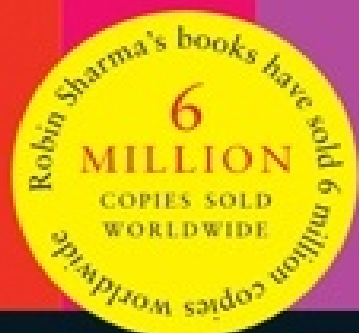


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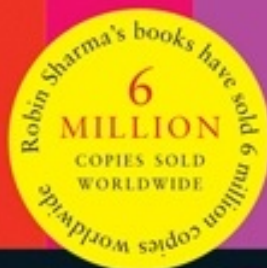


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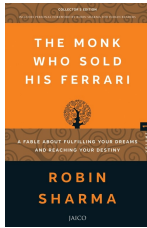
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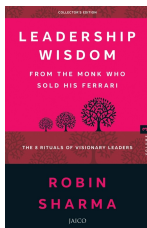
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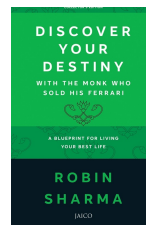
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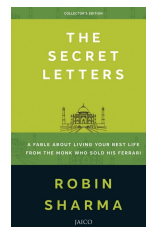
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THE MONK WHO SOLD HIS FERRARI



A FABLE ABOUT FULFILLING YOUR DREAMS
AND REACHING YOUR DESTINY

1

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VOLUME - 1

ROBIN SHARMA



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PRAISE FOR
The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

“Nothing less than sensational. This book will bless your life.” Mark Victor Hansen, co-author, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*

“A great book, from an inspirational point of view.” Carlos Delgado, Major League baseball superstar

“This is a fun, fascinating, fanciful adventure into the realms of personal development, personal effectiveness and individual happiness. It contains treasures of wisdom that can enrich and enhance the life of every single person.” Brian Tracy, author of *Maximum Achievement*

“Robin S. Sharma has an important message for all of us—one that can change our lives. He’s written a one-of-a-kind handbook for personal fulfillment in a hectic age.” Scott DeGarmo, past publisher, *Success Magazine*

“The book is about finding out what is truly important to your real spiritual self, rather than being inundated with material possessions.” Michelle Yeoh, lead actress of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, in *TIME Magazine*

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"Sharma combines the wisdom of the great philosophers from the West and the East and applies it to the business world." *The Liberal*

To my son, Colby,
who is my daily reminder of all that is
good in this world. Bless You.



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The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari has been a very special project, brought to fruition through the efforts of some very special people. I am deeply grateful to my superb production team and to all those whose enthusiasm and energy transformed my vision of this book into reality, especially my family at Sharma Leadership International. Your commitment and sense of mission moves me.

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Life is no brief candle for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

George Bernard Shaw

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CHAPTER ONE



The Wake-Up Call

He collapsed right in the middle of a packed courtroom. He was one of this country's most distinguished trial lawyers. He was also a man who was as well known for the three-thousand-dollar Italian suits that draped his well-fed frame as for his remarkable string of legal victories. I simply stood there, paralyzed by the shock of what I had just witnessed. The great Julian Mantle had been reduced to a victim and was now squirming on the ground like a helpless infant, shaking and shivering and sweating like a maniac.

Everything seemed to move in slow motion from that point on. "My God, Julian's in trouble!" his paralegal screamed, emotionally offering us a blinding glimpse of the obvious. The judge looked panic-stricken and quickly muttered something into the private phone she had had installed in the event of an emergency. As for me, I could only stand there, dazed and confused. *Please don't die, you old fool. It's too early for you to check out. You don't deserve to die like this.*

The bailiff, who earlier had looked as if he had been embalmed in his standing position, leapt into action and started to perform CPR on the fallen legal hero. The paralegal was at his side, her long blond curls dangling over Julian's ruby-red face, offering him soft words of comfort, words that he obviously could not hear.

I had known Julian for seventeen years. We had first met when I was a young law student hired by one of his partners as a summer research intern. Back then, he'd had it all. He was a brilliant, handsome and fearless trial attorney with dreams of greatness. Julian was the firm's young star, the rain-maker in waiting. I can still remember walking by his regal corner office while I was working late one night and stealing a glimpse of the framed quotation perched on his massive oak desk. It was by Winston Churchill and it spoke volumes about the man that Julian was:

Sure I am that this day we are masters of our fate, that the task which has been set before us is not above our strength; that its pangs and toils are not beyond my endurance. As long as we have faith in our own cause and an unconquerable will to win, victory will not be denied us.

Julian also walked his talk. He was tough, hard-driving and willing to work eighteen-hour days for the success he believed was his destiny. I heard through the grapevine that his grandfather had been a prominent senator and his father a highly respected judge of the Federal Court. It was obvious that he came from money and that there were enormous expectations weighing on his Armani-clad shoulders. I'll admit one thing though: he ran his own race. He was determined to do things his own way — and he loved to put on a show.

Julian's outrageous courtroom theatrics regularly made the front pages of the newspapers. The rich and famous flocked to his side whenever they needed a superb legal tactician with an aggressive edge. His extra-curricular activities were probably as well known. Late-night visits to the city's finest restaurants with sexy young fashion models, or reckless drinking escapades with the rowdy band of brokers he called his "demolition team," became the stuff of legend at the firm.

I still can't figure out why he picked me to work with him on that sensational murder case he was to argue that first summer. Though I had graduated from Harvard Law School, his alma mater, I certainly wasn't the brightest intern at the firm, and my family pedigree reflected no blue blood. My father spent his whole life as a security guard with a local bank after a stint in the Marines. My mother grew up unceremoniously in the Bronx.

Yet he did pick me over all the others who had been quietly lobbying him for the privilege of being his legal gofer on what became known as "the Mother of All Murder Trials": he said he liked my "hunger." We won, of course, and the business executive who had been charged with brutally killing his wife was now a free man — or as free as his cluttered conscience would let him be.

My own education that summer was a rich one. It was far more than a lesson on how to raise a reasonable doubt where none existed — any lawyer worth his salt could do that. This was a lesson in the psychology of winning and a rare opportunity to watch a master in action. I soaked it up like a sponge.

At Julian's invitation, I stayed on at the firm as an associate, and a lasting friendship quickly developed between us. I will admit that he wasn't the easiest lawyer to work with. Serving as his junior was often an exercise in

frustration, leading to more than a few late-night shouting matches. It was truly his way or the highway. This man could never be wrong. However, beneath his crusty exterior was a person who clearly cared about people.

No matter how busy he was, he would always ask about Jenny, the woman I still call “my bride” even though we were married before I went to law school. On finding out from another summer intern that I was in a financial squeeze, Julian arranged for me to receive a generous scholarship. Sure, he could play hardball with the best of them, and sure, he loved to have a wild time, but he never neglected his friends. The real problem was that Julian was obsessed with work.

For the first few years he justified his long hours by saying that he was “doing it for the good of the firm,” and that he planned to take a month off and go to the Caymans “*next winter for sure.*” As time passed, however, Julian’s reputation for brilliance spread and his workload continued to increase. The cases just kept on getting bigger and better, and Julian, never one to back down from a good challenge, continued to push himself harder and harder. In his rare moments of quiet, he confided that he could no longer sleep for more than a couple of hours without waking up feeling guilty that he was not working on a file. It soon became clear to me that he was being consumed by the hunger for more: more prestige, more glory and more money.

As expected, Julian became enormously successful. He achieved everything most people could ever want: a stellar professional reputation with an income in seven figures, a spectacular mansion in a neighborhood favored by celebrities, a private jet, a summer home on a tropical island and his prized possession — a shiny red Ferrari parked in the center of his driveway.

Yet I knew that things were not as idyllic as they appeared on the surface. I observed the signs of impending doom not because I was so much more perceptive than the others at the firm, but simply because I spent the most time with the man. We were always together because we were always at work. Things never seemed to slow down. There was always another blockbuster case on the horizon that was bigger than the last. No amount of preparation was ever enough for Julian. What would happen if the judge brought up this question or that question, God forbid? What would happen if our research was less than perfect? What would happen if he was surprised in the middle of a packed courtroom, looking like a deer caught in the glare of an intruding pair of headlights? So we pushed ourselves to the limit and I got sucked into his little work-centered world as well. There we were, two slaves to the clock, toiling away on the sixty-fourth floor of some steel and glass

monolith while most sane people were at home with their families, thinking we had the world by the tail, blinded by an illusory version of success.

The more time I spent with Julian, the more I could see that he was driving himself deeper into the ground. It was as if he had some kind of a death wish. Nothing ever satisfied him. Eventually, his marriage failed, he no longer spoke with his father, and though he had every material possession anyone could want, he still had not found whatever it was that he was looking for. It showed, emotionally, physically — and spiritually.

At fifty-three years of age, Julian looked as if he was in his late seventies. His face was a mass of wrinkles, a less than glorious tribute to his “take-no-prisoners” approach to life in general and the tremendous stress of his out-of-balance lifestyle in particular. The late-night dinners in expensive French restaurants, smoking thick Cuban cigars and drinking cognac after cognac, had left him embarrassingly overweight. He constantly complained that he was sick and tired of being sick and tired. He had lost his sense of humor and never seemed to laugh anymore. Julian’s once enthusiastic nature had been replaced by a deathly somberness. Personally, I think that his life had lost all purpose.

Perhaps the saddest thing was that he had also lost his focus in the courtroom. Where he would once dazzle all those present with an eloquent and airtight closing argument, he now droned on for hours, rambling about obscure cases that had little or no bearing on the matter before the Court. Where once he would react gracefully to the objections of opposing counsel, he now displayed a biting sarcasm that severely tested the patience of judges who had earlier viewed him as a legal genius. Simply put, Julian’s spark of life had begun to flicker.

It wasn’t just the strain of his frenetic pace that was marking him for an early grave. I sensed it went far deeper. It seemed to be a spiritual thing. Almost every day he would tell me that he felt no passion for what he was doing and was enveloped by emptiness. Julian said that as a young lawyer he really loved the Law, even though he was initially pushed into it by the social agenda of his family. The Law’s complexities and intellectual challenges had kept him spellbound and full of energy. Its power to effect social change had inspired and motivated him. Back then, he was more than just some rich kid from Connecticut. He really saw himself as a force for good, an instrument for social improvement who could use his obvious gifts to help others. That vision gave his life meaning. It gave him a purpose and it fuelled his hopes.

There was even more to Julian’s undoing than a rusty connection to what he did for a living. He had suffered some great tragedy before I had joined the firm. Something truly unspeakable had happened to him, according to one of

the senior partners, but I couldn't get anyone to open up about it. Even old man Harding, the notoriously loose-lipped managing partner who spent more time in the bar of the Ritz-Carlton than in his embarrassingly large office, said that he was sworn to secrecy. Whatever this deep, dark secret was, I had a suspicion that it, in some way, was contributing to Julian's downward spiral. Sure I was curious, but most of all, I wanted to help him. He was not only my mentor; he was my best friend.

And then it happened. This massive heart attack that brought the brilliant Julian Mantle back down to earth and reconnected him to his mortality. Right in the middle of courtroom number seven on a Monday morning, the same courtroom where we had won the Mother of All Murder Trials.

CHAPTER TWO



The Mysterious Visitor

It was an emergency meeting of all of the firm's members. As we squeezed into the main boardroom, I could tell that there was a serious problem. Old man Harding was the first to speak to the assembled mass.

"I'm afraid I have some very bad news. Julian Mantle suffered a severe heart attack in court yesterday while he was arguing the Air Atlantic case. He is currently in the intensive care unit, but his physicians have informed me that his condition has now stabilized and he will recover. However, Julian has made a decision, one that I think you all must know. He has decided to leave our family and to give up his law practice. He will not be returning to the firm."

I was shocked. I knew he was having his share of troubles, but I never thought he would quit. As well, after all that we had been through, I thought he should have had the courtesy to tell me this personally. He wouldn't even let me see him at the hospital. Every time I dropped by, the nurses had been instructed to tell me that he was sleeping and could not be disturbed. He even refused to take my telephone calls. Maybe I reminded him of the life he wanted to forget. Who knows? I'll tell you one thing though. It hurt.

That whole episode was just over three years ago. Last I heard, Julian had headed off to India on some kind of an expedition. He told one of the partners that he wanted to simplify his life and that he "needed some answers," and hoped he would find them in that mystical land. He had sold his mansion, his plane and his private island. He had even sold his Ferrari. "Julian Mantle as an Indian yogi," I thought. "The Law works in the most mysterious of ways."

As those three years passed, I changed from an overworked young lawyer to a jaded, somewhat cynical older lawyer. My wife Jenny and I had a family. Eventually, I began my own search for meaning. I think it was having kids

that did it. They fundamentally changed the way I saw the world and my role in it. My dad said it best when he said, “John, on your deathbed you will never wish you spent more time at the office.” So I started spending a little more time at home. I settled into a pretty good, if ordinary, existence. I joined the Rotary Club and played golf on Saturdays to keep my partners and clients happy. But I must tell you, in my quiet moments I often thought of Julian and wondered what had become of him in the years since we had unexpectedly parted company.

Perhaps he had settled down in India, a place so diverse that even a restless soul like his could have made it his home. Or maybe he was trekking through Nepal? Scuba diving off the Caymans? One thing was certain: he had not returned to the legal profession. No one had received even a postcard from him since he left for his self-imposed exile from the Law.

A knock on my door about two months ago offered the first answers to some of my questions. I had just met with my last client on a gruelling day when Genevieve, my brainy legal assistant, popped her head into my small, elegantly furnished office.

“There’s someone here to see you, John. He says it’s urgent and that he will not leave until he speaks with you.”

“I’m on my way out the door, Genevieve,” I replied impatiently. “I’m going to grab a bite to eat before finishing off the Hamilton brief. I don’t have time to see anyone right now. Tell him to make an appointment like everyone else, and call security if he gives you any more trouble.”

“But he says he really needs to see you. He refuses to take no for an answer!”

For an instant I considered calling security myself, but, realizing that this might be someone in need, I assumed a more forgiving posture.

“Okay, send him in,” I retreated. “I probably could use the business anyway.”

The door to my office opened slowly. At last it swung fully open, revealing a smiling man in his mid-thirties. He was tall, lean and muscular, radiating an abundance of vitality and energy. He reminded me of those perfect kids I went to law school with, from perfect families, with perfect houses, perfect cars and perfect skin. But there was more to my visitor than his youthful good looks. An underlying peacefulness gave him an almost divine presence. And his eyes. Piercing blue eyes that sliced clear through me like a razor meeting the supple flesh of a fresh-faced adolescent anxious about his first shave.

‘Another hotshot lawyer gunning for my job,’ I thought to myself. ‘Good grief, why is he just standing there looking at me? I hope that wasn’t his wife I represented on that big divorce case I won last week. Maybe calling security wasn’t such a silly idea after all.’

The young man continued to look at me, much as the smiling Buddha might have looked upon a favored pupil. After a long moment of uncomfortable silence he spoke in a surprisingly commanding tone.

“Is this how you treat all of your visitors, John, even those who taught you everything you know about the science of success in a courtroom? I should have kept my trade secrets to myself,” he said, his full lips curving into a mighty grin.

A strange sensation tickled the pit of my stomach. I immediately recognized that raspy, honey-smooth voice. My heart started to pound.

“Julian? Is that you? I can’t believe it! Is that really you?”

The loud laugh of the visitor confirmed my suspicions. The young man standing before me was none other than that long-lost yogi of India: Julian Mantle. I was dazzled by his incredible transformation. Gone was the ghostlike complexion, the sickly cough and the lifeless eyes of my former colleague. Gone was the elderly appearance and the morbid expression that had become his personal trademark. Instead, the man in front of me appeared to be in peak health, his lineless face glowing radiantly. His eyes were bright, offering a window into his extraordinary vitality. Perhaps even more astounding was the serenity that Julian exuded. I felt entirely peaceful just sitting there, staring at him. He was no longer the anxious “type-A” senior partner of a leading law firm. Instead, the man before me was a youthful, vital — and smiling — model of change.

CHAPTER THREE



The Miraculous Transformation of Julian Mantle

I was astonished by the new and improved Julian Mantle.

‘How could someone who looked like a tired old man only a few short years ago now look so vibrant and alive?’ I wondered in silent disbelief. ‘Was it some magical drug that had allowed him to drink from the fountain of youth? What was the cause of this extraordinary reversal?’

Julian was the first to speak. He told me that the hyper-competitive legal world had taken its toll on him, not only physically and emotionally but spiritually. The fast pace and endless demands had worn him out and run him down. He admitted that his body had fallen apart and that his mind had lost its lustre. His heart attack was only one symptom of a deeper problem. The constant pressure and exhausting schedule of a world-class trial lawyer had also broken his most important—and perhaps most human—endowment: his spirit. When given the ultimatum by his doctor either to give up the Law or give up his life, he said he saw a golden opportunity to rekindle the inner fire he had known when he was younger, a fire that had been extinguished as the Law became less a pleasure and more a business.

Julian grew visibly excited as he recounted how he sold all his material possessions and headed for India, a land whose ancient culture and mystical traditions had always fascinated him. He travelled from tiny village to tiny village, sometimes by foot, sometimes by train, learning new customs, seeing the timeless sights and growing to love the Indian people who radiated warmth, kindness and a refreshing perspective on the true meaning of life. Even those who had very little opened their homes — and their hearts — to this weary visitor from the West. As the days melted into weeks within this enchanting environment, Julian slowly began to feel alive and whole again,

perhaps for the first time since he was a child. His natural curiosity and creative spark steadily returned, along with his enthusiasm and his energy for living. He started to feel more joyful and peaceful. And he began to laugh again.

Although he embraced every moment of his time in this exotic land, Julian told me that his journey to India was more than a simple vacation to ease an overworked mind. He described his time in this faraway land as a “personal odyssey of the self.” He confided that he was determined to find out who he really was and what his life was all about before it was too late. To do this, his first priority was to connect to that culture’s vast pool of ancient wisdom on living a more rewarding, fulfilling and enlightened life.

“I don’t mean to sound too off-the-wall, John, but it was like I had received a command from within, an inner instruction telling me that I was to begin a spiritual voyage to rekindle the spark that I had lost,” said Julian. “It was a tremendously liberating time for me.”

The more he explored, the more he heard of Indian monks who had lived beyond the age of one hundred, monks who despite their advanced years maintained youthful, energetic and vital lives. The more he traveled, the more he learned of ageless yogis who had mastered the art of mind-control and spiritual awakening. And the more he saw, the more he longed to understand the dynamics behind these miracles of human nature, hoping to apply their philosophies to his own life.

During the early stages of his journey, Julian sought out many well-known and highly respected teachers. He told me that each one of them welcomed him with open arms and open hearts, sharing whatever gems of knowledge they had absorbed over lifetimes spent in quiet contemplation on the loftier issues surrounding their existence. Julian also attempted to describe the beauty of the ancient temples that were strewn across the mystical landscape of India, edifices that stood as loyal gatekeepers to the wisdom of the ages. He said he was moved by the sacredness of these surroundings.

“It was a very magical time of my life, John. Here I was, a tired old litigator who had sold everything from my racehorse to my Rolex, and had packed all that remained into a large rucksack that would be my constant companion as I ventured into the timeless traditions of the East.”

“Was it hard to leave?” I wondered aloud, unable to contain my curiosity.

“Actually, it was the easiest thing I have ever done. The decision to give up my practice and all my worldly possessions felt natural. Albert Camus once said that ‘Real generosity toward the future consists in giving all to what is present.’ Well, that’s exactly what I did. I knew I had to change — so I

decided to listen to my heart and do it in a very dramatic way. My life became so much simpler and meaningful when I left the baggage of my past behind. The moment I stopped spending so much time chasing the big pleasures of life, I began to enjoy the little ones, like watching the stars dancing in a moonlit sky or soaking in the the sunbeams of a glorious summer morning. And India is such an intellectually stimulating place that I rarely thought of all I had left.”

Those initial meetings with the learned and the scholarly of that exotic culture, though intriguing, did not yield the knowledge for which Julian hungered. The wisdom that he desired and the practical techniques that he hoped would change the quality of his life continued to elude him in those early days of his odyssey. It was not until Julian had been in India for about seven months that he had his first real break.

It was while he was in Kashmir, an ancient and mystical state that sits sleepily at the foot of the Himalayas, that he had the good fortune to meet a gentleman named Yogi Krishnan. This slight man with a clean-shaven head had also been a lawyer in his “previous incarnation,” as he often joked with a toothy grin. Fed up with the hectic pace that personifies modern New Delhi, he too gave up his material possessions and retreated to a world of greater simplicity. Becoming a caretaker of the village temple, Krishnan said he had come to know himself and his purpose in the larger scheme of life.

“I was tired of living my life like one long air-raid drill. I realized that my mission is to serve others and somehow to contribute to making this world a better place. Now I live to give,” he told Julian. “I spend my days and nights at this temple, living an austere but fulfilling life. I share my realizations with all those who come here to pray. I serve those in need. I am not a priest. I am simply a man who has found his soul.”

Julian informed this lawyer turned yogi of his own story. He spoke of his former life of prominence and privilege. He told Yogi Krishnan of his hunger for wealth and his obsession with work. He revealed, with great emotion, his inner turmoil and the crisis of spirit he had experienced when the once bright light of his life began to flicker in the winds of an out-of-balance lifestyle.

“I too have walked this path, my friend. I too have felt the pain you have felt. Yet I have learned that everything happens for a reason,” offered Yogi Krishnan sympathetically. “Every event has a purpose and every setback its lesson. I have realized that failure, whether of the personal, professional or even spiritual kind, is essential to personal expansion. It brings inner growth and a whole host of psychic rewards. Never regret your past. Rather, embrace it as the teacher that it is.”

After hearing these words, Julian told me that he felt great exultation. Perhaps, in Yogi Krishnan, he had found the mentor he was searching for. Who better than another former hotshot lawyer who, through his own spiritual odyssey, had found a better way of living to teach him the secrets of creating a life of more balance, enchantment and delight?

“I need your help, Krishnan. I need to learn how to build a richer, fuller life.”

“I would be honored to assist you in any way that I can,” offered the yogi. “But may I give you one suggestion?”

“Sure.”

“For as long as I have been caring for this temple in this little village, I have heard whisperings of a mystical band of sages living high in the Himalayas. Legend has it that they have discovered some sort of system that will profoundly improve the quality of anyone’s life — and I don’t just mean physically. It is supposed to be a holistic, integrated set of ageless principles and timeless techniques to liberate the potential of the mind, body and soul.”

Julian was fascinated. This seemed perfect.

“Just exactly where do these monks live?”

“No one knows, and I regret that I’m too old to start searching. But I will tell you one thing, my friend; many have tried to find them and many have failed — with tragic consequences. The higher reaches of the Himalayas are treacherous beyond compare. Even the most skilled climber is rendered helpless against their natural ravages. But if it is the golden keys to radiant health, lasting happiness and inner fulfillment that you are searching for, I do not have the wisdom you seek — they do.”

Julian, never one to give up easily, pressed Yogi Krishnan again. “Are you certain that you have no idea where they live?”

“All I can tell you is that the locals in this village know them as the Great Sages of Sivana. In their mythology, Sivana means ‘oasis of enlightenment.’ These monks are revered as if they are divine in their constitution and influence. If I knew where they could be found, I would be duty-bound to tell you. But honestly, I do not know — no one does, for that matter.”

The next morning, as the first rays of the Indian sun danced along the colorful horizon, Julian set out on his trek to the lost land of Sivana. At first he thought about hiring a Sherpa guide to aid him in his climb through the mountains, but, for some strange reason, his instincts told him that this was one journey he would have to make alone. So instead, for perhaps the first

time in his life, he shed the shackles of reason and placed his trust in his intuition. He felt he would be safe. He somehow knew he would find what he was looking for. So, with missionary zeal, he started to climb.

The first few days were easy. Sometimes he would catch up to one of the cheerful citizens of the village below who happened to be walking on one of the footpaths, perhaps searching for just the right piece of wood for a carving or seeking the sanctuary that this surreal place offered to all those who dared to venture this high into the Heavens. At other times he hiked alone, using this time to silently reflect on where he had been in his life — and where he was now headed.

It didn't take long before the village below was nothing more than a tiny speck on this marvellous canvas of natural splendor. The majesty of the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas made his heart beat faster and, for one long moment, took his breath away. He felt a oneness with his surroundings, a kind of kinship that two old friends might enjoy after many years spent listening to each other's innermost thoughts and laughing at each other's jokes. The fresh mountain air cleared his mind and energized his spirit. Having travelled the world many times over, Julian had thought he had seen it all. But he had never seen beauty like this. The wonders of which he drank at that magical time were an exquisite tribute to the symphony of nature. At once he felt joyous, exhilarated and carefree. It was here, high above the humanity below, that Julian slowly ventured out of the cocoon of the ordinary and began to explore the realm of the extraordinary.

“I still remember the words that were going through my mind up there,” said Julian. “I thought that, ultimately, life is all about choices. One's destiny unfolds according to the choices one makes, and I felt certain that the choice I had made was the right one. I knew my life would never be the same and that something marvellous, maybe even miraculous, was about to happen to me. It was an amazing awakening.”

As Julian climbed into the rarified regions of the Himalayas, he told me that he grew anxious. “But it was those good kind of jitters, like the ones I had on prom night or right before an exciting case began and the media was chasing me up the courtroom steps. And even though I didn't have the benefit of a guide or a map, the way was clear and a thin, lightly travelled path led me higher into the deepest reaches of those mountains. It was like I had some sort of inner compass, nudging me gently towards my destination. I don't think I could have stopped climbing even if I had wanted to,” Julian was excited, his words spilling out like a gushing mountain stream after the rains.

As he travelled for two more days along the route that he prayed would take him to Sivana, Julian's thoughts wandered back to his former life.

Though he felt entirely liberated from the stress and strain that personified his former world, he did wonder whether he could really spend the rest of his days without the intellectual challenge that the legal profession had offered him since he left Harvard Law School. His thoughts then wandered back to his oak-paneled office in a glittering downtown skyscraper and the idyllic summer home he had sold for a pittance. He thought about his old friends with whom he would frequent the finest of restaurants in the most glamorous locales. He also thought about his prized Ferrari and how his heart would soar when he gunned the engine and all its ferocity sprang to life with a roar.

As he ventured deeper into the depths of this mystical place, his reflections of the past were quickly interrupted by the stunning marvels of the moment. It was while he was soaking in the gifts of nature's intelligence that something startling happened.

From the corner of his eye he saw another figure, dressed strangely in a long, flowing red robe topped by a dark blue hood, slightly ahead of him on the path. Julian was astonished to see anyone at this isolated spot that had taken him seven treacherous days to reach. As he was many miles away from any real civilization and still uncertain as to where his ultimate destination of Sivana could be found, he yelled out to his fellow traveller.

The figure refused to respond and accelerated his pace along the path they were both climbing, not even giving Julian the courtesy of a backward glance of acknowledgment. Soon the mysterious traveller was running, his red robe dancing gracefully behind him like crisp cotton sheets hanging from a clothesline on a windy autumn day.

"Please, friend, I need your help to find Sivana," yelled Julian. "I've been traveling for seven days with little food and water. I think I'm lost!"

The figure came to an abrupt stop. Julian approached cautiously while the traveller stood remarkably still and silent. His head did not move, his hands did not move and his feet kept their place. Julian could see nothing of the face beneath the hood but was struck by the contents of the small basket in the hands of the traveller. Within the basket was a collection of the most delicate and beautiful flowers Julian had ever seen. The figure clutched the basket tighter as Julian drew nearer, as if to display both a love of these prized possessions and a distrust of this tall Westerner, about as common to these parts as dew in the desert.

Julian gazed at the traveller with an intense curiosity. A quick burst of a sunbeam revealed that it was a man's face under the loosely-fitting hood. But Julian had never seen a man quite like this one. Though he was at least his own age, he had striking features that left Julian mesmerized and caused him

to simply stop and stare for what seemed like an eternity. His eyes were catlike and so penetrating that Julian was forced to look away. His olive-complexioned skin was supple and smooth. His body looked strong and powerful. And though the man's hands gave away the fact that he was not young, he radiated such an abundance of youthfulness and vitality that Julian felt hypnotized by what appeared before him, much like a child watching the magician at his first magic show.

'This must be one of the Great Sages of Sivana,' Julian thought to himself, scarcely able to contain his delight at his discovery.

"I am Julian Mantle. I've come to learn from the Sages of Sivana. Do you know where I might find them?" he asked.

The man looked thoughtfully at this weary visitor from the West. His serenity and peace made him appear angelic in nature, enlightened in substance.

The man spoke softly, almost in a whisper, "Why is it that you seek these sages, friend?"

Sensing that he had indeed found one of the mystical monks who had eluded so many before him, Julian opened his heart and poured out his odyssey to the traveller. He spoke of his former life and of the crisis of spirit he had struggled with, how he had traded his health and his energy for the fleeting rewards that his law practice brought him. He spoke of how he had traded the riches of his soul for a fat bank account and the illusory gratification of his "live fast, die young" lifestyle. And he told him of his travels in mystical India and of his meeting with Yogi Krishnan, the former trial lawyer from New Delhi who had also given up his former life in the hope of finding inner harmony and lasting peace.

The traveller remained silent and still. It was not until Julian spoke of his burning, almost obsessive desire to acquire the ancient principles of enlightened living that the man spoke again. Placing an arm on Julian's shoulder, the man said gently: "If you truly have a heartfelt desire to learn the wisdom of a better way, then it is my duty to help you. I am indeed one of those sages that you have come so far in search of. You are the first person to find us in many years. Congratulations. I admire your tenacity. You must have been quite a lawyer," he offered.

He paused, as if he was a little uncertain of what to do next, and then went on. "If you like, you may come with me, as my guest, to our temple. It rests in a hidden part of this mountain region, still many hours away from here. My brothers and sisters will welcome you with open arms. We will work together

to teach you the ancient principles and strategies that our ancestors have passed down through the ages.

“Before I take you into our private world and share our collected knowledge for filling your life with more joy, strength and purpose, I must request one promise from you,” said the sage. “Upon learning these timeless truths you must return to your homeland in the West and share this wisdom with all those who need to hear it. Though we are isolated here in these magical mountains, we are aware of the turmoil your world is in. Good people are losing their way. You must give them the hope that they deserve. More importantly, you must give them the tools to fulfill their dreams. This is all I ask.”

Julian instantly accepted the sage’s terms and promised that he would carry their precious message to the West. As the two men moved still higher up the mountain path to the lost village of Sivana, the Indian sun started to set, a fiery red circle slipping into a soft, magical slumber after a long and weary day. Julian told me he has never forgotten the majesty of that moment, walking with an ageless Indian monk for whom he somehow felt a brotherly love, travelling to a place he had longed to find, with all its wonders and many mysteries.

“This was definitely the most memorable moment of my life,” he confided in me. Julian had always believed that life came down to a few key moments. This was one of them. Deep inside his soul, he somehow sensed that this was the first moment of the rest of his life, a life soon to be much more than it had ever been.

CHAPTER FOUR



A Magical Meeting with the Sages of Sivana

After walking for many hours along an intricate series of paths and grassy trails, the two travellers came upon a lush, green valley. On one side of the valley, the snow-capped Himalayas offered their protection, like weather-beaten soldiers guarding the place where their generals rested. On the other, a thick forest of pine trees sprouted, a perfectly natural tribute to this enchanting fantasyland.

The sage looked at Julian and smiled gently, “Welcome to the Nirvana of Sivana.”

The two then descended along another less-travelled way and into the thick forest that formed the floor of the valley. The smell of pine and sandalwood wafted through the cool, crisp mountain air. Julian, now barefoot to ease his aching feet, felt the damp moss under his toes. He was surprised to see richly colored orchids and a host of other lovely flowers dancing among the trees, as if rejoicing in the beauty and splendor of this tiny slice of Heaven.

In the distance, Julian could hear gentle voices, soft and soothing to the ear. He continued to follow the sage without making a sound. After walking for about fifteen more minutes, the two men reached a clearing. Before him was a sight that even the worldly wise and rarely surprised Julian Mantle could never have imagined — a small village made solely out of what appeared to be roses. At the center of the village was a tiny temple, the kind Julian had seen on his trips to Thailand and Nepal, but this temple was made of red, white and pink flowers, held together with long strands of multi-colored string and twigs. The little huts that dotted the remaining space

appeared to be the austere homes of the sages. These were also made of roses. Julian was speechless.

As for the monks who inhabited the village, those he could see looked like Julian's travelling companion, who now revealed that his name was Yogi Raman. He explained that he was the eldest sage of Sivana and the leader of this group. The citizens of this dreamlike colony looked astonishingly youthful and moved with poise and purpose. None of them spoke, choosing instead to respect the tranquility of this place by performing their tasks in silence.

The men, who appeared to number only about ten, wore the same red-robed uniform as Yogi Raman and smiled serenely at Julian as he entered their village. Each of them looked calm, healthy and deeply contented. It was as if the tensions that plague so many of us in our modern world had sensed that they were not welcome at this summit of serenity and moved on to more inviting prospects. Though it had been many years since there had been a new face among them, these men were controlled in their reception, offering a simple bow as their greeting to this visitor who had travelled so far to find them.

The women were equally impressive. In their flowing pink silk saris and with white lotuses adorning their jet black hair, they moved busily through the village with exceptional agility. However, this was not the frantic busyness that pervades the lives of people in our society. Instead, theirs was of the easy, graceful kind. With Zen-like focus, some worked inside the temple, preparing for what appeared to be a festival. Others carried firewood and richly embroidered tapestries. All were engaged in productive activity. All appeared to be happy.

Ultimately, the faces of the Sages of Sivana revealed the power of their way of life. Even though they were clearly mature adults, each one of them radiated a childlike quality, their eyes twinkling with the vitality of youth. None of them had wrinkles. None of them had gray hair. None of them looked old.

Julian, who could scarcely believe what he was experiencing, was offered a feast of fresh fruits and exotic vegetables, a diet that he would later learn was one of the keys to the treasure trove of ideal health enjoyed by the sages. After the meal, Yogi Raman escorted Julian to his living quarters: a flower-filled hut containing a small bed with an empty journal pad on it. This would be his home for the foreseeable future.

Though Julian had never seen anything like this magical world of Sivana, he somehow felt that this had been a homecoming of sorts, a return to a

paradise that he had known long ago. Somehow this village of roses was not so foreign to him. His intuition told him that he belonged here, if only for a short period. This would be the place where he would rekindle the fire for living that he had known before the legal profession stole his soul, a sanctuary where his broken spirit would slowly start to heal. And so began Julian's life among the Sages of Sivana, a life of simplicity, serenity and harmony. The best was soon to come.

CHAPTER FIVE



A Spiritual Student of the Sages

Great dreamers' dreams are never fulfilled, they are always transcended.

Alfred Lord Whitehead

It was now 8:00 p.m. and I still had to prepare for my court appearance the next day. Yet I was fascinated by the experience of this former legal warrior who had dramatically transformed his life after meeting and studying under these marvellous sages from India. How amazing, I thought, and what an extraordinary transformation! I secretly wondered whether the secrets Julian had learned in that far-off mountain hideaway could also elevate the quality of my life and replenish my own sense of wonder for the world we live in. The longer I listened to Julian, the more I came to realize that my own spirit had become rusty. What had happened to the uncommon passion I brought to everything I did when I was younger? Back then, even the simplest of things filled me with a sense of joy. Maybe it was time for me to reinvent my destiny.

Sensing my fascination with his odyssey and my eagerness to learn the system of enlightened living that the sages had passed on to him, Julian quickened the pace as he continued with his tale. He told me how his desire for knowledge, coupled with his sharp intellect — refined through many years of battles in the courtroom — had made him a well-loved member of the Sivana community. As a mark of their affection for Julian, the monks eventually made him an honorary member of their band and treated him like an integral part of their extended family.

Eager to expand his knowledge of the workings of the mind, body and soul, and to attain self-mastery, Julian spent literally every waking moment under the tutelage of Yogi Raman. The sage became more like a father to

Julian than a teacher, though they were separated in age by only a few years. It was clear that this man had the accumulated wisdom of many lifetimes and, most happily, he was willing to share it with Julian.

Beginning before dawn, Yogi Raman would sit with his enthusiastic student and fill his mind with insights on the meaning of life and little-known techniques that he had mastered for living with greater vitality, creativity and fulfillment. He taught Julian ancient principles which he said anyone could use to live longer, stay younger and grow far happier. Julian also learned how the twin disciplines of personal mastery and self-responsibility would keep him from returning to the chaos of crisis that had characterized his life in the West. As the weeks slipped into months, he came to understand the treasure-trove of potential sleeping within his own mind, waiting to be awakened and used for higher purposes. Sometimes the teacher and his student would simply sit and watch the blazing Indian sun rising from the deep green meadows far below. Sometimes they would rest in quiet meditation, savoring the gifts that silence brings. Sometimes they would walk through the pine forest, discussing points of philosophy and enjoying the pleasures of each other's company.

Julian said that the first indications of his personal expansion came after only three weeks in Sivana. He started noticing the beauty in the most ordinary of things. Whether it was the marvel of a starry night or the enchantment of a spider's web after it had rained, Julian absorbed it all. He also said that his new lifestyle and the new habits associated with it started to have a profound effect on his inner world. Within a month of applying the principles and techniques of the sages, he told me that he had begun to cultivate the deep sense of peace and inner serenity that had eluded him in all the years he had lived in the West. He became more joyful and spontaneous, growing more energetic and creative with each passing day.

Physical vitality and spiritual strength followed the changes in Julian's attitude. His once overweight frame grew strong and lean while the sickly pallor that had characterized his face was replaced by a splendid shimmer of health. He actually felt as if he could do anything, be anything and unlock the infinite potential that he learned was inside every one of us. He started to cherish life and to see the divinity in every aspect of it. The ancient system of this mystical band of monks had started to work its miracles.

After pausing as if to express disbelief at his own tale, Julian grew philosophical. "I've realized something very important, John. The world, and that includes my inner world, is a very special place. I've also come to see that success on the outside means nothing unless you also have success within. There is a huge difference between well-being and being well-off.

When I was a hotshot lawyer, I used to snicker at all those people who worked at improving their inner and outer lives. ‘Get a life!’ I thought. But I have learned that self-mastery and the consistent care of one’s mind, body and soul are essential to finding one’s highest self and living the life of one’s dreams. How can you care for others if you cannot even care for yourself? How can you do good if you don’t even feel good? I can’t love you if I cannot love myself,” he offered.

Suddenly Julian grew flustered and slightly uneasy. “I’ve never opened my heart to anyone like this before. I apologize for this, John. It is just that I experienced such a catharsis up in those mountains, such a spiritual awakening to the powers of the universe, that I feel others need to know what I know.”

Noticing that it was getting late, Julian quickly told me he would take his leave and bid me adieu.

“You can’t leave now, Julian. I’m really pumped to hear the wisdom you learned in the Himalayas and the message you promised your teachers you would bring back to the West. You can’t leave me in suspense — you know I can’t stand it.”

“I’ll be back, rest assured, my friend. You know me, once I start telling a good story I just can’t stop. But you have your work to do, and I have some private matters that need to be taken care of.”

“Just tell me one thing then. Will the methods you learned in Sivana work for me?”

“When the student is ready, the teacher appears,” came the swift reply. “You, along with so many others in our society, are ready for the wisdom I now have the privilege of holding. Every one of us should know the philosophy of the sages. Every one of us can benefit by it. Every one of us must know of the perfection that is their natural state. I promise I will share their ancient knowledge with you. Have patience. I will meet you again tomorrow night, this time at your house. Then I’ll tell you all that you need to know to put far more living into your life. Is that fair?”

“Yeah, I guess if I’ve done without it all these years, waiting another twenty-four hours won’t kill me,” I responded with disappointment.

And with that, the master litigator turned enlightened yogi of the East was gone, leaving me with a mind full of unanswered questions and unfinished thoughts.

As I sat in my office quietly, I realized how small our world really was. I thought about the vast pool of knowledge that I had not even begun to dip my

fingers into. I thought about how it might feel to regain my own zest for living, and about the curiosity I had had when I was younger. I would love to feel more alive and to bring unbridled energy to my days. Maybe I too would leave the legal profession. Maybe there was a higher calling for me as well. With these weighty considerations on my mind, I turned out the lights, locked the door to my office and walked out into the thick heat of another summer's night.

CHAPTER SIX



The Wisdom of Personal Change

I am an artist at living — my work of art is my life.

Suzuki

True to his word, Julian showed up at my home the next evening. At about 7:15 p.m., I heard four quick knocks on the front door of my house, a Cape Cod design with awful pink shutters, which my wife believed made our house look like something out of *Architectural Digest*. Julian himself looked strikingly different than he had the day before. He still embodied radiant health and exuded a wonderful sense of calm. It was what he was wearing that made me a little uncomfortable.

Adorning his obviously supple body was a long red robe topped by an ornately embroidered blue hood. And though it was another sticky night in July, the hood covered his head.

“Greetings, my friend,” Julian offered enthusiastically.

“Greetings.”

“Don’t look so alarmed, what did you expect me to wear — Armani?”

We both started to laugh, softly at first. Soon our giggles had turned to guffaws. Julian certainly had not lost that wicked sense of humor that had kept me entertained so long ago.

As we relaxed in my cluttered but comfortable living room, I couldn’t help but notice the ornate necklace of wooden prayer beads dangling from his neck.

“What are those? They’re really beautiful.”

“More about these later,” he said, rubbing some of the beads with his thumb and index finger. “We have much to talk about tonight.”

“Let’s get started. I could hardly get anything done at work today, I was so excited about our meeting.”

Hearing his cue, Julian immediately started to reveal more about his personal transformation and the ease with which it was effected. He told me of the ancient techniques he had learned for mind control and for erasing the habit of worry that was consuming so many in our complex society. He spoke of the wisdom that Yogi Raman and the other monks had shared for living a more purposeful and rewarding life. And he spoke of a series of methods to unleash the wellspring of youthfulness and energy he said every one of us has slumbering deep inside of us.

Though the conviction with which he spoke was clear, I began to grow skeptical. Was I the victim of some prank? After all, this Harvard-trained lawyer was once widely known within the firm for his practical jokes. As well, his story was nothing less than fantastic. Think about it: one of this country’s best known trial lawyers throws in the towel, sells all his worldly goods and treks off to India on a spiritual odyssey, only to return as a wise prophet from the Himalayas. This could not be real.

“C’mon Julian. Stop pulling my leg. This whole story is starting to smack of one of your gags. I’ll bet you rented that robe from the costume shop across the street from my office,” I suggested, breaking into my best fear grin.

Julian was quick to respond, as if my disbelief was something he had expected. “In court, how do you prove your case?”

“I offer persuasive evidence.”

“Right. Look at the evidence that I have offered you. Look at my smooth, lineless face. Look at my physique. Can’t you sense the abundance of energy I have? Look at my peacefulness. Surely you can see that I have changed?”

He had a point. This was a man who, only a few years ago, had looked decades older.

“You didn’t go to a plastic surgeon did you?”

“No,” he smiled. “They only focus on the outer person. I needed to be healed from within. My unbalanced, chaotic lifestyle left me in great distress. It was much more than a heart attack that I suffered. It was a rupture of my inner core.”

“But your story, it’s so ... mysterious and unusual.”

Julian remained calm and patient in the face of my persistence. Spotting the pot of tea I had left on the table next to him, he started to pour into my waiting cup. He poured until the cup was full — but then he kept on pouring!

Tea started to trickle down the sides of the cup and into the saucer, then onto my wife's prized Persian rug. At first I watched silently. Then I couldn't take it any more.

"Julian, what are you doing? My cup is overflowing. No matter how hard you try, no more will go in!" I yelled impatiently.

He looked at me for a long moment. "Please don't take this the wrong way. I really respect you, John. I always have. However, just like this cup, you seem to be full of your own ideas. And how can any more go in ... *until you first empty your cup?*"

I was struck by the truth of his words. He was right. My many years in the conservative legal world, doing the same things every day with the same people who thought the same thoughts every day had filled my cup to the brim. My wife Jenny was always telling me that we should be meeting new people and exploring new things. "I wish you were just a little more adventurous, John," she would say.

I couldn't remember the last time I had read a book that didn't deal with law. The profession was my life. I began to realize that the sterile world I had grown accustomed to had dulled my creativity and limited my vision.

"Okay. I see your point," I admitted. "Perhaps all my years as a trial lawyer have made me a hardened skeptic. From the minute I saw you in my office yesterday, something deep inside me told me that your transformation was genuine, and that there was some sort of lesson in it for me. Maybe I just didn't want to believe it."

"John, tonight is the first night of your new life. I simply ask that you think deeply about the wisdom and strategies that I will share with you and apply them with conviction for a period of one month. Embrace the methods with a deep trust in their effectiveness. There is a reason why they have survived for thousands of years — they work."

"One month seems like a long time."

"Six hundred and seventy-two hours of inner work to profoundly improve every waking moment of the rest of your life is quite a bargain, don't you think? Investing in yourself is the best investment you will ever make. It will not only improve your life, it will improve the lives of all those around you."

"How's that?"

"It is only when you have mastered the art of loving yourself that you can truly love others. It's only when you have opened your own heart that you can

touch the hearts of others. When you feel centered and alive, you are in a much better position to be a better person.”

“What can I expect to happen in those six hundred and seventy-two hours that comprise one month?” I asked earnestly.

“You will experience changes within the workings of your mind, body and even your soul that will astonish you. You will have more energy, enthusiasm and inner harmony than you have had in, perhaps, your entire life. People will actually begin telling you that you look younger and happier. A lasting sense of well-being and balance will swiftly return to your life. These are just some of the benefits of the Sivanan System.”

“Wow.”

“All of what you will hear tonight is designed to improve your life, not just personally and professionally but spiritually as well. The advice of the sages is just as current today as it was five thousand years ago. It will not only enrich your inner world, it will enhance your outer world and make you far more effective in all that you do. This wisdom is truly the most potent force I have ever encountered. It is straightforward, practical and has been tested in the laboratory of life for centuries. Most importantly, it will work for anyone. But before I share this knowledge with you, I must ask you for a promise.”

I knew there would be strings attached. “There are no free lunches,” my loving mother used to say.

“Once you see the power of the strategies and skills shown to me by the Sages of Sivana and observe the dramatic results they will bring to your life, you must make it your mission to pass this wisdom on to others who will benefit from this knowledge. This is all that I ask of you. By agreeing to this, you will help me fulfill my own pact with Yogi Raman.”

I agreed without reservation, Julian began to teach me the system he had come to consider as sacred. While the techniques that Julian had mastered during his stay were varied, at the heart of the Sivanan System were seven basic virtues, seven fundamental principles that embodied the keys to self-leadership, personal responsibility and spiritual enlightenment.

Julian told me that Yogi Raman was the first to share the seven virtues with him after a few months in Sivana. On a clear night, when all the others had drifted off into deep slumber, Raman knocked softly on the door of Julian’s hut. In the voice of a gentle guide, he spoke his mind: “I have observed you closely for many days now, Julian. I believe that you are a decent man who deeply desires to fill his life with all that is good. Since you have arrived you have opened yourself up to our traditions and embraced

them as your own. You have learned a number of our daily habits, and have seen their many salutary effects. You have been respectful of our ways. Our people have lived this simple, peaceful life through countless ages and our methods are known to but a few. The world needs to hear our philosophy on enlightened living. Tonight, on the eve of your third month in Sivana, I will begin to share the inner workings of our system with you, not only for your benefit but for the benefit of all those in your part of the world. I will sit with you daily as I sat with my son when he was a child. Sadly, he passed on a few years ago. His time had come and I do not question his exit. I enjoyed our time together and cherish the memories. I now see you as my son and I feel grateful that all I have learned over many years of silent contemplation will live on within you.”

I looked at Julian and noticed that his eyes were now shut, as if he were transporting himself back to this fairy-tale land that had showered the blessing of knowledge on him.

“Yogi Raman told me that the seven virtues for a life overflowing with inner peace, joy and a wealth of spiritual gifts were contained within a mystical fable. This fable was the essence of it all. He asked me to shut my eyes as I have now done, here on the floor of your living room. He then told me to picture the following scene in my mind’s eye:

You are sitting in the middle of a magnificent, lush, green garden. This garden is filled with the most spectacular flowers you have ever seen. The environment is supremely tranquil and silent. Savor the sensual delights of this garden and feel as if you have all the time in the world to enjoy this natural oasis. As you look around you see that in the center of this magical garden stands a towering, red lighthouse, six stories high. Suddenly, the silence of the garden is disturbed by a loud creaking as the door at the base of the lighthouse opens. Out stumbles a nine-foot-tall, nine-hundred-pound Japanese sumo wrestler who casually wanders into the center of the garden.

“It gets better,” chuckled Julian. “The Japanese sumo wrestler is almost totally naked. He has a pink wire cable covering his private parts.”

As this sumo wrestler starts to move around the garden, he finds a shiny gold stopwatch which someone had left behind many years earlier. He slips it on, and falls to the ground with an enormous thud. The sumo wrestler is rendered unconscious and lies there, silent and still. Just when you think he has taken his last breath, the wrestler awakens, perhaps stirred by the fragrance of some fresh

yellow roses blooming nearby. Energized, the wrestler jumps swiftly to his feet and intuitively looks to his left. He is startled by what he sees. Through the bushes at the very edge of the garden he observes a long winding path covered by millions of sparkling diamonds. Something seems to instruct the wrestler to take the path, and to his credit, he does. This path leads him down the road of everlasting joy and eternal bliss.

After hearing this strange tale high atop the Himalayas, seated next to a monk who had seen the torchlight of enlightenment first-hand, Julian was disappointed. Quite simply, he thought he was going to hear something earth-shattering, knowledge that would stir him to action, perhaps even move him to tears. Instead, all he heard was a silly story about a sumo wrestler and a lighthouse.

Yogi Raman detected his dismay. “Never overlook the power of simplicity,” Julian was told.

“This story may not be the sophisticated discourse that you expected,” said the sage, “but there is a universe of sensibility in its message and a purity in its purpose. From the day you arrived, I have thought long and hard as to how I would share our knowledge with you. At first I considered giving you a series of lectures over a period of months but realized that this traditional approach was ill-suited to the magical nature of the wisdom you are about to receive. I then thought of asking all of my brothers and sisters to spend a little time with you every day tutoring you in our philosophy. However, this too was not the most effective way for you to learn what it is we have to tell. After great deliberation, I finally arrived at what I thought was a very creative yet highly effective way to share the entire system of Sivana with its seven virtues ... and that is this mystical fable.”

The sage added: “At first it might seem to be frivolous and perhaps even childish. But I assure you that every element of the fable embodies a timeless principle for radiant living and has great depth of meaning. The garden, the lighthouse, the sumo wrestler, the pink wire cable, the stopwatch, the roses and the winding path of diamonds are symbols of the seven timeless virtues for an enlightened life. I can also assure you that if you remember this little story and the fundamental truths that it represents, you will carry within you all that you need to know to raise your life to its highest level. You will have all the information and strategies you will need to profoundly influence the quality of your life and the lives of all those you touch. And when you apply this wisdom on a daily basis, you will change — mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. Please write this story deep into your mind and

carry it within your heart. It will only make a dramatic difference if you embrace it without reservation.”

“Luckily, John,” said Julian, “I did embrace it. Carl Jung once said that ‘your vision will become clear only when you can look into your heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakens.’ On that very special night, I looked deep into my heart and awakened to the secrets of the ages for enriching the mind, cultivating the body and nourishing the soul. It is now my turn to share them with you.”

CHAPTER SEVEN



A Most Extraordinary Garden

Most people live — whether physically, intellectually or morally — in a very restricted circle of their potential being. We all have reservoirs of life to draw upon of which we do not dream.

William James

“In the fable, the garden is a symbol for the mind,” said Julian. “If you care for your mind, if you nurture it and if you cultivate it just like a fertile, rich garden, it will blossom far beyond your expectations. But if you let the weeds take root, lasting peace of mind and deep inner harmony will always elude you.

“John, let me ask you a simple question. If I went into your backyard where you have that garden you used to tell me so much about and threw toxic waste over all your prized petunias, you wouldn’t be thrilled, would you?”

“Agreed.”

“As a matter of fact, most good gardeners guard their gardens like proud soldiers and make certain that no contamination ever enters. Yet look at the toxic waste that most people put into the fertile garden of their minds every single day: the worries and anxieties, the fretting about the past, the brooding over the future and those self-created fears that wreak havoc within your inner world. In the native language of the Sages of Sivana, which has existed for thousands of years, the written character for worry is strikingly similar to the character symbolizing a funeral pyre. Yogi Raman told me that this was no mere coincidence. Worry drains the mind of much of its power and, sooner or later, it injures the soul.”

“To live life to the fullest, you must stand guard at the gate of your garden

and let only the very best information enter. You truly cannot afford the luxury of a negative thought — not even one. The most joyful, dynamic and contented people of this world are no different from you or me in terms of their makeup. We are all flesh and bones. We all come from the same universal source. However, the ones who do more than just exist, the ones who fan the flames of their human potential and truly savor the magical dance of life do different things than those whose lives are ordinary. Foremost among the things that they do is adopt a positive paradigm about their world and all that is in it.”

Julian added: “The sages taught me that on an average day the average person runs about sixty thousand thoughts through his mind. What really amazed me, though, was that ninety-five percent of those thoughts were the same as the ones you thought the day before!”

“Are you serious?” I asked.

“Very. This is the tyranny of impoverished thinking. Those people who think the same thoughts every day, most of them negative, have fallen into bad mental habits. Rather than focusing on all the good in their lives and thinking of ways to make things even better, they are captives of their pasts. Some of them worry about failed relationships or financial problems. Others fret over their less-than-perfect childhoods. Still others brood over more trifling matters: the way a store clerk might have treated them or the comment of a co-worker that smacked of ill-will. Those who run their minds in this fashion are allowing worry to rob them of their life force. They are blocking the enormous potential of their minds to work magic and deliver into their lives all that they want, emotionally, physically and, yes, even spiritually. These people never realize that mind management is the essence of life management.

“The way you think stems from habit, pure and simple,” Julian continued with conviction. “Most people just don’t realize the enormous power of their minds. I have learned that even the best-conditioned thinkers are using only 1/100th of a percent of their mental reserves. In Sivana, the sages dared to explore the untapped potential of their mental capacity on a regular basis. And the results were astounding. Yogi Raman, through regular and disciplined practice, had conditioned his mind so that he was able to slow down his heartbeat at will. He had even trained himself to go for weeks without sleep. While I would never suggest that these should be goals for you to aspire to, I do suggest that you start to see your mind for what it is — nature’s greatest gift.”

“Are there some exercises I can do to unlock this mind power? Being able to slow down my heartbeat would definitely make me a hit on the cocktail-

party circuit,” I suggested cheekily.

“Don’t worry about that now, John. I’ll give you some practical techniques that you can try later that will show you the power of this ancient technology. For now, what is important is that you understand that mental mastery comes through conditioning, nothing more and nothing less. Most of us have the same raw materials from the moment we take our first breath of air; what separates those people who achieve more than others or those that are happier than others is the way that they use and refine these raw materials. When you dedicate yourself to transforming your inner world your life quickly shifts from the ordinary into the realm of the extraordinary.”

My teacher was growing more excited by the moment. His eyes seemed to twinkle as he spoke of the magic of the mind and the wealth of goodness it would surely bring.

“You know, John, when all is said and done, there is only one thing that we have absolute dominion over.”

“Our kids?” I said, smiling good-naturedly.

“No, my friend — our minds. We might not be able to control the weather or the traffic or the moods of all those around us. But, we most certainly can control our attitude towards these events. We all have the power to determine what we will think about in any given moment. This ability is part of what makes us human. You see, one of the fundamental gems of worldly wisdom I have learned in my travels to the East is also one of the most simple.”

Julian then paused as if to summon up a priceless gift.

“And what might that be?”

“There is no such thing as objective reality or ‘the real world.’ There are no absolutes. The face of your greatest enemy might be the face of my finest friend. An event that appears to be a tragedy to one might reveal the seeds of unlimited opportunity to another. What really separates people who are habitually upbeat and optimistic from those who are consistently miserable is how the circumstances of life are interpreted and processed.”

“Julian, how could a tragedy be anything but a tragedy?”

“Here’s a quick example. When I was travelling through Calcutta, I met a schoolteacher named Malika Chand. She loved teaching and treated her students as she would her own children, nurturing their potential with great kindness. Her perennial motto was ‘Your *I can* is more important than your *I.Q.*’ She was known throughout her community as a person who lived to give, who selflessly served anyone in need. Sadly, her beloved school, which

had stood as a silent witness to the delightful progress of generations of children, succumbed to the flames of a fire set by an arsonist one night. All those in the community felt this great loss. But as time passed, their anger gave way to apathy and they resigned themselves to the fact that their children would be without a school.”

“What about Malika?”

“She was different, an eternal optimist if there ever was one. Unlike everyone around her, she perceived opportunity in what had happened. She told all the parents that every setback offers an equivalent benefit if they took the time to search for it. This event was a gift in disguise. The school that burned to the ground was old and decrepit. The roof leaked and the floor had finally buckled under the strain of a thousand little feet scampering across its surface. This was the chance that they had been waiting for to join hands as a community and build a much better school, one that would serve many more children in the years to come. And so, with this sixty-four-year-old dynamo behind them, they marshalled their collective resources and raised enough funds to build a sparkling new school, one that stood as a shining example of the power of vision in the face of adversity.”

“So it’s like that old adage about seeing the cup as half full rather than half empty?”

“That’s a fair way to look at it. No matter what happens to you in your life, you alone have the capacity to choose your response to it. When you form the habit of searching for the positive in every circumstance, your life will move into its highest dimensions. This is one of the greatest of all the natural laws.”

“And it all starts with using your mind more effectively?”

“Exactly, John. All success in life, whether material or spiritual, starts with that twelve-pound mass sitting between your shoulders. Or more specifically, with the thoughts that you put into your mind every second of every minute of every day. Your outer world reflects the state of your inner world. By controlling the thoughts that you think and the way you respond to the events of your life, you begin to control your destiny.”

“This makes so much sense, Julian. I guess my life has become so busy that I have never taken the time to think about these things. When I was in law school, my best friend Alex used to love reading inspirational books. He said that they kept him motivated and energized in the face of our crushing workload. I remember him telling me that one of them said that the Chinese character for ‘crisis’ is composed of two sub-characters: one that spells ‘danger’ and another that spells ‘opportunity.’ I guess that even the ancient

Chinese knew that there is a bright side to the darkest circumstance — if you have the courage to look for it.”

“Yogi Raman put it this way: ‘There are no mistakes in life, only lessons. There is no such thing as a negative experience, only opportunities to grow, learn and advance along the road of self-mastery. From struggle comes strength. Even pain can be a wonderful teacher.’”

“Pain?” I protested.

“Absolutely. To transcend pain, you must first experience it. Or to put it another way, how can you really know the joy of being on the summit of the mountain unless you have first visited the lowest valley. Get my point?”

“To savor the good one must know the bad?”

“Yes. But I suggest that you stop judging events as either positive or negative. Rather, simply experience them, celebrate them and learn from them. Every event offers you lessons. These little lessons fuel your inner and outer growth. Without them, you would be stuck on a plateau. Just think about it in your own life. Most people have grown the most from their most challenging experiences. And if you meet with an outcome you did not expect and feel a little disappointed, remember that the laws of nature always ensure that when one door closes another opens.”

Julian started to raise his arms in excitement, much as a Southern minister might while preaching to his congregation. “Once you consistently apply this principle to your daily life and start to condition your mind to translate every event into a positive, empowering one, you will banish worry forever. You will stop being a prisoner of your past. Instead, you will become the architect of your future.”

“Okay, I understand the concept. Every experience, even the worst, offers me a lesson. Therefore, I should open my mind to the learning in every event. In this way, I will grow stronger and happier. What else might a humble, middle-class lawyer do to improve things?”

“First of all, begin to live out of the glory of your imagination, not your memory.”

“Run that one by me again.”

“All I’m saying is that to liberate the potential of your mind, body and soul, you must first expand your imagination. You see, things are always created twice: first in the workshop of the mind and then, and only then, in reality. I call the process ‘blueprinting’ because anything that you create in your outer world began as a simple blueprint in your inner world, on the lush

picture screen of your mind. When you learn to take control of your thoughts and vividly imagine all that you desire from this worldly existence in a state of total expectancy, dormant forces will awaken inside you. You will begin to unlock the true potential of your mind to create the kind of magical life that I believe you deserve. From tonight onwards, forget about the past. Dare to dream that you are more than the sum of your current circumstances. Expect the best. You will be astonished at the results.

“You know, John, all those years in the legal profession I thought I knew so much. I spent years studying at the finest schools, reading all the law books I could get my hands on and working with the best role models. Sure, I was a winner at the game of law. Yet I now realize I was losing in the game of life. I was so busy chasing the big pleasures of life that I missed out on all the little ones. I never read those great books my father used to tell me to read. I haven’t built any great friendships. I’ve never learned to appreciate great music. Having said this, I really think I am one of the lucky ones. My heart attack was my defining moment, my personal wake-up call, if you will. Believe it or not, it gave me a second chance to live a richer, more inspired life. Like Malika Chand, I saw the seeds of opportunity in my painful experience. More importantly, I had the courage to nourish them.”

I could see that while Julian had grown younger on the outside he had grown far wiser within. I realized that this evening was more than just a fascinating conversation with an old friend. I realized that tonight could be my own defining moment and a clear chance for a new beginning. My mind started to consider all that was wrong in my own life. Sure I had a great family and a stable job as a well-regarded lawyer. Yet in my quiet moments I knew there had to be more. I had to fill that emptiness that was starting to envelope my life.

When I was a kid, I dreamed such great dreams. Often, I visualized myself as a sports hero or as a business tycoon. I really believed that I could do, have and be whatever I wanted. I also remembered the way I used to feel as a young boy growing up on the sun-splashed West Coast. Fun came in the form of simple pleasures. Fun was spending a glorious afternoon skinny-dipping or riding through the woods on my bicycle. I had such a curiosity for life. I was an adventurer. There were no limits on what my future could bring. I honestly don’t think I have felt that kind of freedom and joy for fifteen years. What happened?

Perhaps I lost sight of my dreams when I became an adult and resigned myself to acting the way adults were supposed to act. Maybe I lost sight of them when I went to law school and started talking like lawyers were supposed to talk. In any event, that evening with Julian at my side, pouring

his heart out over a cup of cold tea, made me resolve to stop spending so much time making a living and to spend far more time creating a life.

“Looks like I have you thinking about your life also,” Julian observed. “Start thinking about your dreams for a change, just like when you were a little child. Jonas Salk said it best when he wrote: ‘I have had dreams and I have had nightmares. I overcame the nightmares because of my dreams.’ Dare to dust off your dreams, John. Start to revere life again and celebrate all of its wonders. Awaken yourself to the power of your own mind to make things happen. Once you do, the universe will conspire with you to work magic in your life.”

Julian then reached into the depths of his robe and pulled out a little card, about the size of a business card, which had tears along its sides, apparently the result of many months of constant use.

“One day, while Yogi Raman and I were walking along a quiet mountain path, I asked him who his favorite philosopher was. He told me that he had many influences in his life, and it was difficult for him to single out any one source for his inspiration. There was one quotation, however, that he carried deep within his heart; one that encapsulated all the values he had come to cherish over a life spent in quiet contemplation. At that glorious place, deep within the middle of nowhere, this learned sage of the East shared it with me. I too etched its words into my heart. They serve as a daily reminder of all that we are — and all that we can be. The words came from the great Indian philosopher Patanjali. Repeating them aloud every morning before I sit down to meditate has had a very profound influence on the course of my days. Remember, John, words are the verbal embodiment of power.”

Julian then showed me the card. The quotation read:

When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all of your thoughts break their bonds: your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive and you discover yourself to be a greater person than you ever dreamed yourself to be.

In that instant, I saw the connection between physical vitality and mental agility. Julian was in picture-perfect health and looked many years younger than he had when we had first met. He brimmed with vibrancy and it appeared that his energy, enthusiasm and optimism knew no bounds. I could see that he had made many changes to his former lifestyle, but it was obvious that the starting point of his magnificent transformation was mental fitness.

Success on the outside indeed begins with success on the inside, and by changing his thoughts, Julian Mantle had changed his life.

“Exactly how can I develop this positive, serene and inspired attitude, Julian? After all these years in my routine, I think my mental muscles have grown a little flabby. Come to think of it, I have very little control over the thoughts that are floating around the garden of my mind,” I said with sincerity.

“The mind is a wonderful servant but a terrible master. If you have become a negative thinker, this is because you have not cared for your mind and taken the time to train it to focus on the good. Winston Churchill said that ‘the price of greatness is responsibility over each of your thoughts.’ Then you will install the vibrant mindset you are looking for. Remember, the mind truly is like any other muscle in your body. Use it or lose it.”

“Are you saying that if I don’t exercise my mind it will grow weak?”

“Yes. Look at it this way. If you want to strengthen the muscles of your arm to achieve more, you must train them. If you want to toughen up your leg muscles, you must first exert them. Similarly, your mind will do wonderful things for you if you will only let it. It will attract all that you desire into your life, once you learn how to operate it effectively. It will create ideal health if you care for it properly. And it will return to its natural state of peacefulness and tranquility — if you have the vision to ask for it. The Sages of Sivana have a very special saying: ‘The boundaries of your life are merely creations of the self.’”

“I don’t think I understand that one, Julian.”

“Enlightened thinkers know that their thoughts form their world and the quality of one’s life comes down to the richness of one’s thoughts. If you want to live a more peaceful, meaningful life, you must think more peaceful, meaningful thoughts.”

“Hit me with the quick-fix, Julian.”

“What do you mean?” Julian asked gently, running his bronzed fingers along the front of his brilliantly textured robe.

“I’m excited about what you are telling me. But I’m an impatient guy. Don’t you have any exercises or techniques that I can use right now, here in my own living room, to change the way I run my mind?”

“Quick-fixes do not work. All lasting inner change requires time and effort. Persistence is the mother of personal change. I’m not saying that it will take years to make profound changes in your life. If you diligently apply the

strategies I am sharing with you every day for only one month, you will be astonished at the results. You will begin to tap into the highest levels of your own capacity and enter the realm of the miraculous. But to reach this destination, you must not get hung up on the outcome. Instead, enjoy the process of personal expansion and growth. Ironically, the less you focus on the end result, the quicker it will come.”

“How so?”

“It’s like that classic story of the young boy who travelled far from his home to study under a great teacher. When he met the wise old man, his first question was, ‘How long will it take me before I am as wise as you?’

“The response came swiftly, ‘Five years.’

“‘This is a very long time,’ the boy replied. ‘How about if I work twice as hard?’

“‘Then it will take ten,’ said the master.

“‘Ten! That’s far too long. How about if I studied all day and well into the night, every night?’

“‘Fifteen years,’ said the sage.

“‘I don’t understand,’ replied the boy. ‘Every time I promise to devote more energy to my goal, you tell me that it will take longer. Why?’

“‘The answer is simple. With one eye fixed on the destination, there is only one left to guide you along the journey.’”

“Point well taken, counselor,” I conceded graciously. “Sounds like the story of my life.”

“Be patient and live with the knowledge that all you are searching for is certain to come if you prepare for it and expect it.”

“But I’ve never been the lucky sort, Julian. All that I have ever received has come through sheer persistence.”

“What is luck, my friend?” Julian replied kindly. “It is nothing more than the marriage of preparation with opportunity.”

Julian added softly: “Before I give you the precise methods passed on to me by the Sages of Sivana, I must first share a couple of key principles. First, always remember that concentration is at the root of mental mastery.”

“Seriously?”

“I know. It surprised me too. But it is true. The mind can accomplish extraordinary things, you have learned this. The very fact that you have a

desire or a dream means that you have the corresponding capacity to realize it. This is one of the great universal truths known to the Sages of Sivana. However, to liberate the power of the mind, you must first be able to harness it and direct its focus only to the task at hand. The moment you concentrate the focus of your mind on a singular purpose, extraordinary gifts will appear within your life.”

“Why is it so important to have a concentrated mind?”

“Let me offer you a riddle that will answer your question nicely. Say you were lost in the woods in the middle of the winter. You desperately needed to stay warm. All you have in your knapsack is a letter your best friend has sent to you, a tin of tuna and a small magnifying glass that you carry to compensate for your fading eyesight. Luckily, you managed to find some dry kindling wood, but unfortunately you have no matches. How would you light the fire?”

Good grief. Julian had stumped me. I had no idea what the answer was.

“I give up.”

“It’s very simple. Place the letter among the dry wood and hold the magnifying glass over it. The rays of the sun will be focused so as to ignite the fire within a matter of seconds.”

“And what about the can of tuna?”

“Oh, I just threw that in to distract you from the obvious solution,” Julian replied with a smile. “But the essence of the example is this: putting the letter over the dry wood would produce no result. Yet, the second you use the magnifying glass to concentrate the scattered rays of the sun onto the letter, it will ignite. This analogy holds true for the mind. When you concentrate its tremendous power on definite, meaningful objectives, you will quickly ignite the flames of your personal potential and produce startling results.”

“Like what?” I asked.

“Only you can answer this question. What is it that you are searching for? Do you want to be a better father and live a more balanced, rewarding life? Do you desire more spiritual fulfillment? Is it adventure and fun that you feel you are lacking? Give it some thought.”

“How about eternal happiness?”

“Go big or stay home,” he chuckled. “Nothing like starting off small. Well, you can have that too.”

“How?”

“The Sages of Sivana have known the secret of happiness for over five thousand years. Fortunately, they were willing to share this gift with me. Do you want to hear it?”

“No, I thought I’d take a break and go wallpaper the garage first.”

“Huh?”

“Of course I want to hear the secret of eternal happiness, Julian. Isn’t that what everyone is searching for, ultimately?”

“True. Well here it is ... could I trouble you for another cup of tea?”

“C’mon, quit stalling.”

“Alright, the secret of happiness is simple: *find out what you truly love to do and then direct all of your energy towards doing it.* If you study the happiest, healthiest, most satisfied people of our world, you will see that each and every one of them has found their passion in life, and then spent their days pursuing it. This calling is almost always one that, in some way, serves others. Once you are concentrating your mental power and energy on a pursuit that you love, abundance flows into your life, and all your desires are fulfilled with ease and grace.”

“So simply figure out what turns you on and then do it?”

“If it is a worthy pursuit,” Julian replied.

“How do you define ‘worthy’?”

“As I said, John, your passion must, in some way, improve or serve the lives of others. Victor Frankl said it more elegantly than I ever could when he wrote: ‘Success, like happiness, cannot be pursued. It must ensue. And it only does so as the unintended side effect of one’s personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself.’ Once you find out what your life’s work is, your world will come alive. You will wake up every morning with a limitless reservoir of energy and enthusiasm. All your thoughts will be focused on your definite objective. You won’t have time to waste time. Valuable mental power will not, therefore, be wasted on trifling thoughts. You will automatically erase the worry habit and become far more effective and productive. Interestingly, you will also have a deep sense of inner harmony, as if you are somehow being guided to realize your mission. It is a wonderful feeling. I love it,” Julian offered gleefully.

“Fascinating. And I like the part about getting up feeling good. To be really honest with you, Julian, most days I wish I could just stay under the covers. It would be so much better than facing the traffic, the angry clients,

the aggressive opponents and the ceaseless flow of negative influences. It all makes me feel so tired.”

“Do you know why most people sleep so much?”

“Why?”

“Because they really don’t have anything else to do. Those who rise with the sun all have one thing in common.”

“Insanity?”

“Very funny. No, they all have a purpose that fans the flames of their inner potential. They are driven by their priorities, but not in an unhealthy, obsessive way. It is more effortless and gentle than that. And given their enthusiasm and love for what they are doing in their lives, such people live in the moment. Their attention is fully and completely on the task at hand. Therefore, there are no energy leaks. These people are the most vibrant and vital individuals you will ever have the good fortune to meet.”

“Energy leaks? Sounds a little New Agey, Julian. I’ll bet you didn’t learn that one at Harvard Law School.”

“True. The Sages of Sivana pioneered that concept. Though it has been around for centuries, its application is just as relevant today as it was when it was first developed. Too many of us are consumed by needless and endless worry. This drains us of our natural vitality and energy. Have you ever seen the inner tube of a bicycle tire?”

“Of course.”

“When it is fully inflated, it can easily take you to your destination. But if there are leaks in it, the tube eventually deflates, and your journey comes to an abrupt end. This is also how the mind works. Worry causes your precious mental energy and potential to leak, just like air leaking out of an inner tube. Soon, you have no energy left. All of your creativity, optimism and motivation has been drained, leaving you exhausted.”

“I know the feeling. I often spend my days in the chaos of crisis. I have to be everywhere at once and I can’t seem to please anyone. On those days, I notice that even though I have done very little physical labor, all my worrying leaves me totally deflated by the end of the day. About the only thing I can do when I get home is pour myself a scotch and cuddle up with the remote control.”

“Exactly. Too much stress does this to you. Once you find your purpose, however, life becomes much easier and far more rewarding. When you figure

out what your main aim or destiny really is, you will never have to work another day in your life.”

“Early retirement?”

“No,” said Julian in the no-nonsense tone he had mastered during his days as an eminent lawyer. “Your work will be play.”

“Wouldn’t it be a little risky for me to give up my job to start searching for my overriding passion and purpose? I mean, I have a family and real obligations. I have four people who depend on me.”

“I’m not saying that you have to leave the legal profession tomorrow. You will, however, have to start taking risks. Shake up your life a bit. Get rid of the cobwebs. Take the road less travelled. Most people live within the confines of their comfort zone. Yogi Raman was the first person to explain to me that the best thing you can do for yourself is regularly move beyond it. This is the way to lasting personal mastery and to realize the true potential of your human endowments.”

“And what might those be?”

“Your mind, your body and your soul.”

“So what risks should I take?”

“Stop being so practical. Start doing the things you have always wanted to do. I have known lawyers who have quit their jobs to become stage actors and accountants who have become jazz musicians. In the process, they have found the deep happiness that had eluded them for so long. So what if they could no longer afford two vacations a year and a posh summer home in the Caymans? Calculated risk taking will pay huge dividends. How will you ever get to third base with one foot on second?”

“I see your point.”

“So take the time to think. Discover your real reason for being here and then have the courage to act on it.”

“With due respect, Julian, all I do is think. As a matter of fact, part of my problem is that I think too much. My mind never stops. It is filled with mental chatter — it drives me crazy sometimes.”

“What I’m suggesting is different. The Sages of Sivana all took time daily to silently contemplate not only where they were, but where they were going. They took the time to reflect on their purpose and how they were living their lives, every day. Most importantly, they thought deeply and genuinely about how they would improve the next day. Daily incremental improvements produce lasting results, which, in turn, lead to positive change.”

“So I should take the time to reflect on my life regularly?”

“Yes. Even ten minutes of focused reflection a day will have a profound impact on the quality of your life.”

“I understand where you are coming from, Julian. The problem is, once my day gets cranking, I can’t even find ten minutes to eat lunch.”

“My friend, saying that you don’t have time to improve your thoughts and your life is like saying you don’t have time to stop for gas because you are too busy driving. Eventually it will catch up with you.”

“Yeah, I know. Hey, you were going to share some techniques with me, Julian,” I said, hoping to learn some practical ways to apply the wisdom I was hearing.

“There is one technique for mastering the mind that towers above all the rest. It is a favorite of the Sages of Sivana who taught it to me with great faith and trust. After practicing it for only twenty-one days I felt more energetic, enthusiastic and vibrant than I had felt in years. The practice is over four thousand years old. It is called the Heart of the Rose.”

“Tell me more.”

“All that you need to perform this exercise is a fresh rose and a silent place. Natural surroundings are best but a quiet room will also do nicely. Start to stare at the center of the rose, its heart. Yogi Raman told me that a rose is very much like life: you will meet thorns along the way but if you have faith and believe in your dreams you will eventually move beyond the thorns into the glory of the flower. Keep staring at the rose. Notice its color, texture and design. Savor its fragrance and think only about this wonderful object in front of you. At first, other thoughts will start entering your mind, distracting you from the heart of the rose. This is the mark of an untrained mind. But you need not worry, improvement will come quickly. Simply return your attention to the object of your focus. Soon your mind will grow strong and disciplined.”

“That’s all there is to it? It sounds pretty easy.”

“That is the beauty of it, John,” Julian replied. “However, this ritual must be performed daily for it to be effective. For the first few days, you will find it difficult to spend even five minutes in this exercise. Most of us live at such a frenetic pace that true stillness and silence is something foreign and uncomfortable. Most people hearing my words will say that they have no time to sit and stare at a flower. These are the same people that will tell you that they have no time to enjoy the laughter of children or to walk barefoot in the

rain. These people say they are too busy to do such things. They don't even have time to build friendships, for friendships also take time."

"You know a lot about such people."

"I was one of them," said Julian. He then paused and sat still, his intense gaze riveted on the grandfather clock my grandmother had given Jenny and me as a housewarming present. "When I think of those who live their lives this way, I remember the words of an old British novelist whose work my father loved to read: 'One must not allow the clock and the calendar to blind him to the fact that each moment of life is a miracle — and a mystery.'

"Persist and spend longer and longer periods savoring the heart of the rose," Julian continued in his throaty tone. "After a week or two you should be able to perform the technique for twenty minutes without your mind wandering onto other subjects. This will be your first indication that you are taking back control of the fortress of your mind. It will then focus only on what you command it to focus on. It will then be a wonderful servant, able to do extraordinary things for you. Remember, either you control your mind or it controls you.

"Practically speaking, you will notice that you will feel far calmer. You will have taken a significant step towards erasing the worry habit that plagues most of the population and you will enjoy more energy and optimism. Most importantly, you will also observe a sense of joyfulness entering your life along with an ability to appreciate the many gifts that surround you. Each day, no matter how busy you get and how many challenges you might face, return to the Heart of the Rose. It is your oasis. It is your silent retreat. It is your island of peace. Never forget that there is power in silence and stillness. Stillness is the stepping stone to connecting with the universal source of intelligence that throbs through every living thing."

I was fascinated by what I had heard. Could it really be possible to profoundly improve the quality of my life with such a simple strategy?

"There must be more to the dramatic changes I see in you than the Heart of the Rose," I wondered aloud.

"Yes. This is true. In fact, my transformation came about as a result of using a number of highly effective strategies in concert. Don't worry, they are all just as simple as the exercise I have just shared with you — and equally as powerful. The key for you, John, is to open your mind to your potential for living a life rich with possibilities."

Julian, ever the fountain of knowledge, continued to reveal what he had learned in Sivana. "Another particularly good technique for ridding the mind

of worry and other negative, life-draining influences is based on what Yogi Raman called Opposition Thinking. I learned that under the grand laws of Nature, the mind can only hold one thought at any one time. Try it yourself John, you will see that it is true.”

I did try it and it is true.

“Using this little-known information, anyone can easily create a positive, creative mindset within a short period. The process is straightforward: when an undesirable thought occupies the focal point of your mind, immediately replace it with an uplifting one. It’s as if your mind is a giant slide projector, with every thought in your mind being a slide. Whenever a negative slide comes up on the screen, take swift action to replace it with a positive one.

“This is where the prayer beads around my neck come in,” Julian added with rising enthusiasm. “Every time I catch myself thinking a negative thought, I take this necklace off and remove another bead. These beads of worry go into a cup I keep in my knapsack. Together they serve as gentle reminders that I still have a distance to travel on the road to mental mastery and responsibility over the thoughts that fill my mind.”

“Hey, that’s a great one! This is really practical stuff. I have never heard anything quite like it. Tell me more about this philosophy of Opposition Thinking.”

“Here’s a real-life example. Let’s say you have had a tough day in court. The judge disagreed with your interpretation of the law, the litigator on the other side belonged in a cage, and your client was more than a little annoyed with your performance. You come home and fall into your favorite chair, full of gloom. Step one is to become aware that you are thinking these uninspiring thoughts. Self-knowledge is the stepping stone to self-mastery. Step two is to appreciate once and for all that just as easily as you allowed those gloomy thoughts to enter, you can replace them with cheerful ones. So think of the opposite of gloom. Concentrate on being cheerful and energetic. Feel that you are happy. Perhaps you might even start to smile. Move your body as you do when you are joyful and full of enthusiasm. Sit up straight, breathe deeply and train the power of your mind on positive thoughts. You will notice a remarkable difference in the way you feel within minutes. Even more importantly, if you keep up your practice of Opposition Thinking, applying it to every negative thought that habitually visits your mind, within weeks you will see that they no longer hold any power. Do you see what I’m getting at?”

Julian continued his explanation: “Thoughts are vital, living things, little bundles of energy, if you will. Most people don’t give any thought to the nature of their thoughts and yet, the quality of your thinking determines the

quality of your life. Thoughts are just as much a part of the material world as the lake you swim in or the street you walk on. Weak minds lead to weak actions. A strong, disciplined mind, which anyone can cultivate through daily practice, can achieve miracles. If you want to live life to the fullest, care for your thoughts as you would your most prized possessions. Work hard to remove all inner turbulence. The rewards will be abundant.”

“I never saw thoughts as living things, Julian,” I replied, amazed at this discovery. “But I can see how they influence every element of my world.”

“The Sages of Sivana firmly believed that one should only think *sattvic* or pure thoughts. They arrived at such a state through the techniques I have just shared with you along with other practices such as a natural diet, the repetition of positive affirmations or ‘mantras,’ as they called them, reading books rich with wisdom and by constantly ensuring that their company was enlightened. If even one impure thought entered the temple of their minds they would punish themselves by travelling many miles to an imposing waterfall and standing under the ice-cold water until they could no longer bear the frigid temperature.”

“I thought you told me these sages were wise. Standing under an ice-cold waterfall deep in the Himalayan mountains for thinking one little negative thought strikes me as extreme behavior.”

Julian was lightning fast in his response, the result of his many years as a world-class legal warrior: “John, I’ll be blunt. You truly cannot afford the luxury of even one negative thought.”

“Really?”

“Really. A worrisome thought is like an embryo: it starts off small but grows and grows. Soon it takes on a life of its own.”

Julian stopped for a moment and then smiled. “Sorry if I seem a little evangelistic when I speak on this subject, on the philosophy I learned on my journey. It’s just that I have discovered tools that can improve the lives of many people, people who feel unfulfilled, uninspired and unhappy. A few adjustments in their daily routines to include the Heart of the Rose technique and a constant application of Opposition Thinking will give them the lives they want. I think they deserve to know this.

“Before I move from the garden to the next element of Yogi Raman’s mystical fable, I must let you know of one more secret that will offer you great aid in your personal growth. This secret is based on the ancient principle that everything is always created twice, first in the mind and then in reality. I have shared already that thoughts are things, material messengers that we

send out to influence our physical world. I have also informed you that if you hope to make remarkable improvements in your outer world you must first start within and change the caliber of your thoughts.

“The Sages of Sivana had a wonderful way to ensure that their thoughts were pure and wholesome. This technique was also highly effective in transforming their desires, however simple, into reality. The method will work for anyone. It will work for a young lawyer who seeks financial abundance just as it will work for a mother seeking a richer family life or a salesperson seeking to close more sales. The technique was known to the sages as the Secret of the Lake. To apply it, these teachers would rise at 4:00 a.m., as they felt that the early morning possessed magical qualities from which they could benefit. The sages would then travel along a series of steep and narrow mountain paths that eventually led them to the lower reaches of the region they inhabited. Once there, they would walk along a barely visible trail lined with magnificent pine trees and exotic flowers until they arrived at a clearing. At the edge of the clearing was an aqua blue lake covered by thousands of tiny white lotuses. The water of the lake was strikingly still and calm. It was truly a miraculous sight. The sages told me that this lake had been a friend to their ancestors over the ages.”

“What was the Secret of the Lake?” I asked impatiently.

Julian explained that the sages would look into the waters of the still lake and envision their dreams becoming reality. If it was the virtue of discipline they wished to cultivate within their lives they would picture themselves getting up at dawn, performing their rigorous physical regimen without fail and spending days in silence to enhance their willpower. If it was more joy they were seeking, they would look into the lake and envision themselves laughing uncontrollably or smiling each time they met one of their brothers or sisters. If it was courage they desired, they would picture themselves acting with strength in the moment of crisis and challenge.

“Yogi Raman once told me that as a boy he lacked confidence because he was smaller than the other boys his age. While they were kind and gentle to him given their environmental influences, he grew insecure and shy. To cure this weakness, Yogi Raman would travel to this heavenly spot and use the lake as a picture screen for images of the person he hoped to be. Some days he would visualize himself as a strong leader, standing tall and speaking with a powerful, commanding voice. Other days he would see himself as he wished to be when he grew older: a wise sage filled with tremendous inner strength and character. All the virtues he wished to have in his life, he saw first on the surface of the lake.

“Within a matter of months, Yogi Raman became the person whom he

mentally saw himself becoming. You see, John, the mind works through pictures. Pictures affect your self-image and your self-image affects the way you feel, act and achieve. If your self-image tells you that you are too young to be a successful lawyer or too old to change your habits for the better, you never will achieve these goals. If your self-image tells you that lives rich with purpose, excellent health and happiness are only for people from backgrounds other than your own, this prophecy will ultimately become your reality.

“But when you run inspiring, imaginative pictures through the movie screen of your mind, wonderful things start to happen in your life. Einstein said that ‘imagination is more important than knowledge.’ You must spend some time every day, even if it is just a few minutes, in the practice of creative envisioning. See yourself as you want to be, whether this means serving as a great judge, a great father or a great citizen of your community.”

“Do I have to find a special lake to apply the Secret of the Lake?” I asked innocently.

“No. The Secret of the Lake was simply the sages’ name for the ageless technique of using positive images to influence the mind. You can practice this method in your own living room or even at the office if you really want to. Shut your door, hold all calls and close your eyes. Then take a few deep breaths. You will notice that after two or three minutes you will start to feel relaxed. Next, visualize mental pictures of all that you want to be, to have and to attain in your life. If you want to be the world’s best father, envision yourself laughing and playing with your kids, responding to their questions with an open heart. Picture yourself acting gracefully and lovingly in a tense situation. Mentally rehearse the way you will govern your actions when a similar scene unfolds on the canvas of reality.

“The magic of visualization can be applied to so many situations. You can use it to be more effective in court, to enhance your relationships and to develop yourself spiritually. Consistent use of this method will also bring you financial rewards and an abundance of material gain, if this is important to you. Understand once and for all that your mind has magnetic power to attract all that you desire into your life. If there is a lack in your life it is because there is a lack in your thoughts. Hold wonderful pictures in your mind’s eye. Even one negative image is poisonous to your mindset. Once you start to experience the joy this ancient technique brings, you will realize the infinite potential of your mind and begin to liberate the storehouse of ability and energy that currently sleeps within you.”

It was as if Julian was speaking a foreign tongue. I had never heard anyone speak of the magnetic power of the mind to attract spiritual and material abundance. Nor had I ever heard anyone speak of the power of

imaging and its profound effects on every aspect of one's world. Yet, deep inside I had faith in what Julian was saying. This was a man whose judgment and intellectual abilities were impeccable. This was a man who was internationally respected for his legal acumen. This was a man who had walked down the path I was now journeying along. Julian had found something on his odyssey to the East, that much was clear. Looking at his physical vitality, his obvious tranquility, seeing his transformation confirmed that I would be wise to listen to his advice.

The more I thought about what I was hearing the more sense it made. Surely the mind must have a great deal more potential than most of us are currently using. How else could mothers lift otherwise immovable cars to save their crying infants who had fallen underneath? How else could martial artists break stacks of bricks with one fell swoop of their hands? How else could the yogis of the East slow down their heartbeats at will or endure tremendous pain without blinking an eye? Maybe the real problem was within me and my lack of belief in the gifts that every being possesses. Perhaps this evening sitting alongside a former millionaire-lawyer turned monk of the Himalayas was a sort of wake-up call for me to start making the most of my life.

“But doing these exercises at the office, Julian?” I responded. “My partners think I'm strange enough as it is.”

“Yogi Raman and all the kind sages with whom he lived, often used a saying that had been passed down to them through the generations. It is my privilege to pass it on to you, on what has become an important evening for both of us, if I may say so. The words are as follows: ‘There is nothing noble about being superior to some other person. True nobility lies in being superior to your former self All I'm really.’ getting at is that if you want to improve your life and live with all that you deserve you must *run your own race*. It doesn't matter what other people say about you. What is important is what you say to yourself. Do not be concerned with the judgment of others as long as you know what you are doing is right. You can do whatever you want to do as long as it is correct according to your conscience and your heart. Never be ashamed of doing that which is right; decide on what you think is good and then stick to it. And for God's sake, never get into the petty habit of measuring your self-worth against other people's net worth. As Yogi Raman preached: ‘Every second you spend thinking about someone else's dreams you take time away from your own.’”

It was now seven minutes past midnight. Remarkably, I didn't feel the least bit tired. When I shared this with Julian he smiled once again. “You have learned yet another principle for enlightened living. For the most part, fatigue

is a creation of the mind. Fatigue dominates the lives of those who are living without direction and dreams. Let me give you an example. Have you ever had an afternoon at the office where you were reading your dry case reports and your mind started to wander and you started to feel sleepy?”

“From time to time,” I answered, not wishing to reveal the fact that this was my *modus operandi*. “Sure, most of us feel drowsy at work on a regular basis.”

“Yet, if a friend calls on the phone to ask you if you want to go out to the ball game that night or asks you for advice on his golf game, I have no doubt that you would spring to life. Every trace of your fatigue would vanish. Is that a fair assessment?”

“That’s fair, counselor.”

Julian knew he was on a roll. “So your tiredness was nothing more than a mental creation, a bad habit your mind has cultivated to act as a crutch when you are performing a tedious task. Tonight you are obviously enchanted with my story and keen to learn the wisdom that has been revealed to me. Your interest and mental focus give you energy. This evening, your mind has not been in the past nor has it been in the future. It has been squarely focused on the present, on our conversation. When you consistently direct your mind to live in the present you will always have boundless energy, no matter what time the clock reflects.”

I nodded my head in agreement. Julian’s wisdom seemed so obvious and yet so much of it had never occurred to me. I guess common sense is not always so common. I thought about what my father used to tell me when I was growing up: “Only those who seek shall find.” I wished he was with me.

Chapter 7 ActionSummary ¥ Julian Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Symbol



The Virtue

Master Your Mind

The Wisdom

- Cultivate your mind - it will blossom beyond your expectations

- The quality of your life is determined by the quality of your thoughts
- There are no mistakes - only lessons. See setbacks as opportunities for personal expansion and spiritual growth

The Techniques

- The Heart of the Rose
- Opposition Thinking
- The Secret of the Lake

Quotable Quote

The secret of happiness is simple: find out what you truly love to do and then direct all of your energy towards doing it. Once you do this, abundance flows into your life and all your desires are filled with ease and grace.

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

CHAPTER EIGHT

Kindling Your Inner Fire

Trust yourself. Create the kind of life you will be happy to live with all your life. Make the most of yourself by fanning the tiny, inner sparks of possibility into the flames of achievement.

Foster C. McClellan

“The day that Yogi Raman shared his mystical little fable with me, high atop the Himalayas, was actually quite similar to this day in many respects,” said Julian.

“Really?”

“Our meeting began in the evening and carried on well into the night. There was such a chemistry between the two of us that the air seemed to crackle with electricity. As I mentioned to you earlier, from the first moment I met Raman, I felt as if he was the brother I never had. Tonight, sitting here with you and enjoying the look of intrigue on your face, I feel the same energy and bond. I will also tell you that I have always thought of you as my little brother since we became friends. To tell you the truth, I saw a lot of myself in you.”

“You were an amazing litigator, Julian. I will never forget your effectiveness.”

It was obvious that he had no interest in exploring the museum of his past.

“John, I’d like to continue to share the elements of Yogi Raman’s fable with you, but before I do this, I must confirm something. Already you have learned a number of highly effective strategies for personal change which will do wonders for you if you apply them consistently. I will open my heart to you tonight and reveal everything I know, as it is my duty to do. I just want to make sure that you fully understand how important it is that you, in turn, pass this wisdom on to all those who are searching for such guidance. We are

living in a very troubled world. Negativity pervades it and many in our society are floating like ships without rudders, weary souls searching for a lighthouse that will keep them from crashing against the rocky shores. You must serve as a captain of sorts. I'm placing my trust in you to take the message of the Sages of Sivana to all those who need it."

After consideration, I promised Julian with conviction that I would accept this assignment. He then continued passionately. "The beauty of the whole exercise is that as you strive to improve the lives of others, your own life will be elevated into its highest dimensions. This truth is based on an ancient paradigm for extraordinary living."

"I'm all ears."

"Basically, the sages of the Himalayas guided their lives by a simple rule: he who serves the most, reaps the most, emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually. This is the way to inner peace and outer fulfillment."

I once read that people who study others are wise but those who study themselves are enlightened. Here, perhaps for the first time, I saw a man who truly knew himself, perhaps his highest self. In his austere clothing, with the half-smile of a youthful Buddha gracing his supple face, Julian Mantle appeared to have it all: ideal health, happiness and an overriding sense of his role in the kaleidoscope of the universe. Yet, he owned nothing.

"This brings me to the lighthouse," said Julian, remaining focused on the task at hand.

"I was wondering how that fit into Yogi Raman's fable."

"I'll try to explain," he responded, sounding more like a well-schooled professor than a lawyer turned monk who had renounced the sensual world. "You have now learned that the mind is like a fertile garden and for it to flourish, you must nurture it daily. Never let the weeds of impure thought and action take the garden of your mind. Stand guard at the gateway of your mind. Keep it healthy and strong — it will work miracles in your life if you will only let it."

"You will recall that in the middle of the garden stood a magnificent lighthouse. This symbol will remind you of yet another ancient principle for enlightened living: *the purpose of life is a life of purpose*. Those who are truly enlightened know what they want out of life, emotionally, materially, physically and spiritually. Clearly defined priorities and goals for every aspect of your life will serve a role similar to that played by a lighthouse, offering you guidance and refuge when the seas become rough. You see, John, anyone can revolutionize their lives once they revolutionize the direction in which

they are moving. But if you don't even know where you are going, how will you ever know when you get there?"

Julian transported me back to the time when Yogi Raman examined this principle with him. He recalled the sage's exact words. "Life is funny," observed Yogi Raman. "One would think that the less one worked the more one would have the chance to experience happiness. However, the real source of happiness can be stated in a word: *achievement*. Lasting happiness comes from steadily working to accomplish your goals and advancing confidently in the direction of your life's purpose. This is the secret to kindling the inner fire that lurks within you. I do understand that it might seem more than a little ironic that you have travelled thousands of miles from your achievement-oriented society to speak to a cluster of mystical sages living high in the Himalayas only to learn that another eternal secret of happiness can be found in achievement, but it is true."

"Workaholic monks?" I suggested playfully.

"Quite the opposite. While the sages were tremendously productive people, their productivity was not of the frenetic type. Instead, it was of the peaceful, focused, Zen-like kind."

"How so?"

"Everything they did had a purpose. Though they were removed from the modern world and lived a highly spiritual existence, they were also highly effective. Some spent their days polishing off philosophical treatises, others created fabulous, richly textured poems that challenged their intellect and renewed their creativity. Still others passed their time in the silence of total contemplation, looking like illuminated statues seated in the ancient lotus pose. The Sages of Sivana did not waste time. Their collective conscience told them that their lives had a purpose and they had a duty to fulfill.

"This is what Yogi Raman said to me: 'Here in Sivana where time appears to stand still, you might wonder what a group of simple, possessionless sages would ever need or hope to achieve. But achievement need not be of the material sort. Personally, my objectives are to attain peace of mind, self-mastery and enlightenment. If I fail to accomplish these goals by the end of my life, I am certain that I will die feeling unfulfilled and dissatisfied.'"

Julian told me that that was the first time he had heard any of his teachers in Sivana speak of their own mortality. "And Yogi Raman sensed this in my expression. He said, 'You need not worry, my friend. I have already lived past the age of one hundred and have no plans for a quick exit. My point is simply that when you clearly know what aims you wish to achieve over the course of your life, be they material, emotional, physical or spiritual, and you spend

your days accomplishing them, you will ultimately find eternal joy. Your life will be as delightful as mine — and you will come to know a splendid reality. But you must know your life's aim and then manifest this vision into reality by consistent action. We sages call this *Dharma*, which is the Sanskrit word for *life's purpose*.'”

“Lifelong contentment will come from the fulfillment of my Dharma?” I asked.

“Most certainly. From Dharma springs inner harmony and lasting satisfaction. Dharma is based upon the ancient principle that says every one of us has a heroic mission while we walk this Earth. We have all been granted a unique set of gifts and talents that will readily allow us to realize this lifework. The key is to discover them, and in doing so, discover the main objective of your life.”

I interrupted Julian, “It's sort of what you were saying earlier about risk taking.”

“Maybe yes, maybe no.”

“I don't follow.”

“Yes, it may seem as though you are forced to take a few risks to discover what you are best at and the essence of your life's purpose. Many people quit jobs that have stifled their progress the moment they discover the true purpose of their existence. There is always the apparent risk that comes with self-examination and soul searching. But no, because there is never a risk in discovering yourself and the mission of your life. Self-knowledge is the DNA of self-enlightenment. It is a very good, indeed essential, thing.”

“What is your Dharma, Julian?” I asked casually, attempting to mask my burning curiosity.

“Mine is simple: to selflessly serve others. Remember, you will not find true joy in sleeping, in relaxing or in spending your time like an idler. As Benjamin Disraeli said: ‘The secret of success is constancy of purpose.’ The happiness you are searching for comes through reflecting on the worthy aims you are dedicated to achieving and then taking action daily to advance them. This is a direct application of the timeless philosophy that prescribes that those things that are most important should never be sacrificed to those things that are the least important. The lighthouse in Yogi Raman's fable will always remind you of the power of setting clearly defined, purposeful goals and, most importantly, of having the character power to act on them.”

Over the course of the next few hours, I learned from Julian that all highly developed, fully actualized people understand the importance of exploring

their talents, uncovering their personal purpose and then applying their human gifts in the direction of this calling. Some people selflessly serve humanity as physicians, others as artists. Some people discover that they are powerful communicators and become wonderful teachers, while others come to realize that their legacy will be in the form of innovations in the field of business or science. The key is to have the discipline and vision to see your heroic mission and to ensure that it serves other people while you realize it.

“Is this a form of goal-setting?”

“Goal-setting is the starting point. Mapping out your objectives and your goals releases the creative juices that get you on to the path of your purpose. Believe it or not, Yogi Raman and the other sages were very hot on goals.”

“You’re kidding. Highly effective monks living deep in the Himalayan mountains who meditate all night and set goals all day. I love it!”

“John, always judge by results. Look at me. Sometimes I don’t even recognize myself when I look in the mirror. My once-unfulfilling existence has been replaced by one rich with adventure, mystery and excitement. I am young again and enjoy vibrant health. I am truly happy. The wisdom I am sharing with you is so potent and so important and so life-giving that you simply must stay open to it.”

“I *am*, Julian, I really am. Everything you have said makes perfect sense, although some of the techniques do sound a little odd. But I have promised to try them and I will. I agree that this information is powerful.”

“If I have seen further than others, it is simply because I have stood on the shoulders of great teachers,” replied Julian with humility. “Here’s another example. Yogi Raman was an expert archer, a true master. To illustrate his philosophy on the importance of setting clearly defined objectives in every aspect of one’s life and fulfilling one’s mission, he offered a demonstration I will never forget.

“Near where we were sitting there was a magnificent oak tree. The sage pulled one of the roses from the garland he habitually wore and placed it on the center of the trunk. He then pulled three objects from the large knapsack that was his constant companion whenever he ventured to distant mountain climes such as the one we were visiting. The first object was his favorite bow, made of a wonderfully fragrant yet sturdy sandalwood. The second item was an arrow. The third object was a lily-white handkerchief — the kind I used to wear in the pocket of my expensive suits to impress judges and juries,” Julian added apologetically.

Yogi Raman then asked Julian to put the handkerchief over his eyes as a

blindfold.

“How far away from the rose am I?” Yogi Raman asked his pupil.

“One hundred feet,” Julian guessed.

“Have you ever observed me in my daily practice of this ancient sport of archery?” the sage queried, in full knowledge of the response that would come.

“I have seen you strike the bull’s-eye from a mark almost three hundred feet away and I cannot recall a time that you have ever missed at your current distance,” Julian noted dutifully.

Then, with his eyes covered by the cloth and his feet placed securely in the earth, the teacher drew the bow with all his energy and released the arrow — aiming directly at the rose hanging from the tree. The arrow struck the large oak with a thud, missing its mark by an embarrassingly large distance.

“I thought you were going to display more of your magical abilities, Yogi Raman. What happened?”

“We have travelled to this isolated place for one reason only. I have agreed to reveal all my worldly wisdom to you. Today’s demonstration is meant to reinforce my advice on the importance of setting clearly defined objectives in your life and knowing precisely where you are going. What you just saw confirms the most important principle for anyone seeking to attain their goals and to fulfill their life’s purpose: *you will never be able to hit a target that you cannot see*. People spend their whole lives dreaming of becoming happier, living with more vitality and having an abundance of passion. Yet they do not see the importance of taking even ten minutes a month to write out their goals and to think deeply about the meaning of their lives, their Dharma. Goal-setting will make your life magnificent. Your world will become richer, more delightful and more magical.”

“You see, Julian, our ancestors have taught us that setting clearly defined objectives for what we desire in our mental, physical and spiritual world is critical to their realization. In the world you came from, people set financial and material goals. There is nothing wrong with this, if this is what you value. However, to attain self-mastery and inner enlightenment, you must set concrete objectives in other areas as well. Would it surprise you to know that I have clearly defined objectives with respect to the peace of mind I desire, the energy I bring to each day and the love that I offer to all those around me? Goal-setting is not just for distinguished lawyers such as yourself who reside in a world full of material attractions. Anyone who wishes to improve the quality of their inner as well as their outer worlds would do well to take out a

piece of paper and start writing out their life aims. At the very moment that this is done, natural forces will come into play that start to transform these dreams into reality.”

What I was hearing fascinated me. When I was a football player in high school, my coach had constantly spoken of the importance of knowing what we wanted from every game. “Know your outcome” was his personal creed, and our team wouldn’t dream of stepping onto the playing field without a clear game plan that would lead us to victory. I wondered why, as I had grown older, I had never taken the time to develop a game plan for my own life. Maybe Julian and Yogi Raman had something here.

“What is so special about taking out a sheet of paper and writing out your goals? How could such a simple act make such a difference?” I asked.

Julian was delighted. “Your obvious interest inspires me, John. Enthusiasm is one of the key ingredients for a lifetime of successful living and I am glad to see that you still have every ounce of yours. Earlier I taught you that we each think about 60,000 thoughts on an average day. By writing out your desires and goals on a piece of paper, you send a red flag to your subconscious mind that these thoughts are far more important than the remaining 59,999 other ones. Your mind will then start to seek out all opportunities to realize your destiny like a guided missile. It is really a very scientific process. Most of us are simply not aware of it.”

“A few of my partners are big on goal-setting. Come to think of it, they are the most financially successful people I know. But I don’t think they are the most balanced,” I observed.

“Perhaps they are not setting the right goals. You see, John, life pretty much gives you what you ask from it. Most people want to feel better, have more energy or live with greater satisfaction. Yet, when you ask them to tell you precisely what it is they want, they have no answer. You change your life the moment you set your goals and start to seek out your Dharma,” Julian said, his eyes sparkling with the truth of his words.

“Have you ever met someone with a strange name and then started to notice that name appearing everywhere: in newspapers, on the television or at the office? Or have you ever become interested in a new subject, let’s say fly fishing, and then noticed that you couldn’t go anywhere without hearing about the wonders of fly fishing? This is but one illustration of the ageless principle Yogi Raman called *joriki*, which I have since learned means concentrated mind. Concentrate every ounce of your mental energy on self-discovery. Learn what you excel at and what makes you happy. Maybe you are practicing law but are really meant to be a school teacher, given your

patience and love of teaching. Perhaps you are a frustrated painter or sculptor. Whatever it is, find your passion and then follow it.”

“Now that I really think about it, it would be sad to reach the end of my life without realizing that I had some special genius that would have unlocked my potential and helped others — even in a small way.”

“That’s right. So from this moment onwards, be acutely aware of your aim in life. Awaken your mind to the abundance of possibility around you. Start to live with more zest. The human mind is the world’s largest filtering device. When used properly it filters out what you perceive as unimportant and gives you only the information you are looking for at that time. At this very moment, as we sit here in your living room, there are hundreds if not thousands of things going on that we are not paying any attention to. There is the sound of the lovers giggling as they stroll along the boardwalk, the goldfish in the tank behind you, the cool air being blown from the air conditioner and even the beat of my own heart. The moment I decide to concentrate on my heartbeat, I start to notice its rhythm and its qualities. Similarly, when you decide to start concentrating your mind on your life’s main aims, your mind starts to filter out the unimportant and focus only on the important.”

“To tell you the truth, I think it’s about time I discovered my purpose,” I said. “Don’t get me wrong, there are a lot of great things in my life. But it isn’t as rewarding as I think it could be. If I left this world today, I really can’t say for sure that I’ve made that big a difference.”

“How does that make you feel?”

“Depressed,” I offered with total honesty. “I know I have talent. Actually, I was one heck of a good artist when I was younger. That was until the legal profession beckoned with the promise of a more stable life.”

“Do you ever wish you had made painting your profession?”

“I really haven’t given it much thought. But I will say one thing. When I painted I was in Heaven.”

“It really fired you up, didn’t it?”

“Absolutely. I lost track of time when I was in the studio painting. I would get lost in the canvas. It was a real release for me. It was almost as if I transcended time and moved into another dimension.”

“John, this is the power of concentrating your mind on a pursuit that you love. Goethe said that ‘we are shaped and fashioned by what we love.’ Maybe

your Dharma is to brighten the world with lovely scenes. At least start spending a little time painting every day.”

“How about applying this philosophy to things less esoteric than changing my life?” I asked with a grin.

“This should be good.” Julian replied. “Like what?”

“Let’s say one of my aims, although a minor one, was to drop the spare tire I am carrying around my waist. Where would I start?”

“Don’t be embarrassed. You master the art of goal-setting — and goal getting — by starting off small.”

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step?” I asked intuitively.

“Precisely. And getting good at accomplishing little feats prepares you for realizing the big ones. So, to answer your question squarely, there is nothing wrong with mapping out a full range of smaller goals in the process of planning your bigger ones.”

Julian told me that the Sages of Sivana had created a five-step method to reach their objectives and fulfill the purposes of their lives. It was simple, practical and it worked. The first step was to form a clear mental image of the outcome. If this was to lose weight, Julian told me that every morning just after I woke up, I was to envision myself as a lean, fit person, full of vitality and boundless energy. The clearer this mental picture, the more effective the process would be. He said that the mind was the ultimate treasure house of power and this simple act of “picturing” my goal would open the gateway to the actualization of this desire. Step two was to get some positive pressure on myself.

“The main reason people do not follow through on any resolutions they make is that it is too easy to slip back into their old ways. Pressure is not always a bad thing. Pressure can inspire you to achieve great ends. People generally achieve magnificent things when their backs are up against the wall and they are forced to tap into the wellspring of human potential that lies within them.”

“How can I create this ‘positive pressure’ on myself?” I asked, now thinking about the possibilities of applying this method to everything from getting up earlier to being a more patient and loving father.

“There are a whole host of ways to do this. One of the best is the public pledge. Tell everyone you know that you will lose the excess weight or write that novel or whatever your goal might be. Once you make your goal known

to the world, there will instantly be pressure on you to work towards its fulfillment since no one likes to look like a failure. In Sivana, my teachers used more dramatic means to create this positive pressure I speak of. They would declare to one another that if they did not follow through on their commitments, such as fasting for a week or getting up daily at 4:00 a.m. to meditate, they would go down to the icy waterfall and stand under it until their arms and legs went numb. This is an extreme illustration of the power that pressure can exert on the building of good habits and the attainment of goals.”

“‘Extreme’ might be an understatement, Julian. What a bizarre ritual!”

“Extremely effective though. The point is simply that when you train your mind to associate pleasure with good habits and punishment with bad ones, your weaknesses will quickly fall by the wayside.”

“You said there were five steps to follow to make my desires come true,” I said impatiently. “What are the remaining three?”

“Yes, John. Step one is to have a clear vision of your outcome. Step two is to create positive pressure to keep you inspired. The third step is a simple one: never set a goal without attaching a timeline to it. To breathe life into a goal you must attach a precise deadline to it. It’s just like when you are preparing cases for court; you always focus your attention on the ones the judge has scheduled to be heard tomorrow rather than on the ones without any court date.

“Oh, and by the way,” explained Julian, “remember that a goal that is not committed to paper is no goal at all. Go out and buy a journal — a cheap coil notepad will do. Call this your Dream Book and fill it with all your desires, objectives and dreams. Get to know yourself and what you are all about.”

“Don’t I already know myself?”

“Most people don’t. They have never taken the time to know their strengths, their weaknesses, their hopes, their dreams. The Chinese define image in these terms: there are three mirrors that form a person’s reflection; the first is how you see yourself, the second is how others see you and the third mirror reflects the truth. Know yourself, John. Know the truth.

“Divide your Dream Book into separate sections for goals relating to the different areas of your life. For example you might have sections for your physical fitness goals, your financial goals, your personal empowerment goals, your relationship and social goals and, perhaps most importantly, your spiritual goals.”

“Hey, that sounds like fun! I’ve never thought about doing something as

creative as that for myself. I really should start challenging myself more.”

“I agree. Another particularly effective technique I learned is to fill your Dream Book with pictures of the things you desire and images of people who have cultivated the abilities, talents and qualities that you hope to emulate. Getting back to you and your ‘spare tire,’ if you want to lose weight and be in outstanding physical shape, paste a picture of a marathon runner or an elite athlete in your Dream Book. If you want to be the world’s finest husband, why not clip out a picture of someone who represents this — perhaps your father — and put it into your journal in the relationship section. If you are dreaming of a mansion by the sea or a sports car, find an inspiring picture of these objects and use them for your book of dreams. Then review this book daily, even for a few minutes. Make it your friend. The results will startle you.”

“This is pretty revolutionary stuff, Julian. I mean, though these ideas have been around for centuries, everybody I know today could improve the quality of their daily lives by applying even a few of them. My wife would love to have a Dream Book. She’d probably fill it with pictures of me without my notorious belly.”

“It’s really not that big,” Julian suggested in a consoling tone.

“Then why does Jenny call me Mr. Donut?” I said, breaking into a broad smile.

Julian started to laugh. I had to follow. Soon the two of us were howling on the floor.

“I guess if you can’t laugh at yourself who can you laugh at?” I said, still giggling.

“Very true, my friend. When I was chained to my former lifestyle, one of my main problems was that I took life too seriously. Now I am much more playful and childlike. I enjoy all of life’s gifts, no matter how small they are.

“But I have digressed. I have so much to tell you and it is all flowing out of me at once. Back to the five-step method to attain your aims and realize your goals. Once you have formed a clear mental picture of your outcome, created a little pressure behind it, set a deadline and committed it to paper, the next step is to apply what Yogi Raman called the Magic Rule of 21. The learned men and women of his world believed that, for new behavior to crystallize into a habit, one had to perform the new activity for twenty-one days in a row.”

“What’s so special about twenty-one days?”

“The sages were absolute masters of creating new, more rewarding habits that governed the conduct of their lives. Yogi Raman once told me that a bad habit once acquired could never be erased.”

“But all evening you have been inspiring me to change the way I live my life. How can I possibly do this if I can never erase any of my bad habits?”

“I said that bad habits can never be erased. I did not say that negative habits could not be replaced,” Julian noted with precision.

“Oh, Julian, you always were the King of Semantics. But I think I see your point.”

“The only way to permanently install a new habit is to direct so much energy toward it that the old one slips away like an unwelcome house guest. The installation is generally complete in about twenty-one days, the time it takes to create a new neural pathway.”

“Say I wanted to start practicing the Heart of the Rose technique to erase the worry habit and live at a more peaceful pace. Do I have to do it at the same time every day?”

“Good question. The first thing I will tell you is that you never *have* to do anything. Everything I am sharing with you tonight I am offering as a friend who is genuinely interested in your growth and development. Every strategy, tool and technique has been tested over time for effectiveness and measurable results. This I assure you. And though my heart tells me that I should implore you to try all of the methods of the sages, my conscience tells me to simply follow my duty and share the wisdom with you, leaving its implementation up to you. My point is this: never do anything because you have to. The only reason to do something is because you want to and because you know it is the right thing for you to do.”

“Sounds reasonable, Julian. Don’t worry, I haven’t felt for even a moment that you were forcing any of this information down my throat. Anyway, the only thing that could ever be forced down my throat these days would be a box of donuts — and that wouldn’t take much,” I quipped.

Julian smiled gingerly. “Thanks pal. Now to answer your question, my suggestion is that you try the Heart of the Rose method at the same time every day and in the same place, every day. There is tremendous power in a ritual. Sports stars who eat the same meal or tie their shoes the same way before the big game are tapping into the power of ritual. Members of a church who perform the same rites, wear the same robes, are using the power of ritual. Even business people who walk the same route or talk the same talk before a big presentation are applying the power of ritual. You see, when you insert

any activity into your routine by doing it the same way at the same time every day, it quickly grows into a habit.

“For example, most people will do the same thing upon waking up, without giving any thought to what they are doing. They open their eyes, get out of bed, walk to the bathroom and start brushing their teeth. So, staying with your goal for a period of twenty-one days, and performing the new activity at the same time for each of these days, will insert it into your routine. Soon you will be performing the new habit, whether it is meditation, getting up earlier or reading for an hour every day, with the same ease that you feel while brushing your teeth.”

“The final step for attaining goals and advancing along the path of purpose?”

“The final step in the sages’ method is one that is equally applicable as you advance along the path of your life.”

“My cup is still empty,” I said respectfully.

“Enjoy the process. The Sages of Sivana often spoke of this philosophy. They truly believed that a day without laughter or a day without love was a day without life.”

“I’m not sure I follow you.”

“All I’m saying is make sure that you have fun while you are advancing along the path of your goals and purpose. Never forget the importance of living with unbridled exhilaration. Never neglect to see the exquisite beauty in all living things. Today and this very moment that you and I are sharing is a gift. Remain spirited, joyful and curious. Stay focused on your lifework and on giving selfless service to others. The universe will take care of everything else. This is one of nature’s truest laws.”

“And never regret what has happened in the past?”

“Exactly. There is no chaos in this universe. There is a purpose for everything that has ever happened to you, and everything that will happen to you. Remember what I told you, John. Every experience offers lessons. So stop majoring in minor things. Enjoy your life.”

“Is that it?”

“I still have much wisdom to share with you. Are you tired?”

“Not in the least. Actually, I feel pretty pumped up. You are quite the motivator, Julian. Have you ever thought about an infomercial?” I asked mischievously.

“I don’t understand,” he replied gently.

“Never mind. Just one of my feeble attempts at humor.”

“Okay. Before we move along with Yogi Raman’s fable, there is one last point about reaching your goals and your dreams that I would like to impress on you.”

“Go for it.”

“There is one word that the sages spoke of in almost reverential terms.”

“Do tell.”

“This simple word seemed to carry a depth of meaning for them and it peppered their daily talk. The word I am speaking of is *passion*, and it is a word you must constantly keep at the forefront of your mind as you follow your mission and attain your goals. A burning sense of passion is the most potent fuel for your dreams. Here in our society, we have lost our passion. We do not do things because we love to do them. We do things because we feel we have to do them. This is a formula for misery. And I am not speaking of romantic passion, although this is another ingredient for a successful, inspired existence. What I am talking about is a passion for life. Reclaim the joy of waking up every morning full of energy and exhilaration. Breathe the fire of passion into all that you do. You will quickly reap great material, as well as spiritual, rewards.”

“You make it sound so easy.”

“It is. From tonight onwards, take complete control of your life. Decide, once and for all, to be the master of your fate. Run your own race. Discover your calling and you will start to experience the ecstasy of an inspired life. Finally, always remember that what lies behind you and what lies in front of you is nothing when compared to what lies within you.”

“Thanks Julian. I really needed to hear this. I never realized all that was lacking in my life until tonight. I have been wandering aimlessly through it, lacking a real purpose. Things are going to change. I promise you. I am grateful for this.”

“You’re welcome, my friend. I’m simply fulfilling *my* purpose.”

Chapter 8 Action Summary ¥ Julian Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Symbol



The Virtue

Follow Your Purpose

The Wisdom

- The purpose of life is a life of purpose
- Discovering and then realizing your lifework brings lasting fulfillment
- Set clearly defined personal, professional and spiritual goals, and then have the courage to act on them

The Techniques

- The Power of Self-Examination
- The 5 Step Method for Attaining Goals

Quotable Quote

Never forget the importance of living with unbridled exhilaration. Never neglect to see the exquisite beauty in all living things. Today, and this very moment, is a gift. Stay focused on your purpose. The Universe will take care of everything else.

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

CHAPTER NINE



The Ancient Art of Self-Leadership

Good people strengthen themselves ceaselessly.

Confucius

“Time is passing quickly,” said Julian before pouring himself another cup of tea. “The morning will soon be upon us. Do you want me to continue or have you had enough for one night?”

There was no way that I was going to let this man, who held such gems of wisdom within his grasp, stop without completing his story. At the outset, his tale seemed fantastic. But as I listened to him, as I absorbed the ageless philosophy that had been bestowed upon him, I came to believe deeply in what he was saying. These were not the superficial self-serving ruminations of some two-bit huckster. Julian was the real thing. He clearly walked his talk. And his message rang true. I trusted him.

“Please continue, Julian, I have all the time in the world. The kids are sleeping at their grandparents’ house tonight, and Jenny won’t be up for hours.”

Sensing my sincerity, he continued with the symbolic fable that Yogi Raman had offered him to illustrate his wisdom on cultivating a richer, more radiant life.

“I have told you that the garden represents the fertile garden of your mind, a garden that is filled with delightful treasures and boundless riches. I have also spoken of the lighthouse and how it represents the power of goals and the importance of discovering your calling in life. You will recall that as the fable continues, the door of the lighthouse slowly opens and out walks a nine-foot-tall, nine-hundred-pound Japanese sumo wrestler.”

“Sounds like a bad Godzilla movie.”

“I used to love those when I was a kid.”

“Me too. But don’t let me distract you,” I replied.

“The sumo wrestler represents a very important element in the life-changing system of the Sages of Sivana. Yogi Raman told me that many centuries ago in the ancient East, the great teachers developed and refined a philosophy called *kaizen*. This Japanese word means constant and never-ending improvement. And it’s the personal trademark of every man and woman who is living a soaring, fully awakened existence.”

“How did the concept of *kaizen* enrich the lives of the sages?” I asked.

“As I mentioned earlier, John, success on the outside begins with success on the inside. If you really want to improve your outer world, whether this means your health, your relationships or your finances, you must first improve your inner world. The most effective way to do this is through the practice of continuous self-improvement. Self-mastery is the DNA of life mastery.”

“Julian, I hope you don’t mind me saying it, but all this talk about one’s ‘inner world’ sounds more than a little esoteric to me. Remember, I’m just a middle-class lawyer from the leafy suburbs with a minivan sitting in the driveway and a Lawn-Boy in the garage.

“Look. Everything you have told me so far makes sense. As a matter of fact, much of what you have shared with me appears to be common sense, although I know that common sense is anything but common in this day and age. I must tell you though, I’m having a little difficulty with this notion of *kaizen* and improving my inner world. What exactly are we talking about here?”

Julian was agile in his response. “In our society, we all too often label the ignorant as weak. However, those who express their lack of knowledge and seek instruction find the path to enlightenment before anyone else. Your questions are honest and show me that you are open to fresh ideas. Change is the most powerful force in our society today. Most people fear it, the wise embrace it. Zen tradition speaks of a beginner’s mind: those who keep their minds open to new concepts — *those whose cups are always empty* — will always move to higher levels of achievement and fulfillment. Never be reluctant to ask even the most basic of questions. Questions are the most effective method of eliciting knowledge.”

“Thanks. But I still am unclear about *kaizen*.”

“When I speak of improving your inner world, I am simply speaking of self-improvement and personal expansion and it is the best thing you can do

for yourself. You might think that you are too busy to spend time working on yourself. This would be a very big mistake. You see, when you have taken the time to build a strong character full of discipline, energy, power and optimism, you can have anything and do anything you want in your outer world. When you have cultivated a deep sense of faith in your abilities and an indomitable spirit, nothing can stop you from succeeding in all your pursuits and living with great rewards. Taking the time to master your mind, to care for the body and to nourish your soul will put you in a position to develop more richness and vitality in your life. It is as Epictetus said so many years ago: ‘No man is free who is not a master of himself.’”

“So *kaizen* is actually a very practical concept.”

“Very. Think about it, John. How could a person possibly lead a corporation if he cannot even lead himself? How could you nurture a family if you haven’t learned to nurture and care for yourself? How could you possibly do good if you don’t even feel good? Do you see my point?”

I nodded in full agreement. This was the first time I had given any serious thought to the importance of improving myself. I had always thought that all those people I would see on the subway reading books with titles like *The Power of Positive Thinking* or *MegaLiving!* were troubled souls desperate for some form of medicine to get them back on course. Now I realized that those who took the time to strengthen themselves were the strongest and that it was only through improving one’s self that one could ever hope to improve the lot of others. I then started to reflect on all the things I could improve. I really could use the added energy and good health that exercising would surely bring. Ridding myself of my nasty temper and my habit of interrupting others might do wonders for my relationship with my wife and kids. And erasing my worry habit would give me the peace of mind and deep happiness I had been searching for. The more I thought about it, the more potential improvements I saw.

As I started to see all the positive things that would flood into my life through the cultivation of good habits, I grew excited. But I realized that Julian was talking about far more than the importance of daily exercise, a healthy diet and a balanced lifestyle. What he had learned in the Himalayas was deeper and more meaningful than this. He spoke of the importance of building strength of character, developing mental toughness and living with courage. He told me that these three attributes would lead one not only to a virtuous life but to a life filled with achievement, satisfaction and inner peace. Courage was a quality everyone could cultivate and one that would pay huge dividends over the long run.

“What does courage have to do with self-leadership and personal development?” I wondered aloud.

“Courage allows you to run your own race. Courage allows you to do whatever you want to do because you know that it is right. Courage gives you the self-control to persist where others have failed. Ultimately, the degree of courage you live with determines the amount of fulfillment you receive. It allows you to truly realize all the exquisite wonders of the epic that is your life. And those who master themselves have an abundance of courage.”

“Okay. I am starting to understand the power of working on myself. Where do I start?”

Julian returned to his conversation with Yogi Raman high atop the mountains, on what he remembered as a remarkably starry and gloriously beautiful night.

“Initially, I too had trouble with the notion of self-improvement. After all, I was a tough, Harvard-trained legal gunslinger who had no time for New Age theories forced on me by what I thought were people with bad haircuts who hung out at airports. I was wrong. It was this closed-mindedness that was holding my life back all of those years. The more I listened to Yogi Raman and the more I reflected on the pain and suffering of my former world, the more I welcomed the philosophy of *kaizen*, constant and never-ending enrichment of the mind, body and soul, into my new life,” Julian asserted.

“Why am I hearing so much about the ‘mind, body and soul’ these days? It seems I can’t even turn on the tube without someone making mention of it.”

“This is the trilogy of your human endowments. To improve your mind without the cultivation of your physical gifts would be a very hollow victory. Elevating your mind and body to their highest level without nurturing your soul would leave you feeling very empty and unfulfilled. But when you dedicate your energies to unlocking the full potential of all three of your human endowments, you will taste the divine ecstasy of an enlightened life.”

“You’ve got me pretty excited, pal.”

“As to your question about where to start, I promise that I will give you a number of ancient yet powerful techniques in a few moments. But first I must share a practical illustration with you. Get into push-up position.”

‘Good grief, Julian’s become a drill sergeant,’ I silently thought. Being curious and wishing to keep my cup empty, I complied.

“Now do as many push-ups as you can possibly do. Don’t stop until you truly are certain that you cannot do any more.”

I struggled with the exercise, my two-hundred-and-fifteen-pound frame not being used to much more than walking to the nearest McDonald's with my kids or meandering through a round of golf with my law partners. The first fifteen push-ups were pure agony. With the heat of that summer evening adding to my discomfort, I started to sweat profusely. However, I was determined not to show any signs of weakness and carried on until my vanity started to give way along with my arms. At twenty-three push-ups I gave up.

"No more, Julian. This is killing me. What are you trying to do here?"

"Are you certain that you can't do any more?"

"I'm sure. C'mon, give me a break. The only lesson I'm going to learn from this is what to do for a heart attack."

"Do ten more. Then you can rest," commanded Julian.

"You've got to be kidding!"

But I continued. One. Two. Five. Eight. And finally ten. I lay on the floor in total exhaustion.

"I went through precisely the same experience with Yogi Raman the night he shared his special fable with me," said Julian. "He told me that pain was a great teacher."

"What could anyone possibly learn from an experience like this?" I asked breathlessly.

"Yogi Raman, and all of the Sages of Sivana for that matter, believed that people grow the most when they enter the Zone of the Unknown."

"Okay. But what does that have to do with making me do all those push-ups?"

"You told me after you had done twenty-three that you couldn't do any more. You told me that this was your absolute limit. Yet, when I challenged you to do more, you responded with another ten push-ups. You had more inside you and when you reached for your resources, you received more. Yogi Raman explained a fundamental truth to me while I was his student: '*The only limits on your life are those that you set yourself.*' When you dare to get out of your circle of comfort and explore the unknown, you start to liberate your true human potential. This is the first step towards self-mastery and mastery over every other circumstance in your life. When you push beyond your limits, just as you did in this little demonstration, you unlock mental and physical reserves that you never thought you had."

'Fascinating,' I thought. Come to think of it, I had recently read in a book

that the average person uses only a minute measure of his human capacity. I wondered what we could do if we started using the remaining reservoir of our abilities.

Julian sensed he was on a roll.

“You practice the art of *kaizen* by pushing yourself daily. Work hard to improve your mind and body. Nourish your spirit. Do the things you fear. Start to live with unbridled energy and limitless enthusiasm. Watch the sun rise. Dance in a rain shower. Be the person you dream of being. Do the things you have always wanted to do but didn’t because you tricked yourself into believing that you were too young, too old, too rich or too poor. Prepare to live a soaring, fully alive life. In the East they say that *luck* favors the prepared mind. I believe that *life* favors the prepared mind.”

Julian continued his passionate discourse. “Identify the things that are holding you back. Are you scared of speaking or do you have trouble in your relationships? Do you lack a positive attitude or do you need more energy? Make a written inventory of your weaknesses. Satisfied people are far more thoughtful than others. Take the time to reflect on what it is that might be keeping you from the life you really want and know deep down you can have. Once you have identified what your weaknesses are, the next step is to face them head on and attack your fears. If you fear public speaking, sign up to give twenty speeches. If you fear starting a new business or getting out of a dissatisfying relationship, muster every ounce of your inner resolve and do it. This might be the first taste of real freedom that you have experienced in years. Fear is nothing more than a mental monster you have created, a negative stream of consciousness.”

“Fear is nothing more than a negative stream of consciousness? I like that. You mean all my fears are nothing more than imaginary little gremlins that have crept into my mind over the years?”

“Exactly, John. Every time they have prevented you from taking some action, you have added fuel to their fire. But when you conquer your fears, you conquer your life.”

“I need an example.”

“Sure. Let’s take public speaking, an activity most people fear more than death itself. When I was a litigator, I actually saw lawyers who were scared of stepping into court. They would do anything, including settling their client’s otherwise worthy cases just to avoid the pain of getting up on their feet inside a packed courtroom.”

“I’ve seen them too.”

“Do you actually think that they were born with this fear?”

“I sure hope not.”

“Study a baby. She has no limits. Her mind is a lush landscape of potential and possibility. Properly cultivated, it will lead her to greatness. Filled with negativity, it will lead her to mediocrity, at best. What I am saying is this: no experience, whether it is public speaking or asking your boss for a raise or swimming in a sun-soaked lake or walking along the beach on a moonlit night, is inherently painful or pleasant. It is your thinking that makes it so.”

“Interesting.”

“A baby could be trained to view a glorious sunny day as depressing. A child could be trained to see a puppy as a vicious animal. An adult could be trained to see a drug as a pleasant vehicle for release. It’s all a matter of conditioning, isn’t it?”

“Sure.”

“The same holds true of fear. Fear is a conditioned response: a life-sucking habit that can easily consume your energy, creativity and spirit if you are not careful. When fear rears its ugly head, beat it down quickly. The best way to do that is to do the thing you fear. Understand the anatomy of fear. It is your own creation. Like any other creation, it is just as easy to tear it down as it is to erect it. Methodically search for and then destroy every fear that has secretly slid into the fortress of your mind. This alone will give you enormous confidence, happiness and peace of mind.”

“Can a person’s mind actually be fully fearless?” I asked.

“Great question. The answer is an unequivocal and emphatic ‘Yes!’ Each and every one of the Sages of Sivana was absolutely fearless. You could see it in the way they walked. You could see it in the way they talked. You could see it when you looked deep into their eyes and I’ll tell you something else, John.”

“What?” I asked, fascinated by what I was hearing.

“I too am fearless. I know myself and I have come to see that my natural state is one of indomitable strength and unlimited potential. It was just that I was blocked by all those years of self-neglect and unbalanced thinking. I’ll tell you another thing. When you erase fear from your mind, you start to look younger and your health becomes more vibrant.”

“Ah, the old mind-body connection,” I replied, hoping to mask my ignorance.

“Yes. The sages of the East have known about it for over five thousand

years. Hardly ‘New Age,’” he said, with a broad grin lighting up his radiant face.

“The sages shared another powerful principle with me that I think about often. I think it will be invaluable to you as you walk the path of self-leadership and personal mastery. It has given me motivation at times when I feel like taking things easy. The philosophy can be stated succinctly: what sets highly actualized people apart from those who never live inspired lives is that they do those things that less developed people don’t like doing — even though they might not like doing them either.

“Truly enlightened people, those who experience deep happiness daily, are prepared to put off short-term pleasure for the sake of long-term fulfillment. So they tackle their weaknesses and fears head on, even if dipping into the zone of the unknown brings with it a measure of discomfort. They resolve to live by the wisdom of *kaizen*, improving every aspect of themselves ceaselessly and continuously. With time, things that were once difficult become easy. Fears that once prevented them from all the happiness, health and prosperity they deserved fall to the wayside like stickmen toppled by a hurricane.”

“So you’re suggesting that I must change myself before I change my life?”

“Yes. It’s like that old story my favorite professor told me when I was in law school. One night a father was relaxing with his newspaper after a long day at the office. His son, who wanted to play, kept on pestering him. Finally, fed up, the father ripped out a picture of the globe that was in the paper and tore it into a hundred tiny pieces. ‘Here, son, go ahead and try to put this back together,’ he said, hoping that this would keep the little boy busy long enough for him to finish reading his paper. To his amazement, his son returned after only one minute with the globe perfectly back together. When the startled father asked how he achieved this feat, the son smiled gently and replied, ‘Dad, on the other side of the globe there was a picture of a person, and once I got the person together, the world was okay.’”

“That’s a great story.”

“You see, John, the wisest people I have ever met, from the Sages of Sivana to my professors at Harvard Law School, all seem to know the key formula for happiness.”

“Do continue,” I said with a hint of impatience.

“It’s precisely what I said earlier: happiness comes through the progressive realization of a worthy objective. When you are doing what you

truly love to do you are bound to find deep contentment.”

“If happiness comes to everyone who simply does what they love doing, why are so many people miserable?”

“Fair point, John. Doing what you love, whether this means giving up the work you are presently doing to become an actor or spending less time on those things that are less important to make time for those things that are more meaningful, requires a great deal of courage. It requires you to step out of your comfort zone. And change is always a little uncomfortable at first. It is also more than a little risky. Having said this, this is the surest way to design a more joyful life.”

“Exactly how does one go about building courage?”

“It’s the same as the story: once you get yourself together, your world will be okay. Once you master your mind, body and character, happiness and abundance will flow into your life almost magically. But you must spend some time daily working on yourself, even if for only ten or fifteen minutes.”

“And what does the nine-foot-tall, nine-hundred-pound Japanese sumo wrestler symbolize in Yogi Raman’s fable?”

“Our hefty friend will be your constant reminder of the power of *kaizen*, the Japanese word for constant self-expansion and progress.”

In just a few hours, Julian had revealed the most powerful — and the most astonishing — information that I had ever heard in my lifetime. I had learned of the magic in my own mind and its treasure trove of potential. I had learned highly practical techniques to still the mind and focus its power on my desires and dreams. I had learned the importance of having a definite purpose in life and of setting clear goals in every aspect of my personal, professional and spiritual world. Now I had been exposed to the ageless principle of self-mastery: *kaizen*.

“How can I practice the art of *kaizen*?”

“I will give you ten ancient yet supremely effective rituals that will lead you far along the path of personal mastery. If you apply them on a daily basis, with faith in their utility, you will observe remarkable results in just one month from today. If you continue to apply them, incorporating the techniques into your routine such that they become habits, you are bound to reach a state of perfect health, limitless energy, lasting happiness and peace of mind. Ultimately, you will reach your divine destiny — for this is your birthright.

“Yogi Raman offered the ten rituals to me with great faith in what he

termed their ‘exquisiteness’ and I think you will agree that I am living proof of their power. I simply ask that you listen to what I have to say and judge the results for yourself.”

“Life-changing results in only thirty days?” I asked in disbelief.

“Yes. The *quid pro quo* is that you must set aside at least one hour a day for thirty consecutive days to practice the strategies I am about to offer to you. This investment in yourself is all it takes. And please don’t tell me that you don’t have the time.”

“But I don’t,” I said honestly. “My practice is really booming. I don’t have ten minutes to myself, let alone a full hour, Julian.”

“As I told you, saying that you do not have the time to improve yourself, whether this means improving your mind or nourishing your spirit, is much like saying you do not have time to stop for gas because you are too busy driving. Eventually it will catch up with you.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

“How so?”

“Let me put it this way. You are very much like a high-performance race car worth millions of dollars; a well-oiled, highly sophisticated machine.”

“Why, thank you, Julian.”

“Your mind is the greatest wonder of the universe and your body has the capacity to perform feats that might astonish you.”

“Agreed.”

“Knowing the value of this high performance multi-million-dollar machine, would it be wise to run it full out every minute of every day without taking a pit-stop to let the motor cool down?”

“Of course not.”

“Well then, why are you not taking some time every day for your personal pit-stop or rest break? Why are you not taking the time to cool down the high performance engine of your mind? Do you see my point? Taking the time to renew yourself is the most important thing you can do. Ironically, taking time out from your hectic schedule for self-improvement and personal enrichment will dramatically improve your effectiveness once you get back into it.”

“One hour a day for thirty days is all it takes?”

“It’s the magic formula I was always searching for. I would probably have

paid a couple of million dollars for it in my old glory days, if I had understood its importance. Little did I know that it was free, as is all priceless knowledge. Having said this, you must be disciplined and apply the strategies that make up the formula daily, with utter conviction in their value.”

“This is not a quick-fix type deal. Once you are in, you are in it for the long term.”

“What do you mean?”

“Spending one hour a day tending to yourself will surely give you dramatic results in thirty days — provided you do the right things. It takes about one month to fully install a new habit. After this period, the strategies and techniques you will learn will fit like a second skin. The key is that you must keep on practicing them every day if you want to keep on seeing the results.”

“Fair enough,” I agreed. Julian clearly had unlocked a wellspring of personal vitality and inner serenity in his own life. Actually, his transformation from a sickly old litigator to a radiant, energetic philosopher was nothing less than miraculous. At that moment I resolved to dedicate one hour a day to implementing the techniques and principles I was about to hear. I decided to work on improving myself before working to change others, as had been my habit. Maybe I too could undergo a “Mantle-like” transformation. It was surely worth a try.

That night, sitting on the floor of my cluttered living room, I learned what Julian called the “Ten Rituals of Radiant Living.” Some of them required a little concentrated effort on my part. Others could be performed effortlessly. All were intriguing and rich with the promise of extraordinary things to come.

“The first strategy was known to the sages as the Ritual of Solitude. This involves nothing more than ensuring that your daily schedule includes a mandatory period of peace.”

“Just what is a period of peace?”

“It is a period of time, as little as fifteen minutes or as much as fifty, wherein you explore the healing power of silence and come to know who you really are,” Julian explained.

“Sort of a rest break for that overheated engine of mine?” I suggested with a slight smile.

“That’s a pretty accurate way of looking at it. Have you ever been on a long road trip with your family?”

“Sure. Every summer we drive down to the islands to spend a couple of

weeks with Jenny's parents."

"Okay. Do you ever make pit-stops along the way?"

"Yes. For food, or if I'm feeling a little sleepy I'll take a quick nap after having listened to my kids fight in the back seat for six hours."

"Well, think of the Ritual of Solitude as a pit-stop for the soul. Its purpose is self-renewal and this is accomplished by spending time alone, immersed in the beautiful blanket of silence."

"What is so special about silence?"

"Good question. Solitude and quiet connect you to your creative source and releases the limitless intelligence of the universe. You see, John, the mind is like a lake. In our chaotic world, most people's minds are not still. We are full of inner turbulence. However, by simply taking the time to be still and quiet every day, the lake of the mind becomes as smooth as a plate of glass. This inner quietness brings with it a wealth of benefits including a deep sense of well-being, inner peace and boundless energy. You will even sleep better and enjoy a renewed feeling of balance in your day-to-day activities."

"Where should I go for this period of peace?"

"Theoretically, you could do it anywhere, from your bedroom to your office. The key is to find a place of true quiet — and beauty."

"How does beauty fit into the equation?"

"Beautiful images soothe a ruffled soul," Julian observed with a deep sigh. "A bouquet of roses or a simple, solitary daffodil will have a highly salutary effect on your senses and relax you no end. Ideally, you should savor such beauty in a space that will serve as a Sanctuary of the Self."

"What's that?"

"Basically, it is a place that will become your secret forum for mental and spiritual expansion. This might be a spare room in your house or simply a peaceful corner of a small apartment. The point is to reserve a spot for your renewal activities, a place that sits there quietly awaiting your arrival."

"I love the sound of that. I think having a silent place to go to when I come home from work would make a world of difference. I could decompress for a while and let go of the stresses of the day. It would probably make me a much nicer person to be around."

"That brings up another important point. The Ritual of Solitude works best when you practice it at the same time every day."

"Why?"

“Because then it becomes integrated into your routine as a ritual. By practicing it at the same time every day, a daily dose of silence will soon become a habit that you will never neglect. And positive life habits inevitably guide you to your destiny.”

“Anything else?”

“Yes. If at all possible, commune with nature daily. A quick walk through the woods or even a few minutes spent cultivating your tomato garden in the backyard will reconnect you to the wellspring of calm that may now be dormant within you. Being with nature also allows you to tune in to the infinite wisdom of your highest self. This self-knowledge will move you into the uncharted dimensions of your personal power. Never forget this,” advised Julian, his voice rising with passion.

“Has this ritual worked well for you, Julian?”

“Absolutely. I rise with the sun and the first thing I do is head off to my secret sanctuary. There I explore the Heart of the Rose for as long as need be. Some days I spend hours in quiet contemplation. On other days I spend only ten minutes. The result is more or less the same: a deep sense of inner harmony and an abundance of physical energy. Which brings me to the second ritual. This is the Ritual of Physicality.”

“Sounds interesting. What’s it about?”

“It’s about the power of physical care.”

“Huh?”

“It’s simple. The Ritual of Physicality is based on the principle that says as you care for the body so you care for the mind. As you prepare your body, so you prepare your mind. As you train your body, so you train your mind. Take some time every single day to nourish the temple of your body through vigorous exercise. Get your blood circulating and your body moving. Did you know that there are 168 hours in a week?”

“No, not really.”

“It’s true. At least five of those hours should be invested in some form of physical activity. The Sages of Sivana practiced the ancient discipline of yoga to awaken their physical potential and live a strong, dynamic existence. It was an extraordinary sight to see these marvellous physical specimens who had managed to age-proof their lives standing on their heads in the center of their village!”

“Have you tried yoga, Julian? Jenny started practicing it last summer and says it has added five years to her life.”

“There is no one strategy that will magically transform your life, John, let me be the first to say this. Lasting and profound change comes through the continued application of a number of the methods I have shared with you. But yoga is an extremely effective way to unlock your reserves of vitality. I do my yoga every morning and it is one of the best things that I do for myself. It not only rejuvenates my body, it completely focuses my mind. It has even unblocked my creativity. It is a terrific discipline.”

“Did the sages do anything else to care for their bodies?”

“Yogi Raman and his brothers and sisters also believed that vigorous walking in natural surroundings, whether high on the mountain paths or deep in the lush forests, worked wonders for relieving fatigue and restoring the body to its natural state of vibrancy. When the weather was too harsh to walk, they would exercise within the security of their huts. They might miss a meal but they would never miss their daily round of exercise.”

“What did they have in their huts? NordicTrack machines?” I quipped.

“Not quite. Sometimes they would practice yoga postures. Other times I would catch a glimpse of them doing a set or two of one-handed push-ups. I really think it didn’t matter too much to them what they did, so long as they moved their bodies and got the fresh air of their breathtaking surroundings flowing through their lungs.”

“What does breathing fresh air have to do with anything?”

“I’ll answer your question with one of Yogi Raman’s favorite sayings, ‘To breathe properly is to live properly.’”

“Breathing is that important?” I asked in surprise.

“Quite early on in Sivana, the sages taught me that the fastest way to double or even triple the amount of energy I had was to learn the art of effective breathing.”

“But don’t we all know how to breathe, even a newborn baby?”

“Not really, John. While most of us know how to breathe to survive, we have never learned how to breathe to thrive. Most of us breathe far too shallowly and in so doing, we fail to take in enough oxygen to run the body at an optimal level.”

“Sounds like proper breathing involves a lot of science.”

“It does. And the sages treated it that way. Their philosophy was simple: take in more oxygen through efficient breathing and you liberate your energy reserves along with your natural state of vitality.”

“Okay, so where do I start?”

“It’s actually pretty easy. Two or three times a day take a minute or two to think about breathing more deeply and effectively.”

“How do I know if I’m breathing effectively?”

“Well, your belly should move out slightly. This indicates that you are breathing from the abdomen, which is good. A trick that Yogi Raman taught me was to cup my hands over my stomach. If they moved out as I inhaled, my breathing technique was proper.”

“Very interesting.”

“If you like that, then you will love the Third Ritual of Radiant Living,” said Julian.

“Which is?”

“The Ritual of Live Nourishment. In my days as a litigator, I lived off of a steady diet of steaks, fries and other types of junk food. Sure I ate at the finest restaurants in the country, but I still filled my body with junk. I didn’t know it at the time, but this was one of the main sources of my discontent.”

“Really?”

“Yes. A poor diet has a pronounced effect on your life. It drains your mental and physical energy. It affects your moods and it hampers the clarity of your mind. Yogi Raman put it this way: ‘As you nourish your body, so you nourish your mind.’”

“I assume then that you changed your diet?”

“Radically. And it made an amazing difference in the way I felt and looked. I always thought that I was so run down because of the stresses and strains of my work and because the wrinkled fingers of old age were reaching out for me. In Sivana, I learned that much of my lethargy was due to the low-octane fuel I was pumping into my body.”

“What did the Sages of Sivana eat to stay so youthful and bright?”

“Live foods,” came the efficient reply.

“Huh?”

“Live foods are the answer. Live foods are foods that are not dead.”

“C’mon, Julian. What are live foods?” I asked impatiently.

“Basically, live foods are those that are created through the natural interaction of the sun, air, soil and water. What I’m talking about here is a

vegetarian diet. Fill your plate with fresh vegetables, fruits and grains and you might just live forever.”

“Is that possible?”

“Most of the sages were well over one hundred and they showed no signs of slowing down, and just last week I read in the paper about a group of people living on the tiny island of Okinawa in the East China Sea. Researchers are flocking to the island because they are fascinated by the fact that it holds the largest concentration of centenarians in the world.”

“What have they learned?”

“That a vegetarian diet is one of their main longevity secrets.”

“But is this type of diet healthy? You wouldn’t think that it would give you much strength. Remember, I’m still a busy litigator, Julian.”

“This is the diet that nature intended. It is alive, vital and supremely healthy. The sages have lived by this diet for many thousands of years. They call it a *sattvic*, or pure diet. And as to your concern about strength, the most powerful animals on the planet, ranging from gorillas to elephants, wear the badge of proud vegetarians. Did you know that a gorilla has about thirty times the strength of a man?”

“Thanks for that important tidbit of information.”

“Look, the sages are not extreme people. All of their wisdom was based on the ageless principle that ‘one must live a life of moderation and do nothing to extremes.’ So if you like meat, you can certainly keep eating it. Just remember that you are ingesting dead food. If you can, cut back on the amount of red meat that you eat. It is really hard to digest and since your digestive system is one of the most energy-consuming processes of your entire body, valuable energy reserves are needlessly depleted by this foodstuff. Do you see what I’m getting at? Just compare how you feel after eating a steak with your energy levels after eating a salad. If you don’t want to become a strict vegetarian, at least start having a salad with every meal and fruit for dessert. Even this will make a huge difference in the quality of your physical life.”

“That doesn’t seem like it would be too hard to do,” I replied. “I’ve been hearing a lot about the power of a largely vegetarian diet. Just last week, Jenny told me about a study in Finland where it was found that thirty-eight percent of new vegetarians studied reported that they felt far less tired and much more alert after only seven months of this new way of life. I should try eating a salad with every meal. Looking at you, Julian, I might even make the salad the meal.”

“Try it for about a month and judge the results for yourself. You will feel phenomenal.”

“Okay. If it’s good enough for the sages, it’s good enough for me. I promise you I will give it a shot. It doesn’t sound like too much of a stretch, and anyway I’m getting pretty tired of firing up the barbeque every night.”

“If I have sold you on the Ritual of Live Nourishment, I think you will love the fourth one.”

“Your student is still holding his empty cup.”

“The fourth ritual is known as the Ritual of Abundant Knowledge. It centers on the whole notion of lifelong learning and expanding your knowledge base for the good of yourself and all those around you.”

“The old ‘knowledge is power’ idea?”

“It involves far more than that, John. Knowledge is only *potential* power. For the power to be manifested, it must be applied. Most people know what they should do in any given situation, or in their lives for that matter. The problem is that they don’t take daily, consistent action to apply the knowledge and realize their dreams. The Ritual of Abundant Knowledge is all about becoming a student of life. Even more importantly, it requires that you use what you have learned in the classroom of your existence.”

“What did Yogi Raman and the other sages do to live this ritual?”

“They had many sub-rituals that they performed on a daily basis as a tribute to the Ritual of Abundant Knowledge. One of the most important strategies is also one of the easiest. You can even start doing it today.”

“It won’t take up too much time, will it?”

Julian smiled. “These techniques, tools and tips I am sharing with you will make you more productive and effective than you have ever been. Don’t be penny-wise, pound-foolish.

“Consider those who say that they do not have the time to back up their computers because they are too busy working on them. Yet, when those machines crash and months of important work is lost, they regret not investing a few moments a day in saving it. Do you see my point?”

“Get my priorities straight?”

“Exactly. Try not to live your life bound by the shackles of your schedule. Instead, focus on those things that your conscience and your heart tell you to do. When you invest in yourself and start to devote yourself to raising your mind, body and character to their highest levels, you will almost feel as if you

have a personal navigator inside you, telling you which things you must do to see the greatest and most rewarding results. You will stop worrying about your clock and start living your life.”

“Point well taken. So what was that simple sub-ritual you were about to teach me?” I asked.

“Read regularly. Reading for thirty minutes a day will do wonders for you. But I must caution you. Do not read just anything. You must be very selective about what you put into the lush garden of your mind. It must be immensely nourishing. Make it something that will improve both you and the quality of your life.”

“What did the sages read?”

“They spent many of their waking moments reading and rereading the ancient teachings of their ancestors. They devoured this philosophical literature. I still remember seeing these wonderful-looking people seated on little bamboo chairs reading their strangely bound books with the subtle smiles of enlightenment unfolding across their lips. It was in Sivana that I really learned the power of the book and the principle that a book is the best friend of the wise.”

“So I should start reading every good book I can get my hands on?”

“Yes and no,” came the reply. “I would never tell you not to read as many books as you can. But remember, some books are meant to be tasted, some books are meant to be chewed and, finally, some books are meant to be swallowed whole. Which brings me to another point.”

“You’re feeling hungry?”

“No, John,” Julian laughed. “I simply want to tell you that to truly get the best out of a great book, you must study it, not just read it. Go through it as you do when you read those contracts your big clients bring to you for your legal opinion. Really consider it, work with it, become one with it. The sages would read many of the books of wisdom in their vast library ten or fifteen times. They treated great books as scriptures, holy documents of divine origin.”

“Wow. Reading is really that important?”

“Thirty minutes a day will make a delightful difference in your life because you will quickly start to see the vast reserves of knowledge available for your use. Every answer to every problem you have ever faced is in print. If you want to be a better lawyer, father, friend or lover, there are books out there that will rocket you to those goals. All the mistakes you will ever make

in your life have already been made by those that have walked before you. Do you really think that the challenges you are facing are unique to you?”

“I’ve never thought about it, Julian. But I see what you are saying, and I know you are right.”

“All the problems anyone has ever faced, and will ever face over the course of their lifetime have already been made,” Julian asserted. “More importantly, the answers and solutions are all recorded on the pages of books. Read the right books. Learn how those who have preceded you have handled the challenges you are currently facing. Apply their strategies for success and you will be astonished by the improvements you will note in your life.”

“What exactly are ‘the right books?’” I asked, quickly realizing that Julian’s point was an excellent one.

“I’ll leave that to your good judgment, my friend. Personally, since I have returned from the East, I spend the better part of my days reading biographies of the men and women I have come to admire and a great deal of the wisdom literature.”

“Any titles you could recommend to an eager young beaver?” I said, flashing a broad grin.

“Sure. You will thrive on the biography of the great American Benjamin Franklin. I think you will also find much growth impetus from Mahatma Gandhi’s autobiography entitled *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. I also suggest that you read *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse, the highly practical philosophy of Marcus Aurelius and some of the work of Seneca. You might even read *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill. I read it last week and thought it was very profound.”

“*Think and Grow Rich!*” I exclaimed. “But I thought you left all of that behind you after your heart attack. I’m really sick and tired of all the ‘make-money-fast manuals’ that are being peddled out there by snake-oil salesmen preying on the weak.”

“Easy, big fella! I couldn’t agree with you more,” offered Julian with all the warmth and patience of a wise, loving grandfather. “I too want to restore the character ethic to our society. That little book is not about making a lot of money, it is about making a lot of life. I will be the first to tell you that there is a huge difference between well-being and being well off. I’ve lived it and know the pain of a money-driven life. *Think and Grow Rich* is about abundance, including spiritual abundance, and how to attract all that is good into your life. You might do well to read it. But I will not press the point.”

“Sorry, Julian, I didn’t mean to sound like an aggressive litigator,” I

offered apologetically. “I guess my temper gets the better of me sometimes. One more thing I need to improve. I really am grateful for all that you are sharing with me.”

“No problem, water under the bridge. My point simply is read and keep reading. Do you want to know something else interesting?”

“What?”

“It’s not what you will get out of the books that is so enriching — it is what the books will get out of you that will ultimately change your life. You see, John, books do not actually teach you anything new.”

“Really?”

“Really. Books simply help you to see what is already within your self. That’s what enlightenment is all about. After all my journeying and exploring I found that I have actually come full circle back to the point from which I started as a young boy. But now I know myself and all that I am and can be.

“So the Ritual of Abundant Knowledge is all about reading and exploring the wealth of information out there?”

“Partly. For now, read thirty minutes a day. The rest will come naturally,” Julian said with a hint of mystery.

“Okay, what’s the Fifth Ritual of Radiant Living?”

“It is the Ritual of Personal Reflection. The sages were firm believers in the power of inner contemplation. By taking the time to get to know yourself, you will connect to a dimension of your being that you never knew you had.”

“Sounds pretty deep.”

“It’s actually a very practical concept. You see, we all have many sleeping talents inside of us. By taking the time to get to know them, we kindle them. However, silent contemplation will deliver even more than this. This practice will make you stronger, more at ease with yourself and wiser. It is a very rewarding use of your mind.”

“I’m still a little fuzzy on the concept, Julian.”

“Fair enough. It was also foreign to me when I first heard it. Boiled down to its basic form, personal reflection is nothing more than the habit of thinking.”

“But don’t we all think? Isn’t that part of being human?”

“Well, most of us do think. The problem is that most people think just enough to survive. What I am speaking about with this ritual is thinking

enough to thrive. When you read Ben Franklin's biography you will see what I mean. Every evening, after a full day of productive work, he would retire to a silent corner of his home and reflect on his day. He would consider all of his actions and whether they were positive and constructive or whether they were of the negative sort, in need of repair. By clearly knowing what he was doing wrong in his days, he could take immediate steps to improve and advance along the path of self-mastery. The sages did the same. Every night, they would retire to the sanctuary of their huts covered by fragrant rose petals and sit in deep contemplation. Yogi Raman would actually take a written inventory of his day."

"What kinds of things would he write down?" I asked.

"First he would list all of his activities, from the personal care activities of his morning to his interactions with the other sages to his forays into the forest in search of firewood and fresh food. Interestingly, he would also write down the thoughts he had run through his mind during that particular day."

"Isn't that hard to do? I can hardly remember what I thought five minutes ago let alone twelve hours ago."

"Not if you practice this ritual daily. You see, anyone can attain the kind of results I have attained. Anyone. The real problem is that too many people suffer from that dreadful disease known as *excusitus*."

"I think I might have contracted that one in the past," I said in full knowledge of what my wise friend was saying.

"Stop making excuses and just do it!" Julian exclaimed, his voice resonating with the strength of conviction.

"Do what?"

"Take the time to think. Get into the regular habit of personal introspection. Once Yogi Raman had listed all that he had done and all that he had thought in one column, he would then do an assessment in another column. As he was confronted by his activities and thoughts in the written form, he asked himself whether they were positive in nature. If they were, he resolved to continue giving his precious energy to them, as they would pay huge dividends in the long run."

"And if they were negative?"

"Then he would come up with a clear course of action to get rid of them."

"I think an example might help me."

"Can it be personal?" Julian asked.

“Sure, I’d love to know some of your innermost thoughts,” I suggested.

“Actually, I was thinking about yours.”

We both started to giggle like a couple of kids in a schoolyard.

“Oh, alright. You always did get your way.”

“Okay let’s go through just a few of the things that you did today. Write them down on that piece of paper on the coffee table,” Julian instructed.

I started to realize that something important was about to happen. This was the first time in years that I had actually taken the time to do nothing but reflect on the things I was doing and the thoughts that I was thinking. It was all so strange and yet so intelligent. After all, how could I ever hope to improve myself and my life if I hadn’t even taken the time to figure out what I was supposed to improve?”

“Where do I start?” I asked.

“Start with what you did this morning and progress through your day. Just hit a few of the highlights, we still have a fair amount of ground to cover and I want to get back to Yogi Raman’s fable in a few minutes.”

“Fine. I woke up at six-thirty to the sound of my electric rooster,” I joked.

“Get serious and keep going,” Julian replied firmly.

“Okay. Then I showered and shaved, gobbled down a waffle and rushed off to work.”

“And what about your family?”

“They were all asleep. Anyway, once I got to the office, I noticed that my seven-thirty appointment had been waiting there since seven, and, boy, was he furious!”

“What was your response?”

“I fought back, what was I supposed to do, let him push me around?”

“Hmm. Okay. Then what happened?”

“Well, things went from bad to worse. The courthouse called and told me that Judge Wildabest needed to see me in his chambers and if I wasn’t there within ten minutes, ‘heads would roll.’ You remember Wildabest don’t you? You were the one who nicknamed him Judge Wild Beast after he held you in contempt for parking your Ferrari in his parking spot!” I recalled, breaking into laughter.

“You would have to bring that up, wouldn’t you?” Julian replied, his eyes

revealing the remnants of that mischievous twinkle he was once well known for.

“Anyway I rushed down to the courthouse and had another argument with one of the clerks. By the time I got back to the office, there were twenty-seven phone messages waiting for me, all marked ‘urgent.’ Need I go on?”

“Please do.”

“Well on the way home, Jenny called me in the car and asked me to stop by her mother’s house and pick up one of those amazing pies my mother-in-law is famous for. Problem was that when I took that exit, I found myself in the middle of a gridlock that was worse than anything I have seen in ages. So there I was, in the middle of rush-hour traffic, in ninety-five-degree heat, shaking with stress and feeling that even more time was slipping away.”

“How did you respond?”

“I cursed the traffic,” I said with complete honesty. “I was actually shouting out loud inside my car. Do you want to know what I said?”

“I don’t think that would be the kind of thing that would nourish the garden of my mind,” Julian responded with a soft smile.

“But it might make for good fertilizer.”

“No thanks. Maybe we should stop there. Just take a second and look at your day. Obviously, in retrospect, there are at least a few things that you would do differently if you had the chance.”

“Obviously.”

“Like what?”

“Hmm. Well, first, in a perfect world I would get up earlier. I don’t think I’m doing myself any favors by hitting the ground running. I’d like to have a little peace in the morning and ease myself into the day. The Heart of the Rose technique you told me about earlier sounds like it would be fun. Also, I really would like to have the family around the breakfast table, even if only for a bowl of cereal. It would give me a better sense of balance. I always seem to feel that I never spend enough time with Jenny and the kids.”

“But it is a perfect world, and you have a perfect life. You do have the power to control your day. You do have the power to think good thoughts. You do have the power to live your dreams!” Julian observed, his voice rising.

“I am realizing this. I really am starting to feel that I can change.”

“Great. Continue reflecting on your day,” he instructed.

“Well, I wish I hadn’t yelled at my client. I wish I hadn’t argued with the court clerk and I wish I hadn’t screamed at the traffic.”

“The traffic doesn’t care, does it?”

“It just keeps on being traffic,” I noted.

“I think you now see the power of the Ritual of Personal Reflection. By looking at what you are doing, how you are spending your day and the thoughts you are thinking, you give yourself a benchmark for measuring improvement. The only way to improve tomorrow is to know what you did wrong today.”

“And come up with a clear plan so that it doesn’t happen again?” I added.

“Precisely. There is nothing wrong with making mistakes. Mistakes are part of life and essential for growth. It’s like that saying, ‘Happiness comes through good judgment, good judgment comes through experience, and experience comes through bad judgment.’ But there is something very wrong with making the same mistakes over and over again, day in and day out. This shows a complete lack of self-awareness, the very quality that separates humans from animals.”

“I’ve never heard that one before.”

“Well it’s true. Only a human being can step out of himself and analyze what he is doing right and what he is doing wrong. A dog cannot do this. A bird cannot do this. Even a monkey cannot do it. But you can. This is what the Ritual of Personal Reflection is all about. Figure out what is right and what is wrong in your days and in your life. Then set about making immediate improvements.”

“Lots to think about, Julian. Lots to think about,” I offered reflectively.

“How about thinking about the Sixth Ritual for Radiant Living: the Ritual of Early Awakening.”

“Uh-oh. I think I know what’s coming.”

“One of the best pieces of advice I learned in that far-off oasis of Sivana was to rise with the sun and to start the day off well. Most of us sleep far more than we need to. The average person can get by on six hours — and remain perfectly healthy and alert. Sleep is really nothing more than a habit and like any other habit, you can train yourself to achieve the result you want; sleeping less in this case.”

“But if I get up too early, I really do feel exhausted,” I said.

“For the first few days, you will feel very tired. I’ll freely admit this. You

might even feel this way for the first week of getting up nice and early. Please see this as a small measure of short-term pain for a large measure of long-term gain. You will always feel a little discomfort when you are installing a new habit. It's sort of like breaking in a new pair of shoes — at first it's a little hard to wear them but soon they fit like a glove. As I told you earlier, pain is often the precursor to personal growth. Don't dread it. Instead, embrace it."

"Okay, I like the idea of training myself to get up earlier. First, let me ask you what does 'early' mean?"

"Another fine question. There is no ideal time. Just like everything else I have shared with you so far, do what is right for you. Remember Yogi Raman's admonishment: 'nothing to extremes, everything in moderation.'"

"Getting up with the sun sounds extreme."

"Actually it isn't. There are few things more natural than rising with the glory of the first rays of a new day. The sages believed that sunshine was a gift from Heaven and while they were careful not to overexpose themselves, they regularly had sunbaths and often could be seen dancing playfully in the early morning sunshine. I firmly believe that this was another key to their extraordinary longevity."

"Do you sunbathe?" I asked.

"Absolutely. The sun rejuvenates me. When I grow tired it keeps my mood bright. In the ancient culture of the East, the sun was thought to be a connection to the soul. People worshipped it as it allowed their crops to flourish along with their spirits. Sunlight will release your vitality and restore your emotional and physical vibrancy. It is a delightful physician, when visited in moderation of course. Alas, I digress. The point is to get up early, every day."

"Hmm. How do I build this ritual into my routine?"

"Here are a couple of quick tips. First, never forget that it is the quality and not the quantity of sleep that is important. It is better to have six hours of uninterrupted deep sleep than even ten hours of disturbed sleep. The whole idea is to provide your body with rest so that its natural processes can repair and restore your physical dimension to its natural state of health, a state that is diminished through the stresses and struggles of daily use. Many of the habits of the sages are based on the principle that one must strive for quality rest rather than quantity sleep. For example, Yogi Raman would never eat after 8:00 p.m. He said that the digestive activity it induced would reduce the quality of his sleep. Another example was the sages' habit of meditating to the soft sounds of their harp immediately before heading off to sleep."

“What was the reason behind this?”

“Let me ask you, John. What do you do before you go to sleep every night?”

“I watch the news with Jenny, the same as most people I know.”

“I kind of thought so,” replied Julian, with a mysterious twinkle in his eyes.

“I don’t get it. What could possibly be wrong with getting a little shot of the news before I go to sleep?”

“The ten-minute period before you sleep and the ten-minute period after you wake up are profoundly influential on your subconscious mind. Only the most inspiring and serene thoughts should be programmed into your mind at those times.”

“You make the mind sound like a computer.”

“That’s a pretty fair way to look at it — what you put in is what you get out. Even more important is the fact that you alone are the programmer. By determining the thoughts that go in, you also are determining precisely what will come out. So, before you go to sleep, don’t watch the news or argue with anyone or even go over the day’s events in your mind’s eye. Relax. Drink a cup of herbal tea, if you like. Listen to some soft classical music and prepare yourself to drift off into a rich, renewing slumber.”

“It makes sense. The better the sleep, the less I will need.”

“Exactly. And remember the Ancient Rule of Twenty-one: if you do anything for twenty-one days in a row, it will be installed as a habit. So stay with the early-rising routine for about three weeks before you give up because it feels too uncomfortable. By then it will be a part of your life. Within short order you will be able to rise at 5:30 a.m. or even at 5:00 a.m. with ease, ready to savor the splendor of another great day.”

“Okay, so let’s say that I am getting up every day at five-thirty. What do I do?”

“Your questions show that you are thinking, my friend. I appreciate this. Once you are up, there are many things you can do. The fundamental principle to keep in mind is the importance of *starting your day off well*. As I’ve suggested, the thoughts you think and the actions you take in the first ten minutes after you wake up have a very marked effect on the rest of your day.”

“Seriously?”

“Absolutely. Think positive thoughts. Give a prayer of thanks for all you

have. Work on your gratitude list. Listen to some great music. Watch the sun come up, or perhaps go for a quick walk in natural surroundings if you feel up to it. The sages would actually make themselves laugh whether they felt like it or not, just to get the ‘happiness juices’ flowing early in the morning.”

“Julian, I am trying very hard to keep my cup empty — and I think you will agree that I’ve done pretty well for a novice. But that really sounds odd, even for a band of monks living high in the Himalayas.”

“But it is not. Take a guess how many times the average four-year-old laughs in a day.”

“Who knows?”

“I do, three hundred. Now guess how many times the average adult in our society laughs in the course of a day.”

“Fifty?” I tried.

“Try fifteen,” Julian said, smiling in satisfaction. “You see my point? Laughing is medicine for the soul. Even if you don’t feel like it, look in the mirror and laugh for a couple of minutes. You can’t help but feel fantastic. William James said, ‘We don’t laugh because we are happy. We are happy because we laugh.’ So start your day on a delightful footing. Laugh, play and give thanks for all you have. Every day will be an exquisitely rewarding one.”

“What do you do to start your day off on a positive footing?”

“Actually, I have developed quite a sophisticated morning routine that includes everything from the Heart of the Rose to drinking a couple of glasses of freshly squeezed fruit juice. But there is one strategy in particular that I would like to share with you.”

“Sounds important.”

“It is. Shortly after you have awakened, go into your sanctuary of silence. Get still and focused. Then ask yourself this question: ‘What would I do today if today was my last?’ The key is to really get into the meaning of this question. Mentally list all the things you would do, the people you would call and the moments you would savor. Envision yourself doing these things with great energy. Visualize how you would treat your family and your friends. Even picture how you would treat total strangers if today was your last day on the planet. As I told you earlier, when you live every day as if it was your last, your life will take on a magical quality.

“And this brings me to the seventh of the Rituals of Radiant Living: the Ritual of Music.”

“I think I’m going to love this one,” I replied.

“I’m sure you will. The sages loved their music. It gave them the same spiritual boost as the sun did. Music made them laugh, it made them dance and it made them sing. It will do the same for you. Never forget the power of music. Spend a little time with it every day, even if it is listening to a soft piece on a cassette while you drive to work. When you feel down or weary, play some music. It is one of the finest motivators I know of.”

“Aside from yourself!” I exclaimed sincerely. “Just listening to you makes me feel great. You really have changed, Julian, and not just on the outside. Gone is your old cynicism. Gone is your former negativity. Gone is your old aggressiveness. You really do seem to be at peace with yourself. You have touched me tonight.”

“Hey, there’s more!” shouted Julian with his fist in the air. “Let’s keep going.”

“I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

“Okay. The eighth ritual is the Ritual of the Spoken Word. The sages had a series of mantras that they would recite morning, noon and night. They told me that this practice was immensely effective in keeping them focused, strong and happy.”

“What’s a mantra?” I asked.

“A mantra is nothing more than a collection of words strung together to create a positive effect. In Sanskrit, ‘man’ means ‘mind’ and ‘tra’ means ‘freeing.’ So a mantra is a phrase that is designed to free the mind. And, believe me, John, mantras accomplish this objective in a very powerful way.”

“Are you using mantras in your daily routine?”

“I sure am. They are my faithful companions wherever I go. Whether I am on the bus, walking to the library or watching the world go by in a park, I am constantly affirming all that is good in my world through mantras.”

“So mantras are spoken?”

“They do not have to be. Written affirmations are also very effective. But I have found that repeating a mantra aloud has a wonderful effect on my spirit. When I need to feel motivated, I might repeat, ‘I am inspired, disciplined and energized’ out loud two or three hundred times. To maintain the supreme sense of self-confidence I have cultivated, I repeat, ‘I am strong, able and calm.’ I even use mantras to keep me youthful and vital,” Julian admitted.

“How could a mantra keep you young?”

“Words affect the mind in a pronounced way. Whether they are spoken or written, they are powerful influences. While what you say to others is important, even more important is what you say to yourself.”

“Self-talk?”

“Exactly. You are what you think about all day long. You are also what you say to yourself all day long. If you say that you are old and tired, this mantra will be manifested in your external reality. If you say you are weak and lack enthusiasm, this too will be the nature of your world. But if you say that you are healthy, dynamic and fully alive, your life will be transformed. You see, the words you say to yourself affect your self-image and your self-image determines what actions you take. For example, if your self-image is one of a person who lacks the confidence to do anything of value, you will only be able to take actions that are aligned with this trait. On the other hand, if your self-image is one of a radiant individual who is fearless, again, all your actions will correspond to this quality. Your self-image is a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts.”

“How so?”

“If you believe that you are unable to do something, let’s say, find that perfect partner or live a stress-free life, your beliefs will affect your self-image. In turn, your self-image will prevent you from taking steps to find the perfect partner or to create a serene life for yourself. It will actually sabotage any efforts you might make in this direction.”

“Why does it work this way?”

“Simple. Your self-image is a governor of sorts. It will never let you act in a way that is inconsistent with it. The beautiful thing is that you can change your self-image, just like you can change everything else in your life if it is not serving to enhance it. Mantras are a great way to accomplish this objective.”

“And when I change my inner world, I change my outer world,” I said dutifully.

“My, how quickly you learn,” Julian said, giving me the thumbs-up sign he had used so much in his former life as a star litigator.

“Which leads us into the Ninth Ritual of Radiant Living quite nicely. This is the Ritual of a Congruent Character. It is sort of an off-shoot of the self-image concept we were just talking about. Simply stated, this ritual requires you to take daily, incremental action to build your character. Strengthening your character affects the way you see yourself and the actions you take. The actions you take come together to form your habits and, this is important,

your habits lead you to your destiny. Perhaps Yogi Raman articulated the formula best when he stated: ‘You sow a thought, you reap an action. Reap an action, you sow a habit. Sow a habit, you reap a character. Sow a character, you reap your destiny.’”

“What kinds of things should I do to build my character?”

“Anything that cultivates your virtues. Before you ask me what I mean by ‘virtues,’ let me clarify the concept. The wise people of the Himalayas believed strongly that a virtuous life was a meaningful life. So they governed all of their actions by a series of timeless principles.”

“But I thought you said they governed their lives by their purpose?”

“Yes, this is quite so, but their life’s calling included living in a manner congruent to these principles, ones that their ancestors held dear to their hearts for thousands of years.”

“What are these principles, Julian?” I asked.

“They are, simply stated: industry, compassion, humility, patience, honesty and courage. When all your actions are congruent and aligned with these principles, you will feel a deep sense of inner harmony and peace. Living this way will inevitably lead you to spiritual success. This is because you will be doing what is right. You will be acting in a way that is in accordance with the laws of nature and the laws of the universe. This is when you will start to tap into the energy of another dimension, call it a higher power if you will. This is also when your life will move from the ordinary into the realm of the extraordinary and you begin to sense the sacredness of your being. It is the first step to lifelong enlightenment.”

“Have you tasted this experience?” I asked.

“I have, and I believe you will too. Do the right things. Act in a way that is congruent with your true character. Act with integrity. Be guided by your heart. The rest will take care of itself. You are never alone, you know,” replied Julian.

“What do you mean?”

“I’ll explain it to you another time perhaps. For now, remember that you must do little things every day to build your character. As Emerson said: ‘Character is higher than intellect. A great soul will be strong to live as well as to think.’ Your character is built when you act in a way that corresponds with the principles I’ve just mentioned. If you fail to do this, true happiness will always elude you.”

“And the final ritual?”

“This is the all-important Ritual of Simplicity. This ritual requires you to live a simple life. As Yogi Raman said ‘one must never live in the thick of thin things. Focus only on your priorities, those activities that are truly meaningful. Your life will be uncluttered, rewarding and exceptionally peaceful. This I promise you.’

“He was right. The moment I started to separate the wheat from the chaff, harmony filled my life. I stopped living at the frenetic pace to which I had grown accustomed. I stopped living my life in the eye of the tornado. Instead, I slowed down and took the time to smell the proverbial roses.”

“What things did you do to cultivate simplicity?”

“I stopped wearing expensive clothes, I kicked my addiction to six newspapers a day, I stopped needing to be available to everyone all the time, I became a vegetarian and I ate less. Basically, I reduced my needs. You see, John, unless you reduce your needs, you will never be fulfilled. You will always be like that gambler in Las Vegas, staying at the roulette wheel for ‘just one more spin’ in the hope that your lucky number will come up. You will always want more than you have. How can you ever be happy?”

“But earlier you told me that happiness comes from achievement. Now you are telling me to reduce my needs and be content with less. Isn’t this a paradox?”

“Excellent point, John. Brilliant in fact. It might seem like a contradiction, but it isn’t. Lifelong happiness does come through striving to realize your dreams. You are at your best when you are moving forward. The key is not to make your happiness contingent on finding that elusive pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. For example, even though I was a millionaire many times over, I told myself that success to me meant having three hundred million dollars in my bank account. This was a recipe for disaster.”

“Three hundred million?” I asked in disbelief.

“Three hundred million. So no matter how much I had, I was never satisfied. I was always unhappy. It was nothing more than greed. I can now admit this freely. It was much like the story of King Midas. I’m sure you have heard that one?”

“Sure. The man who loved gold so much he prayed that everything he touched would turn to gold. When his wish was granted he rejoiced. That was until he realized that he couldn’t eat because his food had turned to gold and so on, so forth.”

“Right. Similarly, I was so money-driven that I couldn’t enjoy all that I had. You know there came a time when all that I could eat was bread and

water,” Julian said, growing very quiet and pensive.

“Are you serious? I always thought you ate at the best restaurants with all those celebrity friends of yours.”

“That was in the early days. Not many people know about this, but the burden of my out-of-control lifestyle gave me a bleeding ulcer. I couldn’t even eat a hot dog without getting sick. What a life! All that money and all I could eat was bread and water. It was pathetic really.” Julian caught himself. “But I’m not one to live in the past. It was another one of life’s great lessons. As I told you earlier, pain is a powerful teacher. To transcend pain, I had to first experience it. I wouldn’t be where I am today without it,” he said stoically.

“Any ideas on what I should do to bring the Ritual of Simplicity into my own life?” I asked.

“There are so many things you can do. Even little things will make a difference.”

“Like what?”

“Stop picking up the phone every time it rings, stop wasting time reading junk mail, stop eating out three times a week, give up your golf-club membership and spend more time with your kids, spend a day a week without your watch, watch the sun rise every few days, sell your cellular phone and dump the pager. Need I continue?” Julian asked rhetorically.

“I get the point. But sell the cell phone?” I asked anxiously, feeling as a baby might at the doctor’s suggestion that his umbilical cord should be cut.

“Like I’ve said, my duty is to share the wisdom I have learned through my journey with you. You need not apply every strategy to make your life work. Try the techniques and use those that feel right to you.”

“I know. Nothing to extremes, everything in moderation.”

“Precisely.”

“I have to admit though, every one of your strategies sounds great. But will they really bring about profound shifts in my life in only thirty days?”

“It will take even less than thirty days — and even more,” said Julian, with his trademark look of dimpled mischievousness.

“Here we go again. Do explain, O Wise One.”

“Julian’ will be fine, although ‘Wise One’ would have looked formidable on my old letterhead,” he joked. “I say it will take less than thirty days because true life change is spontaneous.”

“Spontaneous?”

“Yes, it happens in the blink of an eye, the very moment you decide from the deepest core of your being that you will raise your life to its highest level. In that instant, you will be a changed person, one set on the course of his destiny.”

“And why longer than thirty days?”

“I promise you that by practicing these strategies and tools, you will see marked improvements in one month from this moment. You will have more energy, less worries, more creativity and less stress in every aspect of your life. Having said this, the sages’ methods are not of the quick-fix kind. They are ageless traditions that are meant to be applied daily, for the rest of your days. If you stop applying them, you will find that you will gradually slide back into your old ways.”

After Julian had explained the Ten Rituals for Radiant Living to me, he paused. “I know that you want me to keep going so I will. I believe so strongly in what I am sharing with you that I don’t mind keeping you up all night. Perhaps this is a good time to get a little deeper.”

“What exactly do you mean? I think *all* that I have heard tonight is pretty deep,” I said in surprise.

“The secrets I have explained will allow you and all those you come into contact with to create the lives you desire. But there is much more to the philosophy of the Sages of Sivana than meets the eye. What I have taught you up to now has been immensely practical. But you must know something of the underlying spiritual current that flows through the principles I have outlined. If you do not understand what I am speaking about, don’t worry at this point. Simply take it in and chew on it for a while, you can digest it later.”

“When the student is ready, the teacher will appear?”

“Precisely,” said Julian, now smiling. “You always were a quick study.”

“Okay, let’s hear the spiritual stuff,” I said energetically, unaware that it was nearly two-thirty in the morning.

“Within you lies the sun, the moon, the sky and all the wonders of this universe. The intelligence that created these wonders is the same force that created you. All things around you come from the same source. We are all one.”

“I’m not sure I follow you.”

“Every being on this Earth, every object on this Earth has a soul. All souls

flow into one, this is the Soul of the Universe. You see, John, when you nourish your own mind and your own spirit, you are really feeding the Soul of the Universe. When you improve yourself, you are improving the lives of all those around you. And when you have the courage to advance confidently in the direction of your dreams, you begin to draw upon the power of the universe. As I told you earlier, life gives you what you ask of it. It is always listening.”

“So self-mastery and *kaizen* will help me help others by helping me help myself?”

“Something like that. As you enrich your mind, as you care for your body and as you nurture your spirit, you will come to understand exactly what I am saying. “

“Julian. I know you mean well. But self-mastery is a pretty high ideal for a 215-pound family man who, up to now, has spent more time on client development than personal development. What happens if I fail?”

“Failure is not having the courage to try, nothing more and nothing less. The only thing standing between most people and their dreams is the fear of failure. Yet failure is essential to success in any endeavor. Failure tests us and allows us to grow. It offers us lessons and guides us along the path of enlightenment. The teachers of the East say that every arrow that hits the bull’s eye is the result of one hundred misses. It is a fundamental Law of Nature to profit through loss. Never fear failure. Failure is your friend.”

“Embrace failure?” I asked in disbelief.

“The universe favors the brave. When you resolve, once and for all, to lift your life to its highest level, the strength of your soul will guide you. Yogi Raman believed that everyone’s destiny was laid out for them at birth. This path always leads to a magical place filled with magnificent treasures. It was up to each individual to develop the courage to walk this way. There is a story he shared with me that I would like to pass on to you. Once, in ancient India, there was an evil giant who owned a magnificent castle overlooking the sea. As the giant had been away for many years fighting in wars, the children of the nearby village used to come into the giant’s beautiful garden and play with great delight. One day, the giant returned and threw all of the young children out of his garden. ‘Never return here!’ he yelled as he slammed the huge oak door in disgust. He then erected a huge marble wall around the garden to keep the children out.

“Winter came with bitter cold, which is native to the northernmost parts of the Indian subcontinent, and the giant wished the warmth would soon return. Spring visited the village that lay below the giant’s castle, but the icy claws of

winter refused to leave his garden. Then, one day, the giant finally smelled the fragrances of spring and felt the radiance of the sun through his windows. "Spring has finally returned!" he cried, running out into the garden. But the giant was unprepared for the sight that greeted him. The children of the village had somehow managed to climb over the castle wall and were playing in the garden. It was because of their presence that the garden had been transformed from a wintry wasteland into a lush place filled with roses, daffodils and orchids. All the children laughed and giggled with joy, but one. From the corner of his eye, the giant spotted a little boy who was much smaller than all the other children. Tears ran from his eyes as he did not have the strength to climb the wall into the garden. The giant felt sad for this boy and, for the first time in his life, regretted his evil ways. 'I will help this child,' he said, running towards him. When all the other children saw the giant coming, they ran from the garden, fearing for their lives. But the tiny little boy stood his ground. 'I will slay the giant,' he stammered. 'I will defend our playground.'

"As the giant approached the child, he opened his arms. 'I am a friend,' he said. 'I have come to help you over the wall and into the garden. This will be your garden now.'" The little boy, now a hero among the children, rejoiced in happiness and gave the giant the golden necklace that he had always worn around his neck. 'This is my lucky charm,' he said. 'I want you to have it.'

"From that day on, the children played with the giant in his wonderful garden. But the brave little boy whom the giant loved the most never did return. As time went on, the giant grew ill and frail. The children continued to play in the garden but the giant no longer had the strength to keep them company. In those quiet days, it was the little boy who the giant thought of the most.

"One day, in the midst of a particularly bitter winter, the giant glanced out his window and saw a truly miraculous sight: though most of the garden was covered in snow, at the center of the garden there stood a magnificent rosebush overflowing with spectacularly colored flowers. Next to the roses stood the little boy who the giant loved. The boy was smiling sweetly. The giant danced with delight and rushed outside to embrace the child. 'Where have you been all these years, my young friend? I've missed you with all my heart.'

"The boy was thoughtful in his response. 'Many years ago you lifted me over the wall into your magical garden. Now, I have come to take you into mine.' Later that day, when the children came to visit the giant they found him lying lifeless on the ground. From head to toe, he was covered by a thousand beautiful roses.

“Always be brave, John, like that little boy. Stand your ground and follow your dreams. They will lead you to your destiny. Follow your destiny, it will lead you into the wonders of the universe. And always follow the wonders of the universe, for they will lead you to a special garden filled with roses.”

As I looked over at Julian to tell him that this story had touched me deeply, I saw something that startled me: this rock-hard legal gladiator who had spent the better part of his life defending the rich and famous had started to weep.

Chapter 9 ActionSummary ¥ Julian Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Symbol



The Virtue

Practice Kaizen

The Wisdom

- Self-Mastery is the DNA of life mastery
- Success on the outside begins within
- Enlightenment comes through the consistent cultivation of your mind, body and soul

The Techniques

- Do the Things You Fear
- The 10 Ancient Rituals for Radiant Living

Quotable Quote

The Universe favors the brave. When you resolve to lift your life to its highest level, the strength of your soul will guide you to a magical place with magnificent treasures.

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

CHAPTER TEN



The Power of Discipline

Sure I am that this day we are masters of our fate, that the task which has been set before us is not above our strengths; that its pangs and toils are not beyond my endurance. As long as we have faith in our own cause and an unconquerable will to win, victory will not be denied us.

Winston Churchill

Julian continued to use Yogi Raman's mystical fable as the cornerstone for the wisdom he was sharing with me. I had learned of the garden within my mind, a storehouse of power and potential. Through the symbol of the lighthouse, I had learned of the over-riding importance of a definite purpose in life and the effectiveness of goal-setting. By the example of the nine-foot-tall, nine-hundred-pound Japanese sumo wrestler, I had received instruction on the timeless concept of *kaizen* and the bountiful benefits that self-mastery would bring. Little did I know that the best was still to come.

"You will recall that our friend the sumo wrestler was stark naked."

"Except for the pink wire cable covering his private parts," I interjected gamely.

"Right," applauded Julian. "The pink wire cable will serve to remind you of the power of self-control and discipline in building a richer, happier and more enlightened life. My teachers in Sivana were undoubtedly the most healthy, contented and serene people I have ever met. They were also the most disciplined. These sages taught me that the virtue of self-discipline was like a wire cable. Have you ever really taken the time to study a wire cable, John?"

"It hasn't been high on my priority list," I confessed with a quick grin.

“Well, have a look at one sometime. You will see that it consists of many thin, tiny wires placed one on top of the other. Alone, each one is flimsy and weak. But, together, their sum is much greater than their constituent parts and the cable becomes tougher than iron. Self-control and willpower are similar to this. To build a will of iron, it is essential to take small, tiny acts in tribute to the virtue of personal discipline. Routinely performed, the little acts pile one on top of another to eventually produce an abundance of inner strength. Perhaps the old African proverb says it best: ‘When spider webs unite, they tie up a lion.’ When you liberate your willpower, you become the master of your personal world. When you continually practice the ancient art of self-government, there will be no hurdle too high for you to overcome, no challenge too tough for you to surmount and no crisis too hot for you to cool down. Self-discipline will provide you with the mental reserves required to persevere when life throws you one of its little curves.

“I must also alert you to the fact that the lack of willpower is a mental disease,” Julian added surprisingly. “If you suffer from this weakness, make it a priority to stamp it out quickly. An abundance of willpower and discipline is one of the chief attributes of all those with strong characters and wonderful lives. Willpower allows you to do what you said you would do, when you said you would do it. It is willpower that allows you to get up at five in the morning to cultivate your mind through meditation, or to feed your spirit by a walk in the woods when a cozy bed beckons you on a cold winter’s day. It is willpower that allows you to hold your tongue when a less-actualized person insults you or does something you disagree with. It is willpower that pushes your dreams forward when the odds appear to be insurmountable. It is willpower that offers you the inner power to keep your commitments to others, and, perhaps even more importantly, to yourself.”

“Is it really that important?”

“Most certainly, my friend. It is the essential virtue of every person who has created a life rich with passion, possibility and peace.”

Julian then reached into his robe and pulled out a shiny silver locket, the kind you might see in a museum exhibit on ancient Egypt.

“You shouldn’t have,” I joked.

“The Sages of Sivana gave this gift to me on my last evening with them. It was a joyous, loving celebration between members of a family who lived life to the fullest. It was one of the greatest and saddest nights of my life. I didn’t want to leave the Nirvana of Sivana. It was my sanctuary, an oasis of all that was good in this world. The sages had become my spiritual brothers and

sisters. I left part of myself high in the Himalayas that evening,” Julian said, his voice growing soft.

“What are the words engraved on the locket?”

“Here, I’ll read them to you. Never forget them, John. They have really helped me when times got tough. I pray that they also bathe you in comfort during times of difficulty. They say:

Through the steel of discipline, you will forge a character rich with courage and peace. Through the virtue of will, you are destined to rise to life’s highest ideal and live within a heavenly mansion filled with all that is good, joyful and vital. Without them, you are lost like a mariner without a compass, one who eventually sinks with his ship.

“I have never really thought about the importance of self-control, although there have been many times I’ve wished I had more discipline,” I admitted. “Are you saying that I can actually build discipline, the way my teenage son builds his biceps at the local gym?”

“The analogy is an excellent one. You condition your willpower just as your son conditions his body at the gym. Anyone, no matter how weak or lethargic they might currently be, can grow disciplined within a relatively short time. Mahatma Gandhi is a good example. When most people think of this modern-day saint they remember a man who could go weeks without food in the pursuit of his cause, and endure tremendous pain for the sake of his convictions. But when you study Gandhi’s life, you will see that he was not always a master of self-control.”

“You’re not going to tell me that Gandhi was a chocoholic are you?”

“Not quite, John. As a young lawyer in South Africa, he was given to passionate outbursts and the disciplines of fasting and meditation were as foreign to him as the simple white loincloth that eventually became his personal trademark in his later years.”

“Are you saying that with the right blend of training and preparation, I could have the same level of willpower as Mahatma Gandhi?”

“Everyone is different. One of the fundamental principles that Yogi Raman taught me was that truly enlightened people never seek to be like others. Rather, they seek to be superior to their former selves. Don’t race against others. Race against yourself,” Julian replied.

“When you have self-control, you will have the resolve to do the things you have always wanted to do. For you, it may be training for a marathon or

mastering the art of white-water rafting or even giving up the law to become an artist. Whatever it is you are dreaming of, whether it is material riches or spiritual riches, I will not be your judge. I will simply tell you that all these things will be within your grasp when you cultivate your sleeping reserves of willpower.”

Julian added: “Building self-control and discipline into your life will also bring you a tremendous sense of freedom. This alone will change things.”

“What do you mean?”

“Most people have liberty. They can go where they want and do the things they feel like doing. But too many people are also slaves to their impulses. They have grown reactive rather than proactive, meaning that they are like seafoam pounding against a rocky shore, going in whatever direction the tide might take them. If they are spending time with their families and someone from work calls with a crisis, they hit the ground running, never stopping to think which activity is more vital to their overall well-being and to their life’s purpose. So, after all I have observed in my life, both here in the West and in the East, I say that such people have liberty but lack freedom. They lack a key ingredient to a meaningful, enlightened life: the freedom to see the forest beyond the trees, the freedom to choose what is right over what seems pressing.”

I couldn’t help but agree with Julian. Sure, I had little to complain about. I had a great family, a cozy home and a bustling law practice. But I really couldn’t say that I had achieved freedom. My pager was just as much an appendage as my right arm. I was always on the run. I never seemed to have the time to communicate deeply with Jenny, and quiet time for myself in the foreseeable future was about as likely as me winning the Boston Marathon. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that I had probably never even tasted the nectar of true, boundless freedom when I was younger. I guess I really was a slave to my weaker impulses. I always did what everyone else told me I should be doing.

“And building willpower will offer me more freedom?”

“Freedom is like a house: you build it brick by brick. The first brick you should lay is willpower. This quality inspires you to do what is right in any given moment. It gives you the energy to act with courage. It gives you the control to live the life you have imagined rather than accepting the life that you have.”

Julian also noted the many practical benefits that the cultivation of discipline would bring.

“Believe it or not, developing the power of your will can erase the worry habit, keep you healthy and give you far more energy than you have ever had. You see, John, self-control is really nothing more than mind control. Will is the king of mental powers. When you master your mind you master your life. Mental mastery starts with being able to control every thought that you think. When you have developed the ability to discard all weak thoughts and focus only on those that are positive and good, positive and good actions will follow. Soon you will start attracting all that is positive and good into your life.

“Here’s an example. Let’s say one of your personal development goals is to get up every morning at 6:00 a.m. and go for a run around that park behind your place. Let’s pretend it is now the middle of the winter, and your alarm wakes you from a deep, restful sleep. Your first impulse is to hit the snooze button and return to your slumber. Perhaps you will live up to your exercise resolution tomorrow. This pattern continues for a few days until you decide that you are too old to change your ways and the physical fitness goal was too unrealistic.”

“You know me too well,” I offered sincerely.

“Now let’s consider an alternative scenario. It is still the dead of winter. The alarm goes off and you start to think of staying in bed. But instead of being a slave to your habits, you challenge them with more powerful thoughts. You start to picture in your mind’s eye how you will look, feel and act when you are in peak physical shape. You hear the many compliments your colleagues at the office offer you as you saunter past them with a svelte, trim physique. You focus on all that you can accomplish with the increased energy a regular exercise program will bring. No more nights spent in front of the television because you are too tired to do anything else after your long day in court. Your days are filled with vitality, enthusiasm and meaning.”

“But say I do this and I still feel like going back to sleep rather than going running?”

“Initially, for the first few days, it will be a little difficult and you will feel like going back to your old habits. But Yogi Bhanu believed very strongly in one timeless principle in particular: *positive always overcomes negative*. So if you continue to wage war against the weaker thoughts that might have silently crept into the palace of your mind over the years, eventually they will see that they are unwanted and leave like visitors who know they are not welcome.”

“You mean to tell me that thoughts are physical things?”

“Yes, and they are fully in your control. It is just as easy to think positive

thoughts as it is to think negative ones.”

“Then why do so many people worry and focus on all the negative information in our world?”

“Because they have not learned the art of self-control and disciplined thinking. Most people I have spoken to have no idea that they have the power to control every single thought they think every second of every minute of every day. They believe that thoughts just happen and have never realized that if you don’t take the time to start controlling your thoughts, they will control you. When you start to focus on good thoughts only, and refuse to think the bad ones through sheer willpower, I promise you they will shrivel up very quickly.”

“So, if I want to have the inner strength to get up earlier, eat less, read more, worry less, be more patient or be more loving, all I have to do is exert my will to cleanse my thoughts?”

“When you control your thoughts, you control your mind. When you control your mind, you control your life. And once you reach the stage of being in total control of your life, you become the master of your destiny.”

I needed to hear this. Through the course of this strange yet inspiring evening I had gone from being a skeptical litigator carefully studying a hotshot lawyer-turned-yogi to a believer whose eyes had been opened for the first time in many years. I wished Jenny could hear all this. Actually I wished my kids could hear this wisdom too. I knew it would affect them as it had me. I had always planned on being a better family man and living more fully, but I always found that I was too busy putting out all those little brush fires of life that seemed so pressing. Maybe this was a weakness, a lack of self-control. An inability to see the forest for the trees, perhaps. Life was passing by so quickly. It seemed like just yesterday that I was a young law student full of energy and enthusiasm. I dreamed of becoming a political leader or even a supreme court judge back then. But as time went by, I settled into a routine. Even as a cocky litigator, Julian used to tell me that “complacency kills.” The more I thought about it, the more I realized that I had lost my hunger. This wasn’t a hunger for a bigger house or a faster car. This was a far deeper hunger: a hunger for living with more meaning, with more festivity and more satisfaction.

I started to daydream while Julian continued to talk. Oblivious to what he was now saying, I saw myself first as a fifty-year-old-and then as a sixty-year-old-man. Would I be stuck in the same job with the same people, facing the same struggles at that point of my life? I dreaded that. I had always wanted to contribute to the world in some way, and I sure wasn’t doing it now. I think it

was at that moment, with Julian sitting next to me on my living room floor on that sticky July night that I changed. The Japanese call it *satori*, meaning *instant awakening*, and that's exactly what it was. I resolved to fulfill my dreams and make my life far more than it had ever been. That was my first taste of real freedom, the freedom that comes when you decide once and for all to take charge of your life and all its constituent elements.

"I will give you a formula for developing willpower," said Julian, who had no idea of the inner transformation I had just experienced. "Wisdom without proper tools for its application is no wisdom at all."

He continued. "Every day, while you are walking to work, I would like you to repeat a few simple words."

"Is this one of those mantras you told me about earlier?" I asked.

"Yes it is. It is one that has been in existence for over five thousand years, although only the small band of Sivanan monks have known about it. Yogi Raman told me that by its repetition I would develop self-control and an indomitable will within a short period of time. Remember, words are great influencers. Words are the verbal embodiment of power. By filling your mind with words of hope, you become hopeful. By filling your mind with words of kindness, you become kind. By filling your mind with thoughts of courage, you become courageous. Words have power," Julian observed.

"Okay, I'm all ears."

"This is the mantra I suggest you repeat at least thirty times a day: '*I am more than I appear to be, all the world's strength and power rests inside me.*' It will manifest profound changes in your life. For even quicker results, blend this mantra with the practice of creative envisioning I spoke of earlier. For example, go to a quiet place. Sit with your eyes closed. Do not let your mind wander. Keep your body still, as the surest sign of a weak mind is a body that cannot rest. Now repeat the mantra aloud, over and over again. While you do so, see yourself as a disciplined, firm person, fully in control of your mind, your body and your spirit. Picture yourself acting as Gandhi or Mother Teresa might act in a challenging situation. Startling results will surely come your way," he promised.

"That's it?" I asked, astonished by the apparent simplicity of this formula. "I can tap the full reserves of my willpower through this simple exercise?"

"This technique has been taught by the spiritual teachers of the East for centuries. It is still around today for one reason: because it works. As always, judge by results. If you are interested, there are a couple of other exercises I

can offer you to liberate the strength of your will and cultivate inner discipline. But let me warn you that they might seem strange at first.”

“Hey, Julian, I’m absolutely fascinated by what I’ve been hearing. You’re on a roll, so don’t stop now.”

“Okay. The first thing is to start doing the things you don’t like doing. For you it might be as simple as making your bed in the morning or walking rather than driving to work. By getting into the habit of exerting your will, you will cease to be a slave to your weaker impulses.”

“Use it or lose it?”

“Exactly. To build willpower and inner strength you must first use it. The more you exert and nurture the embryo of self-discipline, the more quickly it will mature and give you the results you desire. The second exercise is a favorite of Yogi Raman’s. He used to go an entire day without speaking, except in response to a direct question.”

“Kind of like a vow of silence?”

“Actually that’s exactly what it was, John. The Tibetan monks who popularized this practice believed that to hold one’s tongue for an extended period of time would have the effect of enhancing one’s discipline.”

“But how?”

“Basically, by keeping silent for a day, you are conditioning your will to do as you command it to do. Each time the urge to speak arises, you actively curb this impulse and remain quiet. You see, your will does not have a mind of its own. It waits for you to give it instructions that will spur it into action. The more control you exert over it, the more powerful it will become. The problem is that most people don’t use their willpower.”

“Why is that?” I asked.

“Probably because most people believe they don’t have any. They blame everyone and everything except themselves for this apparent weakness. Those who have a vicious temper will tell you, ‘I can’t help it, my father was the same way.’ Those who worry too much will tell you, ‘It’s not my fault, my job is too stressful.’ Those who sleep too much will say, ‘What can I do? My body needs ten hours of sleep a night.’ Such people lack the self-responsibility that comes through knowing the extraordinary potential that lies deep within every one of us, waiting to be inspired into action. When you come to know the timeless laws of nature, those that govern the operation of this universe and all that lives within it, you will also know that it is your birthright to be all that you can be. You have the power to be more than your

environment. Similarly, you have the capacity to be more than a prisoner of your past. To do this, you must become the master of your will.”

“Sounds heavy.”

“Really, it’s a very practical concept. Imagine what you could do if you doubled or tripled the amount of willpower that you currently have. You could get into that exercise regimen you have dreamed of starting; you could be far more efficient with your time; you could erase the worry habit once and for all; or you could be the ideal husband. Using your will allows you to rekindle the drive and energy for living that you seem to be saying you’ve lost. It is a very important area to focus on.”

“So the bottom line is to start using my willpower on a regular basis?”

“Yes. Decide to do the things you know you should be doing rather than walking the path of least resistance. Start to fight the gravitational force of your bad habits and weaker impulses just as a rocket rises above the force of gravity to enter the realm of the heavens. Push yourself. Just watch what will happen in a matter of weeks.”

“And the mantra will help?”

“Yes. Repeating the mantra I gave you, along with the daily practice of seeing yourself as you hope to be, will give you an enormous amount of support as you create the disciplined, principled life that will connect you to your dreams. And you need not change your world in a day. Start off small. The thousand-mile journey begins by taking that first step. We grow great by degrees. Even training yourself to get up an hour earlier and sticking to this wonderful habit will boost your self-confidence, inspiring you to reach higher heights.”

“I don’t see the connection,” I admitted.

“Small victories lead to large victories. You must build on the small to achieve the great. By following through on a resolution as simple as getting up earlier every day, you will feel the pleasure and gratification that achievement brings. You have set a goal and you have realized it. This feels good. The trick is to keep setting the mark higher and raising your standards continuously. This will then release that magical quality of momentum that will motivate you to keep exploring your infinite potential. Do you like to ski?” Julian questioned abruptly.

“I love skiing,” I replied. “Jenny and I take the kids up to the mountains whenever we can, which isn’t very often, much to her dismay.”

“Okay. Just think of what it’s like when you push off from the top of the

ski hill. At first you start off slowly. But within a minute you are flying down the hill like there's no tomorrow. Right?"

"Just call me Ninja Skier. I love the rush of speed!"

"What gets you going so fast?"

"My aerodynamically contoured physique?" I quipped.

"Nice try." Julian laughed. "Momentum is the answer I'm looking for. Momentum is also the secret ingredient to building self-discipline. Like I said, you start off small, whether that means getting up a little earlier, starting to walk around the block every night or even just training yourself to turn off the television when you know you have had enough. These small victories create the momentum that excites you to take larger steps along the path to your highest self. Soon you are doing things that you never knew you were capable of doing with a vigor and energy that you never thought you had. It's a delightful process, John, it really is. And the pink wire cable in Yogi Berman's magical fable will always remind you of the power of your will."

Just as Julian finished revealing his thoughts on the subject of discipline, I noticed the first rays of the sun peeking into the living room, pushing away the darkness like a child pushes away an unwanted bedcover. "This will be a great day," I thought. "The first day of the rest of my life."

Chapter 10 Action Summary ¥ Julian Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Symbol



The Virtue

Live with Discipline

The Wisdom

- Discipline is built by consistently performing small acts of courage
- The more you nurture the embryo of self-discipline, the more it will mature
- Willpower is the essential virtue of a fully actualized life

The Techniques

- Mantras / Creative Envisioning

- The Vow of Silence

Quotable Quote

Wage war against the weaker thoughts that have crept into the palace of your mind. They will see that they are unwanted and leave like unwelcome visitors.

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

CHAPTER ELEVEN



Your Most Precious Commodity

Well arranged time is the surest mark of a well arranged mind.

Sir Isaac Pitman

“You know what’s funny about life?” Julian asked me.

“Tell me.”

“By the time most people figure out what they really want and how to go about attaining it, it’s usually too late. That saying, ‘If youth only knew, if age only could,’ is so true.

“Is that what the stopwatch in Yogi Raman’s fable is all about?”

“Yes. The naked nine-foot-tall, nine-hundred-pound sumo wrestler with the pink wire cable covering his private parts slips on a shiny gold stopwatch that someone has left in the beautiful garden,” Julian reminded me.

“How could I forget,” I replied, breaking into a grin.

By now I had realized that Yogi Raman’s mystical fable was nothing more than a series of memory pegs designed to teach Julian the elements of his ancient philosophy for enlightened living, while at the same time helping him remember it. I shared my discovery with him.

“Ah, the sixth sense of a litigator. You are quite right. My wise teacher’s methods appeared odd at first and I struggled to understand the significance of his tale just as you wondered what I was speaking of when I first shared it with you. But I must tell you, John, all seven elements of the story, from the garden and the naked sumo wrestler to the yellow roses and the path of diamonds, which I am soon getting to, serve as powerful reminders of the wisdom I learned in Sivana. The garden keeps me focused on inspiring thoughts, the lighthouse reminds me that the purpose of life is a life of

purpose, the sumo wrestler keeps me centered on continuous self-discovery, while the pink wire cable links me to the wonders of willpower. A day doesn't pass without me thinking about the fable and considering the principles Yogi Raman taught me."

"And exactly what does the shiny gold stopwatch represent?"

"It is a symbol of our most important commodity — time."

"What about positive thinking and goal-getting and self-mastery?"

"They all mean nothing without time. About six months after I made the delightful forest retreat in Sivana my temporary home, one of the sages came to my hut of roses while I was studying. Her name was Divea. She was a stunningly beautiful woman with jet black hair that fell just below her waist, and in a very gentle and sweet voice she informed me that she was the youngest of all the sages living in that secret mountain abode. She also said that she had come to me on the instructions of Yogi Raman, who had told her that I was the best student he had ever had."

"'Maybe it is all the pain you suffered in your former life that has allowed you to embrace our wisdom with such an open heart,' she stated. 'As the youngest of our community, I have been asked to bring you a gift. It is from all of us and we offer it as a token of our respect for you, one who has travelled so far to learn our ways. At no point have you judged us or ridiculed our traditions. So, though you have now decided to leave us within a few weeks, we consider you one of our own. No outsider has ever received what I am about to give you.'"

"What was the gift?" I asked impatiently.

"Divea pulled out an object from her homespun cotton bag and handed it to me. Wrapped in a fragrant cover of some type of paper was something I never thought I'd see there in a million years. It was a miniature hourglass that had been made from blown glass and a small piece of sandalwood. Seeing my expression, Divea quickly told me that each of the sages had received one of these instruments as children. 'Though we have no possessions and live pure, simple lives, we respect time and note its passing. These little hourglasses serve as daily reminders of our mortality and the importance of living full, productive days while advancing our purposes.'"

"These monks up in the highest reaches of the Himalayan mountains kept time?"

"Each and every one of them understood the importance of time. They each had developed what I call a 'time consciousness.' You see, I learned that time slips through our hands like grains of sand, never to return. Those who

use time wisely from an early age are rewarded with rich, productive and satisfying lives. Those who have never been exposed to the principle that ‘time mastery is life mastery’ will never realize their enormous human potential. Time is the great leveller. Whether we are privileged or disadvantaged, whether we live in Texas or Tokyo, we all have been allotted days with only twenty-four hours. What separates those who build exceptional lives from the ‘also rans’ is the way they use this time.”

“I once heard my father say that it was the busiest people who have time to spare. What do you make of that?”

“I agree. Busy, productive people are highly efficient with their time — they must be in order to survive. Being an excellent time manager doesn’t mean that you must become a workaholic. On the contrary, time mastery allows you more time to do the things you love to do, the things that are truly meaningful to you. Time mastery leads to life mastery. Guard time well. Remember, it’s a non-renewable resource.

“Let me give you an example,” Julian offered. “Let’s say it’s Monday morning and your schedule is overflowing with appointments, meetings and court appearances. Rather than getting up at your usual 6:30 a.m., gulping down a cup of java, speeding off to work and then spending a stressful day of ‘catchup,’ let’s say you took fifteen minutes the night before to plan your day. Or to be even more effective, let’s say you took one hour on your quiet Sunday morning to organize your entire week. In your daily planner, you wrote out when you would meet with your clients, when you would do legal research and when you would return phone calls. Most importantly, your personal, social and spiritual development goals for the week also went into your agenda book. This simple act is the secret to a life of balance. By anchoring all the most vital aspects of your life into your daily schedule, you ensure that your week and your life retain a sense of meaning and peace.”

“Surely you’re not suggesting that I take a break in the middle of my busy work day to walk in the park or meditate?”

“I sure am. Why are you so rigidly bound to convention? Why do you feel that you have to do things the same way as everyone else? Run your own race. Why not start working an hour earlier so that you will have the luxury of taking a serene mid-morning walk in that beautiful park across from your office? Or why not put in a few extra hours at the beginning of your week so that you can cut out early on Friday to take your kids to the zoo? Or why not start working at home two days a week so that you can see more of your family? All I’m saying is plan your week and manage your time creatively. Have the discipline to focus your time around your priorities. The most meaningful things in your life should never be sacrificed to those that are the

least meaningful. And remember, failing to plan is planning to fail. By writing down not only your appointments with others but also those all-important appointments with yourself to read, relax or write a love letter to your wife, you will be far more productive with your time. Never forget that time spent enriching your non-work hours is never a waste. It makes you tremendously efficient during your working hours. Stop living your life in compartments and understand once and for all that all you do forms one indivisible whole. The way you act at home affects the way you act at work. The way you treat people at the office affects the way you will treat your family and friends.”

“I agree, Julian, but I really don’t have the time to take breaks in the middle of my day. As it is, I work most evenings. My schedule is really crushing these days.” As I said this, I felt my stomach tingling at the mere thought of the mountain of work I was facing.

“Being busy is no excuse. The real question is, what are you so busy about? One of the great rules I learned from that wise old sage is that 80 percent of the results you achieve in your life come from only 20 percent of the activities that occupy your time. Yogi Bhanu called it the ‘Ancient Rule of Twenty.’”

“I’m not sure I follow you.”

“Okay. Let’s go back to your busy Monday. From morning until night you might spend your time doing everything from chatting on the phone with clients and drafting legal pleadings to reading your youngest child a bedtime story or playing chess with your wife. Agreed?”

“Agreed.”

“But out of all of the hundreds of activities you give your time to, only 20 percent of those will yield real, lasting results. Only 20 percent of what you do will have an influence on the quality of your life. These are your ‘high-impact’ activities. For example, ten years from now, do you really think all the time you spent gossiping at the water cooler or sitting in some smoke-filled lunch room or watching television will count for anything?”

“No, not really.”

“Right. So I’m sure you will also agree there are a number of activities that will count for everything.”

“You mean like time spent improving my legal knowledge, time spent enriching my relationships with my clients and time invested in becoming a more efficient lawyer?”

“Yes, and time spent nourishing your relationship with Jenny and the kids.

Time spent connecting with nature and showing gratitude for all that you are so fortunate to have. Time spent renewing your mind, your body and your spirit. These are just a few of the high-impact activities that will allow you to design the life you deserve. Direct all of your time to those activities that count. *Enlightened people are priority driven.* This is the secret of time mastery.”

“Wow. Yogi Raman taught you all that?”

“I have become a student of life, John. Yogi Raman certainly was a wonderful and inspiring teacher and I will never forget him for that. But all of the lessons I have learned from my varied experiences have now come together like pieces of a big jigsaw puzzle to show me the way to a better life.”

Julian added: “I hope you will learn from my earlier mistakes. Some people learn from the errors others have made. They are the wise. Others feel that true learning comes only from personal experience. Such people endure needless pain and distress over the course of their lives.”

I had been to many seminars on time management as a lawyer. Yet, I had never heard the philosophy of time mastery that Julian was now sharing with me. Time management was not just something to focus on at the office and discard at closing time. It was a holistic system that could make *all* areas of my life more balanced and fulfilling, if I applied it correctly. I learned that by planning my days and taking the time to ensure that I was balanced in the use of my time, I would not only be far more productive — I would be far happier.

“So life is like a fat strip of bacon,” I chimed in. “You have to separate the meat from the fat in order to be the master of your time.”

“Very good. You’re on to it now. And though my vegetarian side tells me to do otherwise, I love the analogy because it hits the nail right on the head. When you spend your time and precious mental energy focusing on the meat, you have no time to waste on the fat. This is the point at which your life moves from the realm of the ordinary into the exquisiteness of the extraordinary. This is when you really start to make things happen, and the doors to the temple of enlightenment suddenly swing open,” Julian observed.

“That brings me to another point. Don’t let others steal your time. Be wary of time thieves. These are the people who always call on the telephone just as you have put the kids to sleep and have settled into your favorite chair to read that thrilling novel you have heard so much about. These are the people who have a knack of dropping by your office just as you have found a

few minutes in the midst of a hectic day to catch your breath and collect your thoughts. Does this sound familiar?”

“As usual, Julian, you’re right on the money. I guess I have always been too polite to ask them to leave or to keep my door shut,” I confided.

“You must be ruthless with your time. Learn to say no. Having the courage to say no to the little things in life will give you the power to say yes to the big things. Shut the door to your office when you need a few hours to work on that big case. Remember what I told you. Don’t pick up the phone every time it rings. It is there for *your* convenience, not the convenience of others. Ironically, people will respect you more when they see that you are a person who values his time. They will realize that your time is precious and they will value it.”

“What about procrastination? All too often I keep putting off the things that I don’t like doing and instead find myself sifting through junk mail or flipping through legal magazines. Maybe I’m just killing time?”

“‘Killing time’ is an apt metaphor. True, it is human nature to do things that feel good and avoid the things that feel bad. But as I said earlier, the most productive people in this world have cultivated the habit of doing the things that less productive people don’t like doing, even though they too might not like doing them.”

I stopped and thought deeply about the principle I had just heard. Perhaps procrastination was not my problem. Maybe my life had simply become too complex. Julian sensed my concern.

“Yogi Raman told me that those who are masters of their time live simple lives. A hurried, frenzied pace is not what nature intended. While he firmly believed that lasting happiness could be reached only by those who were effective and set definite aims for themselves, living a life rich with accomplishment and contribution did not have to come through the sacrifice of peace of mind. This is what I found so fascinating about the wisdom I was hearing. It allowed me to be productive and yet fulfill my spiritual longings.”

I started to open myself even more to Julian. “You have always been honest and forthright with me so I will be the same with you. I don’t want to give up my practice and my house and my car to be happier and more satisfied. I like my toys and the material things I have earned. They are my rewards for all the hours I have worked over the years since we first met. But I feel empty — I really do. I told you about my dreams when I was in law school. There is so much more I could do with my life. You know I’m almost forty and I have never been to the Grand Canyon or the Eiffel Tower. I’ve never walked in a desert or canoed across a still lake on a gorgeous summer’s

day. I have never once taken off my socks and shoes and walked barefoot through a park, listening to the kids laugh and the dogs bark. I can't even remember the last time I took a long, quiet walk by myself after a snowfall just to hear the sounds and to enjoy the sensations."

"Then simplify your life." Julian suggested sympathetically. "Apply the ancient Ritual of Simplicity to every aspect of your world. By doing so, you are bound to have more time to savor these glorious wonders. One of the most tragic things that any one of us can do is to put off living. Too many people are dreaming of some magical rose garden on the horizon rather than enjoying the one growing in our backyards. What a tragedy."

"Any suggestions?"

"*That* I will leave to your own imagination. I have shared many of the strategies I learned from the sages with you. They will work wonders if you have the courage to apply them. Oh, that reminds me of another thing that I do to make sure my life stays calm and simple."

"What's that?"

"I love to have a quick nap in the afternoon. I find it keeps me energetic, refreshed and youthful. I guess you could say that I need my beauty sleep." Julian laughed.

"Beauty has never been one of your strong points."

"A sense of humor has always been one of yours, and for this I commend you. Always remember the power of laughter. Like music, it is a wonderful tonic for life's stresses and strains. I think Yogi Bhanu said it best when he said, 'Laughter opens your heart and soothes your soul. No one should ever take life so seriously that they forget to laugh at themselves'."

Julian had one final thought to share on the subject of time. "Perhaps most importantly, John, stop acting like you have five hundred years to live. When Divea brought that little hourglass to me she offered some advice that I will never forget."

"What did she say?"

"She told me that the best time to plant a tree was forty years ago. The second best time is today. Don't waste even one minute of your day. Develop a deathbed mentality."

"I beg your pardon?" I asked, struck by the graphic term Julian had employed. "What's a deathbed mentality?"

"It is a new way of looking at your life, a more empowering paradigm if

you will, one that reminds you that today could be your last, so savor it to the fullest.”

“Sounds kind of morbid, if you ask me. It makes me think about death.”

“Actually, it’s a philosophy about life. When you adopt a deathbed mentality you live every day as if it was your last. Imagine waking up every day and asking yourself the simple question: ‘What would I do today if it was my last?’ Then think about how you would treat your family, your colleagues and even those who you don’t know. Think about how productive and excited you would be to live every moment to the maximum. The deathbed question alone has the power to change your life. It will energize your days and bring a rush of zest and spirit to all that you do. You will start focusing on all the meaningful things that you have been putting off, and stop squandering time on all those petty things that have dragged you down into the quagmire of crisis and chaos.”

Julian continued. “Push yourself to do more and to experience more. Harness your energy to start expanding your dreams. Yes, expand your dreams. Don’t accept a life of mediocrity when you hold such infinite potential within the fortress of your mind. Dare to tap into your greatness. This is your birthright!”

“Powerful stuff.”

“Here’s more. There is a simple remedy to break the spell of frustration that plagues so many people.”

“My cup is still empty,” I said softly.

“Act as if failure is impossible, and your success will be assured. Wipe out every thought of not achieving your objectives, whether they are material or spiritual. Be brave, and set no limits on the workings of your imagination. Never be a prisoner of your past. Become the architect of your future. You will never be the same.”

As the city started to awaken, and the morning grew into full bloom, my ageless friend started to show the first signs of weariness after a night spent sharing his knowledge with an eager student. I had been astonished by Julian’s stamina, his boundless energy and his endless enthusiasm. He not only talked his talk — he walked his walk.

“We are moving to the end of Yogi Raman’s magical fable and approaching the time when I must leave you,” he said gently. “I have much to do and many more people to meet.”

“Are you going to tell your partners that you have returned home?” I

asked, my curiosity getting the better of me.

“Probably not,” Julian replied. “I am so different from the Julian Mantle they knew. I don’t think the same thoughts, I don’t wear the same clothes, I don’t do the same things. I am a fundamentally changed person. They wouldn’t recognize me.”

“You really are a new man,” I agreed, chuckling inwardly as I pictured this mystical monk adorned in the traditional robes of Sivana stepping into the striking red Ferrari of his former life.

“A new being is probably even more accurate.”

“I don’t see the distinction,” I confessed.

“There is an ancient saying in India: ‘We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.’ I now understand my role in the universe. I see what I am. I’m no longer in the world. The world is in me.”

“I’m going to have to chew on that one for a while,” I said in total honesty, not quite comprehending what Julian was talking about.

“Sure. I understand, my friend. A time will come when you are clear on what I am saying. If you follow the principles I have revealed to you and apply the techniques I have offered, you will surely advance along the path of enlightenment. You will come to master the art of personal government. You will see your life for what it really is: a small blip on the canvas of eternity. And you will come to see clearly who you are and the ultimate purpose of your life.”

“Which is?”

“To serve, of course. No matter how big a house you have or how slick a car you drive, the only thing you can take with you at the end of your life is your conscience. Listen to your conscience. Let it guide you. It knows what is right. It will tell you that your calling in life is ultimately selfless service to others in some form or another. This is what my personal odyssey has taught me. Now, I have so many others to see, serve and heal. My mission is to spread the ancient wisdom of the Sages of Sivana to all those who need to hear it. This is my purpose.”

The fire of knowledge had kindled Julian’s spirit — this was obvious, even to an unenlightened soul such as myself. He was so passionate, so committed and so fervent about what he was saying that it was reflected even in his physical dimension. His transformation from a frail old litigator to a vital, young Adonis was not brought about by a simple change in his diet and

a daily dose of some quick-fix exercise plan. No, it was a far deeper panacea that Julian had stumbled upon high in those majestic mountains. He had found the secret that people through the ages have been searching for. It was more than the secret of youth, fulfillment or even happiness. Julian had discovered the Secret of the Self.

Chapter 11 ActionSummary ¥ Julian Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Symbol



The Virtue

Respect Your Mind

The Wisdom

- Time is your most precious commodity and it is nonrenewable
- Focus on your priorities and maintain balance
- Simplify your life

The Techniques

- The Ancient Rule of 20
- Have the Courage to Say “NO”
- The Deathbed Mentality

Quotable Quote

Time slips through our hands like grains of sand, never to return again. Those who use time wisely from an early age are rewarded with rich, productive and satisfying lives.

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

CHAPTER TWELVE



The Ultimate Purpose of Life

Everything that lives, lives not alone, not for itself.

William Blake

“The Sages of Sivana were not only the most youthful people I have ever met,” observed Julian, “they were also, without a doubt, the kindest.

“Yogi Raman told me that when he was a child, as he waited for sleep, his father would step softly into his rose-covered hut and ask him what good deeds he had performed through the course of that day. Believe it or not, if he said that he hadn’t done any, his father would request that he get up and perform some act of kindness and selfless service before he was permitted to go to sleep.”

Julian went on. “One of the most essential of all of the virtues for enlightened living that I can share with you, John, is this one: when all is said and done, no matter what you have achieved, no matter how many summer homes you own, no matter how many cars sit in your driveway, *the quality of your life will come down to the quality of your contribution.*”

“Does this have something to do with the fresh yellow roses in Yogi Raman’s fable?”

“Of course it does. The flowers will remind you of the ancient Chinese proverb, “a little bit of fragrance always clings to the hand that gives you roses.” The meaning is clear — when you work to improve the lives of others, you indirectly elevate your own life in the process. When you take care to practice random acts of kindness daily, your own life becomes far richer and more meaningful. To cultivate the sacredness and sanctity of each day, serve others in some way.”

“Are you suggesting that I get involved in some volunteer work?”

“That’s an excellent starting point. But what I’m speaking of is much more philosophical than that. I’m suggesting that you adopt a new *paradigm* of your role on this planet.”

“You’re losing me again. Shed some light on the term ‘paradigm’. I’m not really familiar with it.”

“A paradigm is simply a way of looking at a circumstance or at life in general. Some people see the glass of life as half empty. The optimists see it as half full. They interpret the same circumstance differently because they have adopted a different paradigm. A paradigm is basically the lens through which you see the events of your life, both external and internal.”

“So when you suggest that I adopt a new paradigm of my purpose, are you saying that I should change my outlook?”

“Sort of. To dramatically improve the quality of your life, you must cultivate a new perspective of why you are here on Earth. You must realize that, just as you entered the world with nothing, you are destined to leave with nothing. This being the case, there can be only one real reason for your being here.”

“And that would be?”

“To give yourself to others and to contribute in a meaningful way,” Julian replied. “I’m not saying that you can’t have your toys or that you must give up your law practice and devote your life to the disadvantaged, although I have recently met people who have taken this course of action with great satisfaction. Our world is in the midst of great change. People are trading in money for meaning. Lawyers who used to judge people by the size of their pocketbooks are now judging people by the size of their commitment to others, by the size of their hearts. Teachers are leaving the wombs of their secure jobs to nurture the intellectual growth of needy kids living in the combat zones we call inner cities. People have heard the clear call for change. People are realizing that they are here for a purpose and that they have been given special gifts that will aid them to realize it.”

“What kind of special gifts?”

“Exactly the ones I have been telling you about all evening: an abundance of mental ability, boundless energy, unlimited creativity, a storehouse of discipline and a wellspring of peacefulness. It is simply a matter of unlocking these treasures and applying them for some common good,” noted Julian.

“I’m still with you. So how can one go about doing good?”

“I’m simply saying that you should make it a priority to change your

world view so that you stop seeing yourself purely as an individual and start seeing yourself as part of the collective.”

“So I should become kinder and gentler?”

“Realize that the most noble thing you can do is to give to others. The sages of the East call it the process of *‘shedding the shackles of self.’* It is all about losing your self-consciousness and starting to focus on a higher purpose. This might be in the form of giving more to those around you, whether this means your time or your energy: these truly are your two most valuable resources. It could be something as major as taking a one-year sabbatical to work with the poor or something as minor as letting a few cars pass in front of you in the middle of a crushing traffic jam. It might sound corny, but if there is one thing that I have learned it is that your life moves to a more magical dimension when you start striving to make the world a better place. Yogi Raman said that when we are born, we are crying while the world rejoices. He suggested that we should live our lives in such a way that when we die, the world cries while we are rejoicing.”

I knew Julian had a point. One of the things that was starting to bother me about practicing law was that I didn’t really feel I was making the sort of contribution I knew I was capable of making. Sure I had the privilege of litigating a number of precedent-setting cases that had advanced a number of good causes. But law had become a business for me rather than a labor of love. I was an idealist in law school like so many of my contemporaries. Over cold coffee and stale pizza in our dorm rooms, we had planned to change the world. Almost twenty years have passed since then, and my burning desire to advocate change has given way to my burning desire to pay off my mortgage and build up my retirement fund. I realized, for the first time in a long while, that I had ensconced myself in a middle-class cocoon, one that sheltered me from society at large and one I had grown accustomed to.

“Let me share an old story with you that might really hit home.” Julian continued. “There was once a feeble old woman whose loving husband died. So she went to live with her son and his wife and daughter. Every day, the woman’s sight grew worse and her hearing grew worse. Some days her hands trembled so badly the peas on her plate rolled onto the floor and the soup ran from her cup. Her son and his wife couldn’t help but be annoyed at the mess she made and one day they said enough was enough. So they set up a little table for the old woman in a corner next to the broom closet and made her eat all of her meals there, alone. She would look at them at mealtimes with tear-filled eyes from across the room, but they hardly talked to her while they ate, except to scold her for dropping a spoon or a fork.

“One evening, just before dinner, the little girl was sitting on the floor

playing with her building blocks. ‘What are you making?’ her father asked earnestly. ‘I’m building a little table for you and mother,’ she said, ‘so you can eat by yourselves in the corner someday when I get big.’ The father and mother were moved to silence for what seemed like an eternity. Then they started to weep. In that instant they became aware of the nature of their actions and the sadness they had caused. That night they led the old woman back to her rightful place at their big dinner table and from that day on she ate all her meals with them. And when a little morsel of food fell off the table or a fork strayed onto the floor, nobody seemed to mind anymore.

“In this story, the parents were not bad people,” Julian said. “They simply needed the spark of awareness to light their candle of compassion. Compassion and daily acts of kindness make life far richer. Take the time to meditate every morning on the good you will do for others during your day. The sincere words of praise to those who least expect it, the gestures of warmth offered to friends in need, the small tokens of affection to members of your family for no reason at all, all add up to a much more wonderful way to live. And speaking of friendships, make sure you keep them in constant repair. A person with three solid friends is very wealthy indeed.”

I nodded.

“Friends add humor, fascination and beauty to life. There are few things more rejuvenating than sharing a belly-bursting laugh with an old friend. Friends keep you humble when you get too self-righteous. Friends make you smile when you are taking yourself too seriously. Good friends are there to help you when life throws one of its little curves at you and things look worse than they seem. When I was a busy litigator, I had no time for friends. Now I am alone, except for you, John. I have no one to take long walks in the woods with when everyone else is nestled into the cocoon of a soft, hazy slumber. When I have just put down a wonderful book that has moved me deeply, I have no one to share my thoughts with. And I have no one to open my soul to when the sunshine of a glorious autumn day warms my heart and fills me with joy.”

Julian quickly caught himself. “However, regret is not an activity for which I have any time. I have learned from my teachers in Sivana that, ‘Every dawn is a new day to the one who is enlightened.’”

I had always viewed Julian as a sort of super-human legal gladiator, crunching through the arguments of his opponents as a martial artist does through a stack of heavily reinforced boards. I could see that the man I had met many years ago had been transformed into one of a very different nature. The one in front of me was gentle, kind and peaceful. He seemed secure in who he was and in his role in the theater of life. Like no other person I had

ever met, he seemed to see the pain of his past as a wise, old teacher and yet at the same time, he served notice that his life was far more than the sum of events gone by.

Julian's eyes glittered in the hope of things yet to come. I was enveloped by his sense of delight for the wonders of this world and caught up in his unbridled joy for living. It appeared to me that Julian Mantle, hard-hitting, bone-crunching litigation counsel to the well-heeled, had indeed been elevated from a human being passing through life without a care for anyone, to a spiritual being passing through life caring only about others. Perhaps this was the path that I too was about to walk.

Chapter 12 Action Summary ¥ Julian Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Symbol



The Virtue

Selflessly Serve Others

The Wisdom

- The quality of your life ultimately comes down to the quality of your contribution
- To cultivate the sacredness of each day, live to give
- By elevating the lives of others, your life reaches its highest dimensions

The Techniques

- Practice Daily Acts of Kindness
- Give to Those Who Ask
- Cultivate Richer Relationships

Quotable Quote

*The most noble thing you can do is to give to others.
Start focusing on your higher purpose.*

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

CHAPTER THIRTEEN



The Timeless Secret of Lifelong Happiness

When I admire the wonder of a sunset or the beauty of the moon, my soul expands in worship of the Creator.

Mahatma Gandhi

It had been over twelve hours since Julian had arrived at my house the night before to share the wisdom he had gathered in Sivana. Those twelve hours were, without a doubt, the most important of my life. All at once, I was feeling exhilarated, motivated and, yes, even liberated. Julian had fundamentally changed my outlook on life with Yogi Raman's fable and the ageless virtues that it represented. I realized that I had not even begun to explore the reaches of my human potential. I had been squandering the daily gifts that life had thrown my way. Julian's wisdom had allowed me the opportunity to come to grips with the wounds that were keeping me from living with the laughter, energy and fulfillment I knew that I deserved. I felt moved.

"I'll have to leave soon. You have commitments that are pressing on your time and I have my own work to tend to," Julian said apologetically.

"My work can wait."

"Unfortunately, mine can't," he said with a quick smile.

"But before I leave, I must reveal the final element of Yogi Raman's magical fable. You will recall that the sumo wrestler who walked out of the lighthouse in the middle of a beautiful garden with nothing more than a pink wire cable covering his private parts slipped on a shiny gold stopwatch and fell to the ground. After what seemed like an eternity, he finally regained

consciousness when the marvellous fragrance of the yellow roses reached his nose. He then jumped to his feet in delight and was astonished to see a long, winding path studded with millions of tiny diamonds. Of course, our friend the sumo wrestler took the path and, in doing so, lived happily ever after.”

“Seems plausible,” I chuckled.

“Yogi Raman had quite a vivid imagination, I’ll agree. But you have seen that his story has a purpose and that the principles it symbolizes are not only powerful — they are highly practical.”

“True,” I agreed without reservation.

“The path of diamonds, then, will serve to remind you of the final virtue for enlightened living. By carrying this principle with you through your daily work, you will enrich your life in a way that is difficult for me to describe. You will begin to see the exquisite wonders in the simplest of things and live with the ecstasy you deserve. And by carrying out your promise to me and sharing it with others, you will also allow them to transform their world from the ordinary into the extraordinary.”

“Will this take me a while to learn?”

“The principle itself is strikingly straightforward to grasp. But learning how to apply it effectively in all your waking moments will take a couple of weeks of steady practice.”

“Okay, I’m dying to hear it.”

“Funny you say that because the seventh and final virtue is all about living. The Sages of Sivana believed that a truly joyful and rewarding life comes only through a process they called ‘living in the now.’ These yogis knew that the past is water under the bridge and the future is a distant sun on the horizon of your imagination. The most important moment is now. Learn to live in it and savor it fully.”

“I understand exactly what you are saying, Julian. I seem to spend most of my day fretting over past events that I have no power to change or worrying about things to come, which never do arrive. My mind is always flooded by a million little thoughts pulling me in a million different directions. It’s really frustrating.”

“Why?”

“It tires me out! I guess I just don’t have peace of mind. Yet I have experienced times when my mind is fully occupied on only what was in front of me. Often this happened when I was under the gun to crank out a legal brief and I didn’t have time to think about anything other than the task at

hand. I've also felt this kind of total focus when I was playing soccer with the boys and I really wanted to win. Hours seemed to pass by in minutes and I felt centered. It was as if the only thing that mattered to me was what I was doing in that very moment. Everything else, the worries, the bills, the law practice, didn't count. Come to think of it, these were probably the times when I felt the most peaceful as well."

"Being engaged in a pursuit that truly challenges you is the surest route to personal satisfaction. But the real key to remember is that *happiness is a journey, not a destination*. Live for today — there will never be another one quite like it," stated Julian, his smooth hands coming together as if to give a prayer of thanks for being privy to what he had just said.

"Is that the principle that the path of diamonds in Yogi Raman's fable symbolizes?" I asked.

"Yes," came the succinct reply. "Just as the sumo wrestler found lasting fulfillment and joy by walking the path of diamonds, you can have the life you deserve the very moment you start to understand that the path you are currently walking on is one rich with diamonds and other priceless treasures. Stop spending so much time chasing life's big pleasures while you neglect the little ones. Slow things down. Enjoy the beauty and sacredness of all that is around you. You owe this to yourself."

"Does that mean that I should stop setting big goals for my future and concentrate on the present?"

"No," replied Julian firmly. "As I said earlier, goals and dreams for the future are essential elements in every truly successful life. Hope for what will appear in your future is what gets you out of bed in the morning and what keeps you inspired through your days. Goals energize your life. My point is simply this: never put off happiness for the sake of achievement. Never put off the things that are important for your well-being and satisfaction to a later time. Today is the day to live fully, not when you win the lottery or when you retire. Never put off living!"

Julian stood up and started pacing back and forth across the living room floor like a seasoned litigator releasing his final kernels of reason in an impassioned closing argument. "Don't fool yourself into thinking that you will be a more loving and giving husband when your law firm takes on a few more junior lawyers to ease the burden. Don't kid yourself into believing that you will start to enrich your mind, care for your body and nourish your soul when your bank account gets big enough and you have the luxury of more free time. Today is the day to enjoy the fruits of your efforts. Today is the day to seize the moment and live a life that soars. Today is the day to live from

your imagination and harvest your dreams. And please never, ever forget the gift of family.”

“I’m not sure I know exactly what you mean, Julian?”

“Live your children’s childhood,” came the simple reply.

“Huh?” I muttered, perplexed at the apparent paradox.

“Few things are as meaningful as being a part of your children’s childhood. What is the point of climbing the steps of success if you have missed the first steps of your own kids? What good is owning the biggest house on your block if you have not taken the time to create a home? What is the use of being known across the country as a red-hot trial lawyer if your kids don’t even know their father?” Julian offered, his voice now quivering with emotion. “I know whereof I speak.”

This last comment floored me. All I knew of Julian was that he had been a superstar litigator who hung out with the rich and the beautiful. His romantic trysts with nubile fashion models were almost as legendary as his courtroom skills. What could this former millionaire playboy possibly know about being a father? What could he possibly know about the daily struggles I faced in trying to be all things to all people, a great father and a successful lawyer? But Julian’s sixth sense caught me.

“I do know something of the blessings we call children,” he said softly.

“But I always thought you were the city’s most eligible bachelor before you threw in the towel and gave up your practice.”

“Before I was caught up in the illusion of that fast and furious lifestyle that I was so well known for, you know that I was married.”

“Yes.”

He then paused, as a child might before telling his best friend a closely-guarded secret. “What you do not know is that I also had a little daughter. She was the sweetest, most delicate creature I have ever seen in my life. Back then, I was a lot like you were the first time we met: cocky, ambitious and full of hope. I had everything anyone could ever want. People told me I had a brilliant future, a stunningly beautiful wife and a wonderful daughter. Yet, when life seemed to be perfect, it was all taken from me in an instant.”

For the first time since his return, Julian’s eternally joyful face was enveloped in sadness. A single tear began to slide down one of his bronzed cheeks and dripped onto the velvety fabric of his ruby red robe. I was speechless and gripped by the revelation of my long-time friend.

“You don’t have to continue Julian,” I offered sympathetically, placing an

arm around his shoulder to comfort him.

“But I do, John. Of all those I knew in my former life, you showed the most promise. As I said, you reminded me a lot of myself when I was younger. Even now you still have so much going for you. But if you keep on living the way you’re living, you are headed for disaster. I came back to this place to show you that there are so many wonders waiting for you to explore, so many moments left for you to savor.

“The drunk driver who killed my daughter didn’t take away only one precious life on that sun-soaked October afternoon — he took two. After my daughter’s passing, my life unravelled. I started spending every waking minute at the office, foolishly hoping that my legal career might be the salve for the pain of a broken heart. Somedays, I even slept on a couch in my office, dreading to return to the home where so many sweet memories had been laid to rest. And while my career did take off, my inner world was a mess. My wife, who had been my constant companion since law school, left me, citing my obsession with my work as the straw that broke the proverbial camel’s back. My health deteriorated and I spiralled into the infamous life that I was engaged in when we first met. Sure I had everything money could possibly buy. But I sold my soul for it, I really did,” Julian noted emotionally, his voice still choked up.

“So when you say ‘Live your children’s childhood,’ you are basically telling me to take the time to watch them grow and flourish. That’s it, isn’t it?”

“Even today, twenty-seven years after she left us while we were driving her to her best friend’s birthday party, I would give anything just to hear my daughter giggle again or to play hide-and-seek like we used to in our back garden. I would love to hold her in my arms and softly caress her golden hair. She took a piece of my heart with her when she left. And though my life has been inspired by new meaning since I found the way to enlightenment and self-leadership in Sivana, a day doesn’t pass without me seeing the rosy face of my sweet little girl in the silent theater of my mind. You have such great kids, John. Don’t miss the forest for the trees. The best gift you could ever give your children is your love. Get to know them again. Show them that they are far more important to you than the fleeting rewards of your professional career. Pretty soon they will be off, building lives and families of their own. Then it will be too late, the time will be gone.”

Julian had struck a chord deep inside of me. I guess I had known for some time that my workaholic pace was slowly but steadily loosening our family’s ties. But it was like a smoldering ember, burning quietly, slowly gathering its energy before revealing the full extent of its destructive potential. I knew my

kids needed me, even if they might not have told me so. I needed to hear this from Julian. Time was slipping by and they were growing up so quickly. I couldn't remember the last time my son Andy and I had stolen off early on a crisp Saturday morning to spend the day at the fishing hole his grandfather loved so much. There was a time when we would go every weekend. Now, this time-honored ritual seemed like someone else's memory.

The more I thought about it, the harder it hit me. Piano recitals, Christmas plays, little-league championships had all been traded for my professional advancement.

'What was I doing?' I wondered. I really was sliding down the slippery slope that Julian described. There and then, I resolved to change.

"Happiness is a journey," Julian continued, his voice rising once again with the heat of passion. "It is also a choice that you make. You can marvel at the diamonds along the way or you can keep running through all your days, chasing that elusive pot of gold at the end of the rainbow that ultimately reveals itself to be empty. Enjoy the special moments that every day offers because today, this day is all you have."

"Can anyone learn to 'live in the now'?"

"Absolutely. No matter what your current circumstances might be, you can train yourself to enjoy the gift of living and fill your existence with the jewels of everyday life."

"But isn't that a little optimistic? How about someone who has just lost everything they own due to a bad business deal? Let's say that not only are they financially bankrupt but emotionally bankrupt as well."

"The size of your bank account and the size of your house have nothing to do with living life with a sense of joy and wonder. This world is full of unhappy millionaires. Do you think the sages I met in Sivana were concerned with having a well-balanced financial portfolio and acquiring a summer home in the South of France?" Julian asked mischievously.

"Okay. I see your point."

"There is a huge difference between making a lot of money and making a lot of life. When you start spending even five minutes a day practicing the art of gratitude, you will cultivate the richness of living that you are looking for. Even the person you spoke of in your example can find an abundance of things to be thankful for, notwithstanding his dire financial predicament. Ask him if he still has his health, his loving family and his good reputation in the community. Question him as to whether he is happy to have citizenship in this great country and whether he still has a roof over his head. Perhaps he might

have no assets other than a masterful ability to work hard and the ability to dream big dreams. Yet these are precious assets for which he ought to be grateful. We all have much to be thankful for. Even the birds singing outside your windowsill on what looks like another magnificent summer's day appear as a gift to the wise person. Remember, John, life doesn't always give you what you ask for, but it always gives you what you need."

"So by giving daily thanks for all of my assets, whether these are material or spiritual, I will develop the habit of living in the moment?"

"Yes. This is an effective method for putting far more living into your life. When you savor 'the now,' you kindle the fire of life that allows you to grow your destiny."

"Grow my destiny?"

"Yes. I told you earlier that we all have been given certain talents. Every single person on the planet is a genius."

"You don't know some of the lawyers I work with," I quipped.

"Everyone," said Julian emphatically. "We all have something that we are meant to do. Your genius will shine through, and happiness will fill your life, the instant you discover your higher purpose and then direct all your energies towards it. Once you are connected to this mission, whether it is being a great teacher of children or an inspired artist, all your desires will be fulfilled effortlessly. You will not even have to try. As a matter of fact, the harder you try, the longer it will take you to reach your aims. Instead, simply follow the path of your dreams, in full expectation of the bounty that is certain to flow. This will bring you to your divine destination. This is what I mean by growing your destiny," Julian offered sagely.

"When I was a young boy, my father loved to read me a fairy tale known as 'Peter and the Magic Thread.' Peter was a very lively little boy. Everyone loved him: his family, his teachers and his friends. But he did have one weakness."

"What was that?"

"Peter could never live in the moment. He had not learned to enjoy the process of life. When he was in school, he dreamed of being outside playing. When he was outside playing, he dreamed of his summer vacation. Peter constantly daydreamed, never taking the time to savor the special moments that filled his days. One morning, Peter was out walking in a forest near his home. Feeling tired, he decided to rest on a patch of grass and eventually dozed off. After only a few minutes of deep sleep, he heard someone calling his name. 'Peter! Peter!' came the shrill voice from above. As he slowly

opened his eyes, he was startled to see a striking woman standing above him. She must have been over a hundred years old and her snow-white hair dangled well below her shoulders like a matted blanket of wool. In this woman's wrinkled hand was a magical little ball with a hole in the center and out of the hole dangled a long, golden thread.

“‘Peter,’ she said, ‘this is the thread of your life. If you pull the thread just a bit, an hour will pass in seconds. If you pull a little harder, whole days will pass in minutes. And if you pull with all your might, months — even years — will pass by in days.’ Peter grew very excited at this discovery. ‘I’d like to have it if I may?’ he asked. The elderly woman quickly reached down and gave the ball with the magic thread to the young boy.

“The next day, Peter was sitting in the classroom feeling restless and bored. Suddenly, he remembered his new toy. As he pulled a little bit of the golden thread, he quickly found himself at home, playing in his garden. Realizing the power of the magic thread, Peter soon grew tired of being a schoolboy and longed to be a teenager, with all the excitement that phase of life would bring. So again he pulled out the ball and pulled hard on the golden thread.

“Suddenly he was a teenager with a very pretty young girlfriend named Elise. But Peter still wasn't content. He had never learned to enjoy the moment and to explore the simple wonders of every stage of his life. Instead, he dreamed of being an adult. So again he pulled on the thread and many years whizzed by in an instant. Now he found that he had been transformed into a middle-aged adult. Elise was now his wife and Peter was surrounded with a houseful of kids. But Peter also noticed something else. His once jet black hair had started to turn gray. And his once youthful mother whom he loved so dearly had grown old and frail. Yet Peter still could not live in the moment. He had never learned to ‘live in the now.’ So, once again, he pulled on the magic thread and waited for the changes to appear.

“Peter now found that he was a ninety-year-old man. His thick dark hair had turned white as snow and his beautiful young wife Elise had also grown old and had passed away a few years earlier. His wonderful children had grown up and left home to lead lives of their own. For the first time in his entire life, Peter realized that he had not taken the time to embrace the wonders of living. He had never gone fishing with his kids or taken a moonlight stroll with Elise. He had never planted a garden or read those wonderful books his mother had loved to read. Instead, he had hurried through life, never resting to see all that was good along the way.

“Peter became very sad at this discovery. He decided to go out to the forest where he used to walk as a boy to clear his head and warm his spirit. As

he entered the forest, he noticed that the little saplings of his childhood had grown into mighty oaks. The forest itself had matured into a paradise of nature. He lay down on a small patch of grass and fell into a deep slumber. After only a minute, he heard someone calling out to him. ‘Peter! Peter!’ cried the voice. He looked up in astonishment to see that it was none other than the old woman who had given him the ball with the magic golden thread many years earlier.

“‘How have you enjoyed my special gift?’ she asked.

“Peter was direct in his reply.

“‘At first it was fun but now I hate it. My whole life has passed before my eyes without giving me the chance to enjoy it. Sure, there would have been sad times as well as great times but I haven’t had the chance to experience either. I feel empty inside. I have missed the gift of living.’

“‘You are very ungrateful,’ said the old woman. ‘Still, I will give you one last wish.’

“Peter thought for an instant and then answered hastily. ‘I’d like to go back to being a schoolboy and live my life over again.’ He then returned to his deep sleep.

“Again he heard someone calling his name and opened his eyes. ‘Who could it be this time?’ he wondered. When he opened his eyes, he was absolutely delighted to see his mother standing over his bedside. She looked young, healthy and radiant. Peter realized that the strange woman of the forest had indeed granted his wish and he had returned to his former life.

“‘Hurry up Peter. You sleep too much. Your dreams will make you late for school if you don’t get up right this minute,’ his mother admonished. Needless to say, Peter dashed out of bed on this morning and began to live the way he had hoped. Peter went on to live a full life, one rich with many delights, joys and triumphs, but it all started when he stopped sacrificing the present for the future and began to live in the moment.”

“Amazing story,” I said softly.

“Unfortunately, John, the story of Peter and the Magic Thread is just that, a story, a fairy tale. We here in the real world will never get a second chance to live life to the fullest. Today is your chance to awaken to the gift of living — before it is too late. Time really does slip through your fingers like tiny grains of sand. Let this new day be the defining moment of your life, the day that you make the decision once and for all to focus on what is truly important to you. Make the decision to spend more time with those who make your life meaningful. Revere the special moments, revel in their power. Do the things

that you have always wanted to do. Climb that mountain you have always wanted to climb or learn to play the trumpet. Dance in the rain or build a new business. Learn to love music, learn a new language and rekindle the delight of your childhood. Stop putting off your happiness for the sake of achievement. Instead, why not enjoy the process? Revive your spirit and start tending to your soul. This is the way to Nirvana.”

“Nirvana?”

“The Sages of Sivana believed that the ultimate destination of all truly enlightened souls was a place called Nirvana. Actually, more than a place, the sages believed Nirvana to be a state, one that transcended anything they had known previously. In Nirvana, all things were possible. There was no suffering and the dance of life was played out with divine perfection. On reaching Nirvana, the sages felt that they would step into Heaven on Earth. This was their ultimate goal in life,” Julian observed, his face radiating a peaceful, almost angelic quality.

“We are all here for some special reason,” he observed prophetically. “Meditate on what your true calling is, and how you can give of yourself to others. Stop being a prisoner of gravity. Today, light your spark of life and let it blaze brightly. Start applying the principles and strategies that I have shared with you. Be all that you can be. A time will come when you too will taste the fruits of that place called Nirvana.”

“How will I know when I reach this state of enlightenment?”

“Little hints will appear to confirm your entrance. You will start to notice the holiness in everything that is around you: the divinity of a moonbeam, the allure of a lush blue sky on a scorching summer day, the fragrant bloom of a daisy or the laugh of a mischievous little child.”

“Julian, I promise you that the time you have spent with me will not be in vain. I will dedicate myself to living by the wisdom of the Sages of Sivana and I will keep my promise to you by sharing all that I have learned with those who will benefit by your message. I am speaking from the heart. I give you my word,” I offered sincerely, feeling the throes of emotion stirring within.

“Spread the rich legacy of the sages to all those around you. They will quickly benefit from this knowledge and improve the quality of their lives, just as you will improve the quality of yours. And remember, the journey is to be enjoyed. The road is just as good as the end.”

I let Julian continue. “Yogi Raman was a great storyteller but there was one story he told me which stood out among the rest. May I share it with

you?”

“Absolutely.”

“Many years ago, in ancient India, a maharajah wanted to build a great tribute to his wife as a sign of his deep love and affection for her. This man wanted to create a structure the likes of which the world had never seen, one that would shimmer across the moonlit sky, one that people would admire for centuries to come. So every day, block by block, his workers toiled in the hot sun. Every day this structure started to look a little more defined, a little more like a monument, a little more like a beacon of love against the azure blue Indian sky. Finally, after twenty-two years of daily, gradual progress, this palace of pure marble was complete. Guess what I’m speaking of?”

“I have no idea.”

“The Taj Mahal. One of the Seven Wonders of the World,” Julian replied. “My point is simple. Everyone on this planet is a wonder of this world. Every one of us is a hero in some way or another. Every one of us has the potential for extraordinary achievement, happiness and lasting fulfillment. All it takes are small steps in the direction of our dreams. Like the Taj Mahal, a life overflowing with wonders is built day by day, block by block. Small victories lead to large victories. Tiny, incremental changes and improvements such as those I have suggested will create positive habits. Positive habits will create results. And results will inspire you towards greater personal change. Begin to live each day as if it was your last. Starting today, learn more, laugh more and do what you truly love to do. Do not be denied your destiny. For what lies behind you and what lies in front of you matters little when compared to what lies within you.”

Without saying another word, Julian Mantle, the millionaire lawyer-turned enlightened monk, got up, embraced me like the brother he had never had and walked out of my living room into the thick heat of another scorching summer day. As I sat alone and collected my thoughts, I noticed that the only evidence I could find of this sage messenger’s extraordinary visit sat silently on the coffee table in front of me. It was his empty cup.

Chapter 13 ActionSummary ¥ Julian Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Symbol



The Virtue

Embrace the Present

The Wisdom

- Live in the “now”. Savor the gift of the present
- Never sacrifice happiness for achievement
- Savor the journey and live each day as your last

The Techniques

- Live Your Childrens’ Childhood
- Practice Gratitude
- Grow Your Destiny

Quotable Quote

We are all here for some special reason. Stop being a prisoner of your past. Become the architect of your future.

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

The 7 Timeless Virtues of Enlightened Living

Virtue

Symbol

1 Master Your Mind



The Magnificent Garden

2 Follow Your Purpose



The Towering Lighthouse

3 Practice Kaizen



The Sumo Wrestler

4 Live with Discipline



The Pink Wire Cable

5 Respect Your Time



The Gold Stopwatch

6 Selflessly Serve Others



The Fragrant Roses

7 Embrace the Present



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MegaLiving

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

Leadership Wisdom from the Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

Who Will Cry When You Die?

Family Wisdom from the Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

The Saint, the Surfer and the CEO

Discover Your Destiny with the Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

I dedicate this book, with deep respect and great love, to my parents. You not only gave me the gift of life but an unrelenting passion to live it fully. For that I am so very grateful.

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“Life is pure adventure and the sooner we realize that, the quicker we will be able to treat life as art.”

Maya Angelou

“I used to think that one day I’d be able to resolve the different drives I have in different directions, the tensions between the different people I am. Now I realize that is who I am. I do feel I’m getting closer to the song in my head. I wasn’t looking for grace. But luckily grace was looking for me.”

Bono, lead singer of U2, as quoted in *Rolling Stone*

1

I'm No Guru

The media sometimes calls me a leadership (or self-help) “guru.” I’m not. I’m just an ordinary guy who happens to have learned ideas and tools that have helped many human beings reach their best lives and many organizations get to world class.

But I must be really clear: I’m no different from you. I have my struggles, my frustrations and my own fears—along with my hopes, goals and dreams. I’ve had good seasons and some deeply painful ones. I’ve made some spectacularly good choices and some outrageously bad mistakes. I’m very human—a work in progress. If I have ideas that you find insightful, please know it’s simply because I spend my days focused on the knowledge you are about to experience. Thinking about practical ways to help you play your biggest game as a human being and reach greatness. Dwelling on how I can help companies get to the extraordinary. Do anything long enough and you’ll get some depth of insight and understanding about it. Then they’ll call you a guru.

A man at a signing I did at a bookstore in Bangalore, India, heard me say, “I’m no guru.” He came up to me and said: “Why are you so uncomfortable being called a guru? ‘Gu’ simply means ‘darkness’ in Sanskrit and ‘ru’ simple means ‘dispel.’ So the word ‘guru’ simply speaks of one who dispels the darkness and brings more understanding and light.” Nice point. Made me think.

I’ve had good seasons and some deeply painful ones.

I’ve made some spectacularly good choices and some outrageously bad mistakes. I’m very human—a work in progress.

I guess my discomfort stems from the fact that if you think I’m different from you, then you might say, “Well, I can’t do the kinds of things Robin talks about because he has talents and abilities I don’t have. All the stuff he talks about is easy for him to do. He’s this guru.” Nope. Sorry to disappoint

you. I'm just a guy working hard to make the best of his days, trying to be a great single dad to my two wonderful children and hoping he's—in some way—making a difference in peoples' lives. No guru here. But I do like the “dispelling the darkness” point. Need to learn more about that one. Maybe some guru can help me.

Harvey Keitel and Windows of Opportunity

I don't always get it right (I told you I'm no guru). But please know that I try so hard to walk my talk and to ensure my video is in alignment with my audio. Still, I am a human being, and that means sometimes I slip (I've yet to meet a perfect one). Here's what I mean.

I spend a lot of time encouraging the readers of my books and the participants at my workshops on personal and organizational leadership to "run toward your fears" and to seize those "cubic centimeters of chance" (opportunities) when they present themselves. I challenge my clients to dream, to shine and to dare, because to me a life well lived is all about reaching for your highest and your best. And, in my mind, the person who experiences the most wins. Most of the time, I am a poster boy for visiting the places that scare me and doing the things that make me feel uncomfortable. But recently, I didn't. Sorry.

I was downtown at the Four Seasons in Toronto, in the lobby getting ready for a speech I was about to give to a company called Advanced Medical Optics, which is a long-standing leadership coaching client of ours and an impressive organization. I look up and guess who I see? Harvey Keitel. Yes, the Harvey "*Reservoir Dogs* Big Movie Star" Keitel. And what does the man who wrote *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* do? I shrink from greatness.

Each day, life will send you little windows of opportunity. Your destiny will ultimately be defined by how you respond to these windows of opportunity.

I don't know why I didn't stand up and walk over and make a new friend. I've done it with baseball legend Pete Rose at the Chicago airport (we ended up sitting next to each other all the way to Phoenix). I did it last summer with Henry Kravis, one of the planet's top financiers in the lobby of a hotel in Rome (I was with my kids, and Colby, my 11-year-old son, thought he was pretty cool). I did it with Senator Edward Kennedy when I saw him in Boston.

I even did it with guitar virtuoso Eddie Van Halen when I was a kid growing up in Halifax, Nova Scotia. But I missed the chance to connect with Harvey Keitel.

Each day, life will send you little windows of opportunity. Your destiny will ultimately be defined by how you respond to these windows of opportunity. Shrink from them and your life will be small. Feel the fear and run to them anyway, and your life will be big. Life's just too short to play little. Even with your kids, you only have a tiny window to develop them and champion their highest potential. And to show them what unconditional love looks like. When that window closes, it's hard to reopen it.

If I see Harvey Keitel again, I promise you that I'll sprint toward him. He may think I'm a celebrity stalker until we start to chat. And then he'll discover the truth: I'm simply a man who seizes the gifts that life presents to him.

Nothing Fails like Success

Richard Carrion, the CEO of Puerto Rico’s top bank, once shared a line with me that I’ll never forget: “Robin, nothing fails like success.” Powerful thought. You, as well as your organization, are most vulnerable when you are most successful. Success actually breeds complacency, inefficiency and—worst of all—arrogance. When people and businesses get really successful, they often fall in love with themselves. They stop innovating, working hard, taking risks and begin to rest on their laurels. They go on the defensive, spending their energy protecting their success rather than staying true to the very things that got them to the top. Whenever I share this point with a roomful of CEOs, every single one of them nods in agreement. Please let me give you a real-world example from my own life.

This past weekend, I took my kids to our favorite Italian restaurant. The food is incredible there. The best bresaola outside of Italy. Heavenly pasta. Super foamy lattes that make me want to give up my job and become a barista. But the service at this place is bad. Bad, bad, bad (like it is at most places). Why? Because the place is always full. And because they are doing so well, they’ve taken the lines out front for granted. And guess what? It’s the beginning of their end.

I love taking pictures. My dad taught me to record the journey of my life with photos. So I generally carry a little camera around with me. I asked our server if she would snap a picture of my children and me as we dug into our spaghetti. “I don’t have time” was the curt reply. Unbelievable. Too busy to take five seconds to keep a customer happy. Too busy to help out a little. Too busy to show some humanity.

The more successful you and your organization become, the more humble and devoted to your customers you need to be.

“Nothing fails like success.” Richard Carrion gets it. So does David Neeleman, the CEO of JetBlue, who observed: “When you’re making money and good margins, you tend to get sloppy.” Many CEOs don’t. The more

successful you and your organization become, the more humble and devoted to your customers you need to be. The more committed to efficiency and relentless improvement you need to be. The faster you need to play. The more value you need to add. Because the moment you stop doing the very things that got you to the top of the mountain is the very moment you begin the slide down to the valley.

4

Be a Rock Star at Work

Just finished reading an article in *Fortune* on the Google guys and all their economic success. It inspired a torrent of ideas (reading's like that, isn't it?). It got me thinking about the importance of showing up fully at work—giving the fullness of your brilliance and playing full out. Being wildly passionate about your To Do's. Being breathtakingly committed to your big projects and best opportunities. Being a rock star in whatever you do each day to put bread on your table.

Work gives meaning to our lives. It influences our self-worth and the way we perceive our place under the sun. Being great at what you do isn't just something you do for the organization you work for—it's a gift you give yourself. Being spectacularly great at your work promotes personal respect, excitement and just makes your life a lot more interesting. Good things happen to people who do good things. And when you bring your highest talents and deepest devotion to the work you do, what you are really doing is setting yourself up for a richer, happier and more fulfilling experience of living.

How do you feel after an ultra-productive day? How do you feel when you've given your best, had fun with your teammates and gone the extra mile for customers? How do you feel when you've brought more heart to what you do for a living? How do you feel when you reached for your greatest goals and grabbed them? It feels pretty good, doesn't it? And you don't need to have the biggest title to do the best job. This point makes me think of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—one of my heroes—who once observed: “If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or as Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, ‘here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.’”

And you don't need to have the biggest title to do the best job.

So be a rock star at work today. Walk onto the stage of this day and play your heart out. Give the performance of your life. Wow your audience and get them cheering for you. Be the Bono of selling staplers. Be the Keith Richards of accounting. Be the Jimi Hendrix of human resources. And when you get famous and people from all over ask you for your autograph, make sure you drop me a line. I'd love to hear from you.

Your Days Define Your Life

Big idea: Your days are your life in miniature. As you live your hours, so you create your years. As you live your days, so you craft your life. What you do today is actually creating your future. The words you speak, the thoughts you think, the food you eat and the actions you take are defining your destiny—shaping who you are becoming and what your life will stand for. Small choices lead to giant consequences—over time. There’s no such thing as an unimportant day.

As you live your days, so you craft your life.

Each one of us is called to greatness. Each one of us has an exquisite power within us. Each one of us can have a significant impact on the world around us—if we so choose. But for this power that resides internally to grow, we need to use it. And the more you exercise it, the stronger it gets. The more this power gets tapped, the more confident you become. Henry David Thoreau related to this point well when he wrote: “I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of a human being to elevate their life by conscious endeavor.” And advertising guru Donny Deutsch added a more current spin on the idea when he wrote in his book *Often Wrong, Never in Doubt*: “For every person with the stuff, the one out of a hundred who goes to a rarefied place is the one who says, ‘why not me?’ and goes for it.”

The best among us are not more gifted than the rest. They just take little steps each day as they march toward their biggest life. And the days slip into weeks, the weeks into months and before they know it, they arrive at a place called Extraordinary.

Drink Coffee with Gandhi

Reading is one of the best disciplines I know of to stay “on your game” and at your highest. Reading from a great book is really all about having a conversation with the author. And we become our conversations. Just think, tonight—by reading Mahatma Gandhi’s autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*, over a cup of coffee—you can get behind this great man’s eyeballs and learn what made him tick. Want to hang out with Madonna tomorrow? Grab her book. Same for Jack Welch, Mother Teresa, Bill Gates, Salvador Dali or the Dalai Lama. And reading a book by someone you respect allows some of their brilliance to rub off on you. The hand that puts down a great book will never be the same. As Oliver Wendell Holmes observed: “A mind once stretched by a new idea can never return to its original dimensions.”

When I was growing up my father once told me: “Cut back on your rent or cut back on what you spend on food but never worry about investing money in a good book.” That powerful thought has accompanied me through life. His philosophy was that all it takes is one idea discovered in a single book to lift you to a whole new level and revolutionize the way you see the world. And so our home was filled with books. And now I try to devote at least an hour a day to reading. That habit alone has transformed me. Thank you, Dad.

Perhaps my greatest gift to my children when I die will be my library. I have books on leadership, relationships, business, philosophy, wellness, spirituality, great lives and many of my other favored topics in it. Many of these I’ve picked up in bookshops from across the planet when I travel on business. These books have shaped my thinking. They have formed my personal philosophy. They have made me the man I am. To me, my books are priceless.

Reading a book by someone you respect allows some of their brilliance to rub off on you.

The old expression is true: “Knowing how to read and not reading is almost the same as not knowing how to read.” Make the time to read

something good each day. Fill your mind with big ideas and dazzling thoughts. Use books to flood your soul with hope and inspiration. And remember, if you want to lead, you really need to read. Oh, and if you—like me—have the habit of buying more books than you can ever possibly read, don't feel guilty—you're building your library. And that's a beautiful thing.

7

Get Some Skin in the Game

I fail more than most people. I fail all the time. I've had failures in business. I've had failures in relationships. I've had failures in life. I used to wonder why this happened. I used to play Poor Me and suffer from the dreaded disease of victimitis infinitus. But now I get it. I've been stumbling toward my best life. Failure is the price of greatness. Failure is an essential ingredient for a high achievement. As innovation guru David Kelley wrote: "Fail faster. Succeed sooner." You can't win without leaving your safety zone and taking some calculated risks. No risk, no reward. And the more risks you take in the pursuit of your dreams, the more you are going to fail.

Too many among us live in what I call the safe harbor of the known. Same breakfast for 20 years. Same drive to work for 20 years. Same conversations for 20 years. Same thinking for 20 years. I have no judgment on that kind of a life. If it makes you happy, well, that's great. But I don't know of anyone who is happy living like that. If you keep doing what you've been doing, you'll keep getting what you've been getting. Einstein defined insanity as doing the same things but expecting different results. Yet most people rule their lives that way. True joy comes when you put some skin in the game and take some chances. Yes, you will start to experience more failure. But guess what? Success also starts to pay more visits.

Failure is just part of the process of getting to world class. "Screw-ups are the mark of excellence," said management consultant Tom Peters. The best companies on the planet have failed more than the average ones. The most successful people on the planet have failed more than ordinary ones. To me, the only failure is the failure to try and dream and dare. The real risk lies in riskless living. Mark Twain made the point perfectly when he observed: "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did."

The real risk lies in riskless living.

So go ahead, stretch today. Ask for the best table in your favorite restaurant. Ask for an upgrade to first class on your next flight (good luck). Ask your teammate at work for more understanding. Ask your sweetheart at

home for more love. Do it. I dare you. And remember, you can't win a game that you don't even play.

Be into Breezes

I was at my tennis club a while ago with my kids, who are great players. I'm a great ball boy at best. A man who I guess would be in his early seventies comes up to me and starts a conversation. Interesting person. Lived a rich life so far. After a few moments, he closes his eyes and smiles. I ask: "What's going on?" His reply was unforgettable: "Oh, nothing much. It's just that I'm really into breezes." Perfect.

**Some of life's best pleasures are simplest ones.
Enrich your life with more of them and your heart
will be happy.**

In this age of wanting more, needing more and having more, it was so refreshing to hear someone speak of the simple pleasures of life. I need to be clear: I have nothing against material things. Contrary to popular belief, *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* isn't a manifesto against making money and enjoying the good life. My main message there was simply "remember what's most important to leading a great life." Drive a BMW, wear Prada, stay at the Four Seasons and earn a ton of money if these are things that make you happy. Life is certainly full of material pleasures that really do make the journey more delightful. No need to feel guilty about enjoying them. But please don't forget about those basic but beautiful treasures to be loved along the way. Like deep human connections, realizing your best through fulfilling work, exploring the world and experiencing the glory of nature—like a sensational sunset that fills your soul or a full moon set against a star-filled sky.

Some of life's best pleasures are its simplest ones. Enrich your life with more of them and your heart will be happy. And you can start with sweet breezes.

Make Time to Think

I am blessed to be able to meet interesting people from all walks of life regularly because of the work I do. I meet filmmakers, poets, brilliant college students, wise teachers and visionary entrepreneurs. Each one of these encounters has taught me something and shaped my perspective. I had dinner recently with one of Asia's top CEOs. Asked him the secret of his outrageous success. He smiled: "I make the time to think." Every morning, he spends at least 45 minutes with his eyes closed, deep in reflection. He's not meditating. He's not praying. He's thinking.

Sometimes he's analyzing business challenges. Other times he's thinking about new markets. Still other times he's being introspective on the meaning of his life and what he wants it to stand for. Often, he's simply dreaming up new ways to grow personally and professionally. Every once in a while, he'll spend between six and eight hours doing this. Sitting silently. Still. With his eyes closed. Thinking.

Making the time to think is a superb strategy for success at leadership and in life. Too many people spend the best hours of their days solely engaged in doing, on the execution aspect of things. Recently a client said to me: "Robin, sometimes I get so busy that I don't even know what I'm so busy doing." But what if he's busy with the wrong things? Few things are as disappointing as investing all your time, energy and potential climbing a mountain only to find—once at the top—that you climbed the wrong one. Thinking and reflection ensures that you're on the right mountain. Peter Drucker, the management expert, said it so well: "There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all."

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"There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that
which should not be done at all."**

Being thoughtful and strategic is step number one as you walk to greatness. Clarity precedes success. By thinking more, you will have a better sense of your priorities and what you need to focus on. Your actions will be

more crisp and deliberate and intentional. You will make better decisions and wiser choices. More time thinking will make you less reactive. You'll become clearer on the best uses of your time (which will, in turn, save you time). And your "think time" will provoke some amazing ideas and inspire some big dreams. Lewis Carroll addressed this point beautifully in *Alice in Wonderland* when he wrote:

“‘There’s no use in trying,’ said Alice. ‘One can’t believe impossible things.’ ‘I daresay you haven’t had much practice,’ said the Queen. ‘When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.’”

Leadership Begins on the Extra Mile

I had just dropped off Colby and Bianca at school and was driving to the office when I got an insight that made me pull over. So here I sit, off to the side of the road with my hazard blinkers on, hammering this out on my BlackBerry because I wanted to share it with you. The big idea: Leadership—and success—*begins* on the extra mile.

Ordinary people don't spend much time on the extra mile. But who ever said you were ordinary?

Leadership is shown when a salesperson makes extra calls at the end of an exhausting day—not because it's the easy thing to do but because it's the right thing to do. Leadership is shown by the manager who finishes a report that has taken the very best from him, then goes back to it a little later to polish and improve it even more. Leadership is shown by a team that delivers on their value promise to a customer and then digs even deeper to wow them. And leadership is shown by the human being who fights the urge to stay under the covers on a cold day and throws on her running shoes to pound the pavement. Not because running miles on a frosty morning is fun. But because it's wise.

Please think about this idea. I think it's a deeply important one. Those among us who craft extraordinary careers and spectacular lives are those who spend most of their time giving their best out on the extra mile. Yes, ordinary people don't spend much time on the extra mile. But who ever said you were ordinary?

Mick Jagger and Reference Points

Last Monday night I watched a 62-year-old man rock the house for more than two hours in front of 30,000 adoring fans. Yup, Mick is 62 and the once young Stones frontman is aging. But he still has that charisma. Still has the moves. Still has the youth.

As I watched him, I thought of a term I've been sharing at my seminars these days: "reference points." I heard someone say last week: "I'm in my sixties—getting near the end of my life." Not if Mick is your reference point.

Positive reference points will pull you into a new way of seeing things and introduce you to a new set of possibilities. Doors you never even knew existed will begin to open. Lance Armstrong is a great reference point on persistence. My father is a great reference point on integrity. My mother is an excellent reference point on kindness. My children are superb reference points on what unconditional love and boundless curiosity look like. Richard Branson is a spectacular reference point on living a full-out life. Madonna is a great reference point on reinvention. Peter Drucker was a wonderful reference point on the importance of lifelong learning. Nelson Mandela is a brilliant reference point on courage and humanitarianism.

Often, we have weak reference points so we see the limitations of a scenario rather than the opportunities. With world-class reference points, you will realize far more of your potential and life will have more wonder. You will play a bigger game as a human being if you pick the right people to model. We are all cut from the same cloth. We are all flesh and bones. If they can get to greatness—so can you. You just need to do the same kinds of things your reference points did to reach their excellence.

Positive reference points will pull you into a new way of seeing things and introduce you to a new set of possibilities. Doors you never even knew existed will begin to open.

And I'll tell you one thing: When I'm 62, I want to be like Mick. Because

he's just getting started.

Business Is Relationships

I'm sitting on a plane in Frankfurt as I write this chapter. I spent yesterday meeting with publishers who have distributed *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* series around the world. Each autumn, Frankfurt comes alive as 250,000 publishing people descend on the city for the world's largest book fair. For me, today marks the last day of a 20-day speaking and book tour that took me throughout India (one of my favorite countries to visit) to Istanbul (a fantastic place) and finally to this small German city. Learned so much these past three weeks. Met so many amazing human beings who blessed me with their kindness. Been moved by the sea change of people who are reaching for their greatest lives and leading by example. Perhaps most of all, I've been reminded that few things are more important than building relationships.

How easy it is to forget that, ultimately, business and life is all about forging human bonds. Being out on this tour, I laughed with my readers at book signings. I broke bread with the clients we do leadership development work for. I drank coffee with my publishers. I got to know the people in this community that has grown around my message. And they got to know me.

Big idea: People want to know that you are real. That you are decent, kind and trustworthy. They want to feel you and sense you and look into your eyes to see what you are made of. They want to know your passion for whatever it is you stand for. And when they sense that you are the real deal, they will open up to you. When they see that you have their best interests in mind, they will trust you—and keep your best interests in mind. Once they get that you are good, they'll be good to you. And your career (along with your life) will get to a place called world class based on those trust connections. It's easy to forget that people do business with people they like—and who make them feel good. Simple stuff—I know. Yet most of us just don't get around to becoming masterful at the basics. Success is all about consistency around the fundamentals. The only thing that's rocket science is rocket science.

It's easy to forget that people do business with people they like.

So I invite you to get out of your office and go circulate. Being out there makes good things happen. Nothing really happens until you move. Shake hands. Do lunches. Show genuine interest. Spread your goodwill. Evangelize your message. Remember that before someone will lend you a hand, you need to touch their heart. And that business is all about relationships.

Life Lessons from SpongeBob SquarePants

SpongeBob SquarePants is my hero. The kids and I were having breakfast this morning when Bianca, my nine-year-old daughter, brought up the subject of this crazy little cartoon character. “Daddy, is SpongeBob a real person?” Made me laugh. Then it made me think. If SpongeBob were a human being, this world would be a better place. Seriously. Here are four lessons SpongeBob can teach us to get more joy from life:

BE THE ETERNAL OPTIMIST. *The guy (or sponge, I should say) always sees the best in any situation. Your thinking really does shape your reality. And because SpongeBob looks for the best, he finds it.*

VALUE PEOPLE. *SpongeBob knows what friendship means. He loves his pals in Bikini Bottom, even Squidward “who is always cranky,” to borrow my son’s words. SpongeBob knows that respect and putting people first are two of the most important elements for strong relationships.*

BE AN ORIGINAL. *SpongeBob is one of a kind. Too many among us are afraid to be ourselves. So we give up our dreams to follow the crowd. Tragic. “To thine own self be true,” wrote Shakespeare. Have the courage to be your true—and greatest—you. (Warren Buffett, chairman of Berkshire Hathaway, once said, “There can’t be two yous.”)*

Too many among us are afraid to be ourselves. So we give up our dreams to follow the crowd.

LAUGH AND HAVE FUN. *There’s no point in being successful but sad. Makes no sense. Yes, reach for the mountaintop. But enjoy the climb as well. Life wasn’t meant to be an ordeal. It was meant to be a celebration. So have big-time fun as you chase—and catch—your most cherished dreams.*

How to Be a Happier Human

Here's a simple idea that has worked brilliantly for the executives and entrepreneurs who I coach: If you want to be happier, do more of the things that make you happy. I know that seems like an obvious point—but it's not. As we leave the wonder years of childhood, most of us stop doing the things that make our hearts sing. One CEO client told me recently that when he was young, he used to love to take long solo rides on his bicycle. "I stopped doing that when we had kids and work demands took over. Life just got busier. But those moments out on that bike came from some of the best days of my life." Another client, a phenomenally successful entrepreneur, shared that his passion used to be playing his drums in a rock band. "Those were incredible times. Then I started my business and it began to consume me. I miss playing music. I'd lose myself in it."

Here's your To Do: Make a list of your 10 Greatest Passions, 10 activities that fill your heart with joy and remind you of how good life can be. And then, over the coming 10 weeks, inject one of those pursuits into your weekly schedule. Powerful thought: The things that get scheduled are the things that get done. Until you schedule something, it's only a concept—and extraordinary people don't build remarkable lives on concepts. They build their greatness on action and near-flawless execution around their deliverables. They get things done.

This 10-week program works. When you get back to doing those things that lifted your spirit and sent you soaring, you reconnect with that state of happiness that you may have lost. And part of the purpose of life is to be happy. Really happy.

When you get back to doing those things that lifted your spirit and sent you soaring, you reconnect with that state of happiness that you may have lost.

Work Hard, Get Lucky

That old line remains so true: “The harder I work, the luckier I get.” Life helps those who help themselves. Learned that one from personal experience. I’m not one of those New Age types that believes “it’s all meant to be” and that our lives have been scripted by an invisible set of hands. That kind of talk smacks of “victimspeak” and fear. Fear of failure. Fear of rejection. Fear of not being good enough. Fear of success. That kind of language also lacks any sense of personal responsibility and usually comes from people too afraid to get into the game. Sure I believe that there’s a force of nature that comes into play when we least expect it (and most need it). And yes, I believe there is a coherence to the way our lives unfold that is highly intelligent. But I also believe—deeply—that we were given free will and the power to make choices for a single reason: to exercise them. I believe that we generally get from life what we give to life. I believe that good things happen to those willing to put in the effort, exercise discipline and make the sacrifices that personal and professional greatness requires—no, demands. I’ve also found that actions have consequences and the more good things I do—through good old hard work—the more success I see. Life favors the devoted.

Not one of the über-successful people I’ve worked with as a leadership coach got there without outworking everyone around them. While others were home watching TV or sleeping, these great ones—who have made their mark on the world and have added tremendous value to it—were up early, putting in the hours, showing life that they were dedicated to their dream. I’m not—for even a moment—denying the importance of work-life balance and spending time with loved ones or caring for your inner life. I’ll be the first to stand for those values. All I’m saying is that behind extraordinary achievement you will always discover extraordinary effort. Just a law of nature. Hasn’t changed for a thousand years.

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Ivan Seidenberg, the chairman and CEO of Verizon, tells the following story: “My first boss—he was the building superintendent and I was a janitor—watched me sweep floors and wash walls for almost a year before he mentioned I could get tuition for college if I got a job with the phone company. When I asked him why he waited so long, he said: ‘I wanted to see if you were worth it.’”

And Time Warner CEO Dick Parsons once observed that the best advice he ever got was from his grandmother. She told him: “Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” So plant your seeds. Be spectacularly great at what you do. Wear your passion on your sleeve and hold your heart in the palm of your hand. And work hard. Really hard. Hard work opens doors and shows the world that you are serious about being one of those rare—and special—human beings that uses the fullness of their talents for the highest and the very best.

Know Your Genius

Genius is not the sole domain of a rare breed of person. Both you and I are entitled to that label and to play in that space—if we so choose. Here’s the big idea: Focus on any area or skill with a relentless devotion to daily improvement and a passion for excellence and within three to five years, you will be operating at a level of competence (and insight) such that people call you a genius. Focus plus daily improvement plus time equals genius. Understand that formula deeply and your life will never be the same.

Michael Jordan was a basketball genius. Was his spectacular success on the court purely the result of natural gifts? Absolutely not. He took what nature gave him and ran the formula: Focus plus daily improvement plus time equals genius. He didn’t try to be good at five different sports. He didn’t scatter his focus. He just got devoted to being brilliant at basketball. And he was.

Thomas Edison registered a stunning 1093 patents over his lifetime and invented the light bulb as well as the phonograph. (A schoolteacher labelled him a slow learner when he was a kid; he didn’t listen. Kudos.) He didn’t try to be a great merchant and a great poet and a great musician. He focused on his inventions. He improved daily. And he let time work its magic. Genius came knocking.

Makes me think of a story about Pablo Picasso. One day a woman spotted him in the market and pulled out a piece of paper. “Mr. Picasso,” she said excitedly, “I’m a big fan. Please, could you do a little drawing for me?” Picasso happily complied and quickly etched out a piece of art for her on the paper provided. He smiled as he handed it back to her, and said, “That will be a million dollars.” “But Mr. Picasso,” the flustered woman replied, “it only took you 30 seconds to do this little masterpiece.” “My good woman,” Picasso laughed, “it took me 30 years to do that masterpiece in 30 seconds.”

Focus plus daily improvement plus time equals genius. Understand that formula deeply and your life will never be the same.

Know what you can excel at—your genius. Discover your talents and then work like crazy to polish them. One of the most important of all personal leadership skills is self-awareness. Know what you are really great at. Reflect on those abilities that others admire in you. Think about those capabilities that just come easily to you—and that flow effortlessly from you. You might be a fantastic communicator or have a way with people. You might possess an extraordinary ability to execute and get things done. Perhaps your special talent lies in innovation and creativity and seeing what everyone else sees but thinking a different thought. Find your genius points and then develop them. Focus plus daily improvement plus time. Start today and in three to five years people will be writing about you. Calling you a genius. Celebrating your magnificence. And don't worry—I'll be one of them.

Listen Twice as Much as You Speak

My mom is a very wise woman. As a kid, I loved to talk (still do). In school, I always did well academically but my report cards never failed to note my passion for vigorously exercising my vocal chords on a near-constant basis. One day Mom sat me down and said: “Robin, you were given two ears and one mouth for a reason: to listen twice as much as you speak.” Brilliant point (still working on it though).

Listening intently to someone is one of the best ways I know of to honor that person and forge a deep human connection. When you listen to someone—not just with your mind but with every fiber of your being—it sends them a message: “I value what you have to say, and I’m humble enough to listen to your words.” So few of us are really good at listening. I’ll sit down next to someone on an airplane, at the start of a six-hour flight, and they’ll still be talking by the time we land—without having even asked me my name or where I’m from or what I do or the books I’ve read. Tells me not only that they lack what scientists call “sensory acuity” (an ability to pay attention to the cues around them) but that they were probably not given much listening as kids. Most people’s idea of listening is waiting until the other person has finished speaking before answering. And the sad fact is that while one person is talking, most of us are rehearsing our replies.

Listening intently to someone is one of the best ways I know of to honor that person and forge a deep human connection.

New York attorney general Eliot Spitzer has a line that I love: “Never talk when you can nod.” Your effectiveness as a businessperson, as a family member and as a human being will absolutely soar if you get this one right. Listen twice as much as you speak. Become a world-class listener. Get wildly interested in what others have to say to you. And just watch how people respond. They’ll fall in love with you. Quickly.

Your Customers Buy with Their Hearts

I'm standing in line at a Starbucks. The Dave Matthews Band is playing in the background. The smell of coffee fills the air. The espresso machines blast away. People are reading, relaxing and talking. The vibe is good. I feel happy here. Feels like home. If you're in business, one of the most important things I suggest that you consider is the idea that people don't buy with their heads so much as with their hearts. The competition in today's marketplace is not for customers' money. Not at all. The only real competition is for their emotions. Touch the hearts of the people you serve and they'll be back for more. Engage their emotions and they'll become your raving fans. Miss this insight and you just might lose your business.

Sure I could spend less on a cup of java. Sure there's a coffee shop closer to where I work. But I love the way going into a Starbucks makes me feel. Relaxed. Happy. Good. And each of us craves good feelings as we live out our days. In so many ways, adults are nothing more than children in grown-up bodies—and children are all about feeling good. On this point about emotions driving customer behavior, Kevin Roberts, CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi, writes, in his superb book *Lovemarks: The Future Beyond Brands*: "In my 35 years in business I have always trusted my emotions. I have always believed that by touching emotion you get the best people to work with you, the best clients to inspire you, the best partners and most devoted customers." Roberts then quotes neurologist Donald Calne: "The essential difference between emotion and reason is that emotion leads to action while reason leads to conclusions." A breathtakingly important point. Human beings move when their emotions are moved.

Human beings move when their emotions are moved.

How does carrying an iPod around make you feel? How does shopping at a hip shop make you feel? How does walking into your favorite restaurant and being greeted like Diddy or Madonna or Bill Clinton make you feel? You get my point. People go where they are made to feel cared for, special and good.

People buy from a place of emotional engagement. Seems so obvious. Yet most businesses don't get it.

Here's my bold statement for today: Business is in so many ways about love. Think about it. Success comes by treating your customers with love. Acclaim comes by doing your job with love. Market leadership comes with selling your wares with love. If your customers only like you, you are vulnerable to losing them when a competitor with a cheaper product or a more economical service comes along. Why? Because you've failed to emotionally connect with them. But when your customers love you—because you've touched their hearts by the way that you occur in their lives—you become part of their extended family. You're now a part of their community. They become loyal. They tell the rest of the family about you. And they'll take good care of you should times get tough.

So I'll keep going to Starbucks. I love the place. And if you ever want to find me, I'll be the guy tucked away in the quiet corner, sipping on a grande soy latte with a smile on my face and joy in my heart—feeling the love.

Learn to Say No

Every time you say yes to something that is unimportant, you say no to something that is important. “Yes men” and “yes women” never create anything great. There’s huge value in getting good at saying no.

Say no to the friend who wants to meet over coffee to gossip. Say no to the co-worker who wants to spread his negativity and cynicism. Say no to the relative who laughs at your dreams and makes you doubt yourself. Say no to the social obligations that drain time from your life’s work.

Every time you say yes to something that is unimportant, you say no to something that is important.

You can’t be all things to all people. The best among us get that. Know your priorities. Know your goals. Know what needs to get done over the coming weeks, months and years for you to feel that you played your best game as a human being. And then say no to everything else. Sure some people around you might not be happy. But would you rather live your life according to the approval of others or aligned with your truth and your dreams?

Burn Your Boats

Powerful thought: Great achievement often happens when our backs are up against the wall. Pressure can actually enhance your performance. Your power most fully exerts itself when the heat is on. Who you truly are surfaces only when you place yourself in a position of discomfort and you begin to feel like you're out on the skinny branch. Challenge serves beautifully to introduce you to your best—and most brilliant—self. Please stop and think about that idea for a second or two. Easy times don't make you better. They make you slower and more complacent and sleepy. Staying in the safety zone—and coasting through life—never made anyone bigger. Sure it's very human to take the path of least resistance. And I'd agree it's pretty normal to want to avoid putting stress on yourself by intensely challenging yourself to shine. But greatness never came to anyone normal. (Mahatma Gandhi, Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, Mother Teresa, Albert Schweitzer, Andy Grove and Thomas Edison definitely marched to a different drumbeat—thank God).

I've never forgotten the story of the famed explorer Hernando Cortés. He landed on the shores of Veracruz, Mexico, in 1519. Wanted his army to conquer the land for Spain. Faced an uphill battle: an aggressive enemy, brutal disease and scarce resources. As they marched inland to do battle, Cortés ordered one of his lieutenants back to the beach with a single instruction: "Burn our boats." My kind of guy.

Challenge serves beautifully to introduce you to your best—and most brilliant—self.

How fully would you show up each day—at work and in life—if retreat just wasn't an option? How high would you reach, how greatly would you dare, how hard would you work and how loud would you live if you knew "your boats were burning," that failure just wasn't a possibility? Diamonds get formed through intense pressure. And remarkable human beings get formed by living from a frame of reference that tells them they just have to win.

Grow Leaders Fast

One of the training programs that we offer companies to help them get to world class in their marketplace is called *Grow The Leader*. Organizations all around the world including NASA and pharmaceutical giant Wyeth are using our unique process to increase employee engagement, enhance culture, dramatically boost performance and produce superior business results. *Grow The Leader* is based on a simple yet powerful concept: The ultimate competitive advantage of your enterprise comes down to a single imperative—your ability to grow and develop leaders faster than your competition. The more quickly you can get every single person in the company demonstrating leadership behavior—regardless of their position—the more quickly you will lead the field. Your race is to grow leaders fast and develop a “culture of leadership” before your competition does.

A leadership culture is one where everyone thinks like an owner, like a CEO or managing director. It’s one where *everyone* is entrepreneurial and proactive. This means they focus on getting to solutions rather than on the problems. This means they do whatever it takes to keep customers happy. This means they worry about sales and do their part to reduce costs. This means they take personal responsibility for achieving results that move the business forward (whether they run the mailroom or sit in a boardroom). This means they shape culture, stay positive and lead by example. We’ve helped our clients create leadership cultures and the results have been nothing short of remarkable.

The ultimate competitive advantage of your enterprise comes down to a single imperative—your ability to grow and develop leaders faster than your competition.

I pray that I’ve been clear: I’m not saying everyone needs to do the job of a CEO or managing director. Showing leadership doesn’t mean every employee will run the organization. That would lead to chaos. Businesses do need someone to set the vision and then lead the team to it. All I’m suggesting

is that all the people on your team need to know their role and then show up fully in that role—like a leader would. And when they do—when they think, feel and act like leaders—good things will happen. And soon, your organization will get to great.

Your Four-Minute Mile

The philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer once observed: “Most people take the limits of their vision to be the limits of the world. A few do not. Join them.” Profound point. The life that you see this very moment isn’t necessarily the life of your future. You might be viewing things through the eyes of your fears, limitations and false assumptions. Once you clean up the stained glass window you see the world through, guess what? A whole new set of possibilities appears. Remember, we see the world not as it is but as we are. That idea changed my life, over a decade ago, when I was an unhappy lawyer searching for a better way to live.

Before 1954, it was believed that no runner could ever break the four-minute mile barrier. But after Roger Bannister broke it, many more replicated his feat—within weeks. Why? Because he showed people what was possible. They got a new reference point. And then armed with that belief, people did the impossible.

What’s *your* four-minute mile? What bill of goods have you sold yourself as to what’s impossible? What false assumptions are you making in terms of what you cannot have, do and be? Your thinking creates your reality. Your beliefs truly become self-fulfilling prophecies (because your beliefs drive your actions—and you will never act in a way that is misaligned with your thinking; the size of your life reflects the size of your thinking). If you think something cannot occur in your life, then there’s no way you will take the action required to make that goal a reality. Your “impossibility thinking” manifests itself. Our perceived limitations become the chains that keep you from the greatness you were meant to be. And you are so much better than that. Celebrated neurosurgeon Ben Carson expressed it so well when he said: “There is no such thing as an average human being; if you have a normal brain, you are superior.”

If you *think* something cannot occur in your life, then there’s no way you will take the action required

to make that goal a reality. Your “impossibility thinking” manifests itself.

Push the Envelope

How big do you dream? How fast do you move? How relentlessly do you innovate? I think of Apple on the subject of innovation and their devotion to offering the world “insanely great” products. I just bought my daughter an iPod. She was extraordinarily persistent in her asking—smart kid. Such an array of iPods to select from: the Shuffle, the incredibly sleek Nano, the U2 version of the iPod. Rather than resting on its laurels with the massive success of this product, Apple just keeps innovating, reaching for something even better.

I did a speech for the Young Presidents’ Organization the other night. Talked about leadership and how the best get better. Shared how companies can achieve stunning success by making a few simple changes and course corrections. One young entrepreneur came up to me for a chat. I asked him for the best idea he’s learned for winning. “Always be pushing the envelope,” he replied.

Sure being a leader (at work or at home or in your community) is a lonely act. The very definition of being a leader means you are out in front—with no one else. Taking the road less traveled. Taking responsibility for results in a world that loves to blame and deny responsibility. Seeing possibilities that no one else has yet dreamed of. Challenging the way things are. If you were in the herd, thinking and behaving like everyone else, then you wouldn’t be a leader—you’d be a follower. And that’s no fun.

Remember, every great leader (or visionary or brave thinker) was initially laughed at. Now they are revered.

So push the envelope. Refuse to accept anything remotely close to mediocrity. Let go of the chains that have bound you to the ordinary. And definitely leave the crowd. The only place you’ll reach if you follow the crowd is the exit. Stand for your best. Commit to excellence. Become massively innovative and wear your passion on your sleeve. They might call

you different or weird or even crazy. But please remember, every great leader (or visionary or brave thinker) was initially laughed at. Now they are revered.

On Obituaries and the Meaning of Life

I'm 41 years old. So I'm at half-time. Assuming I live until I'm 80 (and that's a big assumption because I've learned that the only thing you can expect in life is the unexpected), I'm half way home—half way through the adventure I call my life. I've become more philosophical these days. I'm less willing to waste my time. Less willing to listen to negative people. Less willing to miss an opportunity to be loving, champion another human being, get closer to my dreams, or have some genuine fun. I've also started reading obituaries.

When I read of the lives others have lived, I'm offered clues on what's most important in life. Obituaries of lives well lived actually share consistent themes, I've discovered. Family. Friendships. Contribution to community. The need to take calculated risks. Kindness through small, simple acts. And love. I've yet to read an obituary that says, "he died peacefully in his sleep surrounded by his lawyer, his stockbroker and his accountant." No, the great ones all speak of being close to loved ones and of the impact the deceased had on the world around them.

To lead a beautiful life, I suggest that you need to ask the kinds of questions that will provoke you to think deeply and connect with what matters most. One of the dominant traits of so many of the extraordinary people I've worked with as a success coach is the discipline of being more reflective than most of us. So ask profound questions. Good questions lead to excellent answers and greater clarity. And greater clarity is the DNA of authentic success and personal greatness.

I've yet to read an obituary that says, "he died peacefully in his sleep surrounded by his lawyer, his stockbroker and his accountant."

Here are five big questions that I hope will cause you to go deep and become more philosophical about what truly counts in your life. Most people don't discover how to live until it's time to die. But by then it's too late. Ask yourself these five questions today. Write your answers in your journal. Talk

about them. Think about them. Imagine that today is the last day of your life and you are lying on your deathbed. Then ask yourself:

Did I dream richly?

Did I live fully?

Did I learn to let go?

Did I love well?

Did I tread lightly on the earth and leave it better than I found it?

My hope is that the answers you arrive at will help you live with more authenticity, passion and joy. Clarity really does precede success. You can't hit a target you can't even see. And we're really not here that long, when you think about it. We'll all be dust before you know it. So live your potential now. The Chinese say it so well: "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. But the second best time is today."

Leadership Isn't a Popularity Contest

Here's an idea that just might transform your entire career (and your life): Being a leader (and in my mind, every single one of us has an obligation to show leadership daily—regardless of title or position) isn't about being liked. It's about doing what's right. So many leaders are afraid of conflict—they have a deep-seated need to be popular and cherished. They hate ruffling feathers and making waves. They are insecure and not so comfortable living in their own skin. But great leaders are different. They fearlessly make tough calls. They speak their truth. They run their own race, making the right decisions and worrying little about public opinion. They are courage in action.

I speak and write a lot about being caring and respectful of people. Treat your people well and they'll treat your customers well. That's a no-brainer. Help people get to their goals and they'll happily help you get to yours. I'll take that value to my grave. See the best in people and be the most compassionate person you know. But being kind doesn't mean being weak. Being a good human doesn't mean that you don't need to be strong and courageous when required by the circumstances. Not once have I ever suggested that. Extraordinary leadership is a balance between being tender yet tough, compassionate yet courageous, part saint and part warrior, friendly yet firm. (By the way, to help you get to world class professionally and personally, I've recorded an idea-rich and exceptionally practical audio program called "Extraordinary Leadership" which contains my best ideas on the topic. As my gift to you, you can download the presentation for free at robinsharma.com).

All that the best leaders really care about is being fair, doing what's right and getting results. And that brings me to my gentle suggestion to you: Do the right thing rather than doing the popular thing. The best thing to do is generally the hardest thing to do. Please remember that. Make the tough decisions. Speak with candor. Let underperformers know when they are underperforming. Tell your superstars how much you love them. Just be real.

Being a leader isn't about being liked. It's about doing what's right.

When you lead from a position of truth, justice, fairness and excellence, you'll have your critics. Who cares? I've never seen a critic show up at a deathbed. My friend Dan Sheehan, who runs a great company called WinPlus out of Los Angeles that we've done leadership development work with, once shared this with me: "Great people build monuments from the stones that their critics throw at them." Nice point. Smart guy. If I had listened to all my critics, I'd still be an unhappy lawyer locked to a desk. Thank God I didn't.

What Do You Evangelize?

Being an “evangelist” has negative connotations in the world we reside in. But an evangelist, by definition, is simply someone who spreads good news. It’s someone who gets stuck on a big idea or a passionate cause and then walks out into his day and spreads the message like a virus. It’s someone who gets so engaged in doing something important that it’s all he thinks about, dreams about, talks about. It’s a human being who understands—at a cellular level—what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. meant when he said: “If you have not discovered something you are willing to die for, then you are not fit to live.” This troubled and uncertain world of ours needs more evangelists: human beings doing great things, blessing lives by their actions, making a difference.

Where did most people’s passion for greatness go? Each of us had it as kids. We wanted to be superheroes, astronauts, poets and painters. We wanted to change the world, stand on mountaintops and eat lots of ice cream. Then, as we aged, life began to do its work on us. Fearful people snickered at our dreams. Disappointments began to show up. Life began to hurt us and we began to buy into the propaganda that says we should not think too big, reach too high and love too much. Breaks my heart to think about it. But that’s exactly what happens.

You are meant to shine. I believe that fiercely. You are here to find that cause, that main aim, that vital destiny that will move you at the most visceral level and get you up at the crack of dawn with fire in your belly. You are meant to find something that your life will stand for that will consume you, something so beautiful and meaningful that you’d be willing to take a bullet for it. It might mean developing people at work and helping them live their highest potential. It might mean being an innovator who adds outrageous value to your clients and brings cool products to the world. Your cause might involve elevating communities or helping people in need. I recently read about a lawyer who said he was so passionate about being of service to a group of victims he was representing that he wouldn’t give up until there was blood coming out of his eyes. Extreme? Maybe. An evangelist? Definitely.

You are here to find that cause, that main aim, that

vital destiny that will move you at the most visceral level and get you up at the crack of dawn with fire in your belly.

I'm an evangelist. Talk to anyone who knows me and they'll tell you that my oxygen is helping human beings lead without title and getting organizations to world-class. Sure I have my down times and hard days—find me someone who doesn't. But mostly you'll find me full of enthusiasm, high energy and delight at spreading my message. Am I more special than you? Absolutely not. I've just found my Cause.

I don't know what your life's Most Important To Do is. That's for you to figure out (through some deep reflection, introspection and soul-searching; doing that within a journal is a wise idea). But I do know this: When you find the mission that your life will be dedicated to, you'll wake up each day with that fire in your belly I mentioned. You won't want to sleep. You'll be willing to move mountains to make it happen. You'll find that sense of internal fulfillment that may now be missing from your life. And you'll preach that message to anyone who'll listen. You'll become an evangelist.

Under the Kimono: My Best Practices

I just want to help you shine. All I really care about is doing my part to help you get to your greatness. To help you reach your best at work. To help you find happiness at home. To help you make your mark. What's my payoff? Well, when I help you live your finest life, I get to feel significant. I get to feel that I'm making a difference in the world. That I matter. That I'm not walking the planet in vain. That's where so much of my happiness comes from. Truly.

So here's what I thought about in the shower this morning: What are my best practices? In other words, what are the best things that I do to stay at my very best—on game and in potential? Here's what I came up with:

- *Up at 5 a.m. five times a week with naps on the weekends.*
- *A 60-minute “holy hour” once I’m up, for self-development and personal reflection.*
- *five big-time workouts a week.*
- *A 90-minute massage every seven days.*
- *A world-class diet. (But I eat one to two desserts every week—life isn't meant to be too strict; and if I ever see “flourless chocolate cake” on a menu, I order it.)*
- *A period of journaling most days. Journaling builds self-awareness. I also use my journal to write daily goals, plan and record what I'm grateful for, and capture and process new ideas along with lessons learned.*
- *A period of reading each day (from Harvard Business Review to Travel and Leisure to Dwell and good books).*
- *Affirmations or what I call Success Statements throughout the day—especially in the shower. These keep my thoughts locked on what's most important—and thoughts are the ancestors of actions. Right thinking drives right action.*
- *A weekly planning session. I also review my goals here. Usually I do it Sunday morning.*
- *At least one conversation with an interesting person each week to keep my passion high and to surround myself with big ideas. A single conversation can change your life. In an issue of Business 2.0, management consultant Jim Collins revealed that one idea, shared in 30 seconds by a mentor, transformed him.*

**This very day can be the first day of your new life.
It's all your choice.**

I have more but these are my best personal practices, the ones that bring out my highest. Pick the ones that resonate with you. Discard the ones that you disagree with. Just find what works for the way you live. Then act on them today. This very day can be the first day of your new life. It's all your choice.

Culture Is King

At a leadership training program I recently gave for a group of high-tech managers, a distinguished-looking man came up to me at the break and shared: “I love what you said about the need for each one of us to develop a leadership culture within our organizations. At our company, one of our top priorities is to work on our culture. We talk about it all the time. Last year, our company grew 600%. Our focus on culture-building worked splendidly.” Impressive.

As I’ve suggested earlier, one of your most sustainable competitive advantages will be developing a Culture of Leadership. When clients engage Sharma Leadership International for organizational development and employee training, one of the first areas we focus on is developing the company’s culture—because all performance is driven by the culture. Your competitors will copy your products if they are good. They will copy your services. They will copy your branding. But they will never be able to copy your culture. And your culture is the very thing that makes your organization special. Your organization’s culture is what sets—and then drives—the standards of behavior. Your culture tells your people what’s acceptable and important. Your culture lets people know what your organization values (e.g., honesty, innovation, unending improvement, wowing customers, collaboration, candor and so on). Your organization’s culture states its philosophy, its mythology, its religion. To me, culture is king.

One of your most sustainable competitive advantages will be developing what I call a Culture of Leadership.

The five best ways to build culture are as follows:

RITUALS. *I like the “cult” in culture. The best companies, like Dell and Google and Southwest Airlines and Apple and Wal-Mart, have something in common with cults. They have unique rituals like 7 a.m. team huddles or Friday afternoon pizza parties to promote team bonding. Rituals shape culture and keep it special.*

CELEBRATION. *John Abele, founder of the multi-billion-dollar Boston Scientific, once told me over dinner that “you get what you celebrate.” Powerful idea. When you see someone living the values your culture stands for, make them a public hero. Behavior that gets rewarded is behavior that gets repeated. Catch people doing good.*

CONVERSATION. *Your people become what the leaders talk about; to get your vision and values into your people’s hearts, you need to be talking about that stuff constantly—at employee gatherings, at your weekly meetings, during your daily huddles and at the water cooler. You need to evangelize what you stand for constantly. In his excellent book *Winning*, Jack Welch said that he spent so much time evangelizing GE’s mission that he could call his people at three in the morning and—half asleep—they could re-state it. (He never did.)*

TRAINING. *A mission-critical focus to build culture is employee development. If you agree that your organization’s number-one resource is your people, then it only makes sense to invest significantly in developing your number-one resource. Hold seminars and have leadership workshops to instill the values you seek to nurture and build a leadership culture into their hearts and minds. When your people improve, your company will improve.*

STORYTELLING. *Great companies have cultures where great stories are told from generation to generation. The story about how the company was founded in a basement or the story about how a teammate went the extra mile and delivered a customer’s baby or the story about how the organization fought back to victory from the brink of disaster. Storytelling cements a company’s most closely cherished ideals into the hearts of its people.*

People want to go to work each day and feel they are a part of a community. One of the deepest psychological needs of a human being is the need for belonging. We also want to work for an organization that values us, that promotes our personal growth and that makes us feel that we are contributing to a dream. Get these things right by creating a Culture of Leadership and you’ll keep your stars and attract other ones. And wouldn’t that be perfect?

Your Schedule Doesn't Lie

There's an old phrase that says "what you're doing speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you are saying." You can say that your primary value involves putting your family first, but if time with your family is not all over your schedule, well then the *truth* of the matter is that your family life isn't your priority. You can say that being in world-class physical condition is another top value but if I don't see five or six workouts etched into your weekly schedule, then the reality to be confronted is that your health just isn't as important as you profess it to be. You can argue that self-development is an essential pursuit to you because the better you are, the more effective you'll be. Show me your schedule and I'll discover the truth. Because your schedule doesn't lie.

There can be no authentic success and lasting happiness if your daily schedule is misaligned with your deepest values. That's a big idea that has been so helpful to so many of the executive clients that I coach. If there is a gap between what you do and who you are, you are out of integrity. I call it The Integrity Gap. The greater the chasm between your daily commitments and your deepest values, the less your life will work (and the less happiness you will feel). Why? Because you are not walking your talk. Because your video is not congruent with your audio. Because you are committing the crime of self-betrayal. Worst crime of all. And the witness that lives within the deepest part of you—your conscience—sees it.

Your schedule is the best barometer for what you truly value and believe to be important.

Your schedule is the best barometer for what you truly value and believe to be important. Too many people talk a good talk. But talk is cheap. Less talk and more do. Show me your schedule and I'll show you what your priorities are. I used to be a litigation lawyer. Witnesses in the courtroom could say what they wanted to. But the evidence never lied.

Shine as a Parent

I've had coaching clients fly their private jets to the small airport near our office in Toronto and show up at our first meeting saying something like: "Robin, I have all the money I'll ever need and a bunch of homes scattered around the world along with a ton of public acclaim. But I'm desperately unhappy." I ask why. "Because I lost my family while I built my business. My wife left me and my kids don't even know me ... that breaks my heart," is how the reply usually goes.

Put your family, along with your health, at the top of your priority list. Family matters. What's the point of getting to your dreams but being alone? And few things are more important than being an extraordinary parent. Kids grow up unbelievably fast. Blink and they're gone—living lives of their own. It seems like only a year or two ago that I witnessed my daughter's birth. Now she's 9 and spends much of her free time playing with her best friend Max (a cocker spaniel desperately in need of some training). It seems like yesterday my son was in a stroller with the chubby cheeks of a baby and the sounds of an infant. Now he's 11, reading even more voraciously than I do and sharing his vision for his future (he wants to be a venture capitalist). Sure it's a little sad watching your children grow up so quickly. I guess all I can do is stay devoted to them and be generous with my time (my children have always been my number-one priority). Here are some ideas for you to shine in the incredibly important role of parent:

Try not to teach your fears to your kids. Introduce your children to what's possible.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE. *The best way to influence your kids is to walk the talk. Model the behavior you wish to see. Don't preach the beauty of books and learning and then head into your family room to watch three hours of MTV. Those little eyes watch everything you do. I talk about this in Family Wisdom from the Monk Who Sold His Ferrari, which is a book that will be very helpful to you as you grow young leaders at home.*

DEVELOP YOUR CHILDREN. *See yourself not just as a parent to your children but as*

a “developer” of them. It’s important to actively develop their minds, hearts and souls. That’s your job. Expose them to great art. Take them to interesting restaurants. Introduce them to cool people who produce unique ideas. JFK’s father would invite fabulously interesting people to dinner often. During the meal, the Kennedy kids would learn from the guest—and then quiz the visitor to deepen their learning. Smart practice.

INSPIRE YOUR KIDS. *Big idea: Parents teach their children how to view the world. Parents show kids the way the world works. And if you see the world as a place of limitation, so will those little people you are raising. Try not to teach your fears to your kids. Introduce your children to what’s possible. Inspire them to be great human beings who will elevate the world—in their own special way. Be an enabler.*

Here’s a tool for you that comes from my home. Each night before my kids go to sleep, I make four statements to them. “You can do whatever you want to do when you grow up.” “Never give up.” “Whatever you do, do it well.” And “Remember how much your dad loves you.” Been doing that every night for four years. They often say, “Dad, we know all this stuff now. We know we should never give up and how much you love us. It’s getting boring.” But I have a sense that one day, perhaps when I’m old and wrinkled, a letter will come in the mail from Colby or Bianca, my two favorite people on the planet. And on that piece of paper will be simple words saying, “Dad, I’m living a great life. Thank you for being the father you were. And thank you for those four statements each night. They made a difference.”

Be a Merchant of Wow

Just checked into the Hotel Victor here on South Beach before I wrote this chapter. I saw it being renovated a few months ago and made a mental note to check it out on my next visit to Miami. So here I am, waiting to be impressed, just aching for a reason to tell you something good about this place in a world where so many businesses are boring, slow and stale.

I like trying new hotels when I travel. I observe what to do (and mostly what not to do) when it comes to customer service, study cool design (which stimulates big ideas I can then hand over to my team for our products, ranging from CD covers to clothing) and check out whether the hotel understands that in this “experience economy” we now live in, the customers must be taken on a journey from start to finish that makes them go “wow.”

Good news! This place is amazing. Big smile when I entered from the doorman and a warm greeting. Ultra-cool design inside (none of the stark white of SOBE that used to be so hip that everyone copied it—which then made it un-hip). Lots of green and fresh colors. Sexy music and vibe. Super nice front desk staff—the smile thing again with a wonderful offer of Evian water with a slice of lime while I was checking in. And since the MTV Video Music Awards are shooting a video with The Killers tonight down by the pool, Karin asked me whether I wanted a room that would allow me to watch all the action. Sure—I don’t need much sleep anyway.

Eric the bellman showed me the workout facility and then the spa. Best hotel gym I’ve seen since the Sanderson in London. And the room is awesome—art deco, impeccably clean and stylishly put together. All very impressive. Stunning, actually—which is the standard I encourage you to aspire to.

In this “experience economy” we now live in, the customers must be taken on a journey from start to finish that makes them go “wow.”

Hotel Victor under-promised and then over-delivered. It had a chance to

win me over, and through well-trained staff, unique and superbly kept facilities and excellent amenities, it did. Now I'm going back downstairs to try its food (everyone raves about its restaurant, where the chef has a spice rack of 1000 spices that he uses in his cooking). I bet I'll be wowed.

Getting What You Want While Loving What You Have

Some pundits encourage us to enjoy the moment and appreciate what we have, suggesting that constantly striving for more is unhealthy and the primary source of our discontent. And others say that, as human beings, we were built to push beyond our comfort zones each day and reach for something higher—to become great. I’ve struggled a lot with this issue, as I articulate a personal philosophy that I will live my life under. I think I’ve found the answer, a solution that feels right to me: It’s a *balance*, I’ve realized. I call it The Mandela Balance.

Nelson Mandela, a man I greatly admire, once said: “After climbing a great hill, one finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk has not yet ended.”

To me, Nelson Mandela is suggesting that it truly is all about a balance. Enjoy the view from where you are at. Savor how far you have come. Be grateful for where you are along the journey that is your life. Live in the moment. But also remember that with the gifts that reside within you come great responsibilities. I believe that every human being has a “duty to shine.” We must not rest on our past wins and become complacent. We must walk out into the world—each day—and do our best to be of greater service to others, realize more of our potential and become better citizens on the planet. We must continually walk toward our fears and make more of our lives. We must constantly play a bigger game and use our creative talents to do, be and see more. This drive to realize more of our greatest selves has, I believe, been knitted into our DNA and to deny it is to deny our human nature.

**This world was built by people who felt some
discontent with the way things were and knew they
could do better.**

And yes, as we set higher dreams and raise our personal standards, we will create some discontent. But this world was built by people who felt some discontent with the way things were and knew they could do better. “Show me a completely contented person and I’ll show you a failure,” observed Thomas Edison. Politically incorrect these days, I know. But I think he was speaking truth. The greatest among us were not satisfied with the way things were. Think Gandhi. Think Mother Teresa. Think Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Think Bill Gates. Think Einstein. Think Mandela.

So love what you have. And then go for what you want. Enjoy the climb up the mountain. But never take your eyes off the summit.

Think like a CEO

I spoke to the leadership team of Satyam Computer Services a few months ago. Amazing company. One of Asia's fastest growing IT firms: zero to \$1 billion in less than 10 years. 23,000 employees. The chairman is a visionary. I'll share one of his powerful ideas. There are 1500 top managers at Satyam. They run 1500 different divisions and functions. So he tells them that they are not really managers—they are the CEOs of their own small businesses. The larger corporation is simply an “investor” that they need to keep happy. It provides them with resources, structures and opportunities. They just have to return results. The concept inspires them to take ownership of their functional areas and behave like entrepreneurs. It gets them to act like real leaders. It encourages them to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. Brilliant.

Take personal responsibility for the success of your business. Show up like an entrepreneur. Grow sales. Cut costs. Get good stuff done.

You are the CEO of your functional area. Do you have a finance function at your company? You are the CEO of that area, that small business. Work in human resources? That's your small business. Clean-up at the end of the day? You run a clean-up business that serves the larger company you work with. Take personal responsibility for the success of your business. Show up like an entrepreneur. Grow sales. Cut costs. Get good stuff done. You will shine in your career. And the CEO will love you.

Act Like an Athlete

One of the best ways I know to create spectacular results in the most important areas of your life is through daily practice. Top athletes know that practice is how you get to greatness. I was in Moscow a while back for a series of speeches and workshops. One morning I went down to the hotel gym for a workout. It was 6 a.m. Guess who was there? Mary Pierce, the tennis star. For two hours, she ran, lifted weights, did sit-ups and countless push-ups. She was paying the price for success.

You need to practice to get to your greatness. Athletes know this so very well. Why does it seem so foreign to the rest of us? Sure practice takes discipline. But as my friend Nido Qubein (the business consultant and motivational speaker) often says: “The price of discipline is always less than the pain of regret.” Wise man.

What I’m suggesting is that personal and professional greatness takes work. I would never suggest that you could get to your dreams without having to make some sacrifices and pay the price in terms of dedication and self-control. “Pay the price.” Words with the ring of truth. The best among us make it all look so easy. I call it the Swan Effect—elite performers make personal and business mastery look effortless and seem to make things happen as gracefully as a swan moves along the water. But, like the swan, what you don’t get to see is all the planning, discipline, hard work and near-flawless execution taking place below the surface.

Top athletes know that practice is how you get to greatness.

In my life, I have a series of practices that set me up for a great day. I’ve shared those with you. Yes, sometimes life sends you unexpected challenges that knock you off track—that’s just life happening. But with a series of best practices in place to keep you at your highest, you’ll stay in a positive state much more often. This is a simple yet life-changing idea that has helped so many of our clients. Practices that will lock you into your best state include a morning journaling session where you record your feelings, thoughts and the

blessings you are grateful for. Or you may start your day with a strong workout and an elite performer's meal. I often listen to music for 15 minutes, as it not only energizes me, it makes me feel happier. I also use Success Statements or affirmations to get my mind focused. Success and joy and inner peace don't just show up. You need to create them. Find your series of practices, perform them with consistency. And then go out into this beautiful world of ours and shine.

Be Wildly Enthusiastic

“Be enthusiastic” smacks of the obvious. “Be energetic” sounds trite. “Be passionate” seems boring. Yet without enthusiasm, energy and passion, you cannot lead your field and an organization cannot get to world class. (Hey, I never suggested this leadership stuff was rocket science.) Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: “Every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is due to the triumph of enthusiasm.” And Samuel Ullman observed: “Nobody grows old merely by living a number of years. We grow old by deserting our ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul.” Enthusiasm matters.

The people I love to be around are generally those that have a simple, heartfelt quality: They are enthusiastic. Wildly so. They are open to life. They are curious. They love to learn. They smile when they see me. And they have a lot of fun. Play hard or don't play at all.

Today, show up at work with all the enthusiasm you can genuinely muster. Be outrageously energetic and madly alive. See the best in people. Go the extra mile to delight your customers. See the opportunity for learning and personal evolution amidst a seeming setback. Embrace change as a chance to grow. Have a laugh with a teammate. Tell your loved ones you adore them. Spread some passion. I'll be the first to agree that you can't control what happens to you each day. But with an abundance of enthusiasm, I have no doubt that whatever the coming hours bring, you will handle them with grace, strength and a smile.

Be outrageously energetic and madly alive.

Success Isn't Sexy

Too many leadership experts make being successful and fulfilled sound complicated. They preach the latest technique and offer the latest modality that they say will speed you to your greatest life. Take a magic pill or try the latest fad and all will be fine— life will be perfect.

Nonsense. Yes, crafting an extraordinary existence takes work. Of course, getting to greatness—personally and professionally—requires sacrifices. A primary sign of maturity is the ability to give up instant gratification for a much more spectacular pleasure down the road. And true, the right thing to do is generally the hardest thing to do. But here's the good news: With daily, consistent effort in the direction of your dreams and an application of the fundamentals of success, you really can get to the place you've always dreamed of getting to.

Success isn't sexy. It's all about working the basics of excellence with a passionate consistency. I love that word. Consistency. It's amazing how far you will get by just staying with something long enough. Most people give up too early. Their fears are bigger than their faith, I guess.

Stick to the fundamentals that you know in your heart are true and you'll do just fine. What are those fundamentals? Things like being positive, taking responsibility for your role in what's not working in your life, treating people well, working hard, being an innovator rather than a follower, getting up early, setting your goals, speaking your truth, being self-disciplined, saving your money, caring for your health and valuing your family. I told you that you already know this stuff. Nike is a client of ours. And they got it right with all that JDI stuff: Just Do It! As I wrote in my book *Who Will Cry When You Die?*, “The smallest of actions is always better than the noblest of intentions.”

Don't complicate things. Getting to your best life is simple. Not easy but simple. It just takes focus and effort. That philosophy about the thousand mile journey beginning with a single step is true. Do a little each day to get you to your goals and over time you'll get there. Small daily gains lead to giant results over a lifetime.

It's amazing how far you will get by just staying with something long enough. Most people give up too early. Their fears are bigger than their faith.

Big idea: Personal—and organizational—greatness is not about revolution but about evolution, those small but consistent wins. Sam Walton began with a single store. Richard Branson began with his first little record shop. Steve Jobs started Apple out of his garage. Hey, I started with a few cases of self-published books that I'd printed in a Kinko's copy shop. And only 23 people showed up for my first seminar—21 of them were family members. Every dream starts small. But you need to start. Today.

On Cuddle Parties and the Sad State of the World

Get this: I just heard that people across North America are showing up at designated places to have “cuddle parties.” Strangers get together, introduce themselves and then spend time cuddling. Nothing more—just feeling the touch of another human being and feeling connected. Hmmm.

The paradox of our wired world is that as we become more connected electronically, we become less connected emotionally.

The paradox of our wired world is that as we become more connected electronically, we become less connected emotionally. People spend hours each night reading blogs, downloading podcasts and surfing the internet. But they’ve forgotten the importance of old-fashioned conversation. They’ve neglected the power of breaking bread with family and friends. And they’ve lost sight of the importance of human touch.

Do what you like. I’m not a judge. But I have no plans to show up at a cuddle party any time soon. I’d rather work to build the bonds of humanity with those already around me by being loving to my kids and other family, kind to my friends and supportive of my teammates and clients. Just doing that would give me all the cuddles I need.

The Value of Good

After I gave a speech for a major telecommunications company, a woman walked up to me with tears in her eyes. “Robin, I’ve read all your books and try my best to live the kind of life you write about. But there was a man who actually lived your message. He died a few months ago. He was my dad.” She paused, and looked down at the floor. “Five thousand people showed up at my father’s funeral,” she said. “The whole town was there. I was so honored to see that.”

“Was your dad a well-known businessperson?” I asked. “No,” she replied. “A popular politician?” I wondered aloud. “No,” she whispered. “Was your father some kind of a local celebrity?” “No, Robin, he wasn’t at all.” “Then why did 5000 people come to your dad’s funeral?” I had to ask.

Another long pause. “They came because my father was a man who always had a smile on his face. He was the kind of person who was always the first to help someone in need. He always treated people incredibly well and was unfailingly polite. He walked the earth ever so lightly. Five thousand people showed up at my dad’s funeral because he was good.”

Whatever happened to valuing being good? Reality TV shows exhibit the worst of human behavior. We see music superstars who swear every five seconds. We read about corporate leaders who fill their pockets to buy bigger boats while shareholders lose their life savings. I loved the movie *Wall Street*. But Gordon Gekko got it wrong: Greed isn’t good. Good is good.

Some people laugh at the notion of being nice and decent and noble. “That’s a sign of weakness,” I hear. Nope. It’s a sign of strength. Soft is hard. It’s easy to put yourself first. It’s easy to get angry when someone disagrees with you. It’s easy to complain or condemn or take the path of least resistance. What takes guts is to stand for something higher, to behave greater and to be of service to others. Like Mandela. Like Gandhi. Like King. Heroes of mine. I wish I could be one-quarter as good as them.

Gordon Gekko got it wrong: Greed isn’t good. Good is good.

Sorry for ranting, but this is a big topic for me. I'll be the first to tell you I'm far from perfect. I'm just a messenger—an ordinary man. But I'll tell you one thing—I do my best to be good. That quest keeps me up at night. And I hold myself to a standard far higher than anyone could ever expect from me. Do I always get it right? No. Am I always at peace and without anger? No. Do I always model my message? No. I try to each day but I slip sometimes.

I'm not saying that treating people with respect means you don't hold them to high standards and expect excellence from them. It doesn't mean you don't set boundaries and get tough when you have to. Showing leadership isn't about being liked by all. It's about doing what's right. And what's good.

Grace under Pressure

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said in a speech: “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” So true. What we are as human beings presents itself more fully in times of adversity than at times of ease. Anyone can be positive, polite and kind when things are going well. What distinguishes people with an extraordinary character from the rest of us is how they respond when life sends one of its inevitable curves. They don’t crumble or surrender. They reach deeply into themselves and present even more of their highest nature to the world.

Just a couple of hours ago, I was on the runway, ready to fly home from London. The flight had been delayed by a few hours so it felt good to be so close to takeoff. I had my iPod in place, a new book to read and my journal. Then, the pilot’s voice came over the public address system: “The ground crew has found a metal instrument in one of the tires. We regret that we must cancel this flight.” The reactions that statement provoked were fascinating.

One man close to me became belligerent to a flight attendant. A couple in another row grumbled loudly. A businessman in a dark suit actually kicked the seat in front of him. Yet some passengers responded differently, with a quiet humanity. An elderly gentleman smiled as he helped others take their bags down from the overhead compartments. A teenager, rather than trying to rush off the plane like most of the other passengers, stopped to help a woman with a disability. The lady sitting next to me laughed and said, “Hey, it’s not the end of the world,” before calling her kids and sharing her adventure with them. The wisest among us have a remarkable ability to maintain grounded when times get tough.

No life is perfect; mine certainly isn’t. We all must face challenges, both large and small. This very minute, somewhere in the world, there are parents dealing with the death of a child. This very minute, someone has suffered an accident that will devastate their loved ones. This very minute, there are human beings dealing with illness in a hospital bed. Sickness, loss, disappointment. No one gets through life without experiencing this stuff. But you and I have the power to choose to rise above our external circumstances.

We always have the choice to be strong and positive when things fall apart. We have the right to use our stumbling blocks as stepping stones to our greatest life. This isn't motivational sloganeering. I believe this is truth.

What distinguishes people with an extraordinary character from the rest of us is how they respond when life sends one of its inevitable curves.

Grace under pressure. That's what separates leaders from followers. It's that beautiful quality that inspires others and reflects a well-developed spirit. It's a trait that allows you to carve out a spectacular life—one you'll be proud of at the end. My seatmate was right—things could have been so much worse. I'm safe. I have my health. I have two wonderful children. I have work I love and so much to be grateful for. Sure I now have to wait a few hours to catch the next flight home. Maybe I'll get started on that book my editor keeps asking me about.

To Be More Productive, Relax and Have More Fun

Spending all your time working will not make you more productive. In my experience, and I've been at this for over 10 years, few people get their best ideas at work. I invite you to take a moment to think about that. Checking your email messages on your BlackBerry every 60 seconds will not make you more effective. Burning the candle at both ends doesn't tap into your natural pool of creativity. Refusing to take vacations will not make you a star performer. Here's a big lesson I've learned: I get my best ideas—the thoughts that have really elevated my business and revolutionized my life—when I'm relaxed and having fun. There's great value in making the time to chill out and do the things that fill your heart with joy. Newton didn't come up with his breakthrough observations on the laws of physics while rushing to catch a subway. Einstein spent a ton of time sailing and connecting with his childlike self. The creator of the sewing machine came up with the idea while dreaming about an island native holding a spear with a hole in the end of it. I came up with the whole concept behind *Leadership Wisdom from the Monk Who Sold His Ferrari: The 8 Rituals of Visionary Leaders* while taking a long solo drive out in the country. When the idea hit me, I pulled over onto a dirt road and downloaded the ideas into my journal for more than two hours. An unforgettable experience for me.

I get my best ideas—the thoughts that have really elevated my business and revolutionized my life—when I'm relaxed and having fun.

I often joke with my audiences that I make most of my income on a ski hill. People smile. But they get my point. You need to make space for your genius to flow. We get our creative bursts, those idea torrents that take our business and personal lives to the next level, while we are skiing or drinking coffee in a Starbucks or walking in the woods or meditating with a sunrise. Those pursuits are not a waste of time. No way. Those pursuits are a superb use of your time. Creativity comes when you are relaxed, happy and enjoying the moment. And when it comes, it can bring ideas that rock your world. All it takes is one good idea to get you to previously unimagined results.

Relaxing, taking vacations and making time for fun actually makes you more successful.

And these pursuits make you money. Mireille Guiliano, the CEO of Clicquot, said it well: “We have to take ‘beach time,’ a space for ourselves every day, because we live in a world of burnout. Even if you take 20 or 30 minutes for yourself, you’ll be a better worker, a better colleague, a better person. It benefits the people around you as much as it benefits you.”

Get this: Hewlett-Packard recently noted that constant interruptions of technology actually took 10 points off the IQ of an average employee in a work environment. And the U.S. software firm Veritas saw something amazing happen after it introduced “email-free Fridays”: Friday became the most productive and creative day of the week.

So have some fun. Laugh with your co-workers. Go for a walk at lunch. Go fishing or swimming or golfing this weekend. Maybe sit on a beach for a week down in the Caribbean or visit the great museums in France and Italy. Or just take a nap and relax. And if anyone tells you that you’re wasting time, you have my permission to say: “But Robin told me I’m being productive.” And then go back to sleep.

The Two Magic Words

I sometimes get a little bothered by ingratitude. I try to treat people well, help them win and celebrate them, so that they reach for their best life. Sometimes, I'd just love to hear two magic words: "Thank you."

Yes, I know that if you do something good for someone with the expectation of a reward it's not a gift—it's a trade. And I know that good things happen to people who do good things. And I know that life has a very fair accounting system and as one sows, one will reap. But I'd still like to hear those two magic words more often.

I had breakfast with a friend the other day. He's helped so many people in his organization realize their highest potential—as leaders and as humans. He looked at me and said: "Robin, after all these years in business, I can count on one hand the number of people who have told me that they appreciate what I've done for them."

I believe I'm offering you a very real point. According to Gallup research, the number-one reason employees leave their organization is not because they were not being paid enough; they leave because they were not given enough appreciation. Your talent goes to the competition because no one said thank you to them. Max De Pree, the former CEO of Herman Miller, sagely observed: "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you."

So today, take a moment and think about the people in your life who need to be cherished, appreciated and told that their support has been helpful. Offer a heartfelt and enthusiastic "thank you." Those two magic words don't cost anything. But they will make a world of difference.

Today, take a moment and think about the people in your life who need to be cherished, appreciated and told that their support has been helpful.

The Value of Dying Daily

I have no desire to be the richest person in the graveyard. To me, a life well lived is mostly about being surrounded by people I love, staying healthy and happy (no one's happy all the time, except in the movies, by the way), stepping toward my highest potential each day, doing work I love and having an impact on the world around me. So how can you stay focused on the things that are most important to you amidst the daily pressures of life? Die daily.

I wrote about this in *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, but the point of wisdom bears repeating: Connecting to the fact that life is short and no one knows when it will end is a great personal habit to stay centered on your highest priorities. Waking up each morning and asking yourself, “How would I show up today if this day was my last?” is not some cheesy motivational exercise. It's a profound way to bring some urgency and commitment into your days. Apple CEO Steve Jobs said it far more powerfully than I ever could when he observed: “No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because death is very likely the single best invention of life.”

Most of us let life act on us—we are asleep at the wheel of our own lives. And the days really do slip into weeks, the weeks into months and the months into years. Before we know it, we are lying on our deathbeds, wondering where all the time went. I've talked to a lot of elderly people who express that very sentiment, with tears in their eyes. A participant in a recent seminar made the point beautifully, sharing the following quote from one of his family members with me: “When the sun shone and the shops were invitingly open—alas—I forgot my shopping. Now the night has fallen—and I remember my shopping.”

Waking up each morning and asking yourself, “How would I show up today if this day was my last?” is not some cheesy motivational exercise. It's a

profound way to bring some urgency and commitment into your days.

I have a gentle challenge for you: Die daily. Connect with your mortality each morning. Then give yourself over to life. Live like tomorrow will not come. Take some risks. Open your heart a little wider. Speak your truth. Show your respect for the gift of life that's been given to you. Shine brightly today. Chase your dreams. It's tragic that most people would rather cling to security than reach for their best. And then, wake up tomorrow and reach even higher. At the end, people will remember you as one of the great ones. And your funeral will be a celebration.

Client-Focused vs. Out to Lunch

It's Saturday morning as I write this chapter. I woke up nice and early to get a great start to this gift of a day. I spent an hour journaling, read and had an excellent conversation with my kids. I then set out to have a workout at the health club I exercise at, which opens at 8 a.m. When I arrived, I saw all these people standing in the parking lot. This particular club has a bridge going over a little river that leads from the parking lot to the main building and tennis courts. Yesterday, we had monsoonlike rains and the bridge collapsed. A few of the employees were checking out the damage.

So I walked up. It was about 7:50 and I was ready for a nice, big workout to energize me for the day. I'm a client, one of the people who keeps them in business. But they didn't seem to get that. No greeting. No smile. No warmth. Just a continued conversation about the destroyed bridge.

I asked whether the club was still open. They laughed. One of the employees said, "We won't be open for a while." Okay ... a little more information might be helpful, guys. But no more information came. No data on when the club might re-open or a solution for me such as alternative clubs that could allow me to work out for the interim until this place gets up and running again. I turned away, receiving further evidence that this organization just doesn't get it. And that it just doesn't care anymore. It once did.

In the past, it offered excellent service, excellent facilities and excellent amenities. I'd get a birthday card signed by the whole team once a year and they always used my name when I walked in (which felt good even though I knew they'd look up my name when they'd swipe my card as I entered). Then things began to slip. They got successful. Nothing fails like success. Richard Carrion was right. They stopped training their team. They let the machines get old. And so they took us—the clients—for granted. The bridge isn't the only thing broken there.

Business is about loving the people who do business with you and giving them more value than they have any right to expect.

And guess what? If a new club opens up that shows it understands why it is in business—to add value and delight its customers—I'll be the first to show up. To me, business is about loving the people who do business with you and giving them more value than they have any right to expect. Care for your clients. No ... astonish them. And your success and sustainability will be guaranteed. Pretty simple idea. So few get it.

Lead Without Title

When I go into an organization to help develop and grow leaders, the client often asks me to help employees understand what leadership is all about. Leadership has nothing to do with the title on your business card or the size of your office. Leadership is not about how much money you make or the clothes you wear. Leadership is a philosophy. It's an attitude. It's a state of mind. It's a way of operating. And it's available to each one of us. No matter what you do within an organization. Robert Joss, dean of Stanford Graduate School of Business, made the point splendidly when he observed: "By leadership I mean taking complete responsibility for an organization's well-being and growth, and changing it for the better. Real leadership is not about prestige, power or status. It is about responsibility." The invitation I offer to every group of employees I work with: Lead without title.

Here's an example. I spend a lot of my life on airplanes and traveling so I'm hard on my luggage. The handle on my carry-on luggage broke after my tour of Russia (you have to put a visit to St. Petersburg on your list of places to visit before you die). Anyway, I took the piece in to Evex, a dealer in Toronto. The young man at the counter treated me wonderfully and, within a few days, the handle was fixed. Perfect.

While in New York a little while later, the handle broke again. I assumed that I'd have to pay for the repair when I went back to Evex. Most businesses put clients through so many hurdles: If you haven't saved the receipt you are out of luck. If you don't know who did the initial repair we cannot help. If you didn't buy it at this location you don't exist. Well, Evex is different. They just get it. They understand that without treating their customers well, there is no business. They haven't forgotten who puts food on their table each night. Treat your customers like royalty and you cannot help but win.

When I explained that the handle had broken again, the young woman at the counter—without a moment of hesitation—apologized for the problem I faced. She then said: "We promise you that you will have your carry-on in perfect order within three days. And of course, sir, there will be no charge." No bureaucracy around needing the receipt from the previous repair. No hassles. No issues. Just great service, with a giant smile.

“Real leadership is not about prestige, power or status. It is about responsibility.”

This woman showed true leadership. She quickly diagnosed the problem, assumed personal responsibility and made the right decision. Part of the solution versus part of the problem. And she wowed her customer in the process. She wasn't the owner. Not the supervisor. Not a manager. Just a leader without title.

Do Your Part

Big question for you: “What are you doing to help build a new and better world?” Don’t blame the politicians. Don’t blame those around you. Don’t blame your parents or your background. Doing so is playing the victim and this world has far too many people playing the victim when they could be sharing their brilliance and making a profound difference. Mother Teresa said it so much better than I ever could: “If each of us would only sweep our own doorstep, the whole world would be clean.”

Blaming others is excusing yourself. Telling yourself that you—as an army of one—cannot have an impact is giving away your power. After a hurricane a while ago, a couple of college kids got their hands on empty school buses and drove them into the ravaged area when everybody else said the city was impenetrable. A little man in a loincloth named Mahatma Gandhi freed an entire nation. A woman named Rosa Parks sparked a civil rights movement because she refused to sit at the back of a bus. Ordinary people really can do extraordinary things. I love what Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop, once said: “If you think you’re too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room.”

Live by what I call the Jennifer Aniston Rule. In an issue of *Vanity Fair*, Aniston said that she gives herself one day to play victim after experiencing a challenging event. After that day of feeling powerless and sorry for herself, she wakes up and takes ownership for the way her life looks. She takes personal responsibility for her part in the problem—even if that only amounted to 1%. That’s personal leadership in action. It doesn’t matter who you are, or where you come from. “The ability to triumph begins with you. Always,” offered entertainment superstar Oprah Winfrey.

Blaming others is excusing yourself. Telling yourself that you—as an army of one—cannot have an impact is giving away your power.

What don’t you like about your life or the organization you work for or the country you live in? Make a list. Write it down. Shout it out. And then do

something to improve things. Anything. Start small or go big. Just do something. As you exercise your power to choose, guess what? Your power grows. And as you work within your sphere of influence to make things better, guess what? Your sphere of influence expands. So do your part. Today. Now. The world will be better for it.

Do You Play?

I dropped off my son, Colby, at his friend's house this past weekend. When his buddy walked up to our car to greet him, I asked: "What are you guys going to do?" The reply came in one big word: "Play." Perfect answer.

Children are our teachers. I'm not the guru in our home—my kids are. As I drove back to my place, I reflected on the importance of play. How often do you ask an adult "What do you plan on doing today?" and get the response "Play"? Maybe that's why our world is broken.

Adults are nothing more than deteriorated children.

What would your life look like if there was more play? What would your experience of work be like if you had more fun doing your job, no matter what job you do? What would your relationships look like with more spontaneity, laughter, festivity and youthful—no, wild—abandon? As adults, we stop playing once we assume the responsibilities of life. Adults are nothing more than deteriorated children. Why? It doesn't have to be that way. Make the time to play. Find the time to be a little reckless and silly. Be imaginative at work and bring curiosity back to your days. Get back to that sense of wonder you knew when life was all about make-believe, riding your bike and enjoying every second of this journey called living. And the next time someone looks at you—with your briefcase, business suit and serious face—and asks what you plan on doing today, I invite you to confidently give the only reply that matters: "I'm going out to play."

Avoid the “Four F’s Syndrome”

Most training and learning doesn’t last. No stickiness. We attend a seminar and vow to transform our lives. We say we’ll be better parents, more effective leaders and wiser human beings. Two days later, it’s back to business as usual—seeing the negative, playing the victim and being cranky. The learning didn’t work. Because we didn’t change.

No one wants to fail. So most of us don’t even try.

Having helped hundreds of thousands of people create *sustained* change, and businesses around the world win in their markets, I’ve identified four main reasons why people resist change and often don’t take the steps to elevate their careers and their lives, even when they have the opportunity to do so. With greater awareness of these four factors—which I call the Four F’s Syndrome—you can make better choices. And when you make better choices, you are certain to experience better results. Big idea: Personal leadership begins with self-awareness because you can’t improve a weakness or a blind spot you don’t even know about. In other words, once you know better you can do better.

Here are the four things that keep us from making the changes we want to make:

FEAR. *People fear leaving their safe harbor of the known and venturing off into the unknown. Human beings crave certainty—even when it limits them. Most of us don’t like trying something new—it brings up our discomfort. The key here is to manage your fear by doing the very thing that frightens you. That’s the best way to destroy a fear. Do it until you’re no longer scared. The fears you run away from run toward you. The fears you don’t own will own you. But behind every fear wall lives a precious treasure.*

FAILURE. *No one wants to fail. So most of us don’t even try. Sad. We don’t even take that first step to improve our health or to deepen our working relationships or to realize a dream. In my mind, the only failure in life is the failure to try. And I deeply believe that the greatest risk you can ever take is not taking risks. Take that small step and do it fast. Sports superstar Michael*

Jordan once said: “There was never any fear for me, no fear of failure. If I miss a shot, so what?” Failure is just an essential part of realizing success. There can be no success without failure.

FORGETTING. *Sure we leave the seminar room after an inspirational workshop ready to change the world. But then we get to the office the next day and reality sets in. Difficult teammates to deal with. Unhappy customers to satisfy. Demanding bosses to appease. Uncooperative suppliers. No time to act on the commitments we made for personal and professional leadership. So we forget them. Here’s a key to success: Keep your commitments top of mind. Heighten your awareness around them. Better awareness—Better choices. Better choices—Better results. Keep your self-promises front and center. Don’t forget them. Put them on a three-by-five-inch card that you post on your bathroom mirror and read every morning. Seems silly, works beautifully. (You should see my bathroom mirror.) Talk about them a lot (you become what you talk about). Write about them each morning in your journal.*

FAITH. *Too many people have no faith. They are cynical. “This leadership training and personal development stuff doesn’t work.” Or “I’m too old to change.” Cynicism stems from disappointment. Cynical and faithless people were not always like that. They were filled with possibilities and hope as kids. But they tried and perhaps failed. And rather than staying in the game, recognizing that failure is the highway to success, they shut down and grew cynical. Their way to avoid getting hurt again.*

So there you go, the four F’s of why we resist transformation and showing real leadership within our lives. Understand them and you can then manage and overcome them. Because awareness really does precede success. And ordinary people really can craft extraordinary lives. I see it happen all the time. You truly can get to greatness. Trust me. But you have to start. And how will you know if you don’t even try?

Problems Reveal Genius

Problems are servants. Problems bring possibilities. They help you grow and lead to better things, both in your organization and within your life. Inside every problem lies a precious opportunity to improve things. Every challenge is nothing more than a chance to make things better. To avoid them is to avoid growth and progress. To resist them is to decline greatness. Embrace and get the best from the challenges in front of you. And understand that the only people with no problems are dead.

An unhappy customer yelling at you might seem like a problem. But to a person thinking like a leader, that scenario is also a giant opportunity to improve the organization's processes to ensure that doesn't happen again and to get some feedback that may be used to enhance products and services. So the problem has actually helped to improve the company. Free market research.

An interpersonal conflict at work can seem like a problem. But if you think like a leader and use the circumstance to build understanding, promote communication and enrich the relationship, the problem has actually made you better. It has been fodder for your growth and served you nicely. Bless it.

An illness or a divorce or the loss of a loved one might seem like a problem. Sure it's painful (been there, done that, on the divorce side). But I've been shaped by my saddest experiences. They've brought me depth, compassion and wisdom. They have given me self-awareness. They've made me the man that I am. I wouldn't trade them for the world.

The only people with no problems are dead.

Problems reveal genius. World-class organizations have a culture that sees problems as opportunities for improvement. Don't condemn them—learn from them and embrace them. World-class human beings turn their wounds into wisdom. They leverage their failures to bring them closer to success. They don't see problems. They see possibilities. And that's what makes them great. Remember, a mistake is only a mistake if you make it twice.

Love Your Irritations

The things that drive you crazy are actually giant opportunities. The people who press your buttons are actually your greatest teachers. The issues that make you angry are actually your biggest gifts. Be grateful for them. Love them.

The people or circumstances that take you out of your power have extraordinary value: They reveal your limiting beliefs, fears and false assumptions. The celebrated psychologist Carl Jung once said: “Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.” Powerful point. How much would you pay someone who promised that they could pinpoint exactly what is holding you back from your greatest life? How much would it be worth to get intimate information and intelligence on why you are not exactly at the place where you’ve always dreamed of being? The things that irritate, annoy and anger you are entry points into your evolution and elevation as a human being. They are signposts for what you need to work on and the fears you need to face. They are gifts of growth. You can blame the people who trigger you and make it all about them. Or you can do the wise thing and look deeply into yourself to discover the reasons for your negative reaction. Use the challenges to grow self-awareness. Because how can you overcome a fear you are not even aware of? And how can you transcend an insecurity you don’t even know you have?

As you begin to shed light on your personal weaknesses and take responsibility for them, you actually begin the very process of shedding them. Shadows exposed to the light begin to disappear. You become stronger. More powerful. More of who you were meant to be. You begin to see the world through a different set of eyes. People really can evolve into their greatness—I see it every day.

The people or circumstances that take you out of your power have extraordinary value: They reveal your limiting beliefs, fears and false assumptions.

Kahlil Gibran, one of my favorite thinkers, once wrote: “I have learned

silence from the talkative, toleration from the intolerant, and kindness from the unkind; yet, strange, I am grateful to those teachers.” So the next time a co-worker sets you off or your teenager gets you going, or the next time a rude waiter in a restaurant makes you angry, walk over to them, give them a hug. Thank them for the gift they just gave you. Because, in truth, they really did.

Speak like a Superstar

The words you use determine the way you feel. The language you choose shapes the way you perceive reality. Your vocabulary drives meaning in your life. Please think about this idea. I believe it's a big one.

The superstar businesspeople who I've coached are among the most high-spirited people I've ever met. And the way they talk reflects that devotion to being an uplifter and elevator of human beings. They wouldn't dream of calling a setback a "problem"—they'd call it an "opportunity to create something even greater." And then, as if by magic, their positive language provokes a set of positive sensations within them that supports them in playing victor versus victim in the seemingly difficult situation. The great ones among us would never express information about an upset customer as "bad news" but instead would label it "a challenge that will help us grow." Rather than using negative words, they prefer winning words that inspire those around them to dwell in possibility and keep their heads focused on the dream. The words you use influence the life you live. Select them wisely.

I have a little exercise to offer you. Pull out your journal or a clean white sheet of paper and record an inventory of the words you most frequently speak. The more aware you can become of the quality of your language, the more choice you will give yourself. And writing things down dramatically raises your self-awareness. Then, once you have identified your most commonly used words, do another list. Articulate a series of spectacularly positive words that will serve you—words that you imagine a superstar in your field using. Bring them into your daily vocabulary. You will discover that speaking these words will make you feel better. More powerful. More passionate. And when you feel great feelings, guess what? You'll do great things.

The words you use influence the life you live. Select them wisely.

Learning or Decaying

There's a cure for aging that no one talks about. It's called learning. In my mind, as long as you learn something new each day, stretch your personal frontiers and improve the way you think, you cannot grow old. Aging only happens to people who lose their lust for getting better and disconnect from their natural base of curiosity. "Every three or four years I pick a new subject. It may be Japanese art; it may be economics. Three years of study are by no means enough to master a subject but they are enough to understand it. So for more than 60 years I have kept studying one subject at a time," said Peter Drucker, the father of modern management who lived until he was 95. Brilliant guy.

Last year, I had the joy of spending a couple of hours in conversation with Shimon Peres, the former Israeli prime minister and Nobel Peace Prize winner. He was nearly 82 at the time, and I couldn't help but notice that his eyes actually sparkled as he spoke of his love of books, big ideas and learning. I asked: "Mr. Peres, when do you read?" His reply: "Robin, when don't I read? I read when I get up in the morning, when I can during the day and every single evening. Most of my weekends are spent reading great books. Books are my constant companions." He then added with a smile: "If you eat three times a day you'll be fed. But if you read three times a day you'll be wise."

Too many people never pick up a book after they've finished school. Unbelievable. Too many people spend more time watching TV than getting deep inside the minds of the greatest people who have walked the planet. Too many people have closed their minds to new insights and powerful thoughts. One idea discovered in one book can change the way you see the world. One idea read in one book could transform the way you communicate with people. One idea found in one book could help you live longer or be happier or drive your business to remarkable success. Never leave home without a book in your hand.

There's a cure for aging that no one talks about. It's called learning.

Simple Tactics for Superb Relationships

Any good psychologist will tell you that one of the deepest needs of a human being is the need to belong. We are happiest when we feel connected to others—when we are part of a community. Top performers in business make it a priority to build relationships with their teammates and their customers. Connecting with the people who surround them is not seen as a waste of time; instead, it is an exquisitely wise use of their time.

As a leadership development specialist, I work with our corporate clients to build cultures where people and relationships come first. This promotes communication, collaboration and strong business results. When people feel appreciated, they shine. Here are 10 deceptively simple ideas for building your human connections that have helped employees of the companies that engage us for leadership coaching get to a whole new level of high performance:

1. *Be the most positive person you know.*
2. *Be candid and speak truthfully.*
3. *Be on time.*
4. *Say please and thank you.*
5. *Under-promise and over-deliver.*
6. *Leave people better than you found them.*
7. *Be friendly and caring.*
8. *Be a world-class listener.*
9. *Become passionately interested in other people.*
10. *Smile a lot.*

One of the deepest needs of a human being is the need to belong.

Here's a bonus point: Treat people with respect—always. I've discovered a very powerful law that just may change the way you lead as well as the way you live: To get respect, give respect. I sometimes share a story of a respected

consultant who was engaged—at a great sum of money—to reveal his many years of wisdom with the management team of a large organization. The consultant walked into the meeting room and looked intensely at the group. He then reached for a marker and wrote four words on the whiteboard behind him: “Treat people with respect.” He smiled at the executives. And then he left.

Rock Stars as Poets

I love music. I find music just makes life better. Add a little music to an ordinary experience and it becomes extraordinary. I just drove my kids to school before I wrote this chapter. Played the new Our Lady Peace CD as we drove. My daughter, Bianca, looked up at me and said: “Daddy, music makes me feel like dancing.” Her eyes sparkled as she said it. Perfect.

Last night I had a thoughtful conversation with an interesting friend. He makes his living in the financial markets. But he lives his passion spinning turntables as a DJ. Cool combination. He loves music. Makes his life better too. We talked about Morcheeba and Thievery Corporation and U2 and the Dave Matthews Band. That got me thinking. Music can connect us, giving us a shared language, whether we live in New York or Bogotá, Tel Aviv, San Juan, Bangalore or Beijing. Music has the potential to elevate our lives, enrich our societies and uplift the world.

Here’s what I really think: Musicians are artists, no different from painters or poets. They document our culture, cause us to think, provoke us (sometimes) and introduce us to new ideas. And the good ones are philosophers. Seriously. The best share wise insights through their songs that inspire us to see the world through a new set of lenses and step out of the ordinary— into the realm of something special—if only for three minutes. Bono of U2 said in an interview that he sees himself as a traveling salesman. He crisscrosses the planet selling a message, evangelizing his values, spreading the silent whispers of his heart on a stage in front of tens of thousands. Bono’s a poet. Just read some of his stuff. It’s deep. Alanis Morissette also comes to mind when I think of lyrics with philosophical weight. So does Dave Matthews. Even Eminem’s words, when not profane, have power. Listen to them sometime. The guy gets life.

Musicians are artists, no different from painters or poets. They document our culture, cause us to think, provoke us (sometimes) and introduce us to new ideas. And the good ones are philosophers.

So let me ask you: Do you fill your moments with music? What songs make you think or laugh or cry? What music makes your heart soar and reminds you how beautifully blessed you are to be walking the planet today? What tunes inspire you to reach higher, dream bigger and get to the greatness that you are meant to be? Oh, and let me ask you one final question: What is the music that makes you just want to get up and start dancing?

The Innovator's Mantra

True innovators have a mantra: “The enemy of the best is the good.” They are constantly daring to make things better. What others call impossible they see as probable. They live out of their imaginations—not their memories. They live to challenge the commonly accepted. They assume nothing. They see no limits. To them, everything's possible.

If you want to be a leader, I have a simple suggestion: Just keep innovating. Innovate at work. Innovate at home. Innovate in your relationships. Innovate in the way you run your life. Innovate in terms of the way you see the world. To become stagnant is to begin to die. Growth, evolution and reinvention sustain life. Sure it can be scary. But wouldn't you rather feel your fear than play small with your life?

There's no safety in being the same person today that you were yesterday. That's just an illusion that ends up breaking your heart when you get to the end of your life and realize that you missed out on living it boldly. Lasting fulfillment lives out in the unknown. When I was a kid, my dad used to tell me: “Robin, it's risky out on the limb. But, son—that's where all the fruit is.” And to play out on the skinny branch, you need to innovate. Daily. Relentlessly.

Of course, the more you innovate and refuse to be bound by the chains of complacency, the more you will fail. I mentioned that in an earlier chapter. Not every risk you take and not everything you try will work out as planned. That's just life happening. Failure truly is essential to success. And the more you stretch, the farther you will reach. Failure is a gift anyway. Failure has been so helpful to me. It's taken me closer to my dreams, equipped me with more knowledge and toughened me up so I'm more prepared. Success and failure go hand in hand. They are business partners.

There's no safety in being the same person today that you were yesterday. That's just an illusion that ends up breaking your heart.

One of pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline's organizing values is "disturb." Love it. Makes me think of the words of Motorola CEO Ed Zander: "At the height of success, 'break' your business. Companies that don't innovate don't survive, so the key is driving this innovation. The lesson is especially important when things are going well. Though it's counterintuitive, successful companies actually need to be more innovative than the competition. It's like kids playing king of the hill—everyone aims for the kid at the top. Leaders that don't innovate are displaced by those willing to take risks." So go to work each day and refuse to do the same thing you did yesterday—just because it was what you did yesterday. Keep challenging yourself to think better, do better and be better. Shake things up. Confront your limitations. Refuse to be average. Stand for what's best. Commit to being breathtakingly great in all you do. And that's what you'll become. Sooner than you think.

Pleasure vs. Happiness

Pleasure is great—but it doesn't last. Pleasure comes from your five senses. From a great meal, a nice glass of wine and a new car. Nothing wrong with these things—they make the experience of life better. But they are fleeting.

**Pleasure comes from something on the outside.
Happiness comes from within.**

Happiness, well, that's a different story. Happiness is the DNA of pleasure. My point is simply this: Pleasure comes from something on the outside. Happiness comes from within. It's a state you create by choice. It's a decision. It's an act of will.

People can be happy when they are going through great pain and adversity. There's no pleasure evident in their external lives and yet they are content on the inside. And, conversely, tons of people are surrounded by pleasure (fast cars, nice homes, great clothes) but there's no joy within. So choose to be happy. You can't control life on the outside. Hard stuff will happen. But you can control what goes on inside. And those who do become great.

The \$600 Sandwich

Never a dull moment in my life. I just got back from lunch. I went out to pick up a sub sandwich from my usual place. Get this: When I checked my receipt after swiping my debit card, the bill said \$577.89. They sell great sandwiches, but that was a bit rich for my blood.

A couple of leadership lessons I want to offer you from this little escapade:

OAD. *Great businesses are remarkably detail oriented. I love what Stephen Jay Gould once said: “Details are all that matters; God dwells in these and you never get to see Him if you don’t struggle to get them right.” At our company, we talk about OAD: Obsessive Attention to Detail. The best organizations I’ve worked with sweat the small stuff. They understand that customers notice every little detail. The woman behind the counter was not being present in the moment. She should have punched in \$5.77. Big boo-boo. And her boss was standing next to her. Oops. I was gracious and helped her save face. Many wouldn’t have.*

TAKE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY (and do it fast). *When I checked the bill and saw the (outrageous) error, I mentioned it to the woman politely. Her reply was classic: “Didn’t you check before you okayed the amount?” No one wants to take responsibility for things anymore. We blame everyone else. After a few minutes, she got her wisdom back and apologized profusely. I know she just got scared when she saw what she’d done. And most of us, when we get scared, blame others to avoid the pain of owning the mistake we’ve made.*

PAY ATTENTION. *Glad I checked my bill. Sometimes I don’t because my mind is up in the clouds, dreaming about how to change the world. But world-class leaders are attentive. They reside in the moment.*

The best organizations I’ve worked with sweat the small stuff.

I’ll go back to this place. The owner gave me the sub for free and they all felt bad. But their credibility has been seriously undermined and they’ll need

to earn my trust back. I pray they will because they make really good sandwiches.

Good Business Is Good for Business

Here's a simple idea that will have a fantastic impact on your organization (and your career) once you act on it: People want to work for a good company—one that is not only well-run but that does its part to build a better world. Being a good business is good for business. That's not some cheesy slogan I just came up with—that's what I've observed, having worked with real people at real companies around the world. The best companies have a noble purpose and a clear intent to treat their people and their customers well. Great companies also understand that while it's mission-critical to be hugely profitable, it's also mission-critical to be socially responsible. Many of our clients have set up programs to help the disadvantaged or to make communities better. I admire them more than they will ever know.

Pride is something that doesn't get talked about much in business circles. Too bad. What I've discovered is that people want to go to work each day with pride in their hearts. They want to feel good about the company they work for. They want to know that their company—and the work they do—elevates lives and makes a difference. Business philosopher Peter Koestenbaum expressed it so well in his excellent book *Leadership: The Inner Side of Greatness*: “Business is above all a vehicle for achieving personal and organization greatness. It is for accomplishing something worthy and noble. Business is an institution that can enable you to make significant contributions to society.”

People want to work for a good company—one that is not only well-run but that does its part to build a better world.

As I've suggested throughout this book, we all can lead without title. We all have an impact. We all can do good, at work—and in our communities. So become a volunteer. Give money to charities. Start to tithe (the word actually means onetenth, or 10%) your income to good causes. And as an organization, engage in projects that help communities in need (by setting up a foundation or by supporting important initiatives). Become dedicated to

making a greater contribution. Stand for social responsibility as well as remarkable profitability. Not only will you retain your top talent and attract even more, but your customers will respect you. Good business really is good for business. And giving really does begin the receiving process.

Build Success Structures

Yesterday, on my way in to work, I pulled up next to one of those big new Mercedes sedans. The man driving it had his windows rolled down a bit so I heard the song blaring through his stereo system: Queen's "We Are the Champions." Made me think of a CEO who attended one of the leadership summits we run a couple of times a year. He operates a major company. Wanted to improve his organization along with his life. Told me he listens to AC/DC's "Back in Black" full blast before his big sales calls. Interesting.

What practices get you to your best? What rituals throw you into your best game mode? What tactics inspire you to really get going to let your bright light shine? We all need what I call Success Structures scheduled into our weeks to ensure we stay at our highest. We all need systems installed into our days to ensure consistency of results, order and superb outcomes. The best companies have systems to ensure quality control—so should you. Get serious about building systems and you'll show you're serious about success. Things that work for me, as I've suggested, include lots of exercise, high-energy music, reading great books, weekly meetings—even if for only 15 minutes on the phone—with inspirational friends and writing in my journal. They get built into my week just like my most important meetings (and time with my kids).

We all need systems installed into our days to ensure consistency of results, order and superb outcomes.

Success doesn't just occur. It's a project that is worked on each day. You need to swim out to it. You need to make it happen (along with letting it happen—once you've given your best). As Václav Havel once observed: "Vision is not enough; it must be combined with venture. It is not enough to stare up to the step; we must step up the stairs." So what will you do today to jump-start yourself? Don't postpone your greatness. Your time is now. And if not now, then when?

The Person Who Experiences Most Wins

Big idea: Why wait to get old to become experienced? I want the experience of an old man while I'm still young. And I think I've figured out a way to get it: Collapse the timeline. Most people don't take that many risks or have that many new conversations or read that many new books or take that many new travels. By engaging in these and other experience-building pursuits at a dramatically accelerated rate, I figure I could get 10 years' worth of learning and lessons in a quarter of the time. Just collapse the timeline by doing more important stuff faster and sooner. Just stay focused and committed. Just put more living into each of my days.

We all get the same allotment of time. Each of us gets 24 hours each day. The sad fact is that too many among us spend too much time doing unimportant things. Living reactive lives. Saying "yes" to activities they should be saying "no" to. Drifting like a piece of wood in a river, moving in whatever direction the current happens to be moving on that particular day. All because they did not make the time to think. About their priorities. About their dreams and goals. And to note what they want to make of their lives. People have lost 20 good years this way. Seriously.

By getting clear on what you want out of life, you heighten your awareness around what's most important. With better awareness comes better choices. And with better choices you'll see better results. Clarity breeds success.

So don't wait until the end of your life to become experienced. Collapse the timeline. Get clear on what you need to experience to have a fulfilling life—and then start doing it now. Meet cool people. Visit neat places. Read deep books. Seize opportunities. Fail often—it reflects an increase in your reach and risk-taking. Who cares if you win or lose, so long as you get another experience to add to the inventory. Even the saddest of times make your life richer. Benjamin Zander, the conductor of the Boston Philharmonic, shared the following line from his teacher, the great cellist Gaspar Cassadó, in his wonderful book *The Art of Possibility*: "I'm so sorry for you; your lives have been so easy. You can't play great music unless your heart's been broken."

**I want the experience of an old man while I'm still young. And I think I've figured out a way to get it:
Collapse the timeline.**

The more experiences, the better the life. The person who experiences most wins.

Brand like Diddy

This morning just after I woke up, I chilled out. Listened to some Coltrane, a dose of Sade and then played some music by Diddy (the artist formerly known as Puff Daddy then P. Diddy; my name seems so boring now). I needed something to jump-start my day (and wake up the kids). Reflecting on him and the business empire he's built got me thinking. About brands.

To win in your marketplace, your organization needs to develop a magnificently cherished and superbly respected brand. (I mentioned Kevin Roberts, CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi, in an earlier chapter; he doesn't even use the term "brand" anymore, preferring "lovemark." Nice.) And for you to get to professional greatness, I suggest that you work on, polish and protect your personal brand: your good name. (It could take you 30 years to build a great reputation—and 30 seconds to lose it, with one act of poor judgment.)

Everyone's into brand-building these days. Law firms. Accounting enterprises. Retail organizations. Paris Hilton recently said: "I'm a brand."

This raises the question: "How can we get our brand from where it now is to where we want it to be?" My answer is simple: Model Diddy.

Sure you can read the books out there (lots of excellent ones, such as Seth Godin's *Purple Cow* and *The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding* by Al Ries and his daughter Laura Ries). And sure you can invest in getting your brand managers to world class (every company should have brand managers). But I'll save you some money with a simple suggestion: Study hip hop artists like Diddy and 50 Cent and Jay-Z (whom *Fortune* recently called "America's Hippest CEO"). You'll learn all you need to learn about taking a brand to the top of the mountain. These guys are amazing. Constantly reinventing. Relentlessly innovating. Endlessly improving. They have one hit record that drives their name—their brand, sorry—into the public consciousness and then extend their line into clothes, books, movies, colognes, etc. Study the way they build community, cement loyalty and tattoo what they stand for onto people's brain cells.

I'll leave you with an unforgettable quote from Jay-

Z: “I’m not a businessman. I’m a business, man.”

Get Big into Blessings

“I cursed the fact I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet.” Comes from a Persian proverb. That line sends shivers down my spine. Whoever wrote that really gets it. It’s easy to fall into the very human trap of focusing on what we don’t have rather than being grateful for what we do have. I’ll bet you have more blessings in your life than you are noticing.

A billion children went to sleep hungry last night. People in the world lost family members yesterday whom they adored. There are people in your own community dying of cancer and AIDS. I just read about a little girl who was born without a face. Just two eyes and a mouth. And we worry about traffic being heavy on the way to work.

I just read about a little girl who was born without a face. Just two eyes and a mouth. And we worry about traffic being heavy on the way into work.

Here’s a word to think about: perspective. Travel to more countries and you’ll get greater perspective on our world. Talk to people you’ve never talked to and you’ll get a new perspective on what life can be. And celebrate the blessings in your life and you’ll reconnect with how fortunate you are. It’s human nature not to appreciate all we have until it’s lost. Fight that urge.

Be Wise, Early Rise

I gave the keynote address at a conference for the leadership team of the telephone banking division of CIBC yesterday. Great group. CIBC is one of Canada's leading banks and the audience was full of energy, passion and intelligence. I shared my ideas on building a high-performance culture, developing deeper relationships and the power of leading without title. Then I offered some insights on personal leadership—beginning with the imperative of getting up early if one wants to get to world class as a human being. The room fell silent. Thought I'd lost them.

I love connecting personally with audience members and happily stayed after my presentation to answer questions. Amazing how many people asked me what they needed to do to build the early rising habit. "I want to get a lot more from life," one manager said. "I loved your point about taking a 'holy hour' each morning—60 minutes to feed my mind, care for my body and develop my character," said another. "Life is passing by so quickly," noted yet another, "I really need to start getting up earlier to get more from my days."

It's so easy to forget that our outer lives reflect our inner lives and that by getting up earlier each day to do some internal work, our days will become dramatically better. How can you be a positive source of energy to those around you when you have no energy? How can you develop the best in others if you haven't connected with the best within yourself? And how can you champion another person if you fail to see the champion in you? Getting up early to do your inner work, enlarge your thinking, to sharpen your life's philosophy or to review your goals is not a waste of time. That 'holy hour' infuses every remaining minute of your day with a perspective that elevates each area of your life. It'll transform you. Make you better as a leader. As a parent. As a human being. Here are six practical tactics to help you get up early (5 a.m. is nice):

DON'T EAT AFTER 7 P.M. *You will sleep more deeply as well as more sweetly. It's the quality, not the quantity, of sleep that's most important.*

DON'T LOUNGE IN BED *after your alarm clock goes off. Jump out of bed and start your day. The more time you lie in bed after the alarm clock goes off, the*

greater the likelihood that the chatter of your mind will say something like, “Stay in bed. Sleep a bit more. The bed is warm. You deserve it.”

GET INTO WORLD-CLASS PHYSICAL CONDITION. *This is a big idea. I find that when I am in excellent physical shape—working out five to six times a week and eating ultra-well—it is easy to jump out of bed at 5 a.m. or even 4 a.m. Being superbly fit is a brilliant move that will positively influence every area of your life.*

SET BHAGS. *Jim Collins coined the term “BHAGs,” meaning Big Hairy Audacious Goals, in his book Built to Last. Goals breathe life and energy into your days. Most people don’t get up early because they have no reason to. The secret of passion (and getting up early) is purpose. Goals inspire you and give you something to get out of bed for each morning. Taking out your journal and articulating 10-, 5-, 3- and 1-year goals for the core dimensions of your life will focus your mind and drive tremendous results. It will light a fire in your belly and flood you with passion.*

SET YOUR ALARM CLOCK 30 MINUTES FAST. *I shared this point at a recent “Awakening Best Self Weekend,” a workshop where people come from all around the world to learn how to break through their fears and live their greatest lives. I just got an email from one participant from Spain. This little trick has completely changed her life. She thinks she’s getting up at 6 a.m. By the time she’s up and out of bed, she realizes it’s only 5:30 a.m. She uses the newfound time to meditate or read or to exercise. She cares for her inner life now and the results have been excellent. Her business is more successful than it’s ever been. Her family life is at its best place in years. And she’s feeling incredibly happy. I know this tactic seems silly—but it works.*

So join the 5 O’clock Club. Win the Battle of the Bed. Put mind over mattress. Get up early.

GIVE IT 30 DAYS. *One of my favorite clients is NASA. They are doing our Grow The Leader program to develop the leadership capabilities of their people. I love this organization because it truly stands for world class. One of the things I’ve learned from NASA is that the space shuttle uses more fuel during the first few minutes after liftoff than it consumes during its entire trip around the globe. Why? Because, initially, it needs to overcome the tremendous pull of gravity. But as it does—it gets easier to fly. That’s a powerful thought to consider. Personal change is a process that can be hardest at the beginning. It doesn’t happen in a day or even a week. It takes time to overcome the pull of your old habits. But after four weeks from today your life could be so much better, if you choose. Always give yourself 30 days to install a new habit.*

So join the 5 O'clock Club. Win the Battle of the Bed. Put mind over mattress. Get up early. And remember what Benjamin Franklin once noted: "There will be plenty of time to sleep when you are dead." Smart guy.

Who Made Success a Dirty Word?

Too many people believe that there's something wrong with aiming to be really successful. Too many people put down productive achievement. Too many people snicker at go-getters who set their goals and then devote themselves to realizing them. I've heard it a lot these days, the suggestion that if you strive for success, you must not be all that concerned with making a difference and being significant. It's almost as if being a go-getter is incompatible with being compassionate, socially conscious and a good person. Nonsense.

Here's my take on the "success versus significance" issue: An extraordinary life contains both. The essence of life is balance. Without success, I have a sense that the best part of you will feel a little hollow. Part of what makes us human is the hunger to realize our greatest gifts and to live life fully. We were built to be great. And high achievement is simply a reflection of creativity in action. The more worthwhile things you are doing, the more of your natural creativity you are unleashing. Success is a creative act. It's also one of the best routes to fulfillment, if blended with a healthy respect for work-life balance. I've found that few things feel as great as the feeling I get when I complete something worthwhile. Doing important things promotes happiness. Success awakens joy. And yet without significance, I believe that we will feel that we have walked the planet in vain. Success alone, without feeling that you've made a meaningful contribution, will leave the heart feeling empty.

While you chase success, I urge you to stay devoted to elevating the lives you touch and leaving your world better than you found it.

There's nothing wrong with being an elite performer and taking the steps required to become a remarkable success in this world. Success is actually a reflection of healthy self-esteem. But while you chase success, I urge you to stay devoted to elevating the lives you touch and leaving your world better

than you found it. That's the significance piece. With both, you'll discover your greatest life.

Get Great at Life

Life is a skill. And like any other skill, once you know the ground rules and make the time to practice, you can get better. A lot better. If you really devote yourself to life, you could even reach a place of mastery. Some have.

I suggest that there are three simple things you can do to get great at life:

PAY ATTENTION TO LIFE. *Make the time to reflect on what you want your life to stand for, what you have learned from your years and what your legacy will be. Time slips through our fingers—like grains of sand—never to return again. Use your days to realize your talents. Makes me think of that line by Erma Bombeck: “When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left and could say, ‘I used everything you gave me.’” Try to write in a journal each morning before you walk out into your world. Think about what goals you need to accomplish for you to feel the day has been a success—and write them down. Think about your most closely held values. Think about what lessons you’ve learned from the previous day. What good is making a mistake if you don’t learn from it?*

ENGAGE IN LIFE. *Angelina Jolie spoke truth when she said: “The only way to have a life is to commit to it like crazy.” I’ve learned something as I’ve grown older: Life returns what you give it. Donate your best. Over dinner last night with some friends, we began to speak of goal-setting. “But why set goals when life can be so uncertain?” one friend asked. My reply: “Just because life is so unpredictable doesn’t mean you shouldn’t exercise your power to be great. Set your goals. Make your plans. Take action and chase your dreams. That’s what personal responsibility is all about. But once you’ve done your best—let go. And let life do the rest.”*

At the end, the billionaire gets buried next to the street sweeper. We all end up as dust. So let’s have some fun.

ENJOY LIFE. *We take life so seriously. But at the end, the billionaire gets buried next to the street sweeper. We all end up as dust. So let’s have some fun. “Few*

of us write great novels,” observed Mignon McLaughlin. “But all of us can live them.”

The Steve Jobs Question

Steve Jobs is an interesting guy. How many people start a billion-dollar business in their garage in their early twenties? How many people can lead the field in three separate industries? (Music—the iPod has revolutionized the way music is delivered; movies—Pixar is one of the world’s most successful animation studios; and computing—Apple’s devotion to sexy design and ease of use is legendary.) But what intrigues me most about Steve Jobs is his philosophy.

Jobs asks himself an unforgettable question every time he is faced with a big choice: “What would I do if this was the last night of my life?” Powerful idea behind that. He met his wife that way.

He was giving a university address a number of years back. She was sitting in the audience. He fell for her and approached her after the event. She gave him her number. He wanted to take her out to dinner that very night but had a business meeting on the books. Life’s like that. On his way back to his car, he asked himself what I call the Steve Jobs Question: “What would I do if this was the last night of my life?” You and I both know his answer. He ran back to the auditorium, found the woman and took her out. They’ve been together ever since.

What would I do if this was the last night of my life

Look, I know we all have to be practical. I get that we can’t apply Jobs’ question to every situation. But as I wrote in *Who Will Cry When You Die?*, connecting to your mortality is a great source of wisdom. Reminding yourself that in the overall scheme of things you will not be here that long—no matter how long you live—is an excellent way to drive passion, promote risk-taking and get deeply into the game of life. Connecting with the end is a brilliant practice to keep you focused on what’s most important. Before it’s too late.

What's Missing from Your Coolness?

I was just out skateboarding with my daughter. Today I bought her a new helmet, arm pads and boarding sneakers. She looks like a pro. Now she just needs to learn how to ride the thing.

She loves her new accessories. To her, skateboarding is ultra-hip and the perfect sport. So we were out there, having fun, when she looked up at me and said: “Dad, there’s something missing from my coolness.” What a line. Hilarious. Got me thinking.

What’s missing from my coolness? What’s missing from my authenticity? What’s missing from my greatest life? Awareness precedes choice and choice precedes results. (Okay, I’ll stop repeating that line; it’s just that it’s so incredibly important.) With better awareness of what needs to improve in your life, you can make better choices. And with better choices, you will see better results. We truly cannot eliminate weaknesses we don’t even know about.

One of our biggest regrets on our deathbeds is that we were not reflective enough. That we didn’t spend enough time thinking, in deep contemplation. Don’t let that happen to you. Make the time to think. Ask yourself what needs to improve in your life. Ask yourself what needs to get done. Ask yourself what values you need to live. Ask yourself how exceptional are you, how “plugged in” are you, how interesting (and interested) are you—how cool are you? Then make your life your message. And don’t let anything be missing from your coolness.

One of our biggest regrets on our deathbeds is that we were not reflective enough.

No Ask, No Get

I'm on an airplane as I write this chapter. I love being at 35,000 feet. No distractions. No interruptions. Pure think time. Only one problem—I forgot my water. I'll explain.

One of my best practices around flying is drinking a ton of water while in the sky. I'll drink a liter easily. It prevents dehydration, keeps me energized and maintains sharpness of mind. I get many of my biggest ideas on airplanes. And when I get off the plane, rather than being tired, I go straight home to do fun stuff with my kids. But before this flight—because I was rushing to make my connection—I missed my ritual. I didn't buy my *agua*. So guess what I did? I asked for some.

It never hurts to ask.

I walked over to the flight attendant and explained that I drink a lot of water and wondered whether he could help out, if there was an extra big bottle of the good stuff on board. I know they usually only provide a glass or two, but I fiercely believe that it never hurts to ask. To me, that's an organizing principle I try to live my life by—and it's served me so well. I was polite. I wasn't pushy. I just asked for what I wanted.

“With pleasure,” came the reply. And with that he walked over to a metal trolley, opened it up and pulled out the prize: a 1.5 liter bottle of Vittel water. Perfect. So here I sit, nice and hydrated. Listening to Boozoo Bajou's awesome CD *Dust My Broom* on my iPod and reading *The Spirit to Serve*, J.W. Marriott's book on how the hotel chain got where it is. No jet lag for me from this flight. No chance. Because I asked.

Sell Your Desk

The best performers in business don't hide behind their desks. They know that business is all about connecting to people. When people like you and know you and trust you, they will help you. Just the way it is. Human nature at play.

The best managers get out from behind their desks and have rich and meaningful conversations with their team. They get that passion is contagious and, before someone will lend you their hand, you need to touch their heart. The best salespeople get out from behind their desks and break bread with their customers. They understand the power of relationship-selling. (Big idea: People don't buy products and services—they buy people and relationships.) The best employees get out from behind their desks to collaborate with their teammates, support their colleagues and to spread their enthusiasm.

The best performers in business don't hide behind their desks. They know that business is all about connecting to people.

More than ever in my own life, I try to get out of the office. I love my team but they know what they are doing. They don't need me there anymore. They lead without title and are empowered. I'll just get in their way if I'm around too much. I need to be out meeting my much-cherished readers. I need to be out serving my beloved clients and helping them build world-class organizations. I need to be out learning new ideas and interesting insights that will find their way onto my blog or my podcasts or into my next speech or book. Hiding behind my desk is the worst place I could be. The "paperless office"? It'll never happen in my lifetime. The "deskless office"? Give me a year.

Get Fit to Lead

You know I'm an evangelist around the whole idea of being ultra-fit if you want to be at your best. Getting into world-class physical condition is one of the smartest moves you can make. Exercising will make you look better, feel stronger and fill you with boundless energy. Staying fit will even make you happier.

The past week has been a time of great change for me. I'm reengineering my business to make it more focused and fast. I'm coaching my team so that they know the new standards and goals. I'm pushing myself harder to get more done and generate better results. And I'm lifting the bar on the size of my dreams. I need to make a bigger difference. I passionately feel that. As I go through all this, one of the practices that is serving me so well is my daily pilgrimage to the gym.

I remember a professional speaker named Peter Urs Bender once telling me: "Robin, some people go to church each day. Well, my church is the gym. And each day that's where I go to get blessed." I also remember a participant in one of my leadership seminars sharing: "Exercise is an insurance policy I've taken out on my health. And each day that I go into the gym, I'm paying the premium." Yet another person told me recently at a book signing: "Good health is a crown on the head of a well person that only a sick person can see." Smart points. Wise people.

No matter how busy I get or how much pressure is on my shoulders, a good workout makes me feel at ease. I come off the treadmill feeling relaxed, full of joy and with a sense of perspective over the issues on my plate. I get so many big ideas while I'm running and such clarity while I'm lifting weights. And staying fit keeps me happy and positive. Look, I know I'll never be Mr. Universe. But because I care for my health, my life will be a lot better, more productive and longer than if I didn't. And that's good enough for me.

“Good health is a crown on the head of a well person that only a sick person can see.”

Extreme Leadership and Kids' Clothing

I just had a visit with the tailor who adjusts my kids' school clothes this morning before I wrote this chapter. I've known him for a long time and he's always treated us well. He's been in business for 40 years, so I thought I'd get behind his eyeballs and discover what has made his business both as successful and as sustainable as it's been. I started asking my questions.

"Robin, there are four simple principles that we've followed here in our shop. They've served me well my whole life. I actually learned them by watching my mother as I grew up. She was one of the most amazing people I've ever known," he said, and then paused for a moment. "I miss her terribly."

I thought I'd share Neil's four principles with you, as you raise your standards and shine more brightly at work—and at home.

FOUR LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM A WISE TAILOR:

IMPROVE. *Always be getting and doing better. Never settle for mediocrity.*

OBSERVE. *Talk to the people you work with. Really listen to them. And keep your eyes on the business. Because you can expect only that which you inspect.*

CONNECT. *Be really good to people. Treat your customers with respect. Give them good value. Be caring and deal with any complaints fast.*

ADAPT. *Conditions change. Competition grows. Uncertainty is the new normal. Stay fast. Stay flexible. Stay nimble.*

The Seven Forms of Wealth

I just gave a full-day leadership seminar attended by managers and executives of companies like American Express, Infosys, The Gap and Dell. One of the ideas that many of the people in the room told me was most helpful was my “Seven Forms of Wealth” model that I’ve been sharing with our corporate clients over the past year.

In my mind, wealth isn’t just about making money. There are actually seven elements that you want to raise to world-class levels before you call yourself rich. I’ll identify them:

INNER WEALTH. *This includes a positive mindset, high self-respect, internal peace and a strong spiritual connection.*

PHYSICAL WEALTH. *Your health is your wealth. What’s the point of getting to a great place in your career if you get sick doing it? Why be the best businessperson in the hospital ward? Why be the richest person in the graveyard?*

FAMILY AND SOCIAL WEALTH. *When your family life is happy, you will perform better at work. No one gets to the end of their life and regrets making their family their first priority. Related to this is the imperative of forging deep connections with friends and members of your personal community (including mentors, role models and trusted advisors).*

CAREER WEALTH. *Actualizing your highest potential by reaching for your best in your career is incredibly important. Getting to greatness in your profession brings a feeling of satisfaction on a job well done. It helps you make your mark. Being world class in your work is so good for your self-respect.*

ECONOMIC WEALTH. *Yes, money is important. Not the most important thing in life but very important. It absolutely makes life easier and better. Money allows you to live in a nice home, take beautiful vacations and provide well for those you love. And as Yvon Chouinard, the founder of the outdoor gear company Patagonia, has said: “The more I make, the more I can give away.”*

There are actually seven elements that you want to

raise to world-class levels before you call yourself rich.

ADVENTURE WEALTH. *To be fulfilled, each of us needs mystery in our lives. Challenge is necessary for happiness. The human brain craves novelty. And we are creative beings so we need to be creating constantly if we hope to feel joy. Lots of adventure (ranging from meeting new people to visiting new places) is an essential element of authentic wealth.*

IMPACT WEALTH. *Perhaps the deepest longing of the human heart is to live for something greater than itself. Each of us craves to be significant. To make a difference. To know that the world has somehow been better because we have walked the planet. Think of what Richard Bach once wrote: “Here is the test to find whether your mission on earth is finished: If you’re alive, it isn’t.”*

I invite you to focus on each of these seven elements if you want to experience *real* wealth. Money alone does not define being wealthy. There are many rich people who are unhappy and unsuccessful as human beings. By focusing on elevating all seven of these areas to world-class levels, you will not only shine ever so brightly for all those around you—you will also find a contentment that lasts.

Apply the U2 Standard

U2 is one of the coolest rock bands in the world. But that's not the main reason I love them. Yes, their music is fantastic. Yes, their songs are often profound. Yes, their live performances are brilliant (just watch their DVD *Go Home: Live from Slane Castle* if you have any doubt). But what really draws me to U2 is their unrelenting commitment to getting better—no matter how great they become. It's not about the money for them. It's not about the fame. It's not about getting on magazine covers. It's mostly about refusing to accept anything less than mastery as their standard. As Bono observed: "That's the thing about U2. The band always feels like it's coming, never that it's arrived." Beautiful.

All great leaders, serial innovators, successful entrepreneurs and superstar creatives have that ever-present longing deep within their souls to do, be and see something special during their lives. Every single one of them has that fire in her belly. Sure you could call their insatiable hunger somewhat unhealthy and suggest that such people lack contentment. And you'd be right. But as I suggested in an earlier chapter, these are the very people who have given us the progress of the world, these are the men and women who have built spectacular businesses and organizations that add value to our lives. The people who have provided us with the genius inventions that make things easier. The scientists who help us live with better health and longer lifespans. The human beings who have allowed us the chance to witness beautiful art and wonderful music. Greatness arrives for those who are never satisfied with what is, no matter how nice it looks. Yes, one must find happiness in life. And we need to enjoy the journey. Definitely. I evangelize that message everywhere I go. Life balance is unbelievably important.

All I'm saying is that too many among us have gone to the other extreme. Chasing happiness, inner peace and balance while leaving the natural instinct to create something spectacular at the side of life's highway like yesterday's roadkill. In doing so, they've fallen out of balance. And missed out on one of the main reasons to be alive: to create. To shine. To be great.

Greatness arrives for those who are never satisfied

with what is, no matter how nice it looks.

So apply the U2 Standard. Each day—and every day until you take your last breath. Feel like you are coming—never that you’ve arrived. Strive for mastery and brilliance and excellence, in all that you do. You’ll join the realm of those rare individuals who reached the end feeling few regrets and little remorse. You’ll delight in the fact that you squeezed out the best from life and played out loud. You’ll feel that true sense of happiness that all of us aspire to but so few of us ever reach. And guess what else? When you’re in heaven’s waiting room—you just might get to meet Bono.

Learn More to Earn More

A simple idea to move to your next level: To earn more you must learn more. The compensation you receive from your employer will be determined by the value you add. The more you know, the more valuable you become. To earn more, learn more. Out-read your competition. Out-study them. Out-improve them. Out-succeed them.

I remember when I was a lawyer, just starting my professional career. I asked the top lawyer at the firm what I needed to do to ensure a sustained career there. I've never forgotten his reply: "Robin, be so knowledgeable, competent and brilliant at what you do that this firm can't run without you. Become indispensable." Spectacular advice. Awareness precedes choice which precedes results. As you learn what the best do, you will develop new awareness. With better awareness, you will make better choices. And with better choices, you are certain to see better results. Investing in learning and getting your skills to world class is the smartest investment you'll ever make. Master your craft and you'll get to greatness.

Please don't tell me you are too busy to spend at least 60 minutes a day learning. Some of the busiest people I know read or listen to CDs or do online training for at least an hour a day. A lot of people are too busy being busy. Shift from being busy to getting results. At robinsharma.com, you will find a rich source of resources to help you become a lifelong learner, including my blog, free podcasts, a listing of my favorite books, and a wealth of other knowledge tools to speed you to your best.

Investing in learning and getting your skill to world class is the smartest investment you'll ever make.

So take the first step today. Rather than watching TV tonight, make the time to read. Learn what the superstars in your profession do to stay on top. Learn how to create greater wellness in your life. Learn how to master your time. Learn how to live your highest life.

See Through the Eyes of Understanding

The sad fact is that so many people look for the worst in others. They see them through the eyes of their own anger, fear and limitation. If someone shows up late for a meeting, they impute a negative intent to that person, saying, “They are so rude.” If someone makes a mistake on an expense report, they grumble, “That person is so dishonest.” If someone miscommunicates a point, they silently say, “She’s a liar.” Real leaders are different. They look for the best in people. Jack Welch, the former CEO of GE, said it so well: “The most important job you have is growing your people, giving them a chance to reach their dreams.”

I want to be clear. I’m not suggesting that leaders avoid reality. Not at all. They make the hard calls when they need to. I’ve mentioned in an earlier chapter that the best don’t worry about being liked—they just do what their conscience tells them is right. What I’m really saying is that the best leaders see through the eyes of understanding. If someone is late, they try to get to the truth. Maybe there’s a time management problem to coach around or a sick child to help. An error on an expense account could be the result of a poor process in place or the employee’s disorganization. The miscommunication might be all about the person communicating having weak skills in this area—an opportunity for improvement.

Today, rather than looking for the worst in people, I encourage you to look for what’s best within them. Sure some people really are inconsiderate or dishonest or uncaring. But in my experience—and I’ve worked with a lot of people over the years—most people are good. Few human beings wake up in the morning and ask themselves: “What can I do today to mess up someone else’s day or undermine my credibility or ruin our business?” Most of the mistakes people make are the result of a lack of awareness. Most people just don’t know better—so stop taking it so personally.

Few human beings wake up in the morning and ask themselves: “What can I do today to mess up

**someone else's day or undermine my credibility or
ruin our business?"**

And here's the payoff for you: As you seek out the good in people, not only will they want to show up more fully for you, but you will see more good in your world.

The Heart of Your House

Every great business has a clearly articulated business model and strategic plan. That's all about the design and focus of the business. But so few people have taken the time to design their own lives. If you don't know where you are going, then how will you know when you get there? And how can you hit a target you can't even see?

In the hotel industry, there's a name for all the stuff that goes on behind the scenes that guests don't see. All the things that need to unfold in accounting, in housekeeping, in the kitchen and in the laundry that are mission-critical yet not public. All those activities are called "the heart of the house." When "the heart of the house" is in superb order and operating with near-flawless execution, the same will hold true for the external guest experience.

Do you have a "business model" for your life? Do you have a strategic plan for your dreams?

Here's the big idea for you: To get to your best life, I suggest you ensure the heart of your house is nice and tidy. Do you have a "business model" for your life? Do you have a strategic plan for your dreams? Have you recorded your most closely cherished values and your life's most important priorities on a piece of paper, which you then review every morning to keep you locked onto what's most important? These are all aspects of "the heart of the house," your internal operations process that will direct and govern your external results.

Sure it takes time to do this inner work. And sure we all have a ton of urgent things we need to do right now. But there's no point in being busy if you're busy doing the wrong things.

Become an Inspirational Human Being

I dropped my son off at school the other day and was amused by what he did when he walked into his classroom. He passed one of his buddies and said: “Why so glum, chum?” His friend, who had been looking very serious, looked up. Both kids broke into laughter. Got me smiling. Then it got me thinking.

Greatness in business as well as in life comes by being an inspirational human being. We need to uplift people by our attitude and our very presence. When we see someone feeling down or experiencing a struggle or doubting their potential or in need of a kind word, it’s our duty to help them, perhaps by asking, “Why so glum, chum?”

The best way to lead and elevate another human being— whether that means a co-worker or a family member or a friend— is to model the behavior you wish to see. The best way to influence others is to lead by example. You can preach a better sermon with your life than with your words. Talk really is cheap. Extraordinary human beings live their message. They walk their talk. And above all else, they are inspirational. Are you?

One of the nicest compliments I’ve ever received was from a woman who came up to me after a keynote speech I gave to 2000 fitness professionals for a great organization called Can-Fit-Pro. “Robin, I loved your presentation,” she said, full of emotion. I asked why. “I’m not really sure. I guess you just inspired me to be a better human being.” What would the organizations we work for and the communities we live in and the planet we walk look like if each and every one of us did our part to be inspirational leaders each day— encouraging them to be better human beings? We can curse the darkness or we can light a candle. And our world needs more light. Shine. Today.

**Greatness in business as well as in life comes by
being an inspirational human being.**

Make a Dent in the Universe

I'm up earlier than usual as I write this chapter. Listened to some beautiful music that is part chillout and part Indian. I wrote in my journal a bit. Wrote about how much I love my children. Wrote about where my life's at. Wrote about where I want to take it. And I wrote about my hunger to have an impact. Leadership—as a human being—is about having an impact. Making a difference. Leaving things better than you found them.

When I met Shimon Peres, I asked him what he believed the purpose of life to be. He replied without hesitation: “To find a cause that's larger than yourself and then to give your life to it.” What would this world of ours look like if each of us had found our cause or life's purpose and were then passionately pursuing it? There would be less hatred, fewer wars and more love. And we'd be united as one race. As Coretta Scott King said: “When you are willing to make sacrifices for a great cause, you will never be alone.”

Apple CEO Steve Jobs used to tell his people that by showing up at their best they would have the opportunity to “make a dent in the universe.” Jobs definitely gets it. Sure it's important to make a profit in business. Sure you want your enterprise to be operationally excellent. Sure you want high-quality products and services. And sure you need to keep innovating and growing your brand. But isn't having an impact in the world—by helping your clients and positively influencing others—what business is ultimately about?

Isn't having an impact in the world—by helping your clients and positively influencing others—what business is ultimately about?

So a gentle question from a man who wishes only the best for you: “What dent will you make today?” What cause will you pursue? What contribution will you make—at work, at home— in life?

Not All Leaders Are the Same

Many executives come up to me after presentations and ask me about my statement “Everyone needs to be a leader.” As I’ve suggested, in my leadership seminars, I always make the point that for a company to get to greatness, every person on the team needs to see himself or herself as a leader. The best companies on the planet grow leaders and develop leadership potential throughout the organization faster than their competition. Making that happen is their number-one focus. And they do it quickly. I said that earlier, but it’s worth repeating.

Everyone is a leader. But not everyone is the same.

But I’m not saying everyone should run the company. That makes no sense. Everyone is a leader but not everyone does the same thing. Here’s a metaphor to drive the distinction home for you. I love U2. Bono is the lead singer. Larry Mullen Jr. is the drummer. Chaos would ensue if Larry tried to be the lead singer and Bono got confused and started playing the drums. Or imagine if the tour manager thought he could be Bono for a night and walked on stage to do so while Bono was in his dressing room. Not good.

Know your role. Everyone needs to behave like a leader—no matter what they do. Everyone needs to demonstrate leadership traits—regardless of their position. That means everyone needs to take responsibility for getting the results that they generate. Everyone needs to do their part to shape culture. Everyone needs to be positive and inspirational. Everyone needs to keep customers happy and protect the brand. Everyone is a leader. But not everyone is the same.

Six Reasons to Set Goals

I know what you're thinking: "Robin, give me a topic that's fresh and original and challenging. Why are you writing about goals? We know this stuff. It's boring!" Few success practices are as important as articulating your most closely held goals and then reviewing them daily. Getting masterful at setting and then considering your goals on a consistent basis is essential to a life of greatness. And yet, guess what? Most people don't spend more than an hour a year doing this. It's true: People spend more time planning their summer vacations than they do designing their lives.

In my mind, there are six big reasons for you to set goals: Focus, Growth, Intentionality, Measurement, Alignment and Inspiration.

FOCUS. *Where your focus goes your energy flows. I feel so very blessed to be the success coach to some genuine superstars in the field of business. Billionaires, celebrity entrepreneurs, captains of industry. One of their primary traits of greatness is their focus. They know their "vital few," in other words, the key goals they need to achieve to get to the extraordinary. And then they focus like crazy on them. Goals breed focus. Simple but powerful idea.*

GROWTH. *Goal-setting promotes personal growth. The real value of reaching a goal lies not in the result achieved but in what the journey you've walked to get to the goal has made of you as a person.*

INTENTIONALITY. *It's easy to live life by accident and sleepwalk through your days. If you don't act on life, life has a way of acting on you. By articulating your goals and then reviewing them for five minutes each morning, you will exert your influence on life and live in a proactive rather than reactive manner. By setting goals, you will have a framework or decision matrix that will drive better choices. You will become aware—within a few seconds—when you get off plan. You'll make fewer mistakes and get more done in less time. As the novelist Saul Bellow said: "A plan relieves you of the torment of choice."*

**Setting your goals is a bold play for your best life.
Setting your goals is an act of heroism because you**

are reaching for the potential that has been invested in you.

MEASUREMENT. *One of our corporate clients is El Al, Israel's national airline. We did some leadership training for its management team. Amos Shapiro, the CEO who ran the airline, offered me a tour of Tel Aviv's spectacular airport when I was last there. In one of the meeting rooms used by his staff, a statement appeared on a crumpled piece of paper stuck to a wall: "What gets measured gets improved." Big thought. Setting goals gives you something to measure. If your physical goal is to get down to 12% body fat, you have a standard against which to measure your progress. And as you measure, you have a basis on which to improve. With a clearer awareness of your goals you can make better choices. With better choices, you will see better results.*

ALIGNMENT. *I'll share one of my best "secrets of success" with you: Ensure your daily actions are aligned with your deepest values. Let me put it another way: There can be no happiness if your commitments are not congruent with your convictions. Isn't that what integrity is all about, ensuring that your schedule reflects your values and what you stand for? Setting clear goals that are aligned with your most important values is a superb way to get to personal greatness.*

INSPIRATION. *Goals breathe life into your days. The very act of articulating your goals on a crisp white piece of paper causes you to step into a whole new possibility for what your life can become. Setting your goals is a statement that you refuse to be ordinary. Setting your goals is a bold play for your best life. Setting your goals is an act of heroism because you are reaching for the potential that has been invested in you. As Mark Twain noted: "If everyone was satisfied with themselves there would be no heroes."*

Remember the Boomerang Effect

Big idea: the very thing you most want to see more of in your life is the very thing you need to give away.

Want more credit for all you do and who you are? Be the one who gives credit to others. Spread it like wildfire. Give away what you most want. This will create a space in the minds and hearts of all those around you to give more credit.

Give out what you most want to come back.

Want more understanding from others? Be more understanding and give that out.

Want more loyalty? Be the most loyal person you know. Watch what happens.

Want more love? Give more love.

I believe life wants you to win. Most people just get in their own way and sabotage their success. They let their fears keep them from greatness. They let their limitations become their chains. They become their own worst enemies. To get all that life wants for you, apply what I call the Boomerang Effect: Give out what you most want to see come back. It's a gorgeous life you have in store for you. Just go out and get it.

Make People Feel Good

People do business with people who make them feel good. Human beings are creatures of emotion. We want to be with those who make us feel happy and special and cared for and safe.

There are two people I want to introduce you to: a farmer named Steve and Jake the variety store owner, two people who know more about business-building than most CEOs. Steve sells pumpkins. I live in Canada, and every autumn the kids and I hop into our car and drive half an hour to get our Halloween pumpkins from this farmer who never seems to grow older. Sure we could get our pumpkins from the local grocery store five minutes from our home. But then we'd miss the feelings that Steve generates within us. He remembers our names. He makes us laugh. He tells us stories. He reminds us of what's best in the world (farmers are good at that). And we drive away with a big batch of pumpkins and joy in our hearts. By the way, Steve's business is unbelievably successful.

Next comes Jake. Jake runs a variety store. When the kids and I go in, he greets us by name. He knows our birthdays (records them in a little black book). Jake orders magazines like *Dwell*, *Azure* and *Business 2.0* especially for me (no extra charge, of course). His manners are flawless. He always smiles. He makes us feel good. There are at least five other corner stores in our neighborhood, but Jake is a master at relationship-building. So he has our loyalty. Oh, and the guy's a millionaire.

Being good is being wise. It's a smart business strategy. So be like Steve. Model Jake. Make people feel good about doing business with you. You'll lead the field. You'll have fun doing it. And it's just the right thing to do.

Do good and leave behind a virtue that the storm of time can never destroy.”

Makes me think of the words etched on a slip of paper one seminar participant handed to me after an event a few months ago that read simply: “Do good and leave behind a virtue that the storm of time can never destroy.”

I asked him who authored those words. His reply was brief: “The wisest person I’ve ever known—my grandfather.”

Commit to First Class

One of the personal habits I've consistently observed in the star performers and extraordinary leaders I've coached is their commitment to ensuring that their surroundings reflect their devotion to being world class. They drive the highest quality cars, live in the best homes and wear the finest clothes. Their philosophy generally seems to be, "I stand for being the best so it only makes sense that I should invest in the best." Now here's the big idea: They held that belief even when they were not successful.

Greatness is, above all else, a state of mind. You need to believe in your potential and power before you can bring them to life. You need to *feel* like you are extraordinary before you can become extraordinary. I call this "emotional blueprinting." To see spectacular results in your external life, you have to emotionally—viscerally—create a blueprint of your vision within your inner life.

One of the best ways I've discovered to achieve this feeling is to ensure that everything you surround yourself with is at the highest level. I remember reading a book years ago, written by a magician named Al Koran, called *Bring Out the Magic in Your Mind*. One of the ideas that stayed with me is his suggestion that, in order to be successful, it's important to go where the successful people are. Even if you have only \$10, go have a coffee at the best restaurant in your city. His point? Your surroundings shape the way you feel. And the way you feel drives what you do. Feel world class and you'll behave world class.

Rewarding yourself with good things sends a message to the deepest—and highest—part of you. One that says "I'm worth it—and I deserve it."

Invest in the best. Buy the highest quality goods you can possibly afford. Better to buy one superb pair of shoes than three cheap ones (they'll last you longer and make you feel great while you are wearing them). I love the line: "Quality is remembered long after price is forgotten." So true. When I was a young lawyer, just starting out, I took part of my first paycheck and invested

it in a great watch. It wasn't a Rolex or a Cartier. But it was a good one—the best I could afford. My thinking was that it would last for years, make me feel successful while I wore it and actually end up saving me money because it would rarely need repairs. One of my friends, who always looked for the cheapest deal, laughed at me. But I turned out to be right (that does happen to me from time to time). My watch is still working perfectly. Never needed even one repair. My friend has gone through six watches during this time. Not only has he denied himself the positive feelings that high quality would have brought, but he has actually ended up spending more money than I did. Missed the forest for the trees.

I'm in no way encouraging a senseless addiction to material things. All I'm saying is that if you're really serious about standing for the best (and I know you are), then surround yourself with the best. Rewarding yourself with good things sends a message to the deepest—and highest—part of you. One that says "I'm worth it—and I deserve it." One that will inspire you to reach even higher, work even harder and be even better. To anyone who says that our self-worth should be so strong that high-quality goods won't affect how we feel, I'd respectfully suggest that such a statement misses the reality of human nature. I'm one of the most idealistic people you'll ever meet. But I'm also a realist ("in all things balance," observed the Buddha). Every one of us likes nice things. They bring us pleasure. They appeal to our senses, just like a beautiful sunset or a magnificent mountain. True, material possessions don't bring lasting happiness. And there are many things in life that are far more important. But such things still are important.

The best invest in the best. I might not be popular with you for making this point. But I owe you my truth. Reminds me of the words of one of my clients: "My tastes are simple—I just want the best."

Do a Clean Sweep

I've spent much of the past twelve months in what I call Strategic Hibernation—pulling back from much of the “busyness” of my life and rethinking things like my priorities, my values and my personal philosophy. I've accepted fewer social invitations, limited many activities and spent a lot more time in reflection—just to make certain I'm climbing the right mountain and spending my days in the way they should be spent. I've also spent a lot of time this year doing a “Clean Sweep.”

A Clean Sweep is a superb way to streamline, simplify and refocus your life. Most of us have a ton of baggage and clutter that we carry with us on this journey. These might include “messes,” like incomplete relationships or people you have yet to forgive (or apologize to). The baggage in your life could include “undones,” like a will that needs to be prepared or a life insurance policy that should be updated. The clutter could relate to an unkempt yard or a bunch of unpacked boxes stacked in a spare room. The powerful idea is this: When you Clean Sweep these things—put them into order or delete what needs to be eliminated from your life—you will feel lighter, happier and your mind will experience more peace.

My Clean Sweep involved getting a will, getting rid of a lot of things I hadn't used for a while, putting a financial plan in place, tidying up my physical spaces, saying goodbye to pursuits that were not aligned with my personal and professional strategic objectives (goals), installing systems to be more efficient and spending a lot of time refining the model of my business. Guess what? It worked—beautifully.

**Delete what needs to be eliminated from your life—
you will feel lighter, happier and your mind will
experience more peace.**

I have more time to do what's most important. I'm more relaxed and in the flow. I have more energy (messes—whether physical or emotional—drain you). I am more creative. And I'm having more fun. So do a Clean Sweep of your life. And start soon. The results just might astonish you.

Follow the Million Dollar Baby Rule

I loved the film *Million Dollar Baby*. Deeply moving. Unforgettable. And though it was rich with so many life lessons, there's one in particular that I still think about: "Protect yourself."

I believe I'm a world-class optimist. I try to stay incredibly positive. I'm committed to seeing the best in every situation, and the good in every person I meet. I really do expect the best from life. But I also prepare for the worst. That just makes sense to me. Life's not a fairy tale. I must say that expecting the best but preparing for the worst is not an easy balancing act. But I think it's an important one for us to work on and get right as we reach for our own unique forms of personal greatness.

So be splendidly loving and kind to people. Definitely. Give of yourself and help all those around you as much as you can. Undoubtedly. Be one of those special people who leaves people better than you found them. But I also suggest that you not become a martyr. The thing about martyrs is that most of them get burned at the stake. Balance being kind and considerate to others with being kind and considerate to yourself. Balance giving away your energy inspiring others with replenishing your energy so you remain inspired yourself. Strike that delicate balance between loving others and loving yourself.

The thing about martyrs is that most of them get burned at the stake.

Set boundaries. Know your limits. Don't go to extremes. Protect yourself.

The Earth Is Small

Lots of our clients are talking about Thomas Friedman's book *The Earth Is Flat*. It's all about globalization and a leveling of the playing field by emerging economies. Excellent book. The title made me think about a totally different topic, though: the value of perspective.

The world isn't flat—the world is small. Here's the point I'm trying to offer to you: We live on a small planet in a gigantic universe. Stephen Hawking, the famed physicist, said that we are on a minor planet of a very average star in the outer suburb of one of a hundred billion galaxies. And you and I are just one of billions of people here. Are the problems we face as we walk through our days really so big? A little dose of perspective makes life easier to manage.

A question I sometimes ask myself when I'm facing a struggle is this one: "Will this matter a year from now?" If not, I move on—fast. Another great question I invite you to share with your team at work or your family at home is: "Has someone died here?" If not, things settle down and calmer minds generally prevail.

Keep perspective. Most of the problems we think are disasters turn out to be blessings, in hindsight. I've faced things in my life that seemed so painful at first. Thought the world would end. But with the passage of time, those evolved into the very things that made my life better and happier and more rewarding. And my guess is that the same holds true for you.

Life is short, and the world is small—but it's really, really wide.

So do some inner work around perspective today. Focus on the good. Smile and laugh more. Life is short, and the world is small—but it's also really, really wide.

Guests Are God

I've learned some of the deepest lessons on life from guys driving taxis. Want some big-time wisdom? Jump in a cab. Put away your Blackberry or your cell phone and get to know the human being in front of you. He speaks to hundreds of people each day. Very often, he's wiser than you could imagine. I was reminded of that last night.

I'm in Mumbai as I write this chapter. Here to give a day-long leadership seminar and then do another presentation for the Young Presidents' Organization tonight. I love this place. Love the food. Love the energy. Love the people. The driver's name was Ramesh Sharma. He saw my name on the taxi reservation sheet. "Robin Sharma ... where's your father from?" We started a long chat (Mumbai traffic is crazy—we had lots of time) and really connected. He laughed like a child—Indians are among the happiest people I've met anywhere in the world. He told me about his family, his passion for reading, his philosophy. And then he said something I'll never forget.

"In the North of India, where I'm from," he noted with pride, "a guest is God. When someone comes to our home, we treat them with the highest of respect and love. Even if we have to miss eating, we make sure they are well fed. That's our culture. It brings us joy." Brilliant.

In your life, and in your organization, do you treat your "guests like gods"? Is that idea a part of your personal and organizational culture? And let me also ask you: What would your personal life look like if everyone who visited you and intersected the journey of your days was treated like a god (whether that person was a family member or a stranger on the street)? What would your professional life look like if you treated your customers with reverence and admiration? You'd be world class. You'd be more successful. You'd be happier. You'd get to greatness.

In your life, and in your organization, do you treat your "guests like Gods"?

So leave work 30 minutes earlier today. Hop into a cab and go for a ride. Don't bring a newspaper or a phone. Just bring an open mind (and a pen).

And get to know the human in the car with you. You might love what you hear.

The Beauty of Time

Time is a beautiful commodity. It is part of the hardware of life. What you do with it shapes, in so many ways, what your life looks like. And yet, while almost every one of us wishes for more time, we misuse the time we have.

I'm no guru, you know that. But I've become pretty good at using my time well. Time wasted is time lost and the big idea on time is that once it's lost, it can never be regained.

The big idea on time is that once it's lost, it can never be regained.

I recently read that John Templeton, the celebrated financier, never went anywhere without a book in his briefcase. This way, if he found himself in a long line, he could use the downtime to read, learn and grow. I also read in *Rolling Stone* that Madonna hates wasting time. She used to bring a book with her when she'd go out to a nightclub to use the time when she wasn't dancing efficiently. My coaching clients are like that. And they lead big lives as a result of that giant devotion to time management.

I want to be clear: I'm in no way suggesting that every minute of your days, weeks and months need to be scheduled. Be spontaneous. Be playful. Be free. I'm a free spirit at heart. I just find that the people who have the most time for fun are those who know how to plan and then use their time well. In my experience, the people who feel stress the most and lead their lives like a five-alarm fire are those who leave life to chance and make no time to set schedules, articulate goals and follow well-thought-out plans. "Anxiety is caused by a lack of control, organization, preparation and action," observed thinker David Kekich. Powerful thought.

On Mountains and Mastering Change

Just met a reader at a book signing. He was a cynic—even after he read one of my books. No worries—not everyone is open to my words. And I have no need to be right. I just share the philosophy that feels truthful to me. If someone doesn't agree with it—well, not everyone likes coffee either. Diversity of opinion is what makes life so interesting. This reader was kind though. Said he actually loved the book; he just didn't believe it would help him. Hmmm.

Faith and belief do move mountains. And if you don't believe that an idea will work, then there's no chance you'll act on it (and if you don't act, how can you get results?). Thought is the mother of action and your beliefs really do become selffulfilling prophecies.

I thought a lot about the reader's comments after the book signing. If I had the chance to meet him again, I'd use the metaphor of mountain-climbing to help him understand that people truly can make changes that last. I'll offer my thinking on this point to you. I have three thoughts, in particular, to help you take the ideas I've shared so far in *The Greatness Guide* and integrate them into your life so that you see real and lasting results:

DEFINE WHAT THE MOUNTAINTOP LOOKS LIKE. *I suggest you articulate, in writing, what success looks like to you. Note what needs to change in your life for you to feel spectacularly successful and what will happen if you don't improve. Then record your goals for all the key areas of your life. Write out what you want your reality to appear as five years from now. List the values you want to stand for. Clarity precedes success—and awareness precedes transformation.*

START CLIMBING. *There's great power in starting (I call it the Power of a Start). A single act—done now—sets forces into play. It generates momentum. And with the action you begin to experience positive results. That begins a positive feedback loop: more action, more results. And that, in turn, promotes confidence.*

You can't get to the top of Everest by jumping up the mountain. You get to the mountaintop by taking

incremental steps. Step by step you get to the goal.

TAKE SMALL STEPS. *You can't get to the top of Everest by jumping up the mountain. You get to the mountaintop by taking incremental steps. Step by step you get to the goal. Every step gets you closer to the dream. Life's like that too. Small steps each day get you to greatness over time. Why? Because the days really do become weeks and weeks become months and months become years. You'll get to the end of your life anyway—why not reach that place as an extraordinary human being?*

What Happened to “Please”?

I was just in Starbucks getting a soy latte (love it with brown sugar). The woman next to me collects her coffee from the barista and then says: “Can I have a tray?” She didn’t say it rudely—she just wasn’t polite. That got me thinking. Whatever happened to “please”?

To me, “please” means “I respect you.” “Thank you” means “I appreciate you.” Good manners are powerful in showing those around you that you care about them. I love Frankie Byrne’s line that “respect is love in plain clothes.” How often have you bought something at a store or ordered something in a restaurant and just ached to hear some good manners?

Authentic success is not complicated. It comes down to consistently following a series of fundamentals. Those who get to greatness just run the basics—bit by bit, day by day—over many months and years. It’s not hard at all. It just takes small acts of daily discipline around a few important things. But when done over time—amazing results appear. The best among us just do the things most of us already know we should do to live an extraordinary life really well. And they do it consistently. One of the key things they do is say “please” a lot.

Good manners are a stepping stone to being a remarkable human being, whether as a mother, a father, a salesperson or the CEO. They really do show people that you respect them. Yes, having good manners is common sense. But as the French philosopher Voltaire once said: “Common sense is anything but common.” And if all this stuff is so obvious, how come most people don’t do it?

Good manners are a stepping stone to being a remarkable human being.

Bon Jovi and the Power of Focus

Someone told me a while ago that Jon Bon Jovi is a fan of *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*. Interesting. I've always admired the man for his passion and his music. This morning I heard a song of his in which he sings: "When the world gets in my face, I say have a nice day." Got me thinking about Bon Jovi, his long career and why he's still going strong after so many years.

There's great power in focusing on what you want. Seems like such an obvious statement, yet most of us miss it. Dreams can come true. You can get to a place called Extraordinary in your career. You can find love deeper than you've ever imagined. You can realize world-class vitality and find lasting fulfillment. But you need to focus. The person who tries to do everything accomplishes nothing. Most people try to be all things to everyone. And so they end up nothing to anyone. Confucius nailed the point: "Person who chases two rabbits catches neither." Big idea.

What you focus on grows. What you concentrate on is what you see more of in your life. Think about that line. Focus on financial mastery and you'll see your economic life improve. Focus on being more loving and your relationships will improve. Focus on your physical dimension by exercising and following a superb diet and your health will improve. Focus. Focus. Focus. That's what the best of the best do. Tunnel vision around their biggest To Do's. They stick to their knitting rather than scattering their brilliance. A few months ago I had dinner with a billionaire client of mine. I asked him what was the single best thing he did to get to his financial mastery. "I made this goal my sole reference point," came the instant reply.

The person who tries to do everything accomplishes nothing.

Back to Jon Bon Jovi. From what I can tell, he's still around and doing great because he had an idea about what his music would be and where he could take it, and then he stayed focused on that mission. I've heard he's faced some tough times (join the club). But he didn't give up. He didn't play

victim. He remained strong and on course. He stayed true to his fans and himself.

Do a “101 Things to Do Before I Die” List

This is a powerful idea. Got it from an article I read on Ted Leonsis, vice-chairman of AOL. A number of years ago he was on an airplane that looked like it was going to crash. It didn't, but the brush with death changed the way he viewed life—and lived it. He decided, as soon as he got off the plane, to live with a greater sense of passion, purpose and urgency. So he took out a piece of paper and scribbled out a list of the 101 things he was absolutely committed to doing before he died. Borrowing from his example, I've done the same. It has worked wonders.

It never ceases to amaze me how powerful a practice written goal-setting is. Just ask anyone who does it on a consistent basis. Leonsis, whose list included everything from starting a family to owning a professional sports franchise, has accomplished two-thirds of the objectives he wrote down. Clarity clearly does precede success. And with heightened awareness of what's most important comes wiser choices.

As for me, I'm still in hot pursuit of my dreams. But so many of the goals on my list have been achieved, including starting a charity to help disadvantaged children become leaders, watching the sun set on the tiny Greek island of Santorini and showing my kids Michelangelo's statue *David*. And I'm just getting started. So should you.

He took out a piece of paper and scribbled out a list of the 101 things he was absolutely committed to doing before he died.

Spend Time with Your Kids

At the end of our lives, few of us regret not having made more money. Just doesn't happen. What we truly regret are the places we didn't visit, the friendships we didn't nurture, the risks we didn't take and the things we didn't do with the people we love. Brings me to the point I need to passionately make: Spend time with your kids.

I love what I do. Sure there are lots of airplanes (I still feel like a kid on every flight takeoff). Lots of big events in cool places. Lots of great conversations with interesting people from all walks of life. Lots of wonderful opportunities to share my message with those who need it. But nothing—and I really do mean nothing—is more important to me than being a great dad. I've worked with too many executives who get to the top of the mountain and realized that they lost what mattered most along the way.

It's human nature to take the people who love us the most for granted. I'm not saying that's a good thing—I'm saying that's just the way we are wired. We need to resist our nature and develop a rich sense of gratitude for our family. Don't be one of those people who has to experience loss (through divorce or death) before you wake up to the blessings you have. I've seen that happen. All the time. With people all around the world.

If you had 30 minutes left to live, you'd be reaching for your phone to tell those closest to you how much you love them. Then you'd run home and, holding your heart in your hand, speak truthfully about the love that you feel. Just think about the tragedy of 9/11. I still remember those cell phone calls from the people trapped in the towers. Heartbreaking.

If you had 30 minutes left to live, you'd be reaching for your phone to tell those closest to you how much you love them.

I know you're busy. Tons to do. Places to go and people to meet. But take a minute, right here and right now to make a call. Tell your kids how much you care. Tell your wife or your husband or your mom or your dad or your

brother or sister or best friend how you feel about them. You'll never regret it.
Trust me.

Get Goofy at Work

What's the point of doing something if you're not having fun? Life's just too short to be miserable all the time, wouldn't you agree? The best organizations are fun places to be. Sure they demand excellent performance, relentless innovation and superb execution around deliverables. But they also promote fun. Being happy—and laughing—at work promotes collaboration, creativity and commitment. The company that plays together stays together. And fun is good for the bottom line because people love doing business with people who love doing business.

Life's just too short to be miserable.

Now let's talk about your personal life. Having any fun? In my twenties and thirties, I was serious. Mr. Serious. "The purpose of life is a life of purpose" was my driving belief. I wanted to change the world and servant leadership was the name of the game. I worked hard and played little. Only recently did I have a big "a-ha" around the value of fun as I journey through life. I'm different now. I've still got my eye on the mountaintop, but I've become much more attentive to enjoying the climb. I get goofy with my kids constantly. I ski with my friends. I'll add a day to a business trip to visit an art gallery as I did a few weeks ago while I was in London. Because having a good time makes life far better. And a lot more fun.

Revere Great Design

I'm back at the Frankfurt airport as I write this chapter. Being here in Germany, I can't help noticing that design matters in this country. The hand towel dispensers in the bathrooms work flawlessly and are ingenious. The latte machines in the lounge read my mind. Luggage carts are not only functional—they are beautiful. The Germans get it—design matters.

Ford has repositioned itself as a design firm that sells cars. Love it. In this world where consumers have more choice than ever, good design is one of the best ways for you, your products and your organization to pop out of the crowd and grab attention. Look at Apple's iPod, one of the sexiest gadgets you'll ever feast your eyes on (I wouldn't dream of traveling without mine). Sure, keeping 10,000 songs in your back pocket is fantastic. But the design is what made us fall in love with it. Look at Apple's iBook. Actually, look at almost anything that creative and bold company does and you'll see what world class looks like when it comes to design.

Do a Google search for Philippe Starck, a genius of design. Look what he did with partner Ian Schrager to create the boutique hotel category over a decade ago and make people's jaws drop when they entered their hotels. (St. Martin's Lane in London and The Hudson in New York are still two of my favorite places to sleep.) That's what good design does. Or invest in a Bodum French Press coffee maker. Makes super java. Looks great in my kitchen. Its great design has inspired me to tell everyone I know about it. Superb design creates product evangelists. "Businesspeople don't need to understand designers better. They need to be designers," noted Roger Martin, dean of The Rotman Management School in Toronto.

“Businesspeople don't need to understand designers better. They need to be designers.”

Here's a powerful thought for you to take away: Human beings need mystery to be happy in life. If life is bland, we experience no joy. Good design adds to that mystery. It makes life interesting. It connects with the

artist that resides within each of us. It surprises us. And isn't surprising people one of the main aims of being in business and crafting an extraordinary life?

On Evian Water and You as a Big-Time Dreamer

If people don't laugh at you and your ideas at least once a week, you're not pushing the envelope.

There, I said it. Needed to. I'm tired of seeing boring businesses and people afraid to take the road less traveled. Most of the things that fill us with fear never happen, so why let them keep you small?

Great people run toward their resistances and play out on the edges of their lives. And great companies spend far less time benchmarking others than creating new ways of delivering outrageous value to their customers. Why? Because the world doesn't need a better clone. We don't need more copycats. The world needs more human beings and enterprises that make us say wow. That rock our worlds. The world needs more giant ideas that no one's thought of to enrich our customers and improve our communities and elevate the planet. The world needs more visionaries, dreamers and outright revolutionaries. I love what Tom Chappell, founder of Tom's of Maine, said: "Success means never letting the competition define you. Instead, you have to define yourself based on a point of view you care deeply about." Beautiful.

One client recently shared that he thought it was daring for me and my team to have a picture on our rebranded website of me with my eyes closed, holding a dove. "What would all your corporate clients, like Microsoft, IBM, Nike and FedEx, think of it?" he asked. "Those companies stand for reinvention and innovation," I replied. "I think they'd applaud the bold move." The designer of the new multimedia show I'm running at my presentations shared that the colors I'd chosen were risky because they were not "standard corporate colors." "Thanks for the compliment," I joked. Business needs more daring. Business needs more people willing to take risks and play out on the skinny branches. Business needs more human beings like Richard Branson and his devotion to putting tourists into space with his company Virgin Galactic. I love people like that. They inspire me.

Business needs more daring. Business needs more people willing to take risks and play out on the

skinny branches.

All innovators are initially laughed at. Just the way it is. They laughed at Columbus when he said the earth was round. They laughed at the Wright Brothers, who vowed a human being could fly. They laughed at the guys at RIM when they launched the BlackBerry. They laughed at the founder of Evian, who believed people would pay money for water. Who's laughing now? I guess the universe really does favor the brave.

People pay for originality (big idea there). You want to lead the field in your business? Be different. Let them laugh. Let them call you crazy. Let them snicker. Stay true to your vision. Dream bigger. Don't be ordinary. It's the kiss of death, as far as I can tell.

Be like Garth

Throughout this book I've encouraged you to "lead without title," to show up fully and to make a difference. There's a man who lived the philosophy I evangelize. His name was Garth Taylor. He died recently. I want to honor him.

Dr. Garth Alfred Taylor was born in Montego Bay, Jamaica, in 1944. He was a gifted eye surgeon, a family man and—above all else—a humanitarian. One of his favorite sayings was: "I came into this world with nothing, and all I'm going to leave with is my conscience." My guess is he did.

Dr. Taylor first came to my attention through my brother Sanjay, a gifted eye surgeon in his own right. Garth was a colleague of Sanjay's, and a fan of my books. So I signed a few for him one morning and sent them off. I heard it made him very happy.

What made Garth's impact so profound was that he didn't just practice medicine—he lived it. For more than 20 years, he traveled around the world, to developing nations, selflessly helping to save people's sight. In his own words: "I found my nirvana 23 years ago ... by treating avoidable blindness. People don't just get back their sight, they get back their self-esteem." Because he cared—and had the courage to act—he blessed the lives of thousands of people. Sanjay attended Dr. Taylor's funeral. The church was so full many people had to stand out on the street.

"I came into this world with nothing, and all I'm going to leave with is my conscience."

As you near the end of *The Greatness Guide* and our time together, I invite you to think about the truths I've respectfully shared. Reflect on what you want to stand for and what will be your impact. And then contemplate the words of Dr. Garth Taylor: "Until I have no breath to breathe, I will continue to do this because I think I was chosen for this, not for money, not for compensation but just to make the quality of life of my fellow human beings better."

Don't Give Up

I'm sitting here in my study as I write, drinking coffee, and thinking. Not daydreaming. Not wasting time. Not worrying. Simply thinking. One of my best habits. Mostly I'm thinking about the importance of having a sense of mission and then staying true to it. It's not easy though.

I've found that the bigger I dream, the more obstacles I face. My mission in life is pretty straightforward: I want to help human beings become extraordinary and organizations get to world class. I have such passion to realize that dream and do my part to make this world a better place. This isn't just a business to me—it's my calling. But the higher I reach, the more I get tested. Sound familiar?

But challenges are good. We grow through them. We are most alive amidst danger. Papa Wallenda—the great high-wire walker—said it so well: “Life is lived out on the wire. The rest is just waiting.” The wisest among us—the genuine leaders—smile in the face of adversity. They understand that life tests the big dreamers—the passionate revolutionaries. It's almost like a weeding-out process—only the strong (and the best) get to live their heartsong. I love what Amazon.com founder Jeff Bezos once said: “I knew that if I failed I wouldn't regret that, but I knew the one thing I might regret is not trying.”

So I'll rise above any resistance I meet. I'll keep my eyes on the dream. I'll stay on message and solidly on mission. Because this world belongs to us dreamers—you and me. And whether we ultimately win or not, we will have made a difference. And that's good enough for me.

Life tests the big dreamers—the passionate revolutionaries.

Get Big on Self-Care

Leadership begins within. Organizational leadership begins with personal leadership. You can't be great at work until you feel great. You can't make someone feel good about themselves until you feel good about yourself. You can't be a source of positive energy if you have no energy. The doorway to success swings outward—not inward.

Organizational leadership begins with personal leadership. You can't be great at work until you feel great.

On your next flight, listen to the flight attendant. "Put the oxygen mask on your own mouth before you try to help anyone else." The logic is clear: If you can't breathe, you are useless to those around you. Nice metaphor for personal leadership. Make the time to care for yourself. Get into great shape. Read good business books and inspiring autobiographies. Plan and improve your skills. Work with a coach. Spend excellent time with loved ones. Commune with nature. Enjoy life while you chase success.

By caring for yourself, you will be able to give more to others. By ensuring that you are on your best game, your leadership effectiveness will be guaranteed. And by making the time to enjoy life, you'll be more enjoyable to be around.

Guess Who Inspires Me?

At a booksigning the other day a man stood up and asked: “Robin, what keeps you going? What is the source of your energy? Who inspires you?” My answer made everyone laugh. I said: “You.”

I promise to keep writing and speaking, if you’ll keep reading.

Pretty well everything I do I do because of my love for you, a reader of my books or a client I have the privilege to work with. Hearing how my ideas have helped you get to personal or organizational success moves me deeply. Like the woman at a signing who shared how she read *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* to her husband while he succumbed to cancer on his deathbed to make him feel happier during his last moments. Or the businessman who read my *Leadership Wisdom from the Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* book and not only boosted profits but reshaped the culture so it honored human beings. Or the 18-year-old who told me that she got so inspired after reading *Who Will Cry When You Die?* that she started her own business and is now living her dreams.

I feel incredibly blessed. Why? Because I get to spend my life in service. So thank you. I’m more grateful to you than you’ll ever know. I promise to keep writing and speaking, if you’ll keep reading.

How to Live Forever

To live on in the minds and hearts of the generations who will follow you is to cheat death. To make such a difference through the way you lead and show up is to find immortality. To have a lasting impact on human lives—by being a great champion at work or a great parent at home or a great leader in your community—is to live forever.

To live on in the minds and hearts of the generations who will follow you is to cheat death.

“Impact” is one of my favorite words these days. So is “legacy.” Greatness comes by beginning something that doesn’t end with you. So stop worrying about death. Care more about life. What you will create today. What contribution you will make today. What person you will celebrate today. What fear you will beat today. What act of kindness you will offer today. What social ill you will remedy today. What wrong you will right today. I love these words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu: “There is no situation that is not transformable. There is no person who is hopeless. There is no set of circumstances that cannot be turned about by human beings and their natural capacity for love of the deepest sort.”

To paraphrase Mel Gibson’s character in *Braveheart* (one of my all-time favorite movies): “Every one of us will die. But so few of us really live.” Perfect.

Lay Claim to Greatness

Blame or claim—that's the choice each of us has to make each day. Blame what's not working or claim the gift in the seemingly negative situation. The world needs more heroes. And heroes spend their days hunting for the best. They see the best amidst adversity. They see the best in others. They dig for the best in themselves. They claim their greatness. And in doing so, they get their best lives.

It's never too late to become the person you have always dreamed of being.

An extraordinary life is not something only available for the chosen few—people with perfect teeth and royal pedigrees. You and I are destined for greatness. We are meant to live spectacular lives. That's hardwired into our DNA. But we need to do our part to make it all happen. Choice by choice. Step by step. Small gains eventually yield giant results. Life truly does want us to win. We only need to do our part.

So lay claim to your greatness. Drive a stake into the ground to mark your place under the sun. Stop being a prisoner of your past and become the architect of your future. And remember, it's never too late to become the person you have always dreamed of being.

Resources for Personal Greatness

Sharma Leadership International offers a complete range of learning tools and coaching services to help you realize your highest potential and live an extraordinary life. Getting you to world class both in your career as well as in your personal life is our mission.

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At this tremendously popular website you will find Robin's blog, free podcasts to keep you inspired and on your best game, The Robin Sharma Report (free monthly eNewsletter), daily inspirational quotes, audio learning programs available for instant download, on demand eCourses, DVDs, inspirational t-shirts as well as Robin's other books. There is also a worldwide discussion forum at robinsharma.com where you can exchange ideas with other people dedicated to greatness, along with a full listing of upcoming events with Robin.



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Once a year, people from all around the world attend one of the most remarkable and powerful personal development workshops they will ever attend. **The Awakening Best Self Weekend™ (ABS)** is a transformational experience that will help you triumph over your fears, reconnect with your highest potential, get clarity on what you want your life to stand for and discover a life-changing system that will help you be your very best. **ABS** works (and is also one of the most fun learning experiences you'll ever have.) For more details and to register for the next **ABS** Weekend, come and visit robinsharma.com today. This program offers resources for Organizational

Greatness Class Leaders along with content-rich, engaging training manuals for each of your employees.

Free Audio Download for Readers of *The Greatness Guide*

Robin has a gift for you. To help you get to your greatness quickly, you can now listen to Extraordinary Leadership for free—one of Robin’s most popular audio programs (retail value \$24.95 USD). In this thought-provoking, potent and practical presentation, you will learn unique ideas to get you to world class, both in your career and within your life. Simply visit robinsharma.com and download your free copy. We only ask one thing of you: that you share this program with others so that, together, we can positively impact many lives.

Resources for Organizational Greatness

“In this time of dazzling change, global competition and tremendous uncertainty, the organizations that will lead the field will be those that grow and develop the leadership capabilities of each of their employees faster than their competition.” Robin Sharma



Grow The Leader™ is a revolutionary and strikingly powerful training program that helps employees lead without title and organizations get to world class. Many of the world’s best-known companies are using Grow The Leader™ to develop leadership cultures, realize the highest performance potential of their staff, unleash innovation and create an extraordinary team that wins in their market.

Based on The 8 Best Practices of World Class Leaders, **Grow The Leader™** will help your people:

- think, feel and behave like world class leaders.
- focus their actions on activities that create spectacular results.
- show personal responsibility, renewed passion and lasting engagement.
- become superb team players that collaborate and help the organization succeed.
- seize the opportunities change presents.
- awaken natural creativity and talent for innovation to drive constant improvement.
- discover what the best performers in business do to achieve work-life balance and show personal leadership.

Essentially, **Grow The Leader™** is a train-the-trainer program. You identify people within your organization who you want trained in the process. One of our certified **GTL Master Coaches™** will then train these individuals to facilitate **Grow The Leader™** workshops at your organization. You also get **Grow The Leader™** DVDs with Robin Sharma teaching The 8 Best Practices of World-Class Leaders, along with content-rich, engaging training manuals for each of your employees.

For more information on how **Grow The Leader™** and our other resources can get your organization to world class, visit robinsharma.com or call us today at (905) 889-7900.

Presentations with Robin Sharma

Keynote Speeches and Leadership Workshops

Robin Sharma is one of the most in-demand speakers and workshop leaders in the world today. His leadership ideas have helped many organizations get to world class and have shown employees in over 40 countries how to lead without title and realize their best. His presentations are deeply inspiring, idea-rich and full of real-world tactics that your staff can immediately apply to get them and your organization to greatness. For more information on Robin's presentations, visit robinsharma.com or contact us at (905) 889-7900.



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A strikingly powerful and enormously practical handbook that will inspire you to get to world class in both your personal and professional life.

The Greatness Guide contains a proven formula that will help you meet your highest potential and live an extraordinary life. You will discover:

- potent ideas to get your organization to greatness
- specific strategies to turn setbacks into opportunities
- how to attract true wealth along with real happiness
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Here you will receive uncommon advice that will uplift, energize and move you to action, via segments such as:

- Drink Coffee with Gandhi
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ROBIN SHARMA



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PRAISE FOR

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

“Nothing less than sensational. This book will bless your life.”
Mark Victor Hansen, co-author, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*

“A captivating story that teaches as it delights.” Paulo Coelho,
author of *The Alchemist*

“This is a fun, fascinating, fanciful adventure into the realms of personal development, personal effectiveness and individual happiness. It contains treasures of wisdom that can enrich and enhance the life of every single person.” Brian Tracy, author of *Maximum Achievement*

“Robin S. Sharma has an important message for all of us—one that can change our lives. He’s written a one-of-a-kind handbook for personal fulfillment in a hectic age.” Scott DeGarmo, past publisher, *Success Magazine*

“Robin Sharma has created an enchanting tale that incorporates the classic tools of transformation into a simple philosophy of living. A delightful book that will change your life.” Elaine St. James, author of *Simplify Your Life* and *Inner Simplicity*

“... sheds light on life’s big questions.” *The Edmonton Journal*

“*The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* is coherent, useful and definitely worth reading... It can truly help readers cope with the rat race.”
The Kingston Whig-Standard

“A magnificent book. Robin S. Sharma is the next Og Mandino.”
Dottie Walters, author of *Speak & Grow Rich*

“... simple wisdom that anyone can benefit from.” *The Calgary Herald*

“This book could be classified as *The Wealthy Barber* of personal development... [It contains] insightful messages on the key

concepts which help bring greater balance, control and effectiveness in our daily lives.” *Investment Executive*

“... a treasure—an elegant and powerful formula for true success and happiness. Robin S. Sharma has captured the wisdom of the ages and made it relevant for these turbulent times. I couldn’t put it down.” Joe Tye, author of *Never Fear, Never Quit*

“... simple rules for reaching one’s potential.” *The Halifax Daily News*

“A wonderful story sharing lessons that can enrich your life.” Ken Vegotsky, author of *The Ultimate Power*

“Sharma guides readers toward enlightenment.” *The Chronicle-Herald*

“A wonderfully crafted parable revealing a set of simple yet surprisingly potent ideas for improving the quality of anyone’s life. I’m recommending this gem of a book to all of my clients.” George Williams, president, Karat Consulting International

“Robin Sharma offers personal fulfillment along the spiritual highroad.” *The Ottawa Citizen*

PRAISE FOR

Leadership Wisdom from The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

“One of the Year’s Best Business Books”—*PROFIT Magazine*

“... very informative, easy to read and extremely helpful.... We have distributed copies to all our management team as well as to store operators. The feedback has been very positive.” David Bloom, CEO, Shoppers Drug Mart

“Robin Sharma has a neat, down-to-earth way of expressing his powerful solutions for today’s most pressing leadership issues. This is so refreshing in a period when businesspeople are faced with so much jargon.” Ian Turner, manager, Celestica Learning Centre

“This book is a gold mine of wisdom and common sense.” Dean

Larry Tapp, Richard Ivey School of Business, University of Western Ontario

“A terrific book that will help any businessperson lead and live more effectively.” Jim O’Neill, director of operations, District Sales Division, London Life

“Monk points the way to balance in business... the books work ...”
The Toronto Star

“*Leadership Wisdom from The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* is headed for a top spot on the bestseller list.” *Investment Executive*

“Sharma’s mission is to provide the reader with insight to become a visionary leader, helping them transform their business into an organization that thrives in this era of change.” *Sales Promotion Magazine*

“Sharma combines the wisdom of the great philosophers from the West and the East and applies it to the business world.” *The Liberal*

“Sharma uses lessons from past masters to shed light on how we can handle the tensions of a high-tech, fast-changing world.” *The Red Deer Advocate*

To my daughter, Bianca. May you always be the model of joy.

To the many readers of *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* who took the time out of their busy lives to tell me how this simple book touched them. You have moved me.

And to all those leaders who deeply honor the sacred trust between them and the people they have the privilege to lead. Keep blessing lives and liberating talent.





This is the true joy in life, being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one, being a true force of Nature instead of a feverish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.... I want to be thoroughly used up when I die. For the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me. It's a sort of splendid torch which I've got to hold up for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

George Bernard Shaw

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To my mom and dad. I have so very much respect, appreciation and love for you. To my dear brother, Sanjay my tireless supporter and confidant, to his wife, Susan.

And to my young son, Colby, for keeping me playful amid the writing of the manuscript (partly with your Curious George stories) and to my daughter, Bianca, for being a light.



A Wild Ride to Success

It was the saddest day of my life. As I arrived at work after a rare long weekend spent hiking and laughing in the mountains with my kids, I saw two enormous security guards hunched over the mahogany desk in my coveted corner office. Running closer, I could see that they were rifling through my files and peeking into the precious documents on my laptop computer, oblivious to the fact that I had spotted them. Finally, one of them noticed me standing there, my face flushed with anger, my hands shaking at the sight of this unforgivable invasion. With an expression that revealed not a hint of emotion, he looked at me and spoke fifteen words that left me feeling as if I'd just been kicked in the chest, "Mr. Franklin, you have been fired. We must escort you out of the building immediately."

With that simple dispatch, I went from being the senior vice-president of the fastest-growing software company on the continent to a man without a future. And believe me, I took my dismissal very hard. Failure was a foreign concept to me, an experience I had no idea how to manage. In college, I'd been a golden boy, the kid with the perfect grades, the beautiful girls and the boundless future. I made the varsity track team, was elected class president and even found the time to host a hugely popular jazz show on our campus radio station. It seemed to all concerned I was gifted and destined for great success. One day I'd overheard one of my old professors saying to a colleague, "If I had the chance to live my life over again, I'd like to come back as Peter Franklin."

Mind you, my talents were not as natural as everyone believed. The true source of my achievements could be traced back to a punishing work ethic and an almost obsessive desire to win. My father had come to this country as a penniless immigrant many years ago with a deeply held vision of a more tranquil, prosperous

and happy life for his young family. He changed our family name, settled us into a three-room apartment in the honest part of town and started working tirelessly as a factory worker for minimum wage, a job he would keep for the next forty years of his life. And though he had no formal education, I'd never met a wiser man — until recently, when I met a most extraordinary human being, a person who you truly must get to know. I promise to tell you more about him shortly. You will never be the same.

My father's dream for me was a simple one: get a first-class education at a first-class school. A career of peak achievement and just compensation would then be assured, or so he thought. His firm belief was that a well-developed base of personal knowledge laid the foundation for a successful life. "No matter whatever happens to you, Peter, no one will ever be able to take away your education. Knowledge will always be your best friend, no matter where you go or what you do," he would often say to me while finishing his supper after another grueling fourteen-hour day at the factory he devoted most of his life to. My father was quite a man.

He was also a great storyteller, one of the best. In his home country, the elders used parables to convey the wisdom of the ages to their children, so he carried this rich tradition with him to his adopted country. From the day that my mother died suddenly while making his lunch in our well-worn kitchen until the time that my brother and I entered our teenage years, my father would send us off to a dreamy sleep with a delightful story that always had a life lesson. One that particularly stands out in my mind is about an old farmer on his deathbed, who asked his three sons to gather around him. "Sons," he said, "Death is close by and I shall soon take my last breath. But before I do, I must share a secret with you. In that field behind our farmhouse, there lies a glorious treasure. Dig deep and you shall find it. You will never have to worry about money again."

Once the old man had died, the sons ran out to the field and started digging with wild abandon. They dug for many hours and

continued for many days. No part of the field was left untilled as they put every ounce of their youthful energy into this task. But, alas, no treasure could be found. Eventually, they gave up, cursing their father for his apparent deception and wondering why he would choose to make such fools of them. However, the following fall, that same field yielded a harvest the likes of which the entire community had never seen before. The three sons quickly became rich. And they never worried about money again.

So, from my father, I learned the power of dedication, diligence and hard work. In my college days, I toiled day and night, eager to stay on the Dean's List and to fulfill the dreams my dad had set for me. I won scholarship after scholarship and diligently sent my aging father a small check at the end of every month, a portion of the salary I received from the part-time job that I held. This was a simple token of thanks for all he had done. When it came time to enter the work force, I had already been offered a lucrative management position in the high-tech field, the field of my choice. The company was called Digitech Software Strategies and it was the place where everyone wanted to work.

Astonishingly successful, the pundits predicted its meteoric growth would only continue and I felt truly honored that the firm had actively recruited me to become a member of its high-flying team. Quickly accepting the post, I began working eighty-hour weeks to prove that I was worth every penny of the lofty salary I received. Little did I know that, seven years later, the very same company would humiliate me as I had never been humiliated before.

The first few years at Digitech were good ones. They really were. I made some fine friends, learned a great deal and quickly rose through the executive ranks. I became the acknowledged superstar, a young man who had a razor-sharp mind, who knew how to work hard and who showed true commitment to the company. Though I'd never really been taught how to manage and

lead people, they just kept on promoting me to ever-higher positions of responsibility.

But, without a doubt, the best thing that happened to me at Digitech Software Strategies was meeting Samantha, the woman who would eventually become my wife. A bright young manager herself, she was strikingly pretty, with a formidable intellect to match. After meeting at the Christmas party, we quickly hit it off and were soon spending what little free time we had together. From day one, Samantha was my greatest fan, a true believer in my potential and talent. “Peter, you’ll be the CEO,” she would regularly tell me, giving me a soft smile. “I know you’ve got what it takes.” Unfortunately, not everyone felt the same way. Or perhaps they did.

The CEO of Digitech Software ruled the company like a dictator. A self-made man with a vicious streak, he had an ego that matched his grossly inflated paycheck. When I first started working with him, he was polite though reserved. But when word started to spread about my abilities and my ambitions, he grew cold, often communicating with me through terse memos when the situation called for something less formal. Samantha called him an “insecure little clod of a man,” but the fact remained that he had power. Real power. Maybe he felt that as I rose to higher management positions, I would make him look bad. Or maybe he saw too much of himself in me — and didn’t like what he saw.

I have to admit, however, that I carried my own weaknesses. Foremost was a hair-trigger temper. If something went wrong at the wrong time, a rage brewed within me that I simply could not control. I have no idea where it came from, but it was there. And it was not a business asset. I’ll also admit that though I think I’m a fundamentally decent person, I could be a little rough around the edges when it came to the art of managing people. Like I said, I had never received any leadership training and operated on what little instinct I had been granted. I often felt that not everyone on my team shared my work ethic and commitment to excellence, which

led me to frustration. Yes, I would yell at people. Yes, I took on far more responsibility than I was capable of handling. Yes, I should have spent more time building relationships and cultivating loyalty. But there were always too many fires to put out and I never seemed to have enough time to attend to the things that needed improving. I guess I was like the mariner who spent all his time bailing water out of his boat rather than taking the time to fix the hole in it. Shortsighted at best.

And so the day came when I was fired. The months that followed were truly the darkest of my life. Thank God I had Samantha and the kids around me. They did their best to lift my spirits and encourage me to pick up the pieces of my once fast-tracked career. But those months of idleness showed me that our self-esteem is linked to our jobs. At a cocktail party, the first question we are inevitably asked is, “So what do you do for a living?” As we began our weekly round of golf, my partners would always ask, “Any news on work, Peter?” The doorman at our luxury high rise, always a master of small talk, would regularly inquire whether things were going well at the office. With no job to go to, I no longer had any answers.

I went from getting up in the morning and rushing off to the subway station, my mind full of ideas, to awakening around noon in a darkened room, littered with empty Heineken bottles, Marlboro packages and sticky Häagen-Dazs containers. I stopped reading the *Wall Street Journal* and retreated into cheesy spy novels, old western paperbacks and trashy tabloids that revealed Oprah was an alien and that Elvis was still alive, managing a McDonald’s on the West Coast. I could not face reality. I just didn’t want to think too hard or do too much. A numbing pain pervaded my body and resting under the covers of our four-poster bed seemed like the best place to be.

Then one day, I received a phone call. It was an old college friend who had carved out an excellent reputation as one of the best minds in the software industry. He told me that he had just quit his

job as chief programmer for a large company and was getting ready to start his own firm. I still recall him telling me he had what he called “a brilliant concept” for a new line of software and needed a partner he could trust. I was his first choice. “It’s a chance to build something great, Peter,” he said with his usual sense of enthusiasm. “C’mon. It’ll be fun.”

Part of me lacked the confidence to say yes. Starting a new business is never easy, especially in the high-tech field. What if we failed? As it was, our financial situation was a mess. As senior vice-president at Digitech Software, I was paid well and lived the kind of life that my father could only have dreamed of. I drove a brand-new BMW while Samantha had her own Mercedes. The kids went to private school and spent summers at a prestigious sailing camp. My golf club’s membership fees alone totalled the annual income of many of my friends. Now, with no job, the unpaid bills were piling up and many promises were being broken. It was not the ideal time to dream of my own business.

On the other hand, my wise father always told me that “nothing can defeat you unless you defeat yourself.” I needed this opportunity to lift me from the darkness that had enveloped my life. I needed a reason to wake up in the morning. I needed to reconnect to that sense of passion and purpose I had felt in college when I believed that I was unstoppable and the world was truly a place of unlimited possibilities. I had enough intuition to know that life sends us gifts from time to time. Success comes to those who recognize and accept them. So I said yes.

We grandly named the company GlobalView Software Solutions and set up shop in a tiny office in a run-down industrial complex. I was CEO and my partner was the self-appointed chairman. We had no employees, no furniture and no money. But we did have a great idea. And so we started pitching our software concept to the marketplace. Fortunately, the marketplace enthusiastically responded. Soon Samantha came to work with us and we hired other employees. Our innovative software products

began to sell at a phenomenal pace and our profits quickly soared. That first year of operation, *Business Success* magazine listed us as one of the country's fastest-growing companies. My father was so proud. Though he was eighty-six at the time, I still remember him carrying a huge basket of fruit into the office to celebrate our achievement. Tears streamed down his face when he looked at me and said, "Son, your mother would have been very happy today."

That was more than eleven years ago and we have continued our blistering pace of growth. GlobalView Software Solutions is now a two-billion-dollar company with 2,500 employees at eight locations around the world. Just last year we moved into our new international headquarters, a world-class complex complete with a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility, three Olympic-sized swimming pools and an amphitheater for meetings and other corporate events. My partner is no longer involved in the day-to-day operations of the company and spends most of his time on his private island in the Caribbean or mountain-climbing in Nepal. Samantha left the leadership of the company a few years ago to pursue her passion for writing and to become more involved in community service. As for me, I'm still the CEO, but now I have crushing responsibilities that consume the majority of my time. Twenty-five hundred people look to me for their livelihoods and many thousands more depend on our organization to provide products and services that help them in their daily lives.

Sadly, my father died two years after the company was formed, and though he always sensed I would be enormously successful, I don't think that even he could have imagined that we would be where we are today. I do miss him but, with all that's on my plate, I have little time to reflect on the past. I still work hard, about eighty hours on a good week. I haven't taken a real vacation in years and I'm as hard-driving, ambitious and competitive as I was the day I started work as a twenty-three-year-old kid at Digitech Software Strategies. Until I had the good fortune to meet a very special teacher a relatively short while ago, I still tried to do too much and

micromanage every aspect of the business. I knew this was a weakness, but I seemed to have succeeded in spite of it.

Until that most memorable meeting, which I am about to tell you about in greater detail, I still had my bad temper, a characteristic that had only worsened as the pressures on me had grown along with my business. And, despite the passage of time, I still had a hard time managing and motivating people. Oh sure, my employees listened to me. But it was not because they wanted to — it's because they had to. They had no loyalty to me and no real commitment to the company. Fear rather than respect seemed to be the reason they would carry out the commands I issued from my palatial executive suite. It seemed all my power stemmed solely from my position. And I knew that was a bad position to be in.

Let me share a little more with you about the challenges I faced as the leader of a fast-growing company in these turbulent and change-crazed times. Despite the expansion of our business, morale had plummeted. I had heard through the grapevine that some people were saying we had grown too quickly and that profits had become more important than people. Others complained that they were being forced to work too hard with not enough resources to support them. Still others complained that the tremendous change they faced on a daily basis, ranging from innovations in technology to new structures within the bureaucracy, left their heads spinning and their bodies tingling with stress. There was little trust, low productivity and even less creativity. And from what I could gather, nearly everyone in the organization believed that the blame for the problems rested squarely with one person: me. The consensus was that I just did not know how to lead.

Though GlobalView Software continued to grow, the indicators started to show that we might be headed for our first loss in many years. Although our programs still continued to sell, we were losing market share. Our people were simply not as innovative and inspired as in the early days. As a result, our products were not as well-designed and unique. To put it simply: people just didn't seem

to care anymore. And I knew that if allowed to continue, that mindset would eventually spell the end of our company.

Signs of apathy were everywhere. Offices were disorganized and people were consistently late. Christmas parties were poorly attended and teamwork was almost nonexistent. Conflict was routine and initiative poor. Even our new manufacturing facility began to show signs of disrepair and neglect, its once gleaming floors now littered with trash and grime.

Remarkably, all that has changed. GlobalView Software Solutions is a truly excellent company again. And I know we are growing to be even better. Our organization has been transformed through the application of a very special leadership formula given to me by a very special man. This simple yet extraordinarily powerful system has brought back the excitement that once pervaded the entire company, inspired our people to new heights of commitment, sent productivity soaring and caused our profits to skyrocket beyond even my wildest dreams. Our employees have become deeply loyal and dedicated to our shared vision for the future. They work as a dynamic and highly competent team. Even better, they love coming to work and I love working with them. We all know we have discovered something magical and we know we are now headed for something very big. Just last week, *Business Success* magazine featured me on the cover. The heading read simply, “The GlobalView Miracle: How One Company Grew Great.”

So what is this miraculous and time-honored leadership formula that has made me the toast of the business community? Who was this wise visitor who revolutionized our organization and showed me how to become the kind of visionary leader these topsy-turvy times call for? I know with all my heart that the answers to these questions will change the way you lead as well as the way you live. The time has come for you to discover them.



A Monk in My Rose Garden

It was a bizarre scene. Now that I reflect on it, I still cannot believe it happened. I had just come out of my regular Monday morning meeting with my managers after hearing that GlobalView's fortunes were going from bad to worse. In the meeting, one manager had informed me that some of our top programmers were thinking of going to work for a smaller company where their efforts would be more appreciated. He also said that the relationships between management and nonmanagement were growing more strained by the day. "They don't trust us anymore," he said angrily.

Though I remained uncharacteristically calm during the meeting, I broke into a sweat as I walked down the long hallway that linked the boardroom to my office. The tension of the past few months was killing me, and I knew I had to do something to stop the company's downward spiral. I just didn't know who to talk to or what to do. Sure, I could hire a team of consultants to offer some quick-fix solutions to the problems that plagued us. But I felt I had to dig deeper to strike at the roots of what had caused us to go from being a visionary company full of passionate and compassionate people to a bulky bureaucracy where people could not wait for closing time.

Another manager added, "Not only that, there's no teamwork in this place. Before we got so big, everyone would help one another. People truly cared about a job well done. In the old days, if we were under a deadline to ship out a big order, I still remember all of us would work together, sometimes late into the night. I even remember times when the programmers and managers rolled up their sleeves to help people in shipping seal boxes and get them ready for loading onto the delivery trucks. Now it's every person for himself. It's a bunker mentality. I really can't stand it anymore."

By the time I reached my office, perspiration dripped off my

forehead and my shirt was soaked. My executive assistant, seeing my state, rushed toward me and grabbed my arm. As she escorted me to the plush leather couch that sat next to one of the many floor-to-ceiling bookcases in my imperial office, she asked if she should call my doctor or perhaps even an ambulance. Not even giving her the courtesy of a reply, I lay down on the couch and closed my eyes. I had read somewhere that visualizing a soothing scene in the mind's eye was a great way to calm down after a stressful encounter. And so I did my best.

Just as I began to relax, I was startled by a loud noise. It sounded as if someone had thrown a rock against one of the windows in my office. I leapt to my feet and ran to the large main window in search of the culprit. But I could see no one. Maybe the stress I had been suffering from was playing games with my imagination. As I slowly returned to the couch, it happened again, but this time even louder. 'Who could it be?' I wondered, thinking I should have my assistant call security immediately. 'Probably another disgruntled computer programmer pushing his luck with the boss,' I thought, growing even more annoyed at the disturbance. I darted to the window yet another time and, this time, saw a figure standing in the center of the sweeping rose garden that my second-floor office overlooked. As I squinted my eyes and looked more carefully, I was shocked by what I saw.

It was a striking young man who appeared to be wearing a hooded red robe, the kind I'd seen the Tibetan monks wear on a trip that I had made to that exotic land more than a decade earlier. As the rays of the sun illuminated the handsome, unlined face of the stranger, his robe flapped in the light wind, giving him a mysterious, almost ethereal appearance. He had a big smile on his face. And on his feet he wore sandals.

After realizing this was not some hallucination of an overworked CEO whose company was slowly sliding into oblivion, I pounded on the window in anger. The young man did not move. He remained in a fixed position and kept smiling. Then he offered

me an enthusiastic wave. I could not stand this kind of disrespect. This clown was trespassing on my property, spoiling my rose garden and clearly attempting to make a fool out of me. I immediately commanded my executive assistant, Arielle, to call security. “Have them bring our strange visitor up to my office right now, before he gets away,” I ordered. “He needs to be taught a lesson — the likes of which he will never forget.”

Within minutes, four security guards were at my door, one of them carefully holding the young stranger, who appeared to be cooperating with them, by the arm. Surprisingly, the young man was still smiling and he radiated a sense of strength and serenity as he stood in the doorway to my office. He did not appear to be a bit concerned about being caught by security and marched into my office. And though he said nothing, I was also struck by the strange feeling that I was in the presence of a man of great knowledge. I experienced the same feeling I used to have when I was with my dad. I really cannot explain it any more than that. Call it intuition, but my gut told me the young man was far wiser than his youthful face showed. Actually, I think it was his eyes that gave it away.

In my years in business, I have discovered that a person’s eyes can reveal the truth. They can disclose warmth, insecurity, insincerity or integrity, if one simply takes the time to study them. The young man’s eyes told me he had wisdom. They also indicated he had a passion for life and perhaps a slight mischievous streak. They seemed to sparkle when the sunlight pouring into my office caught them. Seen up close, the young man’s ruby red robe was quite splendid in its texture and design. And despite being inside, he had chosen to leave the hood on, lending further mystery to his remarkable appearance.

“Who are you and why were you throwing rocks at my window?” I demanded, my face growing hot and my palms growing even more sweaty.

The young man remained silent, his full lips holding their smile. Then he started to move his hands, bringing them together in a

prayer stance, offering me the traditional greeting of the people of India.

‘This guy is unbelievable!’ I thought. ‘First he treads through my rose garden, the garden I love looking at from my office when things get crazy. Then he starts pitching rocks at my window, scaring the heck out of me. And now, when he is surrounded by four burly, no-nonsense security guards who could floor him in an instant, he plays games with me.’

“Look, kid, I don’t know who you are or where you’ve come from, and to be honest, I don’t really care,” I exclaimed. “You can keep wearing that silly robe and giving me that silly smile. Be as cocky as you like because I plan to call the police. But before I do, why don’t you break that vow of silence you monks are so famous for and tell me why you are here?”

“I’m here to help you reinvent your leadership, Peter,” the young man replied in a surprisingly commanding tone. “I’m here to help you get your organization back on track. And then on to world-class status.”

How did he know my name? Maybe this guy was dangerous. ‘I’m glad I’ve got security right in front of me,’ I thought to myself. And what was all this nonsense about helping me “reinvent my leadership and get my company back on track?” If this clown was some kind of consultant trying to get my attention for a fat contract, he was going about it the wrong way. Why didn’t he just send me a proposal like the rest of those overpriced, underworked “change agents” who have an amazing gift for creating makework projects that ensure they never miss the target dates for their early retirements.

“You have no idea who I am, do you, Peter?” he asked in a friendly tone.

“No, I’m sorry I don’t. And if you don’t tell me now, I’m going to kick your sorry behind down the hallway and out into the parking lot,” I yelled menacingly.

“I see you still have that temper, Peter. We’ll need to work on that. I’ll bet it doesn’t help you win the loyalty of your team. And I know it does nothing but hurt your golf game, which never was that good,” said the young man, breaking into a laugh.

“Do you have any idea who you are talking to, you arrogant little troublemaker?” I screamed, disregarding the fact that the mysterious stranger was well over six feet tall and in superb physical condition. “How dare you chastise me for my temper? And how do you know so much about my golf game? If you’ve been following me around, I’m definitely getting the police to charge you. That’s a very serious offense you know,” I noted, whipping myself into a frenzy that caused me to sweat profusely once again.

Then the young man did something that astonished me. He lifted his hand and reached deep into his robe, pulling out what appeared to be a gold-plated golf ball. He then tossed it high into the air for me to catch. “I thought you might want it back,” he remarked, still smiling.

I was stunned by the object now resting in the palm of my hand. For the golf ball carried an inscription: *To Julian on your fiftieth birthday, a golden golf ball for the man who has it all.* It was signed: *Your friend always, Peter.* How did the young man get this ball? I had given it to my former golfing partner, Julian Mantle, a few years ago. Julian had been a legend in the business world and one of the few friends I had been able to keep over the years. A man with an absolutely brilliant mind, he was widely acknowledged as one of the finest lawyers in the country. Unlike me, he had come from money, his grandfather being a prominent senator and his father, a highly respected judge of the Federal Court. Groomed for success at an early age, Julian graduated number one in his class at Harvard Law School and then landed a coveted position with a spectacularly successful law firm.

He rose to national prominence within a few short years, and his blue-chip client list included multibillion-dollar corporations, major sports teams and even leading governments. In his heyday, he

managed a team of eighty-five talented lawyers and won a string of legal victories, which, to this day, causes me to marvel. With an income well into the seven figures, he had everything anyone could want: a mansion in a tony neighborhood favored by celebrities, a private jet, a summer home on a tropical island and his most prized possession of all — a shiny red Ferrari parked in the center of his driveway. But, like me, Julian had his flaws.

He worked like a fiend, regularly working through the night and then catching a few hours of sleep on the couch in his princely corner office before beginning the daily grind all over again. Though I loved playing golf with him, he was hardly ever available. I mostly heard the same excuse from his executive assistant, “I’m sorry, Mr. Franklin, Mr. Mantle will not be able to join you for golf this week due to an emergency that has come up on one of his cases. He does apologize.” The man pushed himself relentlessly and, over time, lost most of his friends along with his once sympathetic wife.

I honestly thought Julian had a deathwish or something. Not only did he work far too hard, he lived far too hard. He was well-known for his late-night visits to the city’s finest restaurants with sexy young fashion models and for his reckless drinking escapades with a rowdy band of cronies, which often ended up in fights that were splashed across the newspapers the next day. Despite his statements to the contrary, Julian Mantle was digging himself into an early grave. I knew it, the lawyers at his firm knew it and, deep within his soul, I think he knew it.

I watched Julian’s steady decline with a feeling of sadness. At the age of fifty-three, he looked as if he was in his late seventies. The constant stress and strain of his hard-driving lifestyle wreaked havoc on him physically, transforming his face into a mass of wrinkles. The late-night dinners in expensive French restaurants, smoking thick Cuban cigars and drinking cognac after cognac had left him embarrassingly overweight and he constantly complained that he was sick and tired of being sick and tired. Over time, he lost

his once wicked sense of humor and rarely laughed. A time eventually came when he stopped playing golf, even though I knew he loved the sport as well as our outings together. With all the work on his plate, Julian even stopped calling me. I knew he needed my friendship as much as I welcomed his, but I guess he just didn't care.

Then tragedy struck the Great Julian Mantle. One Monday morning, in the middle of the packed courtroom where Julian was arguing a case for one of his best corporate clients, Air Atlantic, he collapsed. Amid the frenzied screams of his paralegal and the clicking cameras of the media that were present, Julian was rushed to the hospital. On arrival, he was diagnosed as having suffered a massive heart attack and was rushed into the coronary care unit. The cardiologist said Julian was as close to death as any patient he had ever seen. But somehow he survived. The doctors said Julian was a fighter and seemed to have "a heroic will to live."

That sad episode changed Julian profoundly. The very next day, he announced he was leaving the practice of law for good. I'd heard through the grapevine that Julian had headed off to India on some kind of expedition. He told one of his partners he "needed some answers" and hoped he would find them in that ancient land that had, over the centuries, gathered such great wisdom. In a striking act of closure, Julian had sold his mansion, his jet and his private island. However, it was his final gesture before departing that was his most unexpected: *Julian sold the Ferrari that he loved so much.*

My thoughts quickly returned to the young stranger in the monk's robes, now standing in the center of my office, still smiling and still wearing the hood over a thick mop of brown hair. "How did you get this gold-plated golf ball?" I asked in a quiet tone. "I gave this to a dear friend of mine a few years ago as a gift for a very special birthday."

"I know you did," replied the visitor. "And he really appreciated your gesture."

“And might I ask how you would know that?” I persisted.

“Because I’m the dear friend. I am Julian Mantle.”



The Miraculous Transformation of a Corporate Warrior

I was astonished by what I had just heard. Could this young man in the peak of health really be Julian Mantle, a man who had fallen from the pinnacle of greatness as no one I have ever known? And if it *was* him, how could he possibly have undergone such a stunning change in appearance? I knew Julian had sold his mansion, his summer home and even given up his prized red Ferrari. I knew he'd given up the trappings of the corporate world and trekked off to the Himalayas on some fanatical mission to seek answers to the deep questions he was struggling with. But surely a simple visit to that ancient and mystical place could not have so profoundly transformed a man who had all but worked himself into the ground.

Disturbed by the bizarre scenario that had just unfolded before me, my mind began to race to some of the other possibilities. Perhaps this was a prank masterminded by one of my less-than-mature managers to inject a little levity into what was sure to be a tension-filled week? Or maybe the young man was an infiltrator from a competitor seeking to get inside our operation to see how bad things really were? Perhaps this visitor in monk's clothing was a deranged trespasser out to seriously harm me. But before I could examine these options more fully, the young man spoke.

“Peter, I know it's hard for you to believe it's really me. I'd feel exactly the same way if I were in your shoes. All I'm asking from you is a little faith, a little bit of belief in life's small miracles. There's a purpose to my visit.”

“And what might that be?” I asked, still not certain who was standing before me.

“Frankly, I've heard you are in big trouble and I've come to help. If what I've heard about GlobalView since my return from the

Himalayas is true, you cannot afford not to listen to what I've come to tell you. I've discovered information that will return you and your business to the heights of success you once enjoyed. I've been given knowledge that will lead you to certain market leadership. I've learned lessons that will show you how to have the most loyal, dedicated and inspired employees of any company in your field. This information was given to me by a very learned teacher, who I met high in the mountains. The timeless wisdom he shared with me is not widely known here in the West. Yet it is so potent and so very profound that I am certain it will revolutionize your entire organization and do wonders for your bottom line."

"Go on," I replied, my curiosity piqued.

"The wisdom I've come to share with you is contained within a unique and extremely powerful system, a leadership blueprint of sorts. It's actually foolproof. Follow the system and then just sit back and watch your company return to prime health. Well, actually, it's designed to do far more than that. If you follow the formula with conviction, your business will be much more successful than it ever was. It will improve it in ways you never could have imagined. Morale and productivity will soar. Your people will be more committed and creative than you've ever seen them. They will be much more responsive and adaptive to change. Your team will start to work together again and deeply care about the work it is doing. And, to state the obvious, profits will go through the roof."

"Okay. You've got my attention," I responded. "But first let me ask you something. Assuming you are Julian, and that's quite an assumption, why are you dressed like a monk? The Julian Mantle I knew wouldn't be caught dead in anything less than Armani."

"Fair question, my friend," the young man replied with a mischievous grin, which I quickly realized looked very much like the one Julian was so well known for in his younger years. "Mind if I start my explanation at the beginning?"

“I’m all ears,” I replied, leaning back into my plush leather chair for what I sensed would be a good story.

The young man proceeded to relate, in minute detail, the rise and fall of the legendary Julian Mantle, from his days as a brilliant young student at Harvard Law School to his unparalleled success as a litigation lawyer handling some of the most complex corporate law cases in the country. He spoke candidly of his victories and also of his well-documented decline. He talked about his dreams, his fears, his failed marriage and his heart attack. He even referred to the intricacies of my golf game and said that he sorely missed our fun-filled afternoons in the sun.

“They were pretty great,” I interrupted, sensing that, somehow, this young stranger dressed in the attire of the sages really might be my long-lost friend Julian Mantle. Who else could have known all these details? I sat there silently, unsure of what to say next. Then I stood up and walked over to him.

“Julian it really is you isn’t it?” I said apologetically.

“Yes it is. And it’s really great to see you after all these years. That golf ball you gave me for my fiftieth really meant a lot to me.”

I was delighted to see him. We embraced as only old friends can and began to revisit memories of our glory days together. But, in the back of my mind, one thought still nagged me. I still couldn’t find a rational explanation for Julian’s amazing youthfulness.

Feeling my unease, Julian asked with his trademark flair, “A little curious to discover my beauty secrets?” his lips curving into a full grin.

“Stop teasing me, Julian. First you show up unannounced after all these years wearing that foolish-looking robe, bouncing rocks off my office window and scaring the daylights out of me on what has already been a stressful day. Then you stun me by telling me who you are and that you can offer me some priceless wisdom that will somehow save my bleeding company. And now you won’t

even explain how you managed to knock years off the way you look. You're walking a fine line, Julian," I said in mock annoyance.

"After my heart attack, I decided to make some drastic changes. I'm sure you heard that I sold the mansion and the summer home and the rest of my toys."

"At least you could have kept your Ferrari, Julian. That was such an amazing machine. I still remember seeing you fly around with that blonde bombshell you used to date in the passenger seat, her long hair waving through the wind."

Julian smiled for an instant. "The one with those hot pink miniskirts?"

"That's the one."

Then he grew pensive and serious. "I had to cut every tie I had to my former world if I really wanted to get somewhere new. I loved the Ferrari, but I knew it had to go. Otherwise it would have been like trying to go on a sailing adventure but hoping to keep a little rope tied to the dock for security. It just wouldn't work. So I sold everything that symbolized my hard-driving, 'take-no-prisoners' lifestyle and headed for India, a land I had always suspected was rich in knowledge and truth."

Julian then described how he trekked across that vast country in search of information he could use to improve the way he worked and lived. Sometimes he traveled by train, sometimes by bicycle or by foot. He visited ancient temples and studied under respected teachers. He met others who were also searching for answers to life's larger questions and made friendships that have lasted until this day. But during his first months in India, the wisdom he sought eluded him. Then, as he searched deeper and deeper, he began to hear whispers of a band of monks living high in the Himalayas.

According to legend, these sages, known only as the Great Sages of Sivana — Sivana meaning "oasis of enlightenment" in the language of their culture — had developed an extraordinary system that could be used to attain remarkable levels of personal and

professional fulfillment. The only problem was that no one knew how to find these monks.

“Many people had tried to find them,” said Julian. “Business people searched for them to discover their deep insights for leadership in the world of commerce. Others sought them for their lessons on leadership in life. But the higher reaches of the Himalayas are deadly and many innocent lives were lost in pursuit of those elusive sages.”

Never one to be deterred from a challenge, Julian threw caution to the wind and started climbing himself, determined to find what he was looking for. For many days and nights, he climbed those majestic mountains, beginning first at the moderate foothills and progressing to steeper and steeper paths that he prayed would lead him to the home of the Great Sages. He told me that he used that time in solitude to reflect on what his life had been — and all that it could be.

“In the corporate world, I had been so busy being busy, I never had time to think about life. And yet reflection and contemplation are among the most important of all business skills. I’ve since realized that in this information-led world we live in, ideas are the commodity of success and the most effective people are the most effective thinkers,” Julian observed. “My time alone in those mountains was transformational. For the first time in my life, Peter, I began to develop a true sense of self and to understand who I really was.”

As he progressed on his trek, he grew weary and began to fear that he would succumb to the treacherous terrain as so many hope-filled adventurers before him. Then came a breakthrough. As he was traveling on a particularly steep path one sun-soaked morning, he caught a glimpse of another figure, dressed strangely in a long flowing red robe topped by a dark blue hood. It had taken him many days to reach this stage and Julian was astonished to see another person. As he was many miles away from civilization and still unsure where Sivana lay, he called out to his fellow traveler.

The figure refused to respond and accelerated along the path, not even giving Julian the courtesy of a backward glimpse. Soon the mysterious traveler was running at full speed, the red robe dancing gracefully like crisp cotton sheets hanging from a clothesline on a windy autumn day.

“Please, friend, I need your help to find Sivana. I’m looking for the sages,” yelled Julian. “I’ve been traveling for seven days with little food or water. I think I’m lost!”

The figure then stopped abruptly. As Julian approached, the traveler, whose face was hidden by the hood, remained strikingly still. Suddenly, a burst of sunlight struck the face, revealing that the traveler was a man. But the worldly-wise Julian Mantle had never seen a man quite like this one. Though he guessed he was in his late fifties, his olive complexion was supple and smooth. His body appeared strong and powerful and the man radiated vitality and vigor. And his eyes were so penetrating that Julian said he was forced to look away.

“It didn’t take me long to realize that I had found one of the elusive Sages of Sivana,” said Julian, clearly still excited by this discovery, despite the passage of time. “So I poured my heart out to him on that mountain. I told him why I was there and what I hoped to learn. I told him of my former life in the corporate world, of my heart attack and of my longing to find the secrets for true leadership in business and in life. I pleaded with him to take me to his people and to allow me to discover their wisdom for myself.”

After listening intently to Julian’s tale, the man put an arm on his shoulder and said gently, “If you truly have a heartfelt desire to learn the wisdom of a better way, then it is my duty to help you. I am indeed one of those sages you have come so far in search of. You are the first person to find us in many years. Congratulations. I admire your tenacity. You must have been quite a lawyer. If you like, you may come with me, as my guest, to our temple. It rests in a hidden part of this mountain region, still many hours away from here. My brothers and sisters will welcome you with open arms. We

will work together to teach you the ancient principles and strategies that our ancestors have passed down through the ages.”

There was, however, one condition the sage imposed upon Julian. “Before I take you into our private world and share our collective knowledge, I must request one promise from you. Although we are isolated here in these magical mountains, we are acutely aware of the turmoil your world is in. Leaders of every sort are struggling to cope with the great transition and tremendous turbulence that this new era of business has brought with it. Competition has never been so fierce, the rate of change has never been so high and morale is plummeting as people struggle to find solid ground. With all this upheaval, people no longer have a sense of loyalty to their companies. They lack any connection to their work. Sadly, too many men and women fail to attach any meaning to what they do and that, in turn, has led to a lack of fulfillment in their lives. Your heart attack was personal evidence of this. But there is hope for these people and the hope will come from you.”

“How will the hope come from me?” Julian asked. “I’m here to learn from you.”

“Don’t worry,” replied the sage. “While you are with us, here in these mystical mountains, you will discover a remarkable system for true leadership. We will show you a formula that any leader in the business world can immediately apply to transform the effectiveness of his or her company, raising it to far greater levels of prosperity and contribution. We will also teach you timeless truths for personal leadership so that you can get your own life back together and start making a real difference in the way you live. Few in this world have the privilege of learning the leadership wisdom you are about to acquire. And yet it is so important that it be made available to all. So, before I take you into our culture and introduce you to my brothers and sisters, I must place one requirement on you.”

The sage then requested that Julian share the lessons he would learn at the feet of the Great Sages of Sivana with all those in the

West who needed to hear them. It would be his duty to be the human conduit of the ancient wisdom of the sages, spreading it throughout this part of the world and transforming many lives in the process. Julian instantly accepted the sage's terms and promised he would carry their message to the West with sincerity and dedication.

“Don't tell me,” I interjected with foresight. “I'm one of the people who needs to hear the message of the sages.”

“Believe me, Peter, you will be glad you did. Neither you nor your company will ever be the same.”

Brushing aside my usual skepticism, I replied with uncharacteristic enthusiasm, “When can we start?”

I guess I was simply fed up with the lack of progress we were making and hoped that Julian really could deliver the blueprint for renewal and transformation that were desperately needed. In spite of his many failings, there was one thing all who knew Julian Mantle could agree upon: he always told the truth.

“How about tomorrow afternoon? Is 5:00 P.M. okay?” Julian asked as he reached into his robe with his right hand.

“I had a meeting scheduled with one of our strategic partners but I'll change it. Of course 5:00 P.M. is fine, Your Holiness,” I replied mockingly. “Should we meet here? You seem to have a fondness for my rose garden. And security already knows you.”

“Actually I had another place in mind. Let's meet at our old golf club. There's something I need to show you and that place will be perfect.”

He then pulled out from his robe what appeared to be a small wooden piece of a jigsaw puzzle and, as he had done with the gold ball that had emerged from it earlier, he tossed it into the air for me to catch.

After giving me a quick smile, he turned around and walked past the security guards who had been sipping coffee in the hallway

outside my door. “See you tomorrow,” I heard, Julian’s voice trailing off.

As I watched the long red robe of my former golf partner swing from side to side as he moved farther down the long corridor that led to the exit, I shook my head in disbelief. I felt a sense of excitement I had not had in a long time. Perhaps there was hope for GlobalView after all. Perhaps I would be able to get my troops inspired and rejuvenated again. Perhaps I could actually regain a clear sense of vision for the future of this once-great organization. Maybe this special leadership system Julian had discovered in the Himalayas would allow us to seize the opportunities the new marketplace presented and experience far greater achievement than we had ever known. And maybe I’d finally learn how Julian had transformed himself.

As I caught myself staring at the foot-high pile of paperwork on my desk, I turned away to study the wooden jigsaw piece that Julian had tossed to me. I noticed it had a design on it. Though I looked closely, I could not figure out what it was. But I did notice that there were also words carved into the wood. ‘How strange,’ I thought. The words were almost illegible, having worn down with the passage of time. I quickly reached into the drawer of my desk and pulled out a magnifying glass. Finally, I could read the words. They read simply, Ritual 1: *Link Paycheck to Purpose*.



The Wisdom of Leadership Vision

Of all of the beautiful truths pertaining to the soul which have been restored and brought to light in this age, none is more gladdening or fruitful of divine promise and confidence than this — that you are the master of your thought, the molder of your character, and the maker and shaper of condition, environment and destiny.

James Allen

My heart was racing as I turned onto the tree-lined country road that would eventually lead me to my golf club, a club widely recognized as one of the most prestigious in the entire country. Judges, senators, financiers and celebrities were well represented among the membership and a ten-year waiting list ensured this would remain the case for the foreseeable future. I felt lucky to be able to belong to such an establishment. I would have felt even luckier if I'd had the time to enjoy the facility on a more regular basis. With all the turmoil GlobalView was facing, a round of golf was nothing more than a fantasy.

As I approached the clubhouse, a massive wooden structure with majestic pillars and a breathtaking view of the beautifully manicured golf course and the lush gardens that surrounded it, I spotted Julian. He was sitting up on the verandah, his table shaded by an umbrella to protect him from the late afternoon sun. He appeared to be reading a book as he sipped his drink. And, in violation of the club's rigid dress code, he still had on his ruby red robe. I couldn't help but smile. Julian always did things his own way. And you had to love him for it.

"Julian," I called out, as I got out of my car and walked up the stairs that led to the verandah.

As he saw me approaching, he stood up and extended his hand. “Thanks for coming, Peter. I promise you won’t be disappointed.”

As we settled in, I ordered a martini. It had been another rough day at the office and I felt the drink would help me unwind. I had been under such pressure over the past few months that anything that would calm my nerves was welcome. “What are you reading?” I asked, looking down at the leather-bound book Julian held in his hand.

“It’s a book on the life of Gandhi.”

“I didn’t know you were into Gandhi. As a matter of fact, I can’t recall seeing you carry around a book in all the years I’ve known you.”

“I have nothing in common with the time-starved, over-stressed Julian Mantle that you once knew. I’ve changed in so many ways you cannot imagine. One of the many lessons I learned in the Himalayas is that with the twin elements of knowledge and courage, all things are possible. So I now make sure that I read from a good book every single day. Doing so connects me to the intelligence I need and keeps me focused on where I’m going. And inspired by the knowledge of where I’m going, I maintain the courage to keep moving forward.”

“Interesting. But why Gandhi?”

“Since my time with the sages, I’ve become a serious student of leadership. When most people hear the word leadership,’ they think of it only in the business context. They imagine leaders of companies, inspiring their followers to be more productive and committing themselves to their grand visions of the future. But the sages taught me that leadership is really much broader than that. *Leadership is really a philosophy for life.* While CEOs and managers can be great leaders, so can caring teachers, committed scientists and compassionate mothers. Coaches lead sports teams and politicians lead communities. And it all begins from within, by having the self-discipline to lead and know yourself. To understand

that the essence of your life lies in leadership. As Robert Louis Stevenson once said, ‘To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end of life.’

“Truly wise people aim, not only for leadership in their businesses but also within their lives. And so, since I’ve returned from the Himalayas, I’ve been studying the life of Gandhi, a man who I believe to have been one of the greatest all-round leaders ever to have graced the earth. He had the wisdom to lead his people in the direction of his future vision, but he also had the courage to lead himself and live with great character. He is a model of enlightened and effective leadership.”

“That’s hard to disagree with.”

“One day Gandhi was getting off a train when one of his shoes slipped off and onto the track. As the train had started to move, he could not retrieve it, so he did something that startled his companions.”

“Which was?”

“He removed his other shoe and threw it near where the first one sat. His companions immediately asked for an explanation. As he walked shoeless down the platform, he smiled gently and replied, ‘Now, the poor man who finds the shoe lying on the track will have a pair he can use.’ ”

“Wow.”

“Gandhi also had an abundance of humility, a great leadership quality if there ever was one.”

“Really? I never would have thought humility was that important.”

“Oh, but it is,” Julian replied as he gently called over a passing waiter and ordered a cup of herbal tea. Within minutes, the waiter had returned with a teapot and an elegant china teacup for Julian. Julian then started to pour the tea into the cup. He poured until the cup was full, but then, most oddly, he kept on pouring! Soon the tea

spilled across the table onto the deck of the verandah. And yet he continued to pour.

“Julian, what are you trying to prove?” I asked incredulously.

“An essential leadership lesson,” he replied calmly. “Most leaders are a lot like this teacup.”

“How so?”

“Well, just like this cup, they are full to the brim. They have filled their minds so full of their opinions, ideas and biases that nothing new can get in. And in our rapidly changing world, where leaders must constantly be learning new concepts and equipping themselves with new skills, that’s a deadly character flaw.”

“So what’s the solution?”

“It’s simple. They must *empty their cups*. They must constantly be receptive to new knowledge. They must always view themselves as lifelong students, no matter how many initials and titles follow their names on their upscale business cards. They must adopt what the sages of the East refer to as the Beginner’s Mind, an essential attitude for every leader destined for success. They must grow humble. That’s why I say that humility is a fundamental leadership discipline. And this is why I have come to admire Gandhi.”

Julian continued, oblivious to the stares he was attracting from the other members who had come up to the verandah to relax after a round of golf. “The sage I told you about yesterday, the one I met while I was climbing along the mountain, was the nominal leader of the Great Sages of Sivana. After I accepted his condition and promised I would spread their system for leadership through the West, he introduced himself as Yogi Raman and led me along a series of intricate mountain paths that eventually led to a lush green valley. On one side of the valley stood the towering snowcapped Himalayas, majestically reaching high against the clear blue sky. The other sides were guarded by a thick forest of pine trees that spilled their fragrance throughout the valley. Yogi Raman smiled at me and said, ‘Welcome to the Nirvana of Sivana.’

“We then descended along another narrow path that took us deep into the forest. I still remember being powerfully affected by the smell of the pine and sandalwood that passed through the air of that otherworldly place. On the forest floor were richly colored orchids and other exotic flowers, the likes of which I had never seen before. Suddenly, I began to hear other voices as we approached a clearing. As we grew nearer, I caught a glimpse of a sight I can assure you I will never forget as long as I live.”

“What did you see?” I asked.

“Before me stood an entire village made solely from what appeared to be roses. At the center of the village was a tiny temple, the kind I had seen on my visits to Thailand and Nepal. But this temple was made of red, white and pink flowers, held together with long strands of multicolored string and twigs. Surrounding the temple was a series of small huts, apparently the simple homes of the monks.

“Even more astonishing were the inhabitants themselves,” Julian added. “The men wore the same red-robed uniform that Yogi Raman was wearing and smiled gently as they passed by. Their expressions conveyed a deep sense of serenity and their eyes a deep sense of wisdom. Rather than growing agitated at the sight of an unexpected visitor who had broken the sanctity of their mountain hideaway, they quietly bowed their heads and then continued to perform the tasks they had been working at. The women were equally impressive. Wearing beautiful pink silk saris that flowed to the ground and with their shiny black hair adorned by bright white lotuses, they moved gracefully through the village. I had never seen people like this before. Even though they were all mature adults, each one of them radiated joy, their eyes twinkling as an expression of their vitality and passion for life. Not one of them had wrinkles. Not one of them had gray hair. Not one of them looked old. I was speechless.”

Julian told me that Yogi Raman then showed him to his living quarters, a small hut that would serve as his home for the next few

months.

“Let’s head down to the fairway,” said Julian, standing up. “I’ll continue with my story as we walk. And bring along those golf clubs,” he requested, motioning toward what appeared to be a well-worn set that someone had apparently forgotten on the verandah.

“Are you actually going to try and play a round in those robes?”

“No, there’s something much more important I want to show you.”

As we walked toward the golf course, Julian continued to share his amazing tale with me. Sensing his burning desire to learn the sages’ leadership wisdom, Yogi Raman took Julian under his tutelage. He spent literally every waking hour with his eager student, happily sharing his accumulated knowledge and instructing Julian on how to apply it. On some days they would rise with the sun and spend hours discussing the timeless truths that Yogi Raman had offered, Julian’s quick legal mind delighting in this powerful information he knew would change his life along with the lives of so many others in his part of the world. On other days, they would walk silently in the pine forest, enjoying the gift of each other’s presence while savoring the opportunity to reflect on the philosophies they had been discussing.

In time, the sage became more like a father to Julian than a teacher. He showed Julian how to see his life in a whole new perspective and truly liberate the fullness of his personal potential. Knowing of Julian’s brush with death after years of neglecting his health, Yogi Raman initially focused on teaching Julian an extremely powerful self-management and life-improvement process that would transform the way he looked and felt.

The sage told Julian that “inner leadership precedes outer leadership” and before he could come to understand the time-honored dynamics of leading others, he had to understand how to lead himself. So Yogi Raman taught him little-known skills to manage stress, break his worry habit and simplify his life. He

taught him how to enhance his energy levels, unblock his creativity and unleash his vitality. Within a number of weeks, Julian had undergone both an outer and inner metamorphosis. He looked years younger, was full of strength and felt more positive about his future than he had in many years. He actually began to believe he could do anything, be anything and make a real difference in the world by spreading the priceless wisdom he had discovered. The ancient lessons of the Great Sages of Sivana had started to work their miracles.

With his student returned to a splendid state of physical and psychological health, Yogi Raman began to share the leadership system Julian had promised would revolutionize GlobalView and allow it to reach a world-class level of achievement and effectiveness.

“This wise leader of the Great Sages of Sivana believed that all failure, whether in the business world or in one’s personal life, could ultimately be traced back to a failure in leadership. Companies don’t perform at their peak when their leaders are unskilled and unwise. People don’t perform at their best when they have no leadership over their lives. He told me that though he lived in an isolated part of the world, he knew there was what he called ‘a leadership crisis’ in our part of the world. Yogi Raman said he held the solution.”

“I’ve spent a lifetime reflecting on the elements of enlightened leadership,” Julian remembered the sage telling him one afternoon as they relaxed in a mountain meadow after exploring and hiking in that surreal place. “I’ve devoted many years to silently contemplating what made the greatest leaders so great. As a monk, I have pledged allegiance to the truth. So my life has been dedicated to searching for truths of leadership. Over time, I have come to understand that the most influential and respected leaders aligned their leadership with certain ancient laws. I’ve structured these laws into an extremely effective system for dynamic leadership, a blueprint of sorts that will help any leader realize his

or her professional and personal potential. Now I shall share what I have learned with you.”

“And what did Yogi Raman tell you?” I asked intently, as we finally reached the barren golf course.

“He told me that the most enlightened, dynamic and effective leaders all possessed one quality that the lesser ones lacked.”

“And that quality is?”

“I think it would be better if I demonstrated it.” Julian then reached into the leather golf bag I was carrying and pulled out a club.

“You’re not going to tell me you also worked on your golf game while you studied under the sages!”

“Actually I did. I played golf every single day. It was very therapeutic and greatly contributed to my recovery.”

“Really,” I said in disbelief. “And I suppose these magical monks had also developed a world-class golf resort in the middle of their mountain hideaway so they could play a few rounds to break up the monotony of their days? Probably had little bamboo golf carts to whiz them from hole to hole, did they?”

“Very funny,” Julian replied, taking my sarcasm in stride. What else could he expect? His story was moving from the bizarre to the incredible. “No, I actually played golf in my mind, Peter.”

“I’ve never heard that one before.”

“A few years ago, I remember reading a magazine article about a Vietnam vet who managed to survive his days in solitary confinement by playing imaginary games of chess. Not only did this help him pass the time, it also dramatically improved his playing ability. By the time he got out and had the opportunity to play with a real opponent on a real board, his chess skills had become nothing short of brilliant.”

“Amazing.”

“I felt exactly the same way when I heard about that story, Peter. So when, in some of my quieter moments among the sages, I began to reflect on how much I had loved playing golf in my younger years, I decided I would model the war veteran’s strategy and practice playing golf in my mind. I had enjoyed the game so much as a kid, I thought it would greatly assist my recovery.”

“Did it make a difference in your golf game?”

“I don’t know. This is the first time I’ve been on a golf course in years. Actually, I think the last time I played was with you. But I’ve probably played over a thousand rounds in my mind, so I don’t really feel like I’ve been away from the game at all. Okay, watch closely now. I think what you’re about to see might surprise you.”

Julian then reached into his robe and pulled out the gold-plated golf ball that I’d returned to him.

“You’re not going to use that one are you? Do you have any idea how much that cost me Julian?” I asked, mildly irritated that my friend would use my special birthday present to him in his demonstration.

“Watch closely,” was the only reply I received as he focused intently on the hole at the other end of the fairway, his ultimate destination. Then with the ease and grace of a seasoned professional, he swung the club, striking the ball perfectly and sending it soaring high into the air. I’d never seen Julian hit the ball like that. However, in spite of his shot, it appeared as if the ball would fall short of its target. I looked at him and gave him my best “nice-try” expression.

Then something unbelievable happened. The ball seemed to speed up in the air, as if it had been blessed with the support of a convenient gust of wind. It now sped precisely toward its intended destination. A couple of groundskeepers, who had witnessed this display, had quickly taken off their hats so as not to miss seeing where the ball would land. Even a few of the golfers relaxing on the

clubhouse verandah were leaning over the railing to see what would happen.

The ball then dropped down from the sky onto the green next to the first hole and began to roll slowly but directly toward it. No golfer had shot a hole in one on this course for quite some time, but perhaps my friend, adorned in the robe of a traditional monk and wearing nothing on his feet but his faithful sandals, would be the first to end this drought. The ball kept on inching toward the hole. Then it seemed to stop.

“Oh Julian,” I said, in sincere disappointment. “So close and yet so far.”

“Just wait, Peter. One of the leadership lessons I’ve learned is that *immediately before a great victory, one will often experience some form of difficulty. The key is to maintain your focus and keep on believing.*”

Then, just when it appeared to all that the ball had come to rest, it rolled the remaining two inches and dropped into the hole.

“Hurrah!” one of the groundskeepers shouted at the top of his lungs after witnessing this extraordinary event. Julian threw his fists into the air and began to do a little dance, obviously delighted by his achievement.

I simply laughed and shook my head. “Wow, Julian. You never cease to amaze me! Congratulations!”

After regaining my composure, I asked Julian how he did it. “Did you actually intend to shoot a hole in one?”

“I did. But to be honest, I wasn’t certain it would happen. I’d rehearsed that very shot on this very course hundreds of times in my mind when I was up in the Himalayas. It began to be a game I would play, just to keep my imagination sharp. I had great fun doing it. I must admit that even I’m a little surprised that my mental training produced such a fabulous result. But the fact it worked

proves the important point I brought you down here to make,” offered Julian with a hint of mystery.

“Does it have something to do with the piece of the puzzle you gave me yesterday?”

“Yes, it does. Let me ask you this question, Peter. What do you think allowed me to shoot a hole in one the first time I stepped on a golf course after so many years?”

“Well, I think you answered the question yourself, Julian. It was because of your mental rehearsals during the time you were up in the Himalayas. You practiced doing what you just did so many times that you must have created something similar to a blueprint in your mind. Then you came down here today and, against the odds, translated that mental blueprint into reality.”

“Very good, Peter. You always had a quick mind and clearly understand the process I followed. I’m impressed.”

“You know I love the game of golf and will do anything to shave a couple of strokes off my game. So, over the past few months, I’ve been reading a lot of books on the lives and lessons of the world’s greatest golfers. If there was one thing they all agreed on, it was that ‘golf is a mental game.’ Jack Nicklaus, for example, mentioned that after walking the course he was about to play, he would envision the shots he hoped to make hundreds of times in his mind’s eye. This became his secret advantage. So when you told me you did the same thing, it really didn’t come as such a surprise.”

“And the greatest leaders in the world of business do the same thing,” Julian stated.

“They all visualize their golf shots?” I replied with a grin.

“No, Peter. They clearly envision their future paths in the present moment. They manufacture a crystal-clear blueprint or picture of what their companies will look like in the coming years. They know intimately the exact nature of the success they and their people are striving for. And every step they take is designed to

move them closer to their vividly imagined future. In a word, my friend, they have a vision that inspires them to reach for the stars. That is the ultimate secret of their greatness as leaders.”

“It seems so simple. Just clearly envision my company’s future and I’ll become a great leader?” I queried.

“I didn’t mean to suggest it was that simple. There are many more leadership practices and philosophies followed by enlightened, high-performing leaders that allow them to lead as they do. Yogi Raman taught them all to me and I assure you I will soon share them with you. But, for now, just remember that *great organizations begin with great leaders. And every great leader has bold dreams.* Effective leaders are visionaries who craft clear pictures of their companies’ futures and then link them to the present activities of the people they are leading. In this way, all actions have a purpose: to bring the organizations closer to the result imagined by their leaders. It’s just like Woodrow Wilson said, ‘You are not here to merely make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget that errand.’ ”

“So well said.”

“And remember, once you surrender to your vision, success begins to chase you. Ultimately, you really can’t pursue success, success ensues. It flows as the unintended by-product of effective efforts concentrated in the direction of a worthy purpose.”

“Yogi Raman, a monk living high in the Himalayas, taught you that?” I queried.

“Yogi Raman spent many years studying the fundamentals of leadership by studying the lives of history’s greatest leaders. He shared with me a timeless system that anyone in a leadership position can use to inspire and energize his or her team into action and raise the organization to heights previously unimagined. Yogi Raman might not have known all the complexities of the modern

world of business here in the West, but he didn't need to. The wisdom he shared with me is based on ancient leadership truths that have been passed down through the centuries. These truths could also be characterized as immutable laws since, like the laws of nature, they have stood the test of time and will continue to do so. And while the world of business is drowning in a sea of change, these truths for leading people are not."

"So every great leader is a visionary. He or she has made a clear connection to the future by vividly imagining an end result. It's kind of like what Henry Kissinger was quoted as saying in the paper a few years back, 'The task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have never been.' Is that an accurate way to summarize what you are telling me?"

"Yes it is, Peter. You seem to have grasped the concept well, perfectly actually. But I'll offer you another example anyway. Do you remember that famous eye surgeon we used to play golf with from time to time?"

"Sure. I really liked the guy. He had a wonderful sense of humor."

"That's him. He also used to organize that annual gala dinner and dance for all the ophthalmologists in the city. Remember what he named it?"

"How could I forget?" I replied with a grin. "The Eye Ball."

"Well, one afternoon, we were out on the course and I remember him telling me about one of his very young patients who suffered from a medical condition known as amblyopia. Apparently, another doctor had mistakenly put a patch over the child's good eye rather than the one that needed protection. After the patch was taken off, it was discovered, to the surprise and sadness of all concerned, that the little boy had completely lost the sight in that good eye. Apparently, the eye covering had stunted the development of his vision and caused blindness. That's the phenomenon that the term amblyopia describes."

“Remarkable.”

“I’ve never forgotten that story, Peter. I also think it applies to the leadership lesson I’m offering to you. In today’s business world, too many leaders become creatures of habit. They do the same things in the same way with the same people every day. They rarely have new thoughts, generate fresh ideas or take calculated risks. Instead, they confine their leadership to a secure area of comfort and refuse to leave it. Such leaders eventually suffer from their own form of amblyopia.”

“How so?”

“By spending their days doing the same old things, it’s like they’ve placed patches over their good eyes. They become unable to see the tremendous opportunities presented by these rapidly changing times. And, eventually, by not using their natural vision, they lose it and grow blind. Never let this happen to you, my friend. Take your blinders off and start looking for new opportunities. *The best way to succeed in the future is to create it.* As Helen Keller once said, ‘I’d rather be blind than have sight without vision.’ ”

Julian continued. “Now that you understand that the most enlightened and effective leaders are ‘visionary leaders,’ my duty is to give you the tools and skills to help you become one. And this is where Yogi Raman’s leadership system comes in.”

“First may I ask you a quick question?”

“Sure,” Julian replied as we strolled back to the clubhouse.

“I really want to learn what you have to teach me. You know that GlobalView is in big trouble. My best programmers are jumping ship, morale has been destroyed, no one trusts management and teamwork is a thing of the past. In an industry that demands relentless innovation, we seem to have lost our creative fire. And all the change that we are being forced to deal with is crippling my people. Technology is changing, the industry is changing and our customers’ expectations are changing. On top of

all that, I just can't seem to figure out the direction in which the company needs to move."

I continued to share my frustrations with Julian. "What I'm really trying to tell you is that I know I need to improve my leadership abilities. At Digitech, I was promoted to higher and higher management positions. And though I went to a few leadership development courses here and there, in all those years, no one ever really took me aside and taught me how to lead people. No one ever showed me what to do to deeply motivate my team or communicate more effectively. No one explained how I could boost productivity while enhancing employee commitment. I've never even learned something as fundamental as the art of managing my time and getting things done.

"And now that I run my own company it's even worse. I always seem to have far too much to do and too little time. Everyone expects me to have all the answers to all their questions. I'm constantly under stress and take out my frustration on my people, which only makes things worse. As for a sense of balance between my professional and personal life, it's just a dream. I say to myself 'next year will be the year I get back into shape or start spending more time with my family.' But things never seem to slow down. So, if you don't mind, I'm going to really take advantage of our time together and dig deep into the elements of great leadership. I want to ask you some of the basic questions I've always wanted to ask but never did, for fear of looking foolish."

"Please do," Julian replied gently.

"Okay. First of all, what does the word leadership' really mean? What does it really stand for? Though I'm running a huge company with more than 2,500 employees, I've never really been able to pinpoint the meaning of the word."

"It's like I said before, leadership is all about focused action in the direction of a worthy purpose. Leadership is about realizing that the impossible is generally the untried. Many people think that a

leader is the man or the woman with the title of CEO or president. Actually, leadership is not about position, it is about action. Your managers can be great leaders. Your programmers can be great leaders. The shop foreman down on the factory floor can be a great leader. You see, Peter, to lead is to inspire, energize and influence. *Leadership is not about managing things but about developing people.* Visionary leaders are those who understand that the true assets of any organization go up the elevator in the morning and down it every night. Quite simply, leadership is about helping people to liberate the fullness of their talents while they pursue a vision you have helped them understand is a worthy and meaningful one. You can do this. Your managers can do this. Even your frontline workers can show leadership in the work that they do. And the truly effective leaders have to live in two places at once.”

“I’m not sure I understand you.”

“The best leaders recognize that leadership is a craft, not a gift. They constantly work to refine their art. And one of the things they work hardest to develop is an ability to be present-based but future-focused. Great leaders have mastered the twin skills of managing the present while, at the same time, inventing the future. That’s why I say they have to live in two places at the same time. They need to live in the present and guide the improvement of current operations by enhancing quality, streamlining systems and raising customer-care standards. But at the same time, they must create, shape and nurture a clear blueprint for the future. Yogi Bhan put it elegantly when he said, *‘The visionary leader is one who has learned how to focus on the summit while clearing the path.’* A company without a fanatical commitment to refining operations will soon be surpassed by its competition. But a company without a strikingly clear ideal to work toward will soon be out of business.”

“And is this where the piece of the jigsaw puzzle you left with me yesterday comes in?”

“Yes. Do you recall what the words on it said?” Julian asked.

Luckily, I had brought the piece with me and quickly lifted it from the front pocket of the yellow golf shirt I had on.

“I couldn’t figure out what the design on it was but I was able to read the words.”

“Fine. And what did they say?”

“*Ritual 1: Link Paycheck to Purpose,*” I answered dutifully. “I’m not quite sure what that means, Julian.”

“You will be before long.”

RITUAL 1



Link Paycheck to Purpose



The Ritual of a Compelling Future Focus

Life affords no higher pleasure than that of surmounting difficulties, passing from one stage of success to another, forming new wishes and seeing them gratified. He that labors in any great or laudable undertaking has his fatigues first supported by hope and afterwards supported by joy.

Samuel Johnson

While Julian and I had been chatting on the verandah, the sun had slowly set, making way for a peaceful yet particularly humid summer's evening. Despite the heat, he steadfastly refused to take off his robe. "I'm just fine," Julian replied courteously. "But I sure would appreciate a glass of ice water."

"With pleasure," I responded, quickly signaling the waiter to come over once again and informing him of my unusually attired guest's simple request. I had realized that Julian truly was a different man from the hard-living, stress-ridden corporate warrior he once was. Gone was the affinity for alcohol, recklessness and profanity that had characterized his notorious lifestyle. He was a model of good health, good judgment and a testament to the principles he was sharing.

"You know, Peter, there are a lot of so-called management gurus. They travel from city to city giving seminar after seminar and write book after book. While many of them develop useless buzzwords and jargon to justify their existences, the best ones really do have valuable ideas that would help improve organizations. The problem lies in what I call the Performance Gap. That's what prevents many businesses from reaching levels of greatness."

“The Performance Gap?”

“It’s a theory that explains why knowledge generally doesn’t translate into results. You see, all too often we know what we should do but we don’t do what we know. We are human beings when what we really should be are humans doing. Many leaders know they should have a clear sense of their future vision and powerfully communicate it to the people they have the privilege to lead. They know they need to take steps to develop deeper connections with those under their leadership. The problem is that they have failed to develop the action habit. And, therefore, they put off doing what they intuitively know they should do. They spend their days majoring in minor things and slowly the weeks, months and years slip by them. These types of leaders never fully realize that 90 percent of leadership success comes in the follow-through, in the implementation and execution of the knowledge they have gathered. Everyone says we are so fortunate to live in this age of information. But what most people fail to appreciate is that information alone is not power. Power and competitive advantage come only when sound information is decisively acted upon.”

“That’s so true, Julian. Most of us in our company know at least a few dozen things we could probably implement in a week or so to at least improve the situation. And yet we are so busy with the daily emergencies that always seem to burden us that we end up putting off doing them until the next quarter and then the quarter after that.”

“Quite right. So remember, as I share Yogi Raman’s leadership wisdom with you, that the key to improving your leadership performance is to passionately act on it. Don’t squirrel it away hoping you will have time down the road to study it and put it into play. Recognize its power and deeply embed it into your daily routine so that you practice its principles daily. Make it a part of your leadership and your life right now. Only then will you see quantum improvements in your effectiveness as a leader of people and in the productivity and performance of GlobalView. As noted

by Herodotus so many years ago, ‘This is the bitterest pain among men, to haw power.’ ”

“Any advice on how I might go about ‘making the wisdom a part of my leadership and my life today,’ as you suggest?”

“Most important of all, you must begin to *ritualize* the wisdom you are about to discover,” Julian replied.

“Huh?”

“The best way to ensure these leadership lessons become a part of who you are is to create rituals around them. That is one of the most timeless and essential of all the leadership truths I will deliver to you.”

“Can you give me an example of a ritual, just so I’m clear about what you’re getting at?”

“Sure. One simple ritual the sages practiced with an almost obsessive sense of commitment was getting up at dawn. They felt this gave them a tremendous head start on their days and fostered self-discipline. By engaging in this simple practice every single day, it became a part of who they were. A time came when they couldn’t have slept in even if they tried.”

“One of my managers is the same way, Julian. As a boy, his father forced him to get up at 5:00 A.M. every single day of the week. He told him he was doing it for his own good, ‘to build character,’ Now, even if he’s on vacation, he still gets up at that ungodly time of the day. Perhaps that’s why he’s one of the most productive people in our company.”

“Personal productivity is generated in many ways. Getting up early is certainly one of the best of them. But the point I’m making is that both the Great Sages of Sivana and your top manager *ritualized* the discipline of getting up early. Other people have ritualized the discipline of exercising every lunchtime and still others have ritualized the practice of reading every night. What I’m really trying to say, and this is so important for you to understand,

is that the only way you will become a visionary leader and liberate the fullness of your leadership talents is by making the truths I'm about to reveal to you part of your daily routine. You need to make them iron-clad rituals, as all the visionary leaders before you have done. In this way you will move beyond simply knowing to doing."

"Could brushing your teeth be considered a ritual?" I asked earnestly.

"Definitely. Would you ever dream of going into the office without brushing your teeth?"

"I wouldn't dare inflict such pain on my staff, Julian," I replied with a hearty laugh, my first in a long time. "Cruel and unusual punishment has been banned in this part of the world, in case you forgot!"

Julian chuckled but then quickly returned to the point he was making. "You brush your teeth every single morning and wouldn't dream of not doing it. So it's a perfect example of a ritual. If you can integrate the leadership truths from Yogi Raman's system into your routine to the same degree, your success as a visionary leader will be guaranteed. This I promise you."

"Great, I'm feeling excited already. So far you've explained that enlightened and effective leaders all have a vividly imagined future vision. They know precisely where they want to go and concentrate their energies on getting there. You've also taught me that the leadership truths that make up Yogi Raman's timeless success system need to be made into rituals so that I practice them daily, almost unconsciously, in spite of how busy I get. Would it be possible for you to give me the elements of this ancient system now?" I asked, barely containing my curiosity.

Julian looked up to the sky, which had now grown dark and star-filled. He gazed for what seemed like an eternity at one star in particular, squinting his eyes in an effort to see it more clearly. Then he muttered something under his breath. While I couldn't make out

all that he said, I did hear, “So there you are, my friend. I’ve missed you for a while.”

Then, realizing that he had drifted off, he quickly caught himself and returned his attention to me, looking mildly embarrassed. “Sorry about that, Peter. When one spends as much time alone as I do, one’s social graces tend to diminish. I apologize for my mind wandering off like that. It’s just that I spotted something I haven’t been able to find all week.”

After a moment, he continued. “Yogi Raman taught me that there were a series of specific rituals practiced by visionary leaders, eight to be precise. These eight disciplines represented a distillation of all the leadership wisdom that had been passed down through the ages and practiced by the world’s greatest leaders of people. These were not the quick-fix, flavor-of-the-month strategies that are so prevalent in today’s businessplace. Instead, they reflected the ageless truths about how to deeply stir men and women into action, how to cultivate tremendous loyalty and respect and how to bring out the very best in the people you lead. Yogi Raman, in all his brilliance, fashioned these eight rituals into the leadership system I’ve promised to share with you for some time now. You have been patient and sincere in your interest to learn a better way to lead. And so the time has come for me to teach the system to you.”

“Would it be fair to assume that the piece of the puzzle you left with me yesterday after your surprise visit to my office has something to do with the first ritual of Yogi Raman’s leadership system?”

“Indeed it does, Peter. The First Ritual of Visionary Leaders is Link Paycheck to Purpose. Simply put, this is the ritual of a compelling future focus. As I have already told you, all enlightened leaders have a richly imagined vision of their organization’s future. But having a vision is not enough. The vision must excite the minds and touch the hearts of the men and women of your organization. People will go far beyond the call of duty when their leader paints

for them a future vision that is compelling and important. *Purpose is the most powerful motivator in the world.*

“Yogi Raman told me that one of the greatest human hungers is the need we all have to make a difference in the lives of others. People have a deep inner need to be a part of something larger than themselves. Whether we are speaking of the CEO or the shipping clerk, every human being needs to feel that he or she is making some sort of contribution. Great leaders appreciate this hunger and constantly communicate to their followers how what they do in their daily work positively affects the world at large. They also fan the flames of excitement within their organizations by continually showing their people that the work they are doing is moving them closer to a compelling cause. To put it simply, these leaders give their followers a reason to get up in the morning.”

“Very interesting. Any ideas on how I could apply this to my situation?”

“Earlier you said that low morale is stifling GlobalView’s growth.”

“True.”

“Then remember this, Peter. There’s no such thing as an unmotivated person, only an unmotivated employee. You can take any member of your team whom you believe lacks motivation and initiative and scrutinize his or her personal life and guess what you’ll see?”

“Dare I guess?”

“You will see that that person has hobbies that he loves. You will see that he has interests that excite him. You will discover that he works late into the night on his stamp collection or spends hours learning new languages or passionately playing musical instruments. Every single person on this planet has the ability to get excited and motivated about something. The leader’s primary task is to get his team excited and motivated about the compelling cause that is his vision. Rather than constantly ordering your people to

work toward the future goals you have developed, why not give them a reason to do so? And if you find that they are still unmotivated, understand that it is because you still have not given them enough reasons to buy into your picture of the future. Remember what the psychologists have known for many years: human beings naturally move away from pain and toward pleasure. Visionary leaders find ways to associate pleasure with the daily work of their employees and the ultimate cause they are working toward. *They link paycheck to purpose.*”

Julian continued. “What’s your current corporate mission statement?”

“C’mon, I’m tired of hearing about mission statements. I think that whole idea has been done to death, if you don’t mind me saying so.”

“I agree. But the fact remains that crafting a statement of your organization’s future can only serve to refocus the energies of your people on the things that count. So bear with me, please.”

“To be the preferred supplier of our customers, to create high-quality products and to grow into a five-billion-dollar company within five years,” I stated proudly.

“Do you truly think a mission statement like that will inspire people to give their best to the company? Do you seriously believe you have given your people a reason to get out of bed every morning? Have you really shown them a compelling cause they can work toward? Every company wants to be the customer’s preferred supplier. And about the five billion dollars, I’ll let you in on a secret. You’re probably the only one in the entire company who is excited about that one. It has no *emotional* impact on the average person within the organization, working hard to pay off the mortgage and to put her kids through school.”

Julian’s words stung me. I knew he wanted to challenge me to explore new pathways of thought. But he was hitting pretty close to

home. I had drawn up that mission statement myself. And it meant a lot to me.

“Let’s look for ways to reframe your future vision to make it more compelling to those you lead. What business are you in?”

“We make software.”

“And what is your primary market?”

“The health-care field. Our software is used primarily by major hospitals and health-care providers to better serve their patients.”

“Ah, now we’re getting somewhere,” Julian replied. “And what exactly does your software allow your customers to do?”

“Well, our bestselling program assists doctors and nurses in the monitoring of critical-care patients. Though it was only developed last year, our industry trade magazine recently reported that that piece of software alone has saved over 100,000 lives.”

“Now that’s what I mean by a compelling cause,” said Julian with great enthusiasm. “And what kind of revenue would GlobalView be generating if you were saving millions of lives?”

“That’s really hard to say. There are so many factors that I’d have to consider and —”

“For the purposes of the point I’m trying to make, let’s be very flexible with the numbers,” Julian interrupted. “Just tell me, is it possible that if the software program you are selling saved millions and millions of lives each year, the revenues of your company could rise to five billion?”

“Yes, it’s possible,” I admitted.

“Fine then. Imagine your mission statement was amended to read, ‘GlobalView is passionately committed to saving the lives of men, women and children by providing our respected customers with cutting-edge, high-value software that allows them to brilliantly serve their patients’ needs. Our five-year goal is to save

the lives of over five million people and make a significant and lasting impact on the health-care industry.”

“Wow,” I replied, immediately understanding the power of the lesson Julian was presenting.

“You see, Peter, *the job of every leader is to define reality for his people*. He shows his people a better, brighter, more enlightened way to see the world. He takes the challenges they face and reframes them as opportunities for growth, improvement and success. He does more than show people *how* to do things right — that is the job of the manager. The enlightened leader clarifies the right things to do, which gives his people compelling reasons to do what they do better than they have ever done it. He constantly reaffirms that the purpose everyone is striving toward is a good one and a just one and an honorable one. He understands that the best motivator for innovative and exceptional performance is meaningful work.

“And the truly visionary leader offers his followers hope by showing them that a higher reality exists for them if they keep moving in the direction of the leader’s vision. To put it another way, he instills a sense of passion within his people by engaging their hearts and minds through the power of his purpose. Napoleon Hill captured the sentiment when he said, ‘Cherish your vision and your dreams as they are the children of your soul; the blueprints of your ultimate achievements,’ while Orison Swett Marden wrote, ‘There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great, and no tonic so powerful as expectation for something better tomorrow.’ Find a vision you can invest every ounce of yourself within, one that will become your driving force, your *raison d’etre*, your life’s work. The excitement and positive energy that you will generate will spill over into the entire organization.”

“That makes so much sense, Julian. If I imagine a truly compelling cause or worthy vision for the future of GlobalView and effectively communicate it to my employees in a way that fulfills

their hunger to contribute and make a real difference, they will get excited about their work.”

“Absolutely. Oh, and don’t forget, stop being so focused on what you will get when you realize your vision and begin to pay more attention to the *why* of what you are doing. By dedicating your energies to the worthy purpose lying behind what you are doing and taking the focus off the rewards, you will get to your destination far more quickly.”

“Why’s that?”

“I’ll tell you a fable that Yogi Raman shared with me that will answer your question nicely. Once a young student traveled many miles to find a famous spiritual master. When he finally met this man, he told him that his main goal in life was to be the wisest man in the land. This is why he needed the best teacher. Seeing the young boy’s enthusiasm, the master agreed to share his knowledge with him and took him under his wing. ‘How long will it take before I find enlightenment?’ the boy immediately asked. ‘At least five years,’ replied the master. ‘That is too long,’ said the boy. ‘I cannot wait five years! What if I study twice as hard as the rest of your students?’ ‘Ten years,’ came the response. ‘Ten years! Well, then how about if I studied day and night, with every ounce of my mental concentration? Then how long would it take for me to become the wise man that I’ve always dreamed of becoming?’ ‘Fifteen years,’ replied the master. The boy grew very frustrated. ‘How come every time I tell you I will work harder to reach my goal, you tell me it will take longer?’ ‘The answer is clear,’ said the teacher. ‘With one eye focused on the reward, there is only one eye left to focus on your purpose.’ ”

“I won’t forget that one, Julian.”

“It’s full of truth, isn’t it? Rather than focusing on what he could give by reaching his ultimate destination, the boy’s mind was centered on what he would receive. And therefore, it would take him far longer to get there. What I’m really trying to say, Peter, is

that *you need to concentrate on contribution. Giving begins the receiving process*, that's the irony. By rallying around a worthy cause and constantly asking, 'How can we serve?' the rewards flow in degrees you cannot imagine. As they say in the East, *A little bit of fragrance always clings to the hand that gives you roses.'* ”

“So true, when one really thinks about it,” I admitted.

“Here's a great example. Southwest Airlines has consistently been one of the most successful major airlines. Herb Kelleher, its feisty and innovative leader, could easily have defined the purpose of the company in terms of “being a great airline” or in terms of levels of profit or in terms of customer satisfaction. But he didn't. He had the wisdom to understand that by rallying his people around an emotionally compelling cause, Southwest would become a great airline, make huge profits and generate an army of satisfied customers. So he defined his company's work — and its reality — in a way that truly connected with people.”

“How did he do that?”

“He explained that Southwest was a very special airline run by very special people. He showed his team how the low fares the company advertised allowed people who could previously never afford air travel the opportunity to fly on a regular basis. This meant that grandparents could start visiting their grandchildren more frequently and that small-business people could explore markets they never could have before. He showed his people how their work was really about helping others fulfill their dreams and live better lives. He understood that *one of the key tasks of the visionary leader is to engage hearts.*

“And once he did, everything else he hoped for followed. So find a way for you and your managers to show your people their work, directly or indirectly, touches people's lives. Show them that they are needed and important and satisfy their hunger to make a difference. This is what the First Ritual of Visionary Leaders is all about. *Because when you link paycheck to purpose, you connect*

people to a cause higher than themselves. Your people will start to feel good about what they are doing. And when your people feel good about the work they do, they will begin to feel good about themselves as people. That's when real breakthroughs start to happen. As Henry Ford once said, 'No one is apathetic except those in pursuit of someone else's objectives.' Give your people a slice of ownership in your vision. They will reward you with the gift of fidelity to your leadership."

"Come to think of it," I interjected, "Recently I heard of a similar example of connecting to a compelling cause. During World War II, the workers who made parachutes for the Allied Forces were less than enthusiastic about their jobs, which could be described as tedious at best. They spent their days doing the same things over and over again and eventually grew weary of their work. Then one day, one of the leaders of their organization sat them all down and reminded them of the value of their work. He told them that it just might save the lives of their own fathers, sons, brothers and compatriots. He reminded them that their work saved lives. By reconnecting them to the big picture, he made productivity go through the roof."

Julian then reached over to pick up a newspaper someone had left on the table next to us, which he thrust in front of me. As I squinted to see the picture on the front page in the dim porch light, Julian remarked, "I read the paper earlier today and came up with an insight I'd like to share with you. What do you see right here on this page?"

"Looks like a photo of the earth, like the ones the space-shuttle astronauts have been taking."

"Right. This afternoon, under the midday sun, I looked at that newspaper photo with my magnifying glass. Guess what I saw?"

"No idea."

"I saw that it was actually made up of nothing more than thousands of tiny black dots. Try it yourself tomorrow morning

over a cup of coffee. You'll see that every single picture in the entire paper is nothing more than a collection of ink dots."

"Okay, so what's your point, Julian?"

"My point is that when you ask someone what the subject matter of this photograph is he or she will quickly tell you that it is of the earth. No one will ever tell you he or she sees ten thousand dots clumped together. When viewing the pictures in the newspaper, we have trained ourselves to focus on the big picture, to observe the subject matter from a higher perspective. Yet, too often in business, leaders and managers lose all perspective and spend their days focusing on the little things."

"On the dots," I interjected, grasping the power of Julian's excellent analogy.

"You got it. And in doing so, they miss a world of opportunities, just like anyone focusing on the dots that make up this picture would miss this spectacular view of our world. To be a visionary leader, you must stay focused on the big picture — the compelling cause that lies at the heart of your vision. You must keep your people centered on the communities they are helping and on the lives they are touching. That will provide all the motivation they need."

"But doesn't it take a special kind of person to want to work hard for his or her company because it is doing good work and advancing 'an emotionally compelling cause' to use your words? I'll be honest, all my people care about is getting their paychecks. They couldn't care less about the company or the vision it has."

"That's your fault."

"What do you mean?"

"Stop blaming your people for your leadership failures. Stop blaming the changing economy, increased regulation and competitive pressures. If people haven't bought in to your vision, it's because they haven't bought in to your leadership. If they are

not loyal, it's because you have not given them enough reasons to be loyal. If they are not passionate about their work, it's because you have failed to give them something to be passionate about. Assume total responsibility, Peter. Understand that great leadership precedes great followership."

The truth of what Julian had just said rocked me. None of the management seminars I'd attended or consultants I'd worked with had ever offered me this kind of insight. And yet I knew it was right. Something inside me, intuition perhaps, confirmed that this youthful and vibrant-looking man in the robes of a monk was sharing the kind of wisdom that would profoundly affect my leadership and even my life. I knew I lacked a clear vision for the future and that all those around me could sense this failure. I knew my sense of uncertainty about the future was being telegraphed throughout the company by my temper tantrums and lack of confidence. And I knew my people did not respect or trust me. Julian was absolutely right. They had not bought in to my leadership.

"Great followership begins the day your people sense you truly have their best interests in mind," Julian continued. "Only when they know you care about them as people will they go to the wall for you. When you start putting your people before your profits you will have accomplished something even more powerful than engaging their hearts. You will have earned their trust. Never forget that the real secret to being seen as trustworthy is to be worthy of trust."

It was now 10:00 P.M. and Julian and I were the only two people remaining on the golf club's verandah. I thought of suggesting to my friend that we move our conversation over to my home but then decided against it. The night was nothing short of perfect. The sky was strikingly clear and glittered with a thousand stars. A full moon illuminated the area where we sat and lent a mystical feeling to what had already been a most unusual day. Julian was deeply engrossed in our conversation and the leadership wisdom was

flowing out of him with eloquence and grace. I would be a fool to do anything else but listen intently to this man who had learned so much during his time high in the Himalayas. I owed at least this to the people in my company.

“Mind if I ask you another basic question, Julian?”

“Not at all. That’s why I’m here,” he replied.

“How do visionary leaders show their followers that they really do have their best interests in mind?”

“Excellent question, Peter. The first thing to do is to practice the Principle of Alignment.”

“Never heard of it.”

“The Principle of Alignment holds that when your emotionally compelling cause, what we have simply called your ‘vision,’ is aligned with the interests of the people under your leadership, you will generate enormous levels of trust, loyalty and commitment. Make sure your future vision is shared by all those you lead. *Too many vision statements hang on office walls rather than live in human hearts.* Give your people, from your top managers to your frontline workers, a genuine sense of ownership in the cause your organization is moving toward. A *shared* vision lies at the heart of every world-class organization.”

“And how do I accomplish this?”

“You must show them that by helping you achieve your future goals they will also realize their future goals. By integrating what is meaningful to you with what is meaningful to them or, at the very least, by showing them how the attainment of the vision you hold for the company will help them feel fulfilled, they will come to understand that you care about their hopes and dreams. They will come to trust you. And with trust dominating the corporate culture, achievements once viewed as impossible become probable.”

Julian added: “There is a second way to gain the respect and loyalty of the men and women you have the privilege to lead. And

that is to become a liberator.”

I had no idea what he meant, but, not wanting to ask too many silly questions, I simply nodded.

“You have no idea what I’m talking about do you, Peter?” Julian observed.

“No, not really,” I admitted, feeling like a school kid might after being caught in a tiny lie.

“Then why did you nod?” he demanded. “I don’t mean to come across as being harsh because that’s not what I’m about. I’m here this evening as a friend as well as a teacher who will give you the knowledge you need to fix your dying company and repair your leadership. But be honest. Honesty is one of the most important leadership skills. Remember, truth precedes trust. And people can sense sincerity a mile away. Without it, GlobalView will never grow to greatness.”

“Okay, I’m sorry. I just didn’t want to look foolish.”

“Visionary leaders care more about doing what’s right than appearing intelligent. Never forget that. Leadership is not about popularity, it’s about integrity. It’s not about power, it’s about purpose. And it’s not about title but rather talent. Which brings me squarely back to the point I was trying to make.”

“I’m all ears,” I offered sincerely.

“Visionary leaders see themselves as liberators rather than limiters of human talent. Their primary priority is to develop their people’s full potential. They realize that every leader’s task is to transform the workplace into a place of realized genius. The visionary leader understands that his company must, above all else, become a place and opportunity for self-development and personal fulfillment. He has the wisdom to know that in order for his followers to become deeply committed to his vision and offer the true extent of their capacities he is duty-bound to provide them with challenging work. He must offer them a chance to grow as people

through their work. You see, Peter, Yogi Raman told me that another of the human hungers is the need for growth and self-actualization. And visionary leaders satisfy this hunger by freeing people's strengths.

“Every single person on this planet has a deeply felt desire to expand and improve as a person. When you, as a leader, dedicate yourself to liberating rather than stifling the talents of the people under your leadership, you will reap quantum results in terms of loyalty, productivity, creativity and devotion to your compelling cause. The bottom line is simply this: *people who feel superb about themselves generate superb results*. This leadership truth has stood the test of time. Never neglect it.

“The sad fact is that most people have no idea how much talent and potential slumbers within them. William James, the founder of modern psychology, once said, ‘Most people live — whether physically, intellectually or morally — in a very restricted circle of their potential being. We all have reservoirs of life to draw upon, of which we do not dream.’ And he was right. If the average person caught even a glimpse of how powerful he or she truly is, that individual would be astonished. And yet most people have never taken the time to look within themselves to discover who they really are.”

“Did the sages teach you that principle?”

“Yes, they did. As a matter of fact, Yogi Raman loved telling me a story on that very point. According to Indian mythology, all people on earth were once gods. However, they began to abuse their power so the supreme god, Brahma, decided he would take this gift away from them and hide the godhead in a place where they would never find it. One advisor suggested it be buried deep within the ground, but Brahma didn't like that idea. ‘Mankind will one day dig deep enough to find it,’ he said. Another advisor suggested it be hidden in the deepest part of the ocean. ‘No,’ said Brahma, ‘one day mankind will dive deep enough to discover it.’ Yet another advisor suggested the godhead be placed on the highest peak of the highest

mountain, but Brahma replied, ‘No, mankind will eventually find a way to climb to the top and take it.’ After silently thinking about it, the supreme god finally found the ideal resting place for that greatest of all gifts. ‘Here’s the answer: Let’s hide it within man himself. He will never think to look there.’ ”

“Great story,” I offered sincerely.

“What I’m really trying to tell you, Peter, is that all people have more energy and ability within them than they could ever imagine. Your job, as a leader, is to uncover this truth for the benefit of your people.”

“I hear what you are saying, Julian. But do you really believe that everyone has the potential for genius within them?”

“Genius is all about having an exceptional natural ability. We all have our special gifts and capacities. The problem is that most leaders have never offered their people opportunities to test and liberate those gifts. Rather than showing them what success looks like and then letting them use their creativity and resourcefulness to get there, the vast majority of leaders micromanage and dictate the path to be followed at every step of the way. They treat their team members as children, as if they are absolutely incapable of independent thought. Over time, this type of leadership stifles imagination, energy and spirit. Then the leaders cry about a lack of innovation, productivity and performance. ‘Leaders should lead as far as they can and then vanish,’ wrote H. G. Wells. ‘Their ashes should not choke the fire they have lit.’

“So allow your people to flourish as they work toward your shared vision. Show them the truth about their talents and offer them blinding glimpses of a new world of opportunity. Challenge them and allow them to grow. Let them try new things and learn new skills. Let them fail from time to time, since failure is nothing more than learning how to win — free market research if you will. *Failure is the highway to success.* Understand that the visionary leader has the wisdom to push his people up rather than keep them

down. He understands that when his people succeed, he succeeds. He understands exactly what Bernard Gimbel meant when he stated, ‘Two things are bad for the heart — running uphill and running down people.’ ”

Julian’s face was now fully animated and his hands were gesturing in his passion for what he was saying. “Yogi Raman put it far more eloquently than I ever could,” Julian continued. “Late one night, high in the mountains under a magnificent sky he used a phrase that will always stay with me. It speaks volumes about the essence of visionary leadership.”

“What was the phrase?” I asked impatiently.

“He told me that *‘The ultimate task of the visionary leader is to dignify and honor the lives of those he leads by allowing them to manifest their highest potential through the work they do.’* ”

“Powerful statement,” I said softly, looking up at the sky in an effort to let the words soak in.

“And it’s true. ‘In dreams begin responsibilities,’ proclaimed the poet Yeats. The visionary leader owes his people the responsibility of helping them develop and flourish. He understands that *the greatest privilege of leadership is the chance to elevate lives*. You need to keep uncovering the truth about their potential so they can see what they really are and what they truly can achieve. The great psychologist Abraham Maslow said that ‘the unhappiness, unease and unrest in the world today are caused by people living far below their capacity’ and I know he was right.”

“Okay, here’s another question. If the visionary leader’s primary duty is to bring out the best in his people and bottom-line concerns are not important, how does he measure success?”

“I didn’t say that the visionary leader disregards the bottom line, Peter. Of course he understands that for his company to grow, profits must flow. Productivity issues, customer satisfaction and quality are all essential issues that occupy his attention. But first and foremost are the development and enrichment of his people. He

actually sees his people as bundles of human potential just waiting to be unleashed for a worthy purpose. And he knows that when people work and live at their highest levels, the profits are certain to come. So to answer your question, the visionary leader measures his success through how many lives he touches and how many people he transforms. He measures his success, not by the extent of his power, but by the number of people he empowers. Makes sense?”

“It does, Julian. It really does. Okay, what comes next?”

“Then once you and your managers have begun to liberate the highest potential of your people, keep clarifying and communicating your great vision for the future. Productivity and passion are the inevitable by-product of men and women working toward an emotionally compelling cause. Inspire them to invest their energies and spirits in it. Allow them to feel it’s theirs and understand the implications of its achievement. Nothing focuses the mind better than a future ideal that moves the heart. Abe Lincoln knew this, Gandhi knew this, Mandela knew this, and so did Mother Teresa.”

“I’ll be totally honest. I still don’t have a clear future vision of what you call ‘an emotionally compelling cause’ that I can get my team to rally around. I really liked your earlier example about saving the lives of five million people. I got excited about that idea and I’m sure my people could as well. I guess that’s a great starting point. Do you have any advice about how a leader can actually develop his or her vision for the future?”

“I don’t mean to be trite, Peter, but it does take a lot of work. You need to spend days and weeks reflecting on what things are most meaningful to you and where GlobalView can make the greatest contribution and impact. Take the time to be silent and begin to cultivate the power of your imagination. Envision what you want this organization to look like five, ten and fifteen years from now. Awareness precedes change, so become aware of all the possibilities the future presents.

“Another tactic you can use to define your future vision is to analyze what keeps you up at night. What things are disturbing you and your customers. Go beyond simply satisfying their needs. Every good company does that. Strive to remove the *frustrations* from their lives. That’s the real secret to having a loyal core of satisfied customers. Begin to anticipate what things bother them and define your future vision around these. And then here’s the fundamental thing you need to do: once you have a clear focus for the future, constantly check it against the present state of operations. If your vision is an inspiring one, you will notice there is a gap. From this gap between where you now are and where you are going will emerge your strategy for change. Then exert your leadership influence to ensure that your blueprint for the future soon becomes the company’s reality. Remember, 90 percent of success lies in the implementation and execution. *One of the hallmarks of visionary leadership lies in the translation of positive intentions into tangible results.*”

“So visionary leaders are people of action. They constantly push themselves to find better and faster ways to merge the present with the future and realize their vision. Is that accurate?”

“Yes, it is. They understand the ancient Law of Diminishing Intent and make sure it doesn’t apply to them.”

“I’ve never heard of that one.”

“The Law of Diminishing Intent says that the longer you wait to implement a new idea or strategy, the less enthusiasm you will have for it. I think anyone who has worked in the corporate world knows the feeling of rushing out of a motivational seminar full of great ideas that will change every aspect of his or her life. But then the demands of the day compete for our attention and all our good intentions and personal promises for change get pushed to the wayside. And the longer we put them off, the lower the probability we will ever fulfill them. So the lesson is to act daily on your strategy for change before it dies a quick death, burying your future vision with it. As the German philosopher Johann von Goethe said

many years ago, ‘Whatever you can do and dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic.’ ”

“So simple and yet so profound, Julian,” I responded, trying to fully absorb these words of wisdom.

In the few hours I’d been with Julian this evening, I’d learned more about the craft of leadership than I had in all my previous years in business. Much of it really was common sense, but then, as Voltaire observed, “Common sense is anything but common.” I guess I’d just never taken the time to think deeply about the elements of leadership and how I could implement them in our company. My days were filled with so many seemingly immediate brush fires to tend to that I was neglecting the fundamentals of effective leadership.

Ironically, due to this neglect, things were going from bad to worse. It made me think about the story of the lighthouse-keeper that my grandfather used to tell me. The lighthouse-keeper had only a limited amount of oil to keep his beacon lit so that passing ships could avoid the rocky shore. One night, the elderly man who lived close by needed to borrow some oil to light his home, so the lighthouse-keeper gave him some. Another night, a traveler begged for some oil to light his lamp so he could continue his journey. The lighthouse-keeper also complied with this request and gave him the oil he needed. The next night, the lighthouse-keeper was awakened by a mother banging on his door. She prayed for some oil so that she could illuminate her home and feed her family. Again he agreed. Soon all his oil was gone and his beacon went out. Many ships ran aground and many lives were lost because the lighthouse-keeper forgot to focus on his priority. He neglected his primary duty and paid a high price.

I realized I was heading down the same path as the lighthouse-keeper. I was not focusing on the timeless principles of enlightened, effective and visionary leadership that Julian was sharing with me. Unless I simplified my leadership and stopped putting second

things first, I sensed that I too would face disaster and be required to pay a particularly high price.

For the first time all night, Julian appeared weary. Many hours had passed since we had met on the verandah and Julian had startled me with his miraculous hole in one. Though he had clearly discovered many of the secrets of personal renewal along with the leadership truths he shared with me, he was still human after all and was entitled to be tired.

“Julian. I am so grateful to you for what you are doing. God knows, I need the coaching. You have spent the entire evening passionately teaching me some very powerful lessons I know will lead to immediate improvements in my organization, once I have the courage to implement them. I could listen to you all night. You always were a great speaker and dynamic conversationalist. But I want to be fair to you. Why don’t we call it a night and meet first thing tomorrow morning in my office. I’ve kept the whole morning free in anticipation of us spending more time together. Let me drive you home now.”

“Thanks for the offer, Peter. I must admit that I’m beginning to feel a little sleepy. I know I look like a young man, but you know exactly how old I am. Though I feel more alive and vital now than I did when I was twenty, I still require a few hours of shut-eye to recharge the body and refresh the mind. If you don’t mind, I think I’ll walk back to where I’m staying. It’s not too far from here anyway.”

“But we’re in the middle of the country, Julian. There’s nothing but forest and farmland for miles,” I offered, with real concern.

“Don’t worry about me,” Julian replied, clearly intending to keep his resting place a well-guarded secret. “I’ll be just fine.”

“So I’ll see you tomorrow morning?”

“Actually I’m busy tomorrow morning. And for the next few days, I have other matters I must attend to.”

“You’re not looking for a new Ferrari?” I joked, fully aware of the reply I would elicit.

“No, Peter. My Ferrari days are over. I’ve become a simple man bearing the simple truths that our world needs to hear. I promised Yogi Boman and the other sages I would spend the rest of my life sharing their leadership wisdom with those who need to hear it. And that’s exactly what I intend to do. How about if we meet next Friday? That will give you some time to contemplate what I’ve shared with you and put some of the philosophy into practice.”

“Sure, Julian. If you want to meet next Friday, next Friday it will be. Same time, same place?”

“Actually, I’d like to meet you at a different location. Let’s meet at that small park behind City Hall. There’s something special there that I’d like you to see,” he said, raising the suspense level. “C’mon, let me walk you down to your car. There’s still a few quick leadership principles I’d like to leave you with.”

We stood up and started walking toward the steps that would lead us down to the spot where I had parked my car. Suddenly Julian stopped.

“Do they still have that big-screen TV in the clubhouse?”

“Yes, they do. Why do you ask?”

“Just follow me. I need to demonstrate a point,” he replied as he strolled across the darkened verandah and into the elegantly furnished clubhouse.

“Is this gentleman with you, Peter?” the manager asked me as we strode by, obviously uncomfortable with Julian’s attire. I nodded and continued behind Julian, who had just stepped into the empty lounge where the big-screen television sat. Soon we were both sitting in front of it watching the evening news.

“Trying to catch up on the day’s events?” I asked, unsure of my friend’s intentions.

“Not really,” came the reply as he pressed the button marked “radio” on the remote control he had picked up off the table in front of us. Now, the screen still showed the news, but the sound of the newscaster’s voice was replaced by a soothing piece of classical music from one of the local radio stations. The contrast proved striking. Over the screen flashed pictures of the violence that plagues so many of our cities and over the speakers came the serene strains of Vivaldi.

“Julian, what are you doing?”

“I’m sorry,” he replied smiling knowingly. “Is there something wrong?”

“Of course there is. The video is not in synch with the audio.”

“Just like too many leaders in our business world. They tell their customers they will do one thing and then do another. They preach fiscal restraint to their employees while they secretly negotiate their golden parachutes. They praise and show courtesy to a key executive when she is standing in front of them and then start condemning her the instant she leaves the room. They lack honor. They lack character. They lack integrity. *Their video is not in synch with their audio.*”

I had never thought about the power of integrity as a leadership philosophy. I was always of the “ends-justify-the-means” school of leadership and believed that sometimes one had to manipulate things to get the desired result. The more I reflected on it, the more I realized I had been acting as if the truth did not matter in our operations. Through my actions, I had been sending the message to others that little lies and deceits were okay. They were a normal and acceptable part of business. I would make up lame excuses as to why I could not meet with a manager facing a difficulty. I would break promises to key customers when the commitment interfered with a more pressing, and perhaps more rewarding, matter. Surely this influenced my people and the way they did business.

“Visionary leaders care less about appearing right than doing

right,” Julian added. “They don’t see their leadership as a popularity contest where they need to please all their stakeholders. They have a very clear future focus, one that takes into account the interests of all, and they steadily move toward it. Their vision serves as their lighthouse, illuminating the path they must follow amid the turbulence that surrounds them. Their leadership is grounded by deeply rooted principles, principles that only add further fuel to their purpose and their inner fire. What they do is aligned with what they say — they have character congruency. The leader with integrity will never let his lips betray his heart and will always let his principles guide his actions. Become a principled leader, Peter. Stand for something more than yourself. You will come to be respected. Maybe even revered.”

“What kind of principles are you speaking of?”

“Collectively I call them the Gandhi Factor because they were the virtues that governed Mahatma Gandhi’s life and leadership. They include honesty, industry, patience, perseverance, loyalty, courage and perhaps, highest of all, humility. And, by studying them and building them into your leadership practices, you will transform the effectiveness of your entire company. When your leadership becomes moral as well as visionary, it will be as if GlobalView finally has an anchor to keep it from drifting when the seas get rough. When you face a crisis, there will be far less panic and far more calm. People will begin to act more fearlessly and more courteously and more respectfully. The nineteenth-century Spanish philosopher Carlos Reyles made the point splendidly when he wrote, ‘Principles are to people what roots are to trees. Without roots, trees fall when they are thrashed with the winds. Without principles, people fall when they are shaken by the gales of existence.’ ”

“How do I bring the Gandhi Factor into our organization? I mean, things are pretty bad right now and no one is open to anything new. Most of us feel that we’ve faced enough change over the past year alone to last us for many lifetimes.”

“Be the model,” came the simple reply. “I read a while ago that Gandhi was once approached by a follower who asked the great man the secret to changing those around him. Gandhi thought for a moment and then replied, ‘you must be the change.’ And that’s really the secret to fostering character and integrity within GlobalView. *You need to be the change you desire. Don’t expect others to become anything more than you are willing to become yourself.* You need to be the model your followers will emulate. People do what people see. Seneca captured this point when he observed, ‘I will govern my life and thoughts as if the whole world were to see the one and read the other.’

“What a quote. That’s definitely one for the bulletin board in the lunchroom.”

“Or the one in the executive suite,” Julian replied firmly. “Visionary leaders become their own best ambassadors. They become shining examples of what they expect their people to be. Don’t push your people to work harder with fewer resources while you take an extra afternoon off to play golf. Don’t cut employee benefits while you, at the same time, refurbish your office. Don’t tell your people to buy into your vision of the future while you quietly plan your exit strategy. People are not stupid. They can tell whether you are honorable or not. Live your leadership. Become one of those fine leaders who has the character power to go from knowing what’s right to doing what’s right to *being* what’s right. Remember what Socrates said, ‘The first key to greatness is to be in reality what we appear to be.’

My mind began to rifle through all the weaknesses my own character revealed on the job. I regularly said I’d do one thing and then did another. I generally cared more about my own interests than my people’s. I had a fiery temper, I could be abrupt with my staff, I was self-centered, I was a very poor listener and often lacked sincerity. I thought no one really picked up on these flaws, but now I realized they did. For the first time in my entire executive career, I saw that my weaknesses as a leader were stimulating

weaknesses in our company. My lack of leadership was the source of the lack of followership. It was time for me to stop blaming other people and other events for the difficulties GlobalView faced. It was time for me to clean up my act. It was time for me to “be the change.”

“The imperfections of your character empower the imperfections of all those you lead,” continued Julian. “When you are rude to an employee, you implicitly give him permission to be rude to someone else. When you lie to someone, you condone her lying to someone else. When you are late for a meeting, you silently say that punctuality is not important. And all these messages powerfully shape the corporate culture that serves as the framework for everything you and your followers do.”

“How do I begin to be the model, Julian? I’ve practiced my current style of leadership for so long, I’m not sure where to start the change.”

“First I suggest you do a Leadership Audit. Go deep within your heart and reflect on your strengths, and even more importantly on your weaknesses, as a leader. Get to know yourself. As I said earlier, *awareness precedes change*. Then, as with all change initiatives, whether personal or organizational, start off small. I recently read about a local company that was experiencing challenges similar to those of GlobalView. Morale was low, productivity had plummeted, creativity had dried up and profits were nonexistent.

“The leader came up with a simple idea. Realizing the fact that her frontline people rarely saw her was contributing to the company’s poor performance, she began the simple discipline of taking regular walks around the shop floor. While doing so, she noticed that unlike her impeccable executive office upstairs, the factory was absolutely filthy. Garbage was strewn along the walkways, graffiti lined the walls and a thick coat of dirt clung to everything. Clearly, no one cared about the place where they worked.

“As the leader performed this regular walkabout, walking and talking with the workers, she would quietly pick up garbage, hoping that this symbolic gesture might somehow influence their thinking. Soon, the workers followed her example. While walking with her, they too would pick up the rubbish that had littered the floors and put it into the nearest trash can. Then, noticing how much better the place started to look, they asked the leader if they could paint the walls in the colors they wanted. She quickly agreed. Next came a wholesale clean-up effort, spearheaded by the factory workers, who now began to take great pride in their workplace. This, in turn, led to improved morale, improved productivity and a sense of ownership in the minds of all of the employees. They had come to take a genuine interest in their work and in the organization they served. This positive force of change spread through the entire company and it quickly returned to good health.”

“And it all started by a simple act of the leader.”

“Small acts can lead to great results, Peter. Never forget that your people are watching you. They are looking to you to see what is acceptable behavior and what isn't. So be the ideal of what you want your people to be. And borrow the strategy of that enlightened leader in the story. Get out of that palatial office suite you have barricaded yourself into and go talk to the people that really count — the men and women who look to you for leadership. Listen to them. Find out what makes them tick. Listen to their hopes and their dreams and their frustrations. Get a clear sense of what the environment is really like within your company. Most leaders haven't a clue. As Yogi Bhan once told me, ‘The fish is often the last to notice the water in which it swims.’”

With that sage advice, Julian shook my hand and began to head off into the darkness. Then he stopped and turned around.

“Oh, there's something I forgot to give you. It will provide you with something to think about until we meet again next week.” He reached into the long robe that he had refused to remove all evening, despite the intense heat. He pulled out an object I could

not see due to the darkness and gently pressed it into my hand. Then he quickly disappeared into the night.

As I got into my car, I looked at Julian's gift under the small light next to the rearview mirror. It was another wooden piece of the jigsaw puzzle. Like the one before it, there was a design on it. And just as before, there were words carved into the wood. They read, *Ritual 2: Manage by Mind, Lead by Heart.*

Chapter 5 Knowledge Summary • Julian's Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Ritual



The Essence

The Ritual of a Compelling Future Focus

The Wisdom

- Purpose is the most powerful motivator in the world
- The primary task of the leader is to get his people excited about a compelling cause that contributes to the lives of others
- Great leadership precedes great followership. Show employees you have their best interests in mind.
- Visionary leaders focus on liberating human talent and manifesting the potential of people
- Lead with integrity, character and courage

The Practices

- Ritualize wisdom so that your positive intentions translate into tangible results
- Communicate your compelling cause so it engages hearts
- Align your video with your audio

Quotable Quote

The ultimate task of the visionary leader is to dignify and honor the lives of the people he leads by allowing them to manifest their highest potential through the work they do.

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

RITUAL 2



Manage by Mind, Lead by Heart



The Ritual of Human Relations

It is the individual who is not interested in his fellow men who has the greatest difficulties in life and provides the greatest injury to others. It is from among such individuals that all human failures spring.

Alfred Adler

As I drove home, my mind buzzed with the ideas Julian had shared with me. They made so much sense that I wished I had discovered them on my own, many years earlier. It would have saved me so much aggravation and stress. If I had been applying this leadership wisdom, who knows where GlobalView might be? My mind then drifted off to what I wanted the company to look like in ten years. I imagined what it would be like if we were the biggest and best company in our field on the entire planet. I envisioned how many of our people I could help develop and how many people's lives we all could touch. A smile came to my face.

It felt good to be dreaming again. Jonas Salk once said, "I've had dreams and I've had nightmares. I've overcome my nightmares because of my dreams." All the successful business-people I had ever known had been dreamers. They had discovered their emotionally compelling cause through deep contemplation and had the courage to let it consume them. When we were hungry young entrepreneurs trying to build GlobalView, I would sit quietly for hours, doing nothing but thinking big thoughts about what our future might bring. But as the business grew, so did the headaches and my quiet moments became few and far between. This meeting with Julian, a man who had clearly experienced his own transformation, would change me forever. I knew I had the makings of a visionary leader. I just needed to learn what to do, and the remarkable leadership system Julian was sharing with me was

showing me. I felt great hope for the future and the cloud of uncertainty began to lift. I felt inspired, renewed and recharged.

That night, I ripped a sheet of paper off the legal pad that sat on the desk in my den. Though it was well past 2:00 A.M., I began to write down all I had learned. I had been exposed to the First Ritual of Visionary Leaders: Link Paycheck to Purpose and the many timeless leadership truths that surrounded that great lesson. Julian had also given me a glimpse of the second of the eight rituals, a ritual that appeared to require me to Manage by Mind, Lead by Heart. And I knew there was still so much to come.

After committing what I had learned to paper, I began to list ways I could implement this knowledge. After all, Julian did warn me of what he called the Performance Gap, the theory that problems in leadership often arise when leaders fail to translate their good intentions into actions. Even from my own experience in the business world I knew that most ineffectiveness stems from the fact that most people do not have the self-discipline to do what they know they should do, when they have to do it. They put off doing the important things in business and in life in favor of the easy and immediate things. And then one day, late in their lives, these people wake up and realize what they could have done with their lives. They regret all the missed opportunities and lost chances. But, sadly, by then it's too late. It's like the saying, "If youth only knew. If age only could."

I thought deeply about my vision of GlobalView's future. I really went deep into my heart and asked myself where we could make the greatest impact as a company. I reflected on how I would start communicating to my people the vision that was taking form and how I would show them that by helping me fulfill my dream, they would fulfill theirs. I contemplated how my new vision for our future would make a difference in people's lives and how I could show my people that the work they did really mattered.

Then my mind began to focus on ways I could truly "be a liberator," to use Julian's words. To start seeing my role as a leader

in terms of being a liberator and not a limiter of people's highest talents. I had to stop micromanaging and let people have more responsibility for their results. I had to start specifying goals and not methods so people could bring more creativity and ingenuity to their work. I had to let them develop as people on the job and challenge them more. I needed to let people do the jobs they were capable of doing, without my constant monitoring and supervision. And I had to bring back a sense of character and integrity to my leadership.

No more yelling and screaming. No more talking behind people's backs or keeping secrets. No more manipulating and arm-twisting. Sure I had to be strong and tough when the circumstances required. That went without saying. But I also had "to stand for something," as Julian had said. I needed to govern myself and my leadership by the time-honored principles he had mentioned. The men and women of GlobalView deserved no less.

The days leading up to my next meeting with Julian whizzed by. I was so eager to meet him, I could hardly sleep at night. My energy level soared while the wisdom he had learned in the Himalayas became a part of my life. I cannot really explain why. I guess it was similar to the way parents feel when they have their first child. There is a newfound sense of excitement, passion and purpose all mixed into one sentiment. You do not want to miss a moment of the experience and feel grateful that it has finally happened to you.

In the few days of applying the truths Julian had taught me, noticeable improvements began to take place within the company. I became more open, honest and interested. I started to take the ideas and interests of others into account. I started to spread my sense of excitement around the company and communicate a much grander vision for the future of GlobalView. And I began to care about the people I worked alongside. Even my executive assistant, Arielle, a no-nonsense woman who rarely let down her guard around me, joked that I must have been replaced by "an alien clone from a kinder, wiser colony." "No matter what has happened, Mr.

Franklin,” she said in a slightly more serious tone, “everyone really likes the changes you are making and hopes that you will keep moving forward. And no one can believe the way you set fire to the old mission statement in the middle of the parking lot yesterday morning. It will go down in GlobalView history, that’s for sure!”

Finally, Friday came. As I left our headquarters and drove down to the park behind City Hall where Julian had instructed me to meet him, my fingers toyed with the second piece of the puzzle Julian had given me. Ritual 2: Manage by Mind, Lead by Heart. ‘What exactly did that mean?’ I wondered. So far Julian had offered me some great information. It was powerful yet practical. But this stuff about “leading by the heart” concerned me a little. I hoped Julian was not going soft on me.

Just as he had promised, Julian was waiting for me in the park. And although it was another scorching summer’s day, he again wore the attire of the traditional monks whose ageless knowledge had changed his life. But in a strange twist, today he also wore a fashionable pair of dark sunglasses, the kind that rock stars and movie actors favored. The contrast was striking.

“I like the shades, Julian,” I said as I patted him on the shoulder, glad to see my friend again.

“I thought you’d like them. I bought them from a young street vendor the other day. He told me I needed to update my look. So I did,” he laughed. “I needed them anyway, to protect my eyes from that sun,” he added, looking up into the sky for a second.

“Wouldn’t want to lose your vision, right?” I replied, ever the model student.

“Nicely said, Peter. Sounds like you’ve been doing some thinking.”

“True. Actually, I’ve taken your advice and begun to do more than just think about the leadership wisdom you have given me — I’ve started to act on it.”

“Wonderful! I knew I didn’t make a mistake coming to see you. I knew you would put the priceless information the sages bestowed on me to good use. And as the sages themselves loved to say, ‘When the student is ready, the teacher appears.’ ”

“And not a day too early, Julian. Things were getting insane at the company. Now I realize that. And yet, in just a few days of applying the lessons you’ve shared with me so far, I’ve noticed some very positive improvements,” I said, pleased to inform him of our progress. “I know it’s still early and real change takes time but things are starting to happen. I’ve shared your leadership wisdom with everyone on my management team and every supervisor in the company. I’ve asked them to, in turn, pass along the lessons I’ve learned to every other person who works here so we can all grow wiser together. It’s like you told me earlier, leadership is not really about position or title but about action. And anyone in the company, from my senior vice-president of operations to the shop steward to the young kid who works in the mail room can display leadership. I now understand that every single employee at GlobalView must receive leadership training if we really want to be a world-class organization. Everyone must know what it means to be a visionary leader and then bring this knowledge to bear on the particular job that he or she does. Every one of us must strive to show leadership at work.”

“Make sure you share your success stories with me as they come. I know there will be many,” said Julian.

“Well actually, I already have one I can mention. After our meeting at the golf club last week, I went home and wrote out a wish list of things I needed to change in my leadership. I did a Leadership Audit, as you suggested. I noted as many weaknesses as I could think of and then came up with an action strategy and a time line by which I would eliminate each one. Once I did that, I then had a little personal brainstorming session where I came up with hundreds of innovative ways I could implement the points you made when we last met. One of the ideas that came to me was to

give all my employees a one-thousand-dollar annual budget that they could spend on enhancing their professional and personal effectiveness. You told me I had a duty to nurture the growth of my people on the job and to really help them get the best out of themselves. So I decided to take this duty seriously and really encourage personal development. You should have seen how happy they were when they heard about this initiative. I know it will cost a fair amount of money, but I really see it as an investment rather than as an expense. As you suggested, Julian, employees who feel superb about themselves are certain to produce superb results.”

“So what have they started to do with the money?”

“Well, the program is just getting off the ground, but members of a few of our teams have already received their checks. From what I’ve heard, some of them are buying the planning tools they always felt they needed to effectively manage their schedules and their time. Others are spending their budgets on motivational books and educational audiocassette programs they can listen to in their cars on the way to work. And one man used part of his budget in a very private way. He is quite short and had difficulty performing his work in our manufacturing facility because it required him to continually reach up to high places. But he was too embarrassed to tell his supervisor. He thought everyone would laugh. Once he had his own budget to spend in any way that would enhance his on-the-job effectiveness, he went out and bought a simple footstool. His supervisor told me his productivity has doubled and he has never seen the man happier.”

“You are starting to experience the power of the truths I discovered in the Himalayas. The reason they have stood the test of time is pretty simple. Because they work.”

“I’ll tell you another thing I’ve started doing since you exposed me to your leadership wisdom, Julian.”

“What’s that?”

“I’ve started taking a lot more risks as a leader. I’ve begun to

see myself as an innovator and catalyst for new ideas. If I'm not constantly stretching my mind and exploring new pathways of thought, how can I expect my people to do the same? I'm reading again. I'm making the time to think again. And I've even started taking a daily cruise around the office to get to know as many people as I can, like that leader you told me about. The fish is often the last to notice the water in which it swims, you know."

Julian smiled, clearly pleased at my progress, and said, "Risk taking is a very powerful success skill. Yet, most people have never cultivated this important leadership discipline. Most of us never remove our security blankets and venture into the zone of the unknown. Yogi Raman put it this way, 'The farther you go out on a limb, the easier it is to fall. But then again, out on the limb is where all the fruit is.' Visionary leaders take chances. They are constantly trying new things. And that becomes a habit. As Seneca said so many years ago, 'It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult.' "

"I'll tell you another chance that I'm taking to clean the cobwebs out of our organization. I read about a top-performing company in Singapore that had a very unusual practice. Every other Friday afternoon, they would shut down the factory for two hours. Then, all the different teams would go off and discuss the latest management bestseller. It not only allowed them to cement relationships with their teammates and break out of their routines, it kept them abreast of the cutting-edge ideas on personal and organizational excellence."

"Tremendous concept," Julian replied as he sat down on the grass in a shaded spot.

"I've instituted the same practice at GlobalView. My managers are really excited about it. They've always complained they never have enough time to read the best business books and keep up with the current management trends. Now they'll be getting paid to do so," I noted proudly.

“Believe me,” said Julian. “In the long run, this idea will save you money. The ineffectiveness that arises in most companies from outdated thinking and inefficient systems that continue to exist simply because of tradition is extremely costly over the long run. Even deadly. What you are doing might be unorthodox. But it is also smart. Putting your people first is the wisest leadership lesson you will ever learn. Which brings me to the next element of Yogi Raman’s ancient system, the Second Ritual of Visionary Leaders: Manage by Mind, Lead by Heart.”

“I was wondering what this one is all about.”

“This is the ritual of human relations and communication competency. Every truly visionary leader has mastered the practice of connecting deeply to his followers. He has refined the art of clarifying his vision for the benefit of his people in a way that fully engages them and stirs them into action. Through their people skills and talents as effective communicators, such leaders touch the hearts of their team and earn long-term loyalty. Simply put, *When you enrich the relationship, you enhance the leadership.*”

“Are relationships really that important? I mean I know a ton of leaders who couldn’t care less about connecting with their people. They see their missions very simply: to create profit and value for the shareholder. Everything else is irrelevant.”

“These so-called leaders are not visionary leaders and, believe me, there is a big difference. Visionary leaders are not people who squeeze as much profit out of a company in as short a period as possible before they bail out and head for an early retirement in the Bahamas, leaving their company in a terrible mess. While short-term profits are important to visionary leaders, they are constantly thinking long-term. They understand that by taking the time to allow their people to develop the fullness of their potential and put strong systems in place, upon which the company can build, massive profits are guaranteed. The leaders you speak of are like sprinters running a marathon. They go for broke in the first mile,

but in doing so have nothing left for the rest of the run. Ultimately, they are the biggest losers.

“You see, Peter, anyone can go into a company and drive up profits by relentlessly driving down his or her people. But soon, the people will grow tired and the equipment will break, because neither has been properly cared for. Remember, the chickens always come home to roost. You just can’t avoid the natural laws of life.”

“Point well taken, Julian. So what do I need to do to put Ritual 2 into practice?”

“I’m about to show you,” he replied as he glanced at an elderly couple sitting under a nearby tree, giggling like a couple of school kids as they enjoyed their picnic. “See those two over there? I’ve been observing them for the past few weeks. Sometimes I’ve watched them feed the ducks in that pond over there. Sometimes I’ve watched them ride their bicycles around the park. Sometimes I’ve even overheard their conversations as I relaxed here on the grass,” Julian admitted, with apparent embarrassment. “I’ll tell you one thing for sure. Those two have a wonderful relationship.”

“I wonder how long they’ve been married? They really look like they’re in love.”

“Forty-three years from what I’ve overheard,” replied Julian. “Last week they celebrated their anniversary right here in this wonderful park. They shared a huge cake with a bunch of friends over there. Quite a lively party they had,” he said, pointing over to a clearing dotted with five picnic tables and bright red flowers.

“Forty-three years. That’s pretty amazing in this day and age.”

“It’s not hard to see how they’ve managed to stay together so long,” Julian said as he took off his sunglasses and wiped the perspiration from his face. “Not surprisingly, they follow the timeless human relations principles that Yogi Bhanu told me visionary leaders applied to foster the respect of their followers and to build lasting trust. And if there’s one thing I’ve learned, a world-class organization is also a high-trust organization. Trust is one of

the ageless elements of every peak-performing company. If your people don't trust you, their managers and their co-workers, there is no way they are going to go the extra mile to give you their best efforts. Without trust, there is no commitment. And without commitment, there's no company."

"So what kinds of things have you observed this couple doing?" I asked with keen interest.

"Four things in particular, Peter: promise-keeping, aggressive listening, being consistently compassionate and, finally, and perhaps most importantly, truth-telling."

"Those are the secrets to their incredible relationship?"

"Yogi Raman taught me that those are the secrets to every great relationship. He told me that anyone who desires to be a visionary leader, one who inspires his or her people to achieve extraordinary things, must make these four practices an integral part of his or her leadership style. They are the cornerstones of effective human relations. They will help you perform Ritual 2 on a daily basis."

"They seem so simple. Can they really make the impact on my team that you are suggesting?"

"That's the problem with many of the enduring leadership truths. They appear to be so simple and so obvious that everyone puts off applying them. They are not trendy, so people shove them aside in favor of strategies that are more flashy and sensational. Let me ask you, Peter, are you doing these four things every day?"

"Uh, no."

"Let's deal with the first one at least. Do you keep the majority of the promises you make?"

I immediately knew the answer to this question. I would often break promises I had made. I would tell my employees I was always available to meet with them, but, when someone actually had a problem that he or she wished to discuss with me, I found convenient ways to get out of the meeting. Other times, I'd tell a

key supervisor that she deserved to have the increased responsibilities she'd been asking for. But then I'd neglect to follow through and ensure she got what she wanted. I was a master of broken promises.

“Every promise you break, no matter how small and seemingly inconsequential, steadily chips away at your character,” Julian said to break the silence. “Each time you don't return a phone call when you said you would or miss a meeting you promised to attend, you erode trust. Each time you don't honor a commitment, you chip away at the bonds between you and the people you have the privilege to lead. As Yogi Bhan used to say, *‘Every time you avoid doing right, you fuel the habit of doing wrong.’*”

“And those elderly lovebirds keep their promises to each other?” I wondered aloud.

“They sure do. When the husband says he'll meet his wife at noon for lunch over at that hot-dog stand, you can bet he'll be right on time. When the wife says that she'd like to take their bicycles out for a spin on a particular day, sure enough, their van pulls up into the parking lot and the husband wheels out the bikes. You see, Peter, when people keep their promises, they breed great loyalty. The wife knows she can count on her husband and he knows he can count on her. And this breeds consistency, an important attribute of high-quality human relations. The husband and wife know what to expect of each other. They can rely upon each other. And that, in turn, breeds trust. Never get behind on your promises. I know you'll be delighted with the results.”

“You know, Julian, you're the first person to show me the connection between promise-keeping and human relations. I know what you are saying is true. For me to really be the leader I've now committed myself to being, I must keep the promises I make to others and be a person they can truly count on. I need to earn the trust of my people and gain their loyalty. From today onward, I will be a man of my word. I'll do what I say I will do. I promise.”

Julian grinned. “I’ll hold you to that one, my friend.”

The sun was still blazing as he stood up and started walking. It was remarkable how agile Julian was despite his advancing years. His youthful face carried a smile, as he strode around the park, continuing his discourse on Ritual 2 and the power of leading from the heart and enriching human relationships.

“The second discipline you must master to make Ritual 2 a part of your leadership style is aggressive listening. *Visionary leaders capture the hearts of their people by deeply listening to them.* Most leaders believe that to lead effectively, they need to do most of the talking. They have been brainwashed into believing that leaders speak and followers listen. Visionary leaders know that another of the human hungers is the hunger to feel understood. Everyone has a deep need to have a voice and to have that voice considered. So visionary leaders become excellent listeners. The irony is that in doing so, they become known as superb communicators.”

“Let me get this right, Julian. Are you actually telling me that by listening more effectively, I’ll be able to communicate my messages more effectively? I mean, how could that be possible?” I asked.

“You want your people to trust you, right?”

“Right.”

“You want your people to be loyal to you and GlobalView, right?”

“Right.”

“Then remember this: listening to what others have to say is a mark of respect. It shows you value your people and believe in them. What I’m really saying is that you must show empathy to them. You must identify with their perspectives. You must *invest yourself* in the person communicating with you. You need to truly get behind their eyeballs and discover what they are thinking. Only by doing so will you understand them and will they feel understood.

And the person who feels understood is the person who listens when it's your turn to speak. Remember, Peter, one of the greatest gifts you can ever give anyone is giving them 100 percent of your attention. *Listening truly is the highest compliment.*"

"I've discovered that I'm not a great listener," I interrupted. "The more I think about it, the more I realize my poor listening habits must really turn off the people I work with. By not paying attention to what they say and feel, I'm really telling them that I don't care, that what they say is not really important to me. It now seems so obvious. And I'll bet that's one of the root causes of our low morale and low-trust environment. I guess I just never thought that excellent listening skills were that big a deal."

"They are," Julian replied swiftly. "Let's see how poor they are. Let's do a quick audit."

"Must we?"

"Like I said before, Peter, awareness precedes change. Before you can improve your leadership skills, you must know precisely which skills need to be improved. *An unknown weakness can never be transformed into a strength.* So let me ask you, do you frequently interrupt others?"

"Guilty."

"Do you finish other people's sentences for them?"

"Once in a while," I lied.

"Are you rehearsing your response while the other person is speaking?"

"Maybe," I said defensively.

"Well, then, we both know you need to do some serious work in the listening department. If you truly want to master Ritual 2 and capture people's hearts, you must stop listening with the intent to respond. Instead, *listen with the intent to understand.*"

"Wow, that's a powerful way of expressing it, Julian. But let me

ask you, if effective listening is such an important leadership discipline, why do so few of us do it?”

“Great question. The first reason is that human beings are visual creatures. Eighty-three percent of our sensory input comes through our eyes so we often neglect much of what we hear. Here’s an example. You’re invited to a cocktail party. You stroll in and are immediately introduced to someone. You begin chatting with that person and, after a few minutes, you realize you have forgotten something.”

“To get a drink?” I quipped playfully.

“No, the person’s name.”

“Happens to me all the time.”

“And not just to you. More than 90 percent of businesspeople forget the name of the person they’ve been introduced to eight seconds after they’ve heard it. The reason is that as soon as we meet someone new, our brains start processing all the visual and tactile information such as height, weight, gender, strength of handshake and facial expression. In the process, the name escapes our attention.

“So we need to start paying more attention to what we hear,” Julian continued. “The second reason most leaders are not excellent listeners is that human beings possess the ability to listen at a rate of about 500 words per minute, yet we speak at the much slower rate of 100 to 125 words per minute. With all that space left to fill, our minds tend to wander.”

“Interesting. To be honest, I find my mind constantly drifts off when I should be listening to others. I’ll be in a meeting and rather than listening to the speaker, my mind will rifle through all the urgent things that need to be done. Even when I’m talking to someone one on one, I start to daydream. Any ideas about how I can begin to focus on listening to and understanding the person speaking?”

“Excellent listening is a habit that takes a little time and practice. But believe me, it is worth the investment. I heard recently that listening can even improve your health by reducing your blood pressure, moderating your heartbeat and making you feel calmer. Having said that, the goal is to become ‘an aggressive listener,’ to use the term that Yogi Bhanu coined. I know it sounds like a contradiction in terms, but it’s not.

“Get excited about being a great listener, get passionate about understanding your people. As to how you do this, try these simple ideas. First, cultivate the skill of asking superb, open-ended questions of your employees and then really listen to the responses. One leader at a high-performing company came up with a simple yet effective idea to make the process even better. He recruited employees from throughout the organization and asked them for their detailed, practical suggestions about how to improve the company. This initiative had two immediate benefits. The first was that the employees felt they were being listened to, which further enhanced morale and environmental trust. The second benefit was that management received free advice about how to streamline and enhance the operation from the people who best knew its weaknesses rather than from an expensive outside consultant. Management then took the best suggestions and scientifically tested them against solid performance measures such as sales revenue, customer service complaints and quality standards to see which ones actually worked. By listening to its people, that company became a market leader.”

“Okay, I’m with you on this one,” I replied. “Can you tell me more about these ‘open-ended’ questions you mentioned?”

“An open-ended question like, ‘What things can I do to help you do your job better’ will elicit a very different response than a closed question such as, ‘If I bought you a new computer, it would help you, wouldn’t it?’ Then develop a series of what I call ‘head-snappers.’ These are powerful questions designed to get your people to open up and connect with you.”

“Any examples?”

“ ‘What has been your greatest achievement on the job?’, ‘What are you happiest doing?’, ‘What three things could we do to make this company more successful?’, ‘What excites or motivates you?’ and ‘What would you do if you were leading this company?’ are all good ones. But I suggest that you take some time to come up with your own. My point is that you must become good at asking questions. And just in case you think I’m telling you to become a wallflower, never forget that the person asking the questions is actually leading the conversation.”

“Really?”

“Really. The second strategy I suggest you apply to develop more aggressive listening skills is to briefly summarize and paraphrase what you have heard. By doing so, you will ensure that you have understood the other person’s message and that she feels understood.”

“Exactly how do I summarize and paraphrase?”

“Develop expressions such as, ‘Just to make sure I understand you properly, are you saying...?’ Believe me, Peter, questions like that will work magic in terms of human relations and your competency as a communicator. Another powerful strategy is to take notes. Imagine what your people will think when they see you pull out a pad of paper and a pen and jot down notes as they speak. This simple gesture will send them the message that you are serious about taking them seriously. And then finally, be sincere. The suggestions I’ve offered you are not tricks and tactics designed to manipulate people. They are aids to help you connect with your followers. But if you are not genuinely concerned, they will sense it and the trust and respect you seek will never flow.”

“And I suppose that couple over there listen to each other?”

“Most definitely. When the wife speaks, the husband is engaged and attentive. When the husband speaks, the wife summarizes and paraphrases to show him she identifies with what he is saying. I’m

not suggesting that I spend my days listening to the private conversations of these two fine people, but I've heard enough to know they have mastered the art of excellent listening. And so should you."

"Okay. I'm sold on the concept. Like all the other leadership wisdom you've shared with me, it makes so much sense. Just to make sure I understand you properly, are you saying that I should practice Ritual 2, leading from the heart, by keeping my promises and becoming an aggressive listener?"

Julian beamed, knowing that I had just put his "summarize and paraphrase" strategy into play. Then he patted me on the back and said, "C'mon, let's get a hot dog."

"You still eat hot dogs?" I asked in surprise. After all, Julian had attributed much of his physical transformation to the healthful diet the sages had taught him while he was living in the Himalayas.

"It's for you, my friend. You must be hungry," he said with concern.

As we continued to walk, Julian revealed another of the timeless truths about human relations that he promised would foster greater respect, loyalty and commitment.

"Visionary leaders are consistently compassionate. They constantly show kindness to their team and think about ways to show their concern is sincere. You see, Peter, another of the human hungers is the need to be cherished. To quote the eminent Harvard psychologist, William James, 'The deepest principle of human nature is the craving to be appreciated.' It doesn't matter who you are — whether you are a young schoolgirl or the toughest factory worker — every single person on this planet has a burning desire to be treated well. The best leaders know this and fulfill that need by being consistently compassionate."

"What exactly does being 'consistently compassionate' involve?"

“It’s all about letting your humanity shine at work. It’s about showing people courtesy, consideration and respect, every single day of the work week. And courtesy is incredibly important in business. Peter Drucker once noted that manners are the lubricant of an organization. So be kind to the people you lead. Respect and cherish them. I think Goethe captured it perfectly when he said, ‘Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and help them become what they are capable of being.’ That, my friend, is one of the great secrets of leadership success.”

“But, if you don’t mind me saying, Julian, if I were constantly kind to my people, wouldn’t I look soft? I’ve always heard the best leaders are the tough ones.”

Julian was silent as he bought me a thick hot dog and then watched me slather mustard and relish over it. I sensed he knew my question was important and wanted to gather his thoughts.

“*Visionary leaders blend humanity with courage,*” came the poetic reply. “All too often, leaders are not real.”

“What do you mean?” I asked as I munched on my lunch.

“Many leaders share the belief you just expressed. They have been told that effective leaders are tough, autocratic leaders. They feel that being nice isn’t part of their job description and that leaders shouldn’t appear too kind. And, therefore, even though the majority are decent people, they hide their true selves and always act tough, sending waves of fear through their organizations. The sad thing is that a dictatorial style of leadership inevitably leads to only two outcomes: people become afraid or they begin to rebel. Either way, the company is soon surpassed by its competitors. Florence Nightingale hit the nail on the head when she mused, ‘How very little can be done under the spirit of fear.’”

Julian paused and then added, “I’m not saying that visionary leaders are not strong. They are tough when the circumstances call for it. Actually, they are the strongest of all leaders because it requires great courage to maintain fidelity to one’s vision and

constantly do what's right. But they never neglect their people's interests. No matter how busy they get, they always take the time to show they care. They don't mind showing they are human. And that vulnerability powerfully connects them to their followers and builds lasting bonds.

“What I'm asking you to do, Peter, if you truly are committed to making GlobalView a world-class operation, is to forget about all those clever new management fads that are popping up in business journals and focus on the timeless truths of leadership. One of the greatest of these is that what people really want is a leader who values and cherishes them as people. They want a leader who has the vision to give them a glimpse of a compelling cause they can strive toward so that their daily work becomes meaningful. Above all, they seek a leader who is kind.”

“So how do I go about being ‘consistently compassionate?’ ”

“Just look at those two lovebirds,” came the reply, as Julian pointed to the elderly couple, just as the husband had reached into the picnic basket and pulled out a large straw hat to protect his bride from the hot sun. “That man constantly performs what Yogi Berman called ‘*minor acts of caring.*’ He always looks for ways to show his wife he is concerned for her welfare. Sometimes he offers her shade by holding up an umbrella. Other times he pours her a cold drink from the canteen. A couple of weeks ago, when it started to rain heavily, I actually saw him lift her over a large puddle in an effort to keep her dry.”

“What are you suggesting, Julian? You can't be telling me that I should be getting cold drinks for my people or lifting them up over the puddles that regularly flood our parking lot?” I remarked, tongue in cheek.

“Of course not. You know me better than that. Even when I was that hard-driving, fast-living lawyer, I always had my feet firmly planted in the real world. What I'm saying is look for ways to spread ‘minor acts of caring’ through your entire organization. Like

I said earlier, be the model. The leader teaches his followers what behavior is acceptable by his or her own behavior. Look for small ways to show you care.”

“Such as?”

“Such as sending a handwritten thank-you card to an employee who has done a great job. One CEO I knew personally signed a Christmas card to every one of his 10,000 employees. He would start in January in order to be sure he would get them all done in time for the following December, writing a few each day. Sure it took a few minutes from his busy schedule. But you can’t tell me it didn’t make an impact on his people. Or perhaps you might start answering your own phone — as Sam Walton did. Why not stroll down the hallways and talk to your people, being truly interested when you ask, ‘How’s the family?’ Paul Allaire, as the head of Xerox, would have a photographer photograph him with one of his top producers and then offer the portrait to the salesperson as a keepsake for a job well done. These small acts of kindness make a profound statement. They add up over time and show your people you are committed to them. They show you care. Give more of yourself to those you lead. Albert Einstein said wisely, ‘Many times I realize how much of my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of my fellow men and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received.’ ”

“I agree, Julian. Sure I’m busy, but I know I could do at least a few of these things to make a deeper connection with the men and women of my organization. You are saying that small actions can have big consequences, right?”

“Exactly. In 1963, meteorologist Edward Lorenz postulated a simple theory: the flapping of a butterfly’s wings in Singapore could affect a hurricane in North Carolina. To the amazement of everyone in the meteorological community, Lorenz showed that it could, turning upside down the long-held view that the universe was a large machine in which causes matched effects. Lorenz’s postulation became known as the Butterfly Effect and stands as a

reminder of the natural principle that small actions can have big consequences. Minor acts of caring are no different, Peter. A personal phone call when one of your employees becomes a new parent or a quick visit with a worker who is facing a challenge makes a world of difference in terms of the way people see you. Remember, you can't fax a handshake."

"You mentioned a fourth discipline I could use to ensure that I practice Ritual 2 and truly lead from the heart. What was it?"

"After keeping your promises, listening aggressively, and being consistently compassionate, the final cornerstone of human relations and communications competency is truth-telling. The best leaders, those who win the hearts and minds of those they lead, are open and honest. Actually, they are *fanatically honest* and, by being so, they earn everyone's trust. They also share information with everyone and make it one of their highest priorities to keep their people informed. They know that the long-term success of their leadership depends upon their information sharing and truth-telling in all circumstances."

"And what do you mean when you say the best leaders are 'open?'"

"To truly win people's support and deep commitment to your future vision, you must communicate as much key information as possible to them. The more they know about what you are doing, the more they'll invest in where you are going. Just as with aggressive listening, being open and sharing ideas with people is a mark of respect. Having the decency to quickly and accurately inform them of the things that will affect them shows them that they are important. It shows them you value them. And when you constantly keep the lines of communication open, your employees will begin to value you as a leader, so much so that they will not want to let you down. That's when the magic starts."

"What do you mean?"

"Yogi Raman believed the highest level a visionary leader can

attain in terms of the quality of the relationship she has with her people comes when they believe so deeply in her leadership that they will do almost anything not to let her down. And when that happens, all things become possible within that organization.”

I knew I fell far short of the model leadership Julian spoke of. I belonged to the school that believed the less employees knew about what was going on within the company the better. Anything other than the information they needed to do their specific jobs was none of their business. But what Julian said was true. People who were fully informed would soon understand the rationale for my decisions. They would have greater confidence in my leadership because they would know the context from which I was acting. And they would certainly feel a greater sense of ownership in the company. What Julian was telling me was not just the right thing to do. It was the smart thing to do.

“Being open and truthful also means that you take care of the little issues and skirmishes that come up every day before they escalate into full-blown wars,” Julian added.

“You’ve lost me again.”

“Here’s an example. One well-known company suffered from major problems in morale when a key executive was let go. Rumors that the former executive’s division was in trouble began to run rampant and other employees began to fear they would lose their own jobs. Fortunately, the company’s president was a visionary leader. Because he understood the importance of openness and honesty, he immediately called a meeting to explain exactly what had happened. The executive had only been hired on a short-term basis to improve the productivity and effectiveness of the division he was charged to lead. Since the executive fulfilled his mandate and the division was again performing well, the president decided that there was simply no need to renew his contract. Though disappointed, the executive knew from the outset that this was a short-term post and left on good terms. By being totally candid with

his people and keeping them in the loop, the president actually turned a negative into a positive.”

“How so?”

“Because he helped them to see the executive’s departure in a better light. He made them realize that it was actually a reason to celebrate because it meant that a division that had once performed poorly was now in fine shape, running smoothly without the benefit of an outside turnaround specialist. By being open with his people, the president showed them a more positive reality and nipped the problem in the bud. Don’t let issues build. Explain the reasons behind your decisions and be transparent with your people. That’s what leadership is all about, my friend. As I said before, you need to help define reality for your people and keeping them informed will greatly assist you in doing that. Problems won’t grow and misunderstandings won’t fester. Now, if you don’t mind, I must leave you. There’s something I must do. It’s been a great day. Thanks for being such a good student.”

“Where are you rushing off to?” I asked.

“I’m going to watch the stars,” came the mysterious reply.

“What do you mean?”

“I’ll tell you about it later, when you’re ready for it. I’ve got to run.”

What was it about Julian and the stars? During our meeting at the golf club, I remember him looking up at one of the stars and muttering a few words to himself. Now he was dashing off to do more of the same thing. Frankly, it sounded a little flaky, especially for Julian. After all, in his previous incarnation, this guy had been a corporate superstar. He had graduated at the top of his class at Harvard Law School and had been one of the finest lawyers in the entire country. Now he was running around in monk’s robes and stargazing. I never could figure Julian out. I guess that was part of his charm.

“But wait, Julian,” I replied anxiously. “Don’t I get another piece of the puzzle? And when can we meet again? You can’t leave me hanging like this. I really want to master the whole of Yogi Raman’s leadership formula. It’s already working its miracles within GlobalView.”

“Here, take this,” he said, handing me a ticket for a court-side seat at the next home game of the Skyjumpers, our local professional basketball team.

“I don’t get it, Julian. What’s this for?”

“We’ll meet at the game. There’s something very special I need to show you there. And it’ll give me a chance to buy you another hot dog. You inhaled the one I bought you for lunch. Lucky I didn’t lose a finger!” he quipped.

With that, he was gone. I started walking back to my car, which I had left at the other end of the park. Julian had offered me so many ideas to improve my company that I tingled with excitement. I couldn’t wait to put Ritual 2 and all its components into practice. I felt hopeful for the future and deeply grateful that this sage man had returned to share his knowledge with me. As I drew closer to my car, I saw something tucked under the windshield wiper.

‘Oh no, not another parking ticket. I’ve already had three this week,’ I thought to myself.

But I soon realized it was not a ticket. Rather, it was an envelope with the letters “J.M.” elegantly embossed upon it. This was Julian’s personal stationery from the old days. I grabbed it from under the wiper and peeked inside, unsure what surprise it held. I wasn’t disappointed.

It was the third piece of the jigsaw puzzle that I had been hoping for. Like the others, this wooden piece had some words carved on it. I now knew they would offer me a clue to the third ritual of the ancient leadership system Julian had discovered on his adventure to the Himalayas. The words read simply, *Ritual 3: Reward Routinely, Recognize Relentlessly.*

Chapter 6 Knowledge Summary • Julian's Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Ritual



The Essence

The Ritual of Human Relations

The Wisdom

- Every visionary leader deeply connects with his followers
- One of the deepest of all human hungers is the need to be cherished and understood
- Let your humanity shine at work and treat people with courtesy and kindness

The Practices

- Promise-keeping
- Aggressive listening™
- Being consistently compassionate
- Truth-telling

Quotable Quote

Every visionary leader has mastered the practice of deeply connecting to his followers. He has refined the art of clarifying his vision for the benefit of his people in a way that fully engages and stirs them into action. Through their people skills and talents as effective communicators, visionary leaders touch the hearts of their team and earn long-term loyalty. Simply put, when you enrich the relationship, you enhance the leadership.

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

RITUAL 3



**Reward Routinely,
Recognize Relentlessly**



The Ritual of Team Unity

Go to the people,

Live among them.

Learn from them.

Love them.

Start with what they know,

Build on what they have.

But of the best leaders,

When their task is accomplished,

Their work is done,

The people will remark,

“We have done it ourselves.”

Ancient Eastern saying

When I was a kid, my dad would always tell me that we have two ears and one mouth for a reason: to listen twice as much as we speak. Well, for the first time in my entire career, I began to put that lesson into practice. The days following my meeting with Julian in the park brought changes that were nothing short of miraculous. I knew the lessons he had been teaching me had stood the test of time and were sound in nature. But I could not have imagined the impact they would have on my people.

Although I hadn't come close to mastering Ritual 2, I was giving it my fullest effort. I instituted an open-door policy and really meant it. I tried to keep even the smallest promises and commitments I made. I stopped interrupting everyone and became an aggressive listener, as Julian had advised. I now looked for

opportunities to perform “minor acts of caring,” whether this meant taking a valued manager out to lunch or simply offering a few words of genuine encouragement to a team member who was giving her best. I even started making the disciplines of honesty and openness a key part of my leadership style, sending out e-mails or circulating personally so as to get essential information out to those whom it affected. And what a difference it made.

As with the previous rituals that Julian had shared with me, I knew it would take time before the full power of the second ritual was released. But even within the few weeks of our last meeting, the men and women of GlobalView realized that something big was happening and that they were a big part of it. The programmers soon came up with suggestions to increase our efficiency and innovativeness. After I shared the insight I had gained about enriching human relations with my management team, they instituted a Truth-Comes-First policy and promised the members of their teams they would be “fanatically honest” in all their dealings with them, keeping them in the loop and making certain their voices were heard. It was as if GlobalView was becoming an entirely new company. People started getting to work early and staying late. Just from the conversations I overheard and the way everyone was treating one another, I could sense that everyone was beginning to care again. For me, as their leader, it felt wonderful.

Finally, the night I was to meet Julian at the stadium arrived. As I entered the complex, an usher asked if I needed help. Upon looking at my ticket, he smiled and said, “Welcome to the CivicDome, sir. Let me escort you to your seat. You’ve got the best location in the house.”

As I sat down, I noticed that every seat in our row was occupied, except for the one next to mine. “This must be Julian’s seat,” I thought. But where was he? The game was going to start in five minutes and Julian was nowhere in sight. I began to worry. After all, it was not like Julian to be late. He had clearly become a man who practiced what he preached and I knew he wouldn’t want

to keep me waiting, especially having whetted my appetite for his profound leadership wisdom during our past two meetings.

Then, two minutes before the game was scheduled to begin, I saw the strangest sight at the other end of the stadium: A man holding a small telescope in one hand and two hot dogs in the other was rushing through the crowd with exceptional speed, the mustard from the hot dogs dripping onto the red robe he wore. When he spotted the place where I was sitting, he let out a yell that attracted the attention of everyone in my vicinity. “Hey, Peter, save that seat! We monks don’t get to see many good ballgames!” Julian had arrived.

As he sat down, he gently placed his telescope under his chair and handed me the hot dogs. “These are for you, I know you’ll love them. The vendor said they are the tastiest he had. Sorry I’m late. I was watching the stars and lost track of time. It’s become quite a passion of mine, you know.”

“So I’ve gathered. What’s so special about it?”

“When the time is right, I’ll tell you. For now, I suggest you dig into those hot dogs before they get cold. Do you think our guys will win tonight?” he asked, deftly moving on to a new topic.

“I’d be willing to bet on it,” I replied. “They’re on the longest winning streak in their history. This should be another easy win for them.”

As the game got under way, Julian leaned over and asked softly, “Aren’t you curious why I asked you to meet me here tonight?”

“Just a little,” I replied, understating the truth.

“Well, I thought you’d learn a lot about leadership from watching what’s going on here. See the head coach over there?” he said, pointing to a tall bald man, impeccably dressed in a dark blue pinstriped suit, the kind that Julian himself had once favored.

“Yes.”

“He embodies the leadership philosophy I want you to adopt. You see, Peter, though he is the team’s leader, he doesn’t dictate the players’ every move. Instead, he coaches, guides and encourages the players as they liberate their strengths. *Great leaders are great teachers.* That is precisely what you should begin to do. See yourself as a coach, inspiring your team to manifest your future vision and rallying it behind your compelling cause. I’ll bet you didn’t know that the verb ‘to coach’ came from the root meaning ‘to bring a person from where he is to where he wants to be.’ ”

“No, I didn’t.”

“Not only that but a good coach keeps his or her team highly motivated as it journeys to that place on the horizon. A good coach energizes, challenges, develops and equips his people. He brings out the very best that they have to offer. He demands that they perform at their peak and then trains them to do so. In this day and age when most organizations suffer from low morale and unmotivated workers, leaders must become skilled coaches to ensure the success of their team.”

“So how do I become a great coach and motivate my team?”

“I thought you’d never ask,” Julian replied, just as one of the point guards on the home team swished a three-pointer. Suddenly Julian jumped to his feet and started yelling at the top of his lungs. “Way to go! A few more of those babies and we’ll be home free!”

I’d never seen Julian so animated since he had returned from the Himalayas. On our previous meetings, he had been so serene and peaceful. Now, amid the excitement of the basketball game, he was on his feet, cheering and clapping like a kid at his first circus show. It was great to see him so happy. He’d been through more pain and turmoil in his life than anyone I’d ever known.

“Sorry about that, Peter. It’s just that since my time with the Sages of Sivana, I’ve learned that every day is a gift. Every day is special and full of tiny blessings. When I was a time-starved, out-of-balance lawyer, I was so busy chasing the brass ring that I lost

sight of the simple pleasures of life. I let my family life slip away. I let my friendships slip away. And ultimately I let my health slip away. Sure I made a ton of money and had all the toys any person could dream of. But I wasn't happy. I wasn't fulfilled.

“So now, even though I have few possessions, I find joy in the special moments that every day brings. I look for the extraordinary in the ordinary. And that's why I'm having so much fun tonight. Who knows if I'll ever get to see another game like this.”

I was surprised to hear Julian talk in this way. He was so positive and alive. To hear him speak of his own mortality and the possibility that he might not be around was uncharacteristic of the new Julian Mantle. And I told him so.

“Oh don't worry, Peter. I plan to live many, many more years. I have so much work left to do in this part of the world. I pledged to Yogi Raman and the other sages I would spend the rest of my days spreading their message for leadership in business and in life, and I plan to do just that. There are so many more people I can help and so many more things I need to do. The best years of my life still lie ahead of me, my friend. Count on it. All I'm saying is that we must all remember that time slips through our hands like grains of sand, never to return again. Have the courage to embrace and enjoy life as you travel through it.”

“Point well taken, Julian. Before your leadership wisdom started to transform our company, I'd become so stressed out I couldn't sleep more than a couple of hours at night. Samantha was worried about it and the kids complained that I was always cranky, which made things even worse. I felt like everything I'd spent my whole life working for was slipping away. My response was to work even harder. But now I know what needs to be done to return GlobalView to peak performance and perfect health. Now I can work *smarter* and begin to enjoy the journey of leadership.”

“Good. Okay, back to your question about how one can become a great coach and develop motivated employees. The secret to

having highly inspired, loyal workers, who will do whatever it takes to help you manifest your vision can be stated in four words. Want to know them?”

“No, I thought I’d get another hot dog,” I said with mock sarcasm. “Of course I want to know the secret of highly motivated employees. Doesn’t every leader and manager?”

“Well here it is: Reward Routinely, Recognize Relentlessly.”

“That’s Ritual 3,” I said pulling out the third piece of the puzzle, which also had a pattern on it, like the first two.

“Yes, my friend. Ritual 3 in Yogi Raman’s ancient leadership system is the ritual of team building. All visionary leaders have made it a daily practice to reward and recognize their employees. They have the wisdom to know that employees who feel appreciated deliver superior results.”

“And I’ll bet that’s another reason that you picked this location for us to meet tonight, right Julian? It’s all coming together now.”

“You’re a fast study, Peter. I’ve always liked that about you. Even in the old days, when you were my golf partner, you were always one step ahead of the game. Yes. The head coach is most certainly applying the principle I am sharing with you. He has obviously discovered that when you honor employees, they will come to honor you. He clearly practices the twin leadership disciplines of rewarding and recognizing. That is why his team is so successful.”

“Where’s the starting point? I’ll admit it, I had no idea that rewarding and recognizing employees was so important. I’ve been so busy with other things that I’ve never really thought about ‘honoring my people,’ as you suggest. But I know from my own days as an employee, when I did something right and my manager noticed it, it made me want to perform even better the next time around. Sad to say, in our company, employees don’t really hear much from management until they do something wrong. Otherwise, they’re pretty much on their own.”

“Most companies are like that, Peter. The leadership assumes that the men and women who work for the organization are mature adults who don’t require a pat on the back. Managers believe their job only requires them to spot bad behavior and correct it. They never tell their people about the many positive letters that come in from satisfied customers; instead they haul their workers into their offices to interrogate them the minute a complaint arrives. In so doing, they unwittingly invite their employees to spend their days trying to avoid bad behavior rather than focusing their energies on doing good work. And rest assured, such companies never grow to world-class status. Would it surprise you to learn that most people in our part of the world go to bed hungry every night?”

“That’s impossible, Julian. We live in the land of plenty.”

“Well, it’s true. Most people go to bed hungry every single night of their lives. Hungry for a little recognition and sincere appreciation for their efforts.”

“So what can I do to turn things around? I’m beginning to see the potential of our people peeking through the suits of armor they have donned in response to my old dictatorial leadership style. I am determined to free their strengths and let them be the kind of workers and people they are capable of being. But where do I start?”

“The starting point for motivating your employees is simple: *hunt for good behavior.*”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Well, you said it yourself: At GlobalView you and your managers are constantly looking for bad behavior to correct. The only indicator most of your employees have that they are doing okay is the fact that they have not been fired. Well, that’s not good enough. Your people deserve better than that. You need to shift your mind-set and start hunting for people who are doing things right. Get aggressive about finding employees who are performing the way you know they should be. Be like a hunter relentlessly

searching for his target. And when you find it, let the rewards and recognition flow freely. *Remember, you always get more of what you reward.*”

“Do you have to acknowledge good behavior immediately?”

“Great question, Peter. Not necessarily, but I’ll tell you one thing for sure: the sooner you reward the good behavior, the more likely it is to be repeated. Keep rewarding the kind of behavior you want to see again and again. When you condition your people in this way, they develop a clear sense of your expectations. They will soon realize what success looks like.”

“But don’t most employees already know what they should be doing? Don’t they already know what success looks like? I’ve always felt that most are simply too lazy to achieve it. In my experience, they just want to make an easy buck and head home as early as possible.”

“You are dead wrong,” came the blunt reply. “Yogi Raman always told me that almost everyone wants to do good. Each one of us wants to contribute in a positive way and feel that our life has some meaning. We all have dreams and hopes and passions that we pray will be fulfilled one day. But the reality is that most people’s ambitions are stifled by the men and women who lead them. They are told what to wear or when to have lunch or how to do their work. Most employees in our part of the world are micro-managed to the point where they feel that it will be detrimental to their careers if they become free thinkers and innovators.

“What you need to start doing, to free the strengths and talents of your people, is to reward the behavior you want to see repeated. Let every single employee know exactly what success looks like by recognizing those who are doing it. You might not believe it, but most workers lack a clear sense of what peak performance means, which further adds to their stress levels. Their leader has never provided them with a model to emulate. Then he or she criticizes

them for not doing what they should be doing, making matters even worse.

“I’ve been in far too many companies where the expectations the leaders have of their employees bear little or no resemblance to employee job descriptions. Visionary leaders define precisely the kinds of results they hope to see from their people and then set them free to realize them. Like I told you earlier, nothing motivates and focuses the mind better than a clear purpose. Once people know where they are going and what is expected of them, they will fulfill their responsibilities.”

“But what about when they fail. Surely they need to be punished?”

“That leads me to another important point. In underperforming companies, people are so afraid of failing that they never take risks. By never taking risks, they never discover new things. And by never discovering new things, they spend the rest of their lives within a small zone of comfort, doing the same things with the same people in the same way every day. To add insult to injury, management then chastises them for their lack of creativity and innovation. Look, don’t get me wrong, Peter, you know I’m a pragmatist; no one is saying that leaders and managers should not correct bad behavior. But don’t miss the forest for the trees. Have the vision to understand that failure is essential to success. When one of your people tries something and fails, he or she is simply learning how to succeed. Failures are nothing more than lessons in disguise. They eventually lead us to wisdom and prosperity. Visionary leaders make work environments risk-free. They give their people the freedom to fail. And by doing so, they ultimately succeed.”

“Wow, I’ve never thought of failure like that.”

“You might be surprised to learn that at Southwest Airlines — the spectacularly successful company I mentioned earlier — a young manager who came up with an innovative new idea that

failed disastrously was actually promoted! The manager had proposed a same-day cargo service that would increase Southwest's revenue by 50 percent. The president personally approved the program and significant sums were spent on advertising and setting up the new operation. Unfortunately, the business never came. But the company's executives understood that while bold risk taking is necessary for massive success, it can also lead to big failures from time to time. It's just a cost of doing business. They ensured that the lesson was well learned and then forged on. By not firing the manager, they sent out a powerful message that innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit was appreciated."

"That's an unbelievable example, Julian."

"It gets even better. Guess how a Southwest employee is recognized when a complimentary letter arrives from a customer?"

"Let's hear it."

"The letter is immediately sent to the employee along with a memo from the president saying, 'I think you're great and my hat's off to you. Keep up the great work. I love you.'"

"Amazing. But I don't know about this loving-your-employees thing."

"At Southwest, the president seizes every opportunity to tell his people that he loves them. The word love' is not used in a soft, sentimental way but as an expression of appreciation. However, you don't have to tell your employees that you love them to motivate and inspire them. Just thank them when they do the right thing and forgive them when they make a mistake. To quote the Tibetan proverb that Yogi Raman favored, 'If you are patient in one moment of anger, you will avoid a hundred days of sorrow.'"

"I'd guess that the best way to reward positive behavior and peak performance is with money. True?"

Julian's response was interrupted by the loud sound of the half-time buzzer. Our team was dominating the game and the fans began

to applaud warmly. Since Julian had bought courtside seats, we were able to hear what the head coach was saying to the players as they came off the court: “Phenomenal job, guys. We’re playing our game, just the way we planned it in practice. Keep this up and we’re guaranteed a playoff spot. I know you’ve been on the road for the past two weeks and I know you guys are darn tired. Let’s wrap this one up for our fans.”

As the players began walking toward the hallway that led to their locker room, the coach added, ‘Hey guys... I’m really proud of you!’ ”

“Does that answer your question, Peter?” Julian asked.

“Huh?”

“Did that coach just motivate his team?”

“Definitely.”

“Did he pull out a sack of money and hand out bills to each player to do it?”

“No,” I said with a smile.

“So how did he do it?”

“He praised them. And he did it sincerely. I really felt that he cared about them and felt proud of their excellent performance.”

“Exactly. You see, my friend, *praise is free*. Sincere praise can move mountains and revolutionize your entire organization. And it won’t cost you a penny. Too many leaders think that bonus checks and cash incentives are the only way to motivate their teams, and since money is tight, they do nothing. Yet, contrary to popular belief, money is not the strongest motivator of human beings. Research shows that people prefer simple praise to almost any other type of reward.

“In one landmark study of 1,500 employees, personalized, instant recognition was found to be the top way to energize staff. Yet only 42 percent received such feedback. In another survey, 58

percent of employees said they seldom received a thank-you note for a job well done even though they said that this form of recognition motivated them the most.”

“A simple thank-you note is all they want?”

“Maybe your people want more. You, as their leader, need to make the time to find out. Here’s a key lesson: don’t reward people according to the way you would like to be rewarded if you were in their shoes. Instead, find out what motivates them. Figure out what you and your managers can do to make your employees feel like heroes. Start asking yourself ‘the Wow Question.’ It’s extremely powerful.”

“What’s ‘the Wow Question’?”

“The Wow Question is every leader’s best friend. It simply requires that you ask yourself the following: ‘What could I do, in terms of rewarding and recognizing my people for excellent work, that would make them say ‘wow’ on receiving it?’ Remember that timeless truth, Peter: *the way you treat your employees determines the way they will treat your customers*. If you have the discipline to make them feel special, to go ‘wow’ on a regular basis, they will do the same for your clients. As I said earlier, giving starts the receiving process.

“Different people must be rewarded in different ways,” Julian added. “Gifts need to be customized. Giving a salesperson who hates to fly or is constantly on the road away from her family a trip to Bermuda might not be a great idea. A person who is well paid but working eighteen-hour days just might prefer a few days off over a big bonus check. There was one young guy on my own legal team back when I practiced law who just wanted to be acknowledged for his excellent work in front of the people he worked with. As Yogi Berra said, ‘Crack the codes of the people you lead and find out what makes them tick.’ Find out what specific things will make them feel good about any success they have

achieved. For one it might be a trophy, for another it might be a day-pass to a local ski hill. Tailor the reward to suit the person.

“I can still remember Yogi Raman coming into my little hut one day, after I had been diligently studying under him and trying very hard to integrate the wisdom of the sages into my own life. ‘You have been a very good student, Julian,’ he said gently, ‘probably the best one we have ever had. You have been respectful of our customs and shown a very sincere interest in learning our philosophies on leadership and life. Every one of us has grown fond of you. We now see you as a member of our little culture. And though we have few possessions, I would like to give you a small gift as a reward for the progress you made. I would like to give you something that is meaningful, so rather than selecting the gift myself, I thought I’d drop by and find out from you what token would make you happiest.’

“You know, Peter, it was the first time anyone had taken the time to ask me to choose my own reward for a job well done. As a result, I was one happy student. I started studying even harder, just so I wouldn’t disappoint this teacher who had invested such faith in me.”

“And what did you ask for?”

“I knew you’d want to know. It was something really simple. Inside the temple that stood in the center of the monks’ village, there sat a plaque made out of wood. In my quiet moments, I would go in and silently reflect on the words that Yogi Raman had carved onto it. They had great meaning to me. My wish was that Yogi Raman provide me with a similar plaque. He gladly complied, delivering it the very next day.”

“What did the words say?” I asked with great interest.

“They were the words of the great Indian philosopher Patanjali. As I have committed them to memory, I can recite them for you:

When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all of your thoughts break their

bonds: Your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be.

Julian continued, oblivious to the basketball game that had just resumed. “In giving me that plaque, Yogi Raman gave me the reward he knew I wanted —”

“Rather than the reward he might have wanted had *he* been in your shoes,” I interjected.

“Exactly. When the visionary leader spots someone in the throes of good behavior, he recognizes her and rewards her as she would wish to be rewarded. In this way, the practice of peak performance steadily ebbs through the entire culture of the organization until people don’t know any other way to work. That’s how you get to world-class status. And it is achievable.”

“Okay, so I clearly have to ‘hunt for good behavior’ around GlobalView. Rather than only looking for people doing things wrong so I can correct them, I must get aggressive about finding people who are doing things right. Then, when I do, I should recognize and reward their efforts, with something tailored to their interests. I’ll also get better at the simple act of praising. As you said, most people appreciate praise more than any other form of recognition and yet they rarely receive it. I think I’ll make ‘Praise Is Free’ my new leadership mantra. I’ll bet the monks would’ve liked that one. Mind if I ask you another question?”

“That’s what I’m here for, my friend,” Julian replied warmly, patting the creases out of the fabric of his long velvet robe.

“My people still need a fair amount of work before they reach peak performance. And yet I know they need to be rewarded and recognized immediately. Should I wait until they improve their skills and are models of good behavior?”

“Brilliant question. You really are digging deep into the wisdom I’m sharing with you. I appreciate this. If you wait until perfect performance arrives, you’ll be waiting a long time, maybe forever.”

“So what’s the secret?”

“The secret is to praise progress and reward results. Hunt for good — not perfect — behavior and get people excited about their improvements. Doing so will be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Peak performance will eventually come because your people will keep getting better and better.”

“Kind of like our home team here,” I said pointing to the players who had just run down the length of the court on a fast break and scored another two points. “I remember coming to see them when the franchise was brand new. Man, they were pathetic. And yet that wasn’t really so long ago.”

“And many of those same players have become superstars. The coach praised progress. He found a reason to reward them. And now look at these guys. They are unbelievable,” Julian said, jumping to his feet again. His fists were now pumping into the air and he was yelling words of encouragement to the players, all of whom he knew by name. I never realized Julian was such a big ball fan. His enthusiasm was contagious.

“Julian, I’ve got more questions for you.”

“Fire away,” he said, once again returning to his seat amid the stares of those who had the misfortune to be seated near us.

“I’m not really sure I know what to say when I praise someone. I mean, I’ve never really done it before. Sure I can say a few quick words like ‘nice job’ or ‘keep it up,’ but do you have any other suggestions on effective praising?”

“Praising is a skill that requires study and practice. Every leader needs to get good at it. To get you started, here are a few of the basic praise principles: praise must be specific, it must be immediate, it must be done in public and it must be sincere. Also,

personalize your praise by using the person's first name when making the positive comment. The most beautiful sound in the world to a person is the sound of his or her own name. Oh, and don't fall into the trap that too many managers fall into when they praise."

"Which is?"

"They overpraise. While praise is important, giving it with reckless abandon devalues it, just like printing too much money cheapens the currency."

"Any other specific ideas on motivating my team?"

"Sure. I'll give you some of the best and most cost-effective ones. Posting a personal thank-you note on the employee's door, paying his parking expenses for a month, an annual subscription to the magazine of his choice are simple but proven ways to reward people for excellent performance. Letting an employee attend a meeting for his manager, sending birthday cards and breaking bread with employees also help to keep them motivated and show you care. I recently read about one manager who adopted the low-cost but highly effective strategy of filling a large chest full of motivational books, tapes and videos from respected personal development authors. She called this her 'treasure chest.' When any of her team members deserved to be rewarded, she would walk them over to the chest, in full public view, and encourage them to select something they'd enjoy. I love this idea because it not only rewards good behavior, it allows your people to grow and develop through their exposure to the positive books, tapes and videos, making them even better performers.

"Remember, Peter, visionary leaders are liberators, not limiters. They know they are duty-bound to help people unlock the best that lies within them and to help them develop a sense of stewardship over their professional and personal lives. They constantly expose their employees to ideas and information that will help them actualize their natural talents and become more independent as

thinkers and as people. As the great sage Confucius observed, ‘*Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.*’ Like I told you at the clubhouse that night, leadership is all about freeing people’s strengths. When you really get down to it, the actual corporation you call GlobalView isn’t much more than a seal and a few pieces of paper spewed out from some corporate lawyer’s computer. The true value lies in your people and their potential to help you manifest your grand vision for the future.”

“Powerful thoughts. You know now that I think about it, some of our competitors have some pretty good techniques to energize their employees as well.”

“Really?”

“I guess I just didn’t understand the power of rewarding and recognition, so I didn’t pay much attention to them.”

“When the student is ready the teacher appears,” said Julian with a smile as the game drew to a close.

“One of GlobalView’s competitors is constantly doing fun things to challenge and stimulate its team. Its sales team always begins meetings by ‘celebrating heroes,’ going around the table recognizing the salespeople for meeting their goals or for excellence in customer care. Another company has dubbed one office wall ‘the victory wall,’ placing motivational quotes, testimonial letters and strategic goals on it for all to see as they pass by. I’ve even heard about one top Xerox manager who took a ski cap embroidered with the name of a five-star ski resort to every meeting. This ‘symbol of victory’ served as a powerful reminder of where the team would be vacationing if it met its sales targets.”

“Those are fabulous ideas I think you should seriously consider bringing into your organization. And never forget the importance of cultural traditions.”

“Run that one by me again,” I requested.

“In the Himalayas, the sages had developed a whole series of cultural traditions to keep them unified. Every evening, no matter how busy they were with their philosophical readings or teachings, they would come together to share a simple but delicious meal around a long wooden table. It was really an unbelievable sight to watch these beautifully adorned monks laughing and singing as they ate, savoring the gifts of one another’s company and enriching their sense of community. These basketball players do the same thing with their Friday-night pizza parties or their semiannual family picnics. These are traditions that serve to bring people closer. They encourage teammates to care about one another. They build richer relationships and help people to see themselves as a part of a shared destiny.”

“So traditions should become part of our corporate culture?”

“Definitely. Let people get to know one another and let their hair down from time to time. Have family picnics or biweekly submarine-sandwich lunches. Shake the cobwebs out of those huge headquarters you have and get people talking and laughing again. One company I know of even has Crazy Days. Believe me, people not only have a great time, productivity soars. As one wise leader once said, ‘Brains, like hearts, go where they are appreciated.’ ”

“Explain this Crazy Days tradition to me. I’ve never heard of it.”

“In this particular company, a day is designated every quarter as a Crazy Day. It’s nothing more than a day designed to let people blow off steam and reduce stress; it boosts morale. For example, one quarter, they designated it as You’re Not the Boss Day. The CEO had to make coffee, answer the phones and work in the warehouse while some of his employees got to work out of the boss’s office and have some fun. This simple idea broke down many of the artificial barriers between management and nonmanagement people and enhanced team spirit. Another quarter, the crazy day was called Corporate Circus Day. Clowns, magicians and jesters were hired to perform throughout the company’s offices,

much to the delight of all the employees. Even those passing by the lobby were invited to take part in the spectacle, providing great word-of-mouth promotion about this innovative and people-centered organization. One of the most successful crazy days was Back to the Future Day.”

“Sounds intriguing.”

“All the employees got together to celebrate their past successes. Personal success stories were posted on the walls of the conference hall that had been rented for the occasion, for everyone to see. Then they all focused on their future goals and brainstormed about the best ways to achieve them.

“The point I’m trying to make with all these examples is that visionary leaders understand that employees who feel they are valued members of an exciting team will go the extra mile to give their best. If you practice Ritual 3 by rewarding routinely and recognizing relentlessly, they will invest their spirits in your organization. And they will begin to see themselves as a part of the larger whole, as an integral part of something special and as an important member of the GlobalView team. That’s when your company will become unstoppable. Perhaps Yogi Berra said it best the time he observed that ‘when spider webs unite they can tie up a lion.’ ”

As the crowd filtered out of the stadium, a strange silence filled the air. We had won the game and people were clearly pleased. But something even more pressing had attracted everyone’s attention. Up in the sky, one star had begun to twinkle brightly, illuminating the darkness with an almost magical hue. Though it was almost 11:00 P.M., it appeared as if a rich coat of daylight was waiting to burst through the darkness and envelope the night sky.

I had never seen a phenomenon such as this. Soon the entire crowd was standing still, staring quietly into the sky.

“I can’t believe what I’m seeing, Julian,” I said, my gaze fixed on the bright star that appeared to be the center of everyone’s

attention.

“I can,” he replied with a knowing smile.

“Does this have something to do with the star you were talking to the other night and that telescope you are carrying?” I asked intently.

“Absolutely. And the time will soon come when I can explain exactly what’s going on. When I was in the Himalayas, the sages predicted that this astronomical event would take place. Even I’m surprised at how accurate they were.”

Within minutes, the darkness had returned and the glittering star had quietly slipped off into the night. The sight I had just witnessed was astonishing. Though I didn’t know anything about astronomy and such natural occurrences, the magnificence of the spectacle was almost overwhelming.

“That was incredible, Julian!”

“The laws of nature are the most powerful laws in the universe,” he replied. “They lead you to the truth, Peter. The quality of our lives as leaders is better off by the degree to which we learn from them. Visionary leaders have full knowledge of these laws and align their efforts with them.”

“What do you mean?”

“They have the leadership wisdom to understand that ‘as you sow, so shall you reap.’ They know that the growth of a business follows the same cyclical process as the change of seasons. They are aware that, as in nature, adversity is always followed by opportunity, just as the darkness of the night is always followed by the brightness of the day.”

“I’ve never thought that the laws of nature applied to the business world.”

“They sure do and the leader who recognizes this timeless fact will have an enormous advantage over his or her competition.

That's why our next meeting will be in more natural surroundings."

"Where exactly?"

"I'd like us to meet next Sunday in the woods behind Bear Lake."

"You mean the place where all those hunters go?"

"Precisely. Just go to the entrance of the forest. From there, you will see a series of markers that will lead you to the spot where I will continue to share the sages' leadership wisdom with you. I promise that you will not be disappointed."

"What time?"

"At dawn. It's a very special time of the day."

"You're kidding, right?"

"I'm absolutely serious. The dawn is the best part of the day. And I think it's about time you experienced the tranquility it brings. Now I've got to run."

"You're always dashing off, Julian. What's the hurry?"

"I've got to find that star," was the only reply I received as he disappeared into the crowd.

On my way home, my thoughts turned to the wealth of knowledge I had been blessed with on this wonderful evening. I thought about the importance of "rewarding routinely and recognizing relentlessly." I reflected on Julian's point that "praise is free" and how most people go to bed hungry every night, hungry for a little sincere appreciation and respect. I remembered all the men and women of GlobalView who dutifully came into work every morning and spent their days without a word of thanks for the energy they expended. There were the managers and the programmers and the delivery staff who I had never even shown the courtesy of a sincere "good morning, how are you?" These people were not the root cause of our company's troubles — I was. As

Julian had said earlier, great leadership precedes great followership. And I had been far less than the great leader they deserved.

I then contemplated the many creative ways my managers and I could start energizing our people and getting them focused on success. Just thinking about the possibilities and the positive results that would come through their application got me excited. We could set up treasure chests full of motivational books and tapes throughout the headquarters to reward good behavior immediately. We could have submarine-sandwich parties from time to time and set up other traditions so that our people could blow off steam and build stronger bonds. You're Not The Boss Day might be a great way to get the word out that I'm not the same old leader I once was. My mind began to fill with new ideas.

How about leaving nonmanagers in charge while my management team and I headed off for the annual two-day retreat I had decided to organize this year? Why not name boardrooms after top employees? Why not reward a worker who comes up with a new revenue-generating idea with a percentage of the profits it generates or at the very least with time off? Perhaps the ten best employees of every division could dine with me and the rest of our top executives every quarter? And I would certainly be sending out hundreds of thank-you notes over the coming months. A little praise could go a long way, I realized.

Upon entering the lobby of our luxury high rise, I reached into the pocket of the light coat I was wearing for my keys when I felt a foreign object. As I moved into the hallway, a smile came to my face. The light revealed that the object was the next piece of the jigsaw puzzle. Julian must have slipped it in while I was watching the game.

This time the inscription read simply, *Ritual 4: Surrender to Change.*

Chapter 7 Knowledge Summary • Julian's Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Ritual



The Essence

The Ritual of Team Unity

The Wisdom

- Great leaders are great teachers and great coaches
- Reward and recognize employees regularly. Give genuine appreciation. You always get more of what you reward.
- Praise is free

The Practices

- Hunt for good behavior
- The 'Treasure Chest' and 'Victory Wall'
- Symbols of Victory and team traditions

Quotable Quote

Visionary leaders understand that employees who feel they are valued members of an exciting team will go the extra mile and give their best. If you practice ritual 2 by rewarding routinely and recognizing relentlessly, they will invest their spirits in your organization. They will begin to see themselves as part of a larger whole. That is when your company will become unstoppable.

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

RITUAL 4



Surrender to Change



The Ritual of Adaptability and Change Management

Watch and see the courses of the stars as if you ran with them, and continually dwell in mind upon the changes of the elements into one another; for these imaginations wash away the foulness of life on the ground.

Marcus Aurelius

I could not believe I had agreed to meet Julian at this ungodly hour. Not surprisingly, there was no one in sight as I marched up to the entrance to the forest, carrying a Thermos full of coffee and a bag full of pastries, which I hoped Julian might share with me. A remarkable stillness pervaded the scene as I proceeded into the woods. The first rays of daylight peeped through the dense arrangement of trees, guiding me deeper into this natural oasis of calm.

As I walked, the fragrance of pine and cedar tickled my nose, bringing back so many warm memories from my childhood when my father and I would venture into the timberland on long hikes. Sometimes we would even bring our old canoe and go for long paddles on sun-soaked lakes. Those were some of the best times of my life. I don't know how I got so far away from nature. Right then and there, I resolved to renew the connection. I knew getting back to nature and its inherent peacefulness would allow me to be a better leader and a deeper thinker. As William Wordsworth observed, "When from our better selves we have too long been parted by the hurrying world, sick of its business, of its pleasures tired, how gracious, how benign is solitude." Such wonderful words.

Just then, I noticed what appeared to be a map stuck to the trunk of a large pine tree with a wooden nail. Julian had said there would

be markings for me to follow to get to where he would be; this was certainly one of them. I took a moment to study the prescribed route and then ventured farther into the forest. The instructions that had been scribbled onto the map indicated I was to travel north for half a mile. Once there, I would see a small stream that I was to cross and then follow for another mile. This would lead me to what the scribbling said was the Final Resting Place. I had no idea what that meant and didn't wish to worry myself by analyzing it.

I pushed on, growing tired and out of breath after twenty minutes of walking. Sweat dripped from my forehead and onto the soft floor of the forest while my heart beat wildly out of control. But if there was one quality I had always had, it was the fighting spirit. I never gave up, no matter what obstacles I encountered. My father used to tell me there were four elements of one's character that if cultivated, guaranteed success: The first element was discipline, the second, concentration, the third element was patience and the fourth one, persistence. I always took those words seriously. And so I trudged on.

Suddenly I heard a noise coming from a distant area. It was soft at first but then grew more noticeable. It sounded like an animal running through the bushes, breaking the small twigs that littered the ground as it moved. Perhaps it was a raccoon or a fox or maybe even a small deer. But then, to my utter surprise, I saw that it was a human figure, swiftly moving among the trees, clutching what appeared to be a long wooden stake! I could not tell if it was a man or a woman and I was not about to call out and ask. I darted in the opposite direction, genuinely afraid for my safety. After all, there was no help available for miles and the sight of that sharp wooden stake was less than comforting.

My heart raced even more fiercely and the sweat began to flow like a torrent as I fought my way through the brush, now running as fast as my legs could travel. My Thermos full of coffee and the fresh pastries had been left behind as I cut my way deeper and deeper into the forest. Finally, after running for a little more than

half an hour, I realized the figure was nowhere in sight. I immediately collapsed and lay on the ground, surrounded by bright flowers and small evergreens. Looking up through the trees, I caught glimpses of the blue sky. It was a cloudless summer's day. Perfect really. Too bad I didn't have the energy to move.

My thoughts then turned to Julian. Surely that wasn't him back there with the stake. Why would he have wanted to scare me? And if it was Julian, at least he would have had the courtesy to reveal himself to me. I then grew angry. Here I was, in the middle of a forest notorious for bears, cougars and wolves and Julian was nowhere in sight. He had said there would be markers that would lead me to him, but I hadn't seen them. To make matters worse, a deranged lunatic with a wooden dagger was hunting for me, and I had no idea how to get back to my four-wheel drive. As a matter of fact, I was totally lost.

'Okay. I need to pull myself together,' I thought to myself. 'I'm the CEO of a two-billion-dollar company. I have a wonderful wife and two great children whom I love deeply and who need me. I'm going to find my way out of this.'

As I stood up, I heard the something that offered me the hope I was searching for. It was the sound of a stream, flowing along an area of the forest that was much less densely vegetated. I realized this must have been the stream that appeared on the map Julian had left for me. If I crossed the stream, as his instructions had indicated, and followed it for one mile, I would find the Final Resting Place. But which direction was I to travel the one mile in?

I made a guess and headed down the stream. As I progressed, a sense of calmness began to return. Maybe it was the effect of the natural surroundings, the likes of which I had not seen in years. Or perhaps it was because this was the first occasion in a long time that I had taken the time to be by myself.

Eventually, the stream meandered past a particularly rocky area and then along the banks of a large meadow. As I climbed up into

this clearing, I saw something very startling. In the center of the meadow stood a small hut made entirely of what appeared to be roses. Surrounding the hut was a vegetable garden and hundreds of exotic flowers. Butterflies flitted through the air, which was laden with a wonderful scent. The whole sight was dazzling. I knew I had found Julian.

“Hello,” I called out. “Are you in there, Julian?”

The door of the hut immediately swung open and out came my old friend, beaming. “What took you so long?” he asked. “I’ve been expecting you for quite a while.”

“You wouldn’t believe it if I told you. I came here at the crack of dawn, just as you asked. I found your map, read your instructions and started into the woods. I was having a brilliant time until, all of a sudden, some madman started chasing me with a huge wooden stake. I panicked and started to run until I couldn’t run any farther. Luckily I lost him and found that stream. It led me right to you. I think I need a drink to calm down. You wouldn’t have any of that expensive Scotch you used to drink, would you?”

“My Scotch days are long gone. And as for the madman, don’t worry. I know for certain that he wasn’t chasing you,” Julian said with a surprising degree of certainty.

“How do you know that?”

“Because it was me. I was running through the woods to get this new stake back to this hut before you arrived. You see, this is my home and I’m planning to do some renovations. I needed the stake to hold up ‘the new wing’,” he laughed.

“That was you?” I exclaimed. “Julian, I thought I was going to die. Why in God’s name didn’t you let me know? I could have had a heart attack!”

Julian put his arm around my shoulder in an effort to comfort me. “I almost did. But then a thought came to me. The reason I invited you here today, into this miraculous forest hideaway where I

live, is to share the power of Ritual 4 with you. Ritual 4, as you know from my little gift to you the other night, requires you to Surrender to Change.

“I thought that if you were exposed to a little adventure and discomfort, you might have an even better appreciation of the lessons I planned to share. I sincerely apologize if I frightened you. But I knew you’d be okay. As a matter of fact, I was watching out for your safety at every step of the way. Now, please come into my home and let’s get started. We have an important day of learning ahead of us.”

Calming down, I asked, “But what do you mean by Surrender to Change? And how would getting me to feel uncomfortable be of any benefit?”

“Change is the most dominant force in the business world today, as I’m sure you know. Technology is changing, society is changing, the political landscape is changing, even the way people work is changing. Did you know that in the early 1900s, 85 percent of the workers in our part of the world were in agriculture? Now this field involves less than 3 percent of the work force. And it was recently reported that more information has been produced in the past thirty years than in the entire 5,000-year period before it!”

“I’m not surprised. Change is driving us crazy at GlobalView. By the time one of our products hits the market it’s actually obsolete since we are already testing something even more advanced. People are demanding new methods of doing their work, we are facing more regulation than ever before, our customers’ expectations have totally changed and our competition is now truly global. It seems that by the time we finally come to grips with one new development, ten more come along.”

“Precisely. That’s why I asked you to come here, to the Final Resting Place as I jokingly call my little home, to learn about Ritual 4, the ritual of adaptability and change management. You see, every visionary leader goes beyond struggling with change. He or she has

the wisdom to realize that if one truly wants to master change, one must *surrender* to it.”

“And why would scaring the living daylights out of me help me do this?” I asked, puzzled by the charade Julian had put me through.

“Because the only way to manage change is to become good at managing the unexpected. In order to thrive in the new economy, where intellectual capital is far more valuable than material capital, a leader must master the art of being resilient and reacting to unforeseen challenges with grace, agility and speed. Sorry to say, my friend, but you failed on all counts.”

“I don’t follow you.”

“Well, my little experiment back there was designed to shake you up and force you to move out of that region of security I’ve noticed you live your whole life within. From what I gather, you are a creature of routine and never try anything new. You barricade yourself into that massive office of yours and do the same things day in and day out. When something new comes along, a new skill to learn or a new challenge to tackle, you try to delegate it to someone else. At best, you rush to apply the same solutions that have worked in the past to every one of the new problems you encounter. And that’s one of the reasons why your company is on the decline rather than seizing the incredible opportunities this new age of business offers.

“Doing the same things every day will not deliver new results. To change the results you are getting, you must change the things you are doing. You must transform the way you are leading. Never forget what Einstein said, ‘The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.’ You must think new, higher, bolder thoughts to manage the change that is bombarding your organization in these topsy-turvy times. You need to become good at tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty. You must embrace the change.”

“Is that what you mean by surrendering to change?”

“Yes. For most leaders, there are only two responses to the stress that change inevitably brings: fight or flight. You chose the latter when faced with an unexpected encounter in the woods back there. But there is a third option to managing change and this is the practice favored by visionary leaders. They surrender to change and, in doing so, use it to their advantage.”

“But isn’t that a contradiction? If you surrender or submit to change, doesn’t that make you the loser?”

“That is the way we think in the West. In the East, however, the sages and Zen masters have adopted a strikingly different mind-set, one that has proven its effectiveness over the centuries.”

“And what might that be?”

“They believe that to conquer, one first must yield. Rather than going against the change, one must go with it. As the ancient philosopher Lao-Tzu said, ‘Softness triumphs over hardness. What is more malleable is always superior over that which is immovable. This is the principle of controlling things by going along with them, of mastery through adaption.’ Rigidly adhering to tradition and outdated ways of doing things will drive a stake right through the heart of your company. Ralph Waldo Emerson said that a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds. And he was dead right. Be more flexible, more open and more accepting. Begin to accommodate and align yourself with change. Go with the flow. Be like water,” offered Julian. “C’mon. Let’s go for a walk.”

“Be like water? That’s a new one,” I said, as we headed down to the stream.

“The nature of water is to flow,” Julian observed as he dipped his youthful hand into the bubbling brook. “It goes with the current. It does not resist. It does not hesitate before it yields. But it is also one of the most powerful forces on the earth. Study water and manage the changing currents of modern business like water manages the currents of nature. Rather than viewing change as an

adversary, welcome it as a friend. *And then surrender to it.* That's what adaptability is all about."

"Is adaptability that important?"

"Adaptability is one of the most essential leadership skills of our new information-driven world. The leader who can adapt to change and use it to his or her advantage will have a huge competitive edge. But adaptability is more than just going with the change rather than against it. Adaptability is all about recovering from the anxiety and adversity that change initially brings and then having the flexibility to move ahead vigorously. It's about seeing failure as nothing more than market research. It's about understanding that you perfect your abilities by suffering setbacks and that change can allow you and GlobalView to emerge stronger than ever before. It's about persisting until you get to the place where you have determined you must go. Remember, you can't learn to sail without tipping the boat over a few times and you can't learn to play the piano without hitting a few wrong notes. Success is a numbers game and setbacks are a part of it. As the Buddhist saying goes, 'The arrow that hits the bull's eye is the result of one hundred misses.'"

"I've always wondered why I've been so resistant to change. Maybe it's in my genes," I joked.

"Actually that's the perfect explanation," Julian replied in a serious tone. "Every human being is genetically programmed to resist change and maintain a state of equilibrium. The condition, known as *homeostasis*, evolved naturally over time as a means by which our ancestors could survive constantly changing conditions. When an environmental change occurs in our own lives, our internal mechanisms jump into play to regulate the new influence and return the body to what biologists call a *steady state*. Essentially, the condition of equilibrium we call homeostasis developed from our need for stability and security. The problem is that the mechanism works to keep things as they are even when more favorable possibilities exist. It doesn't distinguish between

change that would make life better and change that would make things worse. It simply resists all change.”

“That’s fascinating, Julian. You mean to tell me that every single one of us has been genetically designed to resist change?”

“Yes, and that’s why people have such a hard time breaking out of their regions of security. They find it hard to adopt new habits, learn a new skill or cultivate a new attitude. The good news is that homeostats can be reset and change can be embraced. The bad news is that the resetting process always brings stress, pain and a certain amount of fear with it. Your job, as a visionary leader, is to lessen the anxiety by continually reminding your people of why the change is necessary and connecting them to the many benefits that will result from it. Tell them that the change will bring them that much closer to the compelling cause you are all striving toward. Show them how the change will ultimately improve their lives and allow them to be more effective. Make them aware of how the change will help them to serve others and make a deeper contribution. What I’m really saying is help them to master change by giving them the knowledge to change.”

“And how do I go about doing that?”

“That brings me to another of the timeless laws of nature, one that is most prevalent in this lush forest I have the privilege to live in — the Law of Environment. A seed grows into a plant only when the soil, moisture and temperature are favorable. In other words the environment must be ideal. Similarly, to manage change effectively, you, as a visionary leader, must provide the ideal culture in which people can respond positively to change and grow in the process.”

“And what kind of culture would that be?” I asked with great interest.

“You must create a learning culture. You must champion intellectual development. You must foster a workplace that rewards constant learning and skills improvement. You need to let people know that the best way to combat the fear and strain that change

invokes is to become knowledgeable about it. *The best antidote for fear is knowledge.* Don't get lazy about learning. The more prepared and informed your people are, the easier it will be for them to accept and thrive on the change. If you really want to succeed in manifesting your vision for the future into reality, help your people become lifelong learners. To stay competitive in this new era, you must let everyone know they need to be continually learning. Create a corporate culture that inspires them to embrace new ideas and information. And share all the information you have. Remember, Peter, in this day and age, *he or she who learns most wins.*”

As Julian climbed back up the bank of the stream and made his way through the lush meadow, he continued to share the leadership wisdom he had acquired about managing change.

“You see, there is joy in change. Without change, there can be no growth. Without change, there can be no improvement. Without change, there would be no progress. Look at this meadow and the forest you came through. It is in a continuous state of change. The leaves fall off the trees and later reappear. The birds hatch as chicks and evolve into adulthood. The seasons change from winter into spring. Even these butterflies are nothing more than caterpillars who learned to change. Understand that change is the way of the world. Change is essential to our evolution as a civilization. It is necessary to our very survival. *Change is humanity's best friend.* Ordinary leaders fight it, visionary leaders delight in it. The ancient philosopher Marcus Aurelius captured these sentiments splendidly when he said, ‘Observe always that everything is the result of change, and get used to thinking that there is nothing Nature loves so well as to change existing forms and make new ones like them.’”

“You've transformed the way I view change, Julian. I never would have thought that change is governed by the laws of nature and that it is so central, not only to the success of our company but

to the progress of our society. Any other lessons on managing change?”

“One just hopped by,” he replied, pointing to a frog with brown spots dotting its dark green back. “My little friend over here is a perfect example of what can happen to you if you decide to wait for large-scale changes to occur in your environment before you make the transition to the new pathways of thought and action that will help you survive.”

“How so?”

“Well, if you take a frog and pop it into a pot of boiling water, what do you think will happen?”

“I’d bet it will try to jump out.”

“Correct. Now let me offer you a different scenario. Let’s say we started the frog off in water that was at room temperature and quietly let him relax in it. Then we gradually started turning up the heat until the water became hotter and hotter. What do you think would happen?”

“Don’t tell me the frog would just sit there and do nothing?”

“It sure would, like most organizations do when the change creeping up on them is so incremental that it is easy to ignore. You see, like most companies, the internal system of the frog is only geared to respond and adapt to sudden environmental changes. So when slow changes like the gradual boiling of the water occur, it fails to react. It actually seems to enjoy itself. Then, when it least expects it, it boils to death, yet another casualty of a complacent mind-set.”

“Great metaphor, Julian. When did you learn so much about biology?”

“I once dated a high school teacher who taught all that kind of stuff. At the time I found it boring, but now I realize that the laws of nature are essentially the laws of life. And the sooner we come to understand them and apply them in our daily lives, the sooner we

will be able to use the changes that are pervading society to our own advantage. Remember, either you align yourself with the laws of nature or you'll find yourself against them.”

“And boiled like our friend the frog,” I added.

“You got it.”

“What else can we do to manage change? I love the lessons you are sharing, Julian. They make so much sense.”

“The leadership laws I've revealed to you this morning are all common sense. But most people are just too busy to discover them.”

“So true.”

“Next, I recommend that you encourage *your employees to become massively competent*,” came the quick reply. “It sort of relates to what I was just saying about being a lifelong learner. But it is even more than that. Being massively competent as an employee means that you stop waiting for management to hold your hand and guide you through the change process. Instead, you assume responsibility for yourself and situations that arise. If there are problems in your division, start thinking about ways that you can fix them. Stop finger-pointing and begin to see yourself as a problem-solver.”

“And what can I do, as the leader, to help people develop this sense of maturity and ownership in their work?”

“The secret is to help them increase their ability to add value. People are rewarded in the marketplace according to the value they add to it. A person who flips hamburgers might be more creative than a CEO who makes a nine-figure annual income, but he is obviously adding less value to the market. As a result, he gets paid far less. By helping your people improve their knowledge and competence, you will allow them to add greater value. You will help them realize that organizational change is not a spectator sport and to survive it, they need to get into the game and make their

contributions. In doing so, they will not only raise their levels of confidence and initiative, they will also dramatically reduce the stress they experience.”

“How so?”

“One of the greatest stresses associated with high-velocity change occurs when employees fear they will not be able to keep up and will therefore be seen as less than employable. And yet most organizations still don’t see the value of constant leadership and skills development training. Corporations regularly spend 50 to 70 percent of their money on people’s salaries and yet invest less than 1 percent of their budgets on training them to improve their abilities. It makes no sense. By constantly investing in your people, sending them to training seminars and exposing them to the latest business books, you will sharpen their skills, develop their talents and help them to see that they can actually assume a leading role in effecting change within the organization. You will help them turn weaknesses into strengths. ‘Empty the pennies from your purse into your mind and your mind will fill your purse with dollars and keep it full forever,’ said Ben Franklin, while Abe Lincoln noted that ‘one’s security in life comes from doing something uncommonly well.’ Spend the money required to make your people leaders in their field. Understand that employee development is an investment, not an expense. Know that *the growth of your company is directly proportional to the growth of your people*. By helping your people become so good at what they do that they become indispensable, you will not only boost productivity, you will gain loyalty.”

“That’s so true, Julian. We have this one young guy who started out as a shipping clerk. He was a really nice kid — one of the few people in the company I connected to in any real way — and from time to time I would have a quick chat with him. He told me that he really wanted to try his hand at computer programming but lacked the skills. So I sent him through a training program at no cost to him. Pretty soon, at lunchtime he was hanging around with the

other programmers and giving them a hand. It became clear that the kid was gifted, so one of my managers gave him a job writing software programs.”

“So where is he now?”

“He’s our number-one programmer. One of our competitors tried to lure him away with the incentive of a much higher income, but he turned the offer down. Said he was happy just where he is. I wish all my team felt that way.”

“Maybe they would if you invested in them as you did in the young hotshot. You rewarded him with the chance to develop himself; he, in turn, rewarded you with his trust. See, another reason why people resist change is that they simply don’t trust the leadership. They don’t believe their managers and supervisors have their best interests in mind. People challenge those who lead egocentrically. Helping your employees to become massively competent will change all that. If you see yourself as a builder of people, they will see that you are committed to them. One very successful company I used to represent allotted only four days of the week for work.”

“What about the fifth?”

“It reserved that for training its people.”

“Unbelievable.”

“Having emphasized the importance of continuous improvement of your people, never forget the forest for the trees.”

“What do you mean?”

“All too often well-intentioned leaders bring in the speakers, send their team members to seminars, invest in the latest business books and tapes, but they fail to remember the most important thing.”

“Which is?”

“Knowledge that remains unapplied is worthless. Success is not

determined by what you know. Many employees realize what things they need to do to help the organization prosper. Lasting success comes only through acting on what you know, putting it into practice. To become a truly world-class company, you and your people must move from learning to doing and from wishing to being. I still recall that in his little hut Yogi Raman had a saying that reminded him of the importance of acting on positive intentions.”

“What did it say?”

“It read, ‘Spring has past, summer has gone and winter is here. And the song that I meant to sing is still unsung. I have spent my days stringing and unstringing my instrument.’ I believe those words kept him connected to the fact that time is passing and now is the time to translate your good ideas into real results.”

Julian then looked up at the sky, staring at one particular area and muttering something that sounded like, “I’ll be looking for you soon, my friend.” By now, I’d grown used to his sometimes odd behavior and chalked it up to his exposure to the otherworldly sages in the Himalayas.

“Okay, a final thought before we call it a morning,” he continued, returning his attention to me. “I know you must be tired from all the excitement earlier and I’ve got some things I have to attend to today. The last of the natural laws that will help you master change is the one I mentioned to you last time we met: *as you sow, so shall you reap*. It’s the ancient Law of the Harvest.”

Julian then walked me over to his vegetable garden. “I spend some time every morning cultivating my garden. I show it great respect since its produce feeds me. I lovingly till the soil, offer it water and keep it clear of weeds. I have learned that the more I care for it, the more it will care for me. These vegetables are another one of the reasons I look as young as I do.”

Julian then reached over and pulled out a fresh bunch of carrots. I was amazed at how big they were and told him so.

“Want to take some of these home with you?”

“Sure, Samantha would love them.”

“You see, Peter, our minds are very much like this garden. If we care for them, if we cultivate them and if we put in only the best nourishment, they will produce a bounty that will lead us to success. The problem with most people is that they let anything in. They start their days reading the negative stories in the newspaper. Then they have negative thoughts while waiting in traffic. Once at work, they focus on all the negative things rather than having the wisdom to search for the positives. And then, at the end of the day, after filling their minds with nothing but the worst input, they wonder why they feel so tired and miserable. Remember, your mind can either be your best friend or your worst enemy. Don’t let the weeds take over. Manage your inner morale. Assume full responsibility for attitude control. As you sow, so shall you reap.”

“My father used to tell me that one,” I said quietly.

“It sounds like he was a wise man,” noted Julian. “You see, when you really get down to it, leaders don’t lead companies. They don’t even lead people. What they really lead and inspire are *attitudes*. They show their people the higher reality that waits for them on the horizon and then equip them with the enthusiasm and skills they need to get there. So place a premium on positive thinking in your organization. Believe me, it’s not ‘soft stuff’ like many unenlightened leaders and managers will tell you. An inspired, energized mind-set is the very essence of success.

“I’ll tell you something else,” Julian added. “*In this new era of business you are privileged to live in, ideas are the true commodity of success. How far you go will be determined by how well you think. As Disraeli said, ‘Nurture your mind with great thoughts for you will never go any higher than you think.’*”

“That’s a really good point, Julian. What you mean is that, when all is said and done, the only limitations to our success lie within our thinking.”

“Exactly. Think about it for a second. Every great discovery, achievement or invention began as a simple thought in the mind of an inspired man or woman. Edison’s idea to create the incandescent light bulb or Salk’s desire to develop a vaccine to protect against polio or Gandhi’s drive to deliver his people to freedom all began as a single thought in their minds. Nothing more, nothing less. Are you beginning to see the power that lies within the ten-pound mass resting between your shoulders and the shoulders of your people?”

“Yes.”

“So one of the best change-management disciplines you can possibly follow is to start conditioning your mind and the minds of your people to view all the upheaval that is going on as one huge opportunity to learn, grow and succeed. Train them to constantly see the good in every circumstance, the possibilities where others see adversity. Visionary leaders show their people a higher, more inspiring reality when the rest of the world sees darkness,” Julian said, his voice filled with passion. “As Helen Keller said, ‘No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars, or sailed to an uncharted land, or opened a new heaven to the human spirit.’”

“Oh, and by the way,” Julian added, “I also suggest you tell your people to become inverse paranoids. It will really boost productivity and morale.”

“What’s an inverse paranoid?”

“An inverse paranoid is someone who believes the world is conspiring to do something *good* to him or her. And as the great Harvard psychologist William James once said, ‘Belief creates the actual fact.’”

“I like that one.”

“It’s true, Peter. Our expectations create our reality. Success in business and in life is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Thoughts have power — never forget this timeless natural law. You see, thinking is a lot like walking down these footpaths,” said Julian, as he pointed to an intricate series of paths leading to different locations, away

from his hut, “Every day, you have a choice as to which path you will take. Take one path and it is certain to take you to one destination. Choose another, it will take you to an entirely different place. If there’s one thing the sages taught, it’s that the quality of your leadership can ultimately be traced back to the quality of your choices.”

“Really?”

“Sure. The ageless law of cause and effect always prevails. The level of your success will, at the end of the day, boil down to what activities and initiatives you have chosen to focus on. What people you have chosen to surround yourself with. What opportunities you and GlobalView have chosen to seize. What books you have chosen to read.”

“And what thoughts I have chosen to allow into the garden of my mind,” I said, fully grasping the point Julian was making about the power of choice.

“Excellent, Peter. I couldn’t have asked for a better student, you know,” replied Julian. “So like I say, thinking is like walking down these footpaths. If you have the self-discipline to choose the right one, it will take you to where you are hoping to go. But if you take the wrong one, you can be certain you will never reach your predetermined destination. And that’s what negative thinking is all about. A stressful thought enters your mind and rather than moving on to another more enlightening one, you walk down that path. And just like on these footpaths, the more times you walk down that negative path, the more familiar it will become. The more it will feel like this is the path for you. And we both know where that kind of mind-set will lead you in this era of change. Yogi Raman shared with me the fact that the Sanskrit word for ‘funeral pyre’ appears strikingly similar to the word for ‘worry.’ ”

“Amazing.”

“Actually it’s not when you think about it. The two are related.”

“Really?”

“Sure. *The funeral pyre burns the dead while worry burns the living.* So when a disempowering thought slips into your mind, refuse to empower it by lending it further energy. Refuse to go down that path and quickly move on. It will make a world of difference in the way you think and feel.”

“Mark Twain used to say, ‘I’ve had a lot of trouble in my life, some of which actually happened.’ Now I finally understand what he meant by it,” I observed.

“I’ll have to remember that one, Peter. As you can tell, I love to quote the wisdom of great thinkers and that’s a good one.”

As Julian led me through the forest back to where my four-wheel drive rested, I contemplated all the changes GlobalView was going through and how I might apply his leadership wisdom to use them to our advantage. In our short time together, I began to see that change really was nature’s way of ensuring that things evolved and improved. Rather than fighting it, I now understood I had to surrender to it and align myself with it if I hoped to meet with success. I had to adopt a new, more enlightened worldview and focus on the tremendous opportunities presented by this new era of business we found ourselves in. I had to stop blaming change and become a part of it. As Thomas Fuller once observed, “Accusing the times is but excusing ourselves.” My managers and I had to stop being so reactive and become more adaptive. We had to become visionary leaders. It had been an extraordinary morning and I told Julian so.

“The best is yet to come, my friend. You won’t believe where our next meeting will take place. I have quite a session planned for you,” he chuckled.

“I can’t wait,” I replied, shaking my head from side to side. “I better make sure all my health insurance is paid up. Learning the rituals of visionary leaders has been quite an adventure! So where will it be?”

“At the Yaleford Military Base,” came the straightforward reply.

“You’re kidding, right?”

“No. It’s the perfect place for me to reveal the fifth ritual of the timeless leadership system that Yogi Raman shared with me deep within the Himalayas. Let’s meet at 8:00 P.M. next Friday night.”

“Sure. Do I get a quick preview?” I asked, unable to control my curiosity.

“Sure, why not. Have a look for yourself,” Julian said as he reached into his robe and pulled out yet another of the wooden puzzle pieces I now looked forward to receiving. I had discovered that the previous ones all fit together perfectly and were starting to form some sort of image. I was sure that this new addition would add further clarity to the shape that was forming.

“I can’t see any letters on this one, Julian. What’s wrong?”

“It’s upside down, my friend,” he offered with a grin.

Sure enough, when I rotated the piece I saw the markings I had hoped for, the next clue to how I could transform my leadership and jump-start our organization. The inscription read only, *Ritual 5: Focus on the Worthy.*

Chapter 8 Knowledge Summary • Julian's Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Ritual



The Essence

The Ritual of Adaptability and Change Management

The Wisdom

- To master change, develop the discipline of managing the unexpected
- Only a learning culture grows amid change. Champion constant intellectual development and skills improvement. The best antidote to the fear that change evokes is knowledge. In these turbulent times, he who learns most wins.
- There is joy in change. Without change, there is no progress. Change is essential for our evolution as a civilization and necessary for our survival. Change is humanity's best friend.

The Practices

- Become massively competent
- Move from learning to doing
- Inspire positive attitudes to the opportunities change presents

Quotable Quote

Doing the same things every day cannot deliver new results. To change the results you are getting, you need to change the things you are doing. You must transform the way you are leading.

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

RITUAL 5



Focus on the Worthy



The Ritual of Personal Effectiveness

Your task it is, amid confusion, rush and noise, to grasp the lasting calm and meaningful and finding it anew, to hold and treasure it.

Paul Hindemith

It had been many years since I had been to the old military base just off County Road Number 27. My father used to take me there as a boy. For hours we would sit on the high hill that overlooked the compound and watch the soldiers performing their drills with pinpoint accuracy. I still don't know what he found so absorbing about the spectacle. Maybe it was the pageantry. Perhaps it was the precision of the exercises. Maybe it was the simple fact that the outing offered him rare time alone with his little boy. One thing was for certain, however, I sure did miss him.

As I parked my BMW in the empty lot, I scanned the grounds for Julian. It was 8:00 P.M. and I was right on time, but my old friend was nowhere in sight. The only people I could see were young cadets marching across the field with their youthful-looking drill sergeant shouting commands at the top of his lungs.

For a while the soldiers remained at the center of the grassy area, but then they started marching in my direction. I wondered why they would be coming near the parking lot when they had the whole compound to practice their routines. Soon it became obvious that they were headed straight for me. As the cadets drew closer, their strides quickened. I remained in my spot, not moving a muscle. As they neared, I could see that many of them were smiling. Some were even laughing as streams of sweat trickled down their faces, the salty by-products of rigorous exercise and the evening sun.

I still couldn't see the sergeant who was running the show, but I decided I would give him a piece of my mind. After all, these were the people who were charged with protecting this great country and their drills should have been taken seriously. Surely they had better things to do than harass an innocent civilian. Then the cadets all stopped. While they kept their smiles, none of them looked at me, preferring to fix their gaze on a point off in the distance. I decided I would take the initiative, so I started walking down the line of people, searching for their leader.

Finally I reached the end. Though his face was shielded by the brim of the hat he wore, I could see that he was in perfect shape: tall, lanky and trim, with a ramrod-straight posture to match.

"What's going on here?" I questioned in the gruff tone that once made my employees twitch. "I just pulled into the parking lot to meet a friend. Why have you marched your people over to me? I wasn't in your way."

"We have come to interrogate you," came the firm reply. "There is a question we must ask you. If you answer it correctly, you are free to do as you please. If, on the other hand, you give us the wrong answer, we will have to take you into custody."

Surely this had to be a joke. All I had done was drive into their parking lot. I was the CEO of one of the largest corporations in the country. I paid my taxes and followed the law. While I might not have been a great leader, my sins did not warrant incarceration.

"Look, I don't know what this is all about, but I think you have the wrong guy. I'm a businessman. I run a big software company. I'm here to meet an old friend who was supposed to be here at 8:00 P.M. It's not like him to be late. Perhaps you and your men saw him on the grounds. You couldn't have missed him. He would have been wearing a red monk's robe."

The men all started laughing, quietly at first and then much louder. The drill sergeant maintained his composure and continued,

“I still need to ask you this one question. As I say, if you answer it correctly, you can do what you want to do.”

“Okay, let’s hear it,” I replied in utter frustration.

“Did you bring the fifth piece of the puzzle?” asked the soldier.

“I beg your pardon?” I stuttered.

“You heard me, Peter, did you bring the fifth piece of the puzzle? How can we continue with Yogi Raman’s formula for visionary leadership if you don’t have the next piece of the puzzle?”

I immediately reached over and ripped the long-brimmed hat off the man’s head. I was shocked to see who it was. It was Julian! He swiftly slapped me on the back and laughed while the recruits, who were obviously in on his elaborately crafted ploy, began to cheer.

“Welcome to Yaleford Military Base, Peter!”

“You’re unbelievable, Julian. How did you get everyone to go along with you? And what happened to your robe? I thought you never took it off.”

“Only for special occasions like this,” he smirked. “The base commander and I are old friends. We went to Harvard together. He owed me a favor and I decided this was the time to call it in.”

The cadets returned to formation and headed back to the barracks while Julian and I walked to the center of the field, just as the sun was setting on yet another beautiful summer’s day. By now, I had calmed down and begun to see the humor in Julian’s prank.

“I did bring the fifth piece of the puzzle, though,” I said.

“Great. Tonight’s lesson is another essential one if you truly hope to enrich your leadership.”

“And what exactly does Focus on the Worthy mean?”

“Let’s say I had the power to grant you any wish. What would you ask for?”

“That’s easy. Like most other leaders and managers I know, I’d love to have more time. Just give me an extra hour a day and I’d be one happy man. With all the meetings I have to attend, all the reports I have to read and all the problems I have to solve, I never seem to have time to do the important things that would really allow GlobalView to excel. I mean I can’t remember the last time I had a few hours to simply sit back and strategize our future. There always seem to be a hundred tiny brush fires to put out and the deeper issues that I know I need to think about always get put over to another day. So my wish would definitely be for more time.”

“You’ve got it,” replied Julian.

“Just like that?”

“Well, I already told you how to get it: Focus on the worthy. The secret of having more time to concentrate on the necessary things is to have the courage to neglect those that are unnecessary.”

“Is it really that simple?”

“It is. It’s the habit that every visionary leader before you has mastered since time immemorial. One day, the great inventor Thomas Edison was asked the secret behind his extraordinary success. He pondered for a moment and then replied, ‘The ability to apply your physical and mental abilities to one problem incessantly without growing weary.’ You do something all day long don’t you? Everyone does. If you get up at 7:00 A.M. and go to bed at 11:00 P.M. you have put in sixteen good hours, and it is certain that most people have been doing something all that time. *The only trouble is that they devote their time to a great many things, while I devote mine to only one. If they took the time in question and applied it to one object, they would succeed.*

“Visionary leaders have a clear sense of their destination and exactly what things they need to accomplish to reach it,” continued Julian. “They know intimately their high-yield activities, those that result in the progress they need to make in order to get to where they want to go. Anything else is a waste of their precious time and

they disregard it. You see, Peter, *the real secret of personal effectiveness is concentration of purpose.* As Emerson stated, ‘Concentration is the secret of strength in war, in trade; in short in the management of human affairs.’ In leadership, there are activities that are worthy of your energy and attention and there are activities that are unworthy of them. Once you figure out which ones to focus on and then have the self-discipline to do it, your effectiveness as a leader will be liberated.”

“In business school I remember reading Peter Drucker’s admonition to ‘switch from being busy to achieving results,’ ” I offered.

“Correct. And he also wrote that ‘there is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all.’ The oriental philosopher Confucius made the point even more simply when he said, ‘The man who chases two rabbits catches neither.’ Yogi Baman put it yet another way when he told me, ‘*The person who tries to do everything achieves nothing.*’ So the real secret to getting things done is knowing what things need to remain undone. And that’s what Ritual 5 is all about, it’s the ritual of personal effectiveness. To find the time to do what you should be doing in order to get where you are going, you must have the leadership discipline to focus on the worthy. You must develop a sense of tunnel vision for your highest leadership priorities. Once you do, you will never be the same again.”

“Can you give me an example of worthy activities?”

“Only you can decide on those for sure. Let me just say that any pursuit that somehow advances you closer to the vision you have of the future is time well spent. Any task that actually gives you a solid return on the time invested and gets you nearer to the outcome you are ultimately aiming for should be considered. It’s like the old law you must have learned in business school that held that 20 percent of your activities deliver 80 percent of your production. So focus on the things that count, those pursuits that are worthy. And the magic of the concept is that by saying yes to the worthy, you

implicitly say no to the unnecessary. You automatically simplify your leadership and streamline your life.”

“Simplify my leadership. I really like the sound of that one.”

“It’s like a Zen monk once said, ‘Most people I know try to become more clever every day, whereas I attempt to become more simple and uncomplicated every day.’ The simpler your leadership focus, the more effective you will be.”

“Okay, let me try to come up with some of those high-yield activities that will link me to my mission and advance the compelling cause that I’ve come up with since we met a few weeks ago. What if I spend time communicating my vision and helping my people understand how achieving it will help us touch the lives of others?”

“Definitely high-yield. Good answer,” Julian remarked, clapping his hands like a game-show host.

“How about spending time with my managers asking one another how we can motivate our people by Rewarding Routinely and Recognizing Relentlessly?”

“Well done, Peter. Another fine idea.”

Sensing I had the gist of the leadership philosophy Julian was sharing with me, I rushed through a partial list of activities that I realized would transform my leadership effectiveness: regular periods of strategic thinking, consistent preparation and planning, professional and personal development and relationship building.

“And the funny thing is,” added Julian, “that the more time you spend on these high-yield activities, the less time you will have to spend on all those crazy little emergencies you’ve complained of that seem to suck away your precious time.”

“How so?”

“Just think about it. If you spend your days communicating your message and building richer relationships rather than micro-

managing as most leaders do, there will be fewer misunderstandings and less conflict. By spending more time praising and rewarding your people for behavior you want to see repeated, quality, productivity and efficiency will skyrocket. Again, saving you time. And if you devote more time to strategic thinking and improving your own knowledge base, you will become a better thinker, making wiser decisions in the process. Again, smarter decisions mean fewer crises, which means that you save time. It's actually a brilliant concept that the sages came up with. I still can't believe how powerful it is."

"Why do you think most of us don't apply it?"

"Well, first, most people are so busy that they've never stepped back to consider how they could improve their own effectiveness. But as Thoreau said, 'It is not enough to be busy, so are the ants. The real question is what are you so busy about?' Most people are ant chasers rather than elephant hunters if you get my metaphor; they spend their days concentrating on trifles that don't contribute to the advancement of their objectives rather than going after the big game that would really get them to their professional and personal goals. They just don't focus on the things that count. The second reason is that they don't know where to start. They've been squandering their time for so long that they have no idea how to turn things around."

"I'm all ears."

"The trick is to have a system. Effective systems ensure inevitable results. What I'm really trying to tell you is that if you want to focus on the worthy, *you must first ritualize the worthy*. You need a system that will allow you to integrate your high-leverage activities into your day, every day. Only in this way will you be able to shield your hours from the low-impact activities which, over time, will destroy your leadership."

"Did Yogi Boman give you a system to ritualize the worthy?"

"He sure did. It's called the Time Model for Visionary

Leadership. Quite simply, it is the most effective method I have ever come across for time leadership.”

“You mean time management.”

“No, I mean time leadership. Every sane person in business today has some way to manage time. But only the visionaries have discovered how to *lead* their time. *Visionary leaders have the wisdom to understand that if you don’t lead your time, it will lead you.*

“Interesting thought,” I noted. “So how does this Time Model for Visionary Leadership work? It sounds complicated.”

“Actually it’s incredibly simple once you get the hang of it. ‘Simplicity is the highest form of elegance,’ my Himalayan friends would say. The first thing you must do is set aside a period of time for what Yogi Raman called ‘a weekly planning practice.’ This might be a half-hour on a Sunday night or first thing on a Monday morning. My recommendation to you is that you do it on Sunday night. The weekend’s activities have come to an end and it is easier to find a little quiet time for yourself.”

“Easier than on Monday morning, that’s for certain.”

“True. Once you’ve figured out when you’re going to do your planning every week, there are five key steps you must follow to ritualize the worthy and ensure that every action you take during the coming week brings you closer to your ultimate goal. Step One is to revisit your future vision. Silently consider both the vision statement you have developed not only for your company but also for your life. Envision what ultimate success will look like both professionally and personally. This will remind you of where you are going and renew your sense of purpose. Deeply connect to what GlobalView will be when you reach your destination and how your family life will look once you become the kind of husband and loving father you hope to be. Revisiting your vividly imagined future will keep you inspired and focused on the things that count.”

“I’m with you so far. What comes next?”

“Step Two then requires you to review the annual victories you have determined are worthy of achieving this year.”

“Exactly what are annual victories?”

“They are the objectives you have set for yourself after figuring out what uses of your time will have the most impact on the advancement of your future vision during the current year. They are your annual goals. By reconnecting with them, you will remind yourself of your best practices, those pursuits that are certain to deliver you and your company to your predetermined destination. And you will begin to have a much clearer sense of those low-yield activities that wise leaders never even go near. If there’s one thing that can be said about the new era of business we find ourselves in, it’s that leaders are facing more choices than ever before.

“On any given day,” Julian continued, “there are a hundred possible opportunities to consider or a hundred new changes to implement or one hundred possible trade magazines to read. There are one hundred possible things to do at the office and one hundred possible channels to watch on TV and one hundred possible books to read in whatever spare time you have. We are being overwhelmed by choice. Just the other day I went into the grocery store and noticed there were fifteen different kinds of bread! The only way to survive the incredible barrage of choice coming at us is to have a predetermined game plan. If you have one, you will have created a framework that will allow you to select only those choices that will advance your purpose. You will begin to be the master of all the choices rather than their servant. As the novelist Saul Bellow once wrote, ‘A plan relieves you of the torment of choice.’ ”

“That’s a powerful way of putting it.”

“And Victor Hugo said this about the importance of having clearly defined goals and a firm plan, ‘He who every morning plans the transactions of the day and follows out that plan carries a thread that will guide him through the labyrinth of the most busy day. The orderly arrangement of his time is like a ray of light which darts

itself through all his occupations. But where no plan is laid, where the disposal of time is surrendered merrily to the chance of incidents, all things lie huddled together in one chaos, which admits of neither distribution nor review.’

“My point is that smart leaders have already predetermined the best uses of their time. And in so doing, they are better able to manage the army of choices they are faced with. It’s easy to say no to something when there’s a better thing to do. As I said earlier, the secret to getting things done is knowing what to leave undone. This is the ancient Law of Planned Neglect and it is a law that has been mastered by every visionary leader since the beginning of time.”

“This is really intriguing, Julian. What you are sharing with me is an almost scientific process to get important things done in an age where there are too many things to do.”

“That’s right and that’s precisely why I say that the model helps you to ritualize the worthy.”

“And Step Three in the process?” I inquired.

“Once you have connected to your future vision, either by imagining it in your mind’s eye or reviewing it on paper, and taken a quick glance at the specific victories you plan to achieve this year, you must ask yourself a very powerful question: ‘What minor victories or little goals must I accomplish *over the next seven days* for me to feel that this week has advanced me in the direction of both my professional and personal vision?’ Your answer will give you what Yogi Raman called a series of ‘weekly wins.’ Those goals are what you must focus on through the week. They will allow you to have the self-discipline to sacrifice the good for the best. These weekly objectives will concentrate your energy and attention on the worthy.”

“What do you mean when you say coming up with my weekly wins will help me sacrifice the good for the best?”

“Well, *all too often* leaders let their good intentions dominate their best ones. Rather than constantly asking themselves whether

they are making the best possible use of their time they focus on activities that are simply *good* uses of their time. And believe me, there's a big difference. *Visionary leaders focus on the best and delegate the rest.* Never forget that.”

“And by focusing on the best uses of my time through your weekly wins concept, every day of the week and the week itself will serve some purpose, right?”

“Yes. Most people let their days slip by without realizing that the days slip into weeks and the weeks slip into months and the months slip into years. They put second things first and major in the minor. Pretty soon your whole life has slipped by simply because you didn't take charge of your days. As the sages used to tell me, *'If you don't act on life, life will act on you.'*”

“That's so true,” I replied, growing reflective.

“No only that, they also believed that every day is nothing but a miniature version of your life. In life, at the beginning you are born and at the end you die. Similarly, in your days, in the morning you wake up and at night you go to sleep. But what you do in between those daily periods determines, in a very real way, whether your life will be one that is well lived or wasted. Never forget the importance of each and every one of your days, Peter. *As you live your days, so you live your life.* Don't waste even a single one of them. The past is history and the future is just a figment. This day, the present, is really all you have.”

“So setting weekly wins each week will bring me closer to my annual victories, which, in turn, will advance me in the direction of my future vision, right?”

“Exactly.”

“Wow. That means that if I follow this simple process, every single one of my weeks will count for something.”

“Right. And your life begins to be flooded with a sense of fulfillment and energy because you know you are steadily moving

toward the place you have dreamed of being,” noted Julian.

“So once I’ve determined my weekly wins, what comes next?”

“Step Four of the Time Model for Visionary Leadership requires you to integrate the weekly wins you have promised yourself you will achieve over the coming seven days into your daily schedule. You see, by actually writing your weekly goals into your schedule, much as you would a meeting with your best customer, you will be sure to follow through on them. By carving out specific times to achieve your weekly wins before less worthy things get scheduled, you will be certain to give your priorities the priority they deserve. Remember this time leadership truth, *if your priorities don’t get put into your planner, other peoples’ priorities will get put into your planner.* And by practicing the simple time planning discipline I am suggesting, every one of your days will link you that much closer to your future vision. It’s the ultimate tool for a life of achievement.”

“I guess the real challenge would be to stick to the plan once the days start getting busy, as mine always do.”

“That’s right. *The golden key to time leadership is really doing what you planned to do, when you planned to do it.* Like every other one of the leadership philosophies I’ve shared with you, the starting point is self-discipline.”

“Really?”

“Absolutely. Self-discipline is the DNA of visionary leadership. Self-discipline is the common trait of the best of the best. Self-discipline is what allows a leader to go beyond knowing to doing. Like I told you, it’s not what you know that’s important. Success comes from *acting* on what you know — and self-discipline is what stirs visionary leaders into action.”

My father used to talk about the importance of discipline and self-control when I was growing up. I still remember him telling me that *‘the tougher you are on yourself, the easier life will be on you.’* And, to use Julian’s terminology, my dad’s ‘video was in synch

with his audio.’ He would wake up at 5:00 A.M. every day of the week and go out for his daily run. He didn’t smoke or drink and lived a simple but honorable life. He never spoke ill of others and always kept his promises. He truly believed that the dissatisfaction most people experienced in their lives could be traced back to a lack of discipline, whether that meant not having the self-control to eat well or not nurturing key relationships or not having the courage to take some risks and follow one’s dreams. ‘Maybe that’s why he loved bringing me to this military base,’ I thought. These soldiers are models of discipline. They are trained to get things done and never back down from what they know to be right. They come up with a plan and then have the inner power to follow it to completion. I shared my thoughts with Julian.

“That’s precisely why I brought you here this evening,” he replied, delighted with my insight. “The ritual of ‘focusing on the worthy’ requires tremendous self-discipline and inner conviction. *The greatest battles we fight take place within ourselves.* These soldiers and their commitment to keeping themselves on a short leash, to getting tough with themselves, will always remind you of that. You see, Peter, it’s a complete waste of time to go through the planning process I’m sharing with you and schedule periods to carry out your highest-yield activities and then, when push comes to shove, let something else intrude. *There’s no point in strategic planning if you never carry out the plan.* I know it isn’t always easy to do what you planned to do when there are so many distractions that might be so much easier to pursue. But you must do what you know to be right. ‘The successful person has the habit of doing the things failures don’t like to do,’ remarked essayist and thinker E. M. Gray. ‘They don’t like doing them either necessarily. But their disliking is subordinated to the strength of their purpose.’ The nineteenth-century English writer Thomas Henry Huxley arrived at a similar conclusion noting, ‘Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not.’ ”

“Those are absolutely brilliant observations, Julian.”

“That’s what self-discipline and personal courage are all about — doing the things we must do, even if we don’t like doing them. *Deferring those things that are easy to do and preferring those things that are honorable and right to do.* I’m not saying you shouldn’t be flexible. If something unexpected comes up, by all means attend to it if it’s the best use of your time at that particular moment. Like I said when we were discussing how to manage change, flexibility is one of the most important disciplines for visionary leadership. But just make sure you focus the majority of your time on the worthy things, on the right things.”

“So back to the Time Model for Visionary Leadership. I just write the weekly wins I have to come up with into my daily planner and then have the courage and self-discipline to stick to them?”

“Yes and no.”

“C’mon, Julian. I’m serious. I really need to learn this process. I have a feeling the sages were onto something very powerful.”

“I say yes because you must note your weekly wins into your organizer. I say no because it’s actually a little more sophisticated than that. I call the technique of integrating your weekly wins into your days *strategic time blocking.*”

“Sounds fascinating,” I replied.

“It’s a totally new way to make sure the weekly goals you set for yourself actually get done, when you planned to do them. It’s a great way to cultivate the self-discipline you need to become a visionary leader when you might not have developed as much of it as you should have. Strategic time blocking will profoundly change your personal effectiveness and revolutionize your productivity. Most leaders suffer from a dreaded disease. Any idea what it’s called?”

“Haven’t a clue, Julian.”

“The disease I am referring to is the disease known only as ‘dilution of focus’ — and it is one of the most dangerous diseases

known to humanity. By diluting their personal focus and trying to be all things to all people, these leaders get nothing done. By diluting their focus and trying to do too many things in too many different directions, they become the victim of their good intentions. Focusing on the worthy and only on the worthy will set your leadership free. It will allow you to do all the things you have wanted to do and dreamed of doing. And strategic time blocking will help you do it.”

“Okay, so how do I do it?”

“The first thing you need to do is designate the different days of your week in terms of different areas of focus. It’s almost like building a mold according to subject matter for each day and then pouring specific activities into it. If you do so, you will no longer waste your days scrambling to do a hundred different things. Instead, you will focus on a particular area each day and then devote your time to it. For example, Monday could be your day to concentrate only on issues and initiatives that involve your employees. You might label Monday Human Relations Day. Then make sure that any weekly win dealing with that subject gets scheduled on that day. Don’t think about sales issues or work on new product development on that day. Stay focused. Next you might designate Tuesday as your Business Development Day. Again, that day will be strictly reserved for activities relating to generating new business. Wednesday might be your day reserved for marketing or finance-related issues. Thursday might be your Open Day, meaning you will be free to deal with any crisis that might come up or to catch up on general administrative issues or just be available for anyone who needs you.”

“And what about Friday? What should I designate that day as?”

“You can set it aside for whatever worthy area you would like to focus on. As I’ve said, you need to be the one to craft and tailor the kind of week that is best suited for you. *Let time be your servant rather than your master.* My suggestion to you, however, is that you reserve Friday as your Renewal Day, the day that you set aside to

revitalize your leadership and re-create yourself as an executive. All your weekly wins dealing with this subject are scheduled at this time. You might spend it on strategic thinking and clarifying your future vision for the company. You might dedicate it to preparation and future planning priorities. You could use it to go to a leadership seminar or work with a personal development coach. You might devote it to catching up on all those publications you subscribe to but rarely get a chance to review or to get deep into a hot new management book that will give you some new ideas to catapult GlobalView up to the next level. Or you might use it to brainstorm with your management team. By committing to the time leadership method I am suggesting, you will finally be able to turn all your good intentions into tangible results. Are you beginning to see what strategic time blocking is all about?”

“I am. By applying the concept, my time becomes concentrated on the things that count. And as you and the greatest thinkers have said, concentrating effort and focusing on the worthy is the secret of getting meaningful things done in life. I will no longer get pulled into a million different directions every day and do a hundred different things in a half-hearted way. I will no longer have to leave everything I start unfinished and rush off to put out the next little brush fire. Instead, I’ll bring focus to my days by following a weekly cycle of designated focus areas and spending time on the ‘worthy’ activities that will get us closer to our vision. I can also see that the process will allow me to make time for those all-important ‘big-picture’ activities, such as flexing my imagination and strategic thinking. I’m really impressed and I can’t wait to try the process out.”

“So let me summarize,” interjected Julian. “There are five steps to the Time Model for Visionary Leadership. First you must adopt a weekly planning practice and carve out some time, say on Sunday night, to connect to your vision. Your vision will serve as your personal lighthouse, offering guidance and keeping you on the proper course. Step Two involves reviewing your annual victories, those goals you have determined you need to accomplish this year

to keep moving forward. Step Three in the process is to come up with a series of weekly wins, or micro goals that you must accomplish during the coming week. Once you have your weekly wins, Step Four requires that you schedule them into your days by applying the technique of strategic time blocking. Every day of the week has a designated area of focus. Schedule each activity into the particular day designated for it and you will ensure that it gets done. It's really pretty simple once you do it for three or four weeks."

"And what about Step Five?"

"Step Five is about what Yogi Bhanu called 'regular reflection.' *Reflection is the mother of wisdom*, Peter. Never forget that. And having wisdom allows you to make wiser choices, which, in turn, leads to a richer life, both professionally and personally. Every Sunday night, as you plan the coming week, take a few moments to deeply consider the week that you have just lived. Did you do what you planned to do, when you planned to do it? If not, why not? What would you have done differently if you had the chance to spend that week again? Did you truly 'focus on the worthy'? Awareness precedes change, and if you are not aware of the activities you are spending time on, you will never discover that there are ones more deserving of your energy. By reflecting on how you spend your time, you will not only be more effective during the next week, you will also get to know yourself."

"Don't most people know themselves?"

"Not at all. Most people have no real idea of their strengths or their weaknesses. And as a result, they keep on making the same mistakes over and over again, throughout their entire lives. By taking the time to reflect on how you are leading and how you are living, you will be able to make those all-important course corrections every week so that you continually grow as a leader — and as a person. Remember, my friend, there's nothing wrong with making a mistake. Mistakes allow us to mature and become wiser. But there is something wrong with constantly making the same mistakes. It shows a complete lack of wisdom. Instead, begin to

leverage past errors for future successes. Allow your past to serve you. That's one of the greatest abilities of visionary leaders. That's also one of the fundamentals of effective living. Regular reflection will ensure that you practice this habit. As Seneca stated, 'As long as you live, keep learning how to live.' ”

Darkness now filled the sky and the only sounds in the air were those of the bullfrogs and crickets. I was really enjoying this evening with Julian. Two old friends, sitting quietly under a starry sky, savoring the pleasures of each other's company and contemplating the larger issues of leadership and life. I wondered why I hadn't thought about these things before. Was I really so busy that I didn't have time to think about the things that truly mattered?

In the weeks since Julian first showed up in the rose garden outside my office, striking changes had taken place within GlobalView. His leadership wisdom had served to give me the wake-up call that I so desperately needed and to show me the path I had to follow if we wanted to reach world-class status as an organization. I had put many of his lessons and philosophies into practice and had trained my entire management team in the rituals for visionary leadership that I had so far been exposed to by Julian. And the changes I had witnessed were nothing short of incredible.

People were buzzing with a new sense of excitement. They felt inspired by the future vision I shared with them and believed they were an integral part of something meaningful. I'd heard some employees saying that, for the first time in years, they were being listened to and their interests were understood. Our new rewards-and-recognition program was a hit as was our first Crazy Day. We had started to come together as a closely knit unit to manage change to our advantage.

After much soul-searching, I myself made some very personal improvements during that period. Through the wisdom Julian had brought into my life, I realized that my role as a leader really was about “freeing people's strengths” and allowing them the freedom to develop themselves as we realized our dreams for GlobalView. I

now appreciated, for the first time in my life, the importance of keeping my promises, “listening aggressively,” “being consistently compassionate” and becoming “fanatically honest,” to use the vocabulary Julian favored. And I started to work hard to manage my temper. Believe me, all my efforts made a world of difference. My wife Samantha especially noticed a change in me. Julian was absolutely right when he said that I had to stop blaming others for the troubles of our organization and assume responsibility for its failings. Like he said, “great leadership precedes great followership.”

Morale began to skyrocket, loyalty and commitment returned; people became more productive than they had been in years. They actually started talking about the company as if they were part owners in it, as if they had an investment stake in its success and as if they were in business for themselves. I liked that. Our new suggestion program, which allowed anyone to send management an idea to improve the way we did things at GlobalView via e-mail, led to some amazing innovations that helped us cut costs, enhance effectiveness, serve our customers better and get closer to our vision for the future. Rest assured, the employees who made those suggestions were amply recognized and rewarded. The leadership wisdom that those sages up in the Himalayas shared with Julian had really worked wonders for us.

“Why do you keep looking at that star, Julian?” I asked as he again stared at the brightest star in the sky. “You said you were going to tell me.”

“I will, but the time is not quite right. Soon it will be, for we are coming closer to the end of Yogi Raman’s system for visionary leadership. For now, let me just say that that star has been a friend to me. You know I’ve been through a lot in my life, especially during the past few years with my heart attack and all. Leaving the corporate world was a major act of faith for me and I left a lot behind.”

“Like that beautiful Ferrari,” I piped in.

“Like that Ferrari,” Julian acknowledged. “That star has helped me along the way.”

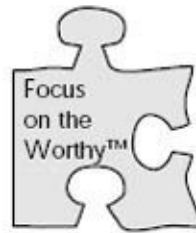
I still had no idea of what Julian was speaking of, but sensing his unwillingness to explain his relationship to that star, I decided not to press the point.

That night, as I climbed into bed and snuggled up to Samantha, my thoughts remained on Julian. Here was a corporate superstar who had come close to the brink of death. He then gave up everything he had and headed off in search of the wisdom that he knew he had always lacked. The man trekked through India and high into the Himalayas until he found the sources he had been searching for. While the Sages of Sivana gave him the secrets of youth and happiness, they also shared with him the rituals of visionary leadership. The transformation he had undergone as a person was nothing short of miraculous. I now realized that the transformation I had begun to undergo as a leader was no less astonishing.

I reached over to the table next to our bed and flipped on the night-light. I stared at the small object that I had carefully placed next to my reading glasses. It was made of wood and had been given to me by Julian, just before I left him alone at the military base. It was the next piece of the intricate puzzle that had grown over the time we had been meeting. Once again, I could not make out the lightly colored design on it. And once again, it carried an inscription. It read simply, *Ritual 6: Leader Lead Thyself.*

Chapter 9 Knowledge Summary • Julian's Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Ritual



The Essence

The Ritual of Personal Effectiveness

The Wisdom

- The secret of personal effectiveness is concentration of purpose
- The art of getting things done lies in knowing what things need to remain undone
- If you do not lead your time, it will lead you
- If your priorities do not get scheduled into your planner, other peoples' priorities will get scheduled into your planner

The Practices

- The Time Model for Visionary Leadership™
- Strategic Time Blocking™

Quotable Quote

Never forget the importance of each and every one of your days. As you live your days, so you live your life. Do not waste even one of them. The past is history and the future is but a figment. This day, the present, is really all you have.

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

RITUAL 6



Leader Lead Thyself



The Ritual of Self-Leadership

There is nothing noble in being superior to others. True nobility lies in being superior to your former self.

Ancient Indian proverb

Mount Percival is the tallest peak in this part of the country. Mountaineers and adventurers come from far and wide to scale its north face, apparently one of the most treacherous of all of the climbs in our locale. A few years ago, the son of one of my colleagues lost his life on a summit attempt. He and the seven members of his team had been found frozen to death, about two hundred feet from the top. For the life of me, I could not figure out why Julian wanted me to meet him here.

As I drove my four-wheel drive up the winding highway that led to an area near the base of the mountain frequented by tourists and hikers, I realized I had come to rely on Julian's regular coaching sessions. Every single one of our meetings had not only been rich with leadership wisdom and powerful lessons on organizational transformation, they had also been mini-adventures that moved me out of my "region of security," to borrow from Julian's language, and into new pathways of thought and action. I sensed that he would not remain in one place for a very long time since I knew he was deeply committed to spreading the philosophy of the sages throughout our part of the world. And I knew that when he left, I would miss him.

As I drove up to the base area, crowded with people from all across the world on this fine day, I spotted Julian. Unlike the last time, today he had on his traditional ruby red monk's robe and his well-worn sandals. As usual, his face radiated vitality and good health. And as on each of the previous occasions, it carried a smile. It was still a little hard for me to believe that this youthful-looking

man was actually Julian Mantle, the once hard-drinking, fast-living corporate player who had collapsed from a massive heart attack in the middle of a packed courtroom.

“Greetings, Peter!” Julian said with his usual degree of enthusiasm. “It’s quite a day up here on the mountain,” he added, taking a whiff of fresh air deep into his lungs. “Kind of makes me feel as if I was back in the Himalayas with Yogi Raman and the rest of my wise teachers.”

“Do you miss their company?”

“Terribly. They were the kindest, most giving men and women I have ever known. They treated me like I was a part of their small family and I felt like they were a part of mine. Those days, up in that natural oasis of beauty, peace and knowledge were truly the best of my life. Having said that, I made a promise to them and I plan to keep it. I have a duty to perform and will dedicate the rest of my days to spreading their ideas about leadership in business and in life, making sure that their timeless message is heard by all those who need to hear it.”

“Mind if I ask another question?”

“Not at all,” Julian replied as we walked to the lodge to purchase a ticket up the mountain by cable car.

“Why are we going up there?” I asked as I strained my neck to look up at the summit.

“Because there is another leadership lesson I wish to share with you. And that is the perfect place for me to share it.”

As we rode up the mountain, neither of us said a word. The beauty of the scenery was simply breathtaking, something to be taken in fully — and silently. With the feeling of joy that came over me through this connection to the gifts of nature, I wondered why I did not leave that oak-paneled office of mine more often to get outdoors and enjoy the simple pleasures of life. At least, I could bring Samantha and the kids up here on weekends. I really needed

to spend more time with them. And I knew that such an outing would bring a greater sense of perspective to my days along with energy to my weeks.

After about half an hour of steady climbing, the cable car stopped abruptly and a voice on the public address system asked us to “de-car,” a term I had never heard before and prayed I wouldn’t again. Julian, obviously familiar with the place, led me along a snow-covered walkway lined on both sides with thick strands of rope. I silently followed my friend, placing my full trust in this man, who I had learned had my best interests in mind. Finally we arrived at our destination. And it was like nothing I had ever seen.

The ridge we were standing on looked out across the entire region as well as over other smaller mountains, which struggled to push through the billowy clouds in the otherwise clear blue sky. I truly wished Samantha and the kids were there with me. This sight would have amazed them. I felt deeply peaceful in this heavenly place and shared this sentiment with my youthful companion.

“I know what you mean, my friend. I know what you mean.”

After a few minutes of soaking in the view, Julian began his lesson.

“Ritual 6 is an extremely important one, Peter, one that visionary leaders practice on a daily basis. If they fail to do so, even for a few days, their vision is diminished and much of their effectiveness is lost.”

“Exactly what does Leader Lead Thyself mean?” I asked as I pulled the sixth piece of the puzzle from the light ski jacket I had put on for the occasion and glanced more closely at it.

“Ritual 6 is the ritual of self-leadership. Sadly, self-leadership is the discipline most neglected by leaders in this part of the world. And yet, it is the foundation from which all other success in business and in life springs.”

“Is self-leadership the same as self-improvement?”

“It’s about so much more than that. Sir Edmund Hillary, who as you know was the first person to reach the summit of Mount Everest, said it best when he observed, ‘It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves.’ That’s really the essence of self-leadership — it’s about conquering and mastering yourself.”

“Interesting.”

“Most leaders believe that effectiveness and excellence come from external factors like an efficient work force or application of the latest technology. The truth of the matter, as visionary leaders have known over the centuries, is that success is an inside job. Excellence begins within. Market leadership begins with self-leadership.”

After inhaling another deep breath of the crisp mountain air, Julian continued. “You see, Peter, how can you lead an organization if you’ve never learned how to lead yourself? How can you coach a team if you’ve never mastered the art of self-coaching? And how can you expect to manage others if you’ve never refined the skill of managing yourself?”

“My dad used to say that you can’t do good if you don’t feel good.”

“Precisely. And Goethe made the point in a similar way when he noted that ‘Before you can do something you must be something.’ You cannot be the inspirational leader you hope to be if you wake up every morning feeling miserable and depressed. You cannot guide your people forward to victory if you are being kept behind by a lack of energy. You will not be able to capture their hearts and energize their minds if you are still yelling and screaming at them all day. Remember, before you can like another person, you must like yourself. *Success on the outside begins within.*

“It’s like that old story my favorite professor told me when I was in law school,” Julian added. “One night a father was relaxing with his newspaper after a long day at the office. His son, who

wanted to play, kept on pestering him. Finally, fed up, the father ripped out a picture of the globe that was in the paper and tore it into many tiny pieces. ‘Here, son, go ahead and try to put this back together,’ he said, hoping this would keep the little boy busy long enough for him to finish reading his paper. To his amazement, his son returned after only one minute with the globe perfectly reassembled. When the startled father asked how he achieved this feat, the child smiled gently and replied, ‘Dad, on the other side of the globe there was a picture of a person, and once I got the person together, the world was okay.’ ”

“So the lesson is that success on the outside really does begin within. It all starts by getting myself together. And once I do, my own world will be okay, correct?”

“Yes, Peter, that’s it exactly.”

“Are you suggesting that I make personal mastery one of my major goals?”

“Make it a vow.”

“What’s the difference?”

“A goal is something you aim to do, a positive intention that you plan to achieve sometime in the future. I discovered from the sages that a vow is something much deeper than that. Making a vow means you are committed, from the very core of your character, to keeping the promise you have made. Failure is simply not an option. By making a vow, you simply refuse to lose.”

“Self-leadership is really that important?”

“Definitely. All the great thinkers have known of this truth. Seneca said, ‘To master one’s self is the greatest mastery,’ while Confucius noted that ‘good people strengthen themselves ceaselessly.’ ‘Man is made and unmade by himself,’ discovered James Allen, while the sixth-century Chinese military leader Sun Tzu said, ‘To secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands.’ Even the modern leadership philosopher Peter Drucker observed

that ‘Self-development of the effective executive is central to the development of the organization, whether it be a business, a government agency, a research laboratory, a hospital or a military service. It is the way toward performance of the organization.’

“You see, my friend, one of the most enduring of all the ancient laws of humanity is that *we see the world not as it is, but as we are*. By improving, refining and defining who we are, we see the world from the highest, most enlightened perspective. By mastering ourselves, we see the world and all its limitless opportunities and potential from the top of the mountain rather than from the bottom. Commit yourself to excellence. Raise the personal standards you have set for yourself. Strive to do everything spectacularly well. *Remember that when you settle for mediocrity in the small things, you will also begin to settle for mediocrity in the big things. And anything less than a conscious commitment to peak personal performance is an unconscious commitment to weak personal performance.*

As I absorbed this profound piece of leadership wisdom, I gazed off into the horizon. I had never taken the time to think about self-improvement. I had often seen other executives reading personal development books, such as *As a Man Thinketh*, *University of Success*, *Think and Grow Rich*, *Psycho-Cybernetics* and *MegaLiving*, on my frequent airline flights and thought silently, ‘There but for the grace of God go I,’ assuming that these were poor souls suffering a professional or a personal crisis. I now realized that while those who could effectively manage others were wise, those who had mastered themselves were enlightened. The most important thing any leader could do to improve his organization was to first improve himself. My dad was right. You can’t do good if you don’t feel good. It is impossible to do great things if you are not thinking great thoughts. I had to make a “vow,” as Julian suggested, to get serious about the development of my self so I could achieve all the things I wanted to achieve. I had to Focus on the Worthy and make the time to lift my inner life to a whole new level of effectiveness.

“Now do you see why I brought you up to the top of this mountain? To gain leadership over others, you must gain true leadership over yourself,” Julian said. “You must climb your own mountains and rise to the top, conquering yourself in the process. You must stop making excuses for why things have gone wrong and assume some responsibility for a change. Visionary leaders are alibi-free.”

“What do you mean by alibi-free?” I queried.

“As a litigation lawyer, I had the opportunity to cross-examine thousands of witnesses over the course of my career. No matter how guilty they were, they all did the same thing. They all came up with an excuse that shifted the blame to someone else. Not once could they clearly and simply admit, ‘It was all my fault. I was wrong. And I am truly sorry.’ ”

“They all had alibis.”

“Right. But visionary leaders are the masters of themselves, as well as of their destinies. They know that if there is a problem with morale in the company, there is a problem with their leadership. They understand that if their relationships are lacking in depth and warmth, there must be some lack within themselves. They know that if their levels of personal achievement are less than outstanding, the thoughts they are having and the actions they are taking must be less than superb. That’s why I say that visionary leaders are alibi-free. They have the power of character to realize that they ultimately control their futures and that their outer lives are shaped by their inner ones.

“And just like scaling any great mountain,” added Julian enthusiastically, “the higher you climb within yourself, the more you will see. The more you come to know who and what you really are as a person, performer and as a leader, the more value you will be able to contribute to the world around you. The saddest thing I know of is a human being who has no sense of self, no idea of what she could achieve in her life if only she had the courage to liberate her full potential through the discipline of self-mastery. Too many

people live far below their potential. It's like Wordsworth once wrote, 'The world is too much with us; late and soon,/ Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:/ Little we see in nature that is ours;/ We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!' The point I'm really trying to make can be made very simply: *Leadership in your world begins with leadership of your life.*"

Julian then walked over to a long wooden bench that rested along the ridge and sat down. Closing his eyes and again deeply breathing in the cool, clean air of this spectacular mountain hideaway, he paused before continuing his passionate discourse on the value of self-leadership.

"You know, Peter, I really love this place. Since I've returned from the Himalayas, I've probably been up here fifty times. It really keeps my head clear. Life with the sages was so serene and peaceful. While they were enormously productive people, their achievement was of a graceful sort. Now that I'm back, I have to admit that I must constantly try not to get swept up in the frenetic pace that dogs our society."

"I feel the same way," I replied. "I mean the pace that I keep at the office is crazy. I'm like a wild man most days. Did you know that my executive assistant, Arielle, has already organized my appointment schedule for the next thirteen months? The number of people I have to see and the amount of work I have to do is absolutely unbelievable. Though the Time Model for Visionary Leadership that you shared with me is beginning to free me to Focus on the Worthy, I still feel the stress."

"Which brings me nicely to the first of the 5 Ancient Disciplines for Self-Leadership. These disciplines are formulations of the timeless wisdom that Yogi Raman gave me for personal mastery. Best practices for human excellence and inner leadership, if you will. Yogi Raman saw that I was in pretty bad shape when I arrived in the Himalayas, still recovering from my heart attack. So he offered me a series of philosophies and techniques to get my internal world back into shape. Let me simply say that the changes

that followed when I applied these strategies were profound. The sense of tranquility that I had lost as a corporate superstar returned. I was able to conquer the worry habit that had plagued me for so long. My energy levels soared. I began to feel the way I had as an idealistic kid at Harvard Law School. And I knocked many years off the way I looked.”

“No kidding,” I observed with a smile. “I thought you were some kid when I saw you standing in my rose garden that day. Your transformation is astonishing. I’d love to hear how you did it. What’s the First Discipline for Self-Leadership?”

“It’s the Discipline of Personal Renewal. All visionary leaders regularly renew themselves. They make time to revitalize their bodies and energize their spirits. You see, in these information-crazed times that we live in, leaders and managers are being driven to do more with less, to work smarter, faster and harder. This frenetic pace that you are required to maintain just to keep up with the competition takes its toll on the way you think, feel and perform. But the thing you need to remember is that it’s not really the stress that diminishes your effectiveness and leaves you feeling utterly exhausted at the end of the day.”

“It’s not?”

“No. What really does the damage is the failure of most leaders and managers to gain some relief from the inevitable stresses they face. As I told you earlier, some anxiety is always associated with change and change is the dominant force in business today. To thrive in this new economy, you have to work harder and aim higher. But virtues can become vices when practiced to excess, and overwork needs to be balanced with downtime. The best way to do this is to get regular relief through self-renewal activities. As the Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu said, ‘All action begins in rest. That is the ultimate truth.’ This will make you stress-hardy and allow you to maintain high levels of stamina and creativity for longer periods of time. I suggest you make a weekly sabbatical a top priority.”

“What’s a weekly sabbatical?”

“In the old days, people were required to observe a day of rest at the end of each working week. This day, known as the Sabbath, was used to relax, connect with family, enjoy personal hobbies or pursue spiritual activities. As a result, workers would begin the new week full of energy, zeal and conviction, ready to face the challenges their jobs would inevitably provide. Sadly, this tradition has been passed over, for most people and hard-driving executives believe that nonstop work routines are the only way to get to the top. It is only when they are afflicted with ulcers, migraines and early heart attacks that they wake up and begin to change the way they work and live. Unfortunately, by then it is sometimes too late. Believe me, my friend, I’m speaking from personal experience.

“So what I’m suggesting,” continued Julian, “is that you designate a period every single week for some serious personal renewal. Time spent recharging your batteries is never a waste but a necessary aspect of any peak performance routine. Recreation is about re-creation. Time spent on genuine recreation makes you stronger, smarter and a better leader. Abe Lincoln captured the essence of what I am saying when he remarked, ‘If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I’d spend six hours sharpening my axe.’”

“So what you are saying is that working the way I do, without ever taking a vacation or even a regular day off to unwind, is the same as driving my BMW full-out, day after day without ever taking the time for a pit stop.”

“Right. *Failing to devote time to the discipline of self-renewal is like saying you are so busy driving that you don’t have time to stop for gas. Not the smartest way to think, is it?*”

“I agree. But how can I make time for myself?”

“I’ve already given you the secret.”

“Really?”

“Use the Time Model for Visionary Leadership and the technique of strategic time blocking that I shared with you when we were at the military base. During your Sunday night planning practice, which I know you have begun to ritualize, block out a period over the coming week for recreation, relaxation and the renewal that you need to perform at your best. Make sure that at least one of your weekly wins revolves around quiet time. And plan to invest at least one hour on your weekly sabbatical. It will return huge dividends to you over the long run, especially when it comes to effective thinking and problem solving in your work as a leader.”

“Seriously?”

“Sure, Descartes made many of his most important intellectual discoveries while relaxing in bed, and Newton formulated the laws of gravity while meditating under an apple tree. Archimedes stumbled upon the laws of hydrostatics while soaking in a hot bath and Mozart composed one of his most famous pieces over a game of billiards. Even the sewing machine came about through an act of renewal.”

“Really?”

“Elias Howe, a Massachusetts instrument maker, was deep in sleep when he had a bizarre dream. In it, he was being chased by a man carrying a long spear with a small hole at the end of it. This served as the inspiration for his invention that later became known to the world as the sewing machine. Are you beginning to see how much the world would have missed had these visionaries not understood the power of self-renewal?”

“I am, Julian. I am,” I replied as I pondered this lesson. “Can you give me a sense of what kinds of things I should be doing during my weekly sabbatical?”

“The best suggestion I have is to go for a walk in natural surroundings and discover the power of solitude. According to Native American tradition, a human being is like a house with three rooms — your mind, your body and your spirit. To live fully, you

must fill these rooms daily with sunlight and fresh air. In our time-starved, fast-paced world, we have forgotten the importance of time spent alone, in silent contemplation. And yet, such reflection is also the surest route to wisdom, both in your leadership and within your life. Reflection and introspection allow you to analyze why you do what you do and how to make continual improvements. The practice of quiet contemplation will enrich your judgment and allow you to begin to understand not just *what* is happening around you at the office but why it is happening. It will allow you to grow more aware of the consequences of each of your choices and, therefore, improve your decision-making abilities. Essentially, making the time for regular reflection will allow you to learn from living. All of humanity's great advances, whether technological or artistic, came, not from frenzied activity but from the deep reflection and introspection that quiet time brings. And connecting to nature will soothe your frazzled nerves and bring a greater sense of balance into your life."

"Any other ideas for my weekly sabbatical?"

"How about planning to spend an hour in a used bookstore, just flipping through great books and enjoying some time alone. Why not go for a massage or watch the sun rise early on Sunday morning. Why not take one of those wonderful kids you have out on a long hike or simply spend a Saturday afternoon by the sea, watching the waves break against a rocky shore. Don't be so busy chasing the big things in life that you neglect life's simple pleasures. *Don't be so busy striving to make a living that you forget how to live a life.*"

I was stunned by the phrase that Julian had just uttered. He was absolutely right. My chaotic, out-of-control lifestyle was leading me to disaster. Sure, a solid work ethic was an essential element of success. Even Julian would agree with that truth. But the strain I had been under as GlobalView's market share and morale slipped had started to affect my health. I realized I was working compulsively and was more concerned about the time I spent in the

office than the quality of the results I was producing. I always felt tired, I was even more irritable than usual and I was rarely able to get a good night's sleep. By living my life like it was some kind of an Olympic sprint, never taking the time to read a good book over lunch or watch the sun set on a weekend, I was missing out on the best life had to offer. I vowed I would change. My employees deserved a calmer leader. My wife deserved a better husband. My kids deserved a better father. And I deserved a lot more peace.

“What’s the Second Discipline for Self-Leadership?” I asked, interrupting my own thoughts.

“It’s the Discipline of Abundant Knowledge. Yogi Raman believed that applied knowledge is perhaps the greatest source of power and every leader was duty-bound to reserve at least thirty minutes a day to read. Books will keep you connected to the fundamental leadership principles that all too often get forgotten in the crush of daily activities. Thirty minutes of concentrated reading every single day of the week will make a profound difference in your life. Every answer to every problem you have ever faced lies in print. Whether you want to be a better leader, thinker, father or golfer, a book surely exists that will rocket you to your goal. All the mistakes that you will ever make in your life have already been made by those who walked the earth before you. Do you really think that the challenges you face are unique to you?”

“No.”

“Then learn from the experience and wisdom of those who have gone before you. Just think about it: books allow you to look deeply into the minds of the greatest men and women who have ever lived. By investing the few hours that it takes to read the autobiography of Gandhi or the biography of Churchill, you will learn the leadership lessons that it took them decades to discover. You will come to understand the principles they followed as well as the solutions they discovered to many of the most common leadership problems. By reading from books on executive effectiveness and personal mastery, you will find time-honored ways to get more done in less

time. And by reading the great works of philosophy and consistently exposing your mind to the great thinkers, you will come to understand the ageless laws of nature and humanity. As Yogi Bhan once told me, *‘Stop wishing for fewer problems and start searching for greater wisdom.’* ”

“Wow. What a statement!”

“What I’m really telling you to do by suggesting that you read for thirty minutes a day is to apply the Principle of Association.”

“Which says?”

“It says that the type of leader and the kind of person you will be five years from now will result from two primary influences: the books you read and the people you associate with. Start spending some of your day with the greatest people who ever lived by spending some time with the books they have written. How would you like to have Napoleon Hill or Dale Carnegie as your personal success coaches, just waiting for you to give them the word? How would you like to have Ben Franklin, Thomas Edison or Alexander Graham Bell mentoring you on the fundamentals of creative thinking and innovation? How would you like to have Abe Lincoln sitting on your bedside table, always available to school you on leadership strategy or Mother Teresa waiting in your den just waiting to teach you the value of patience and compassion in all that you do? That’s the power of print. All of the wisdom of these enlightened humans lies within the pages of their books. Regularly associating with them allows you to rise to their level of thought.”

“Much like an intermediate tennis player always plays a better game when she plays an expert.”

“Excellent analogy. Remember, it’s not just what you get out of books that makes the difference — it’s what books bring out of you. I also suggest you make use of some of the more modern forms of knowledge and intelligence that are waiting for you to call them into action.”

“Like what?”

“Like audiocassette programs. Did you know that if you commute thirty minutes each way every day, after one year this time will have amounted to six weeks of eight-hour days?”

“I had no idea I spent that much time in the car. That’s a month and a half that I’m spending on the road every year. Unbelievable.”

“With a number like that, you really should be listening to educational and motivational tapes in your car on the way to work and then again on your way home. Your employees will notice a big difference every morning and your family a big difference every night. Why not take control of the information that you feed your mind while you commute and ensure that it is the kind that will add value to your life? Set the goal of listening to at least one new audio-book or cassette program per week. You can also practice the Discipline of Abundant Knowledge by going to personal development seminars. And encourage your people to do the same. Let the power of self-leadership spread through your entire organization and transform the culture into one of top performance.”

“What about the Internet?”

“I hear that’s another superb method to tap into every possible type of information you could ever hope for to improve both your business and your life. Like I said earlier, commit to becoming a lifelong student. *Learning no longer ends the minute you pass your last exam. It must continue until you take your last breath.*”

“So what’s the next discipline I can follow to cultivate self-leadership? I’m really getting excited about all you are telling me and can’t wait to put it into practice. I used to read so much more than I do now. I know spending time with great books will bring a greater sense of perspective, not to mention sanity, back into my life. I must admit, I’d hate to leave this world without having read the great works of wisdom and literature.”

“Nice point,” offered Julian. “The Third Discipline for Self-Leadership is the Discipline of Physicality, as Yogi Raman called it.

It simply involves making sure that you respect the timeless truth that says, *as you care for your body, so you care for your mind*. Visionary leaders are high-performance leaders. And high-performance leaders need vigor, energy and drive, the kind that comes through being in prime physical condition. You must have the wisdom to exercise regularly and eat to win. There are 168 hours in a week. Surely you can find a few to swim, stretch or run.”

“You know, I’ve been meaning to get back into shape for quite some time. In college I was quite a track star.”

“I had no idea.”

“I used to love working out in the good old days. I know that if I just took twenty or thirty minutes to go for a swim at lunch, it would make a big difference in the way I feel, act and think. I just finished reading Nelson Mandela’s autobiography.”

“A visionary leader if there ever was one.”

“I agree. Do you know what he did for exercise?”

“I know he used to rise at dawn and walk.”

“That was in his later years. But in his early days, to stay in peak physical condition, he used to box. He absolutely loved the sport and said that the activity renewed him completely. ‘It was a way of losing myself in something that was not the struggle,’ he wrote. ‘After an evening’s workout, I would wake up the next morning feeling strong and refreshed, ready to take up the fight again.’ ”

“Like I said, visionary leaders know that when you care for your body, you also care for your mind. And get this, according to a study at my alma mater involving 17,000 Harvard alumni, it was found that every hour you exercise adds another three hours to your life. Now, that’s an excellent return on investment. So what are you waiting for? Now is the time to get into peak condition. It will add so much to the quality of both your professional and personal life. It will make you feel wonderful and give you the energy to do all the

meaningful things you want to do. It will even enhance the clarity of your thoughts. And like the sages said, *The person who doesn't make time for exercise must eventually make time for illness.*”

“Any suggestions as to the best type of exercise?”

“It's really up to you. Try to find a sport or activity that is fun. Myself, I love the simple discipline of walking. It's convenient, healthy and enjoyable. Many of the world's most productive and creative people have been recreational walkers. When Charles Dickens suffered from writer's block, he would walk the streets of London late at night hoping to rekindle his creative fire. Day after day he would stroll and study the sights. During his outings, he observed many young children working for little or no pay, a circumstance that deeply troubled him. His desire to shed light on this problem sparked his creativity, leading him to write his most famous work, *A Christmas Carol*.

“Fascinating.”

“Swiss designer George de Mestral came up with the idea for Velcro after taking long walks in the mountains. He noticed that his dog's fur was covered by burdock burrs after these jaunts. When he looked at these closely under a microscope, he noticed they were made up of hundreds of tiny hooks that had stuck to the fur. He realized that these would be far more effective than zippers and ultimately produced the first Velcro fastener. What I'm getting at is that walking is a superb way to renew and revitalize your mind as well as your body. All the great thinkers knew this. Confucius, Aristotle and Socrates, for example, all implored their disciples to walk regularly to maintain perfect health. As Yogi Raman used to say with a smile, ‘I have two doctors I always keep with me. My right leg and my left one.’ ”

“You also suggested that I eat to win. What do you mean by that?”

“The sages understood that the quality of the food you ingest affects the quality of your thoughts. And in this information age, we

all know that rich ideas are the foundation of success. We have entered a knowledge economy where intellectual capital carries the highest value in the marketplace. And if you agree that the food you eat affects the way you think, eating well is not just sound health practice. It makes good business sense.”

“Who would have thought that the junk food I wolf down every lunch hour was affecting our bottom line?”

“Of course, it does. You have a steak and fries for lunch and you feel exhausted, right?”

“True.”

“So your choice of food has diminished both your creativity and your productivity. Consider the effect that kind of lunch has on your bottom line when it is consumed not just by you but by many others in the organization. That’s why I say eat to win. Adopt a peak performance diet. Eat more vegetables and fruits. Drink more water. Reduce the quantities of food that you ingest since most of us eat far more than we need to. Get serious about your health. It will even help you with that sleep problem you’ve been complaining about. Which brings me to the Fourth Discipline for Self-Leadership, the Discipline of Early Awakening.”

“I have a feeling I’m not going to like this one.”

“Getting up early is a common practice that runs through the lives of history’s greatest people. Visionary leaders in the fields of business, arts, the military and the sciences have understood that if you don’t control the day, it will control you. You must have the courage to win the battle of the bed and rise before most others do. Enjoy the exceptional tranquility that the day’s earliest hours brings and bask in the splendor of the morning, before the crush of daily events clamors for your mind’s attention. The sages believed that *as you start your day, so you live your day*. They believed that the first thirty minutes after awakening set the tone for the entire day so they had to be special ones.

“By getting up early, you become the master of your time rather

than it mastering you. Thomas Edison, whose industrious work habits allowed him to record over 1,093 inventions in his lifetime, said that ‘sleep is like a drug. Take too much at a time and it makes you dopey. You lose time, vitality and opportunities.’ Ben Franklin believed that there would be more than enough time to sleep when we were in our graves.”

“Sounds a little extreme, Julian. I mean, don’t we all need sleep?”

“Yes, we do. The problem is that most people sleep far more than they need to. They have developed a habit of oversleeping and then claim that their bodies can’t do without it. Do you want to hear the real reason that most people don’t get up early?”

“Sure.”

“Most people don’t get up early because they wouldn’t know what to do with their time if they did. They lack a passionate purpose that fuels and energizes their lives. And so they sleep. That’s why I told you earlier that purpose is one of the greatest motivators known to humankind and that, as a visionary leader, you must link your people’s work to a compelling cause that satisfies their human hunger to contribute and make a difference to others’ lives. People who lack energy often lack a dynamic future vision that impels them forward and excites their spirits. Gandhi slept only four hours a night. His personal mission to free his people from the shackles of servitude was enough fuel to drive him forward. Mandela was an early riser as were many of the wealthiest industrialists who founded this great nation. Always remember that there is a close connection between your energy levels and your purpose.”

“Fascinating. So when I become truly committed to my compelling cause, I will have more energy and not feel so tired all the time?”

“Right. And you will actually feel like rising early because you are excited about where you are going and the good work that you

are doing. Which brings me to the Fifth and Final Discipline for Self-Leadership — the Discipline of the Deathbed Mentality.”

“Sounds morbid.”

“Funny you should think that, because this practice is all about life. According to ancient legend, there was once a maharaja in India who began his day by following a peculiar personal rite. Every morning, just after he arose, he would celebrate his own funeral, complete with flowers and music, all the while chanting, ‘I have lived fully. I have lived fully.’ ”

“Bizarre.”

“That’s what I thought when I first heard about it. But then I realized that the maharaja was on to something. You see, he had found his own way to do what every single one of us needs to do every morning after we wake up.”

“Which is?” I asked, still having no idea what the maharaja’s strange ritual was designed to accomplish.

“Connect with our mortality. Most of us live every day as if we had all the time in the world. We will explore that new opportunity next week. We will learn that new skill next month. We will start to improve our health or spend more time with our kids next year. But right now, we tell ourselves that there are so many things on our plates that demand our immediate attention that we couldn’t possibly have time for anything else.”

“I’m still not sure I understand exactly what the maharaja was doing,” I admitted.

“By celebrating his funeral, he was reminding himself that life is short. He was connecting with the fact that each day could be his last. And by doing so, he brought a sense of urgency, drive and passion to his days that the vast majority of leaders and managers lack. By connecting to his own mortality, he ensured that he lived life fully and didn’t put off doing the important things. Every single day became a work of art, his tiny tribute to the gift of living. I’m

sure you'll agree, Peter, that most of us live as if we had all the time in the world. We worry about trifling matters and focus on petty things. We brood about past failures and fret over future events. We rush through life as if it were a dress rehearsal. And then, on our deathbeds, our hearts fill with regret when we reflect on all the initiatives we did not pursue, on all the relationships we did not build, on all the adventures we did not explore and on all the sunrises that we slept through. I've always found it ironic that people say they would give anything for a little more time in their days and yet they waste the precious time they already have."

"How true. I know exactly what you mean, Julian. I look at my kids and can't believe how quickly time is passing. Christopher will soon be eleven and Elliot fourteen. Yet it seems that it was just yesterday that I was singing them to sleep in their nursery. I've really missed out on a lot of precious moments with those wonderful kids. And there are so many other things I've wanted to do but never got around to doing. Time seems to slip away so quickly. Life is really leaving me behind."

"It's like I said earlier, Peter, either you act on life or life will act on you. But in either case, life waits for nobody. Stop spending so much time thinking about the success of others and start focusing on your own vision for the future. Have the courage to understand that every minute spent thinking about someone else's victories is a minute taken away from the fulfillment of your own. Stop putting off your hopes and dreams to another day. Stop putting off becoming the kind of leader you know in your heart you can be. Now is the time to make things happen. Now is the time to take some risks in your leadership. Now is the time to test those new strategies you have been thinking of testing. Now is the time to show your people how much you value them. Now is the time to really love your family and commit to your community. Do all those things you have always wanted to do, whether that means learning how to play the saxophone or mastering that golf game of yours. Climb the mountain of life and see what life looks like from the summit. You will see things others cannot see. Be like that

maharaja. Live every day as if it were your last. Otherwise you will die with the best you had to give still within you.”

Julian then reached into his robe and pulled out an unexpected gift. It was a parchment scroll that appeared old and wrinkled through the ravages of time. It had been rolled up like a college degree and carefully tied with a homemade bow.

“Here, my friend. I’ve been meaning to give you this for some time now. Our friendship has always meant a lot to me, even if I didn’t always have the courtesy to show it. I truly want you to lead the kind of joyful and meaningful life I feel is everybody’s birthright. This small token will help you on your leadership journey and remind you of a great truth. It contains one of the best definitions of the purpose of life that I have ever read. My hope is that it will be as helpful to your personal growth as it has been to mine.”

I immediately untied the bow and studied the words that had been lovingly etched on the scroll. They were elegant in their simplicity and timeless in their leadership wisdom. They were the words of the great philosopher Emerson and they spoke volumes about what true success was all about. They read:

To laugh often and love much; to win the respect of intelligent persons and the affection of children; to earn the approbation of honest critics; to appreciate beauty; to give of one’s self, to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to have played and laughed with enthusiasm and sung with exultation; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived — that is to have succeeded.

As we boarded the cable car to return to the base of the mountain, I reflected on the lessons that Julian had shared with me for self-leadership. I knew that the Disciplines of Personal Renewal, Abundant Knowledge, Physicality, Early Awakening, and Deathbed Thinking would make a big difference in the way I lived. There was

absolutely no doubt in my mind about that. Rather than just getting *through* life, now I had a sense of how to start getting *from* life.

On that magical day, moving slowly down that grand mountain while taking in the splendors of nature with a friend who had found enlightenment, I finally realized that success really was an “inside job” and that *visionary leadership ultimately began with inner leadership*. I finally realized this was a great time to be alive and that I now had to live with a greater sense of commitment. And I became aware that I would never truly be able to liberate the talents of others until I first realized the potential within myself.

Chapter 10 Knowledge Summary • Julian’s Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Ritual



The Essence

The Ritual of Self-Leadership

The Wisdom

- All leadership begins within
- We see the world not as it is but as we are
- Anything less than a conscious commitment to peak personal performance is an unconscious commitment to weak personal performance
- Never settle for mediocrity when you can attain mastery

The Practices

- The Discipline of Personal Renewal™
- The Discipline of Abundant Knowledge™
- The Discipline of Physicality™
- The Discipline of Early Awakening™
- The Discipline of The Deathbed Mentality™

Quotable Quote

Do not be so busy striving that you miss out on living.
The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

RITUAL 7



**See What All See,
Think What None Think**



The Ritual of Creativity and Innovation

Read every day something no one else is reading.

Think every day something no one else is thinking.

It is bad for the mind to be always part of unanimity.

Christopher Morley

“Our meeting will be a very short one,” Julian had remarked before we parted ways at the mountain’s base.

“Why?” I had asked, clearly disappointed.

“Because I’m in the midst of preparing to move. My work with you is almost complete. You have eagerly embraced the leadership philosophy that I have shared and have been a first-rate student. I have no doubt that GlobalView will quickly soar to world-class status and prosper as never before under your visionary leadership. More importantly, you have now discovered how to lead yourself as well as make GlobalView a place where your people’s natural gifts can be freed and their highest hopes fulfilled. Keep serving your people well by liberating their talents and reminding them of the compelling cause they are working toward. They will serve you well in return.”

“Where are you going?”

“There is another person who is in desperate need of the wisdom I have discovered and therefore it is my duty to go.”

“Are you going to leave that little hut you made in the forest? It looked like you had everything you needed there.”

“Let’s just say I’ve got to leave for a while. But, who knows, you just might see me standing in your rose garden in a few months

from now,” Julian had said with a wink.

Now, driving to meet with Julian, the thought that I would not see him in the future made me feel very sad. He had always been a friend, but I now saw him in a very special light. No one had had such an influence on me, not even my dad. There were so many other leaders in trouble that Julian could have visited, but he came to me first. If there was one quality he had always possessed in abundance it was loyalty. I was his friend, so he decided to help me.

His coaching sessions were like nothing I had ever experienced before in my life. Within them, Julian had pushed me to explore new pathways of thought and evaluate why I did what I did. He forced me to dig deep and reflect on who I was, not only as a leader, but as a person. He had shared pearls of leadership wisdom with me during those times that I had never heard from any other source, wisdom that had left me feeling motivated, inspired and fulfilled. I prayed that our paths would soon cross again after he left for his new destination. I needed a friend and mentor like this in my life, as we all do. And I wanted to have the opportunity to do something for him in return.

As I veered off a main road and into a leafy area that was home to middle-class families with station wagons and minivans in their driveways, I spotted my destination. Centennial Elementary School is known far and wide as one of the finest educational institutions in the country, a facility that produces an extraordinary number of gifted kids. Educators come from far and wide to study the innovative teaching methods employed by the dedicated teachers who are lucky enough to be selected as staff members. And though the students are all below the age of ten, they are constantly encouraged to expand their abilities and dream of great futures. This is the kind of school every parent hopes his or her children will have the privilege to attend.

Julian had already arrived and was in the center of the playground, chatting with Mrs. Maples, the famed principal who frequently appeared in the national media to air her views on the

current state of education, including her opinion that schools had to place a greater emphasis on the development of character. Though he was wearing his robe and sandals, she didn't seem to mind. As a matter of fact, she appeared to know him and smiled as he spoke.

"Hi, Peter!" Julian shouted enthusiastically as I set foot into the playground, which had just started to fill with noisy little children enjoying their mid-morning recess. "I'd like you to meet a very dear friend of mine, Mildred Maples."

"It's a pleasure to meet you, Mildred," I said, extending my hand. "I've seen you many times on television."

"Nice to meet you too, Peter. I've heard a lot about you as well. Read about you and your company in the papers. You've been very successful."

"That was a while ago, I'm sorry to admit. We encountered some growing pains along the way that led us into serious difficulties. Having said that, Julian here has really helped me turn things around. It's like I'm running a brand-new company. I hope you don't mind me saying so, but I think you'll be hearing a lot about us again."

"I'll look forward to it," Mrs. Maples replied courteously.

"Mind if I ask you two how you know each other?"

They both started to giggle. "Mildred's husband owns the local Ferrari dealership. I bought my car from him," Julian replied. "I got to know him and in the process, had the pleasure of meeting Mildred. We were just reminiscing about my car when you drove up."

"I'd give anything to see you whizzing up Main Street in it with your monk's robes on, Julian," said Mildred, "I really would. Anyway, it's so good to see you again. I still cannot get over the way you look, but, if there is one thing I have come to believe in after having been around schoolchildren for almost thirty years, it is the power we all have to work miracles in our lives. I'll leave you

two gentlemen to yourselves. Drop by the dealership later, Julian. I'm sure Jack would be thrilled to see you," she said as she walked up the clean white stairs that led into the head office.

"I just might do that," Julian replied with a smile. "Now where were we, Peter? Oh yes. Ritual 7 in Yogi Raman's timeless leadership system. The seventh practice that visionary leaders have integrated into their routines to ensure that they perform as they should."

"You forgot to give me the next piece of the puzzle when you left me at Mount Percival. You've really kept me in suspense. All week, I've been coming up with different ideas about what Ritual 7 would be."

"Actually I didn't forget, Peter. I was hoping you would do precisely what you did since the seventh ritual is all about the power of ideas. Like I told you earlier, in the information era we currently find ourselves in, ideas rather than materials have become the commodity of success. For the first time in the history of our civilization, the real value of any company enters the building every morning and leaves the building every night. The highest assets of any organization lie within the skulls of its people."

"That's a graphic way of putting it. I don't think I'll forget that one for a while," I said with a smile.

"Good. I hope you don't because one of your most important tasks as a visionary leader is to unlock the natural state of creativity that sleeps within the minds of every one of your people. You must help your employees to think smarter and inspire them to explore new pathways of thought. Only then will you begin to experience the kind of innovation that you need to see before GlobalView grows into a world-class corporation."

"But is it really true that we are all creative? I mean, are you saying that every single one of my employees is capable of creative thinking? What about the accountants in our Finance Department or the lawyers on our legal staff? Surely they aren't creative types."

“You bet they are. It’s just that they have probably never been encouraged to create and so their creativity has remained dormant. I myself used to think that only poets, writers, artists and actors were the creative sort. Yogi Raman and the rest of the sages set me straight. They were the most creative people I’ve ever seen. The things they could come up with were amazing. Though they lived in an isolated part of the world, far removed from modern influences, they had fashioned brilliant tools and machinery to help them in their activities. While they lived very simple lives, they had crafted highly effective equipment to record their wisdom, to maintain high levels of hygiene and to study the movements of the stars.”

“Here we go with the stars again. When do you plan to tell me why you are so intrigued by the stars, in particular that bright one that pops up from time to time? My curiosity is starting to get the better of me, Julian,” I pleaded.

“Next time for sure. For now, simply understand that every human being is endowed with creative tendencies. Begin to see your workplace as one giant idea factory, as a place where creativity and innovation are recognized and rewarded. Let your people know that they will now be allowed to take some risks. Teach them that failure is nothing more than learning how to win and that though some of the risks that they take may lead to setbacks, many will also lead to innovation. Spread this sentiment throughout the organization. Encourage creativity and make it clear that you are now open to listening to, understanding and implementing the best ideas of your people.”

“Interesting. So risk taking is essential to innovation.”

“Definitely. You can’t get to third base with one foot on second. To remain competitive amid the idea era that modern business finds itself in, you and your managers must get your people to stretch themselves. You must give them the confidence they need to move out of their regions of security into uncharted places. You have to inspire them to be like butterflies, not barnacles.”

“What do you mean?”

“Butterflies spend their days exploring new vistas and rising to new heights. Barnacles, on the other hand, attach themselves to one spot and remain there for the rest of their lives. By encouraging your people to take risks and by not punishing them if they encounter the failures that are inevitable, you will free them to explore their imaginations. Remember what Southwest did to that manager who came up with an innovative new program that unexpectedly failed?”

“They promoted him, right?”

“You got it. Don’t tell me that doesn’t inspire high levels of creativity and risk taking within the organization.”

“Yes, it would. So the essence of creativity lies in taking risks?”

“That’s just a part of what allows people to liberate the natural creativity that exists within them. The essence of creativity is really about originality of thought. Here,” said Julian, reaching into his robe and pulling out the seventh piece of the puzzle. “Yogi Raman phrased the principle far more elegantly than I ever could.”

The inscription on the puzzle was hard to make out. As I studied the wooden piece more closely, I was able to read what it said — *Ritual 7: See What All See, Think What None Think.*

“Just look at all these beautiful little children. They are all models of creativity, every single one of them. No one has rained on their parades and told them that the moon is not made of cheese or that Santa Claus does not exist. No one has stifled their dreams by telling them they cannot be doctors and lawyers or astronauts and movie actors. To them, the world contains boundless opportunities and endless possibilities. Their hearts are clean and their minds are pure. Study them carefully. Watch how they flex their imaginations. See how they give every ounce of their attention to what they do. Children come to us more highly evolved than adults to teach us the lessons we need to learn.”

“I’d certainly agree with that, Julian. I remember when my kids were toddlers. I learned a lot from them back then.”

“Like what?”

“I learned the importance of being curious, spontaneous and playful. I guess I just never put it into practice. I also learned that there are always many ways of looking at something.”

“Right. Yogi Raman shared a story with me one night that I’d like to pass on to you. A yogi was sitting with his disciples, high in the foothills of the Himalayas. As a test, he drew a line in the dirt and asked each student to make the line shorter without erasing any part of it. The students were perplexed and couldn’t think of a way to shorten the line without touching it — except for one student. He had been the one who had studied the hardest and practiced the longest. He walked over to the line that the master had drawn and quickly drew a longer line next to it. He did not touch the first line in any way. The teacher smiled. ‘Very good,’ he said. ‘Now the first line is shorter.’

“This kind of original thinking is what Ritual 7 is all about. See What All See, Think What None Think, the ritual of creativity and innovation, calls for you to begin to shed the shackles of the traditional ways of looking at things so that you can master the uncertainty that a changing business world brings. It’s nothing more than developing the skill of discovering new solutions to old problems and finding smarter ways of doing what you do. It’s about seeing things not as they are but as they can be. It’s all about having the leadership courage to let a sense of childlike wonder fill the hearts and minds of your people.

“To foster innovation within GlobalView, *you must recognize that one of your highest priorities is to create a workplace that rewards curiosity and recognizes that new ideas are the seeds of success. Remember, even one good idea can totally transform your organization.* One brilliant new way to increase productivity or enhance quality can make a world of difference in your bottom line.

Perhaps even more importantly, a truly original thought, properly executed, can change the lives of the many people your company has the privilege to serve. That's the real power of innovation. To make the world a better place. As Maya Angelou wrote so beautifully, 'If one is lucky, a solitary fantasy can totally transform one million realities.' ”

“So where do I start?”

“First you must come to see every one of the people you lead as an artist.”

“Really? Even the guys in sales and the folks in shipping?”

“Yes. As I have said earlier, awareness precedes change and if you do not grow intimately aware of the fact that every man and woman within the organization has the capacity to use his or her imagination to generate new ideas, GlobalView will never change into an innovation-centered company. Have the leadership wisdom to understand that all human beings are artists, capable of phenomenal levels of creativity when encouraged to think original thoughts. We all have the capacity for quantum levels of creativity.

“Just look at these kids,” Julian said, pointing to the children scurrying around the playground, deeply absorbed in the games they were playing. “That little guy over there, strumming his imaginary guitar thinks he's the rock star he saw on the music video channel last night. That young girl by the tree believes she's a super hero, charged with saving the world from disaster. You can't tell me that each and every one of them is not an artist, a creator, rich with the ability to generate a fountain of delightful ideas at any given moment.”

“True, but they're a bunch of children,” I protested. “The people I lead are adults, the vast majority of whom appear to be incapable of thinking or doing anything out of the ordinary. Suggest that they try something new and they grow sweaty-palmed and frightened. They cling to their traditional ways of doing things as if their very

lives depended on it, even if the new approach is a thousand times better.”

“Whose fault is that?” Julian asked in a serious tone. “Remember, the way you lead teaches your people how they must follow. If that’s how they react when you suggest that they stretch themselves a little, you and your managers have obviously not created an environment that is safe enough for them to explore new concepts with confidence. Perhaps they fear they will be punished should they fail. Perhaps their rigidity stems from the feeling that they will be ridiculed if they perform in a less than acceptable fashion. If your people are unwilling to embrace new ideas, concepts and systems with enthusiasm and energy, it’s because you haven’t taken the time to create a workplace that is risk-free. Creativity is always stifled when people feel that they have something to lose.”

“So how do I create a ‘risk-free’ environment?”

“There are many ways. Give your people the freedom to fail. Raise the level of trust. Celebrate spontaneity and reward original thinking. And let people be themselves. Give them permission to let the gifts of their imaginations shine.”

“In an article I read a while ago, I remember the CEO of Reebok, Paul Fireman, saying that the secret to the company’s success was that the employees were given the freedom to create. ‘Ordinary people went way beyond themselves only because they were allowed to do it,’ he reflected.”

“Precisely. Remember, visionary leaders never manage creativity — they simply uncover it and allow it to flood the organization. They unleash it, in the hope that their companies will become dynamic playgrounds of innovation, much like the one we are now standing in.”

Just as Julian completed his sentence, a spoonful of thick pudding whizzed through the air and landed on the sleeve of his immaculate red robe. The culprit, a small boy with a devilish grin,

let out a loud cheer the moment he realized he had connected with his intended target. He then turned around and ran as fast as his little legs would carry him, all the while yelling, “I got the monk! I got the monk! I got the monk!”

Julian just stood there, startled. Then, true to form, he reached over and dipped a finger into the slippery mess running down his robe. “Hope it’s chocolate,” he said with a laugh. “It always was my favorite flavor.

“That actually leads me to another key point about fostering creativity within your workplace, Peter,” continued Julian, mopping up the remains of the pudding with a crisp white hankie I had pulled out of the suit jacket I was wearing. “In order for your company to become the ‘playground of ideas’ that will skyrocket it to world-class status, the environment you provide for your people to work in must be a fun one. You see, one of the great barriers to creativity is the belief that playfulness is reserved for kids. That kind of thinking not only limits creativity, it increases workplace stress. There’s nothing wrong with people letting their hair down from time to time and enjoying a solid belly laugh. There’s nothing wrong with letting people have fun at work. *Work should be fun.* And allowing people the chance to have fun through their work is a brilliant leadership philosophy because it will confirm to all that you truly do put people first. It shows you care. Hugo Rahner said, ‘To play is to yield oneself to a kind of magic’ and Plato observed that ‘Life should be lived as play.’ Remember, the men and women you lead spend the majority of their lives at the office. The least you can do is make it a great place to be. Fun and laughter are doorways to the hearts and imaginations of your people. *And people love doing business with people who love their business.*”

“Great point, Julian. What other tips do you have to help me unleash the creativity and energy of our people?”

“Here’s a few quick thoughts that will help you revitalize and re-energize your workplace. Encourage your people to set a weekly ‘idea quota’ for themselves. Develop a formalized system to reward

the best ideas so that people learn their originality matters. Organize monthly outings for the people in your different divisions to keep things interesting and build team unity. Visit a comedy club or rent a movie theater or have a beach party — at the office. I also recommend you set up a contest committee. That’s when the good times really start.”

“A contest committee?”

“Yes, a committee that dreams up all sorts of fun and playful contests that will make your people laugh and smile and grow to love working at your company. It’s a great way to increase job satisfaction and reduce turnover. It will even help you win more customers.”

“Really?”

“Sure. *Never forget that when you ensure that your employees laugh while they work, they will ensure that your clients laugh while they buy.* Are you beginning to see how a positive work environment not only boosts creativity and innovation but also the bottom line?”

“I am.”

“Just think about how great Ugliest Tie Day or Funniest Joke Week or Free Pancake Morning, where everyone would be treated to pancakes prepared by you and your management team, would be for the hearts and spirits of your people? Imagine letting the people in production have half an hour off late one Friday afternoon to have a paper-airplane flying contest if they meet a specified quota. I’d be willing to bet that they’d not only meet but exceed it. And if you really want to telegraph the fact that your attitude has improved and you want people to have more fun, you might even do a ‘4-4-5-4-9-8.’ ”

“What’s a 4-4-5-4-9-8?”

“It’s the tune to Happy Birthday on the keypad of your telephone. Imagine playing it for one of your employees on her

birthday as you wish her well. It would be unbelievable wouldn't it?"

"*Unbelievable* is what my people would think."

"Remember, if your people rediscover the playfulness they knew as kids while they are at work, they will be much happier. Happier employees are more creative, productive and loyal. And creative, productive and loyal people are at the foundation of every truly great organization. Right?"

"Right."

"Just remember that *the company that plays together stays together.*"

"Oh, and from time to time," added Julian as he walked me back to my car while the school kids waved, "treat yourself to some great questions."

"What do you mean?"

"Creative questioning is one of the finest methods to keep your thinking fresh and original. Smart questions help to get you out of your regions of security into the zone of the unknown, that place where your perspective shifts and all things are possible."

"Can you suggest a few questions for me to consider?"

"Sure. How about, 'What would I do if I knew I could not fail?' Or consider, 'What three things could I do every week, which, if I really did well, would change my leadership effectiveness?' Then ask yourself why you are not doing them. When you face a problem, why not ask yourself, 'How might Kennedy, Churchill or Confucius have handled this?' And perhaps the best question to ask yourself when it comes to challenging yourself to rise to higher levels of creative achievement is, '*What would the child that I once was think of the adult that I have become?*' "

"That's quite a question, Julian," I said softly as we reached my car, "I'm almost ashamed to answer it."

“Nourish your imagination and flex your mind. Let your natural curiosity out of the box again. Dare to dream bigger dreams and envision a higher future. Though you might see what every other leader in the business world sees, start to think what no one else is thinking. Never forget that deep within the body of every truly visionary leader lives the spirit of a little child, full of excitement and wonder. The sense of energy, optimism and hope you will generate will be contagious. You owe it to the men and women who look to you for leadership.”

“You really seem to believe that a leader who has ‘hope’ can make a world of difference, don’t you?”

“Absolutely. Hope is a fuel that drives visionary leaders and vision-led companies. It reminds me of what one old man said near the end of his life, ‘I am an average person with below-average capabilities. I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have if he or she would put forth the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith.’ ”

“Was that one of those rich business executives you used to represent in your former glory days?”

“No, Peter,” Julian replied, pausing for a moment. “Those were the words of Gandhi.”

“Remarkable,” I replied quietly. “Speaking of hope, I remember glancing at the paper recently and seeing a headline that read, ‘Paralyzed Journalist Wrote Book by Blinking.’ ”

“Really?”

“Yes. It was the story of Jean-Dominique Bauby, the former chief editor at *Elle* magazine in Paris. While driving his son into the city one morning, he suffered a massive stroke and collapsed in the back seat of his car while his frightened son ran to get help. Three weeks later, he emerged from a coma speechless, nearly deaf and paralyzed. He couldn’t move any part of his body — except for one.”

“Which was?” asked Julian, hanging on my every word.

“His left eyelid. And given his abundance of hope and optimism along with his deep desire to make a difference, Jean-Dominique decided that though he could not move, he would somehow find a way to write a book so that he could share the wisdom he had discovered from his tragedy with others. Using the power of his creative imagination to think of ways to fulfill his dream, he eventually stumbled upon the solution: he would create a special alphabet where each letter would correspond to certain blinks of his eyelid.”

“You’re kidding?”

“No, it’s absolutely true,” I replied. “For three hours every single day with an editor by his side in a dark hospital room, this man slowly blinked his way through his book. The newspaper estimated that Jean-Dominique blinked more than 200,000 times to produce his 137-page text. And by all accounts, the work is a masterpiece.

“In it he wrote about all the things he had always wanted to do in his life but had never done: climbing an Alpine peak with the Tour de France cyclists, racing down a Formula One speedway or enjoying a Lyonnais sausage on a beautiful summer’s day. And he expressed his pain at not being able to hold his young children anymore and play their games and be the kind of person he had wanted to be.”

“After completion of the book,” I continued, “he founded an association to help other paralyzed victims and their families, dedicating himself to transforming his adversity into a victory by inspiring others through the power of his example. Sadly, Jean-Dominique passed away — the article I read was actually his obituary. But I know you’ll agree, Julian, that his life stands as a shining tribute to the strength of the human spirit to achieve the kinds of things you have been teaching me about. His act of

personal heroism really is what See What All See, Think What None Think is all about, isn't it?"

"Yes, Peter, that's exactly what Ritual 7 is about. Finding great opportunity where others see only tragic adversity. Finding hope where others feel only despair. Seeing light where others see only darkness. That's a moving example. I thank you for sharing it with me. You know, what people can accomplish while fueled by a compelling and worthy cause never ceases to amaze me. What does surprise me, though, is that most people wait until they face some kind of a crisis, whether professional or personal, before they reach deep within themselves and discover their human gifts. It's really quite sad."

As I sat in the driver's seat of my car and rolled down the window, Julian stooped over, placing his hands on his knees.

"Well, my friend, we have only one meeting left before I have to head on to my next destination. It has been a true joy spending time with you. I'm glad to see my leadership wisdom is having such a positive impact on GlobalView."

"I'll never be able to thank you enough, Julian," I replied gratefully.

"Just keep putting the lessons I've been sharing into practice and sharing the philosophy of the sages with all those around you. Let the leadership truths they discovered spread throughout your organization and into the business community. Tell as many leaders and managers as you can about this timeless knowledge. That will be thanks enough."

"Aren't you forgetting something?" I asked as Julian began to walk away.

"I know, I know. You want to know where to meet me next, right?"

"You got it. I'm not missing the last ritual for the world."

"Our final meeting will take place out at the observatory. Meet

me there at midnight. I'll show you something that will change the way you think about leadership forever.”

“Really?”

“Really. Oh, and before you go, you better take this little piece of wood I've been carrying around. I know how much you like making jigsaw puzzles,” he said with a wink.

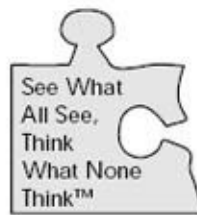
Julian reached into his robe, pulled out the final piece of the jigsaw puzzle and pressed it gently into my left hand. “Until next time, amigo.”

I looked down at the simple gift my friend had bestowed on me. These pieces had come to have great meaning for me and served as powerful reminders of the rituals of visionary leaders that I had learned to date. The eighth one contained a faint design that, as with each of the others, I had difficulty making out. It also carried a message as mysterious as the previous seven. It read simply, *Ritual 8: Link Leadership to Legacy*.

I quickly looked up to ask him what these words meant, but he had vanished. The only soul that remained in the playground was now standing silently in front of me. It was a gentle little boy. He just looked at me and smiled.

Chapter 11 Knowledge Summary • Julian's Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Ritual



The Essence

The Ritual of Creativity and Innovation

The Wisdom

- Every human being is creative. The task of the visionary leader is to create a workplace that liberates this natural endowment.
- Shed the shackles of outdated ways of thinking and discover smarter ways of doing what you do
- Allow people to take risks and fail freely

The Practices

- Celebrate spontaneity and reward original thinking
- Make your workplace fun. Create a playground of ideas.
- The Weekly Idea Quota
- Creative Questioning

Quotable Quote

Nourish your imagination and flex your mind. Let your natural creativity out of the box. Dare to dream bigger dreams and envision a higher future. Though you might see what every other leader in the business world sees, start to think what no one else thinks. Never forget that deep within the body of every visionary leader lives the spirit of a little child, full of excitement and wonder.

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

RITUAL 8



Link Leadership to Legacy



The Ritual of Contribution and Significance

I cannot believe that the purpose of life is to be “Happy.” I think the purpose of life is to be useful, to be responsible, to be compassionate. It is, above all, to matter: to count, to stand for something, to have made some difference that you have lived at all.

Leo C. Rosten

It was just before midnight when I drove up the long winding road that led to the observatory. Located out in the country, it usually sat empty except for the two astronomers who used it as their research base. I quickly parked my car and rushed up the stairs that would lead me into the main hall where Julian had instructed me to meet him promptly. The night was a spectacular one, with not a cloud in the sky. Even to the naked eye, the heavens were alight with the moon and the stars. I knew Julian would be pleased.

“Hi, Peter,” Julian mumbled as he offered me a quick welcome before returning his concentration to the sights he had been observing through the massive telescope. “Glad that you could make it.”

“I wouldn’t have missed it for anything, my friend. Is there something in particular that we are looking for tonight?”

“Oh, yes. Tonight will be a very special evening. That I can promise you,” he replied, not taking his eyes away from the telescope.

“You’ll be happy to hear that, with the last piece of the puzzle you gave me, I finally got the whole thing together.”

“And what did you discover?”

“Well, every time you gave me a new piece with one of the eight rituals carved into it, I could also detect some form of design on it. But I was never able to quite figure out what it was. As the pieces came together, I could see it was turning into a symbol of some sort, but without the last piece, I still couldn’t tell what it was.”

“And now do you know?”

“It’s a star.”

“Not just a star, my friend. It’s *the* star.”

“I’m not sure that I follow you, Julian.”

“Every star in the moonlit sky is bright. But one star in particular is brilliant.”

“Which one’s that?”

“It is the North Star, the most luminescent of them all.”

Suddenly Julian let out a yell. “There it is! It’s time! Let’s go,” he cried, leading me by the arm as he ran out of the building. We raced down the steps and along a winding path that led us into a vast field. Then we stopped and just stood there in silence.

“It’s happening just like the sages promised it would,” remarked Julian with delight.

“What’s happening?” I asked, not observing anything out of the ordinary.

“This,” he said, as he pointed up to a star that was beginning to flicker against the rich black coat of darkness that had dominated the evening sky. Growing brighter and brighter, its light started to flood the dark summer sky. Soon the star became so bright that I had to raise my hand in an effort to shield my eyes. It was a little like what had happened the night of the basketball game but a hundred times more intense. Before long, the entire sky was filled with light and it appeared as if it was the middle of the day, even

though the dial on my watch indicated that it was a quarter past midnight. It was an unbelievable sight.

Looking over at Julian, I saw that he was beaming, his face full of joy and excitement. A radiant smile appeared on his youthful face and his hands were clasped together in the traditional way that the citizens of India greeted those they respected.

“Savor what you are seeing, Peter. The world won’t see anything like this for another thousand years. The sages, in their infinite wisdom, had known this astronomical event would take place on this very night at this very time. I’m sure they must be experiencing it now, high up in their part of the world, just as we are witnessing it now in ours. I hope they’re as moved by it as I am. I sure do miss them.”

“What’s this all about?” I asked, quickly looking back up at the sky before I lost another second.

“This, my friend, is nature’s way of bringing in the dawn of a new era, a new age of leadership and life. There has been so much turmoil and turbulence in the world that many good people are giving up hope. They are losing faith in their power to make a difference. They are giving in to the demands of uncertainty and negativity, rather than transcending them and moving on to higher places of achievement, contribution and success. Many people in our society are even giving up on the gift of living. The natural phenomenon we’re witnessing will act as a torchlight to remind leaders of their obligation to be visionaries. It will serve as their wake-up call to be the forces of good they are meant to be, illuminating their organizations just as the North Star has illuminated the sky on this very special night. Be a light, Peter. Be the one people look up to for guidance and direction. Let the ideal you aspire to burn brightly within you, blazing a path for all to see. This is your ultimate purpose in leadership — and in life.”

Just as Julian had delivered this profound piece of wisdom, the night returned to its normal condition. We sat on the grass, Julian’s

robe growing creased and wrinkled. Then he continued, “One of the most timeless of all of the leadership laws is this one: *The Purpose of Life Is a Life of Purpose.*”

“Powerful statement.”

“The greatest irony of leadership is that the more you give, the more you get. And when all is said and done, the highest and most enduring gift that you will ever be able to give is the gift of what you leave behind. Your legacy to the generations that follow will be how much value you have added to your organization and how many lives you have improved. As the great humanitarian Albert Schweitzer observed, ‘There is no higher religion than human service. To work for the common good is the greatest creed.’ Or perhaps even more to the point, let me use the words one father offered to his son while he lay on his deathbed, ‘Be ashamed to die until you have scored a victory for mankind.’ ”

“So you’re saying that visionary leaders, in practicing Ritual 8, link what they do with who they will serve.”

“Nicely put, Peter. And in constantly focusing on leaving a rich footprint of service and contribution behind them when they depart, *such leaders link leadership to legacy.* In doing so, they fulfill their calling. They fulfill their duty to liberate the fullness of their personal gifts for a worthy cause. All the great leaders who have gone before us have aspired to reach this pinnacle, whether they were leaders in business, the sciences or even the arts. Just before his death, George Bernard Shaw was asked what he would do if he could live his life again. Though he had already achieved more in his lifetime than most of us could only dream of, he replied humbly, ‘I would want to be the person I could have been but was not.’ ”

“Wise words,” I replied.

“They are. They make me think of a short story penned by Leo Tolstoy called ‘The Death of Ivan Ilych.’ Ever read it?”

“No, Julian. To be honest I’ve never read any of Tolstoy’s works. I guess I’ve never got around to it.”

“There’s such wisdom in the great books of literature and yet most people seem to be too busy to discover it. And so they continue to make mistakes both in their leadership and in their lives, mistakes that could so easily have been prevented had they taken a few hours out of their weeks to read deeply. In this particular story, Tolstoy wrote about Ivan Ilych, a vain, highly materialistic social climber who was more concerned about appearing successful than doing right. As a young man, he married, not because he loved and cherished his wife, but because high society approved of the match. He then had a number of kids, not because he wanted to have children but because that was what was expected of him. Rather than spending time with his family and building a rich home life, he devoted almost all his time to his work, becoming obsessed with his public persona as a top-level government lawyer.

“Soon, in an effort to keep up appearances, he began to live beyond his means, and eventually faced enormous financial hardship. This led to deep unhappiness and despair. As luck would have it, just when things were at their worst, he was offered a more prestigious and much higher-paying position as a judge. With his newfound good fortune, he bought the house of his dreams. He felt very proud of it and began to devote much of his time to furnishing the home with expensive antiques and fashionable furniture. The house had to be perfect, so all those around him would be suitably impressed.

“One day, when he was climbing a stepladder to show an upholsterer how he wanted a set of draperies hung, he fell and hurt his side. After the fall, he felt different and grew ill-tempered, often lashing out at his wife for the smallest transgression. A visit to a doctor revealed that he was seriously ill and various treatments were prescribed. But Ivan Ilych’s condition only worsened. Within months, the once vital and jovial man appeared to be dying, his eyes lacking any expression of life and his body growing terribly weak. In his quiet agony, Ivan Ilych began to reflect on his life. First he thought about his childhood, then about his days as a

striving adult and finally he contemplated the sad state he found himself in. Suddenly a question flooded his consciousness. A question that penetrated the deepest core of his being.”

“What was it?”

“He asked himself this: ‘*What if my whole life has really been wrong?*’ You see, Peter, for the first time in his life, he realized that all his jockeying for social position, all the energy he spent trying to look good and to be seen with the right people at the right events, was really not important. This dying man realized that life is a gift. And his could have been so much more than he had made of it. He could have contributed immensely and served greatly. He could have risked, dared and dreamed. He could have been the person he should have been. Instead, he squandered his days on frivolous matters of little consequence, matters that did nothing to improve the world around him. With that realization, his physical pain grew even worse and his mental torment became unbearable. He began to scream, and continued to do so for three full days.

“Then just two hours before his death,” continued Julian, “he said to himself, ‘Yes, it was all not the right thing.’ He then grew silent and wondered, ‘But what is the right thing?’ Just then his young son, a schoolboy who had been deeply saddened by his father’s illness, crept softly into the room and stood beside his bed. His father put a frail hand on the boy’s head as the child began to cry. At that moment, a timeless truth was revealed to Ivan Ilych, one that most people never discover. He realized that though he had not lived his life as he should have lived, *it was still not too late to rectify his failure*. He realized that his duty was to serve all those around him and to enrich their lives in any way possible. He understood that the purpose of life was to make a difference through one’s presence. If even one life was left a little better, it would have been worth living. So as his final act, he requested that his son leave the room so he would not have to endure any more of his father’s suffering. He then closed his eyes and died.”

I was deeply moved by this story. The power of the message Julian

had just shared was not lost on me. I looked up at the sky, breathing in the fresh air and staring at nature's abundance. I reflected on all the time that had passed in my life and on all the things I had missed. I thought about the many men and women who counted on me and considered the duty I owed to them. I thought about the enormous potential of our company and regretted all the opportunities we had neglected. My thoughts then turned to my family. A lump came to my throat when I considered all of those special times I had missed with my two young sons. Little-league baseball games, Christmas concerts, sun-filled afternoons laughing in the park were all missed because I had not had the courage to spend my life well. I thought of my youngest son whose only request of me was to play and laugh a little more with him. I thought about his elder brother whom I had not spent even one quiet evening with in many months. I thought about Samantha and all the romantic getaways that I had promised we would go on, but never did. I really had missed out on living the life I was meant to live.

But, as Ivan Ilych came to appreciate, it was never too late to do what is right and live life fully. That moment I vowed to change the very person I was. I would become the kind of leader my heart told me I was capable of being. I promised myself I would be the kind of husband and father I knew I had the capacity to become. And I would live with the kind of soaring intensity I knew I deserved. At that moment, I looked over at Julian. Tears filled his eyes as well.

“I think you now understand what I've been saying, my friend. To be the kind of person that you are destined to be and to leave something special behind for all those who follow you is what life's all about. It is the essence of leaving a legacy. As Yogi Boman put it, *‘What makes greatness is beginning something that does not end with you.’*”

“You know, Julian,” I said as I wiped my eyes, “my dad used to say that ‘the first fifty years of life are spent building one's

legitimacy while the last fifty are to be devoted to building one's legacy.' I never quite understood what he meant until now."

"The sages had a saying that captures the essence of the point that your father in all his wisdom was trying to make."

"What was it?"

"They used to tell me that 'when you were born, the world rejoiced while you cried. Your mission must be to live your life in such a way that when you die, the world cries while you rejoice.' Only then will your life have made the difference it was intended to make."

"Just so I am perfectly clear, Julian, will my legacy then be the goals that I will have achieved over my life as a leader?"

"Your legacy must be so much more than that. Your legacy will ultimately be a manifestation of the deepest and the best that you had to give in life. It will be a reflection of the person you now are and the person you aim to be. Leaving a legacy is not about impressing your friends or reaching the top. It's not about looking good but about doing good. It's more about fulfilling your duty and actualizing your humanity. Legacy-Based Leadership is the most powerful type of leadership. Practicing it will allow you to do what few leaders in the world today can do."

"Which is?"

"To create a successful present while building a brilliant future. And if I may say so, Peter, every leader in every field of endeavor should aspire to no less."

Julian then walked me back to the entrance of the observatory. Under the steps was a little wooden box that had been covered by a clean white cloth. Julian reached down and picked the box up, carefully making sure that the precious contents were given their due respect.

"Here, this is for you. The time has finally come for me to leave and for you to explore the full magnificence of the 8 Rituals of

Visionary Leaders on your own. I could not have asked for a better student and a more receptive friend. From the day I first exposed you to the leadership wisdom of the sages at our golf club, to this evening here at the observatory, you have embraced what I have come to share with an open mind and an honest heart.

“And so, as a token of my thanks for allowing me to fulfill my promise to Yogi Raman and spread the lessons I learned throughout our part of the world, I humbly offer you this gift. It has great meaning to me and has been my constant companion since I left the Himalayas. I couldn’t think of a better home for it than with you. All I ask is that you sincerely continue to apply the knowledge that I have delivered to you and spread The 8 Rituals of Visionary Leaders throughout your organization for all to discover. In this way, not only will you transform your leadership, you will bless the lives of all those around you.”

And with those final words, Julian reached over and embraced me as only a dear friend could, then dashed off into the darkness, his richly embroidered robe trailing behind him. As I opened the box, I saw that the gift was beautifully wrapped in some type of homemade covering. I immediately removed it, eager to find the special present Julian had placed within.

As I looked deeper, I saw that the box held a shiny object. A smile came to my face as I recognized what it was. It was the small telescope that Julian had been clinging to the night of the basketball game. I could not believe that he would have parted with such a prized possession. I knew how much his stargazing had meant to him.

Picking it up, I noticed that an inscription had been engraved on the telescope in elegant lettering. It said simply: *To my now wise friend, Peter, a man who I know will touch many lives. May your spark of leadership turn fear into power and darkness into light. With love, your fan, Julian.*

Chapter 12 Knowledge Summary • Julian's Wisdom in a Nutshell

The Ritual



The Essence

The Ritual of Contribution and Significance

The Wisdom

- The purpose of life is a life of purpose
- Focus on leaving a footprint and making a difference
- Leadership greatness comes by beginning something that does not end with you

The Practices

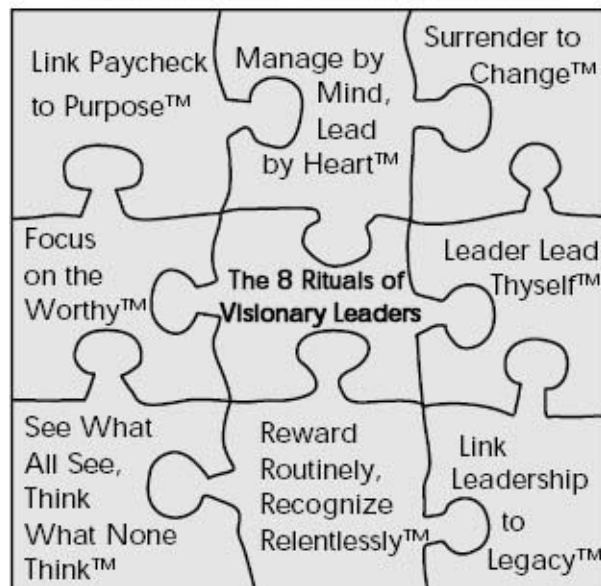
- Create a successful present while building a brilliant future
- Legacy-Based Leadership™

Quotable Quote

Your legacy will ultimately be a manifestation of the deepest and the best that you had to give in life. It will be a reflection of the person you now are and the person you aim to be. Leaving a legacy is not about impressing your friends or reaching the top. It's not about looking good but about doing good. It's about fulfilling your duty and actualizing your humanity.

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

THE 8 RITUALS OF VISIONARY LEADERS™



- 1 Link Paycheck to Purpose™
(The Ritual of a Compelling Future Focus)
- 2 Manage by Mind, Lead by Heart™
(The Ritual of Human Relations)
- 3 Reward Routinely, Recognize Relentlessly™
(The Ritual of Team Unity)
- 4 Surrender to Change™
(The Ritual of Adaptability and Change Management)
- 5 Focus on the Worthy™
(The Ritual of Personal Effectiveness)
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Robin S. Sharma would love to hear how this book has affected both you and your organization. Share your success stories, insights and experiences. Do you have a tip or quotes that you would like to share with other readers in Robin's popular newsletter *The Sharma Leadership Report*[™]? Please send them to us. Robin will make every possible effort to respond with a personal note. We want to hear from you!

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ABOUT ROBIN S. SHARMA

Robin S. Sharma, LL.B., LL.M., is an internationally respected authority on leadership, peak performance and life management. The author of five widely acclaimed books including the national bestseller *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, the sequel *Leadership Wisdom from The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* and the motivational classic *MegaLiving*, Robin. S. Sharma holds two law degrees including a masters of law and has enjoyed a distinguished career as a litigation lawyer. He is a recognized media personality having been featured in hundreds of leading publications ranging from USA Today and SUCCESS Magazine to The National Post and The Globe and Mail, and on NBC, CBC and CTV.

He is the founder of Sharma Leadership International, a respected training firm that specializes in developing the leadership and performance potential of individuals and organizations amidst rapid change. Clients include FORTUNE 500 corporations, major associations and large health-care institutions. To learn more about Robin S. Sharma's keynotes and seminars or to explore more of his thinking on personal and organizational effectiveness, visit www.robinsharma.com or call 1-888-RSHARMA.



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4

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101 SIMPLE SOLUTIONS TO
LIFE'S MOST COMPLEX PROBLEMS

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LIFE LESSONS FROM THE MONK
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ROBIN SHARMA



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MEGALIVING!

THE MONK WHO SOLD HIS FERRARI

LEADERSHIP WISDOM FROM THE MONK
WHO SOLD HIS FERRARI



I dedicate this book to you, the reader. May you apply the life lessons you discover within these pages to manifest the fullness of your talents while making a difference in the lives of all those around you.

This book is also dedicated to my children, Colby and Bianca, two of my greatest teachers. I love you.

The tragedy of life is not death, but what we let die inside of us while we live.

—Norman Cousins

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Acknowledgments

Preface



I honor you for picking up this book. In doing so, you have made the decision to live more deliberately, more joyfully and completely. You have decided to live your life by choice rather than by chance, by design rather than by default. And for this, I applaud you.

Since writing the two previous books in *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* series, I have received countless letters from readers who saw their lives change through the wisdom they discovered. The comments of these men and women inspired and moved me. Many of the notes I received also encouraged me to distill all that I have learned about the art of living into a series of life lessons. And so, I set about compiling the best I have to give into a book that I truly believe will help transform your life.

The words on the following pages are heartfelt and written in the high hope that you will not only connect with the wisdom I respectfully offer but act on it to create lasting improvements in every life area. Through my own trials, I have found that it is not enough to know what to do — we must *act* on that knowledge in order to have the lives we want.

And so as you turn the pages of this third book in *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* series, I hope you will discover a wealth of wisdom that will enrich the quality of your professional, personal and spiritual life. Please do write to me, send me an e-mail or visit with me at one of my seminars to share how you have integrated the lessons in this book into the way you live. I will do my very best to respond to your letters with a personal note. I wish you deep peace, great prosperity and many happy days spent engaged in a worthy purpose.

Robin S. Sharma

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Discover Your Calling



When I was growing up, my father said something to me I will never forget, “Son, when you were born, you cried while the world rejoiced. Live your life in such a way that when you die the world cries while you rejoice.” We live in an age when we have forgotten what life is all about. We can easily put a person on the Moon, but we have trouble walking across the street to meet a new neighbor. We can fire a missile across the world with pinpoint accuracy, but we have trouble keeping a date with our children to go to the library. We have e-mail, fax machines and digital phones so that we can stay connected and yet we live in a time where human beings have never been less connected. We have lost touch with our humanity. We have lost touch with our purpose. We have lost sight of the things that matter the most.

And so, as you start this book, I respectfully ask you, Who will cry when you die? How many lives will you touch while you have the privilege to walk this planet? What impact will your life have on the generations that follow you? And what legacy will you leave behind after you have taken your last breath? One of the lessons I have learned in my own life is that if you don’t act on life, life has a habit of acting on you. The days slip into weeks, the weeks slip into months and the months slip into years. Pretty soon it’s all over and you are left with nothing more than a heart filled with regret over a life half lived. George Bernard Shaw was asked on his deathbed, “What would you do if you could live your life over again?” He reflected, then replied with a deep sigh: “I’d like to be the person I could have been but never was.” I’ve written this book so that this will never happen to you.

As a professional speaker, I spend much of my work life delivering keynote addresses at conferences across North America, flying from city to city, sharing my insights on leadership in business and in life with many different people. Though they all come from diverse walks of life, their questions invariably center on the same things these days: How can I find greater meaning in my life? How can I make a lasting contribution through my work? and How can I simplify so that I can enjoy the journey of life before it is too late?

My answer always begins the same way: Find your calling. I believe we all have special talents that are just waiting to be engaged in a worthy pursuit. We are all here for some unique purpose, some noble objective that will allow us to manifest our highest human potential while we, at the same time, add value to the lives around us. Finding your calling doesn’t mean you must

leave the job you now have. It simply means you need to bring more of yourself into your work and focus on the things you do best. It means you have to stop waiting for other people to make the changes you desire and, as Mahatma Gandhi noted: “Be the change that you wish to see most in your world.” And once you do, your life will change.

Every Day, Be Kind to a Stranger



On his deathbed, Aldous Huxley reflected on his entire life's learning and then summed it up in seven simple words: "Let us be kinder to one another." All too often, we believe that in order to live a truly fulfilling life we must achieve some great act or grand feat that will put us on the front covers of magazines and newspapers. Nothing could be further from the truth. A meaningful life is made up of a series of daily acts of decency and kindness, which, ironically, add up to something truly great over the course of a lifetime.

Everyone who enters your life has a lesson to teach and a story to tell. Every person you pass during the moments that make up your days represents an opportunity to show a little more of the compassion and courtesy that define your humanity. Why not start being more of the person you truly are during your days and doing what you can to enrich the world around you? In my mind, if you make even one person smile during your day or brighten the mood of even one stranger, your day has been a worthwhile one. Kindness, quite simply, is the rent we must pay for the space we occupy on this planet.

Become more creative in the ways you show compassion to strangers. Paying the toll for the person in the car behind you, offering your seat on the subway to someone in need and being the first to say hello are great places to start. Recently, I received a letter from a reader of *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* who lives in Washington State. In it she wrote: "I have a practice of tithing to people who have helped me along my spiritual path. Please accept the enclosed check of \$100 with my blessing and gratitude." I quickly responded to her generous act by sending one of my audiotape programs in return so she received value for the gift she sent me. Her gesture was a great lesson in the importance of giving sincerely and from the heart.

Maintain Your Perspective



One day, according to an old story, a man with a serious illness was wheeled into a hospital room where another patient was resting on a bed next to the window. As the two became friends, the one next to the window would look out of it and then spend the next few hours delighting his bedridden companion with vivid descriptions of the world outside. Some days he would describe the beauty of the trees in the park across from the hospital and how the leaves danced in the wind. On other days, he would entertain his friend with step-by-step replays of the things people were doing as they walked by the hospital. However, as time went on, the bedridden man grew frustrated at his inability to observe the wonders his friend described. Eventually he grew to dislike him and then to hate him intensely.

One night, during a particularly bad coughing fit, the patient next to the window stopped breathing. Rather than pressing the button for help, the other man chose to do nothing. The next morning the patient who had given his friend so much happiness by recounting the sights outside the window was pronounced dead and wheeled out of the hospital room. The other man quickly asked that his bed be placed next to the window, a request that was complied with by the attending nurse. But as he looked out the window, he discovered something that made him shake: the window faced a stark brick wall. His former roommate had conjured up the incredible sights that he described in his imagination as a loving gesture to make the world of his friend a little bit better during a difficult time. He had acted out of selfless love.

This story never fails to create a shift in my own perspective when I think about it. To live happier, more fulfilling lives, when we encounter a difficult circumstance, we must keep shifting our perspective and continually ask ourselves, “Is there a wiser, more enlightened way of looking at this seemingly negative situation?” Stephen Hawking, one of the greatest physicists ever, is reported to have said that we live on a minor planet of a very average star located within the outer limits of one of a hundred thousand million galaxies. How’s that for a shift in perspective? Given this information, are your troubles really that big? Are the problems you have experienced or the challenges you might currently be facing really as serious as you have made them out to be?

We walk this planet for such a short time. In the overall scheme of things, our lives are mere blips on the canvas of eternity. So have the wisdom to

enjoy the journey and savor the process.

Practice Tough Love



The golden thread of a highly successful and meaningful life is self-discipline. Discipline allows you to do all those things you know in your heart you should do but never feel like doing. Without self-discipline, you will not set clear goals, manage your time effectively, treat people well, persist through the tough times, care for your health or think positive thoughts.

I call the habit of self-discipline “Tough Love” because getting tough with yourself is actually a very loving gesture. By being stricter with yourself, you will begin to live life more deliberately, on your own terms rather than simply reacting to life the way a leaf floating in a stream drifts according to the flow of the current on a particular day. As I teach in one of my seminars, the tougher you are on yourself, the easier life will be on you. The quality of your life ultimately is shaped by the quality of your choices and decisions, ones that range from the career you choose to pursue to the books you read, the time that you wake up every morning and the thoughts you think during the hours of your days. When you consistently flex your willpower by making those choices that you know are the right ones (rather than the easy ones), you take back control of your life. Effective, fulfilled people do not spend their time doing what is most convenient and comfortable. They have the courage to listen to their hearts and to do the wise thing. This habit is what makes them great.

“The successful person has the habit of doing the things failures don’t like to do,” remarked essayist and thinker E. M. Gray. “They don’t like doing them either, necessarily. But their disliking is subordinated to the strength of their purpose.” The nineteenth-century English writer Thomas Henry Huxley arrived at a similar conclusion, noting: “Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not.” And Aristotle made this point of wisdom in yet another way: “Whatever we learn to do, we learn by actually doing it: men come to be builders, for instance, by building, and harp players, by playing the harp. In the same way, by doing just acts we come to be just; by doing self-controlled acts, we come to be self-controlled; and by doing brave acts, we come to be brave.”

Keep a Journal



Maintaining a daily journal is one of the best personal growth initiatives you will ever take. Writing down your daily experiences along with the lessons you have drawn from them will make you wiser with each passing day. You will develop self-awareness and make fewer mistakes. And keeping a journal will help clarify your intentions so that you remain focused on the things that truly count.

Writing in a journal offers you the opportunity to have regular one-on-one conversations with yourself. It forces you to do some deep thinking in a world where deep thinking is a thing of the past. It will also make you a clearer thinker and help you live in a more intentional and enlightened way. In addition, it provides a central place where you can record your insights on important issues, note key success strategies that have worked for you and commit to all those things you know are important to achieve for a high-quality professional, personal and spiritual life. And your personal journal gives you a private place to flex your imagination and define your dreams.

A journal is not a diary. A diary is a place where you record events while a journal is a place where you analyze and evaluate them. Keeping a journal encourages you to consider what you do, why you do it and what you have learned from all you have done. And writing in a journal promotes personal growth and wisdom by giving you a forum to study, and then leverage, your past for greater success in your future. Medical researchers have even found that writing in a private journal for as little time as 15 minutes a day can improve health, functioning of your immune system and your overall attitude. Remember, if your life is worth thinking about, it is worth writing about.

Develop an Honesty Philosophy



We live in a world of broken promises. We live in a time when people treat their words lightly. We tell a friend we will call her next week for lunch knowing full well we do not have the time to do so. We promise a co-worker we will bring in that new book we love so much knowing full well that we never lend out our books. And we promise ourselves this will be the year we will get back into shape, simplify our lives and have more fun without any real intention of making the deep life changes necessary to achieve these goals.

Saying things we don't really mean becomes a habit when we practice it long enough. The real problem is that when you don't keep your word, you lose credibility. When you lose credibility, you break the bonds of trust. And breaking the bonds of trust ultimately leads to a string of broken relationships.

To develop an honesty philosophy, begin to monitor how many small untruths you tell over the course of a week. Go on what I call a "truth fast" for the next seven days and vow to be completely honest in all your dealings with others — and with yourself. Every time you fail to do the right thing, you fuel the habit of doing the wrong thing. Every time you do not tell the truth, you feed the habit of being untruthful. When you promise someone you will do something, do it. Be a person of your word rather than being "all talk and no action." As Mother Teresa said, "there should be less talk; a preaching point is not a meeting point. What do you do then? Take a broom and clean someone's house. That says enough."

Honor Your Past



Every second you dwell on the past you steal from your future. Every minute you spend focusing on your problems you take away from finding your solutions. And thinking about all those things that you wish never happened to you is actually blocking all the things you want to happen from entering into your life. Given the timeless truth that holds that you become what you think about all day long, it makes no sense to worry about past events or mistakes unless you want to experience them for a second time. Instead, use the lessons you have learned from your past to rise to a whole new level of awareness and enlightenment.

Life's greatest setbacks reveal life's biggest opportunities. As the ancient thinker Euripides noted, "There is in the worst of fortune the best chances for a happy change." If you have suffered more than your fair share of difficulties in life, perhaps you are being prepared to serve some greater purpose that will require you to be equipped with the wisdom you have acquired through your trials. Use these life lessons to fuel your future growth. Remember, happy people have often experienced as much adversity as those who are unhappy. What sets them apart is that they have the good sense to manage their memories in a way that enriches their lives.

And understand that if you have failed more than others, there is a very good chance you are living more completely than others. Those who take more chances and dare to be more and do more than others will naturally experience more failures. But personally, I would rather have the bravery to try something and then fail than never to have tried it at all. I would much prefer spending the rest of my days expanding my human frontiers and trying to make the seemingly impossible probable than live a life of comfort, security and mediocrity. That's the essence of true life success. As Herodotus noted so sagely, "It is better by noble boldness to run the risk of being subject to half of the evils we anticipate than to remain in cowardly listlessness for fear of what may happen." Or as Booker T. Washington said, "I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles he has overcome while trying to succeed."

Start Your Day Well



The way you begin your day determines the way you will live your day. I call the first thirty minutes after you wake up “The Platinum 30” since they are truly the most valuable moments of your day and have a profound influence on the quality of every minute that follows. If you have the wisdom and self-discipline to ensure that, during this key period, you think only the purest of thoughts and take only the finest of actions, you will notice that your days will consistently unfold in the most marvelous ways.

Recently, I took my two young children to see the thrilling IMAX movie *Everest*. Aside from the breathtaking imagery and the powerful acts of heroism portrayed, there was one point that stayed with me: in order for the mountain-climbers to scale the summit, it was essential for them to have a good base camp. It was impossible for them to get to the top without that camp at the bottom that offered them a sanctuary for rest, renewal and replenishing. Once they reached Camp Two, they then returned to the base for a few weeks to recharge their batteries. On reaching Camp Three, they hastily retreated to base camp to prepare for the trek to Camp Four. And on reaching Camp Four, they again went back down the mountain to base camp before making their final push for the summit. In the same way, I think that every one of us, in order to reach our personal summits and master the daily challenges of our own lives, needs to revisit our base camps during “The Platinum 30.” We need to go to a place where we can reconnect to our life’s mission, renew our selves and refocus on the things that matter most.

In my own life, I have developed a very effective morning ritual that consistently gets my day off to a joyful and peace-filled start. After waking, I head down to my “personal sanctuary,” a little space I have created for myself where I can practice my renewal activities without being disturbed. I then spend about fifteen minutes in silent contemplation, focusing on all the good things in my life and envisioning the day that I expect is about to unfold. Next I pick up a book from the wisdom literature, one rich with those timeless truths of successful living that are so easy to forget in these fast-paced times we live in. Examples include *Meditations* by the Roman philosopher Marcus Aurelius, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* and *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau. The lessons in these works center me on the things that truly count and help launch my day on the right footing. And the wisdom I read during that precious early morning period infuses and enlightens every

remaining minute of my day. So start your day well. You will never be the same.

Learn to Say No Gracefully



It is easy to say yes to every request on your time when the priorities of your life are unclear. When your days are not guided by a rich and inspiring vision for your future, a clear image of an end result that will help you act more intentionally, it is not hard for the agendas of those around you to dictate your actions. As I wrote in *Leadership Wisdom from The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, “if your priorities don’t get scheduled into your planner, other people’s priorities will get put into your planner.” The solution is to be clear about your life’s highest objectives and then to learn to say no with grace.

The Chinese sage Chuang-tzu told the story of a man who forged swords for a maharaja. Even at the age of ninety, his work was carried out with exceptional precision and ability. No matter how rushed he was, he never made even the slightest slip. One day, the maharaja asked the old man, “Is this a natural talent or is there some special technique that you use to create your remarkable results?” “It is concentration on the essentials,” replied the sword-crafter. “I took to forging swords when I was twenty-one years old. I did not care about anything else. If it was not a sword, I did not look at it or pay any attention to it. Forging swords became my passion and my purpose. I took all the energy that I did not give in other directions and put it in the direction of my art. This is the secret to my mastery.”

The most effective people concentrate on their “areas of excellence,” that is, on the things they do best and on those high-impact activities that will advance their life-work. In being so consumed by the important things, they find it easy to say no to the less-than-worthy distractions that clamor for their attention. Michael Jordan, the best basketball player in the game’s history, did not negotiate his contracts, design his uniforms and prepare his travel schedules. He focused his time and energies on what he did best: playing basketball, and delegated everything else to his handlers. Jazz great Louis Armstrong did not spend his time selling tickets to his shows and setting up chairs for the audience. He concentrated on his point of brilliance: playing the trumpet. Learning to say no to the non-essentials will give you more time to devote to the things that have the power to truly improve the way you live and help you leave the legacy you know in your heart you are destined to leave.

Take a Weekly Sabbatical



In ancient days, the seventh day of the week was known as the Sabbath. Reserved for some of life's most important, yet commonly neglected pursuits, including spending time with one's family and hours in deep reflection and self-renewal, it provided a chance for hard-working people to renew their batteries and spend a day living life more fully. However, as the pace of life quickened and more activities began to compete for people's attention, this wonderful tradition was lost along with the tremendous personal benefits that flowed from it.

Stress itself is not a bad thing. It can often help us perform at our best, expand beyond our limits and achieve things that would otherwise astonish us. Just ask any elite athlete. The real problem lies in the fact that in this age of global anxiety we do not get enough *relief* from stress. So to revitalize yourself and nourish the deepest part of you, plan for a weekly period of peace — a weekly sabbatical — to get back to the simpler pleasures of life, pleasures that you may have given up as your days grew busier and your life more complex. Bringing this simple ritual into your weeks will help you reduce stress, connect with your more creative side and feel far happier in every role of your life.

Your weekly sabbatical does not have to last a full day. All you need are a few hours alone, perhaps on a quiet Sunday morning, when you can spend some time doing the things you love to do the most. Ideas include spending time in your favorite bookstore, watching the sun rise, taking a solitary walk along a beach and writing in your journal. Organizing your life so that you get to do more of the things you love to do is one of the first steps to life improvement. Who cares if others don't understand what you are trying to accomplish by making the weekly sabbatical an essential part of your life. Do it for yourself, you are worth it. In the words of Thoreau, "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."

Talk to Yourself



Years ago, when I was a litigation lawyer who had many of the material trappings of success yet little in the way of inner peace, I read a book called *As a Man Thinketh* by James Allen. The book discussed the enormous power of the human mind to shape our reality and attract great happiness and prosperity into our lives. The work also mentioned the profound influence of the words and language we use on a daily basis to create a more enlightened pathway of thought.

Fascinated, I began to read more and more wisdom and self-help literature. And as I did, I discovered the profound impact and importance of the words we use in our daily communications (both with others and with ourselves) on the quality of our lives. This knowledge also caused me to become aware of the personal dialogue that each of us has going on within us every minute of every hour of every day and to vow to improve the content of what I was saying to myself. To achieve this, I began to apply a strategy developed by the ancient sages over five thousand years ago. And, in many ways, it changed my life.

The technique is a simple one and involves nothing more than selecting a phrase that you will train your mind to focus on at different times throughout the day until it begins to dominate your awareness and reshape the person you are. If it is inner peace and calm you seek, the phrase, known as a mantra, might be, “I am so grateful that I am a serene and tranquil person.” If it is more confidence that you want, your mantra could be, “I am delighted that I am full of confidence and boundless courage.” If it is material prosperity you are after, your saying might be, “I am so grateful that money and opportunity is flowing into my life.”

Repeat your mantras softly under your breath as you walk to work, as you wait in line or as you wash the dishes to fill otherwise unproductive times of your day with a powerful life improvement force. Try to say your personal phrase at least two hundred times a day for at least four weeks. The results will be profound as you take one giant step to finding the peace, prosperity and purpose your life requires. As Hazrat Inayat Khan said, “The words that enlighten the soul are more precious than jewels.”

Schedule Worry Breaks



After I wrote *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, I was flooded with letters from readers who saw their lives change from the lessons they discovered on becoming happier, more fulfilled and more peaceful in these stress-crazed times. Many of the letters came from people whose work lives had grown so busy that they spent most of their free time worrying about things that should have been left at the office. They had lost the ability to laugh, love and share joy with their families because challenges at work were consuming them.

Too many people are spending the best years of their lives stuck in a state of constant worry. They worry about their jobs, the bills, the environment and their kids. And yet we all know deep in our hearts that most of the things we worry about never happen. It's like that great saying of Mark Twain's, "I've had a lot of trouble in my life, some of which actually happened." My father, a particularly wise man who has had a deep influence on my own life, once told me that the Sanskrit character for funeral pyre is strikingly similar to the Sanskrit character for worry. "I'm surprised," I replied. "You shouldn't be, son," he gently offered. "One burns the dead while the other burns the living."

I know how dramatically the worry habit can reduce one's quality of life from personal experience. While in my late twenties, I was on the so-called fast track to success. I had received two law degrees from one of the country's most prestigious law schools, served as the law clerk for a Chief Justice and was handling highly complex cases as a litigation lawyer. But I was often working too hard and worrying too much. I was waking up on Monday morning with a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach and a deep sense that I was wasting my talents on work that was not aligned with the person I was. So I began to search for ways to improve my life, turning first to the self-help and life leadership literature, where I found a wealth of lessons for a more balanced, peace-filled and meaningful existence.

One of the simple strategies I learned to conquer the worry habit was to schedule specific times to worry — what I now call "worry breaks." If we are facing a difficulty, it is easy to spend all our waking hours focusing on it. Instead, I recommend that you schedule fixed times to worry, say, thirty minutes every evening. During this worry session, you may wallow in your problems and brood over your difficulties. But after that period ends, you must train yourself to leave your troubles behind and do something more productive, such as going for a walk in natural surroundings or reading an inspirational book or having a heart-to-heart conversation with someone you

love. If during other times of the day you feel the need to worry, jot down what you want to worry about in a notebook which you can then bring to your next worry break. This simple but powerful technique will help you gradually reduce the amount of time you spend worrying and eventually serve to eliminate this habit forever.

Model a Child



A while ago, I took my four-year-old son Colby to an Italian restaurant for lunch. It was a beautiful autumn day and, as usual, my young son was full of energy and joy. We both ordered pasta for our main course and then started to enjoy the freshly baked bread our waiter had brought. Little did I know that Colby was about to teach his father yet another lesson in the art of living.

Rather than eating the bread whole as most adults do, Colby took a different, far more creative approach. He began to scoop out the warm, soft part of the bread and left the crust intact. In other words, he had the wisdom to focus on the best part of the bread and leave the rest. Someone once said to me at a seminar, “Children come to us more highly evolved than adults to teach us the lessons we need to learn.” And on that fine day, my little boy reminded me that as so-called grown-ups, we spend too much time focusing on the “crust of life” rather than on all the good things that flow in and out of our days. We focus on our challenges at work, the pile of bills we have to pay and the lack of time to do all those things we need to do. But our thoughts do form our world and what we think about does grow in our lives. What we focus on will determine our destiny and so we must start focusing on the good stuff.

In the weeks ahead, make the time to connect to your more playful side, the child within you. Take the time to study the positive qualities of children and model their ability to stay energized, imaginative and completely in the moment no matter what might be going on around them. And as you do, remember the powerful words of Leo Rosten, who observed:

You can understand and relate to most people better if you look at them — no matter how impressive they may be — as if they are children. For most of us never really grow up or mature all that much — we simply grow taller. Oh, to be sure, we laugh less and play less and wear uncomfortable disguises like adults, but beneath the costume is the child we always are, whose needs are simple, whose daily life is still best described by fairy tales.

Remember, Genius Is 99 Percent Inspiration



The celebrated inventor Thomas Edison is well known for his statement: “Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration.” While I believe that hard work is essential to a life of real success and fulfillment, I think that being filled with a deep sense of inspiration and commitment to making a difference in the world is an even more important attribute.

All of the great geniuses of the world were inspired and driven by their desire to enrich the lives of others. When you study their lives, you will discover that this desire became almost an obsession for most of them. It consumed them and occupied every cell of their minds. Edison was inspired to manifest the visions he saw on the picture screen of his imagination into reality. Jonas Salk, who discovered the polio vaccine, was inspired to help others from suffering from this dreaded affliction. And Marie Curie, the great Nobel Prize-winning scientist, was inspired to serve humanity through her discovery of radium. As Woodrow Wilson said, “You are not here to merely make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand.”

How inspired are you in your own life? Do you jump out of bed on Monday mornings or do you simply lie there with a sense of emptiness flooding through your body? If your level of inspiration is lower than you know it should be, read a good self-help book or listen to a motivating audiocassette program. Attend a public lecture by someone you admire or spend a few hours studying the biography of one of your heroes. Start spending time with people who are passionate about what they are doing in their lives and dedicated to making the best out of life. With a healthy dose of inspiration, you will quickly raise your life to a whole new plane of living.

Care for the Temple



A few months ago, I had lunch with a colleague in the speaking profession. As we discussed the things we did in our lives to stay focused, balanced and at our peak amid the demands of our busy schedules, he made a powerful point. “Robin,” he said, “many people regularly go to a church or temple to stay grounded and centered. I’m a little different. I go to the gym — that’s my temple.” He added that no matter how busy he is, at 5:30 P.M. he closes his office and makes the “daily pilgrimage” to his gym to run a few miles on the treadmill. Nothing can stop him from taking this time to ensure his health and happiness.

My friend’s observation made me think of a saying of the ancient Romans that I quoted in my first book *MegaLiving*, “mens sana in corpore sano,” which is Latin for “in a sound body rests a sound mind.” It also made me realize that our bodies need to be treated like temples and considered sacred if we hope to live life fully and completely. Regular exercise will not only improve your health, it will help you think more clearly, boost creativity and manage the relentless stress that seems to dominate our days. And research has proven that exercise will not only add life to your years, it could add years to your life. One study of 18,000 Harvard alumni found that every hour spent on exercise added three hours to the participants’ lives. Few investments will yield a better return than time spent on physical fitness. And remember: “Those who don’t make time for exercise must eventually make time for illness.”

In my own life, I have set the goal of swimming five times a week. There is something special about the renewing power of swimming that I cannot begin to describe. I wish I could say I achieve this goal every single week, but I can’t. Yet, having such a lofty objective keeps me focused on how important staying in peak physical condition is for my overall well-being and to the quality of my life. Without fail, every workout in the swimming pool brings the same results: I feel energized, serene, balanced and happy. And my exercise sessions also bring me something that I feel is truly priceless: perspective. After my forty-minute swims, any challenges I might be struggling with seem smaller, any worries I have become trivial and I find myself living fully in the present moment. The act of caring for my physical temple reminds me that life’s greatest pleasures are often life’s simplest ones.

Learn to Be Silent



William Wordsworth sagely observed, “When from our better selves we have too long been parted by the hurrying world, sick of its business, of its pleasures tired, how gracious, how benign is solitude.” When was the last time you made the time to be silent and still? When was the last time you carved out a chunk of time to enjoy the power of solitude to restore, refocus and revitalize your mind, body and spirit?

All of the great wisdom traditions of the world have arrived at the same conclusion: to reconnect with who you really are as a person and to come to know the glory that rests within you, you must find the time to be silent on a regular basis. Sure, you are busy. But as Thoreau said: “It is not enough to be busy, so are the ants. The question is what are you so busy about?”

The importance of silence makes me think about the story of an old lighthouse keeper. The man had only a limited amount of oil to keep his beacon lit so that passing ships could avoid the rocky shore. One night, a man who lived close by needed to borrow some of this precious commodity to light his home, so the lighthouse keeper gave him some of his own. Another night, a traveler begged for some oil to light his lamp so he could keep on traveling. The lighthouse keeper also complied with this request and gave him the amount he needed. The next night, the lighthouse keeper was awakened by a mother banging on his door. She prayed for some oil so that she could illuminate her home and feed her family. Again he agreed. Soon all his oil was gone and his beacon went out. Many ships ran aground and many lives were lost because the lighthouse keeper forgot to focus on his priority. He neglected his primary duty and paid a high price. Experiencing solitude, for even a few minutes a day, will keep you centered on your highest life priorities and help you avoid the neglect that pervades the lives of so many of us.

And saying that you don’t have enough time to be silent on a regular basis is a lot like saying you are too busy driving to stop for gas — eventually it *will* catch up with you.

Think About Your Ideal Neighborhood



One of the things I have done along my quest for self-knowledge is to make a list of all the people I wished lived next door to me. These are men and women from both the past and present who I would love to be able to drop in on for a quick cup of tea every once in a while and share a laugh with from time to time. The very act of listing your “ideal neighbors” will connect you to many of the values and traits you respect the most in people and, in doing so, help you to discover more about yourself as a person. It is also a fun way to spend 30 minutes of your life.

Here are some of the people on my list:

- Norman Vincent Peale, the famed author of *The Power of Positive Thinking*
- Henry David Thoreau, the great American philosopher and the author of *Walden*, one of my favorite books
- Baltasar Gracian, the Jesuit scholar who became one of Spain’s greatest writers
- Billie Holiday, the great jazz singer
- Nelson Mandela, the freedom fighter
- Og Mandino, self-help author of such classics as *A Better Way to Live* and *University of Success*
- Mother Teresa, the respected humanitarian
- Richard Branson, the British tycoon and adventurer
- Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the colorful Canadian prime minister
- Miles Davis, the legendary trumpeter
- Muhammad Ali, the world champion boxer
- Benjamin Franklin, the renowned statesman

Take a moment right now to jot down some of the people whom you wished lived on your street. Then think about the qualities that make these men and women so admirable and how you might foster such qualities in your own life. The first step to realizing your life vision is defining it. And the first step to becoming the person you want to be is identifying the traits of the person you want to be.

Get Up Early



Getting up early is a gift you give to yourself. Few disciplines have the power to transform your life as does the habit of early rising. There is something very special about the first few hours of the morning. Time seems to slow down and a deep sense of peace fills the air. Joining the “Five o’Clock Club” will allow you to start controlling your day rather than letting your day control you. Winning the “Battle of the Bed” and putting “mind over mattress” by rising early will provide you with at least one quiet hour for yourself during the most crucial part of your day: the beginning. If spent wisely, the rest of your day will unfold in a wonderful way.

In *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, I challenged readers to “get up with the sun” and offered a number of ideas to help them cultivate this new life discipline. From the many letters, e-mails and faxes I have received from people who have improved the quality of their lives by getting up at 5 A.M., I can safely say that this is one success principle that is really worth integrating into your life. In doing so, you will join the ranks of many of the most influential people of our time ranging from Mahatma Gandhi, Thomas Edison and Nelson Mandela to Ted Turner and Mary Kay Ash.

One reader of *The Monk*, a marketing executive, wrote that her stress level fell so dramatically once she started rising early that her team at the office presented her with a paperweight bearing the following inscription: “To our MIP (Most Improved Player). Whatever you are doing, keep doing it. You are an inspiration to us all.” A consummate late riser, she vowed to stop sleeping in and spending her days making up for time lost while under the blanket. So while her family (and the world around her) slept, she began to get up first at 6 A.M., then at 5:30 A.M. and finally at 5 A.M. During the free time that she found she had created, she would do all the things she loved to do but had somehow never found time for. Listening carefully to classical music, writing letters, reading the classics and walking were just some of the activities that she used to rekindle her spirit and reconnect with a part of herself she thought she had lost. By getting up early, she began to care for herself again. And by doing so, she became a much better parent, spouse and professional.

To cultivate the habit of getting up earlier, the first thing to remember is that it is the *quality* rather than the quantity of sleep that matters most. It is better to have six hours of uninterrupted sleep than ten hours of restless, broken sleep. Here are four tips to help you sleep more deeply:

- Don't rehearse the activities of your day while you are lying in bed trying to get to sleep.
- Don't eat after 8 P.M. (If you have to eat something, have soup.)
- Don't watch the news before you go to sleep.
- Don't read in bed.

Give yourself a few weeks for this new habit to take hold. Saying that you tried to get up early but gave up after seven days because it was just too hard is like saying you tried taking French lessons for a week but gave up because you could not speak the language by then. Life change takes time, effort and patience. But the results you will receive make the initial stress you experience more than worth it.

See Your Troubles as Blessings



During the life leadership seminars I give, I often ask the participants this question: “Who would agree with me that we learn the most from our most difficult experiences?” Inevitably, nearly every hand in the room goes up. Given this, I often wonder why we, as human beings, spend so much of our lives focusing on the negative aspects of our most difficult experiences rather than seeing them for what they truly are: our greatest teachers.

You would not have the wisdom and knowledge you now possess were it not for the setbacks you have faced, the mistakes you have made and the suffering you have endured. Once and for all, come to realize that pain is a teacher and failure is the highway to success. You cannot learn how to play the guitar without hitting a few wrong notes and you will never learn how to sail if you are not willing to tip the boat over a few times. Begin to see your troubles as blessings, resolve to transform your stumbling blocks into stepping stones and vow to turn your wounds into wisdom.

Like most people, I have encountered my own share of pain as I have advanced along the path of life. But I always try to remind myself that our character is shaped, not through life’s easiest experiences, but during life’s toughest ones. It is during life’s most trying times that we discover who we really are and the fullness of the strength that lies within us. If you are currently experiencing challenges of your own, I respectfully offer the following words of Rainer Maria Rilke, which have helped me greatly when life throws one of its curves my way:

... have patience with everything that remains unsolved in your heart. Try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books written in a foreign language. Do not now look for the answers. They cannot now be given to you because you could not live them. It is a question of experiencing everything. At present, you need to live the question. Perhaps you will gradually, without even noticing it, find yourself experiencing the answer, some distant day.

Laugh More



According to one study, the average four-year-old laughs three hundred times a day while the average adult laughs about fifteen times a day. With all the obligations, stresses and activities that fill our days, we have forgotten how to laugh. Daily laughter has been shown to elevate our moods, promote creativity and give us more energy. Comedian Steve Martin reportedly laughs for five minutes in front of the mirror every morning to get his creative juices flowing and to start his day on a high note (try it — it works). Laughter therapy has even been used to cure illnesses and heal those with serious ailments. As William James, the father of modern psychology, observed, “We don’t laugh because we are happy. We are happy because we laugh.”

A friend of mine, always known for his wise ways, made it his new year’s resolution one year to laugh more. Every few weeks, he would go to his local video store and rent a Three Stooges movie or buy a new book of humor, which he would then dip into when he had a few free moments during the course of his day. A positive person already, he began to notice that he felt even happier and started to laugh even more than before he undertook this personal development initiative. Because of all the humor he surrounded himself with and the new awareness it created in his life, he also began to see the lighter side of things and no longer experienced the level of stress he had felt in his professional pursuits. This simple discipline raised him to a whole new level of living and effectiveness.

Why not follow my friend’s lead and head down to your local video store to stock up on the latest funny movies? Then pick up a few books, perhaps something from Gary Larson’s Far Side series or the much-read Dilbert cartoons, to stimulate your laughter habit. Reconnect to your playful side and enjoy the wonders of a deep belly laugh.

Spend a Day Without Your Watch



Last fall, I did something I have not done for many years: I left my watch at home and spent an entire day without looking at the time. Rather than living by the clock and planning everything I was going to do that day, I simply lived for the moment and did whatever I felt like doing. I became a true human *being* rather than merely a human doing.

Early in the morning, I went for a walk deep in the woods, one of my favorite things to do. With me, I carried an old paperback copy of *Walden* by the social philosopher Henry David Thoreau, a book I have come to love. After finding a beautiful place to sit and read, I experienced one of those moments of synchronicity where something perfect happens at just the right time. For me it was randomly opening the book and finding the following paragraph in front of me:

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life ...

I reflected on this great man's words and soaked up the miraculous beauty of the scene around me. The rest of the day was spent in a bookshop, watching *Toy Story* with my kids, relaxing with the family on our patio and listening to my favorite pieces of music. Nothing expensive. Nothing complicated. But completely fun.

Take More Risks



I'll make you this promise: on your deathbed, in the twilight of your life, it will not be all the risks you took that you will regret the most. Rather, what will fill your heart with the greatest amount of regret and sadness will be all those risks that you did not take, all those opportunities you did not seize and all those fears you did not face. Remember that on the other side of fear lies freedom. And stay focused on the timeless success principle that says: "life is nothing more than a game of numbers — the more risks you take, the more rewards you will receive." Or in the words of Sophocles, "Fortune is not on the side of the faint-hearted."

To live your life to the fullest, start taking more risks and doing the things you fear. Get good at being uncomfortable and stop walking the path of least resistance. Sure, there is a greater chance you will stub your toes when you walk the road less traveled, but that is the only way you can get anywhere. As my wise mother always says, "you cannot get to third base with one foot on second." Or as André Gide observed, "One does not discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time."

The real secret to a life of abundance is to stop spending your days searching for security and to start spending your time pursuing opportunity. Sure, you will meet with your share of failures if you start living more deliberately and passionately. But failure is nothing more than learning how to win. Or as my dad observed one day, "Robin, it's risky out on a limb. But that's where all the fruit is."

As I wrote in an earlier lesson, life is all about choices. Deeply fulfilled and highly actualized people simply make wiser choices than others. You can choose to spend the rest of your days sitting on the shore of life in complete safety or you can take some chances, dive deep into the water and discover the pearls that lie waiting for the person of true courage. To keep me inspired and centered on the fact that I must keep stretching my own personal boundaries as the days go by, I have posted the following words of Theodore Roosevelt in the study where I write:

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy

cause, who at best knows in the end the triumphs of high achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

Live a Life



On being asked about the ups and downs of his career, movie star Kevin Costner responded with these words, “I’m living a life.” I found this reply to be profound. Rather than spending his days judging the events and experiences of his life as either good or bad, he adopted a neutral stance and simply decided to accept them for what they are: a natural part of the path he is on.

We all travel different roads to our ultimate destinations. For some of us, the path is rockier than for others. But no one reaches the end without facing some form of adversity. So rather than fight it, why not accept it as the way of life? Why not detach yourself from the outcomes and simply experience every circumstance that enters your life to the fullest? Feel the pain and savor the happiness. If you have never visited the valleys, the view from the mountaintop is not as breathtaking. Remember, there are no real failures in life, only results. There are no true tragedies, only lessons. And there really are no problems, only opportunities waiting to be recognized as solutions by the person of wisdom.

Learn from a Good Movie



I love going to the movies whenever I can. Often, I take my young daughter Bianca and my son Colby with me and, while munching on popcorn, we enjoy the latest animated film that is heating up the box office. We always walk out with smiles on our faces along with a whole host of new characters we can pretend to be in our daily play sessions. When I am on the road for a speaking tour, I still try to find a few hours at the end of the day to slip into a theater in whatever city I may be in and watch a good movie. I find that films not only relax me but they serve to transport me to a different world and inspire me to keep thinking about the endless possibilities life holds. I guess movies bring out the dreamer in me.

Recently, I saw an Italian movie called *Life Is Beautiful*. Though it was subtitled, it kept me riveted for nearly three hours and moved me like no film I have seen in quite some time. Much of the story centers on a loving father and his relationship with his young son. Early on, the two are inseparable and share many great times. Suddenly, one afternoon, the two are taken away from their home and placed on a train bound for Auschwitz, the notorious Nazi concentration camp. The rest of the movie shows the incredible lengths the father goes to, not only to keep his son alive, but to actually keep him happy through their horrifying ordeal. Though the father ultimately sacrifices his own life at the end, *Life Is Beautiful* is a powerful reminder that living is a gift and we must make the best of it, every day of our lives.

A good movie can restore your perspective, reconnect you to the things you value most and keep you enthusiastic about all the things in your life. And as Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.”

Bless Your Money



If you ever get to London, England, visit Foyle's, which is among the oldest bookstores in the city. I have found more gems by browsing along its dusty shelves than in any other bookshop I have visited around the world. Being a dedicated student of self-help literature myself, I generally gravitate to that section in the store. I always look for a little-known work that will offer me a few new insights on the art of living and help me improve the quality of my own life. And in Foyle's, I always find one.

A few years back, I found a book entitled *Bring Out the Magic in Your Mind*. It was written almost thirty years ago by a man named Al Koran, who was then known as "the Finest Mental Magician in the World." In a chapter entitled "The Secret of Wealth" he writes the following: "When you send your money out, remember always to bless it. Ask it to bless everybody that it touches, and command it to go out and feed the hungry and clothe the naked, and command it to come back to you a million-fold. Don't pass over this lightly. I am serious."

Over the next few days, why not follow Al Koran's advice and see what happens? When you pay for your groceries, silently bless all those who have helped bring this food to you: the farmers who have grown it, the delivery people who have carried it and the store clerks who have stocked it. If you are writing a check for your children's education, why not give silent appreciation to all the teachers who are spending their days shaping the minds of your kids and to all the others who make their work possible? When you pull out a few bills to buy that magazine off the rack in a convenience store, bless the person who is toiling away behind the counter and hope the money adds value to the quality of his or her life. As that timeless truth says, "The hand that gives is the hand that gathers."

Focus on the Worthy



A while ago a FedEx package arrived at my office. Inside was an envelope with a gold seal placed on the fold and my name carefully written on the front. I quickly opened it and began to read the letter within. It was from the CEO of a major corporation who had picked up my book *Leadership Wisdom from the Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* at an airport while on his way to a business meeting in Europe. He said he was a lifelong student of leadership and was intrigued by the title, which had brought a smile to his face.

This executive had been under tremendous pressure as a result of the overwhelming demands placed on him and was hoping to learn some ways to improve his leadership effectiveness so that he could spend more time on the things that really mattered, both in his business life and in his personal world. In his letter, he wrote:

As I read your story about this man whose life had become too complex and out of control, I began to connect with a part of myself that I had not connected with for many, many years. I began to think about the people in my organization who look to me for guidance and inspiration. I began to think about my wife who had been begging me to take a vacation for the past five years. And I thought about my three children who had watched their father spend the finest years of their youth climbing the imaginary ladder of success. I consider myself a strong person but as I continued to read your book, I began to sob, quietly at first and then uncontrollably, so much so that the flight attendant rushed over and politely asked if everything was alright.

The CEO continued:

That moment was a wake-up call for me, an experience I will carry with me until the day that I die. I knew that I had to make some serious changes in the way that I was leading and in the way that I was living. So on that flight, sitting 35,000 feet above the world below, I promised myself that I would commit myself to eliminating the multitude of distractions in my life and concentrate on only the fundamentals, those few activities that really had the power to make a difference in the way I worked and lived. I promised to stop reading six newspapers a day, handling every piece of mail that appeared in my in-basket and accepting every dinner invitation that came my way. I even had the title of your chapter on personal effectiveness, which you aptly called 'Focus on the Worthy,' made into a plaque that I keep

on my desk to remind me that ‘the person who tries to do everything ultimately achieves nothing.’ I cannot tell you how much better my life has become since I began to live by this simple philosophy. Thank you.

Time is your most precious commodity and yet most of us live our lives as if we have all the time in the world. The real secret to getting control of your life is to restore a sense of focus in your days. The real secret to getting things done is knowing what things need to be left undone. Once you start spending the hours of your days only on those high-leverage activities and priorities that will advance your life’s mission and legacy, everything will change. Many of history’s greatest thinkers have arrived at the same conclusion. The sage Confucius put it this way, “The person who chases two rabbits catches neither,” while the Roman philosopher Marcus Aurelius said, “Let thine occupations be few if thou wouldst lead a tranquil life.” Management guru Peter Drucker made the point of wisdom in yet another way when he wrote, “There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all.”

Write Thank-You Notes



The things that are easy to do are also the things that are easy not to do. The more the pace of our lives speeds up, the greater the impact the simple gestures of life will have on those most deserving of them. And near the very top of my list of simple gestures that have profound consequences is the lost art of writing thank-you notes.

Everyone loves getting mail — it's a fact of human nature. We all have a deep-seated need to feel important. I truly love receiving letters from people who have read my books and used the lessons within them to make positive changes in their lives. Few things excite me as much as receiving a bag full of mail from men and women who have attended one of my seminars and seen their careers take off and their personal lives improve. And knowing how much joy I feel when I receive mail from others, I try my best to respond to every letter that comes across my desk with a thank-you note of my own.

Even in the case of the people I deal with on a daily basis — executives calling to book me for a speaking engagement, people who attend my personal coaching programs, members of the media requesting an interview and businesspeople calling me with new opportunities — I try to follow up on every encounter with a sincerely written thank-you note. Sure, it takes time. Sure, there might be pressing things on my agenda. But few acts have the power to build and cement relationships like a heartfelt letter of thanks. It shows you care and that you are considerate and human. So this week, go out and buy a package of the blank thank-you cards that are now available in bulk at your local office supply warehouse and start writing. You — and all the people that you deal with — will be glad you did.

Always Carry a Book with You



According to *U.S. News & World Report*, over the course of your lifetime, you will spend eight months opening junk mail, two years unsuccessfully returning phone calls and five years standing in line. Given this startling fact, one of the simplest yet smartest time management strategies you can follow is to never go anywhere without a book under your arm. While others waiting in line are complaining, you will be growing and feeding your mind a rich diet of ideas found in great books.

“So long as you live, keep learning how to live,” noted the Roman philosopher Seneca. Yet most people never read more than a handful of books after they complete their formal schooling. In these times of rapid change, ideas are the commodity of success. All it takes is one idea from the right book to reshape your character or to transform your relationships or to revolutionize your life. A good book can change the way you live as the philosopher Henry David Thoreau observed in *Walden*, “There are probably words addressed to our condition exactly, which, if we could really hear and understand, would be more salutary than the morning or the spring to our lives, and possibly put a new aspect on the face of things for us. How many a man has dated a new era of his life from the reading of a book. The book exists for us perchance which will explain our miracles and reveal new ones.”

How high you will rise in your life will be determined not by how hard you work but by how well you think. As I say in my leadership speeches, “The greatest leaders in this new economy will be the greatest thinkers.” And the person you will be five years from now will come down to two primary influences: the people you associate with and the books you read. I often joke with my seminar audiences that I play “Cinderella Tennis”: I try hard but I never quite make it to the ball. Yet when I play tennis with someone better than I am, something almost magical happens to my game. I make shots that I have never made before, gracefully floating through the air with an ease that would make even the best player blush. Reading good books creates much the same phenomenon. When you expose your mind to the thoughts of the greatest people who have walked this planet before you, your game improves, the depth of your thinking expands and you rise to a whole new level of wisdom.

Deep reading allows you to connect with the world’s most creative, intelligent and inspiring people, twenty-four hours a day. Aristotle, Emerson, Seneca, Gandhi, Thoreau, Dorothea Brande, and many of the wisest women

and men who grace our planet today are just waiting to share their knowledge with you through their books. Why wouldn't you seize such an opportunity as often as you could? If you have not read today, you have not really lived today. And knowing how to read but failing to do so puts you in exactly the same position as the person who cannot read but wants to.

Create a Love Account



Mother Teresa once said, “There are no great acts. There are only small acts done with great love.” What small acts can you do today to deepen the bonds between you and the people you value the most? What random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty can you offer to someone in an effort to make his or her day just a little better? The irony of being more compassionate is that the very act of giving to others makes you feel better as well.

To practice being more loving, create a love account. Each day, make a few deposits in this very special reserve by doing something small to add joy to the life of someone around you. Buying your partner fresh cut flowers for no reason at all, sending your best friend a copy of your favorite book or taking the time to tell your children in no uncertain terms how you feel about them are all good places to start.

If there is one thing that I have learned in life, it is that the little things are the big things. Those tiny, daily deposits into the love account will give you far more happiness than any amount of money in your bank account. As Emerson said so eloquently, “Without the rich heart, wealth is an ugly beggar.” Or as Tolstoy wrote, “The means to gain happiness is to throw out for oneself like a spider in all directions an adhesive web of love, and to catch in all that comes.”

Get Behind People's Eyeballs



One of the deepest of all the human hungers is the need to be understood, cherished and honored. Yet, in the fast-paced days we live in, too many people believe that listening involves nothing more than waiting for the other person to stop talking. And to make matters worse, while that person is speaking, we are all too often using that time to formulate our own response, rather than empathizing with the point being made.

Taking the time to truly understand another's point of view shows that you value what he has to say and care about him as a person. When you start "getting behind the eyeballs" of the person who is speaking and try to see the world from his perspective, you will connect with him deeply and build high-trust relationships that last.

We have two ears and one mouth for a reason: to listen twice as much as we speak. And having the courtesy to be a better listener has another advantage: since you are not doing all the talking, you are doing all the learning, gaining access to information you would have missed had you been engaged in the usual monologue.

Here are a few practical tips to become better at the art of listening:

- If you are speaking and the person you are having a conversation with has not said something within the past sixty seconds, there is a good chance you have lost her and it's time to stop talking so much.
- Resist the temptation to interrupt. Catch yourself just before you do so and pay more attention to the content of what the other person is saying to you.
- If appropriate (i.e., in a business setting), take notes. Few things more readily show the other person in a conversation that you genuinely wish to learn from what she has to say than pulling out a notepad and making notes while she speaks.
- After the other person makes her points, rather than immediately responding with your opinion, reflect on what you have just heard. Saying something such as, "Just to make sure I understand you, are you saying ... ?" and doing so with complete sincerity will bring you much closer to the people you interact with every day of your life.

List Your Problems



“A problem well stated is a problem half solved,” said Charles Kettering. There is something very special that happens when you take out a piece of paper and list every single one of your problems on it. It is very much like the peaceful feeling you get after telling your best friend about something that has been troubling you for weeks. A weight somehow falls from your shoulders. You feel lighter, calmer and freer.

I have discovered that while our minds can be our best friends, they can also be our worst enemies. If you keep thinking about your problems, pretty soon you will find you think about little else. The mind is a strange creature in this regard: the things you want it to remember it forgets, but all those things you want it to forget, it remembers. I have people coming to my seminars who tell me they are still mad about what someone did to them fifteen years ago or still annoyed at what a rude salesclerk said to them last month.

To let go of the mental clutter that your problems tend to generate, list all your worries on a piece of paper. If you do so, they will no longer be able to fester in your mind and drain your valuable energy. This simple exercise will also permit you to put your problems into perspective and tackle them in an orderly, well-planned sequence. Among the many successful people who have used this technique are martial arts master Bruce Lee and Winston Churchill, who once said, “It helps to write down half a dozen things which are worrying me. Two of them, say, disappear; about two, nothing can be done, so it’s no use worrying; and two perhaps can be settled.”

Practice the Action Habit



“Wisdom is knowing what to do next, skill is knowing how to do it, and virtue is doing it,” observed David Starr Jordan. Most of us know what we need to do in order to live happier, healthier and more fulfilling lives. The real problem is that we don’t do what we know. I have heard many motivational speakers say, “Knowledge is power.” I disagree. Knowledge is not power. Knowledge is only *potential* power. It transforms itself into actual power the moment you decisively act on it.

The mark of a strong character lies not in doing what is fun to do or what is easy to do. The sign of deep moral authority appears in the individual who consistently does what he *ought* to be doing rather than what he *feels* like doing. A person of true character spends his days doing that which is the right thing to do. Rather than watching television for three hours after an exhausting day at work, he has the courage to get up off the couch and read to his kids. Instead of sleeping in on those cold wintry mornings, this individual exercises his natural reserves of self-discipline and gets out of bed for a run. And since action is a habit, the more positive actions you take, the more you will feel like taking.

All too often, we spend our days waiting for the ideal path to appear in front of us. We forget that paths are made by walking, not waiting. Dreaming is great. But thinking big thoughts alone will not build a business, pay your bills or make you into the person you know in your heart you can be. In the words of Thomas Carlyle, “The end of man is an action and not a thought, though it were the noblest.” The smallest of actions is always better than the boldest of intentions.

See Your Children as Gifts



On Father's Day, my son Colby brought home a handmade card from school. On the front of it was his small handprint and inside the card, above a little photograph of my child, were these words:

Sometimes you get discouraged because I am so small
And always leave my fingerprints on furniture and walls.
But every day I'm growing — I'll be grown up someday
And all those tiny handprints will surely fade away.

So here's a final handprint, just so you can recall
Exactly how my fingers looked, when I was very small.
Love, Colby

Children grow so very quickly. It seems like just yesterday that I stood in the delivery room waiting for the birth of my son, and then two years later, for the birth of my daughter, Bianca. It is easy to promise yourself you will spend more time with your kids "when things slow down at work" or "when I get that big promotion" or "next year when I get a little more time." But if you don't act on life, life has a habit of acting on you. The weeks slip into months, the months slip into years and before you know it, that little child is now an adult with a family of her own. The greatest gift you can give to your children is the gift of your time. And one of the greatest gifts you will ever give yourself is that of enjoying your kids and seeing them for what they truly are: the small miracles of life.

In *The Prophet*, Kahlil Gibran makes the point far more eloquently than I ever could when he writes, "Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself."

Enjoy the Path, Not Just the Reward



In my work, I am often asked to teach people how to set and achieve goals. When I ask my audiences, “Why is it so important that you realize your goals?” they often answer, “Because getting the things I want will make me happy.” While there is an element of truth in this answer — getting the things we want often does bring a measure of joy into our lives — it somehow misses the mark. The real value of setting and achieving goals lies not in the rewards you receive *but in the person you become* as a result of reaching your goals. This simple distinction has helped me to enjoy the path of life while, at the same time, staying focused on meeting my personal and professional objectives.

As one of my favorite philosophers, Ralph Waldo Emerson, observed, “The reward for a thing well done, is to have done it.” When you achieve a goal, whether that goal was to be a wiser leader or to become a better parent, you will have grown as a person in the process. Often, you will not be able to detect this growth, but the growth will have occurred. So rather than savoring only the rewards that have flowed from the achievement of that goal, celebrate the fact that the process of reaching your destination has improved the person you are. You have built self-discipline, discovered new things about your abilities and manifested more of your human potential. These are reward in and of themselves.

Remember That Awareness Precedes Change



You will never be able to eliminate a weakness you don't even know about. The first step to eliminating a negative habit is to become aware of it. Once you develop an awareness about the behavior you are trying to change, you will be well on your way to replacing it with one that is more helpful.

As an author, I am frequently invited to appear on radio and television talk shows. When I first started doing these programs, I thought I was a natural. I enjoyed meeting the hosts, sharing my insights and discussing the ideas in my books with callers. It was only when I began to tape myself and study those tapes that I realized something I had been unaware of: I spoke far too quickly. As a matter of fact, I sometimes spoke so fast that many of the key points I was trying to make got lost in the avalanche of words I heaped on the audience that had tuned in. Becoming aware of my weakness was the first step to eliminating it.

I then went to my favorite bookstore and bought five books on effective communication. In addition I ordered a series of audiocassettes that contained the speeches of some of the world's top speakers. I also joined the National Speakers Association. Finally, I picked up the phone and called a number of media personalities whom I felt I could learn from and invited them out for a quick lunch. Not one refused. Over a matter of weeks, I educated myself on how to improve my delivery on TV and radio so that I could share my message more effectively.

I have found as well that becoming aware of a weakness, that is, paying attention to it, also attracts more solutions into one's life. For example, as soon as I realized that I needed to slow down to communicate in a better way, I started to notice seminars on the subject advertised in the paper. I also noticed that the right books appeared on the shelves of the bookstores where I was browsing and found people who could coach me. So, over the coming weeks, reflect on your weaknesses and vow to transform them into strengths that will add richness and energy to the way you live.

Read *Tuesdays with Morrie*



While I was on the Denver stop of the American book tour for *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, I dropped into the airport bookstore before boarding the flight home. As I looked through the latest bestsellers, a small book with a simple cover caught my attention. Its title read *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, A Young Man and Life's Greatest Lesson*. This was the book that at least a dozen booksellers on the tour had suggested I buy since it was, in many ways, similar to the one I had just written. And so I picked it up.

After takeoff, I thought I would browse through the book for a few minutes before taking a much-needed nap. A few minutes slipped into a few hours and by the time we landed, I had just finished the last page with tears in my eyes. The book is about a man who, after leaving university and building a career, rediscovers his favorite professor, Morrie, in the final months of the older man's life. Every Tuesday, the former student then visits the dying teacher to learn another lesson about life from this man who has lived so richly and completely.

A real-life account, the lessons Morrie offers during these moving Tuesday sessions include: how to avoid a life of regret, the value of family, the importance of forgiveness and the meaning of death, where he makes the powerful remark, "Once you learn how to die, you learn how to live." This beautiful little book will remind you of the importance of counting your blessings daily and having the wisdom to honor life's simplest pleasures no matter how busy your life becomes. One of the legacies I will leave to my two children will be a library of books that have inspired and touched me. And *Tuesdays with Morrie* will be one that will sit out in front.

Master Your Time



I have always found it ironic that so many people say they would do anything for a little more time every day and yet they squander the time they already have. Time is life's great leveler. We all have the same allotment of twenty-four hours in a day. What separates the people who create great lives from the also-rans is how they use these hours.

Most of us live as if we have an infinite amount of time to do all the things we know we must do to live a full and rewarding life. And so we procrastinate and put the achievement of our dreams on hold while we tend to those daily emergencies that fill up our days. This is a certain recipe for a life of regret. As novelist Paul Bowles once wrote:

... because we don't know [when we will die], we get to think of life as an inexhaustible well. Yet everything happens only a certain number of times, and a very small number, really. How many more times will you remember a certain afternoon of your childhood, some afternoon that's so deeply a part of your being that you can't even conceive of your life without it? Perhaps four or five times more. Perhaps not even that. How many more times will you watch the full moon rise? Perhaps twenty. And yet it all seems limitless.

Commit yourself to managing your time more effectively. Develop a keen sense of awareness about how important your time really is. Don't let people waste this most precious of commodities and invest it only in those activities that truly count.

Keep Your Cool



“Anyone can become angry — that’s easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way — that is not easy,” taught Aristotle. With all the stress and pressure in our lives, it is easy to lose our cool at the slightest irritation. While we are rushing home from work at the end of another exhausting day, we scream at the slow driver in front of us who apparently has all the time in the world. While we shop at the grocery store, we get annoyed with the stock clerk who sends us to the wrong aisle when we are in search of the ingredients for tonight’s lasagna. And while we are eating our dinner, we yell at the telemarketer who has the nerve to interrupt us in an attempt to sell us their latest wares.

The problem with losing your temper on a daily basis is that it becomes a habit. And like most habits, a time arrives when it becomes second nature. Personal relationships start unraveling, business partnerships begin to fall apart and your credibility decreases as you become known as “a loose cannon.” Effective people are consistent and, in many ways, predictable. Tough times call for cool people and they are always cool and calm when the pressure is on. Keeping your cool in a moment of crisis can save you years of pain and anguish. Hurtful words unleashed in a single minute of anger have led to many a broken friendship. Words are like arrows: once released, they are impossible to retrieve. So choose yours with care.

An excellent way to control your temper is simply to count to 100 before you respond to someone who has irritated you. Another strategy to use is what I call the “Three Gate Test.” The ancient sages would only speak if the words they were about to utter passed three gates. At the first gate, they asked themselves, Are these words truthful? If so, the words could then pass on to the second gate. At the second gate, the sages asked, Are these words necessary? If so, they would then pass on to the third gate, where they would ask, Are these words kind? If so, then only would they leave their lips and be sent out into the world. “Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and help them become what they are capable of being,” said the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. These are wise words to live by.

Recruit a Board of Directors



To succeed in these times of breakneck change, companies will often recruit a board of directors to help them make more effective decisions and lead them in the right direction during stormy times. By consulting men and women of wisdom these organizations reduce the number of mistakes they make, boost corporate effectiveness and increase their credibility in the marketplace. One client of mine has a different approach to the concept of having a board of directors. A seasoned entrepreneur and a participant in one of the monthly life coaching programs I conduct across the country, this woman told me that during her periods of silent contemplation, she sits in a room with a pen and pad of paper and writes down a problem that she is facing. Sometimes it involves a difficulty in a relationship, sometimes it concerns a money issue or at other times a struggle that is more spiritual in nature.

Once in a state of deep relaxation, she then calls upon her personal board of directors to help her solve problems. The twist? The members of her board are no longer alive. In her imagination, she seeks the wise counsel of many of history's greatest thinkers. When confronting a problem that requires a creative solution, she asks Leonardo da Vinci, "How might you deal with this?" On facing a challenge that requires her to have more courage, she asks aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart, "What would you do in this situation?" And when the issue involves money, she asks the late billionaire Sam Walton, widely known for his common sense, "Sam, how would you handle this?" This technique has truly worked wonders for her, improved her creative thinking ability and kept her peaceful during turbulent times.

Who would you invite to sit on your imaginary board of directors? Here are some of the people I'd love to have on my council:

- Ben Franklin for guidance on issues involving character
- Albert Schweitzer to remind me of the importance of service to others
- Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela for leadership issues
- Bruce Lee for advice on self-discipline
- Marie Curie for questions relating to innovation
- Viktor Frankl, famed Holocaust survivor, for guidance about how to deal with adversity

Cure Your Monkey Mind



To get the best from life, you must be completely present and mindful in every minute of every hour of every day. As Albert Camus wrote, “Real generosity towards the future consists in giving all to what is present.” Yet, on most days, our minds are in ten different places at any one time. Rather than enjoying the walk to work, we wonder what the boss will say to us when we get to the office or what we will have for lunch or how our children will do at school today. Our minds are like scampering puppies or, as they say in the East, like unchained monkeys, rushing from place to place without any pause for peace.

By developing present moment awareness and an abundance of mental focus, you will not only feel much calmer in your life, you will also unlock the fullness of your mind’s potential. When too many distractions compete for your attention, the power of your mind is dissipated in all those different directions rather than concentrated on one point like the rays of a laser beam. The good news is that you can practice becoming more attentive to the present and develop this skill within a relatively short period of time.

One of the best ways to cure your monkey mind is through a technique I call “Focused Reading.” Every time your mind wanders from the page into a daydream or a worry, make a checkmark in the righthand margin of the page. This simple act will increase your awareness of how poorly you concentrate and, since awareness is the first step to change, help you to build the skills you need for a clearer, quieter mind.

Get Good at Asking



“He who asks may be a fool for five minutes. He who doesn’t is a fool for a lifetime,” goes the wise Chinese proverb. It makes me think of an ad I read in the classifieds recently that said, “To the beautiful woman in the brown suede coat at the drugstore at [street location provided] on Saturday, November 28 @ 4 p.m. You bumped into me in front of the magazine section. I would love to meet and chat.” The man who placed this ad then left his phone number. Destiny had given him an opportunity — possibly to meet the woman of his dreams — and he had squandered it. And now, after regretting the fact that he “did not ask,” he has had to resort to placing an ad in the newspaper in the desperate hope of finding this woman.

The more you ask, the more you get, but it takes practice to get good at it. Success is a numbers game. As the Buddhist sages observed, “Every arrow that hits the bull’s eye is the result of one hundred misses.” Over the coming weeks, flex your “asking muscles” by asking for a better table at your favorite restaurant, for a free second scoop at your local ice cream shop or for a complimentary upgrade on your next airline flight. You might be surprised at the abundance that will flow into your life when you just ask sincerely for the things you want. Remember, the person who asks for what he wants at least has a chance of getting what he wants. The person who does not ask has no chance. One of the best books I have read on the power of asking is *The Aladdin Factor*, written by my friend and speaking colleague Mark Victor Hansen along with self-esteem expert Jack Canfield. Full of practical ideas and simple techniques, the book also contains a wealth of inspiring quotes like this one from Somerset Maugham: “It’s a funny thing about life; if you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it.”

Look for the Higher Meaning of Your Work



One of my favorite magazines is *Fast Company*. It provides a refreshingly human look at the new world of work. In a recent issue, Xerox PARC guru John Seely Brown said something that really made me think: “The job of leadership today is not just to make money, it’s to make meaning.”

In the old days, most of us were content to have a job that simply paid the bills. But now, we crave so much more in our work. We want fulfillment, creative challenge, growth, joy and a sense that we are living for something more than ourselves. In a word, we seek meaning. One of the best ways to find the higher meaning in the work you do is to use the technique of creative questioning to become aware of the impact your work has on the world around you. Ask yourself questions like, Who ultimately benefits from the products and services my company offers? or What difference do my daily efforts make? Once you do so, you will start noticing the connection between the work you do and the lives you touch.

For example, if you are a teacher, stop focusing on all the tremendous changes in your profession, and remember that every day you enter that classroom, you have the privilege to shape a young mind. There are children and families that count on you. If you are a financial adviser, remain centered on the fact that your services help people retire early, build the homes they have always wanted and fulfill their dreams. If you are an insurance professional, remember that you help people bring security to their lives and serve them in times of need. And if you are a retail clerk, think about how your work serves people and how the products you offer them add joy to their lives.

By concentrating on the value your work adds and the contribution you make, you will see quantum improvements in your satisfaction and motivation levels. Few things energize the human spirit more than the desire to make a difference in the lives of others. Mahatma Gandhi knew this. Nelson Mandela knew this. And Mother Teresa knew this. The simple shift of mind I am encouraging you to make can bring a whole new sense of enjoyment into your life.

Build a Library of Heroic Books



Few things make me happier than meeting someone who has read my books or listened to my audiotapes and hearing something like, “I was so moved and inspired after going through your material that I went out and bought ten more life improvement books and read them all. And you know what, they have completely transformed me.”

I not only write books on life leadership, I am a dedicated student of them. As I mentioned in an earlier lesson, I spend countless hours in large bookstores combing the shelves for the latest treasure that will enlighten and educate me. I also frequent used-book shops where I have picked up some of my most valuable books for only a few dollars (as I write this paragraph, I have a “pre-owned” copy of Maxwell Maltz’s classic *Psycho-Cybernetics* on my desk, which still bears the sticker price of \$2.95. Also on my desk is a copy of Seneca’s *Letters from a Stoic*, a truly priceless work, which was purchased by my dad for \$1.95).

While almost any reading will improve your mind, in a world where there is too much to do, you must be selective in the books you read. And so, I suggest you spend much of your time reading what Thoreau called “The Heroic Books” — those books that contain “the noblest recorded thoughts of man.” Let your mind drink deeply from the works of the great philosophers, such as Epictetus and Confucius. Study the poems of the wisest poets, such as Alfred Lord Tennyson, Emily Dickinson and John Keats, and the novels of Leo Tolstoy, Hermann Hesse and the Brontës. Read the writings of Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein and Mother Teresa. Connecting with such works for even a few minutes a day will keep you centered on what life is really about and will ultimately profoundly affect your character. Asked in an interview what his biggest regret in life was, talk show superstar Larry King replied, “I should have been better rooted in the great books.”

Here are some of the “heroic” books that helped me change my own life and gave me the wisdom and inspiration to live more deliberately and completely. If you read all of them, and act on the lessons contained within their pages, you cannot help but improve your circumstances profoundly.

Letters from a Stoic, Seneca

The Message of a Master, John McDonald

Meditations, Marcus Aurelius

The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin

University of Success, Og Mandino

The Magic of Believing, Claude Bristol

Siddhartha, Hermann Hesse

Psycho-Cybernetics, Maxwell Maltz

The Power of Your Subconscious Mind, Joseph Murphy

As a Man Thinketh, James Allen

Flow, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Think and Grow Rich, Napoleon Hill

Life Is Tremendous, Charlie Tremendous Jones

Through the wonders of technology, you can view a fuller listing of my favorite books at our website located at www.robinsharma.com

Develop Your Talents



Norman Cousins once noted that “The Tragedy of life is not death, but what we let die inside of us while we live.” In a similar vein, Ashley Montagu wrote that “The deepest personal defeat suffered by human beings is constituted by the difference between what one was capable of becoming and what one has in fact become.” There is a difference between simply existing and truly living. There is a distinction between simply surviving and really thriving. The sad thing is that most people have lost sight of the human gifts that lie within them and have resigned themselves to spending the best years of their lives watching television in a subdivision.

In my speeches, I often use the following story drawn from ancient Indian mythology to remind the audience that there is an abundance of potential and ability just waiting to be awakened within us if we will only allow it to see the light of day. Thousands of years ago, it was believed that everyone who walked the earth was a god. But humankind abused its limitless powers so the supreme god decided to hide the godhead, the source of all of this potential, so that no one could find it. The question then became, where could such a thing be hidden? The first adviser suggested it could be placed deep in the ground to which the supreme god replied, “No, eventually someone will dig deep enough and find it.” The second adviser then offered, “What if we place the godhead at the bottom of the deepest ocean” to which the supreme god responded, “No, eventually someone will dive deep enough and find it.” The third adviser then chimed in, “Well, why don’t we put it on the top of the highest mountain?” which prompted the supreme god to reply, “No, I’m certain that eventually someone will scale that highest of peaks and find it.” After reflecting for some time, the supreme god found the solution: “I will put this source of all human power, potential and purpose inside the hearts of every man, woman and child on the planet, for they will never think to look there.”

In all my work with employees of organizations across North America, I see the same thing: *too many people spend more time focusing on their weaknesses rather than developing their strengths.* By concentrating on what they don’t have, they neglect the talents they do have. The greatest people who have gone before us all had a simple strategy that ensured their success: they knew themselves. They made the time to reflect on their core abilities — those special qualities that made them unique — and spent the rest of their lives refining and expanding them. You see, we are all endowed with the

capacity for genius. Perhaps you have just not taken the time to discover what your personal gifts are and then honed them to the level where you are considered brilliant.

Are you using the best within you to its fullest capacity? If not, you are not only doing yourself a disservice, you are doing the world, and all those within it who could benefit from your unique talents, a disservice. Ruskin put it this way, “The weakest among us has a gift, however seemingly trivial, which is peculiar to him and which worthily used will be a gift also to his race.”

Connect with Nature



We live in an age of seemingly limitless information. The weekday edition of the *New York Times* contains more information than the average person was exposed to during an entire lifetime in seventeenth-century England. Over the years, I have found that spending time alone in natural surroundings connects me to the larger universe around me and restores my spirit in this hurried age.

After a busy week of speaking engagements, book sign-ings and media appearances, the simple act of sitting in a wooded park and listening to the wind move through the leaves fills me with a sense of quiet and peace. My priorities become clearer, my obligations seem less pressing and my mind grows still. Communing with nature is also an excellent way to unlock your creativity and generate new ideas. Newton formulated the laws of gravity while relaxing under an apple tree. Likewise Swiss designer George de Mestral developed Velcro after examining the burdock burrs that clung to his dog while he hiked in the mountains. Natural surroundings serve to stifle the endless chatter that fills our minds so that our true brilliance can be liberated.

And while you spend time enjoying nature, observe your surroundings with deep concentration. Study the complexity of a flower or the way the current moves in a sparkling stream. Take your shoes off and feel the grass under your feet. Give silent thanks that you have the privilege of enjoying these special gifts of nature. Many people do not. As Mahatma Gandhi observed, “When I admire the wonder of a sunset or the beauty of the moon, my soul expands in worship of the Creator.”

Use Your Commute Time



If you commute to the office for thirty minutes each way every day, after one year you will have spent the equivalent of six weeks of eight-hour days in your car. Given this, can you really afford to spend all your time staring out the window and daydreaming while the negative news blares from the car radio?

So many of the highly successful and enlightened people I know share a common habit: they listen to audiocassettes in their cars. In doing so, they transform their driving time into learning time and make their automobiles moving universities. Turning your car into a “college on wheels” will be one of the best investments you will ever make. Rather than arriving at work tired, frustrated and dispirited, listening to educational audio-cassettes will make your commute fun and keep you inspired, focused and alert to the endless opportunities around you.

The best way to spot someone truly committed to life improvement is to ask him whether his car radio is working. The real students of effective living will have no clue because they spend every minute of their driving time listening to audio tapes. I cannot tell you how many times I have gone to get into the passenger seat of the car of a successful and fulfilled person and found a small mountain of tapes occupying the place where I was to sit. Most of the latest books can now be found on audiocassette along with many of the best motivational programs and life leadership systems. Personally, I try to listen to at least five new tapes a month ranging from the latest business bestsellers to programs on time management, creativity, positive thinking, physical well-being and spiritual satisfaction.

Go on a News Fast



Negative news sells. In our society, more people will choose to watch the criminal trial of a celebrity rather than the biography of a truly great human being. A newspaper with a headline revealing the latest tragedy will sell more copies than one announcing the latest scientific breakthrough. The real problem is that it is easy to get addicted to reading and watching negative news. I know so many people who begin their days by reading less than uplifting newspaper stories and who end them by catching up on the latest crimes, accidents and scandals on the late-night news.

I am not against newspapers or television by any stretch of the imagination. As a matter of fact, I find excellent information in many newspapers and have learned much from the intelligent TV programs I have watched over the years. My point is simply this: become more selective in the news you expose your mind to. Be more deliberate in the way you read your newspaper and in the way you watch your television. Before you start reading the morning paper, have a purpose in mind. Use it as an information tool to serve you and to make you wiser rather than as an excuse to help you pass time.

One of the best ways to wean yourself from the “news addiction” that so many of us suffer from is to go on a seven-day news fast. Vow not to read even one negative story in the newspaper or watch even one negative news report on television for the next week. You will notice two things. First, you will not really miss out on much information. You will still hear about the most important stories of the day from the conversations that circulate around your office and through your encounters at home. Second, you will feel much more peaceful and serene. As well, you will find that the seven-day news fast offers yet another benefit: more time to do the things that will truly improve the quality of your life.

Get Serious About Setting Goals



Many speakers and authors encourage you to set goals but most have never explained why this is such a powerful discipline beyond saying something like “something magical happens when you write down your goals on paper.” In my opinion, setting clearly defined goals for all the areas of your life works for three reasons. First, it restores a sense of focus in your world, a world that has become complicated by too many options. In this age we live in, there are simply far too many things to do at any given time. There are too many distractions that compete for our attention. Goals clarify our desires and, in doing so, help us to focus on only those activities that will lead us to what we want.

Setting clearly defined goals provides you with a framework for smarter choices. If you know precisely where you are going, it becomes far easier to select those activities that will get you there. Writing down your goals clarifies your intentions (and the first step to realizing your vision is defining it). As novelist Saul Bellow once observed, “A clear plan relieves you of the torment of choice.” Or as author Glenn Bland wrote, “Goals and plans take the worry out of living.” If you set goals, the actions you take will be based on your life’s mission rather than on your day-to-day moods.

The second reason that goal-setting works is that it keeps you alert to opportunities. The discipline almost magnetizes your mind to seek out new opportunities, opportunities that you need to seize in order to create the personal, professional and spiritual life you desire. And the third reason goal-setting works is that clearly defined goals commit you to a course of action. They give you the inspiration to act on your priorities and make things happen in your life rather than waiting for opportunities to land in your lap (which rarely happens). Selecting goals that engage and motivate you is one of the best ways to boost the level of your personal commitment to life and increase the energy you bring to your days. So set big goals. You are only as rich, whether materially or spiritually, as your dreams. Or as advertising genius David Ogilvy put it, “Don’t bunt. Aim out of the ballpark. Aim for the company of immortals.”

Remember the Rule of 21



As I wrote in *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, it takes about 21 days to develop a new habit. Yet most people give up on creating a positive life change after only the first few days when they experience the stress and pain that is always associated with replacing old behaviors with new ones. New habits are much like a new pair of shoes: for the first few days, they will feel uncomfortable. But if you break them in for about three weeks, they will fit like a second skin.

As human beings, we are genetically programmed to resist change and maintain a state of equilibrium. The condition, known as *homeostasis*, evolved naturally over time as a means by which our ancestors could survive constantly changing conditions. The problem is that the mechanism works to keep things as they are even when more favorable possibilities exist. And that is why we have such difficulty adopting new habits and overcoming the gravitational forces that prevent us from moving to higher levels of living.

But just as a rocket uses more fuel during the first few minutes after lift-off than it does over the days that follow when it will cover more than half a million miles, once you get past those first 21 days you will find that staying on course with a new habit will be far easier than you imagined. Take the time to study your personal habits and promise to make the necessary changes. The quality of your life will be determined in large measure by the nature of your habits. John Dryden observed, “We first make our habits and then our habits make us,” while Virginia Woolf wrote, “the skeleton of habit alone upholds the human frame.” So ensure that your habits move you forward rather than hold you back. In the timeless words of Publilius Syrus, “Powerful indeed is the empire of habit.”

Practice Forgiveness



Forgiving someone who has wronged you is actually a selfish act rather than a selfless one. Letting go of the hostility and hatred that you may have allowed to bottle up inside you is actually something you do for yourself rather than for the benefit of the other person. As I teach in my life-coaching programs, when you bear a grudge against someone, it is almost as if you carry that person around on your back with you. He drains you of your energy, enthusiasm and peace of mind. But the moment you forgive him, you get him off your back and you can move on with the rest of your life.

Mark Twain wrote that, “Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that crushed it.” Forgiveness is a great act of spirit and personal courage. It is also one of the best ways to elevate the quality of your life. I have discovered that every minute you devote to thinking about someone who has wronged you is a minute you have stolen from a much worthier pursuit: attracting those people who will help you.

Drink Fresh Fruit Juice



The foods you consume affect your moods as well as the clarity of your thinking. This is why the ancient sages ate only light foods. They knew that anything more would disturb the perfectly peaceful minds they had worked so hard to cultivate and disrupt their meditations on the true meaning of life.

If you owned an expensive Formula One race car, you wouldn't think of fuelling it with anything less than premium-grade gas. Anything else would reduce its performance. So why would you put anything less than the best foods into your body, which is an even more valuable performance vehicle? Eating the wrong foods, in large quantities, will reduce your energy level, affect your health and prevent your mind from serving you to its fullest capacity. Realizing that for every greasy lunch you have, you will suffer a corresponding reduction in your level of motivation and effectiveness is the first step to developing more disciplined eating habits.

One of the best strategies I can share with you to boost both your energy level and your mood is to get into the daily habit of drinking fresh fruit juice. On the counter of our kitchen at home sits one of my prized possessions, one that has added years to my life and life to my years: my juice machine. Investing in a juicer and discovering the life-giving value of fresh juice is a smart move. The juices you can make taste great and I cannot begin to describe how wonderful you will feel once you start drinking a glass of strawberry-apple or orange-grape juice every morning before you leave for work. The best book I have found on the subject of juicing is *The Juiceman's Power of Juicing* by Jay Kordich. The recipes Kordich shares in this book are worth the price alone.

Create a Pure Environment



One of the timeless truths of successful living can be stated simply: your thoughts form your world. What you focus on in your life grows, what you think about expands and what you dwell on determines your destiny. Life is a self-fulfilling prophecy — it gives you just about what you expect from it. As Helen Keller said, “No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars, or sailed to an uncharted land, or opened a new heaven to the human spirit.” Given this principle, the first step to becoming a happier, more serene person is to manage your thoughts and purify your thinking. One of the best ways to begin this inner work is to improve the quality of your personal environment.

After a speech I gave to a large gathering in San Francisco, an elderly woman slowly walked up to me and held my hand, as people in their golden years often do. Looking straight into my eyes she said, “Mr. Sharma, I’ve listened to your insights for living a better life for the past hour and I agree with everything you’ve said. For many years I have understood that our surroundings shape our moods, our thoughts and our dreams. And so, in every room of my little house, I have a bouquet of freshly cut flowers. I am not a wealthy woman. But this is one luxury I would never do without.” This woman knew that a first-class environment is an investment, not an expense.

Take a good, hard look at your environment. Your thoughts are shaped by the people you associate with, by the books you read, by the words you speak and by your daily physical surroundings. Are you spending your time at work with negative people? If so, they will eventually make you negative and cynical. Are you watching violent TV shows and mindless videos at home? If so, your mind will grow restless and noisy. Is the space you work in bright, colorful and inspiring? Over the coming weeks, take steps to make the environment you work and live in a better one. You will quickly detect improvements in the way you think, feel and act.

Walk in the Woods



You will never go wrong by spending time enjoying nature. There is something particularly special about walking in the woods. Your steps will feel lighter, a deep sense of inner quiet will flood your entire body and your creativity will flourish. As the famed Italian architect and painter Leonardo da Vinci said, “Through the window of the eye, the soul regards the world’s beauty... Who would believe that a small scene of nature could contain the images of the universe?”

My favorite time of year is autumn. The leaves on the trees reflect the brilliant colors of the season and it’s the perfect time for long walks in the woods. Away from the noise of the city, the values I hold dearest grow clearer and I can contemplate some of life’s larger questions, questions that never seem to get answered in the normal crush of the daily routine. I can stop by a small stream and relax on a moss-covered rock or inhale the fragrances that only those who walk in the woods truly experience.

When I leave this oasis of nature, I am a new man. I’m more alert, more energized and more alive. Many of the great wisdom traditions have emphasized the restorative power of regular walks in the woods. This life-giving discipline never fails to yield a bounty of welcome results.

Get a Coach



One of the most effective ways to improve your personal and professional effectiveness and to rise to a new level of excellence is to find a mentor to coach you. Success in business and in life is a “connect the dots” process. All you need to do is find out the habits, disciplines and strategies that others have used to obtain their results and connect the dots by duplicating their actions. Once you follow the steps they have taken, in the order they have taken them in, you are bound to get the same results. A personal coach can illuminate your path, encourage you when times get tough and shave years off your learning curve.

In my own life, I have been blessed with many mentors, people who have shown me the fundamentals of effective living and guided me in the right direction when I reached a crossroad. I found most of these special advisers by asking people whom I admired one of the most powerful questions in all of the English language, “Would you please help me?” Not one of the people I approached refused to offer me the gift of their knowledge and the benefit of their experience. Many of my mentors have since become valued friends and my life would not be what it now is without them.

Coaching has become one of the most important elements to a complete program of personal and professional excellence. People from all walks of life have recognized this as one of the best ways to create positive changes and lasting results in their lives. As an executive in one of the monthly life-coaching programs I offer in cities across the country recently said, “Inspirational books helped me to define my dreams. Being in your personal coaching program showed me precisely how to achieve them, while bringing back the balance in my life.”

Take a Mini-Vacation



While you cannot go on a major vacation every week, you certainly can go on a minor one. A mini-vacation begins with closing the door of your office, holding all calls and relaxing in your chair. Then close your eyes and begin taking deep breaths. Once you feel deeply at peace, begin to imagine you are at your favorite vacation spot. Vividly see the colors, hear the sounds and feel the emotions that this special place evokes. After only a few minutes of this mental escape, you will be rejuvenated, ready for the rest of the day ahead.

When I take my mini-vacations, I picture myself walking through a mountain meadow. I visualize my feet on the dewy grass and savor the splendor of the snow-capped mountains that frame this ideal scene. In the background, I hear the sound of water from a waterfall and imagine what the flowers that fill this field smell like.

Our minds are extremely potent devices. The subconscious mind cannot tell the difference between an image that we envision and one that is real. So this little technique actually fools it into thinking we are taking this quick break from our daily routines and invokes many of the wonderful physical benefits of a real vacation.

Become a Volunteer



I find a great deal of wisdom in the ancient Persian proverb “I wept because I had no shoes until I saw a man who had no feet.” It is so easy to magnify our problems and lose sight of the many blessings we all have to be so very grateful for. Giving the gift of your time by volunteering to serve those who have less than you is an excellent way to remind yourself on a regular basis of the abundance that exists in your life.

After a keynote speech on leadership I delivered to the sales team of a large insurance company, a man came up to me and told me he was one of the firm’s top producers. One of the reasons for his success, he said, was his habit of spending a few hours a week helping those less fortunate than he was. “Seeing what others don’t have keeps me awake to all the good things I do have. It prevents me from taking things for granted and, even more importantly, helps me make a difference in the lives of people who really need me.”

French physician Albert Schweitzer observed, “I don’t know what your destiny will be but one thing I do know: The only ones among you who will be happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.” And Anne Morrow Lindberg wrote, “One can never pay in gratitude; one can only pay ‘in kind’ somewhere else in life.” Volunteering affords you the chance to help others and pay back the debt owed to those who have helped you.

Find Your Six Degrees of Separation



In John Guare's play *Six Degrees of Separation*, the character Ouisa has a conversation with her daughter Tess in which she offers the following insight:

I read somewhere that everybody on this planet is separated by only six people. Six degrees of separation. Between us and everybody else on this planet. The president of the United States. A gondolier in Venice. Fill in the names. I find that a) tremendously comforting that we're so close and b) like Chinese water torture that we're so close. Because you have to find the right six people to make the connection. It's a profound thought how every person is a new door, opening up into other worlds. Six degrees of separation between me and everyone else on this planet. But to find the right six people.

Ouisa was right. It is profound to think that you and I are separated from all the other people living on this planet by at most six people. She was also right in noting the real challenge: finding the right six people to connect you to the person you need to know.

One of the things I have done in my own life is to create what I call a Hero List, that is, a list of one hundred men and women I would most like to meet before I die. Since the law of attraction says that we attract into our life that which we focus on, this list is a tool I use to help me connect to the people I most admire. On more than one occasion, the Six Degrees of Separation principle has helped me find the right sequence of individuals who have led me to the person I've wanted to meet. And I am continually astounded by how many of the individuals on my list, which includes celebrities, business leaders, and other professional speakers, seem to cross my path in an airport or to be speaking at the same conference that I am or are having lunch at the same place that I am. The very act of listing my heroes seems to create a heightened sense of awareness that helps me spot them when they are close at hand.

Listen to Music Daily



In the most memorable scene of the wonderful movie *Jerry Maguire*, Tom Cruise's character, a hard-driving sports agent, has just signed up one of the hottest draft picks in football. As he drives away from the athlete's home in a state of utter joy, he impatiently searches from station to station on his car radio for the kind of song he can turn up loud and sing along to at the top of his lungs. Finally, to his great delight, he finds it — Tom Petty's hit "Free Falling." And he begins to sing his heart out.

Do you remember those times when you heard just the right song at just the right moment? Like Jerry Maguire, you started singing out loud and dancing with reckless abandon. In those moments, you felt fully alive, full of energy and truly happy. And all because you heard a few chords strung together in the right sequence. Music can do that to you. Music can lift your mood, put the smile back on your face and add immeasurably to your quality of life.

Get serious about listening to music that inspires you. Build a collection of your favorite pieces and play something that fills your heart with joy every single day of the week. For me, some moods call for a soothing piece of classical music or a soft jazz selection. When I'm writing a new book, for example, I will often listen to Johann Pachelbel's "Canon in D" or jazz legend Chet Baker's "Round Midnight" compilation. If you have attended one of my seminars, you might have recognized the more upbeat music played before I step onto the stage. Even when I travel, I bring along my Walkman and listen to inspiring music such as the soundtracks to the movies *Braveheart* and *Everest* on the plane. Listening to even a few minutes of music every day is a simple yet exceptionally powerful way to manage your moods and remain at your best.

Write a Legacy Statement



Someone once said to me that the first fifty years of life are dedicated to building one's legitimacy while the last fifty are devoted to building one's legacy. How true. So many of us spend the first half of our lives striving for achievement and struggling to gain respect. Once we have this legitimacy, whether it comes in the form of prestige or material possessions, we soon realize that something is missing. We then spend the remaining years of our lives trying to do what we should have done from the beginning: create a legacy.

One day, my father posted a poem on the door of our fridge. It had been translated from Sanskrit and it read simply, "Spring has past, summer has gone and winter is here. And the song that I meant to sing remains unsung. I have spent my days stringing and unstringing my instrument." These words were written by a man whose heart was filled with regret over a life half lived. Rather than singing the great song he was destined to sing, he spent his days preparing and waiting until things were just right before he acted — "stringing and unstringing his instrument," in his words. Sadly, that time never came.

The time to start building your legacy is today, not ten years from today when you "have more time," because we both know that time will never arrive. Reflect on what it is you want to create in your life and, more importantly, what gift you wish to leave the world when you are no longer here. Greatness comes from beginning something that does not end with you. To help me see my own life's legacy more clearly, I have written a personal legacy statement. While many of the corporate executives I work with have personal mission statements, few have considered scripting individual legacy statements. While the former defines your vision of what you want to create while you live, the latter expresses what you aim to leave when you die. There is a distinction between the two. If you think about it, it will help you avoid feeling regret, sadness and disappointment about what could have been when you reach the end of your life.

Find Three Great Friends



Cultivating great friendships is one of the surest ways to find more happiness and joy in your life. Recent studies show that those with a wide circle of friends and family live longer, laugh more and worry less. But friendships, like all other good things in life, take time, energy and commitment. Having said this, few things will offer greater rewards. As one philosopher wrote many centuries ago, “There is nothing in the world more valuable than friendship. Those who banish it from their lives remove as it were the sun from the earth, because of all of nature’s gifts, it is the most beautiful and the most pleasing.”

As I grew up, my father often said that the person with three great friends is a rich person indeed. I have never forgotten this advice and encourage you to take it to heart as well. To build deeper friendships, you must be willing to move out of your comfort zone, break the ice with people you might not know very well and show sincere warmth. If you plant the seeds of friendship, you are bound to receive a rich harvest of great friends. At a cocktail party, have the courage to walk over to someone you would like to get to know better and introduce yourself. Every human being has a deep need for affection and most people will be delighted you took the initiative. And if they do not respond to you, so what? Rather than viewing it as rejection, see it as their loss and politely move on to the next person who can benefit from all you have to offer.

A while ago, my mother’s car had a flat tire while she was on her way to do an errand. She asked a stranger who was watering the lawn in front of her house whether she would mind if Mom left her car in their driveway while she walked to the gas station nearby to get help. The woman said she didn’t mind and so my mother left. After returning and having the flat tire repaired, Mom went to the front door of the house and warmly thanked the owner for her kindness. The woman, in turn, invited my mother in for a cup of tea. Over the next hour, the two of them discovered they had grown up in the same town, gone to the same school and knew many of the same people. A great friendship developed simply because my mother took the initiative to make a new friend.

Read *The Artist's Way*

We are all creative beings. When I first saw *The Artist's Way* on the shelf of my favorite bookstore years ago when I was still practicing law, I did not pick it up. At that time, I believed it was only for “artists” and that I would, therefore, not benefit from it. Over time, however, I realized that every single one of us has an almost limitless wellspring of creativity deep within us. And we all need to use this creativity on a daily basis to get the most from life, whether we are lawyers, homemakers, teachers, business executives, poets or musicians. The realization that I, as a lawyer, was a creative being created a whole new awareness for me.

I started to attend seminars on creativity. I also read more books on the subject and searched for ways I could express this natural creativity to improve the way that I lived personally, professionally and spiritually. Eventually, my search led me to write my first book.

Read *The Artist's Way* and have the self-discipline to go through each of the thoughtful exercises the author, Julia Cameron, suggests you do. Unlocking your creative spirit will fuel your upward path of self-discovery and make every single one of your days far more fulfilling.

Learn to Meditate



The French mathematician Blaise Pascal wrote, “All man’s miseries derive from not being able to sit quietly in a room alone.” We have become experts at filling our lives with noise and activities. We wake up to the sound of the radio blaring and dress while the television news is on. We drive to work listening to the latest traffic report and spend the next eight hours in a bustling office. When we come home, at the day’s end, we delve into the evening’s activities against the background sound of the television, ringing phones and humming computers. Pascal was right: most of our miseries do stem from the fact that we have lost sight of the importance of being silent, for even a short period, every day of our lives.

Without the ability to concentrate, a full and complete life is not possible. If you lack the mental focus to stay with one activity for any length of time, you will never be able to achieve your goals, build your dreams or enjoy life’s process. Without a disciplined mind, trivial thoughts and worries will nag at you and you will never have the capacity to immerse yourself in more meaningful pursuits. Without deep concentration, your mind will be your master rather than your servant.

My own life changed the day I learned to meditate. Meditation is not some New Age practice reserved for monks sitting atop mountains. On the contrary, meditation is an age-old technique that was developed by some of the world’s wisest people to gain full control of the mind and, in doing so, to manifest its enormous potential for worthy pursuits. Meditation is a method to train your mind to function the way it was designed to function. And here’s the key benefit: the peace and tranquility you will feel after twenty minutes of daily meditation will infuse every remaining minute of your day. You will be more patient in your relationships, more serene at the office and more happy when you are alone. Meditation will make you a far better parent, life partner, busi-nessperson and friend. You cannot afford not to discover the power of this five-thousand-year-old mind training discipline.

Have a Living Funeral



When I was doing research for *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, I came across the story of an Indian maharaja who would engage in a bizarre morning ritual: every day, immediately after waking up, he would celebrate his own funeral, complete with music and flowers. All the while, he would chant, “I have lived fully, I have lived fully, I have lived fully.”

When I first read this, I could not understand the purpose of this man’s ritual. So I asked my father for some guidance. His reply was this: “Son, what this maharaja is doing is connecting to his mortality every day of his life so he will live each day as if it were his last. His ritual is a very wise one and reminds him of the fact that time slips through our hands like grains of sand and the time to live life greatly is not tomorrow but today.” One’s sense of mortality is a great source of wisdom.

While on his deathbed, Plato was asked by a friend to summarize his great life’s work, *The Dialogues*. After much reflection, he replied in only two words: “Practice dying.” The ancient thinkers had a saying that captured the point Plato made in other terms: “Death ought to be right there before the eyes of those who are young just as much as before the eyes of those who are very old. Every day, therefore, should be regulated as if it were the one that brings up the rear, the one that rounds out and completes our lives.” Having a living funeral will reconnect you to the fact that time is a priceless commodity and the best time to live a richer, wiser and more fulfilling life is now.

Stop Complaining and Start Living



Stop complaining about having no time for yourself and get up an hour earlier. You have the option, why not exercise it? Stop complaining about not being able to exercise given all that is on your plate these days. If you sleep seven hours a night and work eight hours every day, you still have more than sixty-three hours of free time every week to do all the things you want to do. This amounts to 252 hours every month and 3,024 hours every single year to spend on life's pursuits. There has never been a more exciting time to be alive in the history of the world and you have the choice to seize the boundless possibilities that every day presents.

If you are not as fulfilled or as happy or as prosperous or as peaceful as you know you could be, stop blaming your parents or the economy or your boss and take full responsibility for your circumstances. This will be the first step to a completely new way of looking at your life and the starting point of a better way to live. As George Bernard Shaw said, "The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, make them."

Make wiser choices about the thoughts you will allow to enter your mind, as well as the attitude you will bring to your days and the way you will spend the hours of your time. Stop complaining and start living. In the words of the poet Rudyard Kipling, "If you can fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run, yours is the earth and everything that's in it."

Increase Your Value



In the new economy you now find yourself in, you will be compensated not by how hard you work but by how much value you add to the world around you. Think about it. If you are currently being paid twenty dollars an hour, this money is being given to you not simply because you showed up at your desk for those sixty minutes but because you have added twenty dollars' worth of perceived value during those sixty minutes. So, the monetary reward you receive is determined not by how long you work but by how much value you add.

This is why a brain surgeon is paid so much more than a McDonald's employee. Is the brain surgeon a better person? Not necessarily. Is the brain surgeon a harder worker? Probably not. Is the brain surgeon smarter? Who knows? But one thing is certain: the brain surgeon has accumulated far more specialized knowledge and specific know-how than the McDonald's employee. There are far fewer people who can do what the brain surgeon does and, as a result, the brain surgeon is perceived as far more valuable to the marketplace. This is why the brain surgeon is paid over ten times more than the person who flips burgers. Money simply becomes a symbol for how much value each person has added to the world at large.

So to be paid more money in your work, you must add more value to the world. And the best way to begin adding value to the world is to start becoming a more valuable person. Acquire skills no one else has. Read books no one else is reading. Think thoughts no one else is thinking. Or, to put it another way, you cannot have all that you want if you remain the person you are. To get more from life, you need to be more in life.

Be a Better Parent



The way you raise your children is the way you raise your future generations. Since few of us have had formal training in the fine art of parenting, most of us simply treat our children the way our parents treated us. We know of no other way to do it.

Although being a parent is a great joy, it is also a privilege that involves tremendous responsibility. While I would do anything for my two children, that willingness is not enough. We need to develop the skills of excellent parents. We cannot just hope that the way we are raising our kids is the right way and pray that we will be lucky enough that they become thoughtful, caring and wise adults. We must take the initiative to improve our parenting abilities by attending seminars, reading books and listening to audiocassettes by the leading thinkers in this field. Then we must have the courage to keep trying to refine the ideas we learn in the laboratory of our own lives in order to find the parenting strategies that best suit our families.

I know your life is busy and there is too much to do in too little time. But those miraculous years of your sons' and daughters' childhoods will never come again. And if you do not devote the time and effort to becoming the best parent you know you can be, one day you will deeply regret the lost opportunity. As one father who attended a seminar I gave in Toronto said, "When my son was growing up, he constantly asked me to give him piggyback rides. Though I knew how much he loved them, I was always too busy to play with him. I had reports to read or meetings to attend or calls to make. Now that he has grown up and left our home, I have realized one thing: I would give anything in the world to give that little boy a piggyback ride."

Be Unorthodox



Rousseau wrote, “Take the course opposite to custom, you will almost always do well.” The brilliant ads for Apple computers inspire us to “Think Different.” Or as I tell audiences at my leadership speeches, “If you follow the crowd, the place you will most likely end up at is the exit.” To live a richer, more rewarding life, it is essential that you run your own race. Stop bending to the demands of social pressure at the expense of your uniqueness. When you study the lives of the world’s most enlightened and effective people, you will see that they did not care about what other people thought of them. Rather than letting public opinion dictate their actions, they had the courage to let their hearts drive them. And in taking the road less traveled, they found success beyond their wildest dreams.

One of the best quotations about the importance of being unorthodox comes from Christopher Morley, who said, “Read every day something no one else is reading. Think every day something no one else is thinking. It is bad for the mind to be always part of unanimity.” And perhaps the very best one comes from Emerson: “It is easy in the world to live after the world’s opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.”

Over the next month, rethink the way you do things. Don’t just do things because everyone else does them. Do the things that are right for you. Being different for all the right reasons is a wise way to live. Just ask Einstein, Picasso, Galileo or Beethoven.

Carry a Goal Card



Time and time again, I have witnessed high-functioning, top-performing men and women carrying a little goal card in their wallets that they can review during the quieter moments of their day. The card simply lists their top life goals along with clear deadlines for achieving them. The discipline of reconnecting to your highest priorities, whether they are personal, professional or spiritual, is a smart one.

Montaigne said, “The great and glorious masterpiece of men is to live to the point.” The wisdom of life so succinctly expressed. And yet most of us live our lives like one long air raid drill, filling our days with activities that seem important in the moment but that count for little in the overall scheme of our lives. As I wrote in *Leadership Wisdom from The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, the person who tries to do everything ultimately accomplishes nothing. Having a goal card and coming back to it three or four times a day will keep your mind centered on the things that truly count. It will foster the self-control you need to concentrate only on activities that advance your goals, give you the discipline to say no to all the rest and, in so doing, restore focus to your days. I promise you that if you spend your life focusing on only the worthiest pursuits, it is certain to end in complete joy.

Be More than Your Moods



For much of my life, I believed my thoughts were beyond my control. They just entered my mind automatically and did whatever they wished to do. Even worse, I believed that I was my thoughts. Thankfully, I discovered that nothing could be further from the truth. We are not our thoughts. Instead, we are the thinkers of our thoughts. We are the creators of the thoughts that flow through our minds and, given this fact, we can change our thoughts if we choose to do so.

This seemingly obvious insight was an epiphany for me. I soon became far more aware of the thoughts I allowed into my mind and the inner dialogue that takes place within every one of us every waking hour of every living day. I began to pay complete attention to the quality of my thoughts. This awareness was the first step to changing them. Over a matter of months, I trained my mind to focus only on positive, inspiring and enlightening thoughts. And in doing so, I saw the outer circumstances of my life change.

Just as you are not your thoughts, you are not your moods. You are the creator of the moods you experience, moods that you can change in a single instant. If you choose to do so, you can feel peace in a moment of stress, joy in a time of sadness and energy during a time of fatigue.

Savor the Simple Stuff



No one gets to take his possessions with him when he dies. I have yet to see a moving van following a hearse to a funeral. At the end of the day, the only thing we can take with us are our memories of all those great life experiences that add meaning to our lives. Given this, I would rather spend my days doing things that will leave me happy memories than collecting possessions.

I have discovered that my best memories come from life's simplest things. The day my daughter Bianca learned to walk, my son Colby's first Christmas concert (where he spent more time waving to his proud dad in the audience than singing the assigned song), the day our family played soccer in the rain and the evening we barbequed hot dogs under the full harvest moon.

Dale Carnegie wrote, "One of the most tragic things I know about human nature is that all of us tend to put off living. We are all dreaming of some magical rose garden over the horizon instead of enjoying the roses that are blooming outside our windows today." Have the wisdom to savor the simple things. The wonderful memories that they bring will add more value to your life than any of the material toys we spend so much life energy pursuing. As Emma Goldman noted, "I'd rather have roses on my table than diamonds on my neck."

Stop Condemning



Like the vice of complaining discussed earlier, it is easy to fall into the habit of condemning others, even those we love most. We criticize the way someone eats or the manner in which she speaks. We focus on the most minute details and find fault with the smallest of issues. But what we focus on grows. And if we keep focusing on a small weakness in someone, it will continue to grow in our minds until we perceive it to be a big problem in that person.

Would you really want to live in a world where everyone looked, acted and thought exactly as you do? It would be a pretty boring place. To live a happier, more peaceful life, begin to see that the richness of our society comes from its diversity. What makes relationships, communities and countries great are not the things that we have in common but the differences that make us unique. Rather than looking for things to criticize in those around you, why not begin to respect the differences?

Often, we perceive in others the weaknesses we most need to address within ourselves. Stop blaming and condemning. Accept complete responsibility for the way things are and resolve to work on changing yourself before seeking to change others. This is one of the truest measures of a person of strong character. As Erica Jong said, “Take your life into your own hands and what happens? A terrible thing: no one to blame.”

See Your Day as Your Life



“The days come and go like muffled and veiled figures sent from a distant, friendly party, but they say nothing, and if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away,” observed Emerson. As you live your days, so you will live your life. It is easy to get caught up in the trap of thinking that this day does not matter much given all the days that lie ahead of you. But a great life is nothing more than a series of great, well-lived days strung together like a beautiful necklace of pearls. Every day counts and contributes to the quality of the end result. The past is gone, the future is but a figment, so this day is really all you can own. Invest it wisely.

Your life is not a dress rehearsal. Lost opportunities rarely come again. Today, vow to increase your passion for living and multiply the commitment you will bring to each of the days that will follow this one. Many people think that it takes months and years to change your life. Respectfully, I disagree. You change your life the second you make a decision from the depths of your heart to be a better, more dedicated human being. What takes the months and years are the efforts you must apply to *maintain* that decision. And the best life change decision you will ever make is the one to live every moment of your days to the fullest. As golf legend Ben Hogan said, “As you walk down the fairway of life, you must smell the roses, for you only get to play one round.”

Create a MasterMind Alliance



In his brilliant book, *Think and Grow Rich*, self-help pioneer Napoleon Hill advises readers to form a “mastermind” group if they aim to improve the quality of their lives and get what they want. He defines the mastermind alliance in these terms: “Coordination of knowledge and effort, in a spirit of harmony, between two or more people, for the attainment of a definite purpose.” Hill adds, “No two minds ever come together in a spirit of harmony without, thereby, creating a third, invisible, intangible force which may be likened to a third mind.”

Many of the successful people I personally coach or whom I have met at my seminars have told me that one of the single best things they did to help them create both the business and personal lives they wanted was to form their own mastermind alliance. In doing so, they not only developed a personal support network and some great friendships, they tapped into specialized knowledge and accumulated wisdom they ordinarily would never have had access to.

To form your own mastermind alliance, find three or four people you feel you could learn from and who would get along well with the others of the group. The alliance is all about mutual benefit so you must be able to give as much as you expect to receive. Approach your prospective members and arrange to start meeting once a week — early morning meetings are the best as they force each member to show his commitment to the group. With the advances in technology, you no longer have to meet in person although this will be important to do every so often. Telephone conference calls, electronic communication and even faxes will work. At the appointed time, discuss the challenges you are facing and ask for the group’s input. Discuss the success principles and life lessons that have proved their effectiveness time and time again along with ways to live with greater balance, fulfillment and inner peace. A mastermind alliance will not only cut your learning curve in the game of life, it will help you have much more fun playing it.

Create a Daily Code of Conduct



It is easy to live your life like a leaf in the fall wind, moving in whatever direction the wind blows that day. To create a great life, you must live more intentionally, deliberately and passionately so that you live on your own terms rather than on someone else's. The real challenge is that with so much to do, it is easy to allow life to act on you and watch the days quickly slip into weeks, then into months and finally into years. But I have a solution.

In my own life I have created what I call my Daily Code of Conduct. It is simply three paragraphs containing the values, virtues and vows I have determined through much reflection that I need to live by in order for my life to be a fulfilling one. For example, part of the first paragraph states, "Over the next twenty-four hours I vow to appreciate this day, as it is all I really have, and to use every minute wisely and fully. So much can be done over the next twenty-four hours to advance my life's agenda and complete my legacy. I will, throughout this day, remember that this day could be my last and that no great person ever died with their music still within them." My code then outlines my dearest values and vows as they relate to my family, my community and myself.

Reading my Daily Code of Conduct at the very beginning of the day, during the "Base Camp" period I described in an earlier lesson, reminds me of the things that matter most in my life and reconnects me to my highest priorities, priorities that are so easily forgotten in the blur of daily events. After reading my code, I feel energized, committed and ready to go out into the world with a renewed sense of purpose and focus. Creating your own Daily Code of Conduct will do the same for you.

Imagine a Richer Reality



Albert Camus once wrote, “In the midst of winter, I found there was within me an invincible summer.” We really don’t discover how powerful and resilient we are until we face some adversity that fills our minds with stress and our hearts with pain. Then we realize that we all have within us the courage and the capacity to handle even the greatest curves life may throw our way.

Many of the men and women who attend my leadership seminars come to me after the session and reveal the challenges they face in their lives. Some speak of difficulties they have motivating their employees in these uncertain times. Others speak of inner longings and the need to find a greater sense of meaning and fulfillment through their work. And still others ask me for advice on how to restore balance within their personal lives. My response always begins with the same lesson: to improve your life, you must first improve your thinking. Or as the old saying goes, “We see the world, not as it is but as we are.”

Our greatest human endowment is the ability to reframe and reinterpret a difficult circumstance in a more enlightened and empowering way. Dogs cannot do this. Cats cannot do this. Monkeys cannot do this. This gift belongs only to us and is part of what makes us human. Blaming our circumstances for the way we feel is nothing more than excusing ourselves. In handling any problem, we must have the courage to assume a measure of responsibility for whatever situation we are in and then realize that we also have the capacity to use the setback to our advantage. Life’s greatest setbacks always reveal life’s biggest blessings.

Become the CEO of Your Life



“If it’s going to be, it’s up to me” is a wonderful mantra. I recently read in a newspaper that fully 10 percent of the population is betting they will win the lottery to finance their retirement. Too many people are leaving the quality of their futures to chance rather than to choice. It reminds me of the habit my brother had as a kid. When he saw that a glass was about to fall off a counter, rather than rushing to save it from falling, he would cover his ears with his hands so he could not hear it smash. (He has since grown up and become a Harvard-trained eye doctor, so his unique habit does not appear to have held him back all that much.)

This anecdote’s point of wisdom is simply this: we need to keep our ears and eyes open to the realities of life. If we don’t act on life and take action to make things happen, it will act on us and give us results we might not want. This is one of the natural laws that has governed humanity for thousands of years. To become more proactive during the weeks ahead, begin to see yourself as the chief executive officer of your destiny, the CEO of your life. All effective CEOs realize that “if it’s going to be, it’s up to me” and act as the catalysts of their own dreams. Similarly, if you want something done, rather than waiting for luck to look your way, take steps to get it done. If there is someone you know could help you solve a problem or seize an opportunity, pick up the phone and call him or her. Remember, you can make excuses or you can make progress, but you cannot do both.

When I was practicing law, I would make a forty-five-minute journey on a commuter train to my office in a downtown tower. Every day, a man would sit in front of me who I came to see as a model of the Become the CEO of Your Life principle. Instead of sleeping or daydreaming like most of the other people on the train, this man decided to use his forty-five minutes to exercise. From the moment he sat down until the moment we arrived at the station, he would do arm stretches, neck rolls and a series of rigorous exercises to improve his health. Rather than joining the legion of people who complain they don’t have enough time to work out, he took matters into his own hands and took charge of the opportunity. Sure he looked a little silly. But who cares what others think when you know that what you are doing is the right thing to do.

Seeing yourself as the CEO of your life can create a fundamental shift in the way you perceive your world. Instead of sailing through life as a passenger, you become the captain of the ship, leading things in the direction

you choose to move in rather than reacting to the whim of the changing tides. And as you take greater control of your life, reflect on William James's inspiring words: "Humankind's common instinct for reality has always held the world to be essentially a theater for heroism."

Be Humble



One of the traits I respect most in people is humility. “The tree that has the most fruit is the tree that bends to the ground,” my father taught me as I was growing up. And though there are some exceptions, I have found in my own experience that it is true — the people who know the most, who have achieved the most and who have lived the most are also the people closest to the ground. In a word, they are humble.

There is something special about being in the presence of a person who is humble. Practicing humility shows that you respect others and reminds us that there is so much for us yet to learn. It sends a signal to those around you that you are open to receiving the gift of their knowledge and listening to what they have to say.

I have had the privilege of meeting many famous people in my life. One of my biggest thrills was meeting the world champion boxer Muhammad Ali. Contrary to the cocky and loud image he cultivated in the media, in person he was a true gentleman and the very model of humility. When I had the good fortune to meet him in Los Angeles, he asked more questions about me than I asked about him. He spoke softly and radiated a warmth and decency that spoke volumes about the man he is. Muhammad Ali taught me that the more you are as a person, the less you need to prove yourself to others.

Don't Finish Every Book You Start



It is so easy to feel compelled to finish every book you start. A great sense of guilt fills our minds if we do not reach the end of that book we used our hard-earned dollars to buy. But not every book deserves to be read in its entirety. As Francis Bacon said, “Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts, others to be read, but not curiously, and some few books to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention.”

I myself was guilty of feeling the need to read every book I picked up from beginning to end. I soon found that not only did my reading pile become unmanageable but I began to enjoy the pastime of reading less. Once I decided I would be more selective about which books I actually completed, I not only got through more of them, I found I learned more from each one.

If you find that after reading the first three chapters of a book, you have not gained any worthwhile information or that the book has failed to keep your attention, do yourself a favor: put the book away and make better use of your time (like reading the next book in your pile).

Don't Be So Hard on Yourself



It is easy to spend much of your days beating up on yourself for past mistakes. We analyze that relationship that failed and relentlessly review all the things we did wrong. Or we look at that business decision that cost us so much and dwell on the things we could have done right. Once and for all stop being so hard on yourself. You are a human being and human beings have been designed to make mistakes. As long as you don't keep making the same errors and have the good judgement to let your past serve you, you will be on the right track. Accept them and move on. As Mark Twain wrote, "we should be careful to get out of an experience only the wisdom that is in it — and stop there; lest we be like the cat that sits down on a hot stove lid. It will never sit down on a hot stove lid again — and that is well; but also it will never sit down on a cold one anymore."

Coming to the realization that we all make mistakes and that they are essential to our growth and progress is liberating. We lose the need to be perfect and adopt a saner way of viewing our lives. We can begin to flow through life the way a mountain stream flows through a leafy forest, powerfully yet gracefully. We can finally be at peace with our true nature.

An excellent way to rise to a higher level of enlightenment and personal wisdom is to make a list of the ten biggest mistakes you have made in your life on the left-hand side of a page within your journal. Then, on the righthand side, write down the corresponding lessons you have learned from every mistake and the benefits that actually flowed into your life as a result of those so-called failures. You will soon see that your life would not be as rich and colorful without the mistakes of your past. So be gentler to yourself and see life for what it really is: a path of self-discovery, personal growth and lifelong learning.

Make a Vow of Silence



The Buddhist monks have a favorite strategy to build willpower — one that has been used by many cultures over the years to create enormous amounts of inner strength and resolve. It is the vow of silence. Staying quiet for even short periods of time builds willpower and self-control because you exert force on your will by not giving in to the impulse to talk.

So many people talk far more than they have to. Rather than speaking precisely and communicating only what needs to be said, all too often we go on and on. This in itself reveals a lack of discipline. Discipline involves saying exactly what needs to be said and preserving your precious mental energy by not talking more than you have to. Measured, precise speech is also a sign of clear thought and of a serene mind.

A strategy that you can apply today to improve your personal discipline is to keep a vow of silence for one hour a day over the next seven. Don't speak at all during this silent time. Or if you must, speak only in direct response to a question and offer a clear, crisp answer rather than rattling on about everything from what was on TV last night to where you hope to vacation this summer. The vow of silence can be adopted politely and warmly. The idea is to make you stronger and to enhance your will, not to hinder your relationships. Within a matter of days, you will feel a sense of mastery and strength growing within you. Judge by the results: they will speak for themselves.

Don't Pick Up the Phone Every Time It Rings



The telephone is there for your convenience, not for the convenience of your callers. Yet, as soon as we hear the phone ring, we act as if we are firefighters rushing to a five-alarm fire. We run to pick it up as if our lives depended on the call being answered at once. I have seen people interrupt quiet family dinners, dedicated reading times and meditation periods to answer those seemingly urgent phone calls, many of which turn out to be ones that could have been taken later.

Voice mail, though not perfect, is in many ways one of the great blessings of the modern age. It frees you up to do the things you want by allowing you to answer calls when it suits you. You no longer need be interrupted by the ringing phone and can spend your time on life's more important pursuits.

The habit of picking up the phone every time it rings is a hard one to break, as I know from personal experience. It is so easy to run to it, simply because we want to know who is calling us. Often, picking up the ringing phone is just another way to put off doing something you don't really want to do. But once you get good at letting it ring and staying focused on the activity at hand, whether it is reading a good book, having a heart-to-heart conversation with your life partner or frolicking with your kids, you will wonder what the hurry to pick up the phone was all about in the first place.

Remember That Recreation Must Involve Re-creation



After a tiring day at work, it is so easy to curl up on the couch and spend the next three or four hours watching television. The irony is that, if you are like most people, you actually feel more fatigued after watching too much TV than you felt when you first sat down.

Recreation is tremendously important to a balanced life. But recreation must serve to re-create you. Recreation must restore you and bring you back to life. Real recreation will fill you with a renewed sense of optimism and energy. True recreation connects you to the highest and best within you while rekindling your inner fire. As Plato noted, “My belief is not that the good body by any bodily excellence improves the soul, but, on the contrary, that the good soul, by her own excellence, improves the body as far as this may be possible.” Effective recreation then must involve some pursuit that soothes your soul.

Choose Worthy Opponents



I read recently that after Olympic athletes return home from the games, some of them suffer from what psychologists call POD (Post-Olympic Depression). After being in the world's spotlight and training for years to excel in competition, the athletes who suffer from this affliction fall into a state of depression once they get back to their daily lives. It seems that having achieved the pinnacle of success, there is no higher target for them to aim for and so life loses its meaning. A similar phenomenon was experienced by the *Apollo* astronauts who walked on the moon. After achieving this, they grew dejected at the realization that few things in life could match the excitement of traveling into space.

To maintain a healthy level of optimism and passion for life, you must keep on setting higher and higher goals. On attaining one goal, whether it is a career goal or a personal one, it is essential that you quickly set the next one. I call the process of setting progressively bigger, more engaging goals "choosing worthy opponents." When I was practicing law, I spent much of my time in courtrooms, representing the interests of my clients. Over the years that I argued these cases, I always found I performed best when I appeared against my toughest opponents. Those bright, highly prepared and exceptionally focused litigators forced me to get to the core issue before the judge and deliver my argument succinctly and effectively. The worthiest opponents compelled me to reach deep within myself and do even better than I had previously.

In the same way, selecting a steady stream of compelling goals will liberate the fullness of your talents. Remember, diamonds are created through steady pressure. So make certain your goals are worthy of you. Make sure they are the kind of challenges that will force you to reach into your heart and bring out the best within you, helping you grow in the process. In the personal coaching sessions I conduct around the country, many of the participants already have achieved what I would consider success in both their careers and lives. They are highly respected, influential and they enjoy what they do while leading balanced and fulfilling personal lives. Yet they join my programs because they know deep down that they can be more and that life holds greater rewards in store for them. They understand that in order to truly manifest their human potential and leave a legacy that lasts, they must keep raising the bar and holding themselves to a higher standard. And because of

that attitude of constant improvement, life does send greater blessings their way.

Sleep Less



Thomas Edison's life story is one worth reading about. Part visionary, part gambler and part genius, he was a brilliant inventor who made the best use of his time on the planet. Though he had only six months of formal schooling, he had read such classics as *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by the time he was eight and invented the phonograph, which captured sound on records, by the time he was thirty. A master of positive thinking, when someone asked him why, during his last years when he was almost totally deaf, he did not invent a hearing aid, he replied, "How much have you heard in the last twenty-four hours that you couldn't do without?" He then added with a smile, "A man who has to shout can never tell a lie." But what I remember the most about this special man was his rare ability to thrive on only four hours of sleep. "Sleep is like a drug," he explained. "Take too much at a time and it makes you dopey. You lose time, vitality and opportunities."

Most of us sleep far more than we need to. We say to ourselves that we must have at least eight good hours of time under the covers in order to function at our best. We cannot imagine getting by on less sleep and shudder at the very thought. Yet, as I wrote in an earlier lesson, it is not the quantity of sleep that is most important. What really counts is the *quality* and richness of your sleep.

Just remember those times when everything in your life was working. You were thriving at the office, fulfilled in your relationships and growing in your inner life. You were overflowing with energy and passionate about every minute of your days. If you are like most people, you will also recall that during these times you could get by on less sleep. As a matter of fact, there was so much to be excited about that you did not want to waste time by oversleeping. Now reflect on those times of your life when things were not going so well. Your job was exhausting, the people in your life were driving you crazy and you had no time for yourself. During these times, you probably slept longer than usual. Perhaps you slept until two o'clock in the afternoon on Saturday or Sunday (we often use sleep as an escape from reality during difficult times). But how did you feel when you finally woke up? Groggy, uninspired and tired.

So it is not the number of hours of sleep that is key but rather the amount of renewal your body receives. Strive for less time in bed but a richer, deeper sleep. Understand that fatigue is often a mental creation that stems from doing

things you do not like to do. And remember Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's wise words:

The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.

Have a Family Mealtime



One of the many great family traditions my wonderful mother created for us when I was growing up was having a family meal every day. No matter what activities we had on the go, my father, my brother and I were duty-bound to come home for a dinner, where we could all reconnect and share our stories about the day that was drawing to a close.

My dad would often go around the dinner table and ask us to share one new thing we had learned. Or he would pull out a newspaper clipping he had tucked away in his shirt pocket and engage us in a lively discussion relating to the story. The special tradition of a daily family meal brought our family closer and gave me many happy memories. It is a tradition I have now brought into my own family life and one I hope my children will continue.

Your family meal does not have to be dinner. We live in busy times. We have endless personal commitments, our children have soccer practices, piano lessons and ballet classes, which might make it difficult to have a quiet meal in the early evening hours. Your family meal could take place over breakfast or lunch if your schedule allows for it. It might even be a quick snack of milk and cookies at the very end of the day. The important thing is that you find some time every day to “break bread” with those you love most and consistently work at building a richer, more meaningful family life.

Become an Imposter



Research has shown that the way you act influences the thoughts you think. If you look to the ground, slouch over and generally model yourself physically after a depressed person, you will eventually start to feel depressed. If, on the other hand, you smile and laugh and stand upright with your head held high, you will soon find that you feel much better, even though you may not have been in a great mood to begin with.

Using this information, you can start to “fake it till you make it.” In other words, you can pretend to be the kind of person you wish to be. By consistently acting as a highly enthusiastic person might or as a truly confident person would, you will eventually take on these personal attributes.

The power of the “act like that which you most wish to become” technique was demonstrated by a study at Stanford University in which a team of psychologists took a group of emotionally secure college students and randomly separated them into two groups within a simulated prison setting. The first group was instructed to act like prison guards while the second group was told to take on the characteristics of inmates. The behavior of the group members was affected so dramatically by this experiment that the psychologists were forced to end it after only six days. The “inmates” had become severely depressed, hysterical and suffered from crying bouts while the “guards” behaved cruelly and uncaringly. As this study confirms, the “acting as if” technique is a highly effective way to modify your behavior and transform yourself into the person you plan to be.

Take a Public Speaking Course



As a professional speaker who specializes in leadership, personal effectiveness and life improvement, I have the privilege of appearing on programs that feature some of the world's top experts like Brian Tracy, the renowned motivational speaker, Professor John Kotter, the respected business guru, celebrities like actor Christopher Reeve and musical superstars like Jewel. I give keynote addresses at about seventy-five major conferences a year and speak to large audiences across North America, in the Caribbean and in Asia. Yet very few people know that the greatest fear of my life was once public speaking.

While I was in school, I would avoid any opportunity to speak in front of people for fear of failure. If a teacher asked me to give an oral report to the class or speak on a certain subject, I would always find some excuse not to. My fear of public speaking affected my confidence and prevented me from doing many of the things I knew in my heart I could do. It was not until I took a public speaking course from the Dale Carnegie organization that I began to change. And once I did, a new world unfolded for me.

I have since discovered I was not alone in my fear. It has been reported that most people fear speaking in front of an audience even more than death itself. Talking to a large group of people draws us out of the circle of security that we tend to live in and forces us to confront an entirely foreign experience. But two things can dramatically reduce your fear of public speaking (as well as any other fear for that matter): preparation and practice. By taking a public speaking course that will prepare you for speaking before groups and offer you a regular forum to practice in front of a group, you will soon manage your fear and eventually master it.

Stop Thinking Tiny Thoughts



The British statesman Benjamin Disraeli once said, “Nurture your mind with great thoughts, for you will never go any higher than you think.” His words are profound. And his point of wisdom is clear: it is not what you are that is holding you back in life. It’s what you think you’re not. It is what is going on in your inner world that is preventing you from having all that you want. And the moment you fully understand this insight and set about ridding your mind of all its limiting thoughts, you will see almost immediate improvements in your personal circumstances.

In my motivational seminars, I tell my audiences, “if you are not pursuing your dreams, you are fueling your limitations.” My brother, an internationally known eye surgeon, once told me about a medical condition called amblyopia, a condition that occurs when a patch is placed over a young child’s healthy eye. When the patch is removed, the child has completely lost the sight of that once good eye. Covering the eye stunts its development and causes blindness. Many of us suffer from our own form of amblyopia. We go through life with blinders over our eyes, afraid to dream bigger dreams and do the things we fear. The result is always the same: like the child with amblyopia, we eventually lose our vision and spend the rest of our days within a very limited zone of movement.

Too many people lead small lives. Too many of us die at twenty and are buried at eighty. Remember, nothing can stop a person who refuses to be stopped. Most people don’t really fail, they simply give up trying. And most of the limitations that hold you back from your dreams are self-imposed. So shed the shackles of “tiny thinking,” have the bravery to dream big for a change and accept that failure is not an option for you. As Seneca observed, “It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult.”

Don't Worry About Things You Can't Change



Time and again, when I face a challenge in my own life, I return to *The Serenity Prayer* of Reinhold Niebuhr: “God, give us the grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish one from the other.”

One business executive who went through an exercise I use in my leadership coaching programs found that 54 percent of his worries related to things that would likely never happen; 26 percent were about past actions that could not be changed; 8 percent related to the opinions of people whose opinions really did not matter to him; 4 percent concerned personal health issues that he had since resolved; and only 6 percent concerned real issues worthy of his attention. By identifying and then letting go of the worries he could do nothing about or that were a complete waste of his energy, this man eliminated 94 percent of the problems that had plagued him.

Learn How to Walk



Nearly ten years ago, I received a package in the mail from my father. In it was a worn-out old book that carried the following inscription on the inside front cover: “Dear Robin, some time ago, I picked up this book from a store that sells secondhand books. Though the money paid for this book was nominal, its net worth is tremendous. I enjoyed reading it immensely and I hope you will too. Love, Dad.”

Published in 1946, the book is called *Getting the Most Out of Life* and is one of the treasures in my library of wisdom literature and self-help books. I have returned to the short essays it contains on a wide range of life improvement topics, bearing titles such as “Wake Up and Live!” “The Business of Living a Long Time” and “How to Live on 24 Hours a Day,” many times over the years and have grown much from the lessons offered. It is truly a priceless possession.

On a recent rainy day, I pulled out the book and flipped through the different chapters, stopping at the one entitled “How to Take a Walk.” In it, author Alan Devoe shares his insights on how one can get the best out of walking. First, he advises, a walk should never have a specific purpose. Rather than having a destination, you should simply immerse yourself in the beauty of the walk itself. Second, you must never take your worries with you on the walk. Leave them at home, for if you don’t, they will become even more deeply rooted in your mind by the end of the walk. And finally, be fully aware. Train yourself to pay complete attention to the sights, sounds and smells. Study the shape of the leaves on the trees. Observe the beauty of the clouds and the fragrance of the flowers. As he concludes: “The world, after all, is not so unendurable, when a person gets a chance to look at it and smell it and feel its texture and be alone with it. This acquaintance with the world — this renewal of the magical happiness and wonderment which you felt when you were a child — such is the purpose of taking walks.”

Rewrite Your Life Story



One of the most wonderful things about time is the fact that you cannot waste it in advance. No matter how much time you have squandered in the past, the next hour that comes your way will be perfect, unspoiled and ready for you to make the very best of it. No matter what has happened to you in the past, your future is spotless. Realize that every dawn brings with it the corresponding opportunity to begin a completely new life. If you so choose, tomorrow can be the day that you start getting up earlier, reading more, exercising, eating well and worrying less. As author Ashleigh Brilliant has observed, “At any moment I could start being more of the person I dream to be — but which moment should I choose?”

No one is stopping you from opening your journal and, on a blank page, rewriting the story of your life. This very minute, you can decide the way you would like it to unfold, change the central characters and create a new ending. The only question is will you choose to do so? Remember, it is never too late to become the person you have always wanted to be.

Plant a Tree



According to ancient Eastern thinking, to live a fulfilling life, you must do three things: have a son, write a book and plant a tree. By doing so, the thinking goes, you will have three legacies that will live on long after you die.

While there are clearly many more elements of a happy and complete life (I would add the joy of having a daughter to the list), the idea of planting a tree is an excellent one. Watching a tree grow from a sapling into a tall oak will keep you connected with the daily passage of time and the cycles of nature. Just as the tree grows and matures, so too will you be able to mark your personal passages and growth as a human being.

If you have children, you might also wish to plant a tree in honor of each of them. As they grow, you can carve notches on the trunk to mark their different ages. Each tree then becomes a living record of a different life stage. Planting a tree for each child in your family is a wonderful and creative act of love and one that your kids will remember for many years to come.

Find Your Place of Peace



Everyone needs a sanctuary or a “place of peace” where they can go to be quiet and still. This special place will serve as your oasis in a world of stress. It will be a spot where you can take refuge from the crush of daily activities that demand your time, energy and attention. Your sanctuary does not need to be fancy. An unused bedroom or a corner of an apartment with some freshly cut flowers on the table will do nicely. Even a wooden bench in your favorite park can serve as your place of peace.

When you feel you need some time alone, visit this sanctuary and do some of those “inner development” activities that are so easy to neglect during the course of a busy day. Write in your journal or listen to a soothing piece of classical music. Close your eyes and visualize your ideal day. Read deeply from that book your mother always told you to read or from a book of wisdom. Or simply do nothing for thirty minutes and let the renewing power of solitude take hold.

Carving out a little time for yourself is not a selfish act. Replenishing your inner reserves allows you to give more, do more and be more for others. Making the time to care for your mind and spirit will keep you balanced, enthusiastic and youthful. And as L. F. Phelan once said, “Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind. People grow old only by deserting their ideals and by outgrowing the consciousness of youth. Years wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul.... You are as old as your doubt, your fear, your despair. The way to keep young is to keep your faith young. Keep your self-confidence young. Keep your hope young.”

Take More Pictures



Every life is worth living. And given this, every life is worth recording. So often a friend will tell me about a breathtaking sight on a recent vacation or something hilarious his child did at the Christmas concert or about someone famous he has met. “Did you get it on film?” I ask. “I’d love to see the photo.” “Next time,” comes the reply. “I didn’t have time to pick up a new roll. But let me try and describe what happened to you.”

A picture truly is worth a thousand words. Photographs capture and record life’s greatest memories so that we can re-live them as the years go by. As I grew up, my father constantly took pictures of our family. Whether it was a family picnic, the first time I took his car out for a spin, or a simple gathering with friends, he was there taking pictures. Often, while he asked us to smile for the camera, I would grow impatient and gently ask him to take the photo quickly. “You don’t need to take so many photos, Dad,” I would say. “What are we going to do with them all?”

Well now, as the years have quietly slipped by, I know what to do with all those photos. They have gone into albums that form part of the story of life’s passage. They provide my own children with endless hours of amusement and offer our entire family a wonderful way to reflect on the simple things that have meant so much to us.

Take more pictures. Record the best times of your life. Collect photographs of the things that have made you smile or cry or appreciate the many blessings this world provides. Always carry a disposable camera in your car and two in your luggage when you travel. You might be surprised how good you will feel when you go through your albums years from now.

Be an Adventurer



Teachers are climbing mountains. Entrepreneurs are flying hot-air balloons. Grandmothers are completing marathons and homemakers are taking up karate. The more routine our lives become, the greater our need to fill them with some real adventures. The more obligations that beg for our attention, the more important it becomes to shed those shackles of complacency and send our hearts soaring through some brave new pursuit.

“Man must not allow the clock and the calendar to blind him to the fact that each moment of his life is a miracle and a mystery,” wrote British novelist H. G. Wells. To connect more deeply to the miracles and the mysteries of your own life, vow to restore the spirit of adventure that you once knew as a child. Make a list of twelve pursuits you know would bring a greater sense of passion and energy to your normally mundane routine and tackle one of them every month for the next year. Doing so is a highly effective way to reinvent the way you live.

Decompress Before You Go Home



After a day of stress and pressure at the office, most of us arrive home cranky, tired and dispirited. We gave the best we had to our colleagues and customers and, sadly, we have nothing left for the people we love the most: our spouses, children and friends. Like gladiators who have just completed the battle of their lives, we wearily walk to our favorite easy chair and order family members to leave us alone until we regain our composure.

Taking ten minutes to decompress before you walk through the front door of your home will help you to avoid making this scenario a part of your daily routine. Rather than leaving work, driving home and rushing into your house, I recommend that you spend a few minutes sitting alone in your car while parked in the driveway. Use this time to relax and reflect on what you would like to accomplish during the next few hours with your family. Remind yourself how much your partner and children need you and how many fun things you can do if you simply put your mind to it. To further decompress, you could go for a quick walk around the block or listen to a favorite piece of classical music before you open the door and greet your family. Be creative about your personal decompression time and treat it as a chance to renew and recharge so you are the person your family wants you to be when you greet them.

Respect Your Instincts



It is easy not to listen to what the Quakers call the “still, small voice within,” that inner guide that is your personal source of wisdom. It is often difficult to march to your own drum beat and listen to your instincts when the world around you pressures you to conform to its dictates. Yet, to find the fulfillment and abundance you seek, you must listen to those hunches and feelings that come to you when you most need them.

As I grow older, I give far greater respect to my instincts and to the natural reservoir of intuition that slumbers within each one of us. The impressions I receive when I first meet a new person or that inner sense of wisdom that softly nudges me in the right direction during a trying time have come to play a larger part in the way I work and live. It seems that with age comes the corresponding ability to trust your own instincts.

I have also found that my personal instincts grow stronger when I am living “on purpose,” that is to say, spending my days on activities that advance me along the path to my legacy. When you are doing the right things and living the way nature intended you to live, abilities you were not aware you had become engaged and you liberate the fullness of the person you really are. As the Indian philosopher Patanjali eloquently wrote:

When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all of your thoughts break their bonds: Your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction, and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be.

Collect Quotes That Inspire You



If you have read *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* or any of my other books, you know that I love using quotations from the world's great thinkers. I never knew why I loved these as much as I do until one of my mentors, after reading a manuscript I'd written, said, "You love quotations for the same reason I do, Robin. A great quote contains a wealth of wisdom in a single line."

So often in my readings, I come across just the right quote, which contains the ideal answer to a challenge I am facing. And my mentor was right. The value of a great quote does lie in the fact that it contains a world of wisdom, wisdom that may have taken the author many years to arrive at, in a line or two.

Over the next few weeks, start your own collection of quotations, words that you can keep referring to when you need some instant inspiration or advice about how to deal with those curves life sometimes sends our way. Another effective way that I use quotes is to paste them in places where I know I will see them throughout the day, such as on my bathroom mirror, on the refrigerator door, on the dashboard of my car and throughout my office. This simple discipline keeps me focused on what's essential during busy times, positive during trying times and centered on the principles of real success. On my personal computer, I have now collected hundreds of quotes from great leaders, thinkers, poets and philosophers on subjects such as how to deal with adversity, the meaning of life, the value of self-improvement, the importance of helping others, the power of our thoughts and the need for a strong character.

Love Your Work



One of the timeless secrets to a long, happy life is to love your work. The golden thread running through the lives of history's most satisfied people is that they all loved what they did for a living. When psychologist Vera John-Steiner interviewed one hundred creative people, she found they all had one thing in common: an intense passion for their work. Spending your days doing work that you find rewarding, intellectually challenging and fun will do more than all the spa vacations in the world to keep your spirits high and your heart engaged. Thomas Edison, a man who recorded 1,093 patents in his lifetime, ranging from the phonograph, the incandescent light bulb and the microphone to the movies, had this to say about his brilliant career at the end of his life, "I never did a day's work in my life: it was all fun."

When you love your job, you discover you will never have to work another day in your life. Your work will be play and the hours will slip away as quickly as they came. As novelist James Michener wrote:

The master in the art of living makes little distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his information and his recreation, his life and his religion. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence at whatever he does, leaving others to decide whether he is working or playing. To him, he is always doing both.

Selflessly Serve



Albert Schweitzer said, “There is no higher religion than human service. To work for the common good is the greatest creed.” And the ancient Chinese believed that “a little fragrance always clings to the hand that gives you roses.” One of the greatest lessons for a highly fulfilling life is to rise from a life spent chasing success to one dedicated to finding significance. And the best way to create significance is to ask yourself one simple question, “How may I serve?”

All great leaders, thinkers and humanitarians have abandoned selfish lives for selfless lives and, in doing so, found all the happiness, abundance and satisfaction they desired. They have all understood that all-important truth of humanity: you cannot pursue success; success ensues. It flows as the unintended but inevitable by-product of a life spent serving people and adding value to the world.

Mahatma Gandhi understood the service ethic better than most. In one memorable story from his life, he was traveling across India by train. As he left the car he had been riding in, one of his shoes fell to a place on the tracks well beyond his reach. Rather than worrying about getting it back, he did something that startled his traveling companions: he removed his other shoe and threw it to where the first one rested. When asked why he did this, Gandhi smiled and replied: “Now the poor soul who finds the first one will have a pair that he can wear.”

**Live Fully so
You Can Die Happy**



Most people don't discover what life is all about until just before they die. While we are young, we spend our days striving and keeping up with social expectations. We are so busy chasing life's big pleasures that we miss out on the little ones, like dancing barefoot in a park on a rainy day with our kids or planting a rose garden or watching the sun come up. We live in an age where we have conquered the highest of mountains but have yet to master our selves. We have taller buildings but shorter tempers, more possessions but less happiness, fuller minds but emptier lives.

Do not wait until you are on your deathbed to realize the meaning of life and the precious role you have to play within it. All too often, people attempt to live their lives backwards: they spend their days striving to get the things that will make them happy rather than having the wisdom to realize that happiness is not a place you reach but a state you create. Happiness and a life of deep fulfillment come when you commit yourself, from the very core of your soul, to spending your highest human talents on a purpose that makes a difference in others' lives. When all the clutter is stripped away from your life, its true meaning will become clear: to live for something more than yourself. Stated simply, the purpose of life is a life of purpose.

As this is the last of the life lessons it is my privilege to share with you in this book, I wish you a great life filled with wisdom, happiness and fulfillment. May your days be spent in work that is engaging, on pursuits that are inspiring and with people who are loving. I'd like to leave you with the following words of George Bernard Shaw, which capture the essence of this final lesson far better than I ever could:

This is the true joy in life, being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one, being a true force of Nature instead of a feverish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and, as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.

I want to be thoroughly used up when I die. For the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me. It's a sort of splendid torch which I've got to hold up for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

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Robin S. Sharma LL.B., LL.M., is an internationally respected authority on leadership, peak performance and life management. The author of five widely acclaimed books including the national bestseller *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, the sequel *Leadership Wisdom from The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* and the motivational classic *MegaLiving*, Robin. S. Sharma holds two law degrees including a master's of law and has enjoyed a distinguished career as a litigation lawyer. He is a recognized media personality having been featured in hundreds of leading publications ranging from *USA Today* and *SUCCESS Magazine* to *The National Post* and *The Globe and Mail*, and on NBC, CBC and CTV.

He is the founder of Sharma Leadership International, a respected training firm that specializes in developing the leadership and performance potential of individuals and organizations amidst rapid change. Clients include FORTUNE 500 corporations, major associations and large health-care institutions. To learn more about Robin S. Sharma's keynotes and seminars or to explore more of his thinking on personal and organizational effectiveness, visit www.robinsharma.com or call 1-888-RSHARMA.



When you were born, you cried while the world rejoiced.
Live your life in such a way that when you die,
the world cries while you rejoice.

ANCIENT SANSKRIT SAYING

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MEGALIVING

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SOLD HIS FERRARI

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VOLUME - 5

ROBIN SHARMA



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Dedicated to my wonderful wife Alka for her affection, to my brother Sanjay and his wife Susan for their inspiration and to my parents, Shiv and Shashi Sharma for showing me the way to MegaLiving!

For my son Colby.

Someone has well said, "Success is a journey, not a destination." Happiness is to be found along the way, not at the end of the road, for then the journey is over and it is too late. Today, this hour, this minute is the day, the hour, the minute for each of us to sense the fact that life is good, with all its trials and troubles and perhaps more interesting because of them.

Robert R. Updegraff

MegaLiving! 30 Days to a Perfect Life

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Preface

This Revolutionary Book Will Change Your Life!

WE ALL have the potential for a Perfect Life. We all have the potential to achieve great things and live a life filled with joy, accomplishment and pure bliss. In some of us, this potential is slumbering deep inside, waiting only to be tapped and tested. The most noble of pursuits is to ignite this fire for personal mastery and life excellence. This book is the only tool you will ever need to do this.

There is a story of a weary traveller who met a wise sage on a mountain path high in the Himalayas. The traveller asked the old man where he could find the path which would lead him to the top of the mountain, his ultimate destination. The sage thought for a moment and then replied: “simply make certain that every single step is in the direction of the mountain top and you will get there.”

When your every thought and your every action is directed to your ultimate life goals, you become unstoppable and assured of great success and happiness. When you cultivate your mind, body and character, your life takes on powerful dimensions that you never thought possible. This book will provide you with all that you need to put far more living into your life.

Part I of MegaLiving! contains the leading principles of personal mastery and successful living. Part II will reveal to you the 200 Master Secrets for making your life a magical dream while Part III contains the revolutionary 30 Day Program to a Perfect Life. This book will do wonders for you. Read it, apply it and share it. A Perfect Life is yours for the taking.

Robin S. Sharma, LL.B., LL.M.

CHAPTER ONE

MegaLiving! Achieving Mastery of the Mind, Body & Character

Some men see things as they are and say “why”;

I dream of things that never were and say “why not.”

George Bernard Shaw

THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE

There are people who make things happen. There are people who watch things happen. And there are people who say, “what happened?” The ***MegaLiving!*** program will quickly make things happen in every aspect of your life. You will learn the finest strategies and techniques available to profoundly improve your mind, body and character. This book will show you, in a very exciting and practical way, how to put far more living into your life. There is no doubt that you have within you incredible powers to achieve anything you have ever dreamed about. Whether it is mental, physical, emotional or financial mastery that you are seeking, this book will show you precisely how to get there. MegaLiving!, which contains the revolutionary results of over ten years of research into the secrets of successful living offers you a highly effective collection of powerful, yet easy to use tools that you can use today to live with greater satisfaction, peace of mind and vitality.

This book contains the master keys to dynamic living. You have the potential for a perfect life, this is certain. And if you commit yourself totally to this program for 30 days, you will receive the following benefits:

- i) a deep sense of well-being and happiness

- ii) strategies to erase the worry habit and have far more confidence
- iii) richer relationships that really last
- iv) little-known skills for self-mastery and peak performance
- v) an understanding of the powerful Eastern secrets of longevity
- vi) boundless energy, enthusiasm and glowing health
- vii) greater serenity, tranquility and a radiant personality
- viii) tools to achieve lasting prosperity and financial independence
- ix) proven techniques to take control of your destiny.

Today is the first day of your perfect life, a life that is yours to shape into something truly wonderful and lasting. The past does not determine your future and a change towards personal excellence can happen in the blink of an eye if you will make a firm commitment to raising your life to its highest level. This program is for winners people who know that their lives are more than their current circumstances, no matter how successful they might be at this moment. The fact that you have invested in this program sets you apart from the vast majority of people and demonstrates that you are determined to be a peak performer and condition your mind, body and character for lifelong excellence. Accept the challenge to tap into the richness of your personal potential and dare to be great!

The First Step

Now shut your eyes, take five deep breaths and picture this scene taking place many years into the future: you are in an elegant dining hall, surrounded by those closest to you (who are dressed formally and beautifully). The candles shimmer on every table and the importance of the evening wafts through the air like the aromas from the kitchen. This is your testimonial dinner, an opportunity for the people who know you best to speak about you as a person, your achievements and your contributions to those you love and to society in general. Reflect on what you would like them to say. At this dinner, in the twilight of your life, do you really want to hear that you have lived in an uninspired fashion, without passion and without concrete accomplishment? How would you feel on hearing that you did not even come close to meeting your mental, physical, financial and spiritual potential? How would you feel on hearing that your dreams, however lofty, went unfulfilled and that you never did supercharge your life because you were always too busy trying to pay the bills and so very tired at the end of your day?

With MegaLiving! you are getting a second chance to powerfully change what you will hear at your testimonial dinner. This book is your most

important wake-up call! If you follow the program daily, think about it seriously and apply the concepts regularly, making a decision from the core of your heart to live your life in a magical and special way, you will hear very sweet sounds at your testimonial dinner. The guests will happily testify to your exceptional personal effectiveness, your dynamic personality and compassion for others, your unique zest for life and your outstanding accomplishments. Becoming the very best you can be is life's most noble pursuit. Self-mastery is the DNA of life mastery. If you want to lead a corporation, learn to lead yourself first. If you want to manage a team or a family, learn to manage yourself first. Success on the outside begins with success on the inside and if you truly want to profoundly improve the quality of your outer world, you must first improve your inner world. There is nothing more noble than learning to explore the unlimited potential of your mind and becoming the very best that you can be. This is the ultimate challenge of the MegaLiving! mastery program. Accept it with great energy and welcome yourself to the new reality of a Perfect Life.

THE POWER OF LIMITLESS LIVING

Deep within man dwell those slumbering powers; powers that would astonish him, that he never dreamed of possessing; forces that would revolutionize his life if aroused and put into action.

Orison Sweet Marden

One of the most essential truths to recognize is the fact that the only limits on what we can achieve in life are those we create and place on ourselves. Circumstances are the creation of people and not the other way around. Peak performers, as opposed to the weak performers, have trained themselves to shape the events of their lives rather than being shaped by them. Think of the current limitations in your life, the obstacles preventing you from attaining your dreams and that state of bliss you so much desire. You have interpreted each one of these circumstances to be a roadblock or negative element in your life when this is not the case.

One of the most fundamental of all strategies for success is also one of the most simple: there is no such thing as a negative circumstance, only a circumstance that you may learn from. There are no mistakes in life, only lessons which will allow you to grow and advance higher on the path of self-mastery. If you set limits on yourself such as "I am too young to be a multi-millionaire," "I am not smart enough to be a world leader," "I am too lazy to start my own business" or, "I don't have enough money to do this," your spirit will slowly die and you will fulfill your negative prophecy. Stop being a

prisoner of your past - become the architect of your future. Every event happens for a special purpose. Every problem is a special challenge from which we can learn and prosper to new heights of achievement. Every moment is perfect in nature, whether you realize it or not. If you recognize this age-old truth, you will accept every experience with gratitude and you will see the opportunity in every event, no matter how challenging it might appear initially. If you don't understand this principle, you will never realize the wonderful destiny that is yours for the taking.

The mind has immeasurable and vast potential that remains untapped in most people. It has been said that even the best conditioned thinkers use only about 25% of their minds. What happened to the remaining 75%? Indian yogis living high up in the Himalayan mountains have disciplined their minds to the point where they can control their so-called involuntary processes such as their heartbeat, digestion and nervous functioning. These wise sages of the East have been dipping their fingers into the vast pool of mental potential for over 5000 years and have refined mastery of the mind into a science. Through a combination of meditative techniques and breath control these yogis are able to withstand enormous amounts of physical pain and go for extended periods without food or sleep. Such is the power within every one of us. Mothers whose children have fallen under cars have, in the heat of the moment, lifted the vehicle to save their little ones. Seventy-year-old men have run marathons and climbed mountains. There are simply no limits for a person who accepts no limits.

The human mind and spirit can perform miracles if properly used and conditioned for excellence. And yet most human minds remain uncultivated, unexplored and unchallenged. On an average day, the average person thinks about 60,000 thoughts. Even more startling is the fact that 95% of those thoughts are the same as the ones you thought the day before. Limited thinking patterns must be exploded and you must exert your tremendous mind strength to develop the habit of Limitless Thinking. Throw off the shackles of your old thinking patterns. All successful people have come to realize that your thoughts form your world and you truly cannot afford the luxury of even one negative thought. The first step to a life full of wonders is to see that your outside world begins with your inside world and every single thought must be one that will take you farther along the path of a perfect life. Your thoughts can create magic and every thing you have ever wanted. Today's thoughts build tomorrow's dreams.

Mahatma Gandhi, a frail, weak man roused hundreds of millions of his countrymen and brought down an empire with passive resistance. And yet he started out as a very average lawyer with a small law practice in South Africa.

It was the pain of injustice which sparked his determination to improve his world and like all high achievers, Ghandi started to work on himself first. He started building his mental toughness and creating enormous discipline in his life. At an early stage, he realized a cardinal rule for life mastery: success on the outside begins within. Armed with the self-knowledge that his cause was just, this little man in the white loincloth led his country to independence.

Arnold Schwarzenegger was a young man when he entered the gym for the first time. He had skinny legs, a shrunken chest and small shoulders and came from a background where financial resources were always slim. But Schwarzenegger's inner resources were always abundant. Shortly after his first bodybuilding session he turned to another bodybuilder and promised he would be Mr. Universe in five years. The bodybuilder laughed, but look at Schwarzenegger now. Here is a man who refuses to accept limitations on what he can do and the success that he will meet as he bounds through the rose garden of life. As Napoleon Hill wrote in his wonderful book, *Think and Grow Rich*: "whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe he can achieve."

So an immediate challenge for you is to weave your new habit of Limitless Thinking today. The mind is like a muscle, if it is weak it can be conditioned for strength. If you currently worry too much or live in the past, this negative habit can be erased through the exercises you will learn in the 30 day program at the end of this book. At this point, simply remember that you alone are responsible for every thought you think every second of every minute of every day and if you do not like it, you have the power to change it. MegaThinking!, the powerful habit of thinking without limitations as to what you can do, have, feel and enjoy, arrives through gradual and steady conditioning of the mind. Positive thinking is pure habit and is not easy at first if you have allowed weeds to take over the garden of your mind. But the prosperity mindset can be developed as any other habit. Habit is like building a cable: each day the action is taken, the cable becomes stronger until the point is reached where it is unbreakable. This is the point that you must and will reach with this program. As Emerson wrote: "what lies behind us and what lies in front of us pales in comparison to what lies within us."

Now sit down and identify on a piece of paper those thoughts and thinking patterns that have held you back and limited your life in the past. Awareness of your limitations is the first stage in banishing them from your mind. Effective people are precisely aware of their weaknesses as these are the weakest links in the chain and must be eliminated. What beliefs have kept you from success, happiness, love and self-mastery? What habitual thoughts are keeping you from the peace of mind, rich relationships and ideal health that

you deserve? Note them and make a decision to eradicate them from your mind. It will be hard at first and you will wish to give up but with a little persistence they will be erased.

Once you note the limiting thoughts and consciously remove them from your consciousness, it is key that you replace them with an alternative that energizes you, motivates you and fills your dreams with hope and passion. This age-old principle of the East operates from the fact that at any one instant, your mind can only hold one thought. If the thought on the picture screen of your mind is a disempowering one, quickly replace it with a positive one. With time, the negative thoughts will be few and far between since a great law of nature is that *positive always dominates the negative*.

Picture yourself in your mind's eye as you hope to be, having all you ever dreamed of having. Make a "Dream List" of everything you desire in your lifetime. It might seem silly and wasteful to think such positive and powerful thoughts in your current circumstances but there is phenomenal power in believing in positive mental pictures.

THE PROMISE OF MegaLiving!

Infinite riches are all around you if you will open your mental eyes and behold the treasure house of infinity within you. There is a gold mine within you from which you can extract everything you need to live life gloriously, joyously and abundantly.

Joseph Murphy, Ph.D.,
The Power of Your Subconscious Mind

The MegaLiving! 30 Day Program for Life Mastery is not a fad or quick-fix course that will sustain your interest for a couple of weeks and then take its place in the closet with all the other personal development manuals you have bought in the past. It is a detailed piece of research containing secret gems for life mastery prepared by studying the success strategies of both the East and the West for over a ten year period. You have dynamite in your hands whether you realize it or not.

MegaLiving! is a complete program for the transformation of your mind, body and character starting today. You have a golden opportunity to be a true master of yourself and your existence. You can make your world the bed of roses that you have always dreamed of, the decision is yours alone. If you want this kind of a magical existence, the golden key is to remember that your mind is the sole author of your success. If you master your thoughts, you master your mind. Once you master your mind, you master your life and when you master your life you master your destiny.

Past experiences, failures or trouble spots have nothing to do with the potential that exists within you. If anything, past failure has made you far wiser and stronger than you would have been without the benefit of the experience. Pain is a teacher. Today, and every day, take complete charge and responsibility for your life and all that is in it. If you don't have enough money and want more, decide to make changes and take determined action to realize your dreams. If you want better health and more energy, make a decision from your very core to achieve greater vitality. If you want ideal relationships, dedicate yourself to becoming the kind of person that sustains such bonds. But it will not just come to you by chance. *If you keep doing the same things every day, you are certain to get the same results every day.* Winners are no different from less successful people, they have just learned to do different things that give them their fabulous results. In the chapters which follow and in the 30 Day Program for Life Mastery at the end of this book, you will learn precisely the things that the peak performers do to create rich, fulfilling lives.

Let me ask you a few questions and please take the time to answer them (doers are achievers):

Question

Answer

- Do you want to be a champion in life?
- Do you want more mental power?
- Do you want perfect health?
- Do you want more energy and vitality?
- Do you want to add fun to your life?
- Do you want to fulfill your dreams?
- Do you want more serenity in life?
- Do you want more adventure in life?
- Do you want a powerful character?
- Do you want to live longer?
- Do you seek self-mastery?

If you answered "YES!" to any one of these questions, this program will be invaluable to you and your quest for a perfect life. MegaLiving! blends the latest physical mastery and healthy lifestyle techniques with ancient strategies of the East for mental conditioning and character-building to offer a fully balanced owner's manual for your mind, body and spirit. It is a holistic approach to personal growth that, if applied daily and with sincere conviction, will ensure that you will soar to heights higher than you ever dreamed possible. Thousands of people have already used this program to profoundly

(and quickly) improve the quality of their lives and so can you. Ignite your desire and stoke the fire in your belly for you will soon be MegaLiving!

Once you truly commit yourself to self-mastery and lifelong success, you will appreciate how easy and fun it is. Small victories lead to large victories. Once you start feeling more vital and energetic, you will start achieving even more because you cannot do good unless you feel good. This leads to another primary principle of successful living: *we are happiest when we are growing and feeling that we are contributing in some way*. The purpose of life is a life of purpose and we all, deep down, want to leave a legacy of some form or another. When you dedicate yourself to tapping into the extraordinary potential of your mind, body and spirit, you set powerful forces into play and things start to happen in every aspect of your life. And when you know that you are improving, your confidence and enthusiasm starts to blossom. And when your enthusiasm starts to blossom, your passion and energy blooms. And when your energy starts to explode you start to create opportunity after opportunity for success in your life. Perhaps the great philosopher of India, Patanjali said it best: “When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all of your thoughts break their bonds, your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction and you find yourself in a new great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be.”

The chapters which follow and the MegaLiving! 30 Day Program for Life Mastery will bring very dramatic results in each of the areas that matter most in your life. You will view the world differently. No longer will you feel that you never have enough time to do the things you love to do. By applying the skills you will learn, you will shape your circumstances and achieve the things that are important to you. No longer will you feel like a leaf floating in the Fall wind, with no control of your time and your life. By using the straightforward techniques offered, you will attain a level of personal effectiveness that might startle you. The essential point to understand as you continue to read is that you are no different from any of the peak performers before you. You have the “right stuff.” If others have achieved results which you want, they are simply doing things a little differently. Perhaps they are running their minds a little more effectively or managing their time more meticulously. Perhaps they are using the power of the knowledge around us more diligently or living a more disciplined, principled life. Once you start to apply the tools for lifelong success which follow, you will also see the results you have hoped for. You will understand the importance of self-mastery and the tremendous opportunities that live in every moment. You will appreciate that every day is a miracle and life is a special path that we walk on. It can be

a nirvana or a nightmare - the choice is yours and yours alone. As British poet, William Wordsworth wrote: “All which we behold is full of blessings.”

EXCELLING WITH THE PROGRAM AND IGNITING YOUR LIFE

*For the purposes of action nothing is more useful than narrowness
of thought combined with energy of will.*

Henri Frederic Amiel

There are no shortcuts to the success and pleasure you will receive when MegaLiving! becomes your habit. “Patience, the essential quality of a man,” wrote Kwai-Koo-Tsu. To get the exceptional results this program will deliver, the following points are important:

Follow the program daily: Reserve judgment on the success of the techniques mentioned for 30 days. MegaLiving! blends the most effective ideas for self-improvement from the West with little-known philosophies of the East. Many of the mental and physical mastery tools you will learn have been used by the sages of the Orient for over 5000 years. Some exercises designed to slow aging, tap your energy reserves and build mental clarity come from an intense study of the habits of the yogis living high in the Himalayan mountains of India. These methods might seem novel at first until you experience their remarkable benefits personally. Other techniques for personal effectiveness on issues such as time management and relationship-building will seem more familiar to Western readers. Do not become discouraged if you do not see results on the first day. Studies have shown that it takes at least 21 days for perceptible changes to appear in your life when you are trying to make improvements. Each day you follow the program, you will feel better, perform better and achieve more. By making small, daily changes on a gradual and consistent basis, your enthusiasm will increase as will the visible results. Small victories always lead to large victories.

A missed day following the principles which immediately follow and the techniques in the 30 day program at the end of this book does not mean you will remain where you are. Letting a day slip by without doing something, no matter how small, to improve the quality of your life will mean that you are falling backwards. Again, do not miss even one day of this revolutionary program - daily study and application of its principles is key to dramatic success and the conditioning of your mind, body and character. Some days will be harder than others. Discipline is built by following through on these

“low energy” days. Soon they will be few and far between. This is the nature of will.

Work hard on this life mastery program: This is your best chance to reshape your world and become an elite performer on the playing field of life. Use the SuccessLog provided at the end to chart your daily progress, your thoughts, your aspirations and successes. Throughout the day, review the principles and use the strategies provided. On the subway, in the car and in the shower, mentally repeat your commitment to enhancement of all areas of your life.

Publicize your commitment to MegaLiving!: Tell your family and friends that you will follow through with the program and that they will notice dramatic changes in you in the future. Inform them of your goals. Make a public declaration of your commitment to being the very best you can be. This is an excellent way to get leverage and motivation on the dreams and desires you hold. No one wants to look like a failure or like a person with no willpower and persistence. A little pressure will stimulate you to positive action.

The key to success with the principles of MegaLiving! is to run your own race. Do not compare yourself and your progress to others. You are special and have your own gifts and virtues. As the ancient Eastern proverb says: “There is nothing noble about being superior to some other person. The true nobility lies in being superior to your previous self.”

By implementing the ideas you will learn daily and making small, consistent changes, your personal energy and desire will snowball and soon take on enormous dimensions. By charting the progress in the SuccessLog at the very end of this book, your interest and enthusiasm will increase. And by publicizing your commitment to the course, you will get tremendous leverage for your ultimate aspiration: a perfect life and total self-mastery.

CHAPTER TWO

Your Mind & its Unlimited Potential

Man is made or unmade by himself. In the armoury of thought he forges the weapons by which he destroys himself. He also fashions the tools with which he builds for himself heavenly mansions of joy, strength and peace. By the right choice, and true application of thought, man ascends to divine perfection. By the abuse and wrong application of thought, he descends below the level of the beast.

James Allen, *As a Man Thinketh*

YOUR COMMITMENT TO SELF- MASTERY : KAIZEN

Kaizen means constant and never ending improvement in Japanese. There is no pursuit more noble nor important than the pursuit of self-improvement. As Confucius said many years ago: “good people strengthen themselves ceaselessly.” Consistent and constant improvement in all areas is essential to reaching your true potential. The personal trademark of almost every high achiever and successful person is a dedication to daily improvement in both their personal and professional lives. From Ben Franklin to Mahatma Gandhi, from Martin Luther King Jr. to Ivan Lendl and from Nelson Mandela to Mother Teresa, effective people do things daily to advance confidently in the direction of their goals and dreams.

You must also apply the Kaizen principle on a daily basis to condition your mind to peak performance. It has been said that the mind is a terrible master but a wonderful servant. By seeking to improve your mind and condition it to excellence of thought, this wonderful servant will most certainly bring you all the peace, prosperity and joy you now search for.

Study any great success story and you will undoubtedly learn of their commitment to Kaizen. They will be dedicated to small, daily improvements

in the key areas of their lives and becoming the very best that they could be. Personal mastery is like a bank account, call it the Personal Excellence Account. By improving daily, whether it is by spending some time exercising, reading, visualizing or forging better relationships, you are making regular deposits into your account. After only one month, for example, you will have improved the richness and quality of your world by at least 30%. And after a single year, your life will have improved by more than 365% (factoring in the power of compound interest). But when you sleep too much, worry too much, watch television too much or eat too much, you make withdrawals in your Personal Excellence Account.

Walt Stack, an 80 year-old man who runs the entire length of the Golden Gate Bridge in California every day, come rain or shine, was asked how he kept his teeth from chattering on those cold mornings. "I leave them in my locker," he replied wryly. To be great you must act great. Nothing can stop a person who refuses to be stopped. Yet most people spend their entire lives struggling for a little happiness against a current of problems or difficulties, hoping to see a small glimpse of blue sky against the mass of dark clouds which seem to blanket their lives. These people never realize the magic secret of true happiness: one must rise above the clouds to see the blue sky rather than constantly trying to push them aside.

Clouds will always be there but anyone who conditions their mind and body to the correct degree will rise above any cloud to live with lasting bliss in the blue sky of life. Dedicate yourself to such self-enhancement each and every day of your life. Become a champion. Remember, happiness is a method of travelling through this wonderful world and not a destination, a place you arrive at in the future. A time will definitely come when your personal power takes you to a place where you have real freedom and joy. This is a place where all dreams come true. This is the place of self-mastery. This is a place called MegaLiving!

Excellence in Personal Mastery

Does your mind sometimes feel like a bowl of pudding? Are you easily distracted or pulled away from important tasks that require powerful thought and concentration? Do you lack will-power and discipline and get into the same limiting, destructive thought patterns over and over? If so, you must exert your personal influence (which may currently be dormant inside of you) to exercise and condition your mind. As you learned earlier, the mind is similar to the muscles of the body: if you do not use it and give it a good workout every day, it will become flabby. A flabby mind allows weak thoughts to enter. Weak thoughts drain your energy and limit your actions.

Limited, unproductive actions prevent you from being the best and attaining all of your desires.

Sir Issac Newton, the father of classical physics had an exceptional ability to concentrate on a particular problem from morning until it was solved late in the evening. This mental giant said that “if I have done the public any service, it is due to patient thought.” What most people do not realize is that anyone can enhance the level of their mental functioning. You can become more mentally agile, improve your memory well beyond its current level and become a smarter mental athlete. You can train yourself to go weeks without even one negative thought (William James said: “the essence of genius is knowing what to overlook.”). But you must go into training like any serious athlete. You must place your mind on a regime designed to fire up the brain and dramatically reshape it. The MegaLiving! program will do this for you if you follow it strictly and passionately. While the mental aerobics listed in the 30 day MegaLiving! program and the brain-building exercises appearing in the course take you to new intellectual heights, the important idea to hammer home at this point is that you must set aside one hour each day, at the very least, to renew and revitalize your mind, body and spirit. There are 168 hours in a week, can you not find an hour a day to take care of the very tools that will bring you the success that you desire so much? You may say that you are very busy and cannot afford to take this time off. In reality, you cannot afford to miss this essential period to sharpen your mind, condition your body and feed your spirit. As the German poet Johann von Goethe said: “Things which matter most should never be at the mercy of things which matter least.”

What should you do in this one hour “rekindling” session that is so very important? The answer is clear: practice self-mastery, Kaizen. Although the program lists particulars, what is key is that you spend some time on each of the following, each day (rise an hour earlier or do it in the evening, it will be one of the most magical decisions you make):

1. Personal Development

Personal development is really any activity that gives you knowledge on improving your life and all its elements. Personal development includes self-renewal and stress reduction. Your daily time for personal development could involve reading an inspirational book like *The Power of Positive Thinking* or *Think and Grow Rich*. It may involve the exceptionally valuable habit of listening to motivational tapes while you drive to work or sit on the bus. Or it could be digesting a hot book on diet and health or simply watching the sun rise. The key is that you start to tap the incredible amount of information that is out there on improving your life.

It is amazing to learn of the strategies and techniques available which would do wonders for most peoples' lives if they only knew about them. All we need is a single powerful idea to change our lives for the better. What distinguishes successes from failures is that the successes constantly thirst for new ideas and knowledge. Successful people are hungry for anything that will give them an edge in life's wonderful game. The answers to a life of perfection and bliss are out there and as abundant as the air we breathe. Be open to them and be on the lookout for them at all times.

Readers are leaders and you will be a true leader once you get into the habit being devoted to personal development on a daily basis. Miss a meal but don't miss your daily personal improvement time.

2. Physical Fitness

You should spend at least 30 minutes daily cultivating the perfect health which lies deep inside the temple of your body. Daily exercise, as you have heard so many times, is one of the most effective ways to arrive at the state of personal excellence. If someone said he would give you the secret of longevity, super energy and serenity, you would do almost anything to get it. Well the secret is yours now: exercise every day and you will see a vitality enter your life that will surely change it very dramatically.

A little exercise every day will keep you more relaxed, improve your concentration, your productivity, your creativity and dramatically improve your inner world. With the abundance of energy a fitness program surely provides, you will be able to take those positive steps in the direction of your dreams. Swim, run, walk, take up karate, learn how to water ski, play squash, bicycle, garden, get some fresh air, rollerblade, have fun at aerobics but get out of that life-sapping habit of sitting on a couch and watching TV all night!

How will you feel when your friends say you look marvelous and years younger? How will you feel when you have the stamina to work all day, come home to laugh and play with your family and later, after a brisk walk around your neighborhood, slip off to your den to spend a couple of hours on an activity that will really make your life great. Trust me, physical excellence precedes mental excellence.

3. Relaxation and Personal Renewal Time

The body and mind are like a high performance racing car. It will perform at its peak if it remains cool and well-oiled. Relaxation is essential for the body and without it, the body slowly deteriorates and loses its vitality. "The soul that moves in the world of the senses and yet keeps the senses in harmony... finds rest in quietness," notes the ancient Indian text *The*

Bhagavad Gita. The body and mind are intimately linked and if your body is tense, your mind will be tense, unfocused and agitated. Stress hampers your creativity and intellect in very serious ways. When you are under stress, you are prevented from being your best and tapping your real potential.

A while back I was in a grocery store and saw a mother pushing a screaming baby. I overheard the mother saying “Don’t yell Jennifer, don’t scream Jennifer, be calm Jennifer.” As I passed by the mother I said, “excuse me Madam, I can’t tell you how impressed I am with the way you spoke to your baby.” She looked at me and then smiled, “I am Jennifer.”

We all have our own strategies for stress control. The key is that you have one that works well and use it on a daily basis - even if only for ten minutes. It is essential to spend time every single day on relaxation and quieting your mind. It will be the best decision you ever made and will lead to more effectiveness in all the important areas of your life. Saying you don’t have time for a daily period to relax, meditate and unwind is like saying you do not have time to stop for gas because you are too busy driving - eventually it will catch up with you.

Every peak performer, from Michael Jordan and Wayne Gretzky to the President of the United States recognizes the value of a calm, disciplined and relaxed mind. In the East, a daily period of silence is as common as eating - everyone does it from a very young age. So should you. Exceptional serenity, mental clarity and will-power can be achieved through a daily period of relaxation and renewal. Ancient deep breathing techniques from India and China, the disciplines of stretching and yoga, meditation, contact with nature, self-massage and mental tranquility exercises are all part of the MegaLiving! 30 day program which you will explore later. For now, appreciate the 17th century philosopher Robert Burton’s sage advice: “a quiet mind cureth all.” Relax your mind and body daily, jump start your life and soar to your highest potential.

THE NATURE OF THE MIND : THE ULTIMATE SUPERPOWER

Thought is a vital, living force, the most vital, subtle and irresistible force that exists in the universe. ... Thoughts are living things.

Swami Sivananda

To unleash the tremendous power reserves which currently sleep within you, it is critical that you first become aware of the nature of the mind. In life, you are given an owner’s manual for everything but that which is most important

to you - the ten pound mass which rests between your shoulders. In school, we are taught how to do complex Algebra and the capitals of far away lands that we may never visit. What about the nature of our greatest gift, our mind? The first step to personal mastery and successful living is to learn how to run your mind like a winner. The second step is to understand once and for all that your mind-can create magic in your life if you only let it. The only limitations in your life are those that you consciously set. When you think without limits and dream great dreams, wonderful things happen and powerful forces are set into play.

To run your mind like a peak performer, study the following 10 Golden Rules for Mental Mastery:

1. The level of your success is determined by what you think every second of every minute of every day. Your thoughts shape your world mental mastery is the DNA of life mastery. Today's thoughts will serve to build your dreams of tomorrow.
2. Your outer world reflects your inner world. If you want to change your life, you must start by changing the thoughts you put into your mind. Success on the outside begins with success on the inside.
3. You alone are responsible for what you think. Most importantly, you can change the way you think and remove any negative thinking habits by the daily practice of mental discipline and conditioning. Thinking patterns are habits and, like all habits, they can be changed when you strongly desire to change them and take concrete action towards your goal.
4. A supersuccessful mindset does not happen in a day. You have to work hard on it just like any other worthy pursuit in life. But with 30 days of daily, concentrated practice, you will note astonishing changes in the way you think, feel and act.
5. One of the great keys to a better life is to change your self-image. Our self-image is determined by the mental pictures we constantly run through our minds. Our minds work through pictures and when we change the pictures to show what we really want in our lives and what we really can achieve, our self-image will also improve dramatically. This leads to greater confidence and belief in our personal abilities and power. Goals are then easily achieved and the ordinary becomes the extraordinary.
6. Anything you faithfully and honestly believe you can achieve, you will achieve if you take persistent action in that direction. Constantly keep your dreams at the front of your mind. Repeat them all day, every day. Never,

let go of them. When you concentrate all your mental and physical energy on a single purpose, dormant forces that you never knew you had are sparked into action. This is the secret of genius: finding what you love to do and then spending all your time doing it. As one wise person has said: “once you find what you truly love doing, you will never have to work another day in your life.” People with far less than you have achieved great feats.

7. The Law of Attraction is the dominant law of the mind. What you think about and believe is what you attract into your life. People who are happy and motivated attract such people into their world. People with a positive expectation of super success will attract opportunities to allow them to arrive at this destination.
8. Your subconscious mind plays a particularly great role in the outcome of your life. You must learn how to use it for maximum achievement. Again, mental pictures and verbalization play a big role in stimulating your subconscious mind.
9. Your mind has the capacity to hold only one thought in its focus at any one time. Using this knowledge, you must ensure that each thought is a valuable and positive one. If a negative, disempowering thought does enter, quickly replace it with a good one. As you develop the habit of thinking useful, energizing thoughts, weak ones will no longer hold any power.
10. There is a Success Mechanism inside your mind which craves positive stimulation. It awaits your instructions. When you realize this and start setting great goals for yourself it will spring to life and seize all opportunities get you to where you want to go.

Scientific researchers are discovering the virtually limitless capacity of the brain and that we generally use only about 25% of its potential on any given day at best. Human beings are designed to have perfect health and perfect minds but, during the course of our lives, we learn to sabotage ourselves and exclude perfection.

As a baby, you were in the ideal performance state to achieve excellence. Did you fear public speaking, starting a successful business or skydiving? Of course not. As a child, you dreamed of becoming a movie star, an astronaut or a president. We all had such great dreams. Some of us wanted to be business tycoons or to lead countries. Others wanted to be sports heroes or have ideal family lives with supportive, loving relationships. What happened? What happened to your aspirations and deep hopes?

You were exposed to people and beliefs that taught you that some things

were beyond your ability. You were told that regular people did not move into the White House and you best focus on making a living and paying the bills because that was what life was really about. So gradually, the spark of a limitless reality died. Gradually, your world view shrunk from imagining the thrills of greatness to paying the bills and cutting the grass. But you can return to the winning mindset and rekindle the fire that lies deep inside of you. To do this, it is essential to dedicate yourself and your energies to lifelong success. Forget about past failures or problems. True changes in the quality of your life do not take a year to appear. Profound improvements in the way you feel, in your energy levels, in your financial resources and in the richness of your relationships do not take six months, nor six weeks nor six days to happen. Real change takes only one second - the time it takes for you to make a concrete decision from the very core of your heart that your life is more than the sum of your present circumstances.

It has also been said that you can change your life with a single idea - if it is the right one. Lasting success in life surely requires desire, persistence and practice as visible changes will not come in a week or ten days. But they certainly will come as long as you take action now! You can transform your life and have everything you ever wanted when it happens. As the age-old expression says, “sow a thought, reap an action, sow an action, reap a habit, sow a habit, reap a character, sow a character, reap a destiny!”

Also appreciate the exceptional power of focus. Have you ever noticed that when you buy a new car it suddenly seems that everyone in the world has the same one? Whenever you hear a new name, it is suddenly everywhere. This is the tremendous power of focus. The first step to excellence is awareness and your focus is the laser beam of awareness. What you focus on shapes your life. Your thoughts form your world. Once you make a clear decision to focus on something, opportunities seem to appear from out of the blue. For example, if you focus carefully on seeking knowledge for personal development, you will start to see that information on this subject is everywhere; you simply did not notice it because you were focused on other things. Another example is in your own home. Walk into your favorite room and look at every object in the room. You will notice things that you may not have noticed in the past because you never really took the time to concentrate on them.

Many people dislike their jobs or their relationships simply because they focus on the negative aspects of each. They don't like their boss and are not thrilled by the work and continually focus on these points until a negative association is formed. But things change when you simply ask them if their offices are comfortable, if they have a good pension plan, whether they enjoy

the good friends they have made through work or whether the money is pretty good. Every experience has many positive elements. Every moment is a celebration the winners on the playing field of life know this. If you focus on the good, you will excel and reach higher planes. This is one of the most important success secrets. If you dwell on the negative aspects of life, you will get nowhere fast. Get into the habit of positive focusing today. You will reap huge rewards. And remember the words of H.G. Wells: “Man must not allow the clock and the calendar to blind him to the fact that each moment of his life is a miracle and a mystery.”

Once you make the decision to focus on a perfect life and master all of its components, you will find signs of excellence and positivity everywhere. This is where knowledge comes in. Once you are on the road to self-mastery and are focusing on all that is good in your world and that which is required to make it even better, knowledge will catapult you to the highest level. When an unquenchable thirst for knowledge is cultivated, you start to see the abundant strategies, techniques and ideas that will get you to where you want to go.

Remember this ancient truth: you can accomplish *anything* in your life with the right knowledge. Knowledge provides the means for achieving all objectives and the training to meet all goals. Knowledge provides answers which if focused on consistently and applied correctly lead to mastery in every life facet. If you want to become a multi-millionaire in three years, no matter how much you pray and think positively, it will not happen if you do not take action. But if you set a goal (i.e., \$3 million in 3 years), develop a plan (create a hot product) and then seek out all available knowledge on the product itself, the market, others who have succeeded in business, the mindset of winners and other such topics, you will quickly realize the strategies that others have followed to make millions. This will give you thoughts and beliefs on which you must focus to meet with success.

If you want to achieve any goal, the path is simple: seek out all available knowledge and then apply it thoroughly. Find someone who has achieved that goal, ask her how she did it, what books she read, what thoughts did she think, which people did she talk to and what did she do when she woke up in the morning and throughout the day. Accept a fundamental success principle: you have all the “right stuff” and anything anyone else has done you can also do. You simply need to learn the things they did to get their results. This technique is known as Success Imaging. You must become a mirror image of the person who has succeeded in the activity you desire excellence in - be it running a country or a local bakery. You must emulate their physiology (walk like them, talk like them, eat like them) and their psychology (think like them

and react like them). You must learn their habits, read the books they read, study their diets and learn their philosophies and strategies.

By taking these steps, you are bound to get the same results that they have achieved. Become an explorer in the galaxy of knowledge that is available to anyone with a library card. You can learn any language, skill or concept with the right knowledge and proper coaching. Get into the daily habit of talking to new people and tapping their minds. Ask question after question. Read new books and listen to tapes on the subjects which are the center of your focus. Knowledge is power! You will soon gain unshakable confidence and unstoppable momentum.

Just as a butterfly must shed her cocoon before she flies out into the deep blue sky, you too must make an energetic effort to shed the cocoon of limitations that has enveloped your life and prevented you from self-mastery and life excellence. And no matter how successful you presently are, how happy you are and how much wealth you currently possess, there is more out there for you. Bill Gates of Microsoft fame became a billionaire in his early thirties, J.F.K. President of the United States in his forties. You have all of the qualities of such people, yours may not be developed to their true potential. Shatter the beliefs which cause you to think that you are not well educated enough, intelligent enough, fit enough, rich enough or happy enough to make this life your masterpiece. This minute, make the ultimate decision of your life and become aware of all those thoughts and beliefs that you have allowed to hamper your performance. Get ready for the mind-body training that is the essence of this program. Get ready to expand the limits of your mind and rekindle your spirit. Get ready for the success you richly deserve.

DISCIPLINE & WILL-POWER: THE GOLDEN KEYS TO THE GATES OF SELF-MASTERY

Man is still responsible. He must turn the alloy of modern experience into the steel of mastery and character. His success lies not with the stars but with himself. He must carry on the fight of self-correction and discipline. He must fight mediocrity as sin and live against the imperative of life's highest ideal.

Frank Curtis Williams

The most important initial ingredients of self-mastery and life excellence are discipline and will-power. With them, you will have taken the first step to a Perfect Life. They are the qualities that ensure your success. With discipline

and mental persistence, you will find the means to your ends. You will have the personal toughness to apply the principle of Kaizen and to develop yourself to reach your goals. Discipline allows you to follow the MegaLiving! program daily to unleash the sleeping potential inside of you. It provides you with the character strength to set aside watching the television and other time wasting activities in favor of those that will truly make a lasting difference in your life. Discipline and will-power allow you to ensure that the things which matter most in your life are never at the mercy of those that matter the least.

The Magic of Discipline for Life-Mastery

There are 168 hours in a week. Discipline and mental toughness ensure that this time is well spent and your life retains the balance of physical fitness, mental conditioning, character-building, professional pursuits, social activities and pure adventure that will foster its greatness. Most importantly, the development of discipline ensures that you are always focused on your life goals and moving powerfully and consistently towards them. Erasmus said, “a nail is driven out by another nail; habit is overcome by habit.” The heart of discipline is indeed habit. Discipline and will-power, like the biceps, are muscles to be conditioned and built up. Success in any endeavour requires a focused mind and regular application. Without the power that discipline brings, no dream can be realized. Without will-power, you become a victim to the evils of procrastination, laziness and sloth.

Discipline and will-power deliver you to the highest level of living possible and though it might seem difficult to develop at the outset, once these muscles are consistently exercised into a habit, stunning results appear and once-hard tasks become easy. With discipline you can raise your standards of physical fitness, tap into amazing reserves of knowledge, start and finish major tasks, control your diet, triple your energy level, build your character to achieve a more fulfilling life and enhance your personal relations. Discipline will shape the tremendously important habit of mind control and positive thinking and free you from worry. Discipline will dramatically improve your confidence levels and your productivity as you start to put first things first.

Without discipline, or at least a clear desire to build it, you are lost and are destined to be the servant of your mind rather than having your mind serve you. Instead of mental toughness and agility, disempowering thoughts will creep into your brain freely, zapping you of your personal power and redirecting your attention from worthwhile goals to useless activities that might feel fun but will offer no value in the long run. Without will-power, you might eat too much, worry too much and sleep too much. Study the lives of

Gandhi, Washington, Mother Teresa, Helen Keller and Bruce Lee and you will be studying will-power in action.

Success on the outside begins with success on the inside. If you want to be more effective at the office, if you want to be a better mother or father, or a better citizen in your community, start with your inner world and cultivate your inner resources. You cannot do great things unless you feel great. You cannot lead a corporation or a team unless you have learned to lead yourself first. Life management begins with self-management and a key ingredient of self-management is refining your will-power muscles.

One of the best personal growth objectives anyone can set is to develop their discipline. H.P. Liddon said: " what we do upon some great occasion will probably depend on what we already are; and what we are will be the result of previous years of self-discipline." In his excellent book, *Will-Power*, Raymond De Saint-Laurent writes that "the man of character is one who selects a reasonable objective and never gives up pursuing it so long as he has not reached his goal." Once you are aware of how to use your will, no dream will elude you. Your mind will not be swayed like a leaf in the Fall wind. Once you have a worthy desire, you will exert a totally concentrated mind and effort on it. People will not move you from the path of success nor be able to discourage your aspirations. Here are some of the essential points to note about will-power:

i) *Winners Are Disciplined!* Every person who has met with great success in life has had an abundance of discipline and will-power. Your world will change with these exceptional qualities but you must first understand that they are currently dormant within you. These priceless gems simply need to be polished and refined before they bring you riches that you could never imagine.

ii) *Use Your Will!* The secret to conditioning your discipline/ will-power muscles is incredibly simple: use them or lose them! Nature is consistent in its principles. To increase your biceps, exert them and push them to the limit regularly. Soon they will grow stronger. Exert and push your memory to remember more, it too will grow strong. Exert and push your imagination. Visualize the perfect you and feel that you are that person. You will soon grow strong and become that image. This is the way of your discipline/will-power muscles also. The key is to push them and exert them. They will definitely blossom beyond your expectations.

iii) *Have Big Hopes and Think Good Thoughts!* Even if you think you are weak, lethargic and apathetic, remember the essential truth that there is a sparkling spring of will-power bubbling within you. With proper cultivation the spring will explode into an unstoppable current!

iv) *Become a Will-Power Warrior!* The MegaLiving! program teaches you how to wage war against impulses that drain your energy and keep your limitless potential at bay. You must examine yourself carefully and become aware of the disempowering thoughts that you have conditioned into your way of thinking. Then you must stop considering them and repeat to yourself, over and over, that it is these thoughts that are keeping you from ideal health, perfect wealth and a truly magical existence.

One of the most common “diseases” in our modern world is fatigue. People rush to work, are busy all day, run home to have a quick meal and drop into their favorite couch only to doze off in front of their television. The most common excuse for not doing something important has become, “but Honey, I was too tired.” People who once had lofty ambitions about becoming famous and changing the world for the better now crave nothing more than a night with eight hours of good sleep. Our society is paralyzed by its tired citizens who lack the energy to achieve what they need to achieve in order to make their lives memorable. Would you be shocked to learn that, generally, the “fatigue disease” is nothing more than an illusion? To illustrate this essential truth, think about the last time you were at the office or at home reading something boring and dull. Think of how you really disliked having to plod through the material and think of how tired you felt reading it. Your head started to bob and you actually nodded off a few times. If only you could have a little nap you thought. Then, you were interrupted by a ringing phone or a friendly colleague who dropped by. All of a sudden, the drowsiness and fatigue vanished. You felt alert and vibrant again. You were really not tired at all but, rather, had created this state because you were not interested in the subject. More importantly, you had not developed the habit of disciplining yourself to push on through the material in spite of the drowsy impulses.

Once you start to discipline your mind, it will work wonders for you. Mental and physical fatigue will be a thing of the past. Worry and negative thinking is the greatest cause of fatigue known. A wandering mind will do more to make you tired than a 10 mile run. The mind is like a thousand volt battery. It starts the day fully charged and loaded with energy. Then, as the day goes by, 100 volts are lost worrying about the bills. Another 200 volts are lost thinking about some past event that is really not important and that you know you should not even think about. Another 300 volts are lost by daydreaming about a vacation that you want to take but cannot afford. Soon all your energy is gone and you feel like you need a rest.

The first step to eliminating mental fatigue is to control every thought in your mind. Make certain that each one is an optimistic, positive one. Then, with the habit of discipline, start to realize that you have an incredible energy

reserve that is simply waiting to be tapped. Realize that the fatigue is your own creation. Break the habit of fatigue. Toss it away. When the tired feeling starts to take hold, keep focused on the task at hand. Just as a runner gets a second wind on a long run, your mind will get a second wind if you exert your discipline muscles and stick with the job you are doing. It will not be easy at first. But you must be strong and not seek to escape the task you may be finding dull and unpleasant. Soon your discipline will take over. Things you had trouble doing will become easy. Larger goals become attainable and your confidence soars. You feel mentally stronger and happier.

It has been said that successes do those things that failures don't like to do even though they also find them unpleasant. One of the world's greatest success tips is that all of life's happiness comes from achieving goals. When you look back on your life, what will make you happy will be the great things you have done, the superb family you raised, the prosperous business you created, the places you travelled to and the exciting books you have read. You will not look back and find a sense of accomplishment in the television shows you watched or in the weekend mornings that you slept until noon. Your life will be elevated by one thing and one thing alone: achievement. This does not mean that you must strive to make 10 million dollars or build a house in Bermuda. Achievement and life success can appear in peace of mind and a well-developed spiritual life. The key is simply to achieve. Discipline and will-power will make you a success. Cultivate them and treat them as your golden gifts.

THE FEELGOOD PRINCIPLE & BELIEF SYSTEMS : UNLEASHING VITALITY

Be not afraid of life. Believe that it is worth living, and your belief will help create that fact.

William James

The MegaLiving! program is far more than simple positive thinking. It is a holistic program designed to raise your life to its highest level at every facet. Over 30 days, you will learn the secrets to unleashing the exceptional powers of your mind and supermemory, strategies for maintaining the ideal health state, techniques to build a stronger, more productive character full of integrity and an abundance/prosperity mentality.

If you take anything away from this revolutionary course, remember this one enduring truth known as the FeelGood Principle: everything you have

ever done in your life, every action you have ever taken has been a direct result of your powerful need to feel good. What you focus on throughout the day, what you eat and drink, the people you associate with and the books you read all arise from your desire to feel good. The evil of procrastination comes about through the application of the FeelGood Principle: you derive more pleasure by sitting on the couch doing nothing than becoming physically fit or finishing that report for work that could really give your career the boost it deserves.

When you eat too much, sleep too much or smoke too much you are applying the FeelGood Principle. You are taking these negative steps because they make you feel good. Think of all the things in your life that you know you should not be doing. Why do you continue? Awareness is the first step to excellence and once you become aware of the importance of the FeelGood concept you will have a particularly strong tool for transforming your behaviour and world.

List on a piece of paper all the activities that are preventing success in your life. Do you fight with others, worry too much, see the obstacles in life rather than the endless possibilities? Are you scared to exercise? All limiting activities can be changed in a relatively short period of time with the correct strategies. Perhaps the most powerful tool is simply to start applying the Feelgood Principle for positive rather than negative ends.

Here is the technique to make powerful, lasting transformations in your life:

Step 1: The Decision

Today make the decision that you need to change your behaviour. It has caused you too much pain in the past and it must stop now! Graphically think about and visualize the hurt that this action has caused you, referring to specific incidents and lost opportunities. Now write down your decision to dramatically improve and tape it next to your bedside. Read it ten times before you go to bed and when you first wake up - it will slowly start to affect your subconscious mind which ultimately governs all of our actions.

Step 2: The Challenge Technique

Now that you are committed to change, and maybe have told all your family and friends so that you have some positive pressure on you, you must start the re-conditioning process. When the first thought of the negative behaviour enters your mind, isolate it and “challenge” the thinking process by anything unique: a silly sound that you make, a bizarre word like “ookabooka!” or a pinch to your leg. This may sound strange but it will have the highly important impact of breaking the disempowering thought pattern

that is holding you back. An ageless law of nature is that the positive will always overcome the negative with time. Once you challenge negative, thoughts and behaviours which are holding you back from all that you deserve, they will soon realize that they are unwelcome guests in the palace of your mind and leave this mental kingdom quickly.

Step 3: The New Reality: The Slide Strategy

Once you have made the decision to change and challenged the pattern, you must then replace it with the new behaviour you wish to cultivate. This is known as Opposition Thinking and is an ancient Indian technique practiced by the yogis who developed enormous mental powers. The essence of the strategy is to substitute the negative thought for a positive, empowering one. The mind is very much like a giant slide projector - at a given moment, it can hold only a single thought just like at any instant, a projector will only hold one slide. If you suffer from procrastination, each time the thought of wasting time while you should be working comes to your mind, isolate it, challenge the stream of thought and then substitute a clear thought of you working hard (just like replacing one slide with another).

Picture in your mind's eye the wonderful benefits of completing this task successfully. Will it increase your discipline and self-image? What positive effects will your new behaviour have this year if you keep doing it? How about in five or ten years. Start to ***FeelGood*** about this behaviour.

Step 4: Think Good Thoughts

Now that you have opposed the negative thought with the empowering one, it will slowly start to crumble as it realizes it is unwelcome in your winning mindset. Thoughts are things and it is so very important that you recognize that you control the thoughts in your mind - not the other way around. The key is to continually practice the process given to you above until the new, powerful thinking pattern is conditioned in your mind. Go over it many times. Soon you will think only of positive behaviour and this will become a habit. This is the first stage of your new destiny.

MEGATHINKING! & THE ENCHANTMENT OF POSITIVITY

Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities! Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers you cannot be

successful or happy.

Norman Vincent Peale

Program yourself for total success and self-confidence. What you think you will become. Your mind is the Universe's most powerful computer and you are the programmer. What you enter into it is all that will come out. The quality of your life therefore is a direct result of what you put into your mind - your programming. Your thoughts are things which you are releasing into the world. Make certain that these messengers are in perfect health and fine shape. If you think negative thoughts all day, you will have little energy, no enthusiasm and may soon become ill. It is beyond debate in this age of mind-body medicine that thoughts are things that have a significant result on the physiology of the body. If you think weak thoughts, you are sending out bad signals to your body and filling it with harmful toxins that not only impede your performance but shorten your lifespan.

MegaThinking! is a habit that you can cultivate. It is a mode of thinking without limitations. You see the wonders of life and celebrate your world. It is not seeing the world through rose-colored glasses and being unrealistic. It is seeing the cup half full rather than half empty. It is recognizing that you deserve to have everything you want in life and attaining your goals is simply a matter of believing in yourself and then taking tremendous action to accomplish them. A habit is like a wire cable. It starts off with a thin thread and through constant conditioning, it becomes stronger and stronger until a time arrives when it cannot be broken. The MegaLiving! life mastery program shows you how to become a MegaThinker and see the immense possibilities that you may have been neglecting.

Olympic athletes have understood the tremendous power of the mind and the importance of mental discipline in sports excellence. At that level of competition, what separates the medal winners from the "also rans" is the "winner's mindset." Just as they enter into a top-flight conditioning program for their bodies, such athletes vigorously train their minds to focus on winning and peak performance.

The Champion's Mindset

Virtually every elite athlete has a sports psychology regimen alongside nutritional considerations and general body training. Many say that the key is to harness the mind's exceptional psychic energy to create the desired results. This can be done by visualizing success at the event, going through rituals in preparation for the event and practising meditative exercises designed to calm the body, ridding it of the stresses that hamper peak performance.

In 1954, Roger Bannister did what many people thought no human could ever do - he broke the four minute mile barrier. When asked how he did this, he replied that he simply ran the perfect race over and over on the movie screen of his mind before he ran it in reality. Tennis ace Andre Agassi is a master at the art of visualization as is golf legend Jack Nicklaus, soccer superstar Pele and Olympic gold medalist Bruce Jenner. But mental excellence and the technique of visualization should not be limited to the playing field. Visualization, where one mentally rehearses the ideal performance in his mind over and over before the actual event, should be a tool in the success arsenal of every peak performer.

Increasingly, non-elite athletes in the arena of life are applying the mental conditioning strategies of Olympians to live better, live longer and achieve positive results. You must condition your mind and enter into a mind-training routine as if you were an elite athlete preparing for the event of your life. You must take your training seriously and become devoted to true excellence. You have phenomenal powers lurking deep inside of you, whether you realize this or not. You are likely using only 25% of your mind's vast reserves. What about the remaining 75%? If you want a supermemory, to have the focus of a laser beam, the creativity of a genius or the serenity of an Indian yogi living deep in the Himalayas, you must earn it and train your mind. This will not occur overnight but it *will* happen if you use your personal power to make it happen. MegaLiving! will get you on track for the big results that you want and deserve.

Also, it is imperative that you develop a winning attitude. The limits you impose in your mental factory are the limits you impose on your life. Shatter the myth, once and for all, that you are too old, too young, too tired, too taxed, too poor or too average to do extraordinary things. You can have whatever you want but step one means controlling the thoughts swirling around in the garden of your mind. If you encourage yourself daily and cultivate the garden of your mind it will blossom far beyond your expectations. But if you let the toxic weeds of negative thoughts and bad habits take over, you will never achieve the quality of life which you desire and deserve.

You must *expect* to win at the game of life. Marcus Allen, the first-class NFL running back said: "My whole game is attitude. You've got to think positively to achieve the impossible, to be what you expect to be. If you seek mediocrity, then that's all you get!" As you prepare for each day or a special event such as a big presentation, court case or sports meet, run a mental video of the perfect result in your mind. Smell the air, see all the details of the activity-the more precise the better. See yourself smiling and meeting with

huge success. Think of how you want to feel and will feel. Feel the success and the pleasure you will receive on another job well done. Creative visualization works so put it into your self-mastery toolbox.

Become the most positive person you know. Cultivate the spirit of positivity and joy in every area of your life. Become a true adventurer, seeing life's little obstacles as challenges that will allow you to become wiser and to grow. Learn to love adversity and to thrive on it. The great business leaders of our time from Getty to Ted Turner loved big challenges and turned them into opportunities for magnificent wealth. Critics called CNN the "chicken noodle network" when it first came out. But Turner persisted. He understood that successful people are no different from anyone else, they just stay in the fight an extra round longer. This is the difference between winners and less developed people. Unsuccessful people see adversity as something that will break them and complain that life is hard. Winners design strategies to benefit from challenges, regroup if they do not work and maintain a burning commitment to succeed at all cost. Winners will always find a way.

THE MAGIC OF GOALS : YOUR VISIONS OF EXCELLENCE

Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.

W.W. Ziege

Highly successful people, from leaders in the world of finance to parents leading happy, loving families, all share one powerful habit: they set goals. Clear goals are the essential foundation of success and life mastery. Without clearly defined goals for both the near future and the long-term, you are like a ship moving through the deep seas without a course. You are like a jet flying without a flight plan. You are like a brain surgeon operating with a blindfold on. Lasting self-mastery and life excellence will only come about when you set precise objectives for every facet of your life. Peak performers know precisely where they are going mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually and financially. Because how could you possibly hit a target you cannot even see? Once you take the time to set and regularly review your goals, your mind will spot opportunities to allow your desires to be fulfilled. This is when you start to live your dreams and put far more living into your life.

One of the truest laws of Nature is that what you focus on constantly with great emotion and expectation will become a reality. You can use this age-old

principle to destroy your life by thinking about the negatives or to make it phenomenal by aiming for the stars and expecting your desires to come true. As Henry Ford has said: “Thinking always ahead, thinking always of trying to do more, brings a state of mind in which nothing seems impossible.” You do not start creating the life you want 20 years from now in 20 years, you start this very day by setting precise goals, developing a clear plan and then by taking dedicated action. Every day, you must take some action to advance confidently in the direction of your ultimate destination. Every thought must be a useful one that will boost your enthusiasm for the accomplishment of your hopes. Step one on the magical road to success is the setting of your goals.

Here is the MegaLiving! 7 Step Formula to Achieve Your Goals:

1. Know What You Want. Find, recognize & mentally visualize the goals you are working towards. One of life’s biggest success tips is to figure out what you love doing and then find someone who will pay you to do it. What are your secret ambitions? Perhaps the best way to determine your life goals is to write your own eulogy. Picture your own funeral and what you would like said about you and your accomplishments. Do you want to hear that you were the richest person in’ your country, the best piano player in your city or the happiest person that anyone had ever met? Think deeply about where you want to be in 5, 10 and 20 years. These are your life goals.

2. Set Precise Goals with a Deadline & Develop a Strategy. Once you know the direction in which you are travelling through life, your days take on new meaning. You start to live with tremendous passion and focus. Write out your goals and attach firm deadlines to them so you will not put them off. Then develop a daily plan of attack which breaks the big goal into smaller bite-sized chunks that are easy to swallow and far less intimidating. If a goal is too overwhelming (running a marathon next month for someone who cannot walk a block with ease), it will not even be tackled. But if it is broken down into smaller bits (start walking a block a day, then jog a mile for the next 5 weeks and after a few months, crank up the mileage) it becomes manageable and even fun.

Rick Hansen, the man who travelled around the world in his wheelchair was asked the secret of achieving this exceptional feat. He said that rather than focusing on the 24,901 miles he had to cover, he simply thought only about taking one session at a time, 23 miles per session, three sessions a day. Start off small. Small victories always lead to large ones.

3. Let Your Goals Dominate Your Thoughts. When one of the world’s greatest scientists, Sir Isaac Newton, was asked the key to his awesome success he replied that he thought of nothing else. Study any winner in life

and you will see that they have trained their mind to concentrate on nothing but the attainment of their goals. By thinking constantly of the realization of their dreams, they developed a truly unshakable belief and faith that every single one of their desires would come true. Winners expect success. Remember that ageless principle: your inner world determines your outer world. Therefore, every morning, recite your goals out loud. Take at least 10 minutes every evening and visualize yourself doing what you want to do. Picture the fun and happiness you will feel when, at the end of your life, you have done all that you wanted to do.

4. Use Pressure to Your Benefit. Pressure is not always a bad thing. One of the primary reasons that most goals are not reached is that it is too easy to let them slip to the side of the road because other more pressing things happen to come up. But if there is a little pressure on you to reach your goal, whether it is to lose weight, make a lot more money or make a lot more out of life, you will be pushed forward and work harder to make it happen. You can get pressure behind you by making a public declaration and telling everyone you know that you will lose the extra weight or stop the nagging habit, or whatever it is you want to achieve.

5. Enlist Support. Tell your friends and family what you are doing. Get as much support behind you as possible. If you want to run a marathon, join a running club. If you want to learn how to be a great orator, join Toastmasters. If you want to attain financial mastery, start a mastermind group that meets weekly to discuss which strategies work and which ones do not. Having a support network will keep you focused, motivated and inspired.

6. Remember the Rule of 21. If you do anything for 21 days in a row, you will have an excellent chance of making it into a habit. There is power in persistence. Whether you are trying to erase the worry habit, develop the discipline of a daily walk in a natural setting or trying to quit smoking, persevere for 21 days. Samuel Johnson wrote that “great acts are performed not through strength but by perseverance.”

7. Have Fun & Reward Yourself. “Enjoy the journey” say the sages of the East. Treat yourself when you achieve even the smallest of your goals. Small victories bring large victories. And do not be too hard on yourself if you don’t achieve a goal on schedule. Be flexible. Try another approach but never, ever give up if your aim is worthy.

If it is peace of mind that you are ultimately searching for, you will have to find time to meditate and master your spiritual dimension. If it is perfect health, you will have to find time to develop your body, refine your diet and exercise. Whatever you are aiming towards, you must commit yourself to making small sacrifices for the larger good of your life goals. But once you

set yourself firmly on the wonderful path of your goals, your life will change very dramatically. You will wake up with a fire in your belly and a passion for the day. You will feel productive, confident and deeply happy. You will feel fulfilled as if your life has true meaning. Remember, the purpose of life is a life of purpose. You become a creator in full control of your destiny rather than a person who simply floats through life responding to whatever events fall into your path. With goals, you start to tap your human potential and realize the perfect life that has always been deep within you.

The Success Mechanism

In the early 1960s researchers learned that every person has a Success Mechanism built into their mind. This device works with your creative imagination and is goal striving. In other words, the Success Mechanism is triggered by positive goals that you give to it. Once you feed the mechanism a goal, it takes over and relies on all of your past experience to scan for any feedback and information which will allow it to accomplish the goal given. Ideas and inspirations that you may have been exposed to in the past almost unconsciously, are still deep inside of your mind, waiting to be recalled to assist you in your achievement. By setting clearly defined goals with time limits, your Success Mechanism leaps into action.

Hunches and intuition reflect nothing more than this tool at work. Most importantly, the mechanism is guided by the mental images of your past experiences. For example, if you were asked to give a big speech at the last convention you attended and fumbled badly, a mental picture of that event has been indelibly etched in your mind. You may have played and replayed the mental movie of the negative speech over and over until it became embedded in it. Now, when you have to give another speech, the mechanism scans for relevant information and comes up with this negative picture which often has the result of leading to another unsuccessful performance.

However, the Success Mechanism can be fooled. It cannot tell the difference between a mental picture that has actually happened (i.e., your bad speech) and one that you put into the mind by dreaming and visualizing. Therefore by visualizing yourself over and over, giving the perfect speech to thunderous applause and cheers, the mechanism picks up this “past experience” and powerfully ensures that it becomes a reality. Using this little-known knowledge you can re-program your mind, which is really nothing more than the world’s most powerful computer, by picturing in your mind’s eye the achievement of each and every one of your goals. Be very graphic. If you desire a house in the Caribbean, see the style, color, location and dimensions. Feel how it would be to live in that house. Now determine what you must do to get the house. See the desired results happening and truly

believe that they will be achieved. Practice this technique every day, whenever you have a quiet moment. This tool works and will bring you all that you desire. Can you really afford not to try it for at least 30 Days?

Earlier, it was strongly suggested that you “mirror image” someone who has met with an abundance of success in the field of your interest. When you do this, as well as when you study any great leader, business person or “wonder” person, you will see that their mastery and results have arrived, in part, through the setting of *clearly defined goals*. Goals will serve to motivate, inspire and guide you as you reach for what you want out of life. Goals serve as your personal lighthouse. Without them, you are gambling with your future. Do you really want to play the game of life as if it were a roulette wheel? Get certainty into your life; set your goals!

Your Goal Setting Workshop!

Before moving on, please spend some time assessing your goals and aspirations. It is not only tremendously important to the success of the 30 day MegaLiving! program but it is a fun exercise.

Step 1: Your Masterplan for Life Mastery

On a piece of paper, write out your mission statement in life. Make it succinct. Your mission statement is a capsule statement of what you want to accomplish in your life and how you wish to be remembered. It is a combination of the values you wish to live by and the major goals you are determined to achieve. Keep it general but focused on the true keys of your life. Your mission statement is your lighthouse. It will guide you through good times and bad. It will keep you focused and advancing confidently along the path of your dreams. For example, your mission might read as follows:

My mission is to become a person of true character and integrity, contributing to my country and attaining a state of peak health and mental serenity. I will have a superb family and professional life while I build lasting wealth. I will be courteous to all and live my life with tremendous zest and joy.

This is your guiding light, a clear statement of where you are going in life. This masterplan will keep you on course when others try to push you off it or when life’s wonderful obstacles visit you. Put your mission where you can see it regularly such as beside your bathroom mirror and read it slowly at least twice a day.

Step 2: Your Personal Mastery Goals

Now that you know where you want to be at the end of your life in general

terms, turn to specifics. Set the one year, five year and ten year goals for your personal development. Think of how fit you want to be, what personal qualities you wish to develop, what strategies you want to master, how you hope to feel, look and think, what kind of intellect and memory you want, what books, tapes and seminars do you desire to attend (the list goes on). Write them out as there is a dramatic impact on your subconscious mind when things are set on paper. Very importantly, note time limits for yourself to achieve these results.

Top 10 Personal Mastery Goals for This Year & Their Time Limit

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Throughout this book, it has been emphasized that there is no pursuit more noble than mastering yourself. Each day, it is crucial that you set aside some time to tend to yourself, to care for your mind, to relax your intellect and to nurture your body and soul. Like everything else in life, the key is to make the practice a habit if you truly want to be effective.

Now think about your life in five years. How do you want to feel? What do you want to know and what qualities do you desire to have. How about more passion for life, more joy, a better temperament, a greater degree of serenity and inner calmness, more enthusiasm and more creativity?

All these qualities can be yours if you start striving towards them today. Remember that you cannot start to design your future far off into the future. Jump start your life now with a wonderful set of challenges for yourself. All satisfaction in life comes from rising to the challenges you set for yourself and overcoming them with enthusiasm and vigor. Do not put off this exercise for even a day. It will change your life and set you on the path of personal mastery that you have always longed to walk.

Now list your top ten five year personal mastery goals:

Top Ten Personal Mastery Goals for Five Years

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Top Ten Personal Mastery Goals for Ten Years

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Step 3: Your Material & Fun Goals

At this stage of your goal setting workshop, you will think about and note down your material and fun goals. The only limits to what you can receive are those you choose to set up in your imagination. Let it run wild. There are many things that still remain mystical in this world and one of them is the principle of why, when goals are written down and kept at the center of your mind they come true, provided you take action to have the desired result.

Do not analyze how Nature works. Simply think big and have some fun here. Note all the material things you want (be creative and precise). It is also essential that you write quickly so that your true desires come out and so that you do not start to think your goals are too large to come true. Paupers have become millionaires in 12 months. No dream is ever too big. Do you want a house in Bermuda? How about scuba diving in the Cayman Islands or mountain climbing in Nepal. Do you want a BMW, a sailboat or a trip around

the world? Perhaps you simply want to live with more spirit, richness and vitality. Write all these things down, quickly and with the time limits for their attainment. Start now!

Top Ten Material & Fun Goals for This Year

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Top Ten Material & Fun Goals for Five Years

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Top Ten Material & Fun Goals for Ten Years

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Step 4: Your Financial Future

Meticulously consider where you want to be from a financial viewpoint over the next number of years. How much money do you want to make and by when? What amount would truly make you happy and allow you the freedom to do all the things you want to do? What investments do you want to own? Your financial destiny will affect your personal destiny so think about it very carefully.

Top Ten Financial Goals for This Year

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Top Ten Financial Goals For Five Years

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Top Ten Financial Goals For Ten Years

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Goals are the lifeblood of lasting achievement and personal excellence. By physically writing out your goals on a piece of paper, you have set very special forces into play which will work to bring them into reality. Earlier you learned that most people think about 60,000 thoughts a day. By writing out your goals, you have set up a red flag for your mind, telling it that these thoughts and ideas are far more important than the remaining 59,999 swirling around your mental factory. So many people who have come to my seminars, including CEO's of leading corporations, elite athletes, students, salespeople and parents, have told me that their lives changed in a very profound way once they had thought deeply about their mission and their goals and committed them to paper.

You have now set the goals that will provide you with inspiration and a burning desire. You now have the clearest picture you have ever had of your path of life and your true wants. Most people pass through life without any idea as to where they are going. You have now overcome this hurdle. The next key is to maintain a consistent focus on your goals. Never let these dreams die no matter how far off they might seem today. Nature works in

fabulously wonderful ways. Once a goal is set and the mind concentrated on its achievement, Nature exerts its powerful influence to bring about its realization. Believe in your dreams, reach for the stars and have the destiny that you know is yours! Remember what Thoreau promised: “If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams and endeavours to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.”

The Secret Success Formula: 5 Steps to Turn Your Dreams Into Reality

You have now completed your goal-setting workshop. To assist you in achieving your goals quickly, a very special success formula is offered to you. This technique might seem strange but it is likely one of the most effective you will ever find. Many peak performers in business, sports, the arts and in science have used it with an enormous degree of success. The formula operates on the basis of autosuggestion and will work wonders for you if you believe in it and apply it diligently for a period of months. Even before this period is over, you will notice striking changes in your life for the better. Einstein, Emerson, Napoleon Hill, Olympic athletes and many other high achievers have used this strategy in one form or another for one reason - it works!

1. Clearly decide on your goal and picture its attainment in your mind every night just before you sleep. Picture yourself having achieved your outcome. Make your visualization clear and colorful.
2. Develop a strong belief that it will come true by autosuggestion (repetition of the idea aloud) throughout the day. Self-suggestion has been used very successfully in the East for over 4000 years and is an age-old method of developing strong faith. Repeat your desire aloud ten times before you sleep.
3. Through repetition of thought, the goal will become a burning desire.
4. Develop a clear plan of how you will achieve the goal and seek out all opportunities for its fruition.
5. Write out the goal, the plan of action and the date by which you will achieve it. Repeat this aloud 10 times a day with belief in its purpose and with intense feeling.

As mentioned, this success formula may seem odd but it has been used by some of the world’s most successful leaders and it will surely work for you. Do not apply it for only a day and then give up. This is a special gift that you

are receiving. Have faith in this formula and it will work wonders for you. All your dreams will be placed at the forefront of your consciousness and the forces of thought will make them come true.

Now that you know where you are going and you firmly believe that you will have all that you desire, you must regularly set aside time every day to review your goals and consider how you will feel once you reach them. By applying this strategy, you will constantly be motivating both your conscious and subconscious mind to fulfill your dreams.

As you move to higher levels in your life through the application of the powerful principles in the MegaLiving! program, remember these words of Woodrow Wilson:

We grow great by dreams. All big men are dreamers. They see things in the soft haze of a spring day or in the red fire of a long winter's evening. Some of us let great dreams die, but others nourish and protect them, nurse them through bad days till they bring them to the sunshine and light which comes always to those who sincerely hope that their dreams will come true.

CHAPTER THREE

Your Body: Achieving Physical Mastery

If I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it, even if I do not have it at the beginning.

Mahatma Gandhi

THE POWER OF EXERCISE : YOUR FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

You can transform your life and lift it to a much higher level by one simple activity: exercise. People are willing to go under the knife to look years younger, try bizarre diets and coat their bodies with New Age longevity creams when everyone knows that the surefire way to look young and feel fantastic is to spend some time everyday in some form of physical activity.

Before his championship matches, chess superstar Bobby Fisher did not spend his days solely studying the chess strategies of his opponents nor practising this wonderfully intellectual game. He focused most of his training on becoming physically fit by running long distances and doing laps in the swimming pool to increase his physical stamina and mental endurance. This was his ultimate weapon to unlock his extraordinary potential and it should be yours.

Top executives, world leaders and other peak performers all have one thing in common: they have understood the tremendous power of vigorous exercise on a daily basis as a tool for self-mastery and life excellence. Do not say that you are so busy you cannot afford to exercise. If you are truly busy, then you cannot afford not to exercise. Make one of the best decisions of your life and make the commitment to an exercise routine today. If you already are involved in a fitness program, take it to the next level or start competing in

the sport of your interest. Remember the spirit of Kaizen: if you are not moving forward, you are moving backward.

Here are just a few of the benefits you will receive from daily physical exercise:

- a) A significant increase in your energy levels and stamina
- b) A higher state of general health and an ideal weight
- c) Better muscle tone and a trimmer physique
- d) A much more relaxed and serene mental outlook
- e) More enthusiasm and confidence
- f) Greater alertness and mental poise
- g) Less illness and enhanced achievement/productivity
- h) More discipline in all areas of life
- i) Increased circulation and oxygenation
- j) Much greater resistance to stress

Physical mastery will rocket you to a vital life quicker than almost any other strategy. It is not expensive to achieve and can be exceptionally fun if you approach it with the right attitude. Once you are on a fitness program, you will become so used to it that it becomes a daily habit like brushing your teeth and showering. You do not think twice about these activities each day and the same approach must be taken to your exercise regimen. When you do, all aspects of your life will improve including your mental agility, social relationships and peace of mind. Take a minute and list five negative effects of not exercising that you truly want to avoid:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Now consider ten benefits you will receive from exercise. List the changes and impact it can have on your life both this year, in five years and in twenty. *Really feel* what you will miss, what fun you will not enjoy if you do not wake up each day to the wonders of physical mastery.

10 benefits that I will receive from exercise

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

You have now clarified in your mind the pain that you will suffer over the remaining years of your life without exercise and the big benefits you are bound to receive if you make physical excellence a burning goal (The FeelGood Principle). The MegaLiving! 30 day program will provide you with the tools to unlock the perfect state of health that you are capable of achieving. But the first step is to make a commitment to physical mastery and a daily dose of exercise. As the old saying goes: “the person who has no time for exercise must make time for illness.”

Here are just a few of the activities that will revitalize and juice-up your life:

- * Running, walking or hiking in the mountains
- * Swimming, playing tennis, weights or aerobics
- * Having a brisk walk in natural surroundings
- * Martial arts, yoga, deep breathing exercises
- * Skating with your kids, rollerblading to work
- * Gardening, running a marathon and cross-training
- * Sailing, scuba diving or waterskiing
- * Doing a mini-triathlon or jogging on the beach

If you are just getting into an exercise regimen, one of the best all-round pastimes for both body and mind conditioning is yoga. Yoga is the Sanscrit word meaning union of mind and body. This 5000 year-old activity will boost your stamina, provide you with exceptional relaxation and increase your concentration dramatically. Yoga, when combined with a healthful diet and positive thinking will have truly dramatic effects on your life and the passion

that you bring to it. Try it a few times and you will never give it up. You will stay younger longer, be far more productive, erase the worry habit and radiate an exceptional degree of vitality. The practice of yoga offers not only physical but mental training as well and is the world's oldest system of personal development.

Once you decide to accept the challenge of physical mastery, you must remain disciplined, consistent and motivated in your workouts to see real, lasting results. After 30 days, things will start to spark in all areas of your life and you will undoubtedly feel better than you have ever felt. One of the best things about daily exercise, whether it is a quick walk around the block or a stretching routine in a nearby park on a sunny day, is the marked increase you will detect in your energy levels. You will no longer feel like hitting the couch when you come home from work after a long day. Instead you will be eager to do fun, productive things that are sure to enhance the quality of your life. In fact, you will feel unstoppable. Here's how to stay motivated:

1. Start off easy (15 min/day) and think strong
2. Have fun and maintain a positive, playful attitude
3. Get a partner with a similar goal of physical mastery
4. Cross-train with different sports to keep the regimen fresh
5. Write down your 1, 5 and 10 year fitness goals
6. Use positive motivators like pictures of what you will achieve
7. Use visualization techniques to focus on what you will be
8. Make the program a habit. Do it at the same time daily
9. Affirm each minor success - the 1000 mile journey begins with one step
10. Use the momentum of daily minor successes from your program to catapult you to greater challenges: aim high!

Physical exercise will change you. It will add power and focus to your dreams. It is so simple. Out of the 168 hours in your week, can you not spare 6 or 7 in the interest of your longevity, mental toughness and happiness? As stated by Humboldt: "True enjoyment comes from activity of the mind and exercise of the body; the two are ever united."

THE MAGIC OF DIET : EATING YOUR WAY TO EXCELLENCE

You are what you eat. By transforming your diet, you can dramatically

reshape your body, moods, energy levels and overall vitality. All the mind-conditioning strategies and self-mastery techniques discussed above will not help you if you do not have the energy and health to apply and excel with them. This section is about the fuels you put into your body, your physical miracle. By caring for it with proper and thoughtful nutrition, you will have the longevity and ability to achieve your dreams. By letting it breakdown, your dreams will crumble and remain unfulfilled.

In ancient India, it was believed that mental clarity and mental toughness were directly related to the nature of one's diet. Light, non-meat foods such as vegetables and fruits were favoured by the yogis who felt that the flow of personal power and energy (called prana) was hampered by meat. Recent scientific studies now confirm that the mind and body are powerfully linked and if one is not operating at its optimal levels, the functioning of the other suffers. Treat both well and you create the magnificent life you deserve.

Eating Live Foods: A Giant Step to Physical Mastery!

The ancient yogis of the Himalayas are an excellent study on longevity, physical strength and mental toughness. Many live beyond the age of 100 and maintain lithe, limber and strong bodies throughout their lives, being able to perform tremendous feats well into what North Americans consider their last years. These masters can go for weeks without sleep and food and can endure exceptionally high levels of pain. What is the secret of their long, youthful lives? It is simply that they, along with almost every other group known for exceptional longevity and good health, eat in moderation and follow a strictly natural diet.

The "sattvic" or pure diet is one based on living foods - those created by the natural interaction of the sun, air, soil and water. The "sattvic" diet emphasizes fruits (and their fresh juices), vegetables and grains. By making changes to your diet to ensure that these Megafoods form at least 70% of your diet, you will take the first step to ensuring physical mastery and a vital life. Try it for 30 days and you will surely be astonished by the phenomenal results. Here are some of the proven benefits you will receive when you start to eat living foods regularly rather than dead foods (meat products):

1. A significant increase in your energy & stamina
2. Enhanced concentration & creativity
3. Decreased obesity, loss of body fat
4. Enhanced complexion, skin tone and vitality
5. Lower sleep requirements

6. Less digestive difficulties
7. Improved alertness and mental agility, memory benefits
8. A longer life with fewer diseases
9. A greater sense of harmony with Nature
10. General health excellence

A diet rich in vegetables, grains and fruits is truly what nature intended for us to have. For example, our teeth and intestines are strikingly different from carnivores such as dogs and are more anatomically similar to fruit-eating primates. Meats such as beef and poultry provide second-hand nutrition - that gained from the animal eating natural fruits and vegetables. As well, animal flesh has been found to have a high proportion of toxins and lacks many of the important vitamins and minerals that we need to function at optimal levels. Importantly, meat is particularly hard to digest and greatly depletes our energy reserves in the digestive process. Compare how you feel after eating a steak for a meal, with the way you feel after eating a fresh salad. Natural foods such as fruits are easily digested, leaving the energy available for more productive pursuits like achieving your dreams and becoming the very best that you can be.

If meat is so bad for us, why do we eat it? Most proponents argue that vegetarian diets do not provide proper protein. But it is ironic that those who eat meat get the worst quality protein available. Meat protein contains too much uric acid to be broken down by the liver and can lead to serious health problems in later life. Vegetables and dairy products all provide an excellent source of protein and in a much higher quality than that found in meat products. One need only look at the most powerful animals on the planet. The elephant, rhino and gorilla (which has thirty times a man's strength) all survive on vegetables or fruits. Fruits and vegetables will provide you with all the building blocks for first-class protein.

Unlocking Your Energy Reserves: Exposing Your True Vitality

Energy is the first fundamental of life excellence for without an abundance of it you are like a rocket without fuel. For peak energy, it is important that you eat according to the natural cycles which occur in your body. They are as follows:

1. **The Welcoming Cycle** noon - 8 p.m. (Megafoods such as fruits taken in and digested)
2. **The Absorption Cycle** 8 p.m. - 4 a.m. (the foods are used)

3. The Removal Cycle 4 a.m. - noon (foods are eliminated)

By recognizing these natural body cycles and eating in a way to allow each cycle to be most effective, you will release your tremendous energy reserves and see more vibrant health than ever before. The key is to ensure that toxins are flushed out of the body and the body remains pure inside. This is done by considering the following:

1. Eat high water content foods

The planet is 70% water as is your body. To properly cleanse your system and to ensure that it is in a peak performance state, you must make certain that your diet consists of at least 70% high water content foods (vegetables and fruits). The 3 body cycles function best when supplied with water from these sources on a regular basis (the 8 glasses of water a day theory floods the body unnecessarily).

2. Work with the 3 Cycles

Once you are eating water-rich, live foods, you must ensure that your intake corresponds with the cycles. In the morning (until noon) when the body is trying to eliminate toxins and other wastes, eat only fruit. This will make the cleansing/elimination process far more efficient. After noon, have your meals (70% of your diet should be vegetables, grains and fruits). After 8 p.m., eat nothing. Otherwise you will hamper the absorption process and clog the system (again draining your energy reserves and working the digestive process overtime). By following this suggestion you will also sleep far more restfully.

Making the nutritional changes above are not as difficult as they might seem. To ensure a high water content, simply have a salad with all your meals. In the morning (when you are eliminating wastes and should therefore only have fruit), start off the day powerfully with a glass of fresh orange or apple juice. One of the very best investments you can make is buying an inexpensive juicer. There are many excellent juicing books now on the market as this practice has become one of the hot trends across the country. Combinations such as apple-strawberry and raspberry-watermelon should change the minds of even the most ardent non-believers.

For lunch, rather than a hot dog and fries, why not have a salad consisting of greens, peppers, artichokes, celery, carrots, green onion, marinated veggies and cherry tomatoes. You only need to visit one of the many wonderful salad bars in any office building to see that they are fabulously tasty and far different from the old, boring salads you may have had as a kid. For dinner,

add meat if you must but make sure the meal is full of vegetables and grains to ensure optimal health and energy. Live this lifestyle for just one month and the transformation will blow your mind. This is not some trendy diet craze. This is for real. By eating natural, water-rich foods - MegaFoods - you will be able to do those things that you were always too tired to do.

If you are truly sick and tired of being sick and tired, try the suggestions mentioned above. Another idea to consider is the discipline of fasting which has been prevalent among Eastern cultures for many centuries. Fasting not only offers you health benefits, it is an ageless technique used to build will-power. And it is easy to do. Simply eat only vegetables and drink fresh fruit juices for a day every few weeks and you will be fasting in a safe, enjoyable way for good health.

In any event, explore the many advantages of a largely vegetarian diet. In a recent study in Finland, researchers learned that 38% of the new vegetarians studied reported that they felt less fatigued and more alert after only seven months. You do not have to take things to an extreme and give up meat entirely if this doesn't suit your lifestyle. Just cut back on your intake of meat products and develop a love of good fruits and vegetables. Start eating more ethnic foods which offer tasty, meatless dishes (Italian, Chinese, Indian, Japanese and Thai are all excellent choices). In our society, a great plague is our lack of energy. So many people are living in a permanent state of autopilot and are perpetually exhausted. By adjusting your diet to include more high water content foods, your energy levels and mental agility will improve profoundly. You will finally be able to have the fun you always wanted to have and, ultimately, live the life you have always wanted to live!

5 ANCIENT SECRETS OF THE EAST FOR LONGEVITY

Longevity Secret 1: Breathing Your Way to Perfect Health

When the breath wanders, the mind is unsteady, but when the breath is still, so is the mind still.

Ancient yoga principle

Take food or water out of your life and you can live for days. Take away breath and you will die a quick death. Breathing is essential to living. Learn to breathe properly and you will not only develop the skill of changing your state of mind, you will dramatically enhance your energy levels. Good

breathing practice fully oxygenates the body and charges up every one of your cells to fuel your activities and keep you in a state of high vitality. Good breathing practices (as well as good posture) will unleash the vitality that now lies inside you waiting to be released. The techniques below are derived from age-old yogic practices and are now being recognized throughout the world as strategies for creating optimal health and happiness. Learn them, practise them and share them with others.

“To breathe properly is to live properly”, said one ancient philosopher. Deep breathing maintains a superb state of both mind and body fitness. It is now common to use deep breathing techniques to calm the mind when it is agitated or unfocused. Elite athletes do deep breathing exercises to fully relax and achieve peak performance at an important event. Actors and professional singers/speakers can be seen in the wings before a key performance tuning up their tools with deep breathing.

Proper breathing strategy is one of the most important elements of physical mastery and yet it is so overlooked. Look back through the ages at activities such as yoga and the martial arts (which were created not only to build character but to maintain ideal health and longevity) and you will see that deep and proper breathing practices form the bedrock of these pursuits. If you want to live longer, be happier and think stronger, learn to breathe properly and practise the following exercises regularly.

Breathing Exercises for Perfect Health

1. Breathe & Hold: MegaBreathing!

This technique, which will dramatically increase your energy after only a couple of weeks of steady use, is simple to practice and can be done anywhere. It is also one of the best exercises to improve your concentration if you are weak in this key area.

The essence of the exercise is to inhale to a count of two, hold your breath for a count of eight and exhale fully to the count of four. To aid you in your counting, you may use walking steps: walk for two steps while inhaling fresh air deep into your lungs, hold for eight steps and exhale strongly for four more footsteps. You will soon notice the difference in your energy level and overall health levels.

2. Alternate Nostril Breathing

This is a thousand year old technique used to boost the energy levels and to produce a wide array of lasting benefits to the mind, body and spirit. After practising it, you will feel a mild feeling of euphoria.

Sit in a quiet area with your feet crossed and back straight. At all times, your mouth should remain closed. Place your right thumb over your right nostril and inhale to the count of two through your left nostril. Close your eyes when you do this and imagine a giant balloon expanding in your tummy when you take the inhalation. Now hold for the standard eight count and, at the same time, cover your left nostril with your right pinky. Next, exhale to the count of four through your right nostril. Next, your inhalation will be through the right nostril, hold and exhale through the left (your thumb is now on the right nostril). Practice this alternate nostril breathing for five minutes every morning and the benefits will come fast.

3. The Pump

This is a quick energy booster which you may use before a big presentation or meeting. Simply sit down and place your hands over your belly as if you were cupping a balloon. Now pump/push in your stomach at the belly button area and exhale strongly through your nose at the same time. Then, inhale through your nose and push the belly outward. Repeat the process twenty times, speeding up as you grow more comfortable.

4. The Early Riser

There is nothing quite as good for your mind, body and spirit as a beautiful walk through the woods or along the sea in the early morning. Try it once a week, perhaps on Sunday mornings. It will calm your mind and allow you to maintain a balanced perspective on what this special life is really about and the wonders that are out there for the taking. Every day is a celebration. Every sunrise is a jewel to be savoured. Be sure to breathe deeply while you are walking (inhale two counts, hold eight and exhale four).

5. Green Fog Breathing

This is a technique developed by the world-class martial artists of the Orient to place themselves into a state of serenity and elevated calmness before competition.

The first principle of good breathing practice is to breathe with all of your lungs and not just from the top portion of them. Proper breathing occurs when you are using the top and bottom of the lungs, as you do naturally when you sleep.

Now lay down on your back in a place of quiet and shut your eyes. Repeat aloud the following phrase slowly, "I am serene, strong and focused." Then, while you inhale, visualize the air as deep green fog entering your body through your nostrils, moving slowly into the depths of your abdomen. The

green fog then moves through the limbs and throughout the body. Next, when the calming green fog has travelled through the body relaxing every muscle, exhale it along with any tensions that may have accumulated.

Keep doing this deep breathing exercise for 5 to 20 minutes daily (preferably first thing in the morning or before any stressful situations) for immediate calmness and internal peace. Deep breathing can change the state of your mind and the state of your life.

The above breathing exercises reflect the very best breathing conditioners for the mind, body and spirit. You can take your general health to a far higher level simply by applying the above techniques on a daily basis for thirty days. You need to spend only 10 or 15 minutes a day on the strategies but you will surely reap huge gains and carry out all important tasks with improved vigor and enthusiasm. With the greater energy reserve deep breathing generates, you can do more, achieve more and transform your world from the commonplace to the ideal.

Longevity Secret 2: The Importance of Proper Chewing

It has been explained earlier that the process of digestion is extremely energy consuming and the easier the process is made, the more energy you will have for other pursuits. Proper and slow chewing of all food might sound like an immaterial activity but it is essential for perfect health and youthful vigor.

Most people are in such a hurry, they gobble down food half chewed. Food should be digested in the mouth before being digested in the stomach. Otherwise the food sits in the stomach for long periods when, had it been chewed properly, it would have moved along nicely and been absorbed by the body. Since the digestive process is one of the body's most energy consuming processes, improperly chewed food has the effect of taking up vital energy which could be used for more important pursuits.

Properly chewed food is digested much easier which also means that your body requires less of it. So with proper chewing, you can cut down on your intake and still be far healthier than you ever were. People in our society eat far more than they require anyway and it is a sound principle of longevity to eat better food in lesser quantities rather than more food, poor in quality. Benjamin Franklin said, "To lengthen thy life, lessen thy meals."

Longevity Secret 3: Stop Acting Old

Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote, "a feeble body enfeebles the mind." To

achieve excellent health and slow aging you must not let an old person move into your body. Guard against acting old and the habits of old people. Maintaining a youthful lifestyle will keep you young. You truly are only as old as you think you are. The real secret of longevity is to grow younger by living with passion, zest and enthusiasm.

Studies show that thinking that as you grow older your mental and physical faculties will diminish is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Most surely, those who are young at heart and those who maintain a dynamic, challenging lifestyle are actively taking steps to beat the aging process. It is especially important to keep flexing your mind as you age to prevent deterioration. Mental aerobics to use for enhanced mental clarity appear in the 30 Day Program for Life Mastery at the end of MegaLiving! But daily workouts with crosswords, learning new languages, taking classes and best of all, reading good books, are all highly effective ways to stay mentally sharp as you age. To keep your mind young, simply remember that your mind will give you what you ask of it.

Also, do not let your posture go to ruin. A poor posture has a very negative impact on both your physical and mental health. From a physical perspective, slouching puts undue pressure on your lower back and has even been shown to negatively affect circulation and breathing. From a mental viewpoint, poor posture makes you feel more tired and less enthusiastic. The way you stand, move and act affects the way you feel (just try feeling tired and gloomy when you are standing tall and laughing). As William James said: “we don’t laugh because we are happy, we are happy because we laugh.”

So keep your back straight and your head held high. Walk with purposeful steps in a smooth strong cadence. Breathe deeply and fully when you walk. An excellent posture is something you must always be aware of and is a habit to be formed. The health benefits of good posture and the excellent breathing it allows are very dramatic.

Another useful tip is to see yourself as a person in peak health. Two or three times a day, shut your eyes and picture clearly the person you want to become physically. See the brilliant glow in your face and eyes and notice the smooth tone of your skin and muscles. See yourself laughing and feel the energy that you have cultivated. By now you are an expert at making mental pictures and must realize the incredible power this technique offers. Make such pictures for only a month and you will notice a huge difference. Your self-image will have improved, you will feel better and you will have more enthusiasm for carrying out the routines that will put you on the road to physical mastery.

Anything that you want to be, you can be if you hold a clear picture of the

desired goal in your mind with deep conviction and emotion that it will become a reality. Add to the mix a definite time frame for the achievement of the goal, a clear plan and daily steps in the direction of your dream and you truly become unstoppable! Do not give up. You are a person of great character and courage, only the weak fail and never climb the mountain of life mastery and Perfect Health. And not only is this journey to the higher reaches of your life a spectacular adventure but the ultimate destination is clearly within your grasp.

Longevity Secret 4: The Outstanding Benefits of Yoga

One of the easiest strategies for powerful physical and mental transformation is yoga. Designed thousands of years ago by the wise sages of India as a total means of achieving and maintaining perfect health of the mind, body and spirit, it will do wonders for you. The essence of yoga is that through a number of physical exercises (asanas), general relaxation techniques, a lighter diet (sattvic), good breathing practice and positive thinking, a person can elevate his condition to one of real excellence where the mind and body become one for lasting good health.

Hatha Yoga programs are offered throughout North America and Europe at inexpensive rates. The programs are relaxing and very enjoyable. As well, the ideas and exercises are easy to learn when guided by a well-trained teacher. If you have yet to try yoga, you are missing out on one of the very best health tonics and elixirs for youth.

Longevity Secret 5: The Magic of Positive Thoughts & Dreaming

If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.

Thoreau

You have the potential to create a new reality beginning today. This new reality can be one of superb health, abundant prosperity and absolute bliss. You too can meet with a success unexpected in common hours. The preceding pages have provided you with numerous strategies for mastering your mind, body and spirit. Precise exercises and powerful routines appear in the 30 day MegaLiving! program which follows at the end of this book. But through all the principles, through all the meditations and techniques, one burning truth stands out above all the rest. That truth is the most potent secret of longevity, peak health and life mastery.

That truth is simply stated: *your thoughts control your world*. If you firmly stand guard at the door of your mind and let only the very best thoughts enter, you will be happy, healthy and serene. If you let thoughts of negative past and future experiences dominate your mind, you will be burdened by them, you will never enjoy bliss and you will not even come close to the state known as perfect health. Be a firm guardian of each and every thought that enters your mind and make certain it is of the highest quality.

As an avid gardener tends daily to her garden, nurturing it with all that is good, you must nurture and cultivate your mind. If you do this and zealously guard against the weeds which will attempt to take root by thinking positive, inspiring thoughts only, you will see great things blossom. Everything is created twice - first in your mind and then in the outside world. Just as a builder first designs a building on paper before he starts to build it, you must create all that you desire in your mind's eye. If you do this, if you dream great dreams and good thoughts, forces which you never understood will be activated to bring you to your goals.

Change your thoughts and you will radically alter your life. Think of perfect health and you will undoubtedly have it. See yourself as a confident, strong and passionate person within your imagination and you will soon transform into this vision. See yourself as a wealthy person, think this thought for twenty or thirty minutes daily with true belief in its attainment and you will have it.

Thoughts combined with the emotion of faith and belief yield phenomenal results. If you wish to perfect your body, first perfect your mind. Be a strong warrior, determined to think happy, wonderful thoughts only. Slay any thought that is not powerful and conducive to the mindset of a winner at life's game. You are the master of your thoughts. The sooner you realize this as well as the control that we have all been given over our thinking process, the sooner you will see real and lasting self-mastery. You are responsible for your thoughts. With practice and discipline, you will reign supreme over each and every thought in your mind. You will then create a personal destiny second to none.

As stated by James Allen in the excellent little book, *As a Man Thinketh*: "As the physically weak man can make himself strong by careful and patient training, so the man of weak thoughts can make them strong by exercising himself in right thinking." So what is the secret of longevity and personal excellence? Master your thoughts and you will master your mind; master your mind and you will master your body; master your body and you will feel as you have never felt before - you will feel perfect health.

The ancient thinkers arrived at the conclusion that thoughts are things and,

like every other thing in this world, they are made up of energy. So with every thought, you have actually created something. You have sent a mental messenger from your mind out into the world. And this messenger, if it is of the correct nature, will influence all aspects of your material life as the energy of the thought influences the energy of all matter. Positive thinking is not some abstract concept. Rather, it is grounded in the physical principles of the world. Thought is matter and thoughts influence matter. This is why belief in your desires and goals is so very powerful and can reshape your life. Miracles happen every day. Cancer patients have reportedly been cured by a diet of positive thinking and laughter after traditional medical treatments have failed. People who have had nothing have pulled themselves up to greatness by making a decision to make their lives better and then taking action to ensure that this happened. Is there any doubt that in your mind, you hold the most incredible instrument of change and success ever created?

You have learned of the power of your mind. This ten pound mass sitting between your shoulders can create whatever it is that you want. Master your thoughts and you will soon become the master of your inner world. And once you master your inner world, exceptional personal effectiveness, greater peace of mind, far more productivity, ideal health and lifelong success will await you. Success on the outside begins with success on the inside. The MegaLiving! 30 Day Program will show you how to run and further condition your mind. It is the ultimate owner's manual for your greatest asset. If you commit yourself to the simple exercises given to you, you will take the most important step of your life, the first step to mastering your mind and, thus, your world.

CHAPTER FOUR

Your Character: Attaining Public Excellence & Private Victory

Everyone knows that weeds eat out the life of the garden and of the productive fields. The gardener and the farmer alike each has to keep the weeding process alive... It's like that in the building and developing of character. No one knows our faults and tendencies better than we do ourselves, so that it is up to each one of us to keep the weeds out, and to keep all growth vigorous and fruitful.

George Matthew Adams

Before you can ever hope to change your circumstances, you must first improve yourself. If you want to lead a company, learn to lead yourself first. If you want to manage a family or a team, learn to manage yourself first. Self-mastery is the DNA of life mastery. The starting point is, as always, with your thoughts. The surface of your thoughts is your character. All of the thoughts which dominate your mind, come together like the wires of a powerful cable to create your character. If you have weak thoughts, you will most certainly have a weak character. Be a strongly disciplined thinker and you are assured of a strong, unstoppable character. A character rich with integrity, courage and trustworthiness is the bedrock of lifelong success.

THE PLEASURES OF PROACTIVITY

You are responsible for everything that happens to you in your life. You can make your existence a shining example of personal and professional excellence or you can make your life miserable. You can choose a nirvana or a nightmare. The key is to realize that you have the power to see problems as challenges and to take any action required to have what you want. The quality of your life is determined by your *interpretation* of what happens to you.

Being proactive means you no longer chalk up past failures or lack of

achievement to your family background or personal circumstances. Being proactive means that you no longer cry over spilt milk and complain about the hand this world has dealt you. You are “pro-active”: for action.

You must exercise your proactivity muscles to develop the mindset of a true champion. You must see yourself as a little god on this earth, one who has all the qualities required for great success and a burning desire to achieve it. If you have such dreams, you will indeed find a way to achieve them. Gandhi, Ford, Lincoln, Bell, Kennedy and Salk all did and so can you.

All highly successful people are proactive. They view setbacks and failures as lessons and see mistakes as wonderful opportunities to grow. *They have come to understand that pain is a teacher and there are no negative events in life, only outcomes which you can choose to view in a positive light if you wish.* Study any rose and its stem. Some will see it as a rosebush with a few little thorns along the way. Others might see it as a thornbush with a little rose at the end. The object of study is the same, what is different is your interpretation.

Once you develop the essential habit of thinking effectively, a new reality will unfold. When you begin to realize that you hold in your mind infinite power to shape your destiny, wonderful things start to happen. More than likely, you are only using 25% of your mind’s incredible potential, at best. What about the rest? Are you really willing to waste the billions of brain cells that you have been given and the marvel we call the human body on a life of mediocrity? This book is your wake up call. In the twinkling of an eye, this very second you can transform your life. Make the decision and the commitment to be the very best you can be.

Being proactive means you shape circumstances and they do not shape you. You have the choice of interpreting any event that has happened in the past or that will unfold in the future according to your wishes. For example, if someone is particularly insulting to you, you have a choice as to how you interpret the event. The average person becomes angry and repeatedly asks himself why someone would do this - pushing himself into a negative, fully unproductive state. The person who has developed proactivity appreciates that he has the power to interpret the event in a manner to empower him. As Eleanor Roosevelt said: “no one can hurt you without your consent.” Gandhi put it another way: “they cannot take our self-respect if we do not give it to them.” The key is the interpretation of the action and to choose to see the event as one that will help you grow. You may make the following interpretations from an otherwise negative circumstance of someone being rude to you:

- i) Poor fellow, what can I do to help him - he must be having a bad day.

- ii) How can I learn from this event and use it as a growth experience on my path to life mastery?
- iii) Everything happens for a reason and something positive will come out of this situation.
- iv) What will happen to me (both physically and mentally) if I let this minor incident bother me? Am I majoring in minor things?
- v) I must see myself as an orange - when squeezed, only what is inside will come out. If I have truly cultivated serenity, kindness and self-control, only these wonderful qualities will appear. If negative qualities come out, I still have some work to do on my journey to personal mastery.

Remember, it is not the snake bite that kills but the venom which circulates afterwards that is fatal. Do not let the snakebite of another person release any venom inside of you. You can control its entry and you are responsible for every thought in your mind. You can make every day an extraordinary celebration once you control the thoughts you allow into your mental garden every second of every minute of every day.

Being proactive means that you can live a blissful existence, seeing the good in all events unfolding on the beautiful canopy of life. There is no such thing as an unpleasant experience. Every experience has the potential to improve an element of your character or to present a challenge to you which may lift you to a higher level spiritually, physically, mentally and professionally. True winners see problems as great opportunities. Where others fail, they thrive. In any recession, there are always a handful of entrepreneurs who make their fortune, the stock players who are buying when everyone else is selling. See the blue sky above every rain storm - it is there.

Proactivity is the first step to personal mastery. It is really nothing more than self-control. And self-control, like all essential mastery qualities, can be developed through patient and consistent perseverance and regular conditioning. Once you make the choice to run these muscles on a daily basis, you will take real control of your life and awaken the true potential that now slumbers deep within you. Will you accept the challenge?

MOMENTUM ON THE PATH TO MASTERY

There is a magic in momentum. Just as a downhill skier starts off slowly at the top of the hill but quickly becomes unstoppable as he progresses down the

slope, you can use the momentum created by little self-mastery successes to guide you to your ultimate goal of a perfect life.

This is the essence of MegaLiving! Start off small with minor changes in your mental attitude, in your exercise program, in your diet and in your life habits. Soon the steps taken grow larger and the results more tangible until you are finally unstoppable. The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step and you must start off small if you want to achieve big results.

In the area of your mental development, you will start enriching your mind's diet with excellent motivational books, positive, inspirational thoughts and exercises to improve your mental agility and stamina. At first, you will be spending only a few minutes a day on this but once you see the dramatic results which appear, you will become more devoted to realizing the potential of your intellect. Throughout this book, it has been emphasized that your mind is like any of the other muscles of the body: you must use it or "lose it". Not only must you use it, but if you do not push it and challenge it daily, it will grow weaker.

If you are not going forward, you are going backward. And if you constantly feed your mind with wonderful treats and condition it for excellence, you will certainly meet with success and happiness not expected in common hours. It does not matter if you have had a poor memory in the past or if you have been a negative thinker all of your life. You can change your focus and your beliefs with a simple commitment to change and a daily dose of mental practice for at least 30 days (and then maintaining your gains by daily conditioning). Nothing is more noble in this life than enhancing your mind and developing your character. Such actions will profoundly improve the quality of your life and the lives of those that surround you.

The same momentum that will propel your mindset to its highest levels will take you to physical mastery. You have a deep fountain of perfect health sleeping serenely inside of you. You must tap into this ocean of peak health and allow it to express itself. This is exceptionally important. You must realize the body's real potential for physical excellence.

The very best physician is a mind full of good thoughts, thoughts of hope, courage, strength and bliss. By feeding your body an equivalent diet of high water content foods (fruits & vegetables) and other healthful choices, it will regain the youthful form it may have lost and give you the energy you may have been lacking with a poor, hard to digest diet. By making small but significant changes in your diet, you will soon develop an incredible momentum that will build Habits of Health.

These habits will provide you with the discipline to eat well for the rest of

your life - giving you a better body, better general health and the motivation to be the very best you can be. Tap into your reservoir of perfect health and start yourself on the course of MegaLiving! You will never turn back once you see the results which you are truly capable of achieving.

A MISSION STATEMENT: YOUR LIFE PLAN FOR SELF-MASTERY

Without a concrete life plan and precisely defined goals, you are like a ship drifting aimlessly in the sea. You will go wherever the tide decides to take you. Such a lifestyle is not only one which leads to little productivity and personal effectiveness but one which provides little happiness and even less fulfillment.

To meet with any lasting success and life mastery, you must chart your course in advance, planning for the achievement of your dreams and preparing to deal with the wonderful curves that life deals along the way. It is essential that you take the time to think deeply about what you want to hear at your testimonial dinner that was discussed at the opening of this book and determine what meaning you hope to attach to your life, what legacy you wish to leave.

Many powerful strategies for goal fulfillment were explained to you in the Goal-Setting Workshop contained earlier. But every person truly interested in getting the very most out of life must take the time to develop a definite mission statement. A mission statement, vital for real self-mastery, is a capsule statement of your life's purpose and objectives. It must come from your deepest core and reflect the fundamental principles which drive you. It must inspire you and accurately represent your dreams, ideals and desires.

With a mission statement in place, the meaning of your life and the course of your life's path is set (although this does not mean that your mission cannot change as you develop and progress through life). With a clear idea of what you now want out of life and the guiding principles by which you will live, your world becomes filled with a tremendous sense of security and confidence. When opportunities and challenges present themselves, you can meet them effectively because you are certain of the direction in which you are travelling and the ultimate destination. You simply select that course of action which will take you where you want to go. Much like the salesman who will get a large bonus if he meets his target of selling 1000 units of his product concentrates primarily on only those activities which will lead him to his goal, a mission statement concentrates your mind on those actions which are most important to success in your life.

A mission statement allows you to live with greater integrity and acts as a powerful compass to keep your life pointed towards your values. If someone suggests you do something contrary to your mission, you can immediately recognize this and refuse the suggestion. If part of your mission statement is to always act with kindness and courtesy because this is the kind of person you aspire to be, when someone treats you harshly, you will never respond in kind because it would go against the core values of your mission. You then remove regret from your world because you start to act the way you really want to act and others cannot cause a response that you dislike. You become proactive rather than reactive. You take charge and have complete control over each situation. You become principle centered, living in a way consistent with your fundamental values.

Here are a few of the benefits of a personal mission statement:

- i) Clarification of the purpose of your life and its guiding values.
- ii) A mission will offer you a constant source of guidance in times of difficulty or challenge.
- iii) It will keep you motivated and act as a personal lighthouse, pointing you at all times to the principles which you value most.
- iv) It will give you a much better sense of balance and allow you to define your life's priorities.
- v) It will help you to manage your time much better, placing emphasis on those activities that will yield the greatest results (80% of life's real accomplishments come from only 20% of your activities so put first things first).

A mission statement is really nothing more than a few paragraphs or pages setting out what your life is about. It should say in general terms what are the key roles in your life and what you will achieve at the end of your existence. It should also set out those values that mean most to you and the qualities you aspire to have.

Develop your mission statement and foster your burning desire to soar to success. Today and every day that follows, you must tap the magical source of mastery that is your true potential. Today is the day you start being far more than you have been in the past. Today is the day that you stop being a prisoner of gravity and start to explore your true potential for higher, more successful living.

HOW TO ATTRACT WEALTH &

PROSPERITY

Wealth means many things to many people. To a person in the world of business, it might mean a net worth of \$50,000,000. To a person more focused on the spiritual aspects of life, it may mean the attainment of peace of mind and a deep faith in the existence and powers of a divine being. Most people are searching for some sort of wealth in their lives and what follows are the time-tested secrets of achieving it.

The first step to the realization of lasting wealth is to know what wealth means to you. What is it that you are searching for? Remember that happiness is not a destination but a way of travelling through life's journey. Happiness is not an oasis that lies at the edge of the desert, a place that you reach only when you are prosperous. Study many of the greatest success stories of our time and they will say that they were happiest when they were starting to build their massive fortunes. They were happiest when they were working against the odds and had the raging fire of ambition and determination burning in their bellies. Determine to be happy now, not later. This requires nothing more than a conscious choice on your part.

Once you have figured out very clearly what wealth means to you and what your key destination is, the next step is to develop what is known as a prosperity consciousness. To be wealthy, you must think wealthy. As with all success, everything begins with the mind since your outer world reflects your inner world. Recognize that the mind is a treasure house of power to bring you all the richness you seek. It will soon come as surely as the night follows the day.

Every man and woman in this world was born to succeed, be wealthy and be prosperous. The potential for prosperity is one of your most essential human qualities, whether you realize it or not. If there is not an abundance of all that you desire in your life, do something about it and do something this very day. It begins by tapping the hidden and magical powers of that part of your mind that you may not even know exists: your subconscious mind.

The subconscious mind, containing infinite wisdom and capability, is brought to life through your beliefs. It responds to suggestion, both verbal (autosuggestion) and mental (through the form of pictures in your mind's eye). By repetition of phrases directed to the importance of prosperity in your life, you will soon enter a wealthy state of mind. This state of mind is the guiding force of every superachiever before you.

The beliefs which you hold in this mindset are then impressed on the subconscious mind which brings forth an abundance of opportunities for

lasting wealth to become your reality. The key is to let your beliefs and faith in the fact that you will one day grow very rich penetrate your emotions. To become wealthy, you must feel wealthy. You must emotionalize your commitment to prosperity and let every thought you put in your mind dwell on this essential outcome. When you soak your mind in thoughts of wealth, happiness and peace, you start to tap and harness the incredible power of the subconscious mind. It is at this point that your life rises above the ordinary to the realm of the extraordinary, where it truly belongs.

For hundreds of years, great success stories have learned to concentrate the limitless power of the subconscious mind which many claim is the direct link to divine power beyond this material world. Whether you subscribe to this philosophy or not, it is essential to your prosperity that you realize that your subconscious mind can do wonders for you when you feed it the right nutrition in the form of affirmations (autosuggestion) and mental pictures (visualization).

Here is the best strategy for using your subconscious mind to achieve your dreams:

1. Get into a very relaxed state using one of the techniques you have learned in this book.
2. Mentally picture, in tremendous detail what it is you want for ten minutes.
3. Tell yourself out loud what you desire and that the result will come.

When you get into a truly relaxed, serene state, the subconscious part of the mind is most receptive to your suggestion. It will act on your every wish and make things happen. The essential key is to condition it just as you condition your subconscious mind for happiness by filling it with only the very best mental food.

Create your own personal mantras to repeat over and over to your subconscious mind when it is in this Ideal Action State of deep relaxation. Load up your mind with vivid pictures of what you will look like when you are prosperous. How will you feel? What will your house, car and family look like? See the many zeroes after the number one in your bank book. Get emotional. What emotions will flood through you when you are wealthy? How will you feel about yourself?

In doing this exercise, every single day, you are simply applying one of the least known but most powerful of the laws of Nature: The Law of Attraction. This law states that what you constantly and consistently focus on in your inner world is precisely what you will receive in your outer world. As you

sow in the wonderful garden of the mind, so shall you reap. Whatever you believe as true in your mind's eye will certainly manifest itself in your reality. As Emerson said: "A man is what he thinks all day long." Understand this concept and you become unstoppable.

If you do not have all that you want in life, today is the day to start the reconditioning process. You are developing that state of magical thinking known as prosperity consciousness. Soon, you will start attracting tremendous opportunities and gifts that you never thought possible. The more you focus on your wishes, the more you believe deeply in their realization and the more every thought in your mind is a good one, the more you will receive. Throughout the day, affirm, "I am attracting great prosperity and wealth." Also repeat, "every day in every single way, I am getting better and better." Never let go of a tight hold on your dreams. They will all come about. But first, once and for all, agree that the mind is the source of unlimited power.

THE LOST ART OF EFFECTIVE PERSONAL MANAGEMENT

Before you can do wonders in the outside world, you must first raise your standards about what you can do in your inner world. The essence of effective personal management is effective mind management. And the essence of effective mind management is mental discipline which is nothing more than controlling each and every thought to ensure that it is a useful and good one. Every thought concentrated in the direction of your dreams is like a little nugget of gold, advancing you confidently in the direction of lasting life wealth.

When your every thought is in the direction of where you want to go in your life, that is in the direction written clearly in your mission statement, your actions follow and become productive ones. Everything is created twice: once as a blueprint in the mind's eye and later in your reality. The process is very similar to the work of an architect who first draws a sketch and plan of the way things will look in the new building and then methodically follows this blueprint to create the structure.

The guiding principle of effective personal management is a simple one: put your life goals first. The things which truly matter to you should never take a backseat to those which matter very little. By your mission statement, you know very precisely what matters most to you. It may be becoming the very best family man that you can be or the kindest mother ever to walk the

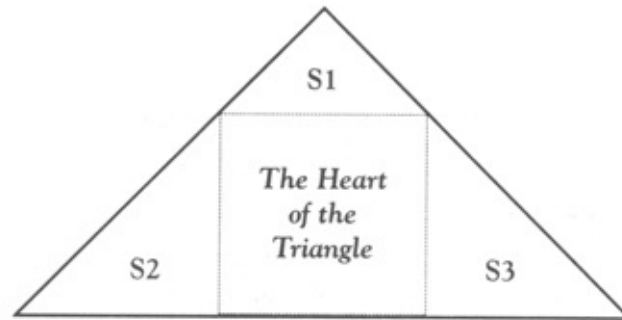
face of this earth. Your life's goals may be to become wildly rich or famous. Perhaps you have determined that you want to be a doctor or a professional athlete. Part of your mission may be to develop your character to the fullest or get into super shape by creating a winners mindset. Your mission might also include the goal of achieving peace of mind and inner serenity. Any of these dreams are attainable, you have learned that. The key now is to see that every thought and action taken in the direction of these goals will get you closer to them. Remember the 80/20 Rule: 80% of the results come from 20% of your activities. Recognize which activities will make the difference in your life and get you to where you want to go. Then focus your energy and attention on these. This is one of the best Secrets of Successful Living.

Every step in another direction, no matter how pleasant it might be, will keep you that much farther from what you have already determined means most to you in your life. Therefore, the overriding principle is to never let what matters most to you be sacrificed to those things that matter the least.

Your time and daily activities all exist within the three points of the Triangle of Personal Management. As you will see in the diagram which follows, your actions fall somewhere within Segments 1, 2 or 3 (SI, S2 or S3) and the Heart of the Triangle.

SI reflects activities which you might be doing which are pleasurable but of no value (i.e., television often falls into this segment of the triangle; you enjoy watching it but recognize it really gets you nowhere). S2 reflects those activities which appear productive and important but which really have little "Big Picture" value because they do not advance your mission and life goals. For example, you might spend a lot of time over a year learning to be an expert in computers but it is really time wasted if your life's primary goal is to be a concert pianist and a first class amateur athlete. These are immediate things which occupy your time but have no value in the overall scheme of things when you really step back and consider them (these activities range from needless meetings to dead-end jobs). S3 reflects those crisis activities that always require our attention whether we like it or not. These are the little brush fires and urgent matters which often appear as we journey through life and take up an undue amount of our energy.

The Triangle of Personal Management



In the center of the Triangle of Personal Management is the Heart of the Triangle. When you have thought deeply about what you truly want out of your life, when you know what your life's mission and meaning is, this place will be your home. When every thought is in the direction of your goals and dreams, almost every second of your time will be spent in the Heart of the Triangle. And when it is, your life will take on enormous power. You will become the strong master of your mind, body and character. You will realize that nothing is impossible and that your dreams are not beyond your grasp. You will reach this level of thinking and you will visit this place very soon if you stay committed, enthusiastic and concentrated on the limitless possibilities of your life. This is not a place for a select few people. This is a place where you belong with all others who raise their lives beyond the mundane to the infinite. This is a place where hopes and desires all come true.

Study the Triangle of Personal Management and commit yourself to living your life within the Heart of the Triangle. This will not be a restricting way to live but a very freeing way of organizing your life according to your dreams and guiding principles. You start to develop unshakable confidence and security as well as an appreciation for the value of time and the limitless achievement which is your potential.

Living your life according to the Triangle of Personal Management is not just one way to live, it is the only way to organize your life. If you study every great superachiever, if you study anyone who has arrived at their Perfect Life, you will see that they live by the Triangle. This is not just a time management matrix, this is a life management matrix. A golden rule for effective and productive living is a strikingly simple one: *time mastery is life mastery*. Guard your time, it is your most valuable commodity. Once it passes through your hands, it is gone forever. Time is the great leveller. John F. Kennedy, Bruce Lee and Isaac Newton all had precisely the same amount of time as you have. We all start off every day with a twenty-four hour gift. What separates the peak performers from the weak performers is how this gift is used.

Balance is another key ingredient of the highly-developed achiever. It is

essential to live a life of balance. Thousands of years ago, in ancient India it was written in the Bhagavad Gita that one should never live a life of extremes. Every person must strive for a balance between moderation and the burning desire to fulfill one's potential. By living with both eyes firmly planted in the direction of your goals, you do not lose the balance and fun that this world has to offer. First, there is nothing more fun than attaining your goals. Second, your life goals (your mission) must be sufficiently thought out to maintain the essential balance in life. For example, your mission statement should include life goals such as being the most adventurous person you know or the most balanced, relaxed person anywhere. A good mission will keep you on track but also well-rounded.

8 KEYS TO THE PATH OF MASTERY

We live in a “quick-fix” society. We want everything in a flash. Faxes send information across the world in a matter of seconds and computers can tap the knowledge of the ages with a couple of key strokes. We want fast food, fast service and fast learning. But some things do take time, disciplined effort and hard work. You have taken the time to get this far in the book. You have sacrificed other things to commit yourself to being the very best you can be by studying the strategies of MegaLiving! Part II will reveal to you the 200 Master Secrets to Success while Part III contains the breakthrough 30 Day Program to Life-Mastery. But before you move on to the next part, please consider what mastery is all about.

What is mastery? Mastery is a state of performance one reaches where every action in the mastered activity reflects unconscious excellence. Think of the martial arts master who has achieved a 5th degree black belt. He no longer has to think about each of the movements he must take to strike a blow or execute a kick through a wooden board. When this master throws a punch, he does not think to himself “first I must raise my arm, then I must pull it back and finally I must release it with tremendous force to strike at my intended target.” Rather, after many hundreds of days of consistent and concentrated practice, he has reached a level of performance where a punch can fly as easily as the master breathes.

The same is true for the concert pianist, the elite athlete or the top flight trial lawyer who, once on her feet in the courtroom, enters a zone or mental state where every ounce of focus is on the case before the judge. Nothing else matters and time has no meaning. The true master, when engaged in the mastered activity, lives purely in the moment. You have had such experiences. Think of the times when you played sports and were in a very challenging

game. Nothing else was on your mind and nothing else mattered. Hours passed by like minutes and you experienced true Bliss and joy.

“A man possesses nothing certainly save a brief loan of his own body yet the body of man is capable of much curious pleasure,” wrote J. B. Cabell. We are capable of exceptional pleasure and happiness in our lives. The state of the true master, where time slips merrily by while the activity is being performed, has been called the state of Flow and can be cultivated. Just as the karate master enters this ideal performance state during his practice or competition, you can tap Flow in your daily life after you have mastered your mind, body and spirit. Flow is nothing more than the ideal state of concentrated attention but it provides an almost magical feeling.

Mastery and the state of Flow intersect at the point of living in the moment. All masters live in the moment and all individuals who have mastered their lives enjoy Flow. What all of these people have in common is the skill of making every moment count and thinking only of what matters most in their lives in every minute to the exclusion of other less productive, trivial thoughts.

The young woman who grew up in poverty dreams of one day becoming the world’s best eye surgeon. When she concentrates her attention on this goal with the force of a laser beam, not only does she set into play incredible forces which start moving to bring about her desire, she also starts to live in each moment and with true happiness. Her mind is on what she wants. She thinks of little else and her activities are the result of a strong mind with its attention in the correct direction.

This woman’s energies are not dissipated by worry or by other life-sucking mental diseases that distract the average person from living up to their real potential. This woman understands the Laws of Nature and knows the nature of the mind. She knows that her mind, with its goal seeking Success Mechanism, will do what she has instructed it to do. She now sets about to take dedicated action to get what she wants with faith in its attainment. This woman has set about on the path of mastery and will start to experience Flow on a regular, if not daily basis. She will start to experience Bliss and deep peace. She starts to realize that her life is indeed a perfect one.

The path of mastery rises above the world of the “quick-fix.” Mastery of your mind, body and character, just like mastery of any other activity, requires discipline, persistence and hard work. But the results will change every element of your life and you will understand that there truly is no more noble cause than strengthening yourself.

The 8 Keys to the Path of Mastery

THE FIRST KEY TO MASTERY: **Commitment & Desire**

As with every important goal, it is essential to know your outcome and precisely what you want. Sit down and assess your desire. Is it a worthy, productive one? What benefits will you receive through mastery of the activity in question? Then make a decision to reach the point of mastery. Make a pact with yourself to do whatever it takes to get to your goal. Think how you will feel as a master of the desired activity. Think about the confidence that this will inspire in you. You are a person of character, push yourself to achieve what you want.

THE SECOND KEY TO MASTERY: **Knowledge & Instruction**

Once you are certain of your outcome, become determined to amass a storehouse of knowledge on the subject you want to master. The answers to everything you would want to know are out there. All of life's mistakes have already been made. Is there really a need for you to make them all again?

Talk to people who have become masters. What did they do to achieve their success? Read books on the subject, listen to cassettes and attend seminars to understand what it is you must do to advance on your chosen path of mastery. Seek out the very best instruction possible and listen to what you are taught. Learn to associate a tremendous amount of pleasure with learning. You will never be disappointed and your life will become one inspiring adventure.

THE THIRD KEY TO MASTERY: **Kaizen & Consistent Practice**

You have learned about the wonders of Kaizen, constant and never-ending improvement, in an earlier section. To gain total mastery of yourself, you must do something every day to develop yourself and your potential. This is nothing more than practice and the development of good habits which will help you reach the higher levels to which you aspire.

A martial arts student must practice regularly if he desires a black belt. At first the workouts are hard and seem like drudgery. The student asks himself, "why am I putting myself through this?" After three weeks of practice, the student notices transformations. The workouts get easier, he develops more stamina and endurance and his technique looks better. Soon his confidence increases and he starts to have fun with the activity. The student is now on the path to mastery and, in time, will definitely get there.

Any changes in one's life habits cause discomfort at first. Exercising, meditation or the daily habit of filling your mind with new ideas for personal growth might be hard at first. But every time you push yourself past any

obstacles, you make yourself that much stronger. The next time becomes a little easier.

THE FOURTH KEY TO MASTERY: Persistence

No path is free of challenges and obstacles. This is the way of Nature. Little hurdles appear to offer you tests and opportunities to refine and expand yourself. Think of all of the problems you have encountered in your lifetime. Have you learned a lesson from every one of them? Most people have. And yet the average person avoids problems like the plague rather than embracing them and realizing that every difficulty will pass and leave us with little nuggets of wisdom that we can use in other areas of our lives.

The real key to mastery of yourself is persistence. Nothing can stop the person who simply refuses to be stopped. There is a solution to every problem and if you want something bad enough, you will find a way to achieve it. There is no success story without the presence of persistence. Cultivate this quality, it will never let you down.

THE FIFTH KEY TO MASTERY: Raise Your Standards and Keep Pushing

A famous international boxing champion was once asked the secret to his phenomenal physique and fitness level. He said, "I daily exercise my body against great resistance." Pushing his muscles against tremendous weight built him up into the elite athlete that he became. The same physical principle applies to your mind and the mastery of your inner and outer world.

On a daily basis, you must exert your will-power to do those things which you may not like to do. Peak performers do things that unsuccessful people don't like to do even though they too might dislike doing them. Do that which you fear and the fear vanishes into thin air never to return. When that feeling of procrastination sets in just as you are about to sit down to that long overdue project, throw it off and tap your true strength of character to get the job done. Each time you overcome these weak tendencies that may have held you back in the past, you take a bold step in the direction of your dreams. Each time you push yourself, just like pushing your muscles when you exercise, you grow tougher and more forceful. Soon what was once hard becomes easy.

It is essential to raise your standards on a regular basis, every master does. Everyone reaches a plateau in any activity. You know you are at this level when things become too easy and the challenge is gone. Things get boring just like a life without difficulties and challenges. Fight against staying on the plateau. To expand, grow and prosper, your aim must be set high on the stars. Keep getting better every day. Never accept anything but the very best from yourself. This is your essential nature, tap into it.

THE SIXTH KEY TO MASTERY: Even the Teachers Have Teachers

Always keep an open mind. No matter how disciplined and successful you become, remember that even the giants have teachers. There is no one on this planet that cannot learn more, improve more and live a better life.

As soon as you close your mind to new opportunities and ideas, you close off a part of your self-mastery path and your quest will be harder to carry out. Maintain a sense of humility and realize that you can learn something from everyone. Every person that you meet every day is a teacher of some sort. Listen to what they have to say and open yourself to the knowledge that exists for the taking.

THE SEVENTH KEY TO MASTERY: Have Fun and Enjoy the Journey of the Master

If you follow and apply the concepts you have learned so far along with the 30 Day Program, you are assured of reaching a state of self-mastery and lasting Bliss. But you have learned earlier that happiness is not a destination that is to be reached after a long trek through this world. Rather, happiness is a manner of travelling through your life. One of the greatest truths is that every moment of every day is pure perfection, whether you realize it or not. There is no chaos in the world and everything happens for a reason. Today, realize the perfection and wonders of your life and do not waste a single minute in regret about things in the past. The past has no relevance to your future and the achievements of which you are capable.

As you refine yourself, developing your mind power, your body and Perfect Health along with your character, enjoy the journey towards your goals. Have fun and be playful. Every master through the ages has known and applied this principle for the Miracle of Successful Living.

THE EIGHTH KEY TO MASTERY: Share Your Knowledge and Serve Others

When all the wisdom of the wisest thinkers and philosophers throughout history is distilled, the purpose of our existence becomes clarified. The overriding objective of our lives stands high above all other pursuits and is simply stated: *we are here to give to others*. The purpose of life is a life of purpose and a life of purpose is created through constant service to those around us. When all is said and done, no matter how much money you make, how high you rise in your company, how respected an entrepreneur you are or how great a parent you become, the quality of your life will be measured by the quality of your contribution. One of the greatest of all of the master keys to lifelong success is serve others and the quality of your own life will

profoundly improve. Do not let even one day slip by without practising “random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty.”

Another ageless truth, and one that the wise sages of the East have spoken of for centuries is the following: “live for each day and celebrate every moment.” Seize and savour every single day because it is a miracle. So often we put off happiness to a later date. We will take that romantic weekend with our spouse when we get that promotion. We will teach our child to play the saxophone or take her to a sporting match when the workload gets lighter. We promise ourselves that we will make time for daily self-renewal or take the time to read all those great books sitting in our den when the big project we are working on is finally completed or when we become the top salesperson at our company. But so often a fundamental principle escapes us: success is a journey, not a destination. Every day is a miracle, no matter how much the phone rings, no matter how high your “in basket” gets and no matter how many bills remain to be paid.

Make time for yourself every day. Enjoy the journey as you pass through life. Invest in yourself. Watch a sunrise at least once a week. Take an afternoon off after a gruelling work week and go to the movies. Understand the power of silence and be still for a change. Learn to love sunsets, the sound of laughing kids and deep friendships. Escape from the telephone once in a while and enjoy life’s simpler pleasures. Rekindle the habit of laughter, play soothing music (and actually do nothing but listen to it) and plan times to rest and relax. Taking the time for personal renewal is essential for self-mastery. It will make you more, not less, productive, efficient and creative.

As you move through the next sections of MegaLiving! you will learn practical and easy-to-apply strategies that will boost your personal and professional success. You will learn the 200 Master Secrets for living a far richer, happier and vital life. These secrets are the direct result of over ten years of study into the finest success tools of both the West and the East. You will also discover the power of the 30 Day Program for Life Mastery. After a very short period of using the simple techniques offered, you will note striking transformations in yourself. You will have the energy and focus to do all that you want, you will have greater peace of mind, you will have more confidence, more vitality and more passion to pursue your dreams. You will note distinct improvements in your health, wealth and character. You will grow fundamentally different and start to live in a new, more magical reality.

As you expand the limits of your mind, body and character and as you soar to higher levels of personal achievement and fulfillment, remember to enjoy the journey and savour the special moments. To me, the following definition of success is the best I have read:

To laugh often and love much; to win the respect of intelligent persons and the affection of children; to earn the approbation of honest critics; to appreciate beauty; to give of one's self, to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to have played and laughed with enthusiasm and sung with exultation; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived - that is to have succeeded.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

PART TWO

The 200 Master Secrets for MegaLiving!

Wisdom thoroughly learned will never be forgotten.

Pythagoras

I have always wanted to write this book. The fact that you are reading it makes it clear that you are committed to reaching for the very best that you can be in all facets of your life - be it personal, professional, financial or spiritual. You seek excellence and this book will inspire you to attain it. It is a total guide to fulfilling the great potential that exists within all of us and a motivator to assist you in reaching greater heights. We have the power to change and to constantly excel - this is part of what makes us human. Each one of us has the power to achieve great things - each one of us. The key is to learn the philosophies, strategies and techniques which will allow for a realization of our greatness.

But this book is more than the common self-growth guides that those committed to success regularly read. This book contains wisdom of the ages that will allow you to develop your leadership skills, enhance your relations with anyone you come into contact with, develop a deeper understanding of human nature and strengthen your personal character. It will allow you to view life from the highest level and constantly perform at your peak. Nutrition, personal renewal and proven confidence enhancement techniques are provided as are relaxation strategies and other mind conditioning methods that will

In Part I, you were exposed to the powerful techniques of self-suggestion, goal-setting, proper breathing and visualization used by peak performers ranging from the elite athletes of the West to the yogis of India and the martial arts masters of ancient China. Many thousands of people have used these simple skills to profoundly improve the quality of their lives - and so can you. You also explored tools to improve your concentration, mental toughness, discipline and will-power as well as noting Eastern philosophies on longevity,

ideal health and the habit of happiness. Part I of this book has given you the essential strategies of life mastery and personal excellence. Part II now gives you the Top 200 Success Secrets of MegaLiving!

THE TOP 200 SECRETS OF SUCCESS AND THE PILLARS OF SELF- MASTERY

- 1. Sleep less.** This is one of the best investments you can make to make your life more productive and rewarding. Most people do not need more than 6 hours to maintain an excellent state of health. Try getting up one hour earlier for 21 days and it will develop into a powerful habit. Remember, it is the quality not the quantity of sleep that is important. And just imagine having an extra 30 hours a month to spend on the things that are important to you.
- 2. Set aside one hour every morning for personal development matters.** Meditate, visualize your day, read inspirational texts to set the tone of your day, listen to motivational tapes or read great literature. Take this quiet period to vitalize and energize your spirit for the productive day ahead. Watch the sun rise once a week or be with nature. Starting the day off well is a powerful strategy for self-renewal and personal effectiveness.
- 3. Do not allow those things that matter the most in your life be at the mercy of activities that matter the least.** Every day, take the time to ask yourself the question “is this the best use of my time and energy?” Time management is life management so guard your time with great care.
- 4. Use the rubber band method to condition your mind to focus solely on the most positive elements in your life.** Place a rubber band around your wrist. Each time a negative, energy sapping thought enters your mind, snap the rubber band. Through the power of conditioning, your mind will associate pain with negative thinking and you will soon possess a strongly positive mindset.
- 5. Always answer the phone with enthusiasm in your voice and show your appreciation for the caller.** Good phone manners are essential. To convey authority on the line, stand up. This will instill further confidence in your voice.
- 6. Throughout the day we all get inspiration and excellent ideas.** Keep a set of cards (the size of business cards; available at most stationary stores) in your wallet along with a pencil to jot down these insights. When you get home, put the ideas in a central place such as a coil notepad and review them from time

to time. As noted by Oliver Wendell Holmes: “Man’s mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions.”

7. Set aside every Sunday evening for yourself and be strongly disciplined with this habit. Use this period to plan your week, visualize your encounters and what you want to achieve, to read new materials and inspirational books, to listen to soft soothing music and to simply relax. This habit will serve as your anchor to keep you focused, motivated and effective throughout the coming week.

8. Always remember the key principle that the quality of your life is the quality of your communication. This means the way you communicate with others and, more importantly, the way you communicate with yourself. What you focus on is what you get. If you look for the positive this is what you get. This is a fundamental law of Nature.

9. Stay on purpose, not on outcome. In other words, do the task because it is what you love to do or because it will help someone or is a valuable exercise. Don’t do it for the money or the recognition. Those will come naturally. This is the way of the world.

10. Laugh for five minutes in the mirror each morning. Steve Martin does. Laughter activates many beneficial chemicals within the body that place us into a very joyous state. Laughter also returns the body to a state of balance. Laughter therapy has been regularly used to heal persons with varied ailments and is a wonderful tonic for life’s ills. While the average 4 year old laughs 500 times a day, the average adult is lucky to laugh 15 times a day. Revitalize the habit of laughter, it will put far more living into your life.

11. Light a candle beside you when you are reading in the evening. It is most relaxing and creates a wonderful, soothing atmosphere. Make your home an oasis from the frenzied world outside. Fill it with great music, great books and great friends.

12. To enhance your concentration and powers of focus, count your steps when you walk. This is a particularly strong technique. Take six steps while taking a long inhale, hold your breath for another six steps, and then exhale for six steps. If six steps is too long for the breaths, do whatever you feel comfortable with. You will feel very alert, refreshed, internally quiet and centered after this exercise. So many people allow their minds to be filled with mental chatter. All peak performers appreciate the power of a quiet, clear mind which will concentrate steadily on all important tasks.

13. Learn to meditate effectively. The mind is naturally a very noisy machine which wants to move from one subject to another like an unchained monkey. One must learn to restrain and discipline it if one is to achieve anything of

substance and to be peaceful. Meditation for twenty minutes in the morning and twenty minutes in the evening will certainly provide you with exceptional results if regularly practiced for six months. Learned sages of the East have been advancing the many benefits of meditation for over 5000 years.

14. Learn to be still. The average person doesn't spend even 30 minutes a month in total silence and tranquility. Develop the skill of sitting quietly, enjoying the powerful silence for at least ten minutes a day. Simply think about what is important to you in your life. Reflect on your mission. Silence indeed is golden. As the Zen master once said, it is the space between the bars that holds the cage.

15. Enhance your will-power; it is likely one of the best training programs you can invest in. Here are some ideas to strengthen your will and become a stronger person:

a) Do not let your mind float like a piece of paper in the wind. Work hard to keep it focused at all times. When doing a task, think of nothing else. When walking to work, count the steps that it takes to get all the way to the office. This is not easy but your mind will soon understand that you hold its reins and not vice versa. Your mind must eventually become as still as a candle flame in a corner where there is no draft.

b) Your will is like a muscle. You must first exercise it and then push before it gets stronger. This necessarily involves short term pain but be assured that the improvements will come and will touch your character in a most positive way. When you are hungry, wait another hour before your meal. When you are labouring over a difficult task and your mind is prompting you to pick up the latest magazine for a break or to get up and go talk to a friend, curb the impulse. Soon you will be able to sit for hours in a precisely concentrated state. Sir Issac Newton, one of the greatest classical physicists the world has produced, once said: "if I have done the public any service, it is due to patient thought." Newton had a remarkable ability to sit quietly and think without interruption for very long periods of time. If he can develop this so can you.

c) You can also build your will-power by restraint in your conduct with others. Speak less (use the 60/40 Rule = listen 60% of the time and speak a mere 40%, if that). This will not only make you more popular but you will learn much wisdom as everyone we meet, every day has something to teach us. Also restrain the urge to gossip or to condemn someone who you feel has made a mistake. Stop complaining and develop a cheerful, vital and strong personality. You will greatly influence others.

d) When a negative thought comes to your mind, immediately replace it

with one that is positive. Positive always dominates over the negative and your mind has to be conditioned to think only the best thoughts. Negative thinking is a conditioned process whereby the negative patterns are established over and over. Rid yourself of any limitations and become a powerful positive thinker.

16. Make an effort to be humorous throughout the day. Not only is it beneficial from a physical viewpoint but it diffuses tension in difficult circumstances and creates an excellent atmosphere wherever you are. It was recently reported that members of the Tauripan tribe of South America have a ritual where they awake in the middle of the night to tell each other jokes. Even tribesmen in the deepest sleep wake to enjoy the laugh and then return to their state of slumber in seconds.

17. Become a highly disciplined time manager. There are roughly 168 hours in a week. This surely allows plenty of time for achievement of the many goals we desire to accomplish. Be ruthless with your time. Set aside a few minutes each morning to plan your day. Plan around your priorities and focus on not only those tasks which are immediate but not important (i.e., many telephone calls) but especially on those which are important but not urgent, for these allow for the greatest personal and professional development. Important but not immediate activities are those which produce long-term, sustainable benefits and include exercise, strategic planning, the development of relationships and professional education. Never let the things which matter most be placed in the backseat as compared to those that matter least.

18. Associate only with positive, focused people who you can learn from and who will not drain your valuable energy with complaining and uninspiring attitudes. By developing relationships with those committed to constant improvement and the pursuit of the best that life has to offer, you will have plenty of company on your path to the top of whatever mountain you seek to climb.

19. Stephen Hawking, one of the great modern physicists of the world, is reported to have said that we are on a minor planet of a very average star located within the outer limits of one of a hundred thousand million galaxies. Are your problems really significant in light of this? You walk this Earth for but a short time. Why not become devoted to having only a wonderful experience. Why not dedicate yourself to leaving a powerful legacy to the world? Sit down now and write out a list of all that you have in your life. Start first with your health or your family - the things we often take for granted. Put down the country we live in and the food we eat. Do not stop until you have written down fifty items. Once every few days, go through this list -you will be uplifted and recognize the richness of your existence.

20. You must have a mission statement in life. This is simply a set of guiding principles which clearly state where you are going and where you want to be at the end of your life. A mission statement embodies your values. It is your personal lighthouse keeping you steadily on the course of your dreams. Over a period of one month, set a few hours aside to write down five or ten principles which will govern your life and which will keep you focused at all times. Examples might be to consistently serve others, to be a considerate citizen, to become highly wealthy or to serve as a powerful leader. Whatever the mission statement of your life, refine it and review it regularly. Then when something adverse happens or someone tries to pull you off course, you quickly and precisely return to your chosen path with the full knowledge that you are moving in the direction that you have selected.

21. No one can insult or hurt you without your permission. One of the golden keys to happiness and great success is the way you interpret events which unfold before you. Highly successful people are master interpreters. People who have attained greatness have an ability which they have developed to interpret negative or disempowering events as positive challenges which will assist them in growing and moving even farther up the ladder of success. There are no negative experiences only experiences which aid in your development and toughen your character so that you may soar to new heights. There are no failures, only lessons.

22. Take a speed reading course. Reading is a powerful way to gain many years of experience from a few hours of study. For example, most biographies reflect the strategies and philosophies of great leaders or courageous individuals. Read them and model them. Speed reading will allow you to digest large quantities of material in relatively small periods of time.

23. Remember people's names and treat everyone well. This habit, along with enthusiasm, is one of the great success secrets. Everyone in this world wears an imaginary button that screams out "I WANT TO FEEL IMPORTANT AND APPRECIATED!".

24. Be soft as a flower when it comes to kindness but tough as thunder when it comes to principle. Be courteous and polite at all times but never be pushed around. Ensure that you are always treated with respect.

25. Never discuss your health, wealth and other personal matters with anyone outside of your immediate family. Be very disciplined in this regard.

26. Be truthful, patient, persevering, modest and generous.

27. Soak in a warm bath at the end of a long, productive day. Reward yourself for even the smallest of achievement. Take time out for renewal of your mind,

body and spirit. Soon all your more important goals will be met and you will move to the next level of peak performance.

28. Learn the power of breathing and its relationship with your energy source. The mind is intimately connected with your breathing. For example, when the mind is agitated, your breathing becomes quick and shallow. When you are relaxed and focused, your breathing is deep and calm. By practising deep, abdominal breathing, you will develop a calm, serene demeanour that will remain cool in the hottest of circumstances. Remember the rule of the Eastern mountain men: “to breathe properly is to live properly.”

29. Recognize and cultivate the power of autosuggestion. It works and is an essential tool in maintaining peak performance. We are all performers in one way or another and it is particularly valuable to use such techniques of athletes and public figures for our own enhancement. If you want to become more enthusiastic, repeat “I am more enthusiastic today and am improving this trait daily”. Repeat it over and over. Purchase a legal notepad and write out this mantra 500 times. Do it for three weeks with regular practice and feel that this quality is developing. Very soon it will come. This is a strategy that Indian sages have employed for thousands of years to aid their spiritual and mental development. Do not be discouraged if the results are not immediate, they will certainly develop. The spoken word is a powerful influencer of the mind.

30. Maintain a diary to measure your progress and to express your thoughts. Writing out not only your successes but your troubles is one of the world’s most effective methods of erasing the worry habit, staying in optimum state and developing precision of thought.

31. Stress is simply a response which you create in the interpretation of an event. Two people might find that a given event results in quite different responses. For example, an after dinner speech might strike fear into the heart of an inexperienced speaker while a strong orator views it as a wonderful opportunity to share his thoughts. Understanding that the perceived negative effects of an event or task may be mentally manipulated and conditioned towards the positive, will allow you to be a peak performer in all instances.

32. Read “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” by Stephen Covey. It contains a wealth of wisdom and powerful insights into further developing your character and enhancing your personal relationships.

33. Become a committed audio-tape user. Most self-mastery programs and books are now offered in this format. Listen to these inspirational materials on your way to work, whilst waiting in the line at a bank or while you wash dishes in the evening. Make your car a college on wheels and use the drive

time to make knowledge your best friend. All down time can be very effectively used in this productive fashion. Use such opportunities to learn and continually expand your mind and its vast potential.

34. Try fasting one day every two weeks. During these fast days, drink fruit juice and eat fresh fruits only. You will feel more energetic, cleansed and alert. Fasting also has a salutary effect on your will-power as you are subverting the otherwise pressing impulses in your mind calling on you to eat more.

35. Keep a radio-cassette player at your office and listen to soft, soothing music throughout the day. Place pleasant scents and inspirational pictures in your workplace. By the magic of association, your work will become something you enjoy even more and arouse a very pleasant feeling within you.

35. Budget your time on trips such that you can spend half an hour in the airport bookstore. They always contain the latest and best self-mastery books and tapes given that those who travel by air are of a group that finds value in these materials.

36. Read “As a Man Thinketh” by James Allen. And don’t just read this little book once, read it over and over again. It contains an abundance of timeless wisdom on living a fuller and happier life.

37. Remember that forgiveness is a virtue that few develop, but one that is most important to maintaining peace of mind. Mark Twain wrote that forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it. Practice forgiveness especially in those situations where it is seemingly difficult. By using your emotional forgiveness muscles more regularly, petty wrongs, remarks and slights will not touch you and nothing will penetrate your concentrated, serene mindset.

38. Empty your cup. A full cup cannot accept anything more. Similarly, a person who believes that he cannot learn anything else will stagnate quickly and not move to higher levels. A true sign of a secure, mature individual is someone who sees every opportunity as a chance to learn. Even the teachers have teachers.

39. The Two Minute Mind is an excellent exercise for developing concentration. Simply stare at the second hand on your wristwatch for two minutes and think about nothing else for that time. At first your mind will wander but after 21 days of practice, your attention will not waver during the routine. One of the greatest qualities a person can develop to ensure his success is the ability to focus for extended periods of time. Learn to build up your concentration muscles and no task will be too difficult for you.

40. Drink a cup of warm water before a speech. Ronald Reagan employed this strategy to ensure that he maintained his honey-smooth voice. Mastery of the art of public speaking is a noble goal. So dedicate yourself to it. You will be judged by the calibre of your communication skills.

41. When you stand and meet someone, stand firm and steadfast. A telling sign of an unfocused, weak mind is constant fidgeting, shifting of the eyes and shallow breathing.

42. Act tough and you will be tough. Have courage and inspire others with your actions. But always be considerate.

43. Ask not what this world can do for you but, rather, what you can do for this world. Make service an important goal in your life. It is a most fulfilling investment of time. Remember, in the twilight of your life, when all is said and done, the quality of your life boils down to the quality of your contribution to others. Leave a rich legacy for those around you to savour.

44. Once a week, arise at dawn. It is a magical time of day. Be still, go for a walk or simply listen to an old Ella Fitzgerald recording. Take a long, hot shower and do 100 pushups. Read one of the classics. You will feel alive and invigorated.

45. Remain slightly aloof. Do not let everyone know everything about you. Cultivate a mystique.

46. Master the art of public speaking. There are few natural speakers. One great trial lawyer stammered dreadfully but through courage and strength of conviction, he developed into a brilliant orator. Role model anyone you think is a highly effective, influential communicator. Visualize a picture of this person. Stand like him, smile like him, and talk like him. The results will startle you.

47. Seek out motivational speakers committed to character training and lifelong success. Make it a point to attend inspirational lectures each month to consistently renew the importance of personal growth in your mind. In a two hour seminar, you can learn powerful techniques and strategies that others have spent many years learning and refining. Never feel that you have no time for gathering new ideas, you are investing in yourself.

48. Read the wonderful book “Discovering Happiness” by Dennis Wholey. It will certainly open up new horizons for you in your quest for an optimal state of health and happiness.

49. To enhance your concentration, read a passage in a book you have never explored. Then try to recite it verbatim. Practice this for only 5 minutes a day and enjoy the results which follow after a few months of effort.

50. Try entering a 5 km running race and then a 10 km event. The adrenaline that flows from the experience of racing with several hundred other fitness-minded people is exhilarating. By constantly pushing the envelope of your capacity, your potential will quickly unfold. Remember, the body will give you only what you ask of it.

51. Aromas have been proven to be an effective means of entering a state of relaxation. Scents have a very noticeable effect on your mindset and moods. Purchase the essential oils of orange and clove bud from your local health food shop. Put a few drops of either oil within a cup of boiling water and inhale the sweet smelling steam for a few minutes. Then let the mixture sit in the room where you are resting. You will gain a sense of peace and serenity. A little apple spice in the air has recently been shown to induce a far more restful sleep.

52. Cultivate the art of walking half an hour after you have finished eating your evening meal. Walks in natural settings are the very best. Walking is, perhaps, nature's ideal exercise. And when you walk, do not think about work or about the bills or about the challenges you might be facing - this will neutralize many of the benefits. Simply enjoy the walk. Notice the richness of your surroundings. Let your senses drink in the beauty of nature and the crispness of the air for a change. So many people who have mastered the art of growing younger have also mastered the habit of a daily walk.

53. Start a program of weight lifting at the gym. Strong people are mentally tough people. As you age, you need not lose your physical nor your mental strength. 75 year-old men are running marathons, 80 year-old women have scaled mountains and 90 year-old grandparents are living rich, productive lives. Whether you are 19 or 93, stay fit, stay motivated and stay passionate about life.

54. Never argue with the person you work for - you will lose more than just the argument.

55. In terms of business attire, dark suits (navy blue and charcoal grey) reflect power, sophistication and authority. Have you ever seen a prime minister or president in a tan suit?

56. Regularly send handwritten notes to your business clients and your other relations to strengthen the bond. Develop a system which reminds you to send something valuable to this network at least once every four months. Send them postcards when you are away on vacation. If you have to buy a few hundred postcards and spend an hour writing, don't worry. This is an exceptionally good investment of your time. Another idea is to send a recent article of interest to your contacts with a handwritten note saying that you

thought this would interest them and that you continue to value their friendship. Relationship building should always be a central focus whether you are a CEO, a student, a salesperson or a parent.

57. Two of the fundamentals for a happy, joyful life are balance and moderation. One must maintain a balance of all activities and do nothing to extremes.

58. Drink Jasmine tea which can be obtained from any Chinese herbal shop. It is excellent for your general health and is very relaxing. Also try placing a few slices of fresh ginger in a cup of hot water for a superb tea that will restore vitality and keep you in a peak physical condition.

59. Remember that effective time management makes you more rather than less flexible. It allows you to do the things that you really want to do rather than the things you really have to do.

60. Do not take personal development books as gospel. Read them and take whatever useful ideas you need. Some people feel they must do everything suggested and take the techniques to extremes. Every book has at least one tool or strategy of benefit. Take what you need and what works for you and discard what doesn't suit you.

61. Become an adventurer. Revitalize your spirit and sense of playfulness. Become a kid again. Once every few months, plan to enjoy a new, thrilling activity such as white water rafting, scuba diving, windsurfing, rockclimbing, joining a martial arts club, sailing, deep sea fishing or camping. This will keep your life in perspective, bring you closer to those you share the activity with and keep you feeling invigorated and young.

62. Spend time with Nature. Natural settings have a powerful effect on your senses which in turn will lead to a sense of renewal, refreshment and peacefulness. Peak performers through the ages have understood the importance of getting back to Nature. Start camping or simply taking quiet walks in the forest. Rest by a sparkling stream. Cultivate your own little garden which will serve as your personal oasis in the middle of a crowded city. By cultivating a friendship with Nature, you will quickly find more serenity, contentment and richness in your life.

63. Recall the wise saying "mens sana in corpore sano" which means in a sound body rests a sound mind. Never neglect the body which is intimately connected to the mind. This is your temple. Feed it the finest fuels, exercise daily and care for it as you would your prized possession - because it is.

64. Be so strong that nothing interferes with your peace of mind. A well-known boxer was once unhappy. When asked why, he said that he had

allowed himself to think a negative thought. Curb your desires and stay centered and focused - it gets easier with practice. You truly cannot afford the luxury of even one negative thought.

65. Do not eat three hours before sleep. This allows for smoother digestion and a more restful sleep. For deeper, more renewing sleep, remember that a daily dose of exercise promotes good sleep as does a period of relaxation an hour before bed. Also do not bring work to bed with you or think about anything which might agitate you. Ease yourself into sleep like a baby being sung a soft, soothing lullaby. And finally, as Leonardo da Vinci said: “a well-spent day brings happy sleep.”

66. Be careful about your reputation. If it is good it will take you to the highest of heights. But once tarnished, it will be difficult to retrieve. Always reflect on your course of action. Never do anything you wouldn't be proud to tell your mother about. Have fun always but temper it with common sense and prudence.

67. Find mentors to model who will guide you in your progress. The mistakes of the world have all been made once before - why shouldn't you have the benefit of the experience of others? Find someone who has both courage and consideration for others, someone who is therefore mature. Your mentor must have only your best interests in mind and should be sufficiently senior to offer you good guidance on the subjects you seek assistance with. Everyone needs to feel appreciated and even the busiest of executives will find time to assist a person who respects them and values their advice.

68. Make a list of all your weaknesses. A truly confident and enlightened person will note a weakness and seek to methodically improve. Bear in mind that even the greatest and most powerful people have weaknesses. Some are better than others in hiding them. On the other hand, get to know your best qualities and cultivate them.

69. Never complain. Be known as a positive, strong, energetic and enthusiastic person. Someone who complains, is cynical and always looks for the negative in everything, will scare people away and rarely will succeed at anything. From a purely psychological viewpoint, things are always created twice: once in the mind and then in reality. Focus on the positive. Be so mentally tough that nothing takes you off your planned course to success. Visualize and firmly believe in what you want. It will most certainly come true.

70. Overlook the weaknesses of your friends. If you look for flaws you will most surely find them. Be mature enough to ignore the petty failings of others and see the good that each one inherently possesses. We can learn from

everyone. Everyone has a story to tell, a joke to share and a lesson to learn. Open your mind to this and you will learn a tremendous amount. Friends are so very important to a happy existence - especially those who have shared many experiences and laughs with you. Work hard to make friendships, and all your relationships for that matter, stronger and richer. Call your friends, buy them small gifts of books or other items you believe they might enjoy. The “law of the farm” applies to relationships as well as to the rest of life - you reap what you sow and to have great friends you must first be one.

71. Be kind, considerate and courteous. But also be shrewd and know when to be tough and courageous. This is the mark of a well-defined character and you will surely command respect. It is most useful to read books on friendliness and enhancing relationships by being a good listener, showing others sincere appreciation and refining other interpersonal skills. But, to truly succeed, one must also recognize that worldly wisdom and shrewdness are essential skills to foster. Become an expert in human psychology and be able to read the essence of people. Never be taken advantage of and be aware of the politics around you. Stay above petty gossiping and office politics but appreciate that they indeed exist and know what goes on behind your back. Every great leader does.

72. Create your image as a highly competent, strong, disciplined, calm and decent individual. Find that crucial balance between working on the image that you project to the rest of the world and your inner character. Create a sense of mystery about yourself as the truly wise never show their hand. Do not tell everyone everything about yourself, your strategies and your aspirations. The successful citizens of this world think thrice before they speak because a word uttered can never be retrieved. Make things look easy and people will say you are naturally gifted. Speak only good things and people will flock to you. Never speak ill of others and all will know you will not malign them behind their backs. Build your character and live a highly principled life.

73. Familiarity breeds contempt is a very good rule. The stars remain far above the Earth. You must keep a distance from all but your closest of relations. Once people see everything of a leader he loses his aura and with it the authority and mystique he may have created. For example, Ronald Reagan was known to many as an excellent leader. He carefully cultivated his image of a folksy, considerate politician who kept the interests of the United States first and foremost in his mind. At gatherings of world leaders, he commanded attention and respect in his dark suits, surrounded by the trappings of power such as political aides, security officers and a convoy of limousines. As soon as he appeared, thoughts of authority and power came to our minds. Did you

ever see the President with his shirt off swimming at his pool? How about in his dressing gown after waking up after one of his long sleeps, hair tousled and beard grown? Reagan's handlers never allowed such glimpses because they detract from the perception of authority. The American nation was not exposed to these sights. In the Clinton Era things changed and you saw the President eating Big Macs and wearing baseball caps with a full business suit. Whilst these scenes may be endearing to the public, there is little doubt that President Clinton was more familiar to us, merely another one of us and, unlike the stars above, much closer to the ground.

74. Learn to organize your time. It is incorrect to say that by becoming a meticulous time manager and living by a carefully defined schedule you become rigid and non-spontaneous. Rather, proper organization allows one to accomplish those goals which are truly important as well as enjoy leisure time. Good time management offers more time for fun and relaxation - not less. These important periods are scheduled into the week just like other commitments which may appear more pressing. Neither are sacrificed. Also, discipline yourself and stop wasting time on all those immediate and pressing but unimportant tasks (i.e., the ringing phones) and concentrate on the activities that are truly meaningful to your life's mission. Such activities include time for self-renewal and reflection, time forging relationships built on trust and mutual respect, time for physical fitness, time to read and think deeply and time serving others in your community.

75. Keep well-informed about current events, the latest books and popular trends. Many peak performers read five or six papers a day. You don't have to read every story of every paper. Know what to focus on, what to pass by and what to clip out and read at another time (many successful people scan scores of magazines and papers, clipping out articles of interest; these articles go into a file folder which can be read in your down time). Knowledge is power. Whether you are an entrepreneur, a corporate leader or someone leading a family, you can profoundly change your life and the lives of those around you with a single idea. Just ask Gates, Edison and Bell.

76. When choosing your life partner, remember that this is the most important decision of your lifetime. The marriage relationship offers 90% of all your support, happiness and fulfillment so choose it wisely. Consider qualities such as affection, sense of humor, intelligence, integrity, maturity, temperament, compatibility and that indescribable characteristic of chemistry. If these are present, your relationship stands an excellent chance of great success. Move slowly and let no one press you into an uncomfortable decision.

77. Never discuss your personal development activities with anyone. Your strategies for expanding your mind and spirit are your own. Others might not

understand the value of self-mastery and, further, will take away your credit when you meet with success by saying that you relied on techniques. Keep these self-development activities to yourself.

78. Schedule relaxation time into your week and be ruthless in protecting it. You would not schedule another activity into the time planned for an important meeting with the president of your company or your best client so why would you put off a period to invest in yourself? We must have time for ourselves to reflect, unwind and recharge our batteries. These are the renewal activities that allow us to maintain peak performance and are exceptionally valuable periods.

79. 83% of our sensory input comes from our eyes. To truly concentrate on something, shut your eyes and you will remove much distraction.

80. Be the master of your will but the servant of your conscience.

81. Develop the wonderful habit of a daily swim. It will promote excellent health, keep you relaxed and concentrated, lean and trim. Swimming is not stressful on the body, provides a great workout for the lungs and requires little time to do effectively. Remember that in a fit body resides a fit mind.

82. People who are doing good today are ensuring their happiness for tomorrow.

83. The key to successful time management is doing what you planned to do when you planned to do it. Keep your mind fully on the task at hand. Only then will you achieve all your goals and have time for the things that matter most. Although it is imperative to be flexible (a bow too tightly strung will soon break), following your planned schedule requires no more than simple discipline.

84. An excellent visualization technique: if you are worrying about something, picture the words of your worry on a piece of paper. Now ignite a match to the paper and watch the worry dissipate into flames. Bruce Lee, the great martial arts master employed this mental control device regularly.

85. Compartmentalize your worry. Set aside a certain amount of time to ponder over a problem and map out an effective plan of attack and your options. Once this is done, have the mental fortitude not to come back to the problem and go over it again and again. The human mind is a strange creature - things we want to forget keep coming back and those things we want to remember are not there when we want them. But the mind is similar to a muscle and the more you flex it the stronger it will become. Make it your servant. Feed it only the best nutrition and information. It will serve you well and perform magic if you believe in it.

86. Peak performers are physically relaxed and mentally engaged.

87. To be at your performance peak mentally, your body must be loose physically and relaxed. It is now beyond dispute that there is a mind-body connection and when the body is supple, free from tension, the mind is clear, calm and focused as well. This is why yoga is such a beneficial activity. It keeps the body relaxed so that the mind can follow. Basic stretching for 15 minutes a day is also an excellent way to release tension that builds up as a result of our life in this highly complex and fast moving, but wonderful world. Try having a massage or power lounging in a Jacuzzi. Relax the body and you relax the mind.

88. Prepare a detailed financial plan for the next few years and follow it. Seek out financial advice if you need it. A powerful strategy for financial mastery is also a simple one: save 10% of all you make for long-term growth (take this off the pay cheque before you have a chance to spend it). If you can invest \$200 a month for the next 30 years at an annual return rate of 15%, you will end up with \$1.4 million dollars. Being wise with your money is one of the very best investments to make. Financial security leads to personal freedom.

89. Readers are leaders. U.S. President Bill Clinton read more than 300 books during his short time at Oxford University. Some top performers read a book a day. Seek out knowledge and information. We have truly entered the age of massive information and those who are proactive can use this to their advantage. The more you know, the less you fear.

90. Get into the excellent habit of reading something positive and inspirational before you go to bed and as soon as you awake in the morning. You will soon note the benefits as these thoughts will be supporting you throughout the day.

91. Make it one of your goals to develop a dynamic, charismatic personality. Such a quality is something each one of us has the potential to develop but few do. President Kennedy was a sickly youth but rose above his physical problems to be the most charismatic and exciting political figure in the history of the United States. Start off small. Take a Dale Carnegie course on public speaking. Go to the library where you will find books on the fine art of conversation and personal grooming. Learn three clean and witty jokes and get in the habit of socializing. You will have fun and build a lasting network of friends and associates.

92. On the subject of conversation, a Chinese proverb states as follows: “a single conversation across the table with a wise man is worth a month’s study of books.” Seek out the wise and learn from them. They are just waiting for that small spark of interest to tell you all that you need to know.

93. Lao-Tzu prized three essential qualities for a person of greatness: “the first is gentleness; the second is frugality; the third is humility, which keeps me from putting myself before others. Be gentle and you can be bold; be frugal and you can be liberal; avoid putting yourself before others and you can become a leader among men.”

94. “When you cannot make up your mind which of two evenly balanced courses of action you should take - choose the bolder,” said W. J. Slim. There is no substitute for courage and though the chance of stubbing your toe increases the more you walk, it is always better than going nowhere by standing still. Take chances, take smart risks and you will meet with success beyond your dreams.

95. Become your spouses number one supporter, the one who is always there supporting and fueling hopes and dreams. Develop together and march confidently through the world as an army of two.

96. Think of three people who can provide you with inspiration, motivation and support for your goals and aspirations. Plan to meet with each one of them over the next few weeks. Listen enthusiastically to them and brainstorm with them. Map out a strategy and take their wise counsel.

97. Make every one of your days a true masterpiece. Remember the old saying: “it’s not who you think you are that holds you back but what you think you’re not.”

98. Just as valuable energy is wasted by spending time on activities that are of no value, energy can be wasted on loose thinking. Imagine that your mind has an energy measure of 1000 watts at its disposal. Each time your mind wanders off the project at hand, to a nagging worry, to all the things to do by the end of the day, 100 watts is lost. Quite soon the entire energy supply is gone. This is the nature of the mind. Fail to discipline it and your energy levels will be depleted and your accomplishments will be minimal. Control it and you will see great things happening. You will feel more powerful and achieve difficult tasks with ease. The 19th century philosopher Henri Frederic Amiel summed it up nicely: “for purposes of action, nothing is more useful than narrowness of thought combined with energy of will.”

99. It has been rightly said that “you sow an action, you reap a habit. You sow a habit, you reap a character. You sow a character, you reap a destiny.” The essence of a person is his character - make yours unique, unblemished and strong. Do not say you will do anything unless you will indeed do it. Speak the truth and measure your words wisely. Be humble, straightforward and peaceful.

100. Remember the overriding law of nature: positive overcomes the

negative.

101. A contented mind is a continual feast. Greed and material desires must be curbed to achieve lasting happiness and serenity. Be happy with what you have. Do you really need all of those material possessions? One can develop contentment just as one develops patience, courage and concentration - with daily practice and sincere desire.

102. Make a new friend or acquaintance every day. Keep an updated list of all contacts close at hand. Rich relationships are the DNA of a rich, rewarding life.

103. Remember this ancient Indian proverb: “if you conquer your mind, you conquer the world.”

104. Place greater importance on staying happy than amassing material possessions. A zest for life is developed and carefully nurtured through thoughtful activities and pursuits.

105. Contrary to popular opinion, stress is not a bad thing. It allows us to perform at peak levels and can assist us through the flood of chemicals it releases within our bodies. What is harmful is too much stress, or more particularly, a lack of relief from stress. The times of stress must be balanced nicely with times of pure relaxation and leisure for us to be healthy and at our best. Many of the great leaders of our time were exposed to crushing workloads and the burdens of high office. But they prospered by developing strategies to balance the challenging times with fun and calming times. President Kennedy would have regular naps in his White House office. Winston Churchill had the same practice and slept for one hour every afternoon to stay alert, focused and calm. Not only is it essential to be physically relaxed to maintain optimal health but one must couple this trait with mental serenity. Too often people think that vigorous exercise, good nutrition and pleasant leisure activities will be the panacea for all ills. These pursuits must be combined with positive thinking and peace of mind for true happiness and longevity.

106. Get into the habit of taking mental vacations throughout the day. Visit Bermuda for five minutes in the morning. Visualize a swim in the Mediterranean in the afternoon and skiing down the slopes of the Alps just before you “head for home at the end of your busy and productive day. Try this for two months and schedule these rest periods into your agenda just as you would your essential meetings or tasks. The rewards will be significant.

107. A change is as good as a rest. Whether this change is as major as a change of employment or as minor as a leisure pursuit which occupies your entire attention for an hour three times a week, these changes in routine, and

mindset are entirely beneficial. In selecting the activity, try to find something totally engaging which requires deep concentration so that your mind is free from the mundane but seemingly important aspects of your day. Many executives are becoming involved in the martial arts for just this reason. If your mind wanders for even a split second, a harsh lesson is soon learned. Pain is a great motivator and always will be.

108. Study these 10 fundamentals of happiness:

- Pursue a productive, exciting and active life
- Engage in meaningful activities every minute of every day
- Develop an organized, planned lifestyle with little chaos
- Set realistic goals yet keep your mark high
- Think positively - you cannot afford the luxury of a negative thought
- Avoid needless worry over trifling matters
- Devote time to fun
- Develop a warm, outgoing personality with a sincere love of people
- Get in the habit of giving more than receiving
- Learn to live in the present. The past is water under the bridge of life.

109. Strive to be humble and live a simple life.

110. Read “A History of Knowledge” by Charles Van Doren which chronicles the history of the world’s ideas. In this one book is an absolute wealth of knowledge. Get it, read it and enjoy it.

111. Read “The Art of the Leader” by William A. Cohen. It is both inspirational and practical.

112. Develop that elusive quality known as charisma. The following are ten qualities of a charismatic leader:

1. Be committed to what you are doing
2. Look like a winner and act like one
3. Have big dreams, a vision and reach for the sky
4. Steadily advance in the direction of your goals
5. Prepare and work hard at every task you do
6. Build a mystique around yourself
7. Be interested in others and show kindness
8. Have a strong sense of humour
9. Be known for the strength of your character
10. Have grace under pressure. (John F. Kennedy said that “the elusive half-step between middle management and true leadership is grace under pressure.”)

113. In work, love and life, play hard and play fair.

114. Do not talk when you are listening. Interrupting is one of the most common discourtesies. Listen aggressively with the full scope of your attention. You will be amazed at what you learn and how your counsel will soon be sought by many.

115. “Anybody can become angry - that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, and to the right degree, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way - that is not within everybody’s power and is not easy.” - Aristotle

116. Knowledge is power. People who have achieved great success are not necessarily more skillful or intelligent than others. What separates them is their burning desire and thirst for knowledge. The more one knows, the more one achieves. Great leaders have techniques to allow them to arrive at the top of the mountain. Read the biographies of the world’s leaders and learn from their habits, inspirations and philosophies. Cultivate the important practice of active role modelling.

117. All the answers to any questions are in print. How to improve as a public speaker, how to improve your relations with others, how to become fitter or develop a better memory - all aspects of personal development are dealt with in books. Therefore, in order to achieve your maximum potential, you must read daily. But, in this age of information, you must be ruthless in what you consume. Focus on your goals and read only those materials that will be an asset to you. Do not attempt to read everything for you are busy and have other tasks at hand. Choose what is important and filter out what is of no value. Begin with a solid newspaper every morning for an excellent summary of the key events of the day. Also ensure that your readings are broadly based. For example, perhaps you may wish to read history, business, Eastern philosophy, health books etc. Then go to the library and develop the habit of making regular visits. Read the classics from Hemingway to Bram Stoker. Read history, with all its lessons on life and read biology for a new perspective. Look under the heading of “success” at the library and you will be amazed at the literature you will find: inspirational stories of people who developed greatness in the face of adversity, strategies for improving yourself physically, mentally and spiritually and texts to tap the unlimited power for success that certainly exists within us. Drink deeply from such books. Surround yourself with them and read them constantly whether on the bus each day or before you go to bed. Let them inspire and motivate you.

118. Get into the habit of breakfast meetings. An early meal to touch base with a friend or business associate is a most pleasant way to start the day and allows you to maintain your contacts in the face of a busy schedule.

119. If you live in a flat, always ensure that it is very bright and has a swimming pool. A pool is especially important because it will allow you to exercise no matter how busy your schedule. There is nothing like a refreshing swim after a long, productive day. You will feel excellent and sleep like a baby.

120. “Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but rather we have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.” - Aristotle

121. “Today is yesterday’s pupil.” - Benjamin Franklin

122. If you have a choice of taking two paths, always take the more daring of the two. Calculated risk taking often produces extraordinary results.

123. Every day, get away from the noise, the crowds and the rush and spend a few hours alone in peaceful introspection, deep reading or simple relaxation.

124. That which any person who has walked this Earth has achieved you can achieve with the right mental attitude, perseverance and industry. Limiting thoughts and weak mental images must be banished. One’s focus must be on the attainment of goals that are truly important.

125. Get into the habit of memorizing beautiful poetry. Not only will it be a great source of entertainment but it will quickly lift your intellectual functions to a higher level by improving your memory, concentration and mental agility.

126. Keep your words soft and arguments hard.

127. Break the worry habit by putting things in perspective and laughing over small setbacks. Repeat to yourself that “this will soon pass”. Then take a sheet of paper, write out the worry on your mind. Allot a certain period of time to think on it, isolate the precise problem and formulate a powerful line of attack. By this practical technique, your negative, energy sapping habit will soon be a faint memory of the past.

128. Be known as that person who goes the extra mile. The person who works longer than others. The one who takes on the extra assignments and follows them through with great success. Be the person who always has concerns about others and who makes family members feel truly special. Be a standout, the one with a balance in both personal and professional excellence. Be a star that shines brightly for all others to admire.

129. Become a committed and sincere networker. Cultivate new friendships. You will truly be surprised where people end up over the years and how small, kind gestures will help you later on in life. Treat everyone who crosses

your path as if they are the most important person in your world. You will certainly meet with great success.

130. When you look for something you will find it. If you constantly expect exceptional success, you will surely have it. Peak performers attract success. You must keep the goals you desire to achieve at the forefront of your mind throughout the day. Repeat your ambitions at least five times a day and visualize yourself achieving them. If your goal is to be rich, picture the house you will be living in, the car you will be driving, what it will feel like to be rich and the pleasure of attaining your goals in life. Repeat your ambition over and over until you have complete certainty that you will attain your desires and eventually you will.

131. Develop a sense of wonder about the world. Be an explorer. Find pleasure in the things that others take for granted. Stop and actually listen to that wonderful street musician playing the trumpet. Read that classic book your father loved so much. Plan to get away from the city next week and visit a secluded, powerfully natural place for a few days. Take a mini-retreat and care for your mind, body and spirit. It will profoundly improve the quality of your life.

132. Send cards on birthdays and little notes from time to time showing that you care and were thinking about your relations. We are all busy but if you spend just five minutes a week to send a card to a friend or family member, by the year end you will have sent out 52 cards. This is a small investment for the dividends that are guaranteed to follow.

133. Remember and use people's names when you talk to them. A person's name is a uniquely sweet sound to them.

134. Go outdoors and look up into the blue sky for half an hour. Note the supremely strong feeling that you get when you are connected to Nature. Get away from your rigid schedule today and spend the afternoon in a beautiful setting. Walk in the woods and sit by a cool stream. Go fishing or rent a canoe. Getting away from your routine will provide a refreshing release and make you feel wonderful when you eventually return.

135. Once every few weeks, leave your watch at home. In this society we often become bound to the clock and soon it governs our every action like a rigid taskmaster. Go through the day doing precisely what you wish to do and for however long you wish to do it. Spend time with that special person without having to run off to your next appointment. Savour the moments and focus on what is truly important rather than those mundane things that somehow take on a greater importance than they really deserve. Lose the clock and gain some quality time.

136. Laugh at work and be known as a positive achiever.

137. An idea gives rise to a mental image. A mental image will then generate a mental habit out of which a mental trait ultimately blossoms. Master your thoughts and you master your mind; master your mind and you master your life; master your life and you master your destiny.

138. Recognize the tremendous power of opposition thinking. This simple technique simply involves the substitution of a positive thought each and every time a negative or limiting thought enters your mind and begins to detract from your focus. For example, on a Sunday evening, you may think “I wish I did not have to return to work tomorrow after such a pleasant and relaxing weekend.” Immediately replace this defeating thought pattern before it begins to take hold by thinking the opposite. For example you might think “I cannot wait to return to the office given the exciting projects on the go and the wonderful sense of accomplishment I receive after a productive, challenging week.” Then think how fortunate you are to have a job and one that you can advance in through your own efforts and productivity. Make a list of all of the positive attributes of your position and repeat them over and over. Soon the negative pattern will be broken and you will look toward the exciting week ahead with that most fabulous of qualities: *enthusiasm*.

139. Get deep into the habit of personal introspection. Ben Franklin called this one of the most important strategies for personal effectiveness. Spend ten minutes every night before you go to bed in self-examination. Think about the good things you did during the day and the bad actions you may have taken which you must change in order to excel and grow. Successful people are simply more thoughtful than others. Daily reflection will soon allow for the eradication of your negative qualities (ranging from procrastination to gossiping to insulting others) and will sharpen the mind. After steady practice, a time will eventually arrive when the mistakes you make are few indeed and your personal power will move to the highest level.

140. The most efficient and effective alarm clock ever developed lies within our own minds. If you do not believe this, try the following:

1. Sit in an easy chair approximately ten minutes before you go to bed.
2. Shut your eyes and gently rest your hands on your knees.
3. Breathe deeply for a few minutes (inhale to the count of five, hold to the count of ten and exhale fully).
4. Repeat the following command to yourself at least twenty times: “I will awake at (the desired time) feeling fresh, alert and enthusiastic.” This command must be said with feeling and emotion. Then take a few seconds to visualize yourself waking up at the desired time (the more

detailed the mental picture the better) and imagine how great you will feel. You will soon wake up at the desired moment after little or no practice.

141. Some men see things as they are and say “why?” I dream of things that never were and say “why not?” George Bernard Shaw

142. Use these strategies to improve the quality of your mind-calming meditation:

1. Practice meditation at the same time each day and in the same place so that your mind becomes accustomed to entering the desired serene state as soon as you enter the peaceful place.
2. The early morning is undoubtedly the most powerful time to meditate. Indian yogis believe that the pre-dawn time has almost magical qualities which aid in achieving the super-peaceful state so many meditators attempt to attain.
3. Before you start, command your mind to be quiet by using affirmations such as “I will be focused and very calm now.”
4. If thoughts do enter, do not force them out but simply let them pass like clouds making way for the beautiful blue sky. Picture that your mind is like a still lake without even a ripple.
5. Sit for ten minutes at first and then increase the time every few sittings. After a month or two, you will not be interrupted by any pressing thoughts and will surely feel a sense of peace that you have never felt before.

143. Forge and foster great friendships as such relationships are essential for maintaining a healthy and successful life. Find a few minutes every day to jot down some warm wishes to an old friend or to place a telephone call to someone you have not had a chance to speak to for a while. Show compassion and sincere consideration for all your friends and watch the results which follow. Develop long lasting friendships by being a good friend. Also, make it a priority to seek out new friends no matter how many you may be fortunate enough to have. This is one of life’s greatest joys which many of us miss.

144. Purchase a cassette or CD of Miles Davis’s *Kind Of Blue*. It is a uniquely soothing compilation that will refresh and soothe you after a challenging and productive day. Music such as this is good for the soul.

145. Drown your appetite by drinking more water - ten glasses a day is ideal. It revitalizes the system and purifies the body. Also, get into the habit of eating soups and more complex carbohydrates such as rice, potatoes and pasta which feed your hunger with far less calories than other less healthy foods.

You truly are what you eat and must ensure that your diet is designed to maximize your energy and mental clarity.

146. Develop the essential habit of punctuality for it is most important for high success. Punctuality reflects discipline and a proper regard for others. Without it, even the most sophisticated person appears slightly offensive. Do not be early and certainly never be late. Budget your time and, should you arrive early, take a walk or simply relax for a few moments to ensure that you arrive on time as requested. You will be appreciated and welcomed always if you cultivate this important quality that appears so rarely these days.

147. The telephone is there for your convenience, not for the convenience of others who are attempting to contact you. If you are busy with a task, do not answer the phone or have someone answer the call so that you may return it at a more suitable time. Do not let such interruptions waste your time. Most phone calls are not important and last far too long anyway. Over the course of the average American's lifetime, she will spend two years unsuccessfully returning phone calls. There are so many important and fun things to do in life. The challenge is to respect precious time so that we can achieve a fuller, more satisfying life.

148. Start your day off well. Before you get out of bed each morning, say a prayer or repeat your personal affirmation giving thanks for the day and all the positive things you will see and achieve. Make a conscious decision to make this the best day of your life and meet with pleasure, success and fun. If you believe it, it will most certainly happen. A timeless secret for lifelong success is to live each day as if it were your last.

149. Confide in your partner. This will strengthen the relationship and allow you both to grow at the same pace. It is also a wonderful tonic to share important or otherwise troubling things with the person you are closest to.

150. Push yourself just a little harder and a little farther each day. Winners on the playing field of life push the envelope of their potential daily. Do the thing you fear and the death of fear is certain. Winners do the things that less developed people don't like doing even though they also might not enjoy doing them. This is what strength of character and courage is all about. Tackle your weaknesses. Do the thing that you have consistently put off. Write that thank you note or letter that you have neglected for so long. Exercise your discipline muscles and they will rise to the occasion by filling your day with more satisfaction, more effectiveness and far more energy.

151. All individuals who have attained the highest of levels generally have cultivated the essential mental habit of optimism. Without optimism, life loses

its lustre and hardships appear at every step of the way. This is an essential life habit.

152. Today, write down the seven best qualities of individuals who you admire and post this list by your bed. Then, each morning as you rise, focus on a new quality which you will strive to implement during the day. After one week, you will notice small differences in yourself. In one month, these traits will become firmly embedded. After two months, all those important qualities will be yours.

153. You have as many reputations as you do acquaintances as each person you know thinks differently of you. What should truly concern you is your character. You have full control of this and this is what you must develop, refine and cultivate. Once your character is strong and vigorous, then all else that is positive will follow.

154. Consider yourself as an orange. Only what is really inside can come out. If you fill your mind with thoughts of serenity, positivity, strength, courage and compassion, when someone squeezes you, this is the only juice that can flow.

155. Our lives have been described as a parenthesis in eternity. We are but a small blip on the stage of the Universe. As we can take nothing with us when we leave, then the real meaning of our existence must be to give and serve others. Keep this in mind. When you wake up early in the morning, repeat the mantra: "I will serve others today, I will care for others today and I will be kind today." This kind of living will bring you huge returns if you stay on the purpose of aiding others rather than on the outcome of personal gain.

156. Be known as an innovator at your place of work. Sit down over the next week and write out ten suggestions for your supervisor as to how to improve the work being done and the quality of the workplace itself. Be known as an idea person willing to discover challenges and tackle them with zest and enthusiasm.

157. Learn to laugh at yourself.

158. Keep open the windows of your mind.

159. Try to go through one full day without saying "I". Focus on others. Listen to others and you will learn wonderful new things as well as gain friendships.

160. Spend one hour a day in full silence except in answer to direct questions. Even then, answer directly and without extending the conversation unduly. We, so very often, talk around subjects and repeat ourselves. This ancient

Eastern exercise will not only build your will-power but develop clarity and precision of language which is essential for effective communication.

161. Each day, do two things that you do not like doing. This may be the preparation of a report you have been putting off or shining your shoes. It does not matter how small the task, just do it! Soon these chores will not seem so bad, your personal power will increase and your productivity will soar. Try it because this is an age-old technique for building strength of character.

162. True happiness comes from only one thing: achievement of goals, whether they are personal, professional or otherwise. You are happiest when you feel you are growing. When you feel that you are contributing and advancing in the direction of your dreams, you will notice that you have boundless energy and vitality. Time spent on activities which offer little reward aside from a fleeting feeling of relaxation (television watching is the best example), is time lost forever. Relaxation is essential but chose the most effective means of renewal and spend your time in productive pursuits that will slowly move you along the path of accomplishment. Happiness comes from doing - not sleeping.

163. Napoleon III of France had a special ability to remember the names of all those he met. His secret was to say “so sorry, I missed your name” after being introduced to a new person. This would cause the name to be repeated and reinforced within his memory. If the name was difficult, he would ask for the proper spelling.

164. The sages of China have held a basic life philosophy for thousands of years: develop an indomitable spirit along with courtesy and integrity. The repetition of these three traits will make you an exceptionally powerful individual respected by all. Exert your effort and personal influence to attain these qualities.

165. A valuable technique for defeating negative and self-limiting thoughts that can hamper you from attaining peak performance is the mental interrupt device. When a negative thought enters your consciousness, first you must become aware of it and have a strong desire to remove it for good. To do this, interrupt the negative train of thought by doing something to break and banish the self-limiting pattern. When the bad thought enters, you may pinch yourself and say, “I am strong and weak thoughts are gone”, or you may shout out loud or do anything that will divert your attention and remove the negative focus. By practising this technique, you will see a marked decrease in the negative thoughts that most people have, paving the way to the mindset of a true winner.

166. Taking time from your busy work and family schedule to focus on

personal growth activities is essential and is never to be considered a waste. Taking one hour from your hectic morning to watch kids playing in a nearby park or to take a brisk walk might seem like a poor use of time to some. But by making more time for life's simple pleasures and bringing more balance into your day, you will make the remaining hours far more productive and effective. You cannot do good unless you feel good. When you are serene, relaxed and enthusiastic you are also more productive, creative and dynamic. This is something that has been proved time and time again and yet we consistently get caught up in the apparent immediacy of our routine and fail to see the forest for the trees.

167. Read more, learn more, laugh more and love more.

168. Pick five relationships that you desire to improve over the next six months. Write out the names of these people and under each name detail why you want to improve the relationship, how you plan to do so and in what time frame. This is simply another facet of goal setting - the practice which will always yield excellent results in any of life's fields. Be committed to being a better parent, friend and citizen. Be creative in the steps you take to show your appreciation and respect for your loved ones. Sending notes is fine but consider unique and thoughtful measures ranging from a romantic picnic in the country with your partner to an early morning fishing trip with an old friend.

169. Remember the power of prayer.

170. An excellent investment in your personal growth is the six tape series of Reverend Norman Vincent Peale entitled "The Power of Positive Thinking". Get it and listen to it over and over. It is packed full of strategies and techniques that, without fail, will ensure that you live a long, happy, productive and prosperous life.

171. Consider purchasing a pocket organizer which may prove to be an excellent tool for scheduling, recording your commitments and keeping the responsibilities of your life in fine order. One can be purchased at a reasonable price.

172. Browse second-hand bookstores every few months searching for lost treasures of character-building books. You will find gems on public speaking, improving your habits, time management, personal health and other important subjects for low prices. Some of these older texts are the very best and come from an age where every young person was under an obligation to develop discipline and good life habits regularly.

173. Read *The Magic of Believing* by Claude M. Bristol. It will allow you to release the powerful forces which most certainly exist in your mind but may

presently be untapped.

174. Be known as someone with a cool head, warm heart and great character. Your presence on this earth will long be remembered.

175. It has been said that doing something for others is the highest form of religion. Every week, out of the 168 hours available, spend a few in service to others. Many say that such selfless service soon becomes a key focus within their lives. Give your time at a seniors home or to needy children. Teach someone how to read or offer to give a public lecture on the subject of your expertise. Simply take action and do something to leave a legacy.

176. Fill your home with bright, fresh flowers. This is one of the best investments you can make. Let the sounds of great music, loud laughter and good fun fill the oasis of your home.

177. Get to know and enjoy your neighbors. They make life more pleasant and can provide helpful resources when you least expect it.

178. Recognize the power of mantras and the repetition of positive, powerful words. Indian yogis have employed this technique for over 4000 years to live tranquil, productive and focused lives. Create your own personal mantra which you can repeat daily to enhance your character and strengthen your spirit.

179. When the breath is still and strong, so is the mind.

180. Use the following visualization from time to time. Sit in a quiet place and picture that you will be on the earth for only another day. Who would you call, what would you say and what would you do? These questions will give you some important insights into what outstanding actions you must endeavor to complete.

1. Precision & clarity of thought and speech
2. Refined and gentle manners
3. The power and habit of introspection 4- The power of personal growth
4. The power to achieve your goals & dreams

182. *“Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind. People grow old only by deserting their ideals and by outgrowing the consciousness of youth. Years wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul... You are as old as your doubt, your fear, your despair. The way to keep young is to keep your faith young. Keep your self-confidence young. Keep your hope young.”*

- Dr. L.F. Phelan

183. Explore the healing powers of Chinese herbal medicine and similar

Eastern strategies for maintaining a state of perfect health (consult an expert at all times and take a formal course on the subject to gain powerful insights into this most useful area of healing).

184. Be certain to organize your time around the true priorities of your life. As Stephen Covey has noted: “it is easy to say no when there is a deeper yes burning within.”

185. Slow down your pace of life. In this complex age, we are running our lives at a frantic pace. Focus on what is truly important and start undertaking activities that will slow you down and rekindle the natural, calm within us. Sit in the grass and watch the blue sky for half an hour - at first, it is not as easy as one would think and the urge is to get up after only a few minutes of such useful relaxation. Once you are used to a healthier pace of living, with regular periods dedicated to the simple pleasures of life, every other activity will become more efficient and enjoyable.

186. Try eating only fruit and milk for a full day. Fasting is a powerful success strategy of the East that millions use regularly to maintain peak health and mental clarity. By trying this simple practice every few weeks you will notice a surge in your energy level and a lightness in your walk. Big meals require a significant amount of energy that could be better directed toward more productive pursuits.

187. Value your spouses laugh and keep your partner’s picture close by your work desk for inspiration and pleasant thoughts throughout the day.

188. If you are married, have your partner’s initials and your own engraved on the inside of your wedding bands along with the date of your marriage. This is useful not only in case the rings are lost but to provide you both with personalized keepsakes that may be passed down to successive generations.

189. The mind is like a garden - as you sow, so shall you reap. When you cultivate it and nurture it, it will blossom beyond your wildest expectation. But if you let the weeds take over, you will never reach your potential. What you put in is what you get out. So avoid violent movies, trashy novels and all other negative influences. Peak performers are meticulous about the thoughts they allow into the gardens of their minds. You truly cannot afford the luxury of a single negative thought.

190. Do a hundred sit ups a day and do not break this habit. Strong abdominal muscles are very helpful to ensuring that you enjoy peak health and injury free days. They also maintain your appearance and confidence level.

191. Be the most honest person that you know. Be trustworthy - worthy of the trust of others.

192. Curb your worldly desires and you will strengthen your will. He who is deeply bound to material things runs into difficulty and unhappiness when they are taken away. Happy people enjoy worldly objects but do not become bound or wedded to them. Live a simple, uncluttered and productive existence. To simplify your life today, consider selling your television, stopping the junk mail, spending less, learning yoga, selling your car, practising meditation every morning and unplugging your ringing phone once in a while.

193. If you have not laughed today, you have not lived today. Laugh hard and loud. As William James said: “we don’t laugh because we are happy, we are happy because we laugh.”

194. Read *The Charisma Factor - How to Develop Your Natural Leadership Ability* by Robert J. Richardson and S. Katharine Thayer. It is a superb book for any aspiring leader, or a current one, who seeks to advance to the next level.

195. Travel often. The perspective offered by visiting new lands is important and allows one to appreciate the existence that we generally take for granted.

196. Each month set a physical fitness goal for yourself. Start to swim in July or learn to ski in January. The key is to arrive at a goal for the month, write it down, consider how to execute it and then, as the NIKE ad says: “Just Do It!”.

197. Things are always created twice. There is always the mental creation which precedes the physical creation. Just as plans for a house must first be set down on paper before the house is started, so too should your day be planned within your mind early in the morning before the day begins. Visualize the wonders you desire this life to bring and they will materialize as your subconscious mind starts to focus on the attainment of goals. This is a true law of Nature.

198. Walk to work and notice the wonderful beauty in Nature.

199. Sleep less, spend less, do more, live longer and be greater.

200. Read this book over and over and share it with others!

PART THREE

The MegaLiving! 30 Day Program

Our imagination is the only limit to what we can hope to have in the future.

Charles F. Kettering

THE ULTIMATE ACTION PLAN FOR MASTERY OF YOUR MIND, BODY & CHARACTER

Welcome to the MegaLiving! 30 Day Program for Life Mastery. This is a truly revolutionary personal growth plan that combines the most effective strategies for lifelong success from both the East and West. The powerful (and often little-known) techniques that you will learn are easy to use and have helped many thousands achieve a more satisfying, prosperous and rewarding life.

This program is designed to provide you with all the essential skills needed to transform yourself into a peak performer at the game of life. No matter how successful you currently are, how finely tuned your mental attitude, body and character might be at the present time, this 30 day program has all the ingredients to take your life to its highest level. If you use your personal power to devote at least an hour a day to the program, learning and applying the concepts consistently, you will certainly notice profound improvements in the quality of your life one month from today.

Each day, you will meet with little victories and will start to gain a magical momentum and love for self-growth that will be unstoppable. The exercises offered must be done in order to benefit from the program. And if you give it a chance, dedication over this month will lead you to the energy, health, serenity, positive attitude and motivation that you have been searching for.

Follow this life-changing program to achieve all your dreams. Follow this program and live with the richness you deserve. Follow this program and put far more living into your life.

The program is simple and easy to follow. Each of the following thirty pages refers to a single day of the program. Each day will have exercises, success tips and philosophies which you must apply that day.

Use the Success Log at the end of the book to chart your daily progress. It is important that you enter your results into the Success Log every day to provide yourself with a measure of your discipline and to give you the momentum and inspiration to continue.

Welcome to the first day of your new life, a life of MegaLiving!

PART I: THE MIND *Goal-Setting Workshop*

Today is the first day of the rest of your life. You must start preparing for what you want to be in twenty or thirty years this very day, not twenty or thirty years from today. You have learned in Parts I & II of the mind's true potential and that you have the incredible power to transform your life in a second if you really want to. Today, make those changes you have put off for so long. Start living your dreams and finally create a new personal destiny.

List your top ten mind improvement goals for the next 30 days	i)	_____
	ii)	_____
	iii)	_____
	iv)	_____
	v)	_____
	vi)	_____
	vii)	_____
	viii)	_____
	ix)	_____
	x)	_____

Go over this list at least three times today, repeating your burning commitment to achieving these goals and a clear date by which you will have attained them. Let the power of autosuggestion work for you as it has worked for so many success stories of the past. Now think of all the pain you will feel if you do not make these improvements - really see and feel it. Finally, think of all the pleasure you will have if you indeed accomplish the above goals, how increased concentration, mental focus & supreme confidence will enhance your life. Please review your mental goal list every remaining day of the MegaLiving! program, even if for only a few seconds.

Part II: THE BODY

Today is the first day of your new physical reality. Over the next 29 days, you

will learn secrets for taking your body and physiology to its highest level. You will learn how to condition it for peak health and peak life performance. Welcome to the path of physical mastery.

List your top five physical goals	i)	_____
	ii)	_____
	iii)	_____
	iv)	_____
	v)	_____

Part III: THE CHARACTER

List the top five improvements in your character (your public and private self) which you are determined to have over the coming month. Consider their importance and repeat them aloud when you awake and immediately before you sleep for the next 29 days.

Part I: THE MIND *The Power of Concentration*

Without the ability to concentrate for long periods of time and focus your thoughts on a single purpose or goal, there can be no real progress and no lasting life achievement. Concentration also brings with it a quiet serene mind, one that does not succumb to every weak thought trying to enter. A serene mind brings with it a healthier body as your health is clearly rooted in your thoughts. Practice the following two concentration exercises every remaining day of the program for a minimum of 15 minutes.

Exercise 1: *The Burning Candle* - Find a very quiet spot at a quiet time. Light a candle, making sure the room is otherwise dark. Look at the candle for as long as you can and try not to blink. Study the shape of the flame, its texture and its movements. Do not take your mental focus away from the flame - if it drifts off to something else, gently pull your mind back and deeply concentrate on this beautifully empowering light. Each day you do this, your concentration will improve and you can focus without distraction for a longer time. You will also start to feel calmer and little things will no longer ruffle you.

Exercise 2: *The Stepping Strategy* - One of the most effective methods to improve weak thinking tendencies and a lack of concentration is step counting. The process is simple yet the results will be striking. As you are walking, inhale to six steps, hold your breath for another six and exhale for six more steps. Repeat the cycle and do not let your mind wander away from your step counting.

Part II: THE BODY *The Power of Exercise*

Start your exercise program today and focus on cardiovascular conditioning. If you are not fit, a fifteen minute walk in the fresh air at a moderate pace will be fine. If you are fit, do whatever sport you have been doing, whether swimming, running, squash or rollerblading, for an extra fifteen minutes. The key is to push your body. Do some exercise every day for the next 28 if you want results.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *The Power of Kindness*

Your character will be shaped slowly and steadily over time. By making little daily improvements, it will take on a new form and become full of strength, power and vitality. Today, reflect on one of your top character improvement goals noted yesterday. Develop a clear plan of why this new quality is important and what you will do to have it. One of the most valuable qualities is that of kindness to others. Kindness and consideration for those around you will ultimately give you lasting happiness as well as personal, professional and social respect. Start off your day by affirming aloud your commitment to becoming a kinder more considerate person. Then visualize the wonderful day unfolding in your mind's eye, taking care to focus on every possible opportunity to show kindness to others. See this happening and it will indeed happen.

Part I: THE MIND *The Power of Mental Conditioning and the 5 Questions of Success*

Today, you will learn the power of conditioning your mind for success. The key to achieving excellence in all areas of your life is to recognize that what you focus on you will have. If you focus on all that is good and use mental pictures to fill your mind with beautiful images, the laws of Nature will act to make them into reality.

One of the best ways to direct your mind's focus is to use questions. From today onwards, start your day off with a winner's mindset by developing five Questions of Success. Some of the best are as follows:

- i) How can I make today a living masterpiece and what action must I take?
- ii) What do I have to be grateful for? (make a complete mental list)
- iii) What can I do today to improve my mind, body and spirit?
- iv) How can I contribute to the world in some small way?
- v) What can I do to laugh and have fun today?

These questions should become part of your life. Just as you brush your teeth after you wake up, you must develop the habit of asking yourself these questions every morning. It will only take a few minutes and you can do it in the shower. They will very quickly change the way you feel and the way you act throughout the day. This simple formula will bring you lasting results and enrich your life.

Part II: THE BODY *Getting back to Nature*

Nature can have a brilliant effect on an overworked body and mind. Realizing the benefits of time with Nature is a first step to true relaxation and serenity. Today, make a plan for some event to get you in touch with the natural world around you . It may be as significant as a week camping and hiking in a national park or as simple as a walk in the woods for half an hour. The key is to focus all your attention on the surroundings and affirm the beauty and simplicity of the world. We make things much more complex than they are and taking this time to look at that magnificent blue sky or sit alongside a still lake is something that you deserve. Try to make such activities part of your weekly exercise regimen.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Your Personal Success Journal*

You have decided to make your life a living masterpiece. It is now important to record your daily results, ideas, inspirations and challenges. There is something magical about writing things down. Your thoughts and focus becomes clearer and plans become burning desires when you commit them to the written form.

You do not require anything expensive - a simple coil notebook will do nicely. Write daily, if possible but do not worry if you miss a day or two. The main idea is to note down all your thoughts and how you plan to tackle any difficult situations. Journal writing has become one of the most favored techniques to prevent worry. By writing any problems down, they stop running over and over your mind. Once the problem is isolated, you can develop a precise plan of attack and your serene mindset will remain intact.

Part I: THE MIND *Autosuggestion and Dream-Building*

Autosuggestion must become one of your main tools for personal mastery. Through this age-old technique, a person without confidence will soon develop it, a person with no motivation may soon attain it and one without

material wealth can ultimately have it. Autosuggestion is simple and involves nothing more than an application of the following two-step formula:

- i) Write down the goal your are determined to achieve (this can be anything from confidence to making ten million dollars). Make certain that the goal is precise and clear.
- ii) Read the desired goal aloud as often as possible during the day but, at least before you get up and prior to sleeping. Do the repetitions (or mantras as they are often called) ten times at a time and really believe that they will come true. A clearly defined goal, repeated regularly until it becomes a burning desire will come true when it is combined with that all-important ingredient of belief in its realization. Do not worry that it does not seem that it will come true under your present circumstances. Simply persist and follow this formula. Your mind will create the opportunities and the results.

Part II: THE BODY *The Self-Massage*

A full-body massage will make you feel like a million dollars and can be done by yourself in just five minutes. The massage will lubricate your skin keeping it soft and supple, ease any tension in your muscles and correspondingly, calm your mind while providing a deep sense of relaxation and peace.

Buy yourself a bottle of sesame oil (available from any health store). Heat four or five tablespoons in the microwave, being very careful not to make it too hot as you will burn yourself. Then, in your bathroom, dip your fingers into the oil and start your body massage. Start with your feet and legs rubbing vigorously, massaging any tightness out. Then move to your stomach and abdomen where you should be more gentle and use clockwise circular motions. Next is the back, neck and arms. Finally, work your way on to your face, massaging your skin deeply. When the massage is complete, soak in a hot bath if possible. This caps off the relaxation strategy with a soothing activity and also removes the excess oil from your body. You can do the personal massage daily for best results or once a week when you wish to relax and have time for yourself.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Enhancing Your Social Environment*

Today's exercise is simple. Go to your local bookstore or library and get a copy of Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Read it completely over the next week. Think deeply about its wisdom and start to apply its philosophy.

Part I: THE MIND *Mastery of Your Concentration Skills*

The key to success in life, you might be surprised to learn, is simply mental concentration. With a concentrated mind, you will live not in the past, not in the future but in the present. When you learn to concentrate effectively, big problems become small and you can see things in the world that were previously invisible. You will be able to work more efficiently without the burden of a wandering mind that worries about past difficulties and actions. Things will come easily and you can move quickly to achieve your ambitions and desires. Concentration brings deep peace of mind. The stronger your mind, the lovelier life becomes. Life is very much like a rose. There are thorns along the path but once you rise above them, there is true and lasting beauty. Remember the rose and its wonderful properties. Today's exercise is a fun one:

Buy a single rose. Place it in a quiet spot and stare at it for as long as possible. Focus on its brilliant qualities, its splendid texture and fragrance. Do not take your sight or mind off the rose. Other thoughts will come into your mind if you have not trained it for concentration. Do not worry, gently let the thoughts pass away like a cloud moves through the blue sky and return your attention to the rose. Practice this essential exercise every day. It is among the most important. Once you can focus without interruption for twenty minutes, you will have reached the level where your mind is conditioned to do very special things for you. You will be amazed at the changes in life such mental toughness brings.

Part II: THE BODY *Voice Conditioning - An Ancient Technique for Vitality*

The ancient Tibetans believed that the health of the body was controlled through the operation of seven spinning vortexes. When the vortexes slowed down, hormonal changes would cause the process of aging to set in. One of the vortexes, located deep in the neck, governs the vocal chords. If the voice is strengthened, the vortex is stimulated to produce an optimal state of health. This is why Tibetan monks would perform chants daily. Not only would such vocal conditioning enhance their all-important concentration skills but it would yield remarkable physical results in the form of peak health.

Exercise: Repeat "Mimm" over and over for at least five minutes a day. Perhaps the best time to do this is whilst you shower. For the best results, gradually lower your voice with each repetition until you can do the entire exercise in the lowest voice you have.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Courtesy*

“Manners maketh man” wrote a literary scholar many years ago. Showing politeness to everyone you meet will make your character mighty and dramatically improve your relationships. Today, make an action list of all the chances you will have to show courtesy to those around you, to show that you appreciate them. Then, use these opportunities to grow. Remember that no one can insult you without your permission. If any one is rude, do not stoop to their level but remain graceful and poised. Never raise your voice and be known as a highly self-disciplined person, kind yet strong.

Part I: THE MIND *Becoming a Mental Explorer*

Mental stimulation is essential for good health and intellectual growth. Through this book you have learned that you are likely only using 25% of your mind’s potential, at best. You must work hard and become the mental giant you are capable of being. Do not pay attention to what others may have said about your abilities. Accept no limitations on yourself and what you can achieve because there truly are none.

You must become a mental explorer, an individual dedicated to learning about the powers of the mind and its incredible abilities. The first step is to have an open mind. Meditation, yoga, focusing and visualization are a key part of the peak performance regimens of many of the world’s top athletes. Seinfeld practices yoga daily and a significant number of business executives have found peace and good health through various meditation techniques.

Exercise: Visit your local library or bookstore and study the success literature. Pick up two of the stranger sounding titles and read their contents. Remain open to new ideas you are exposed to in the field of personal development. Try new things.

Part II: THE BODY *Sleep Less and Live More*

Your body needs only six hours sleep per night to be in peak condition yet many people sleep much longer. There are only 168 hours in a week and so many exciting things to do. One of the very best strategies to increase your productivity is to sleep one hour less per night. Sleeping too much is caused by a bad habit. To have a fuller, more accomplished life, break this habit and sleep only as much as you need.

Start slowly by arising half an hour earlier tomorrow. After three days, cut back to the full one hour. You will notice that it gets much easier as time goes on. After three weeks, you will wonder why you wasted this time previously. A key principle to remember is that if you do anything for 21 consecutive

days, it becomes a habit and much easier to do. Stick it out for this period and you will find that you suddenly have all the time you once said you never had. This is a powerful success secret which can impact on your life in a positive, dramatic way.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *The Abundance Mentality*

One of the primary laws of Nature is that the more you give and the more you serve others, the more you get. Too many people live with a scarcity mentality believing that if they share ideas, wealth or resources, there will be less left for them. This is the surest way to a life of little. Develop the habit of doing things for others, especially those in need. Give money to your favorite charity and do not shy away from public service. Work with others in both your business and the community. Shed the “us versus them” mentality and recognize the powers of synergy: two hands are stronger than one.

Part I: THE MIND *Your Photographic Memory*

One of the best kept secrets is that every person has a photographic memory locked deep inside of them - the key is to unlock it and bring it to life. When you last forgot something recall how it later came back to you. The fact was in your memory - it was just asleep and it needed to be prompted. All the details you have ever experienced are deep inside of your mind, waiting for the correct trigger.

The best way to tap your true memory potential is to give direct commands to your subconscious mind once it is in a state of readiness. To do this, you must first become very relaxed. Lie down on your back in a quiet place. Take twenty deep breaths, visualizing any tension leaving your body with each exhale.

Then, moving from your feet to the head, command the body to relax very deeply. For example, starting at your feet, say “my feet are now very heavy, I feel the heaviness.” Then move up through the ankles, calves, thighs, etc. Soon you will notice that your body is feeling very warm and entirely relaxed. At this stage, the subconscious part of your mind, which is exceptionally powerful, is most open to your commands. Repeat for five minutes, the following command: “I have a perfect memory, I can remember anything I want to recall at will, my memory is perfect and there to serve me.”

Do this for a period of 21 days and you will notice a truly remarkable transformation.

Part II: THE BODY *The Power of Breath*

Deep breathing will provide you with tremendous relaxation, vitality and energy. Deep breathing triggers the lymph, your body's sewage system which will give your cells more efficiency. Deep breathing also ensures that the blood is fully oxygenated, also providing for peak health.

Exercise: Deep breathing must occur to the following ratio: 1-4-2. If you inhale for two seconds, you should hold your breath for eight seconds and then exhale to the count of four. By practicing this cycle in repetitions of 10, three times a day, you will significantly increase your stamina and general state of health.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Persistence Breeds Success*

Every great person has failed on more than one occasion. Edison is said to have failed 10,000 times before he finally struck it big with the light bulb. When asked his secret to success, he replied: "I failed so many times that the only thing left to do was to succeed I exhausted all the failures." As reported in the biography on Ted Turner, *It Ain't As Easy As It Looks*, what struck Turner's schoolmates was his extraordinary persistence. He always stayed with a goal until he eventually achieved it. Nothing can keep a good person down and the sooner you realize this the better. Rather than whining over problems and asking why they always seem to happen to you, start calling problems "challenges" and looking forward to them as tests of character and opportunities to learn and grow. You will always meet with challenges on the path of life but the champion learns to love them, learns from them and thrives on them.

Part I: THE MIND *More Concentration Conditioning*

The importance of mental concentration has been emphasized over and over in the MegaLiving! program. Today, you will learn yet another exercise to toughen up your mind, getting it ready for super performance.

Exercise: *The Two Minute Mind*

This is a delightful exercise to strengthen a mind that suffers from wandering thoughts and a lack of ability to concentrate. All you have to do is to stare at the second hand on your watch for two minutes. Give your full attention to the second hand and do not let any other thoughts occupy your attention. Your whole world is in the movements of the second hand and use your will-power to do this exercise properly. If you perform the technique three times a day,

after 21 days, you will have developed a highly powerful mind and will notice a real difference in your energy level as well as in your overall mental agility.

Part II: THE BODY *The Amazing Benefits of Yoga*

If there is one thing you can do to take your physical dimension to the highest plane it is to practise yoga. Classes are offered in all cities and the positions are easy to learn and wonderfully relaxing. Regular yoga practice will keep you serene, energetic, improve your complexion and digestion and enhance your overall muscle tone. Take this powerful step now! You have absolutely nothing to lose and so much to gain.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *The Value of Friendship*

Good friendships have been proven not only to make life more enjoyable but to give a longer one. Researchers from the University of Michigan found that Tecumseh, Michigan residents who had the most family and friends lived the longest. Several studies have also found that married people live longer than their single counterparts.

Take today as an opportunity to dramatically improve your friendships. Pick five friends who you want to become closer with and write out their names. Then write out why you value their friendship. Finally, make a precise action plan to improve the friendship. It may be as simple as writing them a letter expressing your appreciation for their friendship and attaching an inspirational article of interest to them. You may buy your friend a book and drop it off personally to them saying, "I was at the bookstore and found this treasure I thought you would love." Take a friend out for a Sunday brunch or for a walk along the ocean to see the sun rise one morning. Even the act of writing out a "love letter" to a friend, which you never have to send, will improve the relationship as it clarifies in your mind the importance of this person in your life.

Part I: THE MIND *Opting for Optimism*

Optimism will change your life. If you expect your life to be a living masterpiece you will be happier, live longer and have all that this magical world can offer. Researchers studied 99 young Harvard men for the effects of optimism. By the time the study was published in 1988, the cheerier individuals were less affected with severe illnesses than their pessimistic counterparts.

Optimism can be learned. Every day, think deeply about all the good things you have in life. Everyone has something to be grateful for. The difference

between optimists and pessimists is that the former look for and find the good in everything. A pessimist always sees and remembers the bad. For example, an optimist looks back on the day and smiles at the kindness he received, the good meals he ate, the family he is fortunate enough to have been surrounded by and the good health that he has enjoyed. A pessimist sees none of this and focuses on one or two challenges that may have appeared. He then concludes that this “was a bad day” and continues to brood over these minor difficulties for the rest of the day. In the wonderful little book, *As a Man Thinketh*, James Allen wrote: *Let a man radically alter his thoughts, and he will be astonished at the rapid transformation it will affect in the material conditions of his life.*

Good thoughts are guaranteed to lead to sunny circumstances. Optimism is an essential condition for success. Resolve to curb your wandering mind and start the habit of positive thinking today! Make certain every word you say is a good one, every thought you think is an inspiring one and every act you take an uplifting one.

Part II: THE BODY Strong Body = Strong Mind

Rousseau said: “a feeble body enfeebles the mind.” Physically strong people are mentally tough people. Build your physical strength and you will reap just rewards. Here are exercises you should work into your physical regimen today and every day after:

- i) pushups and sit-ups
- ii) the military chest press
- iii) bicep curls with weights to improve your arms
- iv) beach running to improve your legs
- v) aerobic classes to improve your heart and lungs
- vi) triceps pressdowns, squats

Part III: THE CHARACTER *More Journal Writing*

Congratulations! You are on Day 9 of the MegaLiving! program and are on the way to becoming the very best that you can be. The fact that you have come this far confirms that you are among the minority of people who have the discipline to persist in order to achieve self-mastery. Write for five minutes in your journal all the benefits you have noticed and all that you have learned about personal power and your own positive qualities over the past eight days. List your weaknesses as well: thoughts that are preventing true happiness, bad habits that are denying you the bountiful life that you are now certain is yours and factors in your life which you must change.

Part I: THE MIND *The Power of the Book: Readers are Leaders!*

One of, if not the most important thing you can do for self-mastery is incredibly easy: read something inspiring and valuable every day. Reading can take you to new heights as knowledge truly is power. Reading will give you brilliant ideas on how to improve every aspect of your life. The key is to surround yourself with such thoughts so you are forced to think positively and to accept no limitations.

All the mistakes of this world have already been made and their solutions appear in books. Is there really any point in making them again? The trick in life is to make it easier, not harder and the habit of reading will certainly do this for you. Start your own personal excellence library and make the following ten books its foundation:

- i) *Think and Grow Rich*, Napoleon Hill
- ii) *The Autobiography of Ben Franklin*
- iii) *The Power of the Subconscious Mind*, Dr. Joseph Murphy
- iv) *The Power of Positive Thinking*, Rev. Norman Vincent Peale
- v) *Siddhartha*, Herman Hesse
- vi) *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Mahatma Gandhi
- vii) *As a Man Thinketh*, James Allen
- viii) *The Pursuit of Happiness*, David Myers
- ix) *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie
- x) *The Magic of Believing*, Claude Bristol

Part II: THE BODY *Stop Acting Your Age: The Importance of Good Posture*

If you act old you will be old. Why buy into the myth that you must age according to a certain schedule and process. Why not resolve to beat age and live a youthful, passionate existence? The first step is to physically act young. Improve your posture, ensuring that your back is straight. It allows you to breathe properly.

Also, take purposeful steps and do not walk like an old person. The essence of youthful living is to prevent an elderly person from moving into your body and you can do so by thinking and living young.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Broadening Your Worldview*

One of the most beneficial things you can do for yourself is to travel the world. Travelling shows you what the world is like and, importantly, how very lucky you are. In the heat of everyday life, we tend to let the little things take on a much greater importance than they should. Who cares if the paper came late today or if the boss was in a bad mood? Do you have food on your table? Are you living in a state of war? Learning about the world, even through reading if you cannot travel, will put things into perspective and ensure that you realize all of the gifts life has bestowed on you. Do not waste another minute worrying about the small troubles and past events. You are more than this and today is the day to rise to the heights where you are certainly capable of living.

Part I: THE MIND *The Master Blaster Technique for Personal Excellence*

A highly positive self-image is essential for mastery of your mind, body and character. Every moment of every hour of every day, you must guard against thoughts that damage your self-image. Once you start thinking such thoughts (i.e., I am not intelligent, charismatic etc.), they soon become habit forming and seriously affect your performance in life.

A very valuable technique to rid yourself of negative self images is the Master Blaster. Write down a list of all the negative qualities you believe that you have. Now find a quiet place and get into a very deep state of relaxation (perhaps by deep breathing or by some of the other strategies you have learned in this book).

Once you are relaxed, picture the negative self-image and quality (i.e., if it is overeating and obesity, picture yourself gorging at a meal and being overweight). Now make the image in your mind's eye clearer - really see it. Now, most importantly, visualize two sticks of dynamite being placed at both ends of the picture and, with the lighting of a match, watch the negative self-image explode into a hundred million tiny pieces. See the image shattered! Now immediately replace the old image with a bright, clear, big one of the quality you desire to have or the way you wish to look. Repeat the entire process at least 20 times on the first try and then about five times a day for the next 21 days. Your self-image will dramatically improve with this very special exercise.

Part II: THE BODY *Sticking with Your Exercise*

Program

Over the past 10 days, you should have been doing *at least* 20 minutes of exercise every day. If you are not fit, gentle walks through the woods or swimming will help. If you are fortunate enough to be in shape, you should be doing more than 20 minutes and pushing yourself towards the higher levels you are capable of achieving.

One of your most important life habits should be to exercise vigorously at least four or five times a week. If you can do it everyday without straining your body all the better. Such physical conditioning keeps you young, aids in your digestion and general health and significantly improves your energy reserves. No more excuses, take Nike's advice and "**Just Do It!**"

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Purging Your World of Worries*

It is tremendously important to have a relaxed, serene mind. A calm mind will do wonders for you and lead to a strong, vital body. A mind free of worries and negative thoughts must be your first priority if you want a truly happy life. Like most other things, a positive, winning mindset can be cultivated through practice.

Exercise: Make a list of every single thing that is worrying you. List your loans, any challenges at work, health troubles - everything. The very act of writing out the list is most beneficial and freeing. Once you have listed everything you can think of, from the smallest worry to the biggest, rip up the list into as many pieces as possible and see your worries crumble into the dustbin. Bruce Lee, the martial arts legend, used a similar technique to free himself of any negative thoughts.

Part I: THE MIND *Building a Routine for Mental Toughness*

You are at the stage of this program where you have learned the strategies for success practised by the great citizens of this world. Meditation, focusing, deep breathing and visualization techniques have now become part of your success arsenal. The key is to develop a routine so that you use them daily to ensure that you stay at the very top of your game. Set aside at least thirty to forty minutes every morning to attend to your personal development, the earlier the better. Get into the following routine:

i) Five minutes: Ask yourself 5 Questions for Success.

- What will I do to make today a masterpiece? (picture it)
- What am I grateful for? (list everything)
- What will I improve today?
- Who will I serve today?
- What will make me laugh today?

ii) Fifteen minutes: Get into a serene mindset by meditating

Meditation is practised by millions of superachievers and it has now gone mainstream. Do not fear that it is something done by the flowerchildren of the 1960's and is not for you. Elite athletes use it for peak performance and so should you. Nothing calms your overworked mind better. Practise focusing on a flower or pleasant object for fifteen minutes. Think of nothing else. Build up the muscle of your mind so that you are in total control and think only of the object. Over the weeks, you will notice that the little thoughts that used to ruin your mood and distract you can be expelled from your mind instantly.

iii) Ten minutes: Get inspired to seize this day!

“Happiness is not a state to arrive at but a manner of travelling,” said Margaret Runbeck. This is so very true and every second of your life must be happy. The trick is to surround yourself with happy thoughts and things. Here is a huge secret: happiness is a habit. Happiness is not something which develops because you win the lottery or get a great job. Some of the world's happiest people are its poorest or ones that have endured tremendous hardship. But they developed the habit of looking for the positive in everything. Surround yourself with inspirational books, tapes and pictures. For ten minutes, at the very least, read a dynamic book that will supercharge your spirit.

Part II: THE BODY *Goal Review*

Review your physical goals from Day 1. Are you doing something each day to move towards them? Keep planning your approach, write inspiring notes to yourself aimed at attaining your goals.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Fun Exercise*

Today's exercise is easy. Rent *It's A Wonderful World* (Jimmy Stewart) from the video store and watch it tonight. What does it teach you and what secrets for success have you learned?

Part I: THE MIND *Mental Racewalking*

Over and over, this program has emphasized that your mind can be sharpened and strengthened to perform things that you have never believed possible. You can increase your peace of mind, concentration powers, will-power, memory and creativity, among other things, by training.

One of the most effective ways to charge up your mind so that you will excel at mental activity (i.e., at work or on an important essay at school) is Mental Racewalking. The way to warm up the mind for peak mental performance is to speed it up. Do the following exercise:

Mental racewalking: Pick up a newspaper or a magazine. Select any noun in any article (i.e., health in the Health Section). Now for five minutes, *as quickly as possible and without stopping* write down everything that your mind associates with the word “health”. After five minutes, relax for a minute by deep breathing and move on to your project or essay.

Part II: THE BODY *Nutritional Excellence*

To get the most out of life and to have the energy to do all the things that you have now been motivated to do, you must be very careful of what you put into your body. Bad foods will slow you down, affect your moods and keep you from perfect health. A diet high in fruits and vegetables will keep you strong, energetic and highly vital.

Today, take fifteen minutes and list all the things you have eaten over the past two days. If you cannot remember, list the things you generally eat. Notice all the high fat offenders like whole milk products, fried foods, snack foods, creamy salad dressings, pastries and cheeses. Eliminate 25% of these this week alone. This will not be as hard as it sounds given all the low-fat alternatives at your grocery store. For example, low-fat cheese, milk and meats are available everywhere.

Also, follow these powerful tips for health excellence:

- i) Stop overeating. Eat only what you need and push the rest away.
- ii) Have as much fresh fruit as you can in the morning.
- iii) Do not eat after 8 p.m.
- iv) Eat a salad with every meal (it will help your digestion and increase your energy level significantly). Also, reduce your meat intake.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Manage Your Time!*

Time is one of the most precious commodities you have. We have 168 hours in a week. How much of this time are you wasting? Two hours of TV a night is 14 hours a week. This is a full day of time that you could have spent

building up your health, enriching your relationships, writing that book you have always talked about or taking a new initiative at work that would make you the standout you know you are. Stop wasting time!

Make a list of all the time wasters in your life that are sucking away your productivity. Stop gossiping on the phone, hanging out at the coffee room and focus on the things that are really important to achieving your dreams. The minute lost is gone forever.

Part I: THE MIND *Break All the Rules!*

The superachievers of this world, those people who live each second to the maximum and are living their dreams have one thing in common: they accept no limitations on what they can have from this life. You too must shatter the rules about what you can become, what you can do with your life, the rules about the health that you must have and the limits on the fun in your day. Why can't you become a millionaire, sail around the Caribbean, travel to Bali, write a best selling novel, run a marathon or learn to fly? Change your mindset today. Start getting exposed to the people of this world who have done these things with much less ability than you. If someone says you are too old to start your own business, think otherwise. If someone says you are not fit enough to become a competitive runner, train harder than ever and show them that they know nothing about who you are.

Exercise: Dreaming For Personal Excellence - Make a list of the top 10 dreams that you have. Be creative and the more fun the better. List only those things you really want to have happen. Now think, emotionally, about what it would feel like if those dreams came true. What would your family say and how would it improve your life. Next, write out one thing you will do over the next week, no matter how small, to get on the path of attaining your dreams. If your goal is sailing to the Bahamas, sign up for sailing lessons tomorrow - DO IT! If your goal is to start a business, look for one of the many seminars available on the subject and go to it. Meet others who want to do the same thing for ideas, inspiration and motivation. Take action every single day to move towards your dreams. If you really want them to come true, if you really want to have all that is yours, start today, not ten years from today.

Part II: THE BODY *Physical Conditioning - The Next Level*

“First say to yourself what you would be and then do what you have to do” wrote Emerson. In Day 1 of the MegaLiving! program you committed yourself to achieving certain physical goals. You should now be on the path towards them. Everything is about habit and you should now be into the habit

of exercise, even if only for 20 minutes a day. Exercise is the secret fountain of youth. It is so very simple to do and the benefits are enormous. Keep up your routine. If possible, take your physical conditioning to a higher level today. Run just a little faster, swim just a little longer or walk up that long hill you have avoided climbing for the past two weeks.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Life Tips*

- i) Be the most enthusiastic person you know. Be kind, be strong and be serene.
- ii) Act youthful, live with an air of fun, laugh hard, laugh often.
- iii) Go to bed early and wake up before 6 am. Pray.
- iv) Be humble, save 10% of your income every month and give something to charity yearly.
- v) Control your emotions and never get angry. Count to 10 if you feel anger.
- vi) Associate with positive, active and loving people.
- vii) Eat moderately using light food and have a balanced diet.
- viii) Be honest in everything you do. Be noble and courteous. Guard your reputation.
- ix) Fast once a month, taking mild fruits only. It is very cleansing.
- x) Achieve your dreams, think big but keep it simple.

Part I: THE MIND *More Affirmations for Excellence*

Autosuggestion will make things happen for you. Any thought, when constantly repeated, affects the powerful subconscious mind. Once the thought is accepted, your will is then directed towards the accomplishment of the goal. This technique, however strange it might seem, has been used with tremendous success for many years. Napoleon Hill, the man who studied hundreds of America's most successful people, urged it on his readers in *Think and Grow Rich*. The strategy works so make it a tool for your personal mastery. Below are six of the most effective affirmations which you should repeat to yourself throughout the day (it is essential for you to say the affirmation with great emotion and belief in its truth):

- i) "I am serene, strong and happy"
- ii) "I have everything I want in this world and am grateful"
- iii) "Every day, I get better and better"

- iv) “Wealth-Success”
- v) “I have tremendous energy and vitality”
- vi) “I am young, healthy and tranquil”

Part II: THE BODY *Boosting Your Longevity*

Over the next 15 days, incorporate the following powerful longevity tips into your life:

- i) After age 50, your oil glands start to slow down. It is key that you keep your skin looking youthful and supple by using a moisturizer containing lanolin or the oils of coconut, safflower or wheat germ. Use it right after you get out of the shower.
- ii) Try using Retin-A. This is the so-called youth ingredient that reduces age lines on your face. The prescription cream encourages the growth of new skin proteins, blood vessels and speeds the removal of dead skin cells.
- iii) A regular weight training plan when combined with aerobic activity will make you look years younger.
- iv) Take a brisk walk every day. In a study of 16, 936 Harvard Alumni, those who engaged in physical activity clearly had lower death rates.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Enthusiasm*

“Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm,” said Ralph Waldo Emerson whilst Twain attributed the secret of his success to the fact that “I was born excited.” In survey after survey, leaders say that enthusiasm is key to success. To develop enthusiasm you must determine what fires your soul. You don’t have to sit chained to a desk from nine to five every day. Determine what it is you love to do and then do it. The passion which comes from doing that which you love creates enthusiasm. Put an elastic band around your wrist. This is “the band of enthusiasm.” Today and every day after, you must be the most enthusiastic person you know. The band will remind you of the many benefits of enthusiasm and of your commitment to be enthusiastic and zestful throughout this wonderful day.

Part I: THE MIND *The Mini-Vacation*

It is essential, if you are to meet with true self-mastery, that you remove all tension from your body. Too much stress impedes performance and prevents you from tapping the huge potential lying dormant inside of you. Stress reduction exercises must become a part of your daily routine and will only

take a few minutes of your time. Once you start using them, you will feel much calmer, stronger and happier.

Exercise: Sit in a quiet place and get comfortable. If you are in your office, shut the door and hold all calls. Shut your eyes and start breathing deeply. Inhale watching the belly move out like a big balloon. Hold the breath and then exhale fully. In your mind's eye, see all your worries and tension flooding out of you like a chimney spewing out smoke. Keep breathing deeply for two minutes, each time feeling yourself becoming more and more relaxed. Focus only on the breathing.

Now, starting with your feet, feel that your body is getting incredibly heavy. Your ankles are sinking towards the floor with the weight. Then feel your legs loosening up, visualize the muscles relaxing and all tension vanishing. Move up through the torso, arms, neck and head. You will now feel exceptionally relaxed. Now imagine you are on vacation. You have all the time in the world. You have no watch and no appointments. You find yourself barefoot in a lush, green forest. Hear the birds chirping and the bubbling brook in the distance. Smell the wild roses and lavender in the bushes. As you walk, feel the moist earth against your soles. See the sunlight peeking through the trees at certain places, warming up that particular area as you walk by. You walk through this stunningly green forest to a lake. The lake is calm like a plate of glass and you study the reflections the trees make on the surface of the water. Your mind is as tranquil as this lake. You feel deeply calm and at one with nature. This is your mini-vacation. Enjoy it. Now open your eyes and go back to work, refreshed, relaxed and alive.

Part II: THE BODY *Banishing Your Belly*

Strong abdominal muscles are very important for peak health. As we get older, it becomes more and more difficult to keep the stomach toned and lean. The trick to a taut stomach is to lose the fat by aerobic exercise, build the muscle below the surface by weight training or sit-ups and keep the stomach thin by eating a light diet with low-fat foods. Each day for the next fourteen, do 20 sit-ups.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Becoming a Better Lover*

If you want to be a chef, you do not simply walk into a kitchen and say you are a chef. You must train. If you want to be a teacher, you don't walk into the classroom and start to teach, you train. In the same vein, you were not born a lover. To get the most out of your relationships and really love those around you, you must train and work at being a great lover. On a piece of paper, list

those people you want to become closer to, those people you really want to love. Now, write out a “love letter” to each one. You will not send it so be as expressive and open as possible. Really tell them how you feel and what you think of them. Be romantic, be creative, be silly but be sincere. The very act of writing these love letters is very fulfilling and will tap your “love skills”. Finally, take some action to improve these relationships this week.

Part I: THE MIND *Revisiting Kaizen: Constant and Never Ending Improvement*

This book has emphasized the importance of Kaizen: daily improvement in all aspects of your life. The very fact that you are doing this program and have come this far shows that you are a breed apart from the average person who believes that things cannot be changed and they must accept the deck that life has dealt them. Each and every day, take a step, no matter how small, to improve yourself. This is the essence of MegaLiving! If you take such steps daily, the results will start to become more and more noticeable until they snowball and every aspect of your life moves to a higher level. Here are a few suggestions for using the principle of Kaizen today:

- i) Start your memoirs
- ii) Unplug your TV and really communicate to those around you
- iii) Write five letters to old friends (a wonderful habit!)
- iv) Finish everything you start today
- v) Stretch yourself and do something gutsy!
- vi) Sign up for a language course, take jazz trumpet lessons
- vii) Read three different newspapers today and write to the editor
- viii) Go to the opera tonight, the symphony or the ballet - explore life!
- ix) Listen to the radio, review your financial goals, dream
- x) Visualize the person you are determined to become

Part II: THE BODY *Energizing Yourself*

You will not reach your goals without energy. Gandhi slept four hours a night. He had both the energy and the desire to lead his country to independence. Here are some of the best strategies for increasing your energy levels (select two to incorporate into your daily routine):

- i) Be active. Paradoxically, you will have more energy if you expend it.

- ii) Use the deep breathing techniques in this book.
- iii) Eat energizing foods: fresh fruits and vegetables
- iv) Nothing drains energy more than worrying. Relax, meditate and loosen up.
- v) Use autosuggestion: repeat “I am totally juiced up and energetic!”
- vi) Take a brisk walk after dinner, if only for ten minutes
- vii) Listen to your favorite music that has charged you up in the past
- viii) Take a power-nap if you are tired (15 minutes maximum)

Part III: THE CHARACTER *More Journal Writing*

Take out your success journal and write out in a detailed way all the changes you are noticing in your thoughts and in your life. What positive things are happening to you? What challenges are you still facing and what will you do to overcome them and reach all the goals you set for yourself on Day 1 ? List the strategies and ideas you have learned to date from the MegaLiving! program. Now congratulate yourself for getting this far and moving closer to the ideal life that you deserve.

Part I: THE MIND *The Power of Music*

“Music has charms to soothe a savage beast” wrote the English poet William Congreve. Music can be used to ensure that your mindset remains serene and focused. People are only now starting to realize the many wonderful effects music has on our moods. Many Olympic athletes are using music as part of their training regimen. Make it a part of yours.

When you wish to enter a state of tranquility, classical music works best. Pieces such as Pachelbel’s Canon are incredibly soothing and will transport you to another world. Set aside a time, perhaps after dinner, to sit down and concentrate fully on the music. Let it enter your soul and work its charms. Jazz music also works wonders and provides a lift to your spirit keeping it soaring and inspired. If you don’t want to buy this music, simply listen to the many classical and jazz stations on your radio. Radio is excellent and provides many benefits.

Part II: THE BODY *Think Healthy - Be Healthy*

Many doctors are now recognizing that our thoughts affect our immune system and our general health. Emotional states such as fear and sadness are processed in the limbic system and hypothalamus which then send signals to body’s immune system via chemicals called neuropeptides. The current

philosophy argues that a mental image of a healthy body can be communicated from the brain to the immune system's cells which act in such a fashion so as to duplicate the mental image that was held in the mind.

Cancer patients have effectively used creative visualization and imagery exercises to picture immune cells killing the cancerous ones, sometimes with startling results. You can use this strategy for maintaining a state of perfect health. Simply get yourself into a relaxed state of mind using one of the calming techniques you have learned. Then, in a detailed way, picture yourself in a perfect state physically. See your skin glow and your face looking healthy. See yourself as lean, energetic and happy. Do this exercise twice a day for the next few months and you will reap positive rewards in your self-esteem as well as in your general health condition.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *The Ideal Person*

Practise the 6 virtues of the Ideal Person:

- i) Self-mastery in all situations
- ii) Self-control of all of the senses
- iii) Control in diet and soberness
- iv) Self-command of temper and desires
- v) Humility in success, hope in defeat
- vi) Compassion to all, moderation in life and persistence in goals

Part I: THE MIND *Tapping Your Creativity*

It is essential that you develop your mental creativity muscles. With enhanced creativity, you will create all sorts of ideas to help you in your quest for personal excellence and the Perfect Life. Creativity will also make your life more playful, joyous and rewarding.

First put yourself into a relaxed frame of mind for today's exercise. A new technique you may use is to shut your eyes and vividly picture a blackboard. Gradually, words start to appear on the board and as you look closer you see your name with the word "relax" next to it, all the way down the long blackboard. Study the blackboard and clearly see these words on it.

Now, with your eyes still shut, picture yourself as you were when you were a six year old child. What likes did you have and what things did you do for fun? Tap the happy, creative and lively child sleeping inside of you. How did you see adults then? What pranks did you play? Visualize all of this and make it fun. For the rest of today, see things as a child might. Shake up your

perspective. At the office or in your home, stand on a chair and see what it looks like up there. Do something you have never done like visiting an art gallery or riding a roller coaster. Focus on being creative and playful in the things you do. You will never be the same!

Part II: THE BODY *More Exercise*

Your exercise program should be well underway and part of your daily routine. You must now have started to see and feel the powerful results that this simple activity can bring. Today, in your journal, write down five benefits of exercise. Then, from a magazine or the newspaper, find a picture of someone with the physical condition that you want to have. Get a hero or a role model and tape the image to your bathroom mirror or even better, to the fridge. Look at it regularly and focus on developing such a shape.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Becoming a Leader*

Start to develop the 10 Master Keys of Leadership:

- i) Belief in your dreams
- ii) Courage and supreme persistence
- iii) Enthusiasm
- iv) Consideration for others
- v) Self-control and self-mastery
- vi) Well-developed social skills and diplomacy
- vii) The habit of doing far more than expected
- viii) Long-term planning and organization
- ix) Calculated risk taking
- x) A burning desire to succeed and faith in success

Part I: THE MIND *Raising Your Standards*

Today make the decision that will surely change your life: raise your standards. Raise the level of what you expect of yourself, the way you treat your body, the thoughts you put into your mind and the way you live your life. Do not accept mediocrity. Give up being a member of the pack. Commit yourself to true life excellence. Be the very best you can be and start giving 110% in every single area of your life from your relationships to your professional activities.

Here are the **5 Keys** to making excellence your life-standard:

- i) **Change your attitude.** Most successful people develop an attitude

which prevents them from being anything but the best.

- ii) **Get in the habit of being outstanding.** Once you take small steps each day to confirm your new standard of working, playing and living, there will be no going back after a few months. MegaLiving! will be your habit.
- iii) **Publicize your new standards to those closest to you.** Get some pressure on yourself to ensure that you do not budge from your commitment to living every moment of life to the fullest.
- iv) **Remember your “old self.”** Anytime you think of the bad habits that you are changing or the past standards that you once lived by, proudly tell yourself that that was the way you *were* - *that was the old you and you will never go back.*
- v) **Try to get others to raise their standards with you.** We all can explode our limitations in a second if we make the simple decision to do so.

Part II: THE BODY *Serene Body = Serene Mind*

It has been emphasized throughout the MegaLiving! program that it is essential that you develop a serene, relaxed mindset which will guarantee your success as a peak performer. This comes with practice. You have learned exercises to dramatically enhance your concentration and focus. Stand guard at the gates of your mind and be so mentally tough that not even one negative thought enters your superbly conditioned mind. Today, take Day 16's mini-vacation and practise this serenity technique every day for the next nine.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Brainstorming to Success*

Take twenty minutes tonight and pull out your success journal. Jot down the first 25 things you want out of life. Anything you have ever dreamed of should be there. If it is sailing to Hawaii, put it down. Now, using deep breathing and any one of the relaxation strategies you have learned in this book (i.e., the mini-vacation is a good one), get into a very relaxed state. Feel any tension and worrying thoughts leave your mind like clouds moving out of a blue sky to make way for the radiant sunshine. Once you feel serene, visualize yourself doing all the things you dreamed of and having all the possessions you wrote down. Become aware of what you want, then act on the dreams.

Your Day Off! *Enjoy the Rewards of MegaLiving!*

Congratulations are due to you today! You have reached Day 21 of the MegaLiving! Program and are on the golden road to a Perfect Life filled with pure joy, peak health, happy relationships, excitement, success and contentment. You have powerfully shown yourself what you can do and the potential within you to achieve your dreams. By reaching Day 21, you are amongst a minority of people who have the discipline to start and stay with this revolutionary personal excellence program for the long run.

Over the three weeks you have been practising MegaLiving!, changes have taken place in every area of your life. You have looked at all of the aspects of your world and taken positive steps to change what you don't like. You have taken actions that will pay huge dividends to you. New habits are starting to take root. New ideas about what you will contribute to this world are dancing in your mind. You have more energy, confidence and zest for life. In a word, you are "MegaLiving!"

You have worked hard to get to this stage of the program. It was not easy and you have made some sacrifices. But you are here and you are outstanding! Today is your day off. Do something adventurous, fun or silly. Be like a kid for the day, curious and enthusiastic. Walk along the ocean or see that play you have missed. Before you dash off to maximize your day off, quickly run through the brief assessment below to learn where you stand with MegaLiving! and where you must place your focus to reach your goals.

MegaLiving! Assessment

	Good	Very Good	Excellent	Outstanding
Mental Conditioning				
Physical Conditioning				
Character-Building				
Motivation Level				
Self-Happiness Rating				

Part I: THE MIND *Don't Believe in Defeat*

Combine a powerful faith in the incredible abilities that lie deep inside of you with guts, determination and enthusiasm and you will succeed in every challenge you come up against. You should now be using the 5 Questions of Success that you learned in Day 3 of the program. The first one is, of course, "How can I make today a living Masterpiece?" To make each moment of

every glorious day a masterpiece, it is essential to have a tremendous belief in yourself and in the goals you have committed yourself to realizing. Challenges and obstacles will appear, this is reality. But you can turn them around. See them as opportunities and chances to grow and develop further. Make problems a game. Ask what wisdom will you gain from them, how will they make you stronger and tougher and what will happen if you allow them to seep into your winning mindset. Believe in your unlimited potential. Believe in your tremendous personal power. Believe in yourself.

Part II: THE BODY *How to Take a Walk*

Walking is excellent nutrition for the mind. It creates calmness, happiness and wholeness. In this high-pressure world, we forget about the truly simple pleasure of a long walk through the forest or a brisk walk along the waterfront. You may not have access to posh country clubs, expensive golf resorts or private fitness facilities but you can walk. The MegaLiving! Program has emphasized over and over the tremendous importance of exercising daily. This should now be one of your life habits. The treat of a walk on a regular basis should never be forgotten.

5 Suggestions on Taking Walks (a wonderful pleasure):

- i) Find a lovely, natural place. Even the busiest city has one.
- ii) Walk alone and at a quiet time of the day (early a.m. is great)
- iii) Remove from your mind all worldly cares. Focus only on the walk
- iv) Breathe deeply and enjoy the air, scents, scenery and soulful quiet
- v) Walk strongly, with good posture and balanced steps

Part III: THE CHARACTER *10 Golden Keys to Popularity*

- i) Remember people's names. It is the sweetest sound they know.
- ii) Smile often, laugh often. Know three great, clean jokes.
- iii) Become a great listener. Use the 70/30 Rule. Listen 70% of the time, talk only 30%.
- iv) Perfect your manners. They are a mark of true polish and character.
- v) Do small, kind gestures for people every day. Make every day count.
- vi) Never say someone is wrong. Don't argue. If you don't agree, keep quiet.

- vii) Inspire people, encourage people and befriend people.
- viii) Develop your contacts. Write letters often and make phone calls.
- ix) Be the most honest person you know.
- x) Give more than you receive. It always comes back in a river.

Part I: THE MIND *More Memory Conditioning*

You have learned that you have a photographic memory sleeping in your mind. Details you thought had vanished have been retained and are awaiting the conditioning of your memory. Tap its real potential.

The memory is like every other muscle, you must use it or lose it. Get into the habit of using it. Stop making grocery lists, use your memory. Picture the ten items you need. See yourself at the grocery store picking every one of the items up and inspecting them. Make up a colorful, vivid story using the things you need so you will be certain to get everything. Start memorizing a paragraph of poetry or literature every day. Turn off that television set and spend a half hour on your greatest possession: your limitless mind.

Part II: THE BODY *More Exercising*

The bountiful benefits of physical conditioning should be apparent. You have enjoyed over three weeks of exercise and you must feel more energetic, confident and healthy. Little digestive or skin problems which may have plagued you in the past should have cleared up. Getting out of bed will be easier and your enthusiasm level is skyrocketing. Today, increase the level of your exercise program. Work out longer, run faster, swim harder. Do it! Do it! Do it!

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Mastery of Problems*

The MegaLiving! program has shown you that the quality of your life is the quality of your interpretation of problems and challenges. The way you see events determines your happiness and your level of success. Your attitude determines your altitude. Once you have developed a winner's mindset, nothing will stop you.

Problems will always crop up. The peak performer uses them as learning experiences and motivators to work harder and accomplish more. One of the best strategies for neutralizing the possible negative effects of problems is to ask yourself questions. Asking yourself questions puts things into perspective, focuses your mind on the positive elements of what has happened and prevents your energy from being drained by worry.

A Secret for Mastering Life's Problems Quickly

The next time you are faced with one of life's little problems, on a piece of paper, ask yourself the following questions:

- i) How can this experience help me? What lesson have I learned?
- ii) What will happen if I let this defeat me and if I worry?
- iii) What can I do to ensure that this never happens again?
- iv) What can I do to enjoy this situation and even laugh about it?
- v) What am I grateful for?

Part I: THE MIND *Eliminating Your Fears Forever*

Emerson said, "do the thing you fear and the death of fear is certain." Lasting life-mastery and personal success will only happen when you directly attack those obstacles which may have held you back in the past. The first step is to eliminate your fears once and for all.

The Master Blaster technique you learned earlier (Day 11) is an excellent tool to blast fears out of your mind. Really, the technique is nothing more than simple conditioning of the mind to enjoy the thing you were once afraid of or felt negative towards. Today, make a list of the fears which have prevented you from being the best you can be. The first stage is to be clearly aware of them, the second is to take concrete action to eliminate them. Do you fear meeting people, public speaking, making huge amounts of money, taking new risks or making important changes? Note your fears. Then, under each one, make an action plan to face the very thing you fear more often.

If you fear speaking, offer to give three presentations over the coming months to your colleagues at work. Also, start reading every book you can get on public speaking. Take a course on the subject and develop a burning desire to be the very best speaker you know. Join Toastmasters and find some good role models who will gladly share their secrets of success with you. Post pictures of Churchill and other powerful orators over your bed and surround yourself with positive motivators which will guarantee your success. Each time a fearful thought enters your mind, replace it immediately and forcefully with a mental picture of you as a fiery, dynamic speaker. Work hard over the next week to identify all of your other fears, no matter how small. Attack them with a vengeance. You will be surprised how quickly they disappear.

Part II: THE BODY *The Business of Living a Long Time*

Throughout this program, you have received secrets to live longer and healthier. The key is to really have a powerful belief in your personal vitality and understand that you really are only as old as you think you are. Today, in a quiet moment, picture yourself as you hope to be in 2, 10, 20 and 30 years. Drive home to yourself that your body has incredible potential for youthfulness and vigor. Now that you are exercising, eating more fruits and vegetables and less meat, relaxing your mind and body daily, thinking positively and living correctly, you are on the path to real longevity. Every day, even for a minute, say to yourself, "I am youthful, dynamic and vital." Visualize yourself as energetic and young with a glowing complexion and a toned physique. Everything is created twice - first in the mind and then outside of it.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Respect & Character*

It has been said that knowledge will give you power but character will give you respect. You have been exposed to some of the world's most effective tools for personal development in the MegaLiving! 30 Day Program for Life-Mastery. You have the knowledge, now build your character. Each day for the past 23, you have consistently taken steps to become more confident, motivated and vital. Make a "strong as rock" character one of your most important goals. Set your goals and values high and never shy away from them. Live a life of integrity and truth. Live with passion and live honorably. Believe in yourself and your human potential!

Part I: THE MIND Suggestive Articulation - More Mastery Mantras

Words undoubtedly have profound suggestive power. What we think and say all day becomes our reality. You can develop great serenity by getting into a relaxed state and repeating "tranquility" to yourself over and over. You can develop mental toughness by quietly repeating "I am tough, I am powerful" to yourself all the way to work every morning. Words influence the subconscious mind which is the seat of enormous personal power. Never underestimate its abilities.

Today, rid yourself of all the little negative sayings you accidentally use throughout the day. Stop saying "I've always been terrible with names" or, "I've never had much energy in the morning." If you make these kinds of harmful statements, you can bet you will never remember names and always be groggy every morning. Sit and clearly identify any phrases you regularly use which undermine your true potential for life mastery. Get them out of your vocabulary.

Mastery Mantras

- i) For Energy: “I am active and love to achieve.” Now take action today, be alive!
- ii) For Perfect Health: “I am incredibly healthy and vital, I feel so fit today.”
- iii) For Wealth: “I am wealthy, I have real success.”

Part II: THE BODY *Stress Reducer*

After your workout today, treat yourself to a stress reducer. Book a professional massage or give yourself one (see the technique from Day 4)- Try an acupuncture treatment or a sauna/whirlpool. Try anything new but give yourself a relaxing treat as a reward for your excellent efforts at physical conditioning.

Part III: THE CHARACTER **More Readings -** *Knowledge is Power*

On Day 10, you were exposed to a number of books that should form the core of your library of personal mastery books. Most of them are very inexpensive but actually of priceless value. Today, read for one hour, *at the very least*, from Napoleon Hill’s superb book *Think and Grow Rich*. This book will have a very great impact on you and put you on the road to personal and financial abundance.

When you have finished your reading, take out your success journal and write down Napoleon Hill’s 13 Principles. Study them and picture vividly how you could put them to use in your life. Now set your goal as he suggests and take active steps to make certain that you are on your way to achieving this dream. Over the next week, finish the book and make notes on its key points so that you have them at your fingertips.

Part I: THE MIND *Surround Yourself By* *Excellence*

You have propelled yourself to a new level of focus and positivity. The key is to ensure that every thought that enters your mind is a good and motivating one. To do this, start listening to tapes of the great positive thinkers of this world such as Reverend Norman Vincent Peale, read the books of Emerson and Carnegie, learn the stories of those with much less than you who achieved life mastery. Stop wasting time thinking about what is missing in your life and start dreaming and achieving your ultimate goals.

Also, surround yourself with other triggers for happiness in your life. When you wake up, play some soulful jazz or serenely pleasant classical music. Associate with only those who are inspired by life and who refuse to accept anything but the very best that this dazzling world has to offer. Keep adding to your success library, go to seminars on mastery of your character, life and virtues. Live by the Kaizen principle of daily and constant improvement. Make this your personal trademark.

Part II: THE BODY *Fasting For Health and Energy*

For thousands of years, people have fasted. Going without food for a day or at least restricting your diet to fruits and juices for a day will cleanse your system, give you more energy and significantly increase your self-control. It is a technique to try once every month for general health maintenance. Consult your physician if you have a health concern prior to fasting.

Today, plan to fast for one day over the next two weeks. Schedule this and stick to your commitment. Your discipline muscles are getting stronger and stronger every day. Keep it up, self-control does wonders for your life!

Part III: THE CHARACTER *The Wonders of Listening*

One of the most essential qualities of an outstanding individual is the ability to listen to others intently. In our fast-paced, egocentric world, we are often too self-centered to take the time to listen to others, even those we love the most. But once we start listening to those we are surrounded by, we learn things we never knew before. People who once appeared boring suddenly have valuable insights from which you can learn and grow. As well, once you start developing the powerful listening habit, your relationships improve. You start to see the point of view of others and develop more compassion and understanding. People start enjoying your company even more and your personal contacts dramatically increase. The art of listening must be cultivated. Here are some strategies to become the best listener you know:

- i) **Stop talking so much.** Use your self-control to start listening more today.
- ii) **Visualize being the world's best listener.** In the morning, focus for a couple of minutes on your excellent ability to listen and how you plan to use this skill in your meetings today.
- iii) **Stop interrupting others.** We all do it. Start a game and pay your friends or family members a dollar each time you cut them off.

Part I: THE MIND *The Magic of Silence*

This is a fast-paced world we live in. We can thrive on the chaos by developing strategies to ensure that we remain the calm within the eye of the storm. The habit of inner serenity is tremendously important for personal excellence. This morning, appreciate the power of silence. Silence provides a tonic for even the most anxious mind and returns one to a state of tranquility. Take half an hour out of your morning schedule and sit in the quietest place in your home. Now focus on the silence, enjoying the peace. You will feel like getting up and doing something after only a few minutes but muster up all the self-control you have developed through this program and resist the urge. Simply be still. Listen to your heartbeat or feel the weight of your head on your shoulders. You will start to notice things you have never seen before when you are silent and internally still. Make the enjoyment of silence an integral part of your life routine.

Part II: THE BODY *Making Exercise a Delight*

Former President Ronald Reagan once stated one of the true keys to success in physical conditioning: “find something you enjoy and keep the exercise varied.” You have been doing something physically challenging for the past 26 days of the MegaLiving! program. You have taken your energy levels and conditioning to a much higher level and are starting to see positive changes in all areas of your life. Do not let boredom set in. Be adventurous with your exercise program. Try a new sport today or find the three activities you enjoy the most and alternate between each of those over the course of a week. Keep exercising hard and maintain your discipline. But above all else, have a blast!

Part III: THE CHARACTER *More Life Tips*

- i) Never discuss private or business matters inside elevators. You might be surprised who is standing next to you.
- ii) Set aside at least one night every week to be alone with your spouse. Turn off the TV and leave the answering machine on. Focus all your attention on your life partner. Really talk and enjoy the company of this very special person.
- iii) Experiment with new ideas. Try using an electronic scheduler or tool to see if it provides greater efficiency. Never stop improving. Stay hungry for new ideas.
- iv) Keep your perspective - always. Things are never as bad as they might seem. Even the worst moments will pass. Challenges allow one to grow and become tougher.

v) Do not make enemies.

vi) Never take your family for granted. Think for a moment about how you would feel if your mother or father were no longer here. What thoughts have you forgotten to express, what loving gestures would you have performed? Now pick up the phone and tell these things to those you love.

Part I: THE MIND *Your Standards of Excellence*

In Day 20, you were exposed to the 5 Master Keys to making excellence your standard for life. Review them and make sure you are indeed applying them to every aspect of your life. Happiness does not come from relaxing and doing nothing. Happiness only comes from achieving and knowing that every day of your life you are getting better and better. Raise your standards and expect nothing but the very best from yourself. Life mastery is not for a chosen few. Slumbering deep inside you are powers and abilities that you cannot fathom. The leaders and achievers of the world all know this. Keep your aim high. Push yourself when you feel scared or lacking in motivation. Soon excellence will be your habit. Aiming to the sky will be second nature to you.

Part II: THE BODY *More Voice Conditioning*

On Day 5, a secret of longevity was shared with you: voice conditioning creates health. Practice the following exercises to further strengthen your voice:

i) Pronounce the following syllables as quickly and in as low a tone as possible: pe be me fe ve le re; ip ib iv if

ii) Sustain “hummm” for as long as you can. Repeat five times.

iii) Say “haa” five times, each time exhaling deeply and releasing any tension that has built up inside your body.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *Run Your Own Race*

One of the essential principles of life success and true personal mastery is to run your own race. Too often one gets caught up in what others are doing and what other people expect. “Why haven’t you bought a house or started a family yet?” your lovely mother might ask. “You are too old to go to law school” your best friend might say. Set your goals, know what you want out of life and then plan methodically to take action on the path of your dreams. If you really know where you are going and cultivate the important habit of faith in yourself, what others say or think will mean very little to you.

You are like a ship that has plotted its course. You know precisely the route on which you are travelling and the courses of other vessels are irrelevant. Running your own race also leads to peace of mind and self-confidence. If your school chum lands an early vice-presidency, you are genuinely thrilled for him because you are certain that you too will achieve your own goals in time. Pettiness vanishes and kindness towards others becomes one of your most notable personal traits.

Part I: THE MIND *Concentration Revisited*

This program has continually emphasized the importance of concentration in life mastery. Developing powerful concentration skills allows you to control the thoughts in your mind. Negative thoughts can then be banished and positive ones will prevail. As a positive and motivated thinker, you will then have the desire and energy to achieve all that you are capable of achieving. If there is one secret to remember for the rest of your life, remember that true happiness and peace of mind can be developed. You can achieve the state of Bliss by mastering the art of concentration.

Today, go back to Day 2 of the MegaLiving! program and practise the Burning Candle exercise for at least 25 minutes. You have been practising your concentration exercises over the past few weeks and should be noticing dramatic improvements in this area. No longer will your mind wander at the slightest distraction. No longer will you become annoyed at the most trivial of events. You no longer major in minor things and now focus only on the very best in life.

Part II: THE BODY *Food For Thought*

It is now beyond debate that what you put into your body affects your mind. Eat too much meat and other hard-to-digest foods and you will feel lazy and less alert. Eat light foods such as vegetables and fresh fruits and you will soon have boundless energy and will be startlingly attentive and mentally agile. Moods are even affected by some foods. The essential point is to strictly monitor what goes in so your mind is given the very best fuel it deserves.

Make a list of all the food you have ingested over the past twenty-four hours. Now remove as much of the fatty foods as possible. Try replacing chocolate bars and snack foods with fresh fruit or yogurt. Cut down your red meat intake as much as you can as this food is exceptionally hard to digest and absorbs an undue amount of your energy. Once you precisely identify what you are eating, you can take steps to improve the quality of your food and the quality of your physical life.

Part III: THE CHARACTER *The Importance of the Mastermind*

The Mastermind is a term that has been used in business circles to describe a group of people assembled to motivate one another, to brainstorm for new ideas and to support each other as each participant tries new ventures. You have clearly committed yourself to self-mastery and achieving all you can. By getting to Day 29 of the 30 day MegaLiving! program you have demonstrated your discipline and enthusiasm for success in life. Today, plan your own Personal Mastery Mastermind. Think of the four most positive people you know, people who live with zest and are determined to enjoy their dreams, people who are open to new ideas and who you can trust. Discuss the Mastermind concept with them and plan to meet at least once every two weeks. At these meetings, brainstorm for ideas on personal excellence techniques, ways to live with more passion, tools for time management and financial success. Motivate one another and use the powers of synergy to catapult you to results you have never seen before. The Personal Mastery Mastermind is one of the most effective resources you will ever have to start and continue MegaLiving!

The Conclusion of MegaLiving!

The Ultimate Action - Plan for Mastery of Your Mind, Body and Character

Congratulations on successfully completing the 30 Day Program for Life Mastery. You have been exposed to the finest strategies from both the East and the West for personal excellence and lifelong success. Thousands have applied these strategies and have gone on to find enormous personal wealth, true peace of mind and ideal health. You will now be able to put far more living in your life.

This, the final day of the MegaLiving! program, is not the end but really the start of a new way of life for you. Over the past 30 days, you have learned exceptionally powerful principles and exercises to control the way you think and feel. You should be feeling more motivated, energized and disciplined than you have felt in the past. In this book are the secrets for lifelong success and happiness. Practise the skills and share them with others. Do not stop using the program but, rather, make it an essential part of your life. An elite athlete does not stop conditioning after the first race is over but maintains a training regimen over many years until it is second nature. MegaLiving! should be a way of life for you too. Every day you will improve in some way

and find a new sparkle of joy and fun. Happiness is truly not a destination but a method of travelling through this wonderful world.

You have devoted much time to excelling with this program and you have made sacrifices along the way. You are now equipped to achieve the dreams you have held close to your heart. Believe in yourself and your potential. Shatter any limitations and appreciate that any challenge can indeed be overcome.

Dream higher than you have ever dreamt before. Aim for the stars. I wish you well and hope that we can one day meet on this path of success that we share. This path is supremely exciting, filled with magnificent gifts and is open to everyone. This path is called MegaLiving!

Robin S. Sharma

The MegaLiving! SuccessLog

Every day, in every way, I am getting better and better.

Emile Coue

	The Mind	The Body	The Character
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About The Author

Robin S. Sharma, LL.B., LL.M., is an internationally respected authority on motivation, leadership and change. By blending Western strategies for personal effectiveness and peak performance with timeless wisdom for care of the mind, body & soul, he has helped thousands of people enhance the quality of their lives.

Over ten years ago, Robin Sharma set out to find the most effective strategies for dynamic living. With few resources but a commitment to learning and self-improvement, he travelled extensively searching for philosophies, techniques and skills that anyone could apply easily to profoundly improve the quality of their personal and professional lives. He distilled much of the timeless literature on character-building and successful living and learned the secrets of hundreds and hundreds of people including leaders in the world of high finance, wildly successful entrepreneurs, yogis living high in the Himalayan mountains of India, sages of the East and everyday people who had found ways to live with deep contentment. He then tested the principles he learned in his own life.

Robin Sharma received both Bachelor and Master of Law degrees before going on to become a highly successful litigation lawyer. He is also a triathlete, a practitioner of the ancient martial art of Tae Kwon Do, a musician and a dedicated family man.

Robin Sharma is a frequent guest in the national media ranging from NBC to Success Radio.

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PRAISE FOR

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

“Nothing less than sensational. This book will bless your life.” Mark Victor Hansen, co-author, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*

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“The book is about finding out what is truly important to your real spiritual self, rather than being inundated with material possessions.” Michelle Yeoh, lead actress of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, in *TIME Magazine*

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“*The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* is coherent, useful and definitely worth reading.... It can truly help readers cope with the rat race.” *The Kingston Whig-Standard*

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“Simple wisdom that anyone can benefit from.” *The Calgary Herald*

“This book could be classified as *The Wealthy Barber* of personal development.... [It contains] insightful messages on the key concepts which help bring greater balance, control and effectiveness in our daily lives.” *Investment Executive*

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“One of the year’s best business books.” *PROFIT Magazine*

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“Sharma combines the wisdom of the great philosophers from the West and the East and applies it to the business world.” *The Liberal*



ALSO BY ROBIN SHARMA

MegaLiving

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

Leadership Wisdom from The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

Who Will Cry When You Die?



I dedicate this book to my extraordinary children, Colby and Bianca, two of the greatest and wisest teachers in my life. I love you both very very much.

I also dedicate this book to my dear friend and colleague the late George Williams, a man who touched many lives but left us far too early.

Finally, I dedicate this book to you, the reader. May the lessons you discover on these pages inspire you to be a wiser person, a better parent, and to become the kind of family leader that will inspire the children of the world to live bigger and better lives.



A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in or the kind of car I drove. But the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.

Author unknown

To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die.

Thomas Campbell

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THE FIRST MASTERY OF THE FAMILY LEADER™

THE SECOND MASTERY OF THE FAMILY LEADER™

THE THIRD MASTERY OF THE FAMILY LEADER™

THE FOURTH MASTERY OF THE FAMILY LEADER™

THE FIFTH MASTERY OF THE FAMILY LEADER™

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Acknowledgments

First, thanks must go to all the people around the world who have read the books in the *Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* series and had the wisdom to apply the knowledge shared to enrich not only their own lives, but also the lives of all those around them. I have loved receiving your letters and your e-mails and hearing how the lessons I've offered have helped you on your journeys. I honor you for having the courage to change, grow and lead.

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And finally, I thank Colby and Bianca, my two children, for bringing me so much joy.



My Great Awakening

We are generally afraid to become that which we can glimpse in our most perfect moments.

Abraham Maslow

The saddest part of life lies not in the act of dying, but in failing to truly live while we are alive. Too many of us play small with our lives, never letting the fullness of our humanity see the light of day. I've learned that what really counts in life, in the end, is not how many toys we have collected or how much money we've accumulated, but how many of our talents we have liberated and used for a purpose that adds value to this world. What truly matter most are the lives we have touched and the legacy that we have left. Tolstoy put it so well when he wrote: "We live for ourselves only when we live for others."

It took me forty years to discover this simple point of wisdom. Forty long years to discover that success cannot really be pursued. Success *ensues* and flows into your life as the unintended yet inevitable byproduct of a life spent enriching the lives of other people. When you shift your daily focus from a compulsion to survive towards a lifelong commitment to serve, your existence cannot help but explode into success.

I still can't believe that I had to wait until the "half-time" of my life to figure out that true fulfillment as a human being comes not from achieving those grand gestures that put us on the front pages of the newspapers and business magazines, but instead from those basic and incremental acts of decency that each one of us has the privilege to practice each and every day if we simply make the choice to do so. Mother Teresa, a great leader of human hearts if ever there was one, said it best: "There are no great acts, only small acts done with great love." I learned this the hard way in my life.

Until recently, I had been so busy striving, I had missed out on living. I was so busy chasing life's big pleasures that I had missed out on the little ones, those microjoys that weave themselves in and out of our lives on a daily basis but often go unnoticed. My days were overscheduled, my mind was overworked and my spirit was underfed. To be honest with you, my life reflected outward success but was completely bankrupt in terms of inner significance.

I was of the old school that believed that happiness would arrive when I bought the right car, built the right house and was promoted to the right job. I judged the value of a human being not by the size of their heart and the

strength of their character, but by the size of their wallet and the contents of their bank account. You might say that I was not a good person. I would argue that I simply had no idea about the true meaning of life or how to conduct myself as I lived it. Maybe it was the kind of people I associated with, but everyone I knew in the business world lived by this same philosophy. We all dedicated the best hours of our days to climbing the stairway of success that we dreamed would lead us into the coveted corner office, the opulent summer home in the Hamptons and perhaps that spectacular ski chalet in France. We all wanted to be famous, admired and honored. We all wanted to be filthy rich. And, most of all, we all wanted to be wanted.

And though I did entertain the idea of being a mother one day and raising a family in the future, the dreams of my quietest moments were more along the lines of appearing on the cover of *Forbes* or *FORTUNE* magazine with the headline under my sleek figure stating “Catherine Cruz: the CEO Who Broke All the Rules and Still Won” than cheering on children at little league games. On the way to work, I used to repeat affirmations like “Today will be the best day of my life” and “I have the millionaire’s mind and the warrior’s heart.” I can just see you shaking your head right now, but I wanted success so badly back then I would have done anything for it. I would have said whatever people asked me to say, done whatever anyone told me to do and climbed over anyone who had the misfortune to get in my way. I’m not saying I’m proud of the person I was back then. I’m just telling you that that’s who I was. I was tough, ruthless, ambitious and driven—to a fault, closing down my emotional side in an effort to survive in the world I had made for myself.

My life was defined by my work and I felt I was destined to reach the pinnacle of success in business. On my office wall were these words of the great English poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow that I believed said it all:

Lives of great men all remind us

We can make our lives sublime,

And, departing, leave behind us

Footprints on the sands of time.

Sure, my pals from MBA school and I learned to pay lip service to all those honey-covered platitudes like “people come first” and “people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” that were served up all too frequently by well-heeled consultants and well-meaning business professors. But deep within each one of us, there lived only one desire: to serve ourselves and meet our own goals, hopes and dreams—no matter how many people we had to trample to do it. And so we sacrificed our very souls for the sake of professional success and the pursuit of big money.

We gave everything we had to our work. And though I'm now embarrassed to admit it, in the early years it was fun. Really fun.

As the brightest student in my class, I had my pick of the best companies on the planet to work for. Having always been a bit of a rebel, I delighted in rejecting every one of their six-figure offers, much to the chagrin of my mother who thought I was out of my mind. Remembering the advice of one of my favorite professors in business school, himself a person who chose to walk the road less travelled (he preached: "When searching for your ideal job, stop asking 'Is this a company I'd like to work for?' and start asking 'Is this a company that I'd like to own?'"), I settled on a fast-track management position with a little-known financial services firm with massive growth potential. Never discount the power of stock options to attract even the most uninterested job candidate.

Every morning at precisely 5:15, my shiny black Mercedes—a signing bonus from my new employer—sped through the underground parkade of the seventy-story glass-and-metal office tower that I was to spend the next few years of my life within. With a fresh copy of *The Wall Street Journal* in one hand and my alligator skin attaché case in the other, I strode to the bank of elevators and then up to the sixty-second floor office. This was my real home.

Once there, I would check my messages, return all phone calls and then proceed to live out the next sixteen to eighteen hours in a state of high anxiety and near chaos. In short order I was promoted to divisional, and then senior, vice-president, all before I was thirty-five. I had the pleasure of flying around the world first-class, rubbing shoulders with the business elite, eating in the finest restaurants and doing deals that would make my contemporaries shudder with jealousy. I was eventually given a luxurious office, and I finally did buy that ski chalet, thanks to my stock options that, as I had hoped, soared through the stratosphere.

A few years ago, a few friends from business school and I started a web-based company we called BraveLife.com that provided corporations with a revolutionary new way to train and develop employees wishing to excel in these wildly competitive times. Though it was initially something we did just for fun, BraveLife.com became an instant hit, and within months, our unique enterprise was featured in just about every major business publication in the nation. With the pundits saying this venture was an ideal candidate for a public offering and venture capitalists hovering around us like vultures closing in for the kill, my partners and I knew we would soon be rich. It was all coming together, just as I had envisioned in so many of my quieter moments. I would be wealthy, celebrated and and beloved. I could afford all the material possessions I craved so deeply, and finally have the resources to

live my life on my own terms. I was well on my way to the mountaintop and living the life I had always wanted. And yet, as I drew closer to my dreams, I stumbled upon a strange realization that took the wind out of my sails. No matter what I tried to do to deny it, I was a completely miserable human being.

I was seven years into a marriage that lacked any trace of passion or emotional connection. I met my husband, Jon Cruz, at a wilderness retreat the company I initially worked for had sent its high-performing executives to in order to refine our leadership skills. Jon was a struggling entrepreneur hoping to find some inspiration in the mountains, and we found ourselves on the same team, faced with the mission of scaling a challenging rock face in the middle of the night. He admired my fearlessness and tenacity, and I was immediately attracted to his gentleness and passion for life. We fell in love and, though it ran contrary to my cautious ways, we were married six weeks later.

Jon was a good man in a world where raw goodness and strength of character are no longer given the value they deserve. Our early years together saw lots of good times but, as the years progressed, our relationship started to fall apart through the process of neglect. He loved nature and the great outdoors, and I loved glitzy restaurants and high-brow fashion shows. He collected great books and enjoyed carving wood on the backyard patio, while I collected great wines and appreciated fine art. But I must tell you that it was not our differences that led to our less-than-ideal marriage. The real problem was that I was never home to be with my husband.

By the time I'd roll into the driveway at night, Jon would be asleep. And by the time he'd get up, my Mercedes would be winding its way to my office. Though we lived under one roof, it would be safe to say we lived separate lives. But it was far more than my relationship with Jon that was causing me to feel so empty and disheartened as a person. We had two young—and wonderful—children I knew were suffering as a result of my eternal absences. They did not say a word to me about all the time I spent at the office, but their eyes revealed the fulness of their disappointment and their deep need to have a richer connection with the woman they called Mom.

Porter, our son, was just turning six and Sarita, our daughter, was three. I knew that these early years were by far the most important in terms of the shaping and development of their characters. I knew this was the stage during which they needed to be surrounded by great, loving role models who lavished affection and wisdom upon their tender souls. I knew that I would regret the many hours I spent away from them but, for some inexplicable

reason, I just could not tear myself away from my office and all the obligations my hyper-complex professional life carried with it.

“Life is nothing more than a series of windows of opportunity strung together to form a whole,” my wise father used to tell me. I had the common sense and intelligence to appreciate that Porter and Sarita would only be young once, and that now was the time that they needed my presence. Once this window of opportunity closed, my chance to equip them with the values, virtues and vision to lead rich lives as they matured would be gone forever. And I knew I could never forgive myself for not being there for them when they needed me most. I guess I just didn’t have the courage to step back from my chaotic life and really reflect on my highest priorities, nor the wisdom to ensure that these priorities were reflected in the way I spent my days. No matter how hard I tried, I just couldn’t bring myself to stop working at a blistering pace and restore balance in my life. I truly felt I could not live without the adrenaline rush and sense of significance my overflowing agenda gave to me. As much as I’d publicly profess that my family was what truly counted, the facts clearly revealed otherwise. All the evidence showed that Jon and the kids finished a distant second to my career and my desire to become rich.



The Best Worst Experience of My Life

If I had to live my life over again, I would relax more. I'd be sillier than I have been on this trip. I would climb more mountains, swim more rivers and watch more sunsets. I would have more actual troubles and less imaginary ones. Oh I've had my moments, and if I had to do it over again, I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try to have nothing else, just moments, one after another. And I'd pick more daisies.

Nadine Stair, age 89

Most people don't really discover what life is all about until they come to die. Then, facing their mortality head on, they awaken to life's deepest meanings and realize all that they have missed. Life can be cruel in that way. Its gifts all too often fail to appear until the very end. When we are young and have our whole lives ahead of us, we tend to put off living. "Next year I'll spend more time in nature or laugh more or love more. Next year I'll spend more time with my kids and read the great works of literature. Next year I will watch more sunsets and build better friendships. But right now, I've got things to do and people to meet." These are the standard refrains of the age we live in. Well, I've learned that if you don't act on life, life has a habit of acting on you. And the days slip into weeks and the weeks into months and before you know it, your life will be over. The point of wisdom is clear: *stop living your life by default and start living your life by design*. Get back into the game and take action to create the richer reality you know deep within your heart you were destined to create. Today, begin to live your life the way you will wish you had lived when you lay on your deathbed. Or, to paraphrase Mark Twain, live out your life in such a way that even the undertaker cries at your funeral.

It's a strange world we live in. We can send a missile across the world with pinpoint accuracy, yet we have trouble walking across the street to meet a new neighbor. We spend more time watching television than we do connecting with our children. We say we want to change the world but are not willing to change ourselves. Then, as the sun sets on our lives and we allow ourselves some time for a little deep reflection, we catch a glimpse of the joys we could have experienced, the kindnesses we could have given, and the people we could have been. But by then, it's too late. By the time most of us wake up to living, it's time to lay down. Thankfully, my awakening came sooner.

I was headed to San Francisco to speak at a high-tech conference about the success of BraveLife.com. I had almost missed my flight due to a major snowstorm which had paralyzed most of the city and ground traffic to a halt. After finally boarding the plane, my two business partners and I had settled into our first-class seats with an exceptionally good glass of wine and a discussion about how we would handle the presentation we had been asked to make. We chatted for about thirty minutes and then, feeling exhausted after a full day at the office, I excused myself from the discussion and drifted off to sleep.

Suddenly, I was awakened by the captain's voice over the public address system. "We are experiencing some really choppy weather up here, folks. And it looks like it's going to get even rougher. Please ensure that your seatbelt is fastened snugly around your waist and place your tray table in the upright position," came the familiar instruction. Though he tried his best to sound calm, the captain's voice betrayed him, and I wondered if there was something far more serious he was dealing with. My heart began to pound as he continued to speak. "It looks like all this inclement weather has created some real challenges for us up here on the flight deck. Again, please keep your seatbelts fastened, and I'll keep you updated about this storm we are heading into as soon as we know more."

The next thing I knew, the cabin lights went out and the emergency lighting system came on. The plane started shaking violently and plates started falling to the floor. The turbulence, which had initially been bearable, soon became too much to take and made me sick to my stomach. I looked at the face of my partner Jack—he looked like a young Warren Beatty and had two young children at home, like myself. Normally a master of grace under pressure, he was clearly horrified by what was happening and started to hyperventilate. As he shakily grabbed my hand, he forced out eight words I will never forget: "Catherine, I think we are going to crash."

It's hard for me to describe to you how I felt during the next few minutes. I knew Jack was right but oddly, a strange sense of peace and acceptance came over me. Clutching his hand tightly, I closed my eyes. And I thought about my children. My heart sank as an image of Porter's smiling face danced across the picture screen of my mind. I remembered his first words and this great little boy's first steps. I saw him laughing in the treehouse Jon had built for him in our backyard, munching on a carrot dipped in peanut butter, a snack he told us would make him into a superhero when he grew older. I saw a giggling Sarita jumping up and down on her bed and singing nursery rhymes at the top of her lungs. And then I saw Jon relaxing on the back porch next to the barbeque he joked he loved more than me, sipping on an ice-cold

Corona with a wedge of lime tucked over the top. Almost in slow motion, I then saw all four of us on the only vacation we ever took as a family: we had gone up to Canada and traveled through the Rockies. Here's the interesting thing, though—of all those hundreds of thoughts that I had in those last few moments before the plane crashed, not a single one was about myself or my business. I guess it's true what the wisest among us have said for centuries: *at the end of your life you will find that the things you thought were the big things were actually the little things, and that all those things you thought were the little, unimportant things were actually the big, important ones.*

At that low moment of my life, staring death in the face, I did not think about the money I made or the car I drove or the title inscribed on my business card. My thoughts did not drift to the profit our company had made or the magazine covers I had been featured on. *All I could think about was my family.* And how much I loved them, how much I would miss them and how deeply I regretted not devoting more time to them. My dad used to say that he had never seen a U-Haul following a hearse on the way to a funeral. His point, undoubtedly, was that no matter how many things you collect over the course of your lifetime you cannot take them with you. The only thing we can take with us is our memories, memories of *The Things That Truly Count.* Facing my mortality head on, I came to the ultimate realization: my family mattered most.



The Gift of Life

To believe in the heroic makes heroes.

Benjamin Disraeli

The next thing I remember was waking up as I was being rushed into an emergency room by a team of screaming paramedics. I drifted in and out of consciousness for the next few minutes and heard someone yell: “We’re losing her. Losing all vital signs. Get this woman onto the operating table stat!”

“My God,” I thought. “I’ve just survived a plane crash.” My clothes were soaked in blood and gaping wounds riddled my arms and legs. I felt cold and disoriented. And I was thirsty; I’ve never felt so thirsty in all my life. Then I realized that I just might die on the operating table.

I had no idea what city I was in. I didn’t know if my family had been informed of the tragedy. I didn’t know if my two partners were alive. But soon my fear turned to calm, and for some reason, I knew I would live. I’ve since learned that the universe unfolds as it should and that everything that happens to us in life happens for a reason. Our setbacks inevitably carry blessings and bring with them lessons that we need to learn in order to move to the next level of living. The great English poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow expressed the point so well when he observed, “It has done me good to be somewhat parched by the heat and drenched by the rain of life.” I knew I had survived this tragic accident for some reason. I just couldn’t figure out what that reason was. And I had no idea what my lesson would be.

After spending nearly twelve hours in the operating room, I was shipped off to the critical care ward to begin the grueling process of recovery. The next morning, I was awakened by the two sweetest sounds my ears have ever heard—Porter’s and Sarita’s voices. “Mommy, wake up. Mommy, wake up! We love you,” they repeated in mantra-like fashion. When I finally managed to open my eyes, I saw Porter there in his favorite Curious George t-shirt and Sarita in the little red overalls she insisted on wearing most of the time. Jon was standing with them, tears streaming down his cheeks, unable to speak even a word. Then they hugged me. And we all began to cry.

I spent months in that hospital bed. Sadly, the plane crash had claimed many lives, including those of Jack and Ross, my business partners—a loss that devastated me. The three of us had experienced so much together over the previous few years, and I had no interest in running the company without them. They were not simply the co-founders of BraveLife.com; Jack and Ross

had become my best friends. The final cause of the accident, according to the FAA, was determined to be “pilot error” and as the lawyers stepped in to make their claims, I vowed to put this event behind me and to do whatever I needed to do to get back on my feet and return to my family. Though Jon and the kids visited me every day, I spent most of my time in rehabilitation, making an effort to speed up the healing process. The doctors and nurses at the hospital were like angels sent from above, showering me with attention, kindness and compassion. As the days passed, I grew stronger and my future began to look brighter. But then one night, something extremely strange happened to me.

Visiting hours had just ended and Jon had taken the children home for the night. I had just started reading a wonderful book called *Hope for the Flowers* by Trina Paulus, which I was finding to be not only inspirational but also deeply enlightening. As I reached for the cup of hot tea on my bedside table, I saw someone in an electric wheelchair whisk by the doorway to my room at an alarming rate.

I was surprised that someone would be moving so quickly in a hospital at such a late hour, but decided to turn my attention back to my reading. I had given up this important habit when the demands of work became all-consuming, but ever since the plane crash I had vowed to get back to *The Things That Truly Count*. Reading something from the wisdom literature everyday was one of those things. The crash had been an epiphany for me, the wake-up call I needed to rethink my priorities and clean up my life. In the solitude of my hospital room, I did some deep thinking and reflected, for the first time in many years, on the way I had been conducting myself—as a parent, as a partner and as a human being. I felt that I had been given a second chance to live—this time around, I would live with greater wisdom, decency and virtue. I decided that I would get back to the fundamentals of great living and simplify my life.

“The best things are nearest: breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of Right just before you. Do not grasp at the stars, but do life’s plain common work as it comes, certain that daily duties and daily bread are the sweetest things in life,” wrote Robert Louis Stevenson.

Just when I had focused on my book, it happened again. The figure in the wheelchair raced by my room a second time—but now he was going even faster. Even more surprisingly, this person was now singing at the top of his lungs. I recognized the song—I hadn’t heard it in years. My parents used to sing it to me when I was a little girl, and I was surprised this odd visitor knew the words. I had to find out who this person was. But would this be a safe

thing to do? What if he were some crazed lunatic who had come in off the streets? Still, my curiosity got the better of me, and I rolled out of bed and grabbed my trusted walker.

I slowly went out into the hallway hoping to see who this maniac was. But I saw nothing. The hallway was completely empty, and totally silent except for two young nurses working at their station. “Oh, hello,” I said warmly, as I made my way along the corridor.

“Hi Catherine,” they replied. “Everything okay?”

“Sure,” I answered. “I was just wondering who that was flying down the hallway a few minutes ago. He was going far too fast for my liking. He could have hurt someone, you know. And why was he singing? If you see him again, please tell him to slow down. Tell him to get some singing lessons while you’re at it,” I said with a smile.

“We didn’t see anyone,” the nurses replied in unison.

“You didn’t?” I asked in embarrassment.

“No, we didn’t. Sorry, Catherine. Maybe you just had a bad dream.”

“No, it wasn’t a dream. I saw this strange-looking figure in one of those electric wheelchairs speeding down this hallway. And he was singing this children’s song I used to love as a kid. I haven’t heard that song for years.”

I was beginning to realize how silly I sounded. The nurses started to laugh.

“You’re pulling our legs, right?”

“No, I’m serious. If you see him again, talk to him,” I said sternly. “He should act more responsibly.”

“Okay, Catherine, we will,” one of the nurses replied, still chuckling.

As I made my way back to my room, something on the floor caught my eye. The object was shiny and made of metal. As I turned it over and held it up to the light, I could not believe my eyes. It was a gold butterfly. I was astounded. My father had given a butterfly like this to me and to my older brother Julian to remind us to be free thinkers as we grew up and went on to lead lives of our own. To him, the butterfly was a symbol of freedom, independence and beauty—qualities he hoped we would fill our lives with. He gave the gold butterflies to us on the day he was named a judge of the Federal Court. I remember feeling so very proud of my dad on that day. He had worked tirelessly to arrive at that position and deserved every bit of his success. Dad was such a good man: noble, loving and honest to a fault.

I had kept my butterfly at home and treasured it as one of my most important belongings, especially after Dad died. I have no idea what my brother Julian did with his. Knowing Julian, he probably sold it. My brother was a unique character, I must tell you. You will probably never meet anyone quite like him in your life. I'm not sure how I would describe him to you. Yes, he was brilliant and talented and irreverent and wild. But he was so much more.

Growing up, he was always the smartest—and cockiest—kid in his class. Given his movie star looks, the prettiest girls in school always gravitated to him. Given his brains, he won every honor that the school had to bestow. In university, he was an elite athlete, a brilliant debater, a first-class student and a planet-class playboy. He just had these immense human gifts. It was far more than his intellect or his charisma. He had this amazing energy and light about him that was inescapable. And even more importantly, Julian had a good heart. I really loved him and saw him as my hero. We had such fun growing up, spending summers at our lakeside cottage and winters on the ski hill. Most of our time together was spent laughing and playing practical jokes with one another. Simply said, Julian was one amazing man. And I missed him deeply.

As expected, Julian graduated first in his class at Harvard Law School. He was the subject of an intense bidding war among the finest law firms in the country. In short order, he carved out a reputation as one of the best and brightest hired legal guns in the nation and achieved success that was impressive by any measure. Even my dad, a man who did not give praise lightly and who understood the true meaning of excellence, often remarked: "That boy really is good. Really good. I'd be willing to bet he'll be on the Supreme Court one day. A chip off the old block I'd say," he would add with a laugh.

Julian's star shone brightly for many years. Respected as one of the smartest and toughest trial lawyers in the entire country, he earned an income in the seven figures and filled his life with the best that life had to offer. He purchased a spectacular mansion in a neighborhood favored by celebrities and ambassadors. He invested in a private jet to whisk him from client to client in royal style and would fly tailors in from Italy just to make him a suit for a big trial. He even bought a home on a private island that he named "Nirvana" in hopes that it would serve as a place of renewal where he might recover from the blistering pace he had chosen to keep. But of all Julian's possessions, the one that he loved most was the shiny red Ferrari that he always kept parked in the center of his driveway. That car was his joy, his passion and his reward for

all the sacrifices he knew he had made along the road to his fast but well-deserved success.

Along the path of Julian's meteoric rise in the legal profession, my brother married a wonderful woman and this golden couple had a beautiful daughter they named Ally. She was an amazing little girl—unusually bright, always laughing and constantly getting into mischief. I've yet to see a child as luminous and lovely as Ally. Having a daughter changed everything for Julian. Sure, he still did extremely well as a lawyer, and his skills in the courtroom remained as sharp as ever. Sure, he still had that competitive fire that burned deep in his belly and compelled him to reach for the stars. But his priorities seemed to change as the days went by. I saw he was beginning to love the life of a family man. He began taking every Friday off to do nothing more than play with his daughter and take her on outings with his wife. I remember him being so very happy at that time of his life.

While Julian had always been handsome and fit, his face actually seemed to glow when he was with his family. His eyes sparkled when he would show up with Ally, and I knew this was a man who had found the inner peace we all crave in this world of hypercomplexity and infinite uncertainty. Julian was surrounded by love and had the world by the tail. But life has a way of setting us back when we least expect or deserve it. Often it is when we are at the top of our game that our greatest suffering begins. At such times, all that is dear to us can be ripped out from under us, leaving us sitting in the darkness and facing the abyss. It is in those most bleak of moments that we catch a glimpse of who we truly are. It is in those times of greatest pain that our true character is revealed. It is in those lowest periods of life that we are introduced to our finest strengths. And something soon happened to my dear brother Julian that introduced him to strengths he could never imagine he had.

One sun-soaked autumn afternoon, as he drove little Ally to her best friend's birthday party, Julian noticed that a car in the opposite lane was starting to swerve into his lane. At first he thought nothing of it. But he grew concerned as the car not only remained in his lane, but started to accelerate directly towards the car he and Ally were riding in. What happened in the next few seconds changed Julian's life forever. The driver of the other car, drunk after a day of hard drinking with his buddies, lost control and smashed head on into Julian's car. Unbelievably, Julian escaped with no more than a few bruises. But sadly, little Ally was not so fortunate. She was fatally injured when her head struck the windshield at the moment of the crash, and she died in my brother's arms as he sat in the middle of the road screaming for medical assistance. After this unspeakable loss, Julian was never the same. He was

transformed from a man who lived every day to the fullest to a man who struggled to survive each passing hour. It broke my heart.

In a desperate attempt to avoid confronting his sorrow, he began spending every waking hour at work, sometimes spending weeks on end sleeping on the couch in his lavish office and refusing to meet with anyone who might remind him of the life he once knew. And while this tunnel vision led Julian to even greater success in his career, it created equally great decay on the personal front. Carlos Castaneda once wrote that “the basic difference between an ordinary man and a warrior is that a warrior takes everything as a challenge while the ordinary man takes everything as either a blessing or a curse.” I think that Julian felt he was cursed.

His lovely wife eventually decided to leave him, saying that his obsession with work and his emotional unavailability made life with him unbearable. She confided in me that she did everything in her power to snap Julian out of the state he had fallen into, but nothing had worked. Even worse, he made it very clear from his words and actions that he was not open to receiving any help. Not from anyone. He just wanted to be left alone and wished everyone would “mind their own business and go shower their pity on someone else.”

Julian began to drink excessively and live recklessly. He slept little, ate too much and developed a rough exterior that pushed even those closest to him away. What little free time he had he would spend with impossibly thin fashion models or the rowdy band of stockbrokers he referred to as his “demolition team.” Although I did not see much of Julian those days—he refused to accept even my phone calls—I knew he was headed for trouble. Deep trouble.

Once I spotted him rushing along a downtown street with two briefcases bulging with papers, sweat pouring off his forehead. His appearance that day brought tears to my eyes. I could not believe how my brother looked. His once youthful and handsome face had been replaced by a landscape of wrinkles, and his eyes spoke of deep sadness. The chiseled physique he was once so proud of had given way to a grossly overweight figure and a fallen posture. And the million-dollar smile that used to perpetually rest on his face had left without a trace. I felt so sad to see Julian, the brother whom I loved so much and had such admiration for, going through this private hell.

A few months later, I received a phone call from one of Julian’s law partners. I was informed that Julian had suffered a massive heart attack in the middle of the courtroom while he was arguing a major civil case. He had been rushed to the hospital and, thankfully, would survive, the partner told me. But, as usual, Julian was refusing all visitors. “Especially family,” his colleague emphasized.

“Couldn’t I see him for even a few minutes?” I pleaded.

“I wish I could say yes, Catherine, but you know Julian. He has ordered everyone out of his room and instructed the hospital staff to keep the door closed at all times. He even threatened one of the senior doctors with a lawsuit if anyone was given access to the private telephone line they installed in his room for him.”

“That’s so Julian,” I thought. Even in his most vulnerable of moments, he was first and foremost a lawyer.

“There’s something else I think you should know, Catherine,” the partner added as his voice grew quieter. “I really can’t believe this, but Julian has announced that he will give up the practice of law. He has tendered his resignation and is leaving the firm.”

“You’re kidding!” I exclaimed, scarcely able to believe what I was hearing. “The law is in Julian’s blood, just like it was in Dad’s. He’s wanted to be a lawyer since he was five years old.”

“I’m just telling you what he told me earlier today, Catherine,” the partner replied in a tone that revealed his own shock at Julian’s decision.

True to his word, within weeks Julian left the law. Even more astounding, within months he sold all his material possessions: the mansion, the plane and the private island. He even sold his red Ferrari, the most obvious symbol of his success and of the man he once was. I learned through another one of his friends that Julian had retreated to India on some kind of “a search for life’s deepest meaning,” as his friend put it. Julian left no forwarding address, no phone number by which he could be contacted and no indication as to when he would return.

“What’s your guess?” I asked his friend.

“My guess is that neither you nor I will ever see the great Julian Mantle again,” came the hushed reply.

As the years slipped by, I heard nothing from Julian, not even a postcard. It was as if he refused to acknowledge the existence of a sister or of the life he had before the death of his daughter. Failing to see that there were lessons to be learned from Julian’s downfall, I too became consumed with my work, though I had started a family of my own. And though I began to think less and less of Julian over time, in my quieter moments, often when Jon and the kids were asleep upstairs, I could not help wondering where my brother was and whether he was okay. My mind would float back to those hot summer days when we’d swim off the dock at our summer place and sail our little boat along the lake. I’d recall Julian’s sense of humor and the pranks he used to

play on anyone who had the misfortune of causing him the slightest aggravation. And most of all, I remembered that mischievous sparkle that never left Julian's eyes. Through the miracle of genetics, Ally had acquired that same sparkle. My, how I missed that little girl. And my, how I longed to see my brother.



A Monk Comes to Visit

The happiness or unhappiness of a man does not depend upon the amount of property or gold he wins. Happiness or misery is in one's soul. A wise man feels at home in every country. The whole universe is the home of a noble soul.

Democritus

“I’m your new doctor,” boomed the voice from the darkened end of the hallway. As I looked up, I was astonished by what I saw. I watched a striking young man in a doctor’s coat get up out of the wheelchair that had been flying down the corridor and begin to walk towards me from the darkness. And while he had the standard stethoscope hanging from his neck, something else that he was wearing took me by surprise. The young man appeared to be wearing a hooded red robe, the kind I’ve often seen Tibetan monks wear. It was elegantly cut and very beautiful in its texture, with intricate stitching along its flowing borders. While it was still difficult to see the man in the dim light, as he moved closer to me I sensed a remarkably youthful and handsome face that radiated a positive vitality and energy. I was also struck by how familiar this man looked.

Attired in sandals, with little flowers carved on them, the young man looked fit and strong and conveyed a special sense of confidence as well as inner peace. And his eyes, which I soon was able to see more clearly, looked like two sparkling diamonds— they seemed to penetrate deep inside of me, causing me to stand frozen in the hallway.

“What kind of doctor are you?” I asked curiously. “You don’t fit the traditional mold, if you don’t mind me saying.”

“A *family* doctor ... of sorts,” came the immediate reply. Much of the young man’s figure remained in the shadowed part of the corridor, giving him a look of great mystery.

“From what I can see, you look more like a voodoo doctor...of sorts, “ I said with a small laugh. Then, in my most commanding CEO tone, I added: “Well, I have no need for a family doctor, young man. I was in a plane crash. I was hurt very badly. And specialists are about the only people I have any interest in seeing these days. So, I’m sorry, but I’m not interested. I want my old doctor and no one new. And, frankly, your attire makes me feel more than a little uncomfortable. Is that monk’s robe you’ve got on supposed to instill confidence in people?”

“It keeps me warm in the winter,” he responded with a smile. “And it reminds me of who I really am,” he added.

“And who might that be?” I wondered aloud, taking his bait.

“More about that later. For now just let me say that I have come to help you. You must put all your faith in me. I really do have your best interests in mind.”

“Put my faith in you? Are you crazy?” I replied, starting to become angry. “Do you have any idea how much I have suffered? Do you have any idea how much pain I’ve endured? All I want is my old doctor, some pain pills and a quiet hospital room. I don’t need some joker in a monk’s robe telling me he’s my new doctor and begging me to trust him.”

“I’m not begging you to do anything,” the young man stated calmly. “I’m simply informing you that I can help you in ways you cannot imagine. Your old doctor is indeed a very good one. Actually, she’s the best in her field and an excellent choice—if it’s only your body you want to fix.”

“What do you mean by that?” I asked, growing more and more agitated.

“Well, your doctor will help you get your physical health back. But I have come to do so much more for you. I have come here to help you get your life back together.” He paused reflectively, seeming to choose his next few words with great care, then added with exceptional gentleness that made him seem far older than he appeared to be: “I know that you are facing struggles in your life—especially with your family. I know that you have experienced not just a physical crisis but a spiritual one too, one that is forcing you to confront the way you have been living and reconsider the priorities of your life. I also know that your family means everything to you and something inside you is telling you to start putting them first before it is too late.”

“How could you possibly know that?” I asked, whispering as I tried to maintain a sense of security in front of this man who knew so much about me.

“Trust me, I know pretty much everything there is to know about you. I know where you grew up. I know that apple pie with a scoop of chocolate ice cream on top is your favorite dessert and that *Wall Street* is your favorite movie of all time. I even know about that birthmark on your...”

“Stop!” I interjected. “Enough already. I think I get the point.”

Who was this guy? First he flies up and down the hallway in that wheelchair as if he was on the first lap of a Formula One racecourse. Then he comes up with some far-fetched story about being my new “family doctor.”

And now he recites details of my personal life in all-too-accurate detail. I was growing concerned. Maybe this young man was dangerous.

“Listen. I have no idea who you are and I don’t really care all that much,” I lied. “I’m tired, I’m in pain and I need to rest. I suggest you get back into that wheelchair, head back down that hallway and let’s forget we ever met. If you don’t,” I suggested in the most threatening voice I could muster, “I’ll have those nurses call security immediately.”

The young man remained relaxed and supremely confident. Then he started to laugh. He chuckled at first. Soon he started to roar with laughter.

“Oh, Catherine, if only you could see yourself. Getting mad at a monk in a doctor’s robe while you’re standing in that silly hospital gown showing no privacy in the back. I’ve always loved your spunk. You still never let anyone push you around. Glad to see you haven’t changed a bit in all these years.”

He knew my name. Now I was really worried. I started walking towards the nursing station to get help when the young man raised an arm and grabbed my hand, quickly placing something inside of it.

“Let go of me!” I yelled in an attempt to get the attention of the two nurses working nearby.

“Okay,” the young man retreated. “Just give me back my butterfly and I’ll be gone.”

“Your butterfly? What on earth are you talking about? You really are a lunatic,” I shouted—until I looked down at the object that rested in my hand.

“Where did you get that from?” I asked, beginning to calm down. “My dad gave me one of those when I was much younger,” I added softly. “He had them specially made for me and my brother Julian. They were truly unique and original pieces. We’d never seen anything like them before. I thought there were only two of these in the world, to be honest with you. Guess I was wrong.”

“There are only two of them in the world,” came the gentle reply.

I was baffled. If there were only two of these golden butterflies, and I had one at home, and Julian had the other, how could this strange visitor to the hospital have gotten one? I was worried again. Maybe Julian was in trouble.

“Do you my know brother Julian?” I asked hopefully.

“Better than you could ever imagine. I guess you could say that Julian and I are extraordinarily close,” he replied with a grin that suggested he knew far more than he was revealing.

“Where is he?” I asked eagerly.

“He’s here,” came the reply, “actually right here in the hospital.”

“You’re kidding.” My heart started to race. I began to feel a little dizzy. My brother, the superstar litigator, his life derailed by tragedy, the man who had headed off to India so many years ago to find himself and save his soul, had returned and was actually here in this very hospital. Impossible.

“Where?” I asked, growing tired of this man’s game playing.

“Julian is right in front of your eyes. Julian has returned. Julian is back. And better than before, I might add,” replied the young man joyfully, as he did a little jig.

“I’m so sorry,” I said sincerely. “I sense that you have good intentions and my intuition tells me you are harmless. But I am at a complete loss as to who you are and why you are here. If you know where Julian is, why won’t you tell me where to find him?”

The young man stepped back and raised his hands into a prayer stance as I’ve observed people in India do upon greeting one another. He stood still and looked deep into my eyes. He did not speak for a moment and all I could hear was his breathing. A single tear rolled down his cheek. He then appeared to regain his composure and slowly wiped his face with one of the sleeves of his delicate robe before taking a final pause and answering my question.

“Because, dear sister Catherine, I am Julian.”

The young man then stepped out of the shadows and, for the first time, walked directly into the light. And though the physical transformation had indeed been extraordinary, there was no doubt in my mind that what I had just heard had been the truth. My dear brother, away on some wild adventure in the Himalayas, had finally returned.



The Miraculous Journey of the Great Julian Mantle

You who would accomplish little must sacrifice little; you who would achieve much must sacrifice much; you who would attain highly must sacrifice greatly.

James Allen

I could not contain my emotions. After so much time apart from the only brother I had, my heart overflowed with joy that he had finally returned. I cried uncontrollably, shedding more tears in those first few minutes than I had in the entire decade prior to this remarkable reunion. As we hugged and kissed, I could scarcely believe how much Julian had changed. How had he achieved this miracle and what had he experienced while he was away? By my calculations, he would be in his late fifties right now and, frankly, he had looked at least twenty years older than that the last time I had seen him. Back then, his wizened face testified to the extent of his suffering and the burden of his out-of-balance lifestyle. He had been dramatically overweight, coughed incessantly and often had trouble breathing. It was clear to me then that the old Julian had a death-wish and was working himself into the ground as a means to bring it all to an end.

The Julian before me, on the other hand, was a perfect specimen of peak health. His body was strong and his bearing was powerful. His face exuded the energy of youth and an abundance of joy. Even more remarkable were his eyes—unbelievably striking eyes. There was something within them that told me that this young man was an old soul who had seen more and learned more than anyone could ever have imagined of him. He seemed wise and worldly and decent and kind. “The deepest personal defeat suffered by human beings is constituted by the difference between what one is capable of becoming and what one has in fact become,” observed Ashley Montagu. This man standing before me, who embodied great strength yet enormous humility, seemed to be a person who had somehow become all that he was capable of being. I cannot really describe why I had this feeling. Let me just say that at that moment, I had the sense that I was standing before a human being that had connected to his own special form of greatness.

“I know it’s impossible to believe, Catherine. But it really is me. God, it’s great to see you, little sister. You have no idea how much I’ve missed you and how often I’ve thought about you,” Julian said as he reached over and gave me yet another bear hug, followed by a tender kiss on my forehead.

“You could have called me or at least written us a letter,” I replied.

He paused for a long moment as a pained look came over his face. “I’m so sorry I cut you off like I did, but after Ally died, my heart and spirit broke. I’ve never felt so much pain in my whole life. Some days I was in so much agony over my loss that I couldn’t get out of bed. I didn’t want to talk to anyone. I didn’t want to see anyone. I did whatever I could to throw myself into my work. It was the only thing that could keep my mind off Ally.”

“But we could have helped,” I said sincerely.

“I don’t think so, Catherine. I was deeply wounded and I really did need to get away from this place. You heard about my heart attack, didn’t you?”

“I did,” I replied sympathetically as he put his arm around me and we started walking back into my room.

“Well, it almost killed me. The doctors said it was a miracle that I survived. They said that I had a brave heart and a burning will to live. After the heart attack, there was no way in the world I was going back to my law practice. The passion and sense of focus had evaporated and I had a hunger for something else.”

“Like what?”

“I had a thirst to discover a much deeper sense of meaning in my life. In this age we live in, we hear it spoken about a lot. So many of us are asking ourselves life’s bigger questions, like what is it all about and why am I here and what is the true purpose of my existence on this planet?”

“I’ve noticed that too, Julian.”

“Hey, that’s the first time you’ve called me Julian, little sister. You really do believe it’s me!”

“I do. But your transformation is pretty amazing.” I then reached over, kissed Julian on his bronzed cheek and gave him another huge hug. He reciprocated with a kiss to my forehead and we held each other close, feeling that unique human connection that only brothers and sisters can share. As we hugged each other, I noticed Julian starting to shake. As I looked up at his face, I saw that he had started to cry once again. This made me cry, too, and soon tears were flowing down both our faces.

Julian quickly reined in his emotion, but I noticed none of the embarrassment that the Julian of old would have shown at this outburst of vulnerability. “You’ve never seen me cry as an adult, have you Catherine?”

“True.”

“One of the many things I’ve learned while I’ve been away is that we all need to be real.”

“To be real?” I asked, not quite sure of what Julian was getting at.

“Yes, Catherine. Most of us live our entire lives wearing a social mask that hides our true selves. Rather than showing the full colors of our humanity, we work hard to sculpt an image of the person we think the world wants us to be. We say the things other people want us to say and wear the clothes other people want us to wear and do the things other people want us to do. Rather than living the lives we have been destined to live, we end up living the lives of other people. And in so doing, we die a slow death. ‘*Death is only one of many ways of dying*,’ the explorer Alvah Simon put it. So now, I live my life entirely according to what my heart tells me is the right way to live. If I feel like crying, as I just did because I am so happy to be with you again, I cry. If I feel overwhelmed with joy, I sing. If I feel love towards someone, I express it. I guess you could say that I now wear my heart on my sleeve. I live completely in the moment and enjoy every single moment of this great gift we call life.”

“And that means you are ‘real’?” I asked.

“Yes, it means that I am living the way we were made to live. Too many people become domesticated.”

“Domesticated?”

“Sure. They have become so good at keeping up appearances and doing what others expect of them they become domesticated—like trained seals.”

“Isn’t that a little harsh, Julian?”

“Not really, Catherine. *We all have a high human duty to live our lives out loud. We all have a deep human obligation to live our best lives and show up at the top of our game every single day.* That means being real and listening to your inner wisdom. It means saying no to all those things that you know are not the right things for you to do, so you can say yes to all those true priorities that will add great richness to your days and true fulfillment to your hours.” Julian continued. “I could have gone back to practicing law but it would have been a personal defeat.”

“How so?”

“Because I have learned through my trials in life that everything that happens to us happens to us for a reason.”

“I agree completely,” I said, recognizing this to be a principle I had recently discovered in my own life.

“Not only that, but I have also learned that failures and suffering in life are actually our best friends. Alexander Graham Bell made the point well when he remarked: ‘When one door closes, another opens. But we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we fail to see the one that has opened for us,’” offered Julian, concentrating on his words as he spoke.

“So true,” I stated.

“Yes, Catherine. *Our wounds ultimately give us wisdom. Our stumbling blocks inevitably become our stepping stones. And our setbacks lead us to our strengths.* As Leighton once wrote: ‘Adversity is the diamond dust that heaven polishes its jewels with.’”

“Lovely words. Let me write them down,” I said earnestly.

“You won’t need to, little sister. I’ll teach you everything you need to know and believe me, you won’t forget a thing. But here’s the point I’m trying to make: I could have gone back to practicing law and making all that money. But to have done so would have been to turn a blind eye to the opportunity that life had presented me with. There must have been some reason for Ally’s death and my divorce and my subsequent heart attack. I knew that if I accepted the challenge and got out of the pity party I had been spending my days in, I would discover something that would take me to a whole new level of living. And I sensed that with this would come far more joy, happiness and love than I had ever known.”

“Love? I don’t remember you being much of one to speak about love, Julian. My, how you have changed.”

“Love is what we need more of in this world, Catherine. And I’m not only referring to loving other people. We must show love to our work. We must show love to our surroundings, and most importantly, we must show love to ourselves. Only then can we really give our love fully to other people. My point of wisdom is simply this: *everything you do as you live out your days must speak of love.* Leo Tolstoy wrote: ‘Only one clear quality marks an action as either good or evil: if it increases the amount of love in the world, it is good. If it separates people and creates animosity among them, it is bad.’”

“So to be more fully human I should not only show more love to Jon, the kids and all the people around me, but I should also show love to my work? Then I’ll be a real, fully functioning person. But doesn’t that lead to the very imbalance I have been struggling with for so long? I don’t think I should be working more. I think I should be working less.”

“Interesting observation, Catherine. Well, I guess it all comes down to what you describe to be your work. You are speaking of work in a very

narrow way. I am speaking of loving the work of your life.”

“My life’s work?”

“Yes. Perhaps for you your life’s work is raising two fine children who will go out into this world and make it a better, wiser place. I also sense your life’s work involves BraveLife.com and the lives you are transforming with that enterprise.”

“How do you know about BraveLife.com?” I asked in amazement. “I thought you had sequestered yourself in some mountain retreat high in the Himalayas.”

“Since I’ve been back, I’ve been reading about you. You’ve been doing some great things on the business front, little sister, not that I’m at all surprised. I must have taught you well,” Julian suggested with mock pride.

“Don’t stick that muscled chest you’ve somehow acquired out too far, big brother. I did it all myself,” I laughed.

“Always the independent one, Catherine. I’ve always loved that in you as well as your toughness and that dedication to excellence that you have always insisted upon. But back to what I was saying—love your life’s work. Love everything and everyone. Your life will change.”

“Do you have an example?”

“Well, how about if I offer you the words of that great philosopher Kahlil Gibran. His words are so beautiful to me: ‘When you work, you are a flute whose heart the whispering of the hours turns to music. To love life through labor is to be intimate with life’s utmost secret. All work is empty save when there is love, for work is love made visible.’ So love your work at BraveLife. Give yourself to it and add value to lives in the process. But also love your work as a mother and your role as a partner to Jon.”

“Okay,” I replied in complete fascination. “So what exactly did you do after the heart attack?”

“Well, first I made a conscious decision to sell everything I owned. I had to travel light and all my worldly possessions would only clutter my mind and encumber my life. I decided to strip my life down to the very essentials of human existence and to simplify to the core. And so I sold the mansion. I sold the plane. I sold the island.”

“You even sold your Ferrari, Julian. I couldn’t believe it when I heard you did that!”

“I think I even surprised myself with that little gesture,” Julian noted with a smile as he stroked the embroidery on the sleeve of his beautiful robe.

“I headed off to India, a place I knew would hold many of the answers to the questions that I needed to ask. That was an incredibly spiritual period of my life. I felt liberated for the first time in years. I knew that I was embarking on some great path that would lead me to a whole new understanding of what life was all about. George Bernard Shaw wrote that ‘to be in hell is to drift; to be in heaven is to steer,’ and for the first time in so very long, I actually felt I was in control of my future. I felt as if I was living by design rather than by default—the way so many of us live our lives.”

“I agree, Julian. Most people seem to live their lives by accident, reacting to the events of their days rather than creating the circumstances they see in their dreams,” I added, becoming caught up in the inspiration my brother was filling me with.

“Beautifully said, Catherine. Oh, I am impressed!” he shouted with enthusiasm, slapping both of his bronzed hands on his knees. “You’ve always had a superb mind but now you’ve developed a poet’s heart.”

“Well, not quite, Julian,” I replied humbly.

Julian then recounted how he had traveled across India, sometimes by train, sometimes by bicycle and sometimes on foot. He delighted in meeting the people of that rich culture and learning their wise ways. He visited ancient temples and watched majestic sunsets over ancient ruins. He began to reconnect with the childlike spirit he had lost sight of, and gradually his trademark smile returned.

“I used to stare at the stars for hours. I devoured philosophical texts, making notes in my dogeared journal about all the insights that came to me. I used to take long walks with sages and yogis and pepper them with question after question about what life’s highest purpose really was and how I could fill my days with more meaning and grace. I asked them how one could be healthier and happier and more alive to life before it was too late. I wondered how I could deepen my human relationships and find the love I had lost after Ally died and my wife left me. And I encouraged them to teach me how to slow down my noisy mind and discover a deep sense of inner peace that I knew was one of the cornerstones of a truly fulfilling life.”

“Sounds like a remarkable time, Julian. I especially like the stuff about slowing down and enjoying the more fundamental pleasures of life that we all miss out on as we keep up the crazy pace of this new world we exist in. I recently clipped out a quote from the newspaper. Here, let me show it to you,” I said, reaching down into the drawer of the table at my bedside. It read:

Most of us miss out on life’s big prizes. The Pulitzer. The Nobel. Oscars.

Tonys. Emmys. But we are all eligible for life's small pleasures. A pat on the back. A kiss behind the ear. A four pound bass. A full moon. An empty parking space. A crackling fire. A great meal. A glorious sunset. Hot soup. Cold beer. Don't fret about getting life's grand awards. Enjoy its tiny delights. There are plenty for all of us.

“Oooh, that’s really good, Catherine. I wish I’d written that. Really makes the point of enjoying the basic blessings of life as our path unfolds. I’ve now learned that the road really is as good as the end and it is so important that we not put off being happy until the arrival of some future event. Too many of us lie to ourselves in this respect.”

“Please clarify?”

“Sure, we tell ourselves that we will be happy when we get that big promotion or that new job. Or we say we will have more fun in life once the kids grow up and go off to college. We say we will make the time to watch the stars and pursue our passions when we retire. But that is the Big Lie of Life. *Happiness does not arrive when you achieve certain things. It comes when you think certain thoughts. Happiness is nothing more than a state of mind that you create by the way that you process and interpret the events of your life.* It comes by giving great thanks for all that you have in your life and from developing the Gratitude Mindset whereby you deeply appreciate all the little wonders of your life. As the sage thinker Cecil once observed: ‘Every year of my life, I grow more convinced that it is wisest and best to fix our attention on the beautiful and the good and dwell as little as possible on the evil and false.’”

“Even more importantly, remember that the hand that gives is the hand that gathers, and that giving to others starts the receiving process. Do not make happiness the goal that drives you. Make service to others and a heartfelt desire to enrich people your core focus—then happiness will come. ‘Just imagine that the purpose of life is your happiness only—then life becomes a cruel and senseless thing,’ wrote Tolstoy. ‘You have to embrace what the wisdom of humanity, your intellect and your heart tell you: that the meaning of life is to serve the force that sent you into the world. Then life becomes a joy.’”

“Powerful words. I’ll need to think more about them when I am alone. But now, please tell me more about your journey. It’s an incredible story.”

“After a few months of some of the most intense personal growth and discovery I have ever experienced,” Julian continued, “I began to grow hungry for even more meaningful wisdom on how to live a richer, more joy-filled life. I pushed the teachers and pundits I had met to reveal even deeper

truths to me and to help me find even greater enlightenment. They were so decent and loving, sharing everything they knew without even the slightest expectation of anything in return. I now know they were aligned with what is known as the Abundance Principle.”

“The Abundance Principle. I’ve never heard of it,” I replied with great curiosity as I sat up straight in my bed.

“It’s that timeless and immutable principle of nature that I’ve just hinted at. It holds that *the more you give to others, the more you will ultimately receive yourself*. I’ve discovered that if you want more abundance and prosperity in life, you need to give more. Abundance is an energy that circulates in the world, and the more you send out, the more you will see come back to you. The Abundance Principle works incredibly well in business as well. To grow wealthy, stop wishing that you made more money and ask yourself how you can help more people. When you get deeply focused and committed to adding value to the lives of those people you serve, the money will begin to flow in a river. Never forget, Catherine, that money is nothing more than payment from the universe for value added and services rendered. The more value you can add, the more money you will make.”

“So you are saying that people in business make a mistake in making the pursuit of money their primary objective?”

“I am. Money is not to be chased. Money is the *byproduct* that can flow into your life when your focus shifts to helping people live better lives and realize their own dreams. As Viktor Frankl wrote so perfectly: ‘Success, like happiness, cannot be pursued. It must ensue. And it only does so as the unintended side of one’s personal dedication to a cause greater than one’s self.’”

Julian added: “In India, amid such wisdom and love for humanity, I realized that there is a grand purpose to every life.”

“Really?”

“Truly, little sister. We are all here to live heroic lives and make a difference to the world, in our own unique way. I recently came across the words of General James Doolittle of the U.S. Air Force, who made the point of wisdom I’m trying to convey in these terms: *We were put on earth for one purpose and that is to make it a better place. We should, therefore, be contributing members of society. And if the earth, as a result of our having been on it, is a better place than it was before we came, then we have achieved our destiny.*”

“Then why don’t more of us discover this calling? Why are so many of us

unfulfilled and unhappy?”

“Because we are so busy filling our lives with clutter and possessions and busyness that we have no time to think about The Things That Truly Count. It reminds me of the words of an ancient Zen master who reflected: ‘Most people try to get more every day while I strive to grow simpler and more uncomplicated every day.’ If we would only slow down, press the pause button a little more often and have a look at the big picture of our lives, we would arrive at a greater understanding of why we are here and what we must be doing. I know the last thing you want to hear about is being on a plane, but there’s a metaphor I need to share with you.”

“You’re right, I’m still quite fearful about flying, but go ahead.”

“Don’t worry, Catherine. I’ve spoken to all your doctors and even had some of my old friends, the best doctors in the country, review your charts and check your progress. Everyone advises me you are doing extremely well and will make a full recovery. I know you’ve gone through a great tragedy and, believe me, the very purpose of my visit is to help you through this whole thing. But the point I want to make is simply this: on a plane, let’s say at 35,000 feet, if you look down to the ground, you gain a complete perspective on the world. You cannot miss the forest for the trees because you get the full view.”

“I agree. We see the big picture.”

“Right. Well, what we need to do far more often in our lives is to ‘go up to 35,000.’”

“We need to fly more?” I asked, slightly confused.

“No, what I’m saying is that we need to regain perspective in our lives so we can identify and then realign the way we live with our most important priorities. We need to ‘go up to 35,000’ so we can have an eagle’s-eye view of the way we are conducting our days so we can make those essential course corrections and get back on track towards our destination. Most people just don’t do enough of that. As the thinker Joanna Smith Bers said:

We need to define our priorities—the values, endeavors and dreams that guide us—and build our worlds around those things. It’s not enough just to get through the day. We need to make every day a platform for accomplishing what we want out of life. We must take responsibility for ourselves and the world we live in so that we can live with ourselves and the world around us.

“Hmm,” I replied. Never before had anyone been able to share wisdom that struck me so clearly. Thoughts began racing through my head as I

identified all the things that were not working in my life and all the priorities that I had been neglecting for so long. Mostly I thought about my family. I really missed Porter and Sarita. I wondered if Jon was okay and what he would be doing at home right now. I started making more promises to myself about the changes I would make and all the new actions I would take the moment I was released from this hospital room. Then my mind drifted back to Julian. My brother had become so much more than the person he once had been. The former Julian was brilliant and tenacious and charismatic. But the new Julian was thoughtful and knowing and wise. I loved him even more this way.

“So you were saying that you kept on pressing the pundits you met for even deeper knowledge, Julian. What happened?”

“I learned some amazing things and discovered things about myself I’d never known before.”

By this time, Julian was relaxing on the chair next to my bed with his long legs outstretched and his hands resting comfortably behind his head. His face was animated as he spoke, and his eyes danced with the passion of his message. I was spellbound by what my brother was saying and mesmerized by every word he spoke.

“After a few months of traveling into the north of India, I started hearing whisperings about a band of monks who lived high in the Himalayas. According to legend, these sages, known only as ‘The Great Sages of Sivana’—Sivana means ‘oasis of enlightenment’ in their language—had developed an extraordinary system that anyone could use to achieve remarkable levels of personal mastery and inner fulfillment. These sages had distilled all of the wisdom of the ages into a practical and extremely powerful process that they used to live their lives with a remarkable degree of peace, joy and festivity. The only problem was that nobody seemed to know how to find these elusive monks. I also heard that many had died trying.

“Anyway,” continued Julian as he took a sip of tea from my cup, “you know I’ve always believed in taking risks. It’s like Dad always told us: ‘At the end of our lives, what we will regret the most will not be all the risks we took. What will fill our hearts with the greatest amount of sadness will be all those risks we didn’t take, all those fears we didn’t face and all those wonderful opportunities we did not seize.’ Remember, Catherine, *on the other side of fear lies freedom*. So I threw caution to the wind and with every ounce of enthusiasm I could muster up I headed off for the Himalayas in search of the ultimate knowledge I was committed to discovering. And if I didn’t find the monks, I was prepared to die trying.

“For many days and many nights, I climbed in those treacherous mountains. Though I endured great pain and came close to death on more than one occasion, I also experienced beauty I’d never seen before,” remarked Julian. “I guess it was the rawness of the scenery and the simplicity of my surroundings that touched me so deeply. I felt so connected to the universe on that trek and a part of something so much larger than myself up there. And I never gave up. I just climbed and climbed, hoping I would survive and eventually find the sages. You know I’ve always believed that persistence is a quality that needs to be cultivated within every one of us if we hope to get to where we dream of going in life. ‘Some succeed because they are destined to; most succeed because they are determined to,’ noted Anatole France.

“After much effort and dedication, I finally had a breakthrough. One day, I caught a glimpse of another figure, dressed oddly in a long flowing red robe topped by a dark blue hood. I could not believe another person could be up here alone. ‘For what purpose could someone be up here?’ I wondered.

“I yelled out to this fellow climber but rather than stopping to talk to me, the figure started moving even more quickly up the mountain path we were ascending. When I called out again, this time at the top of my lungs, the strange traveler started to run at full speed, his face still hidden from view, his red robe dancing gracefully in the wind behind him.

“‘Please, friend, I’m in great distress!’ I cried out. ‘I need your help to find Sivana. I’m looking for the sages and I think I’m lost!’”

“Then the figure came to an abrupt stop. As I moved closer to this mysterious person whose face was still hidden by the hood, the traveler turned towards me and began stepping in my direction. Suddenly, a burst of sunlight struck the face, revealing that the traveler was a man. But I must tell you, Catherine, I’ve never seen a man quite like this one. Never. My guess was that he was probably in his late fifties but his brown face was supple and smooth. His body looked remarkably strong and powerful and he radiated boundless vitality. He stood tall and had an almost regal bearing about him. And I still remember his eyes, so penetrating that I was compelled to look away for an instant.

“It was obvious to me that my search had come to an end. I was convinced; this had to be one of the Great Sages of Sivana. And so I opened my heart to this human being, praying for his help and explaining why I had risked my life to come up to this perilous place. I told him about my former life, the success I had experienced as a superstar in the legal world, the jetset lifestyle I had adopted, and then of the tremendous loss I had endured on the death of Ally. I pleaded with him to take me to his community of sages and to

permit me to learn from their deep wisdom so I could discover the secrets of a complete, meaningful life.”

Julian told me that the man listened to his tale with intense concentration without speaking a word. He was not even sure if the sage understood a word he was saying. Then, surprisingly, the sage reached over and put an arm on my brother’s shoulder. “If you truly have a heartfelt desire to learn the wisdom of a better way to live out your life, then it is my personal duty to help you. I will never refuse to assist anyone who comes to me in need. Giving help to one who requires assistance is one of our sacred vows and one that I hold close to my heart. I am indeed one of those sages you have come so far in search of. You are the first person to find us in many years. Congratulations, I admire your tenacity. You must have been quite a lawyer,” he remarked with a grin. The sage then led Julian to the mountain hideaway where he and the other monks lived, promising him that they would welcome him with open arms and teach him the ancient principles that their ancestors had passed down to them over the ages.

“There was one condition that this sage imposed on me, however,” noted Julian seriously. “I still remember his words: ‘Before I take you into our private world and share our collective knowledge, I must ask for one promise from you. Although we are isolated here in these magical mountains, we are acutely aware of the turmoil your world is in. People are forgetting how to live with decency and love. People have lost sight of the things that truly count. They sacrifice meaning for money and chase profit instead of purpose. Their families are no longer their highest priority and, as a consequence, their spouses and their children suffer needlessly. They no longer make the time to renew themselves and cultivate their most important human relationships. They have forgotten that life’s little pleasures, like the magic of a child’s laugh or the glory of a sunrise, are life’s most important ones. I feel so strongly that people in your part of the world deserve to lead happier and fuller lives. I know there is hope for all these people, and my intuition is telling me that this hope must come from you. While you are with us in these mystical mountains, you will discover a remarkable system for true leadership of your life. You will learn so much about the power that the human spirit has to be a force for good in this chaotic world. You will discover how to be stronger, healthier, happier and wiser than you have ever been. You will also come to understand how important rich relationships are for effective living, and learn some very unique techniques to restore a true sense of love for your life.”

“Love?” Julian asked, surprised that the sage would value this.

“Yes,” came the quick reply. “We all need more love in our lives. As a

matter of fact, this world would be a far better place with more love. But before I take you into our culture and introduce you to all my brothers and sisters, you must first promise me that you will share the lessons you learn at our feet with all those in the West who need to hear them. You must be the conduit of the ancient life wisdom we have accumulated and spread it throughout your world so that many people can be helped and many lives will be transformed. Most important in life is not what you get from it, but what you give to it. Life is about helping others and blessing the world by the way you live. You must commit yourself from the deepest core of your heart to governing the rest of your days with this simple but forgotten principle. Promise?”

“I agreed to this condition immediately,” Julian told me, before taking a pause. “Within a few hours I was standing in the most amazing village I had ever seen in my life. It was breathtakingly beautiful and surreal in its appearance. Never seen anything even close to that place, Catherine. Every structure, including the temple that rested in the center of the village, was covered by roses.”

“Roses?” I questioned.

“Roses. I mean the fragrance of that place was so incredible. And every one of the inhabitants of Sivana looked just as special as the great sage who had brought me there. I was in complete awe of the whole place. I really couldn’t believe it. I had risked my life to find this legendary place. I had finally found it, and then I was given the privilege of being a part of their community and the chance to study at their feet. The joy I felt moved me to tears.”

Julian’s story had held me enthralled for nearly two hours. My brother’s adventure was the stuff of fiction, and yet he had actually lived it. For some reason, the nurses outside of my room had decided to leave us alone, perhaps sensing that he was family and that the contact would be good for my spirits. I wondered what they thought of his attire? Probably the first monk they have seen in here, I giggled. I couldn’t wait to hear what Julian had learned in Sivana. I now know why he had said he had returned here to help me. He had come back home to fulfill his promise to the sage by sharing their system of life renewal and wise living with me. I hoped Julian could help me mend my family relationships and teach me how to make my home the spirited place I knew it could be. For the first time in a long while, I felt excited at the prospect of a more fulfilling life. The emptiness that had engulfed me for so long started to pass like gray storm clouds making way for the first rays of sunshine. Julian stood up.

“Catherine, I’m so happy to see you,” he said tenderly. “But I have to

leave for a little while. There are some things that I have to do.”

“Julian, I haven’t seen you in years. Please do not leave me now,” I replied anxiously.

“I promise I’ll be back. As a matter of fact, I have no plans to leave here anytime soon, so you’re stuck with me whether you like it or not. You’ve probably guessed why I’m here.”

“To fulfill your promise to the sages?”

“Exactly. I knew you were in trouble. I read about the plane crash and that was why I rushed here. But even before that, I knew you were spiraling downwards into darkness. I heard from one of my former law partners that you had become a great success in business but that your personal life was in shambles. Those two fine children of yours need you. You have an obligation to put them first and to inspire them to develop the leadership qualities that will help them become great, caring adults one day. I will show you how to become a masterful parent and find deep fulfillment in the process. I will share the sages’ secrets of building relationships so your connection to Jon deepens in profound ways. And I’ll also teach you how to simplify that complex life of yours and restore ideal balance.”

“Do you think I have to give up my career?” I asked.

“Not at all. I’m here to teach you that it is possible to have it all. It is possible to have a satisfying professional life where you do great work and touch many lives and, at the same time, raise a wonderful family while creating a rich home culture. As a matter of fact,” added Julian, “I’ve discovered that building a strong foundation at home will fuel even greater success at work.”

“Is it really possible to be superb in both areas of life?”

“Absolutely,” responded Julian as he started to walk towards the door. “The trick is to work smarter, not harder. You need to bring a greater sense of *focus* to your work and gain greater clarity about which activities are essential and which ones are not. That will free up time for your family as well as time for all the self-care activities that will restore inner peace and joy in your days. But more about that later. I’ve got places to go and people to meet,” said Julian with a big grin. “I wonder what those models I used to date would think of the robe?” he mused.

“You’re kidding, right?”

“Of course I am, Catherine. I have become a man who walks his talk and lives his message. *We all need to live our message.* My own life is much

different from the one you once knew me to lead. I live simply and to the point, concentrating only on life's essentials. My wild days are over."

"Glad to hear that, brother. Boy, I used to worry about you."

"Not any more. Thanks, little sister. Love ya!"

And with that, the legal superstar turned enlightened monk kissed me on the forehead once again and darted out of the room, his red robe swaying behind him. All that remained of this most surprising visit was a single object that he had left next to my pillow. It was his golden butterfly. As I turned it over, I could see that Julian had, in tiny writing, engraved some words upon it. I put on my reading glasses and read the elegantly inscribed message. "*Catherine,*" it said, "*your children are the greatest blessings of your life and they will only be young once. Put them first and your life will soar. I'm so happy to be home. Your fan, Julian.*"



The First Mastery of the Family Leader

Leadership in Life Begins with Leadership at Home

Twenty-five years ago I wish someone had told me that the enduring meaning in my life would be found in shaping my children's values, not in my professional success.

Rabbi Harold Kushner

If children grew up according to early indications, we should have nothing but geniuses.

Goethe

It had been just under a month since I had returned home from the hospital. Thankfully, just as Julian had promised, I had made a full recovery and regained all the strength and stamina that had been so much a part of who I was in the past. But so many other things changed as a result of my wake-up call at 35,000 feet. I'd decided to streamline my work life and set up a home office in our basement. Instantly my previous full-hour commute was transformed into one lasting a full minute. And I loved being able to conduct transatlantic conference calls with CEOs from major firms while I was standing in my flannel pajamas. Though my priorities had been reconfigured, I still loved the adrenaline rush that running a business gave me, and I felt grateful that Julian had advised me not to give this aspect of my life up.

On doctor's orders, I started a serious exercise regimen—which made me feel great—and I adopted a much healthier diet. No more late night pit stops at the drive-through windows or three-cheese pizzas with double pepperoni and bacon. I began spending most of my time at home with Jon and the kids and really dedicated myself to rekindling the spark that had been lost during all my time away. And one of the biggest changes of all: Julian, the former owner of one of the the city's biggest mansions, and a man known for his fierce independence, moved in with us, setting up home in the small but sun-soaked room above the garage. I guess he really was committed to *living his message* and since he preached the power of a simple life, I was pleased to see that he now practiced it. I'll admit, though, that it was hard for me to believe that my brother, the legendary Julian Mantle, having returned from his extraordinary trek through the Himalayas where he met the world's most remarkable sages, was now living quietly in the granny quarters above our garage. Life can yield such bizarre outcomes.

And yet I must also tell you that I did not feel any sorrow or pity for my brother. Of course I felt sad that life had dealt him such hard blows. The loss of his daughter Ally was far more than he deserved. It's just that in my mind, I didn't feel that he had fallen from grace. Sure, he no longer sported about town in his gleaming Ferrari, had sold his opulent mansion and was now living in a crawlspace only slightly bigger than the bathroom of his former office. Sure, he was no longer the toast of the town, spending late nights with beautiful fashion models barely into their twenties and hipper-than-hip investment bankers who thought nothing of jetting down to Nassau for a night at the casino. I guess I felt that while he no longer had the material trappings of his former life, he seemed to have found something far more important. Julian's health was superb, the lively spirit of his boyhood had returned and he had become the keeper of wisdom so substantial it made me quiver. To me, his life had gone from total complexity to utter simplicity. It had shifted from an existence of constant frustration to one of jubilant celebration. No, Julian had not fallen from grace. He had discovered it.

"Let's go down to the BraveLife.com headquarters," said Julian as he strolled into our sunny kitchen one day after completing the ritual walk he took every morning as the day broke. "I haven't been in an office tower for years, and I'm curious to see how things have changed in the corporate world."

Though I now worked out of our home, all our employees remained in the luxurious offices that my partners and I had leased when we started the company—before they died. We had two floors in one of the city's most prestigious skyscrapers with a view that would take your breath away. While I would visit the office periodically, I soon came to dread going downtown.

"Why in the world would you want to go there, Julian? You haven't even spoken to your old friends in years. I would have thought that the financial district—the place you practically lived when you were Mr. Big Shot Lawyer—would be the last place you'd want to go."

"Actually, I have spoken to a couple of my friends since I've returned from the Himalayas, but that's another story," replied Julian mysteriously. "And I really do need to go downtown."

"What do you need? You know I'm happy to pick up anything you want."

"Actually, it's not for me that I want to go downtown—it's for you."

"For me? I have no interest in heading down there. I'm happy working from home and everyone's doing just fine at the office without me. And anyway," I continued, "you'll never get past security in that robe you insist on wearing every day. Are you sure you want to keep wearing it? Everyone on the street is talking about 'the monk who moved in with the Cruz family.'"

Even Miss Williamson, the old woman who sits in her dark living room all day with her fourteen cats, walked up to me as I was doing some gardening out front and asked me who you were. I'll bet she thinks you're cute, Julian," I mocked.

"She's not my type," Julian retorted with a laugh. "Trust me on this one, Catherine," he continued. "There's a lesson I want to share with you today, and your old office is the perfect place to do it. Actually there are Five Masteries I plan on sharing with you—*The Five Masteries of the Family Leader*, to be precise."

"What's a mastery?"

"A mastery is a skill that a person becomes brilliant at through continuous focus and constant practice. Over the coming weeks, I will share with you five timeless—and fundamental—philosophies that will completely transform your abilities as a parent and the quality of your family life. *The Five Masteries of the Family Leader* are based directly on the teachings of the Great Sages of Sivana. I've just added some of my own learnings for good measure," Julian said with a knowing smile. "Today I feel you are ready to discover the First Mastery."

"Which is?" I asked with bated breath.

"That *Leadership in Life begins with Leadership at Home.*"

"Fascinating. Tell me more."

"Not until we get downtown," Julian responded firmly. "The setting needs to be perfect."

"Okay, let's go. I know that the *The Five Masteries* are going to change my life. I can just feel it. I truly sense that this wisdom you are sharing with me will revolutionize my thoughts, my words and my actions," I replied, grabbing my car keys. "And I guess it's about time I start taking some risks again."

"That's the spirit, little sister. Life's all about gaining new knowledge and taking bigger risks, isn't it? The greatest risk in life lies in not taking greater and greater risks."

"Wasn't it Peter Drucker who said 'there is the risk you cannot afford to take and there is the risk you cannot afford not to take'?"

"Right. And to go back even further in time, the Roman philosopher Seneca stated that 'it is not because things are difficult that we do not dare. It is because we do not dare that things are difficult.' In my own life I try and

take a reasonable risk, even a small one, each and every day. That way, I grow and progress daily.”

“I saw the movie *Rounders* on video a few weeks ago. Did you see it?”

“Haven’t seen a movie in years, little sister. We monks generally don’t spend much time around the vcr,” Julian said with a grin so big I thought his face might split. “Anyway, the popcorn always used to get stuck to my teeth. Right in here,” he added, opening his mouth and pointing to a crevasse between two of the teeth located at the back of his mouth.

“Spare me the gory details, Julian. Anyway, it was a pretty good movie—all about the importance of taking calculated risks in life and pursuing your destiny, even when it’s not the easiest thing to do.”

“Sounds fascinating.”

“It was. Anyway, in the movie, Pappa Wallenda...”

“The great high-wire walker?” Julian interjected enthusiastically.

“Yes, the great tightrope walker, Julian. Anyway, Pappa Wallenda was quoted in this movie as saying: ‘Life is lived out on the wire. The rest is just waiting.’”

“Oh, that’s good. Really good. And it’s completely true, Catherine. The people who get on in life are those who dream big dreams and then take whatever risks are necessary to bring their vision to life. They face their fears directly, get into the game and live their days with courage. They break through their fear doors, no matter how scared they feel. Remember, *it’s better to be a lion for a day than a sheep all your life.*”

“Wow, that’s a powerful expression, Julian.”

“And so,” Julian continued without a pause, “though I know it will not be easy for you to head down to BraveLife.com after being away for so long, please take the chance. The rewards are sure to flow.”

“Feel the fear and do it anyway?”

“Exactly. As I told you in the hospital, *on the other side of fear you will always discover freedom.*”

I felt nervous as Julian and I walked into the gleaming office tower I once spent my best waking hours in. The very smell of the place set my heart aflutter. A security guard approached Julian and I as we made our way to the bank of elevators that would take us to the BraveLife.com corporate offices perched atop this steel and glass monument.

“Hi, Mrs. Cruz. Nice to see you again. I heard about the plane crash. All

of us here at the security station were really sad to hear about it. I'm sorry about your partners. They were nice fellas."

"Yes, Matt, they were good men and I miss them a lot. Thanks for mentioning them. I guess it helps me to deal with their loss when I hear how kind they were to so many people. It's good to see you, too. I don't get down here much these days. I'm running the company from my home now, so I can spend more time with my family. It sure feels strange to come back."

"That's quite a change, Mrs. Cruz. I'd say that out of everyone I know in this tower, you worked the hardest. Me and the other guards used to place bets on how early you'd get in here and how late you'd leave."

"Well, those days are history, Matt," I replied self-consciously.

"Your children must be happy about your decision. I've got three young ones at home, and I know that the best thing I can do for them as a parent is to spend lots of time with them."

"You're right, Matt. My children are thrilled to have their mom back. To be honest, I've never seen them happier."

The guard's face then tightened. "Sorry to ask this, Mrs. Cruz, but does the gentleman with you have some ID? As you know, this is a high-security building, and I've got to ask that question or my boss will kill me." He then glanced at Julian. "No offense, buddy, but we don't get a lot of monks in here."

"Matt, this is my brother Julian. Julian Mantle."

"Julian Mantle? The famous trial lawyer?"

"Yup, the famous trial lawyer."

The security guard was speechless. "Uh... Hello, Mr. Mantle. I used to read about you all the time in the papers. I was a really big fan of yours," he added, shaking Julian's hand with both of his own, the way people do when they wish to curry favor. "Some of those cases you won were unbelievable, man. Remember that case where you sued that fast food restaurant for millions of dollars when hot coffee spilled into your client's lap?"

"I do remember that one, Matt. That was a fun case to win," replied Julian graciously.

"What happened to all those fancy suits you used to wear, Mr. Mantle? And that slick red Ferrari? Man, that was one sweet car. Me and the boys used to see you fly by here with the top down all the time. Those women you had next to you made us drool," the security guard noted with all the exuberance of a schoolboy set to go out on his first date.

“Ancient history, my friend, ancient history,” replied Julian, looking away as if he was embarrassed by how ostentatious his previous lifestyle had been.

“Are you a monk now?” persisted the security guard.

“These robes are the clothes I’ve chosen to wear, Matt. My teachers wore these clothes. They remind me of the man that I now am and the mission that I am dedicated to pursuing. I’ve chosen to live a far simpler life now. No more Ferraris,” said Julian as he patted the security guard on the back and walked towards the elevators.

“Well, go on up, Mr. Mantle. It’s an honor to meet you, sir. And you take care, Mrs. Cruz. Have fun with those kids. They’ll be all grown up before you know it.”

As Julian and I entered the opulent offices that were home to BraveLife.com, I was struck by the sheer busyness of the scene in front of me. It seemed that people were just busy being busy. Employees were rushing from place to place, computers were humming, the phones were ringing and faxes were flying.

“Hard to believe this used to be my life,” I mentioned to Julian softly.

“Don’t be too hard on yourself, Catherine. You had a mortgage to cover and bills to pay. Believe me, I have great empathy for people of this age we live in. Expenses are high and their financial obligations seem endless. They want to provide all the good things in life for their families, and so they feel compelled to work longer and harder. And this eventually sucks the life out of them. They become shells of their former selves. By the end of the day, they drive home in their grief containers, crawl into their homes, grunt at their families and drift off to sleep in their Laz-E-Boys. I feel so sad for such people.”

“What’s a grief container?”

“Oh,” Julian replied, starting to giggle, “that’s my term for a car. Most people are so unhappy by the time they’ve finished a miserable day at work, their cars become nothing more than ‘grief containers’ that transport them home.”

I laughed. Julian continued, enjoying how I was concentrating intently on his every word.

“Such people are living half-lives, Catherine. ‘One of the saddest experiences which can come to a human being is to awaken, gray-haired and wrinkled, near the close of an unproductive life, to the fact that all through the years he has been using only a small part of himself,’ V.W. Burrows noted.

And that's the point of wisdom here. The name of the game is not to sacrifice yourself for work and have nothing left for the people you truly love. Change the rules, no, break all the rules and realize that the whole idea is to work for the sake of living rather than living for the sake of work. Be superb at work. Have a great time at it and dedicate yourself to helping your clients. But have the wisdom to realize that there is more to life than the nice things money can buy. How about having nice kids and a nice family and a loving home life? Those things can only come when you devote yourself to enriching your home culture. And that, my little sister, takes time. *Never forget that the best gift you can ever give your kids is the gift of your time.*"

"Really?"

"Absolutely. It shows them that you truly love and value them. Nothing else is as precious or as important. Which brings me to why I've brought you down here."

"I was wondering about that."

"What is BraveLife.com?"

"It's a company that trains the employees of our client organizations to be more productive, effective and far more successful in the way they work. We are the Internet's premier e-learning firm."

"Anything else?"

"Our unique technology allows employees to receive coaching from the best experts on the planet conveniently at their very own desktops."

"Is that your final answer?" Julian asked, grinning like a game show host.

"Yes."

"All of those answers are correct. But the one I was really looking for was this one: at the end of the day, your company is a community."

"Really?"

"Sure it is. Ultimately, the company that you have so tirelessly dedicated yourself to building is nothing more than an assembly of human beings united to pursue a common cause. BraveLife.com is not really a corporate entity. It is a collection of people working towards the same aim."

"Making money?" I asked, surprised by my own cynicism.

"No, not at all. They all crave meaning. They all crave a feeling of fulfillment. And they all ache, whether they realize it or not, for what I call a Compelling Cause that will flood their hearts with passion and engage the best that they have within them. Dee Hock, the founder of VISA, put it this

way: “All organizations are merely conceptual embodiments of a very old, very basic idea—the idea of community. They can be no more or less than the sum of the beliefs of the people drawn to them; of their character, judgments, acts and efforts.”

“Interesting. I never thought of the company in that way.”

“It’s true. And what’s really lacking in this so-called New Economy of ours where we can work, bank and even buy groceries online is a deep sense of community. We have lost the essential human connections that are necessary for us to work and live in a state of joy and delight. We have lost that sense of belonging to something larger and more important than ourselves. In the borderless world that has been created by the Internet, what each and every one of us desires is a space and a place where we feel loved, trusted and significant. A place that we can call ‘home.’”

“How do you know so much about the Internet, Julian? You’ve been secluded in the Himalayas for what seems like an eternity.”

“I’m a passionate learner and an obsessive student, Catherine. In this new world we live in, learning no longer ends after we’ve taken our last exam. It now ends only after we have taken our last breath. Many years ago Erasmus wrote: ‘When I get a little money I buy books; and if any is left, I buy food and clothes.’”

“Wow.”

“I’m the same way, little sister. I hunger for knowledge— sometimes I ache for it. While most of what I read and contemplate is from the wisdom literature—the books of the world’s greatest thinkers—I do spend time keeping up with what’s going on in our world. What good is wisdom if you have no concept of how to apply it in your current circumstances?”

“Good point,” I agreed without hesitation. “And so tell me, big brother, what can we do to restore that sense of community in our lives?”

“Great question, Catherine. It’s actually the question I was hoping you’d ask. With all the changes in society and within corporations, the sense of community that people once felt has vanished. Loyalty in business is a thing of the past, and restructuring within business has led many workers to believe that it’s now a game where every person must fend for themselves if they hope to survive.”

“So where are people going to get that sense of community that we all crave?”

“The family,” came Julian’s speedy reply. “People are retreating into their

family lives and making them their highest priority again. People are realizing that they can get all of the social fulfillment they may have once gotten from work within their very own homes. They are realizing that you don't have to leave your front doorstep to get the benefits of being a part of a community—you can get it within the four walls of the very place you live.”

“And from the people that love you the most,” I added, completely absorbed by what Julian was telling me.

“Right, Catherine. So begin to see your family as your own personal community and the place where most of your personal satisfaction will come from. Understand that through your family, you can gain a richer understanding of yourself and develop greater insight, knowledge and wisdom. Through your family, you can increase your humanity and actualize your inner strength. The point of wisdom I'm trying to share is simply this: *leadership in your life begins with leadership in your home*. Your family is your foundation, just like the launching pad of a rocket. Once it is secure and in perfect order, you can soar to heights previously unimagined.”

“Okay, where's the starting point?”

“It lies in realizing that your family is not all that different from other organizations, BraveLife.com included.”

“Really?”

“Really. The parallels are clear. Your company and your family both have unique cultures, don't they?”

“Well BraveLife.com definitely has its own culture. There are certain ways we dress and certain rules we follow and specific ways we deal with each other that make us unique in comparison with other companies in our field.”

“And is your family any different?”

“No, come to think of it, it's not. At home, I guess we do have a culture. We have certain rules, values and ways of doing things.”

“Yes. And like other cultures and organizations, if you want to grow and advance, there's one thing that must be present.”

“A dictator?” I replied with a laugh.

“Close, but no cigar, little sister. But I appreciate the humor. The one thing that needs to be present for any family culture to grow into something vibrant and splendid is leadership.”

“Leadership? I've never thought that leadership was important in a family

or within the home.”

“How did BraveLife.com become such an enormous success?” Julian asked. “I mean, I saw your face on the cover of one high-tech magazine in New Delhi!”

“I guess it was primarily because of good management.”

“No, it was because of great leadership, Catherine. And by that I don’t just mean you and your partners and the rest of the executive team. I mean that *everyone* in the company took a sense of responsibility for and ownership of the company’s success. Everyone showed commitment and fidelity to the vision you painted for them. And so your company roared to fortune. The same applies in your home. You must bring leadership into your family and inspire everyone to make a contribution to the culture. You must create a gorgeous future vision of the way you desire things to be for your family and share that Compelling Cause with Jon and the kids. This must be done in a way that excites them and engages their hearts. Only then will your family life reach its highest potential.”

“This sounds really far out, Julian, even for you. I mean, Jon is busy with his business and the kids have something on the go constantly. How can I get them to buy into a vision of the ideal family that I wish we could be? And tell me, big brother, how can I get them all to start acting as leaders at home?”

“Easy,” came the quick reply. “*You* must show leadership first. As Gandhi said, you must become the change you most wish to see in your life. Lead by example, and I promise you, Jon and the kids will follow.”

“Really?”

“Yes. We live in a world where everyone wants everyone else to change first. We blame the government for our problems. We blame our bosses for our stress. We blame the traffic for our misery. But blaming others is merely a convenient way of excusing yourself. Placing the blame for all that’s wrong in your life on the shoulders of other people is a nice way to coast through life without ever having to show courage and face your weaknesses head on. It’s actually a cowardly way to live and a good way to become a more impotent human being. M. Scott Peck, who wrote *The Road Less Traveled*, put it in these terms: ‘Whenever we seek to avoid responsibility for our own behavior, we do so by attempting to give that responsibility to some other individual or organization or entity. But that means that we then give away our power to that entity.’”

Julian’s voice was growing louder, and I could see the intensity of his convictions bubbling to the surface. We walked into one of the boardrooms as

Julian continued his spirited lesson. “Here’s the real message, Catherine. When you shift the blame and responsibility for something to other people, you are essentially saying that you have no ability to control the problem. You are also saying that you have no choice in the matter and no capacity to influence the outcome. So in blaming other people, you end up giving away your own power, just like Peck says. You are saying ‘I can’t change things for the better, only they can.’ You are in effect saying ‘I cannot affect the circumstances of my life, only others can.’ And that kind of toxic thinking can send you into a downward spiral that will eventually lead you to a place called nowhere.”

“I’ve never looked at it that way. I recently read that Winston Churchill used to say that ‘the price of greatness is responsibility.’ Now I know exactly what he meant.”

“Look, little sister, what makes us human, at the end of the day, is the power each and every one of us has to choose our response to a specific situation. One person loses their business but sees it as a great life lesson that will make them wiser and better equipped to build an even bigger business. Another, less highly evolved person feels “road rage” over a big traffic jam. No matter who you are and no matter what your background is, you still have the power to choose how you will process the events of your life. That capacity to choose the way we will interpret what happens to us is our highest human endowment. So don’t expect others to change in order for your circumstances to get better. You go ahead and take the noble path. You make the changes that need to be made. I can promise you that the rest of your family will eventually follow.”

“Okay,” I said, trying to digest all the knowledge Julian was delivering to me as I leaned back in my plush leather chair. “So for me to develop this sense of community at home, I need to be a leader at home?”

“Exactly,” replied Julian, looking as out of place in this ultramodern boardroom as a tulip in a patch of mushrooms as he adjusted the sleeves of his beautiful monk’s robe.

“Before I can expect others to change, I must change. Rather than yelling at the kids to be more polite, perhaps I should be more polite to them. Rather than telling them to clean up their rooms so they look tidier, maybe I should organize my home office. And instead of nagging at Jon to start doing things to make our home life more fun and passionate, I guess I should be the one taking the initiative. I should be the one to act as a ‘catalyst for change in our family culture’ as you put it .”

“Yup,” came Julian’s monosyllabic reply. “*The best way to inspire your*

children to develop into the kind of adults you dream of them becoming is to become the kind of adult you want them to be. All children, especially young ones like Porter and Sarita, believe that the way their parents act is the correct way to act. You teach them how to act by the way you act. Your values and beliefs become their values and beliefs. Your negative patterns will inevitably become their negative patterns. You need to remember that your children are always watching your every move. And if you think that those little eyes on you are not being influenced in a very profound way by your every word and action, you are just kidding yourself. *Remember, Catherine, after quality time, the second best gift you can give to your kids is the gift of a good example.*”

“That’s a wonderful insight, Julian.”

“You know, I just read a report the other day that I found deeply troubling.”

“What did it say?”

“That the average North American child spends approximately five hours a day watching television and just five minutes of quality time with their parents. Too many parents are giving the responsibility of raising their own children to the programming directors of the national networks. And to me, that is a crime.”

“What, then, can I do to show family leadership, to really be a leader in my home and build that sense of community that you say we are all craving in this strange new world?”

“The first thing you can do is to open your eyes.”

“What do you mean?”

“Helen Keller put it so well when she said ‘the most pathetic person in the world is someone who has sight but no vision.’ *Too many parents are living day-to-day with no sense of direction in their lives. Rather than living their lives by choice, they live their lives by chance, hoping that everything will work out fine.* But life isn’t like that. Living your life by accident, praying things will fall into place and your children will turn out great by default, is about as smart as playing Russian roulette with your life.”

“That’s a scary thought,” I observed, still riveted to Julian’s dissertation.

“And I’ll tell you, Catherine, if you keep doing the same things each day, you are destined to get the same results each day.”

“Someone said the definition of insanity is doing the same things every day and expecting a different result.”

“Right. So get in the game and start steering the boat of your family life.

Nietzsche made the point well: ‘Man’s task is simple. He should cease letting his existence be a thoughtless accident.’”

“I’ll excuse the gender bias,” I noted.

“I will too, because his lesson is such a good one. If you want to see what your life will look like five years from now, just make certain that you do not change any of your habits, your patterns of thought or your core beliefs. You will discover that five years from now, you will have a life that is pretty much the same as the one you have today.”

“Don’t like the sound of that,” I replied with complete honesty. “I have much grander dreams for our family’s future. I want to have more fun with my kids. I want them to grow stronger, wiser and more independent. I want Jon and I to become closer and more loving. And I dream of our home becoming a very special place of warmth, growth and joy that offers us all a sanctuary from the harshness of the world we now live in.”

“Well then, Catherine, please understand that for your family life to improve, the way you view the world must first improve. You must create a compelling vision on the picture screen of your imagination about what you want your family culture to look like. You must then clarify that ideal in your mind so it is vivid and strikingly precise. Finally, you must commit it to paper.”

“Why?”

“Because when you commit the vision you have for your family’s future to paper, it becomes an agreement.”

“Really?” I wondered.

“Definitely,” responded my brother. “It becomes like a pledge or a binding contract that you have made with yourself. Your beliefs in life are really nothing more than agreements you have made with yourself about the state of affairs you find yourself in. Some people believe they are too busy to hug their children many times a day to show them their love. In doing so, they have made an agreement with themselves in an effort to justify that ‘fact.’ Some people believe that they can never live great lives because their pasts have been too difficult. In doing so, they have made an agreement with themselves and resigned themselves to live by that ‘fact’. The agreements you make with yourself are extremely powerful, Catherine.”

“I’ve never thought about our beliefs in this way, Julian.”

“So here’s what I want you to do. You know what you want for your family life and now you have committed yourself to doing what it takes to get

there.”

“Correct.”

“Now create a Family Vision Agreement that will then serve as your daily guide so that you can make wiser choices about how you will spend your days and invest your time. It will serve as a commitment statement that will keep you focused on The Things That Truly Count.”

“So by developing this Family Vision Agreement and translating it into writing I will stop living by chance and start living by choice?” I asked, genuinely fascinated by the strategy Julian was revealing to me.

“Yes. You will finally be in control of your destiny. Your Family Vision Agreement will serve as your lighthouse, always guiding you ‘home’—to that place of love and peace—no matter how rough the seas become. It will give you hope and an overwhelming sense of promise for better things to come. And it will protect you and your family.”

“Protect us?”

“Yes. Knowing exactly what you want for the future of your family protects you from all those negative influences that try and creep into our lives. When your thoughts are crystal clear and you are completely committed to your vision of your family’s future, then the opinions of others mean nothing. The hypnotic pull of the ads on television dictating what the ideal family should look like has no hold over you. The need to keep up with the neighbors and your colleagues falls to the wayside. You and your family become *independent*. And, in so doing, you are elevated to a much wiser, more enlightened way of leading your family life.”

“I’d love for the kids to be independent, Julian. I’ve learned that independent thinking is a key factor in business success. Colin Baden, the VP of Design at Oakley Sunglasses, was recently quoted in *Fast Company* magazine—”

“Oooh, I love that publication,” Julian interjected.

“You read *Fast Company*?” I replied in surprise.

“Told you I’m hungry for knowledge. It’s a great read.”

“Well anyway,” I went on, “this senior executive was quoted as saying ‘If you’re doing something a certain way because it’s always been done that way, then you’re probably doing it the wrong way.’ I loved that because it strikes at the heart of why we need to be independent thinkers if we hope to excel in business these days.”

“And in life these days. So have the courage to create your Family Vision

Agreement so you can begin doing things your way, according to what your heart...”

“And Jon’s heart,” I interrupted quickly.

“And Jon’s heart,” Julian corrected, “tells you is morally correct. And putting that vision of what you want your family life to look like in the future into a concrete form is also one of the best ways I know of to increase your level of commitment to your family.”

“Why?”

“Because I have discovered in my own life that *the things that get committed to paper are the things that are committed to in life.*”

“I agree,” I replied excitedly. “One of the secrets to the success I’ve experienced in my professional life was insisting on great clarity about what results I wanted. I used to write down my career goals for every ninety days and read them almost daily to maintain my focus and to help me seize opportunities that might pass through my days undetected.”

“Nicely said, Catherine. Do the same in your family life. I suggest you take the Family Vision Agreement, study it closely, prioritize what is most important and then create goals—with deadlines around each priority.”

“That’s the kind of strategic thinking that made us so successful in BraveLife.com.”

“And it’s the kind of strategic thinking that will now make you even more successful in your home life. I cannot understand why people meticulously plan their professional lives but give no attention at all to the way they will live at home.”

Julian paused and grew more reflective as his fingers played with a brass coaster on the table. He looked down for a few seconds and then spoke again. “Great leaders are more thoughtful than others, Catherine. They take the time to go into seclusion every once in a while to do nothing but think. Einstein used to do that, you know?”

“I wasn’t aware of that,” I confessed.

“Yes, I read he had a special ‘thinking chair’ that he would retreat to in a silent place. And once in it, he would do nothing but think.”

“Our best salesperson does the same thing,” I said. “He blocks off one day every other week to ‘get lost’ as he calls it. He leaves his pager and his cellphone in the office and goes off to a place where no one can reach him. All he takes with him is a legal sized notepad and a pencil. And all he does for that whole day is think.”

“I’m impressed,” replied Julian, nodding his head with a gentle smile. “I think I’d like the guy.”

“We all thought he was crazy. Until we saw the results. His sales were five times higher than his nearest competitor. Five times higher! So one day I sat him down to figure out his process. He told me that during that ‘Strategy Day,’ as he called it, he’d think about his future and what he dreamed it would look like. He wrote things down so they became clearer and clearer in his mind.”

“See, *clarity precedes mastery*,” Julian interjected gleefully.

“Well, it sure did in his case,” I continued. “He told me that the more time he spent in solitude, just thinking about and defining what he wanted out of life, the more ideas his imagination would deliver to him. And as these brainstorming sessions came, he just kept writing them all down with his pencil. The entire scope of his consciousness became concentrated around his highest priorities. He dreamt, thought and spoke of little else. He then built specific goals around these objectives and added deadlines for the accomplishment of each one. He told me that these special days filled him with so much hope and energy he could barely contain himself. And with this renewed focus, he would come back to the office and dazzle us all once again.”

Julian then did something that left me speechless. He quickly rose to his feet and then jumped up onto the gleaming meeting table. Then he started to dance, mildly at first and then wildly, as if he had entered some sort of a trance.

“Julian! What are you doing? Have you lost your mind! Please stop that right now. I’m getting scared. Please stop that,” I pleaded, alarmed at what I was seeing.

“Not to worry, little sista,” replied Julian, mocking the style of those millionaire rap stars who dominate the record charts. “Just havin’ some fun.”

“C’mon Julian. These are the corporate offices of a multi-billion dollar firm. You need to exercise some restraint in here.”

“Each day, and the living of it, has to be a conscious creation in which discipline and order are relieved with some play and pure foolishness,” came his cryptic reply.

“What?”

“Those are the words of May Sarton. And I live by them. I live my life with great discipline and virtue, but I ensure that I make time for fun while

I'm at it. So c'mon up here with me and join me in my little dance. There's a point I'm trying to make."

I reflected on Julian's unusual request. I'll agree that my brother's behavior was eccentric. But there was no longer any doubt in my mind that the wisdom Julian had connected with in those mountains had given him insights that had the power to transform my life, if I only had the courage to embrace them. Julian had developed an uncanny ability to teach me precisely the lessons I needed to learn to move forward, and I realized that if I refused to listen to him, I would be the one to suffer, not him.

"Okay. You win," I said, reluctantly climbing up onto the meeting table with him, my shoes still on.

"Now dance!" laughed Julian. "Let the little child in you see the light of day. He's been begging to come out and play. It'll be good for your soul."

I moved my feet a little but felt too self-conscious to do much more.

"Dance, or I'll start singing, Catherine," Julian threatened with a smile that made his eyes twinkle.

"Oh, all right," I replied, as I started to wave my hands in the air, mimicking John Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever* and starting to feel pretty good in the process. "Hey, this is kind of fun, Julian," I added, shaking my body from side to side.

"I know it is. Never be too busy to dance, little sista!" he yelled, pumping both his bronzed fists in the air and whirling around in a remarkable display of athletic prowess.

Just then my senior vice-president walked past the boardroom. A few seconds later he returned, his eyes bulging and his face conveying total surprise. He just stared at the two of us up on the boardroom table. I immediately came to a standstill. Julian continued his wild dance with delight. I think he enjoyed the fact that we had been caught. My colleague remained frozen in his tracks, observing this odd scene through the glass wall that separated us. Then he started to laugh. He popped his head into the boardroom.

"Nice to see you've fully recovered, Catherine. When you have time, you'll have to share that new management practice you've discovered with the rest of the executive team," he joked.

"I will, Les, I promise I will," I responded, grateful for his indulgence of my peculiar behavior.

After the VP left, I looked at Julian.

“Julian, what’s the point here? I’ll be the laughing stock of this whole company if I keep doing this kind of thing.”

“Okay, Catherine. I was just having some fun with you. But back to my teaching. Here’s the point. Standing on this table allows you to gain a new perspective. It allows you to see things from a higher place. Remember the astronauts and their lunar landing?”

“Of course.”

“Well, when they came back, they mentioned repeatedly how being up there and looking down on the earth gave them a completely new perspective on our world. Even more importantly, they said this higher view of our planet gave them a wiser understanding of life on it.”

“So standing up on this table allows me to see the world in a better way?” I asked, a little confused at the metaphor Julian was offering.

“It gets back to the Family Vision Agreement I’ve been talking about. In the same way that getting up on this meeting table allows you to take a broader view of your offices, creating your Family Vision Agreement will allow you to keep a broader perspective on your life. You will always be able to keep the big picture in mind rather than getting sucked down into the mundane distractions that keep us from experiencing the happiness and pleasure of this gift we call life. You will always have an aerial view of the tiny community you love as your family. You will no longer spend your days majoring in minor things. Instead you will be in a position to concentrate your time on the Vital Few.”

“The Vital Few?” I asked, not having come across this term before.

“Yes, The Vital Few. Being a great leader, in your company and even more importantly in your home, means you need to focus on The Vital Few rather than on the Mundane Many. Most people spend the best years of their lives consumed by activities that do not advance them in the direction of their ideal life. They watch too much television, think constantly about what’s wrong in their lives rather than what’s right, gossip on the telephone and criticize their kids. The Family Vision Agreement will help you stay centered on those few meaningful activities that yield the greatest positive results in your life and ensure that you end up exactly where you dream of ending.”

Julian got down from the table and leaned against the wall, pausing for dramatic effect.

“Writing down your Family Vision Agreement and specific goals to enrich your home culture will do just that: you will be able to detect opportunities to build a greater family that you would have otherwise missed

because you were not looking for them. *See, what you focus on in your life grows and what you think about expands. And the things you invest your attention in grow in importance.*”

“I agree that what you focus on grows. I find that when I get a new client, the next day I’ll be driving around the city and I see signs of that new client everywhere. I might see one of their trucks with their logo on it drive past me on the freeway or I’ll notice their advertisement in the paper or I’ll see their head office as I make my way home. All these things were there before, I just failed to detect them until they came into the scope of my focus. And then I see them everywhere.”

“It’s a powerful observation and something that I think we all experience on a regular basis. Once you start paying attention to something, it expands into your consciousness and floods into your awareness. That’s why I always say that *awareness precedes change*. Before you can change something in your life, you must first become aware of it and begin to really pay attention to it. You must build some awareness around it. You will never be able to eliminate a weakness you don’t even know about.”

“Just so I understand, you are saying that setting my Family Vision Agreement onto paper so it becomes a true agreement, and then breaking it down into specific goals, will cause me to pay more attention to these things in my life.”

“Yes.”

“And are you also saying that this act will allow me to see all those opportunities to build a better home life that most of us busy parents never even notice because our energy is taken up by all the little emergencies that seem to occupy every waking minute?”

“Exactly. It reminds me of that Hollywood screenwriter I used to have drinks with.”

“I remember him well. He used to wear cowboy boots and never went anywhere without a bottle of Evian water in his hand.”

“That’s him. He once told me that the secret of his success in Hollywood was that *he always wrote the endings first*. He created the perfect ending and then worked his way backwards.”

“Brilliant.”

“I agree. And that’s what I’m suggesting you do in your family life. Close your eyes and picture the happiest ending you could possibly imagine. Then work your way backwards until today. See, the Family Vision Agreement is

really the story of your life—as it relates to your family. In defining it and committing it to written form, you will be able to make smart choices about how you spend every minute of any day. If an activity or behavior does not somehow advance you along the script you have envisioned—towards that happy ending—you simply don't do it.”

“Got it,” I replied, finally grasping the importance of the concept. “Did the Sages of Sivana teach you all this knowledge?”

“They taught me the organizing principles for a great life. They taught me that loving relationships form the foundation of a life greatly lived. They taught me that our thoughts form our world and that to improve our lives we must first improve our thinking. And they taught me so much more. For many months after I left their tiny Himalayan village, I thought about all the lessons these very special human beings shared with me. I built upon their teachings and then forged my own insights on what it takes to live our best lives. I came up with ideas that even I am surprised I arrived at. And those insights are what I'm sharing with you, my dear sister.”

“Sista, for short,” I said with a wink. Julian giggled.

“But Julian, what else can I do to show real leadership at home and foster that sense of community with the family?”

“Make your home a haven,” came the simple reply.

“Can you elaborate on that a little for me, big brother?”

“In Sivana, high up in those Himalayan mountains, the sages always treasured their homes. Even though they lived in the most peaceful and serene place I've ever seen, those little huts that they lived in were their real sanctuaries. They made sure that their simple little homes were always clean and full of sunlight. They were always careful to ensure that fresh air filled their living spaces and flowers were everywhere. And they took pains to make certain that while they often invited one another over to discuss philosophy and share wisdom, their homes offered plenty of time for silent reflection, introspection and self-examination. What I'm saying is that in this noisy, bustling world we find ourselves in, you can show some real family leadership by making sure that your home becomes a haven for you, Jon and the kids.”

“And for you too, Julian. We love having you live with us. Even though you appear so youthful, Porter and Sarita sense your wisdom and your age. They are absolutely thrilled to have you in our home and have come to see you as the grandfather they never had.”

“Gee, thanks,” replied Julian.

“It’s funny—you have such a calming influence on them. Jon and I are always telling them to hurry up and you are always reminding them to slow down.”

“Grandparents are like that, aren’t they. Throughout our civilization, all families have revered their elders and sat at their feet to learn life’s most important lessons. In the Himalayas, extended families were the norm. The sages wouldn’t think of living in a place without their mothers and fathers being around. Their elders were a constant source of comfort, knowledge and love.”

“And I’ll bet the young monks benefitted the most.”

“Yes, they did. And even here in the West, ask schoolteachers if they can tell which of their young students have had the influence of grandparents in their lives, and they will always reply in the affirmative. They are the kids who are calmer, quieter and more trusting of other human beings. They are the kids who are more independent, thoughtful and compassionate. Look at our own family’s experience, Catherine, with Grandpa and Grandma Mantle. They always gave me that feeling that life would turn out right in the end.”

“They did, Julian. I really miss them.”

“Me too. I’m delighted that the kids love having me around. I love them deeply. I feel such joy when Porter sits on my knee and Sarita cuddles in my arms and they ask me to tell them stories about my adventures in India. And I’m finding that they teach me as much as I teach them. The sages believed that children come to us more highly evolved than adults to teach us the lessons we need to learn. Porter and Sarita certainly do that. They remind me of the importance of staying playful, of being curious and of being consistently compassionate every day. Makes me think of the words of the ancient philosopher Heraclitus who observed ‘Man is most nearly himself when he achieves the seriousness of a child at play.’”

“Not that you need your spirits lifted, Julian. You are always so positive. I think you are really comfortable in your new skin. And I couldn’t be happier for you.”

“Thanks. Helen Keller, a woman I greatly admire, once said: ‘No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars, or sailed to an uncharted land, or opened a new heaven to the human spirit.’”

“Lovely words.”

“They are, aren’t they? When I was practicing law, I laughed at people who talked about positive thinking and read self-help books. I’d smile with a sense of superiority when I’d see people rushing to the subway after work

clutching books with odd titles like *MegaLiving!* and *Who Will Cry When You Die?* ‘Why would you read a self-help book if you were normal?’ was what I would think back then. But my thinking has evolved. I’ve come to understand, through my time with those great sages, that the most normal and wise thing you can do as a person is work on yourself. The best possible use of your time, bar none, lies in cultivating your mind, character and spirit so that you can be more to this world. Buddha said it best: ‘Carpenters bend wood. Fletchers bend arrows. And wise people fashion themselves.’”

“When I was putting a new bouquet of flowers in your room like you asked me to, I saw all those quotes you have pasted to the ceiling.”

“Pretty cool huh?” remarked Julian proudly. “At night, after the kids are in bed, I go up to my room, lie in bed and recite each and every one of those quotes out loud. It deepens my commitment to living by the timeless success principles that have governed humanity.”

“I loved the ancient Indian one that read ‘There is nothing noble about being superior to others. True nobility lies in being superior to your former self,’” I noted reflectively.

“Those are compelling words, aren’t they? They strike at the core of what the purpose of life really entails. It’s not about competing against others. It’s about winning against yourself, growing as a person each day and making yourself a more valuable human being.”

“So we can add more value to all those around us.”

“You got it, Catherine,” affirmed Julian, clearly pleased with my correct response. “Now back to what I was saying about making your home a haven.”

“I’m keen on this one.”

“I recommend that you begin by filling your home with great books. Teach Porter and Sarita that *to lead in their lives they must read in their days*. One of the finest gifts a parent can give their children is a love of reading, a passion for good books. All the answers to any question the kids might ever have in their lives are contained within books. Through the discipline of daily reading, Porter and Sarita can spend time with the greatest people who have ever graced the planet. They can get deep into the minds of history’s wisest thinkers and learn their most intimate insights. I recommend you schedule a thirty-minute reading session every night with your children. Get them hooked on a special author or on a fascinating series so that they look forward to this time. I promise you this simple nightly ritual will influence their lives in such a positive way.”

“Wonderful idea, Julian. I guess I just assumed they would learn all this

stuff in school.”

“Schools only supplement the teachings of parents. In this day and age, where parents have too much to do in too little time, it’s easy to sit back and hope that the school teaches your children all the things you would have taught them if you weren’t so busy trying to do all the things that are competing for your attention. But that’s the wrong approach. Showing leadership as a parent means doing all those things that your conscience tells you are the right things to do, even though they might not be the easy things to do.”

“Any examples?” I asked, intrigued.

“Sure. After a long day of work, you might just want to do nothing more than watch tv on the couch. But say Sarita wants you to read to her. The easy thing to do would be to brush her off and get Jon to take her out for a walk. But the right thing to do would be to turn off the television, pick up a book and read to your daughter. Doing that is showing great leadership within your home.”

“True,” I agreed.

“Another example might involve speaking your truth with Porter.”

“Speaking my truth? What does that mean?”

“Speaking your truth means speaking from your heart. Far too many people in our world speak only in the words they know the people around them want to hear. They use their words to manipulate and control rather than to express their true feelings and build the kind of understanding that always leads to greater love. In using words that do not reflect what they really mean or how they truly feel, they live their lives in a state of spiritual dishonesty. Only by speaking your truth—what you truly feel, believe and know—will you be in a position to be the family leader that you are destined to be.”

“Wow,” was the only reply that I could muster.

“Now back to the example. All too often in life, we run away from our fears. Wise, enlightened and fully evolved people make a point of running *towards* their fears. Most of us hate confronting people over things we perceive they have done to us that have made us feel bad. Someone puts us down or treats us poorly and rather than having the courage to raise the issue in a mature way, we pretend it never happened. But the problem with that is that the wound festers.”

“And it drains your energy, too,” I added.

“Exactly, Catherine. And so all these little wounds add up to an enormous

weight that you end up carrying around with you on the journey of life. Showing leadership means you deal with issues as they come up, in a mature, rational and heartfelt way, no matter how uncomfortable it is for you to confront them head on. So let's say that when Porter gets a little older—perhaps into his early teen years—he does something that embarrasses you. You have a choice: you can run from the issue or you can deal with the issue. Running from it guarantees that the wound will fester. Dealing with it means that Porter will gain some awareness of his actions and that greater understanding will evolve between the two of you.”

“So leadership is, in many ways, about taking the high road and making the tough choice—no matter how uncomfortable it makes me feel.”

“Yes. And I'll tell you what. *The tougher you are with yourself, the easier life will be on you. The stricter you are with yourself, the gentler life will be on you.*”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that when you get stricter with yourself and rein in all those weaker impulses and have the self-discipline to do what's right—every time—your life is certain to turn out great. *Deferring what is easy to do and preferring those activities that your heart tells you are the right ones always leads you to the family life of your dreams.*”

“The one I will have defined in my Family Vision Agreement?”

“Precisely, little sister. Precisely.”

In a grand, sweeping gesture, Julian reached over and pulled the hood of his robe over his head. He looked out of the window and he scanned the horizon, which was filled with skyscrapers containing many thousands of people struggling with the same issues I was dealing with.

“I've got to get going, Catherine. I've got a meeting with someone.”

“Might I ask with whom?” I blurted out, burning with curiosity.

“I have to meet a craftsperson. He's working on a special project for me. You will know about it when the time is right,” was all Julian would reveal. “But let me finish up this lesson before I go. So what I was saying is: take responsibility for your children's moral development. Don't expect the kids' school to do everything. That's not fair to the kids or to the school. And give Porter and Sarita a great love of great books. Henry David Thoreau referred to these as the ‘heroic books’ in his classic work *Walden*, books that he said contained the noblest recorded thoughts of humankind.”

“But Sarita can't read and Porter is just getting into *Arthur* and *Curious*

George books. Does it really make sense to fill our home with great biographies and the wise books of philosophers when he cannot really read?”

“He might not be able to read on his own, but you can certainly read to him. If you are serious about inspiring your children to become great leaders in their own lives, then you must expose them to the lives of other great people who lived before them. As I mentioned, few things are as powerful to kids as good examples. If you want your children to love learning, turn off the television and read for an hour a night yourself. If you want your children to commit themselves to excellence, make sure you do the same. By filling your home with great books and making the time to read them—even for fifteen minutes a day—you will send a powerful message to your children that *reading matters*. As well, I can think of no better legacy to leave to your wonderful children than a library containing the thoughts of the wisest people who have ever graced the earth. Knowing Porter and Sarita, they will thank you for it forever.”

“What an incredible idea, Julian. Building a library of the world’s greatest books for my children as a tribute to them.”

“It would be a wonderful thing to do, Catherine. So wherever you go, keep hunting for special books to add to their collection. Read aloud from these books nightly. You may think they will not understand them, but the wisdom they receive will be tucked away deep in their minds. And those seeds that you plant within their characters will eventually sprout into the great acts of enlightened adults,” noted Julian poetically.

“When we were growing BraveLife.com, we brought in some consultants who coached us to create a learning culture at work. They told us that if we really wanted to have productive and creative employees, it was our duty as the leaders of that organization to foster an environment where people loved to learn.”

“Fair point. We now live in a world where ideas are the commodity of success. In the old economy, value was defined by bricks and brawn—how many offices you owned and how many employees you had. In the new economy, organizational success is defined by the brains and beliefs, the quality of the ideas your people generate. One idea, coming from one person’s mind, can transform the world. And if you don’t believe me, just think about Bill Gates or Steve Jobs, to use but two examples from the high-tech field you work within. Their ideas about the potential of computers have changed the way we live. One idea, if acted upon with great intensity and relentless commitment, really can change the world.”

“And it’s not just in business,” I added. “Nelson Mandela started out with

nothing more than the simple idea that his people deserved to be free.”

“As did Mahatma Gandhi.”

“Amelia Earhart had a simple idea about aviation.”

“Another good example,” affirmed Julian.

“And Einstein’s ideas transformed science.”

“Correct, little sister. The greatest leaders in this new world will be the greatest thinkers. So your duty as a parent is to listen to those high-priced consultants you brought in and *create a learning culture*—not only in your company but also within your home. Make learning fun. Make your house a playground of ideas where the kids are truly passionate about learning. Model Curious George!”

“Model Curious George?” I asked in surprise.

“Porter and Sarita love Curious George, right?”

“He’s their hero,” I replied.

“Well, every Curious George book starts off with the same sentence. Do you remember it?”

“Sure: ‘George was a good little monkey but he was always very curious.’”

“Right. What I’m saying to you is that your duty as a parent is to instill a burning sense of curiosity within Porter and Sarita. Teach them to be hungry for knowledge and thirsty for wisdom. Coach them to love books and music and ideas. This is how they will succeed in this world of boundless change.”

“Anything else I can do to make our home a haven after I’ve created what you call ‘a learning culture’ for the family?”

“Flowers,” came the reply. “For about \$3.49, you can walk out of any grocery store with a bouquet of flowers that will have a million-dollar effect on your home environment.”

“Really?”

“The simple act of placing even a bouquet or two of flowers in your home can flood it with a feeling of peace and tranquility. In Sivana, the sages filled their tiny homes with flowers and worshiped them as symbols of all that is good about life. Flowers in your home will add color, they will keep you connected to the simple pleasures of life and they will teach the kids that nature is a positive force in our lives.”

“I agree, Julian. Since I’ve been home, I’ve started going for weekly

walks in the woods, in the same woods we used to play in as children. I've also started unplugging the television while the kids are watching it and taking them out into the woods with me as often as I can. We collect leaves. We play hide and seek. And we skip rocks on that big pond you used to go skinny dipping in."

Julian squealed with laughter. "I remember. We had some glorious times as kids, didn't we?"

"We sure did. But you're absolutely right. The time the kids and I spend in natural surroundings is so special for us. It really bonds us and brings out the best in our hearts. And I know it does wonders for their creativity."

"My advice is to try and do as much as you can to make the inside of your home beautiful. Develop an intense appreciation for beauty. Increase your awareness of what is beautiful. As this awareness grows, let's say through the strategic use of flowers throughout your house, you will discover you begin to notice even more beauty in your home—and in your life."

"The mind is an incredible thing, isn't it, Julian?"

"That it is. And the sages taught me so much about its workings and its wonders." Julian pressed on without missing a beat. "To make your home a haven, I also suggest that you adopt another of the rituals of the sages and let fresh air pass through every room in the house."

"Why?"

"It's one of those ancient Eastern habits that even now I don't fully understand. But Catherine, I encourage you to judge by results and by results alone. My little room always has the windows open and I know it is one of the reasons for my high energy level and excellent health. Perhaps it's because the more oxygen we allow to enter our lungs, the greater our personal vitality will be. The sages used to say that 'to breathe properly is to live properly.' In my own life, I make certain that I breathe fresh air daily. On my morning walks, I breathe consciously and deeply and completely. This simple discipline fills my body with vitality and a radiant energy. What's the first thing we do after we are born, Catherine?"

"We breathe air into ourselves."

"Correct. So please remember that proper breathing practice is central to life."

"Okay, anything else to make my home a special sanctuary that will build our family culture and help us get to where we dream of getting?"

"Three final suggestions before I go. First, let lots of sunlight into your

home. It really does warm the soul and make things most pleasant. Again, look at my living quarters. I put a skylight in for this very purpose, and the rays of the sun keep me smiling throughout the day. Second, try and have quiet family time— especially in the evenings when Jon is back from work and the kids are home from school. Most parents give no thought to the amount of noise in their home environments, and yet this is one of the most important factors in the development of a peaceful mindset. *Your environment shapes your thinking.* If the television is always on, the video games are always running and the radio is always blaring, your home will never be an oasis of peace—a haven—from the outside world. To really create a sanctuary that your whole family will love to spend time within, make certain it is a calm place to be.”

“Sounds so good when you describe it,” I said eagerly.

“Give your kids an appreciation of solitude. As they get older, show them that there is no need for them to constantly have the radio playing, the computer humming and the phones ringing. Encourage them to enjoy stimulating conversation. Suggest that they cultivate the habit of letter writing. And inspire them to watch beautiful sunsets and dream big dreams.”

“I’d love for the kids to love those things,” I replied wistfully.

“A wonderful ritual to incorporate into your family culture is a daily meal where the whole family sits down together to enjoy each other’s company. Many years ago, the family mealtime was a cherished part of nearly every family’s routine. But sadly, with all the demands that have now been placed upon our time, this habit has been lost. I suggest that you use this sacred time to ask about each other’s day and what each family member learned from it. Talk about your Family Vision Agreement or other important things that you wish to share. Share a new point of interest or a funny story you might have heard. The main point is to see this as an excellent opportunity to reconnect at the end of the day. Oh, and make certain that you turn off all the phones during this family meal so you will never be interrupted.”

“I guess that’s what voicemail is for, isn’t it?”

“True.”

“And yet we all seem to have this urge to run and pick up the phone every time it rings, even if we are doing something important with the kids.”

Julian nodded and then continued. I sensed that he was anxious to leave, but wanted to share as much wisdom as he could with me before doing so.

“Implementing the strategy of a daily family mealtime is a fabulous way to show real leadership at home. *And remember, as a parent you are a leader.*

Leadership is not the sole domain of the CEO. Whether you work in a boardroom such as this or within your home as a full-time parent, you are a leader.

“And the final point?”

“*Never forget that the family that plays together is the family that stays together.* Every few weeks, have a Laughter Night where you rent funny movies from the video store or do silly things at home guaranteed to make everyone laugh. Never lose that fabulous sense of humor you have, Catherine. And teach your children the power of a good belly laugh. Laughter truly is the shortest distance between people and one of the wisest ways to deepen your human connections. Life can be difficult at times, but keep your perspective and make the time to laugh together on a regular basis. The more you laugh, the more Porter and Sarita will see that being an adult is actually not such a serious occupation after all. Have you watched the kids when they pretend they are you and Jon?”

“Yes, I have.”

“Well, they grow so serious, don’t they?”

“You’re right, they do,” I answered, shuddering at this realization.

“Do they laugh and giggle when they are imitating the two of you?”

“Nope,” I responded quietly.

“So what I said earlier might just be true. Children do come to us more highly evolved than adults to teach us the lessons we need to learn. And perhaps, my great little sister who I love so much, the lesson for you is to lighten up.”

“But I did dance on this table,” I laughed.

“You did,” replied Julian, giving me a big hug and then his trademark kiss on my forehead. “I know you are all going to have great lives and your children will mature into fine teenagers and excellent adults. You need not have any worries about that. Take all I have taught you this morning to heart. Reflect on the wisdom I’ve shared for the rest of the day and think deeply of how you can integrate it all to create a rich family culture and a home that is your special community of love. Your life will move from the cocoon of the ordinary into the realm of the extraordinary.”

And with that, my brother, the great Julian Mantle, turned and dashed off, leaving me alone in the boardroom as the rays of a glorious afternoon bathed me in light. I felt so happy about what I had learned that morning that I felt like dancing on the table.



The Second Mastery of the Family Leader

Shift from Scolding the Child to Molding the Leader

*Make it a rule never if possible to lie down at night without being able to say,
“I have made one human being at least a little wiser, a little happier or a little
better this day.”*

Charles Kingsley

*I had not loved enough. I'd been busy, busy, so busy, preparing for life, while
life floated by me, quiet and swift as a regatta.*

Lorene Cary

Julian's advice that the family was an organization that required leadership like all other organizations was not lost on me. In the weeks following our remarkable meeting downtown at the BraveLife.com offices, I set about making some profound changes in the way we did things at home. Jon and I came to see ourselves as leaders and catalysts of change. We recognized that Julian was right: *parents are leaders* and we had to stop doing what was easy in our lives and start doing what was right. The two of us went on many long walks while Julian played with Porter and Sarita, and we started to carve out the beginnings of our Family Vision Agreement, a contract that we both promised would guide our actions. We analyzed what kind of examples we were setting for our children by the way we were conducting our lives and wrote out a long list of all the things we knew we had to improve.

Many hundreds of years ago, Thomas Fuller wrote: “He does not believe who does not live according to his belief.” To me, that means that if you don't live by the values that you profess to believe in, then you don't really believe in them. Say what you want, but talk is cheap and *the evidence never lies*. You can tell the world that your family comes first, but if you miss family dinners for business meetings most days of the week, the fact of the matter is that your family really does not come first. You can preach the power of reading and offer your children good books, but if you spend most of your free time watching sitcoms on tv, well then you really don't believe that learning is the priority you say it is. After the plane crash, there was no doubt in my mind that my family was the most important priority in my world. Now I had to live that value.

Those early days after the crash, with Julian living with us up in that simple room above the garage, were precious times. Jon and I grew closer with each

passing day. The more we discussed how we could improve our family culture and make our home a haven, the more we rekindled that spark of caring that we both thought we'd lost. I came to develop a greater appreciation for the strength of Jon's character and for the man that he was. In turn, Jon told me that he honored me for my intellect, my self-discipline and my new passion for life. We grew to understand each other more. We came to respect each other more. And we came to love each other more than we had ever in the past.

Rebuilding my relationship with the children and Jon was not always easy, though. Yes, we made tremendous progress in a relatively short period of time, in large part because of the strength of my commitment to improve our family life. But after so many years of neglect on my part, challenges were bound to occur.

Jon sometimes felt bitter over the lost years and the special family times I had missed. Since he was not the most vocal of people, this frustration was often masked in apathy. He would tell me he was not interested in going for a picnic or not keen to try a new dish I wanted the two of us to cook together. That great leader of human beings Mahatma Gandhi once said that "Three-fourths of the miseries and misunderstandings in the world will disappear if we step into the shoes of our adversaries and understand their standpoint." While Jon was clearly not my adversary, I often relied on this phrase to help me when things grew trying with him. I'd ask myself "what must he be feeling right now, and how can I help him through it?" I really tried to "get behind his eyeballs" and view things from his perspective. Each one of us sees the world through our own stained-glass window, each color of that window representing an experience, attitude or bias. It was helpful to view the world through his.

With time, I came to realize that it was more than just time together that Jon needed. He craved greater understanding. He wanted to be loved deeply and have a partner whom he could love completely in return. He wanted someone who would celebrate the little victories he won as he built his own business, and someone to whom he could open up when the cards did not fall in quite the way he had hoped. He wanted a partner he could laugh with, a lover he could learn from and a wife who would become his best friend all over again.

I'll also come clean and admit that Porter and Sarita did not always cooperate either. Of course, they were thrilled that I spent so much time with them and that I had moved my office into our home. They loved the fact that I was less serious, more playful and far more affectionate with them than I'd ever been. But all that time away from them did take its toll. They sometimes

became clingy and wouldn't leave my side. At other times, they threw tantrums over issues that other kids might have not given a second thought to. I sensed that their insecurity lay in the fact that they never knew when this newly-created dream might end and their mother might get called back into work to resume her former lifestyle. I also realized that it would take some time for me to fully regain Porter and Sarita's trust. A few months of being the ideal parent is no substitute for a lifetime of commitment and dedication to one's children.

I realized that my vision of becoming an excellent parent was a work-in-progress. I learned to be gentle with myself and to accept my past failings with grace. They were a necessary part of my evolution, I came to understand. "Everything happens for a reason," I would remind myself. The unfolding of every life is a process. We live, we falter and then we learn and grow. I simply promised myself I would accept Julian's wisdom with an open heart and apply his ideas with a gentle faith. I felt certain that the results would come and my best life would eventually reveal itself.

After many late-night discussions and much introspection on our parts, Jon and I both began to take a far greater sense of responsibility for what went on within our home. As more time passed, the residual apathy that Jon showed from time to time melted into sympathy and an appreciation of how hard I was working to get our family culture to the place where we both knew it could be. We started laughing more often and since laughter is contagious, the kids soon came to follow our lead. We all started hugging each other many times a day, and saying "I love you" became as common in our home as spilled milk and Saturday morning cartoons. And we all began to really enjoy doing nothing more than enjoying each other's company.

Just so you know exactly how we got our transformation going after that meeting with Julian downtown, the first thing Jon and I did was to formulate the Family Vision Agreement that Julian had encouraged us to develop. It made perfect sense to us: it would be impossible to hit a target we could not see. If we really wanted to make wholesale improvements in our family life and make our home culture one based on deep love and happiness, we had to have a clear picture of the end result in our minds and then articulate it on paper. "Clarity precedes mastery" was the phrase Julian kept on repeating to the both of us while we all relaxed in the family room.

By clarifying our future, defining our values and reflecting upon our priorities, we began living in a much more intentional and deliberate way. Life no longer acted on us—we took charge of our lives and lived out our days on our own terms. Personally, I felt more peaceful and in control. That sense of being overwhelmed, which dominates the lives of most of us in this

wild and woolly world where we juggle full-time jobs with grocery shopping, soccer practices and volunteer work, began to subside. Life became fun again.

As for Julian, he spent most of his days reading and meditating in his neat little room above the garage. From time to time I'd hear banging and sawing, but I pretty much stopped going up there in a bid to give Julian the freedom I knew he needed. Sometimes he'd come into our family room covered in sawdust, muttering something about "those darned craftspeople. I hope they know what they're doing." I didn't ask what he meant.

Julian's needs were few: fresh flowers whenever I had time to pick them up for him, lots of fresh air and plenty of time with Porter and Sarita. His love for them grew profound as the weeks rolled along. Julian had been a good father to Ally over the course of her all-too-brief life. But with his newfound wisdom and compassion, I sensed he would be a great parent if he ever decided to have children again. One morning I asked him about this.

"Hi, Julian," I said as he walked in the side door, a bottle of spring water in his hand after his customary morning walk.

"Good morning, Catherine. I think it's going to be one brilliant day out there. Did you see the way the moon is still visible in the sky even though the sun is blazing?"

"I hadn't noticed. But I'll have a peek once I drop Porter off at school and Sarita off at Jon's mom's place. She's been away on vacation and wants to spend the day doing arts and crafts with her. She's such a nice woman, Julian."

"So I've heard. Mind if I tag along with you in the car?"

"Sure, that would be great. Sarita loves it when you sit in the back seat with her and do your hilarious 'tour guide' routine."

"I'll do anything to amuse her," replied Julian.

"I know."

After we dropped the kids off, I started asking Julian some of the questions that had been on my mind.

"Julian?"

"Yes, Catherine."

"Do you think you will ever get married again?"

"What?" exclaimed Julian, breaking into laughter.

"No, I'm serious. You look phenomenal. You are the wisest person I've

ever met. You are so fun to be around and you have the most positive attitude I could ever imagine. I think there would be many opportunities for you to meet someone special. Maybe even have another child.”

Julian looked out of the passenger window and fell completely silent. I didn't say another word. Soon, his eyes welled up with tears that then gathered and drizzled down his smooth cheeks, ending up on the folds of his ever-present red robe.

“Sorry, Julian. I didn't mean to bring back bad memories,” I apologized.

“You actually brought back good ones,” Julian answered sweetly. “My days with Ally were the best days of my life. Having Porter and Sarita around has brought the joy of those days back to me. I really love kids. “

“I know you do.”

“And Porter and Sarita are very special children. I've seen such an improvement in them over the past little while.”

“Thanks. I'm working at it.”

“I know you are,” Julian replied.

“I hate to be so persistent, but I am your sister and I care about you a lot. So what do you think? Keen on remarrying?”

“Not at this point in my life, Catherine. But maybe later,” he said with a broad grin, tickled by the fact that though he was well into his golden years, physically he looked many decades younger.

“Okay, I'm not going to push the point. For now. But I've got a ton of intelligent, beautiful friends that would love to meet a man like you.”

“I'll keep it in mind, little sister. Right now I have other priorities.”

“So where are we going?” I asked, as Julian rolled down the window and stuck his hand into the wind, letting it sail up and down the way kids do on hot summer days.

“I was hoping we could drive up to the cottage today. I haven't been up there in years. I thought today would be the right day for me to share The Second Mastery of the Family Leader with you.”

“Really?” I replied joyfully. “I was wondering when you'd reveal this one. What does it say?”

“The Second Mastery of the Family Leader is all about trust-building and opening the lines of humanity.”

“Opening the lines of humanity?”

“Yes. All too often, Catherine, we restrain our humanity. We don’t tell people how much we love them or all that we appreciate about them. This failure prevents us from forging the bonds of love that give rise to a great family culture. The Second Mastery of the Family Leader says *Shift from Scolding the Child to Molding the Leader*, and that’s done through deepening your relationships at home.”

“Okay, Julian, let’s head up to the cottage. I think that’s a great idea. Jon’s working on a big project and said he’d be home later than usual. I could call his mom and ask her to pick Porter up from school. I know she’d be thrilled to have the kids all day.”

“Excellent,” replied Julian, clearly pleased at my willingness to rearrange my schedule so we could be together for a full day of learning.

“And, to be honest, I could use the break. I’ve been spending so much time with the children that I’d love some time off in the country.”

“It’s important to have your time too, Catherine. Too many parents feel guilty if they take some time for themselves. They think it is a selfish thing to do. But carving out time to renew and recharge is actually a very selfless act.”

“Really?”

“Of course. It makes you better with your whole family. When you are happy, they will be happy. When you feel relaxed and at peace, you will be at your best. And your family will benefit the most.”

“Excellent point. I’ll remember that one.”

“So let’s drive straight out to the country. I want to share a few more principles with you that I know will make your home life even better. You’re doing some great things these days. I’m very impressed with all your efforts. That chat we had down at the BraveLife.com offices really seems to have made an impact.”

“You opened my eyes to a lot of things on that day, Julian. The whole notion that I need to be a leader at home and build a unique family culture really hit the mark.”

“I’m glad,” came the soft reply.

What Julian referred to as “the cottage” was really a spectacular estate property that my grandfather had built on forty-two acres of the most beautiful grounds you could ever imagine. The home overlooked a magnificent freshwater lake that we used to swim in and boat on as children. Flowers were everywhere, and the sounds of singing birds could be heard throughout the property. It was so good to be back.

As we drove along the road that led to the main house, my mind was drenched with memories of the past. I remembered the day Julian taught me how to sail the boat that our mother had bought for us the day we finished school that year. We both had placed at the very top of our classes, and she said she'd get us something special. We spent day after lazy summer day in that sailboat, making up hilarious stories and dreaming about the lives we would create as adults. Even back then, Julian's dream was the same: "I'm going to be a great trial lawyer," he would say.

I smiled as I thought about the night when, as kids, we slept outside under the stars and told tales of ghosts and goblins to each other, growing so frightened that we had to yell for our father to come out and escort us inside with the aid of a flashlight. And I recalled all the great family times we had enjoyed at this idyllic retreat, times so grand it seemed that happiness and love infused the very air we were breathing.

"I always loved the smell of these flowers in the spring," observed Julian in a relaxed tone.

"Me too. I've never been able to find flowers this big in the city," I replied.

Walking up the path to the big house, Julian threw an arm over my shoulder and then continued along the way silently.

"You know why we both love this place so much?" he asked after a few moments.

"Tell me?"

"It's because of the memories, Catherine."

"The memories?"

"Yes. Sure, this is a marvelous place. But at the end of the day, the reason why this property has such a place in our hearts is because of all the human moments we have enjoyed here."

"Human moments?" I answered, curious about yet another of Julian's novel phrases.

"Yes, *human moments*. The *Harvard Business Review* did a piece on this subject a number of years back. The author wrote that the reason people are no longer happy, creative and inspired at work is because the modern workplace has grown so busy there is no longer a place for human moments."

"What exactly are human moments?"

"They are those special times when human beings come together and

connect in a deep, open way. Before things in the corporate world became so busy and fast-paced, we used to make time to chat at the water cooler about what we did on the weekend or ask our workmates about the progress their children were making. We would get to know our colleagues and come to see them as important elements in the fabric of our lives. Now, people come in to work and are assaulted by a barrage of e-mails, a never-ending stream of voicemail and a mile-high pile of faxes. In the new business world, we no longer have the time to slow down, enjoy each other's company and connect warmly. We practically don't even know these people that we spend the better parts of our days with."

"And the thing that's ironic," I added, "is that when we find the time to foster these connections that you're speaking of, innovation, productivity and on the job effectiveness soar."

"That's exactly what this consultant wrote in the article. But I think that his real point was this: business leaders can enrich the spirit of the communities of people that comprise their companies by encouraging human moments at work."

"I think I know where you're going with this one," I said intuitively.

"Apply the same thinking to your home life," stated Julian.

"Interesting."

"To show real leadership within your family," Julian continued, "encourage human moments between yourselves. Stop scolding the children and start molding and sculpting them into leaders through the gift of your unconditional love. All effective leaders care deeply about the relationships that comprise their organization. You shouldn't be any different."

"Agreed," I said in a reflective tone, knowing that work still needed to be done with that fiery temper of mine that I'd sometimes let loose during those times when the kids were screaming, phones were ringing and deadlines were approaching quickly.

"You are a star in business, Catherine," Julian continued, making me feel a little better. "I'm certainly not in a position to lecture you on the art of growing a world-class enterprise. You've done that and succeeded admirably."

"Thanks, Julian."

"And given your experience as a corporate leader, you know that ultimately what makes a great business is great talent. Great, creative, energized people who are passionate about what they do."

“Completely correct,” I replied as we walked into the grand living room of the dwelling.

“And I know you will also agree that the best way to bring out the best in people is to show them that you truly care about them.”

“I do.”

“So the heart of business success lies in connecting to people’s hearts. *True leadership of human beings lies in commending them rather than in condemning them.* The deeper your relationship with others, the more effective your leadership of them will be. People will not follow you if they don’t trust you. And here’s the big lesson,” Julian spoke with heightened emotion: “*Before anyone will lend you a hand, you must first touch their hearts.*”

“Before someone will lend you a hand, you must first touch their heart? I love that one, Julian.”

“Know why you love that one?”

“No, why?”

“Because it speaks to the truth. Every human being, no matter what stage of evolution they are at, has the capacity to recognize the highest truths of humanity. And that phrase I just mentioned is one of them.”

“Wow. It reminds me of a quote I recently read by the German poet Goethe where he wrote: ‘Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and help them become what they are capable of being.’”

“And that is what human moments are all about. Those little opportunities to show your humanity to another person. Those little windows of chance to show love and compassion for another person that reveal themselves each and every day but generally go unseized because we are all so darn busy being busy.”

“And seizing these opportunities to create ‘human moments’ deepens our relationships in profound ways, right?”

“Right. And not only that. These human moments leave us with indelible memories which, at the end of the day, are the most precious things in life. You see, Catherine, a great life is nothing more than a series of great memories woven together.”

“Fascinating.”

“It’s true. All too often we get caught up in thinking that we need to achieve certain heroic acts in order to validate our lives and bring us great

success. We get fooled into believing we must accumulate expensive toys and an excess of belongings in order to be fulfilled at the end of the day. But that's not the way to real happiness. *Real and lasting happiness comes through the progressive accumulation of lovely memories and special moments.* For the rest of your days, Catherine, commit yourself to doing whatever it takes to collect as many great family memories as possible. *And remember that the best way to be really really successful in life is to be really really kind.* Take all that thinking from the corporate environment about community building and human moments and transpose it into your home life. Bring these tried and true leadership philosophies of the business world into the four corners of the place where you live."

"How exactly?" I wondered.

"Start thinking that the deeper your relationship with Jon and the kids, the more effective your leadership will be within your home. Stop scolding Porter and Sarita and start molding them into the great souls that we both know they are destined to become."

"And stop condemning and start commending them?" I added, borrowing Julian's phrase.

"Right on," Julian replied excitedly, jumping up into the air as if he were riding a trampoline. "Praise your kids on jobs well done. *Never forget that behavior that is rewarded is behavior that gets repeated.* Recognize and appreciate them when they help with the dishes or prepare dinner with you. Lavish them with sincere praise when they learn a new skill or try a new game. *Sincere praise is one of the finest motivators of the human heart and yet we rarely use it.*"

"I guess you're right, Julian. We restrain our humanity."

"And don't be so quick to get mad when they spill a little milk or break a brand new dish. They are children and that's what children do. It's one of the ways that they learn. I remember one of the investment bankers I used to hang out with in my old glory days telling me that the secret to the incredible confidence that he had stemmed from his childhood."

"What in particular?"

"Well, he was raised by his father, and whenever he would spill a drink or break a dish or make a mistake, his father, rather than getting angry, would ask him: 'So, Jerry, what's the lesson here?' That simple question led to the forging of one of the strongest characters I've ever known. Remember, Catherine, a mistake is only a mistake if you make it twice. The first time around it's a learning experience, one essential for growth."

“Really?”

“Of course. Wouldn’t you agree that the primary way we grow as people is through our failures and mistakes?”

“For sure. Come to think of it, my biggest setbacks have led to my greatest growth.”

“Exactly. Failure is the highway to success. Failing is nothing more than learning how to win. *Good parents reward excellent failures.* When Porter and Sarita have the bravery to step out and try something new and they fail, reward and encourage them. It will flood them with confidence and inspire them to keep growing and stretching their capacities. If they’ve made a mistake, help them learn what went wrong and then move forward. And *never* use negative or critical language with them. Condemning children causes them to shrivel up inside and extinguishes the very light that makes them so special. It is a sin, the way I hear parents screaming at their kids at the grocery store over the silliest of accidents. What that shows is that *the parents* have to get their acts together—not the children.”

“My goodness, you’ve got some brilliant insights, Julian. You must have spent hours and hours reflecting on all this stuff.”

“More like years and years,” came the faint reply as Julian began to stroke his robe, deep in thought.

“And also think seriously about that all-important leadership principle I mentioned to you that says ‘people will not follow you if they do not trust you.’ Recognize, once and for all, that *your primary duty as a parent is to become a builder of human trust.*”

“I need to become a builder of human trust?” I asked, intrigued by this phrase.

“Yes, Catherine. Trust forms the cornerstone of every great family culture. Like I said, before someone will lend you a hand, you must touch their heart. And touching someone’s heart ultimately comes through generating their trust.”

“So if I want Porter and Sarita to help out more around the house, say by picking up all their toys after they finish playing with them, I need to start touching their hearts more often?”

“Yes, that’s precisely what I’m saying.”

“So what practical things can I do at home to become a ‘builder of trust,’ as you put it? How can I start deepening my relationships and creating these great memories that you say are the stuff of great family lives?”

“Well, there are so many things you can do. The first and by far the most important is to *keep your promises and commit to your commitments.*”

“Ever heard the story of the master carpenter who was just about to retire?” Julian continued.

“I don’t think so.”

“Well, he was set to retire after a long and dedicated career building houses. But at the very beginning of his illustrious tenure with a prominent contractor, he had been required to make a very special promise.”

“Which was?”

“The carpenter had to promise the contractor that every house he built would be built as if it was the most important project he had ever been given. He had to promise that every house would be built with dedication, care and love. Getting ready to retire, the carpenter went into his boss’s office to inform him that the house he had just completed would be his last. The boss said he was sorry to see him go and asked if he would be kind enough to do a final favor for him. ‘Just build me one more house,’ requested the employer, ‘then you’re free to go.’ The carpenter, who respected his boss a great deal, agreed and immediately got to work on the new house. But unlike every other house he had built over the years, he did not use the full extent of his expertise with this final one and took every shortcut he knew to finish the project in record time so he could begin his life as a retired man. He cut corners, used inferior material and hurried to get the task over with.”

“He broke his early promise,” I interjected, immersed in the story Julian was sharing.

“Yes he did, Catherine,” Julian continued. “Within weeks, the house was completed and the carpenter informed his boss of this fact. ‘Thanks for doing this for me,’ he said to the carpenter in a gentle tone. Then the employer handed the carpenter the keys to the front door. ‘These are for you. The house you just built is my parting gift for all your years of hard work and dedication.’ The carpenter was astounded. He could not believe that the home he had just built was his own. If he had known this, he would have put his very best into it.”

“Wow. Great story.”

“See, that carpenter failed to keep the most important promise he had made to his employer and to himself, the promise that he would do his work with excellence and true mastery of his craft. And because he breached this core commitment, he ended up living in the only inferior home that he had ever built. And so it is with our lives. We break promises and end up living in

less than ideal circumstances, circumstances that we have created by our own actions.”

“So family leaders must always keep their promises and remain true to their word,” I concluded.

“Yes, unless they wish to end up living in inferior and miserable homes. And it’s not just the promises they make to their family members that they must follow through on, Catherine. They must also keep the promises that they make to themselves. Keeping the promises you make to others builds family trust and enriches the home culture. Keeping the promises you make to yourself builds self-trust and enriches your personal character.”

“That’s definitely true, Julian. As you know, I’ve started working out regularly.”

“I’ve noticed. You’ve never looked better.”

“Thanks, big brother. Well, when I miss even one of the workouts I’ve planned, I feel so bad. It’s like I’ve let myself down or something.”

“You have. Keeping the promises you make to yourself, whether the promise involves exercising or taking some time to commune with nature or even getting a massage after a hectic week, means you are being true to yourself. When you follow through on the commitments you have made to take better care of yourself, you are in effect honoring yourself. When you break these promises, you slowly lose trust in yourself. You weaken self-trust. The more promises you break, the more self-trust you lose. Eventually, you lose complete confidence in yourself as a human being. And when you’ve lost that, you’ve lost everything,” stated Julian dramatically, the sunlight dancing off the shiny golden embroidery that ran along his robe.

“That makes so much sense, Julian. No one’s ever taught me anything quite like this. Not in grade school. Not in high school. Not in business school. Please go on.”

“Trust is the basis of every human relationship, whether at work or at home. To deepen your relationships with your family, you need to increase the trust that is there. And one of the most powerful ways to do that is to become a person of your word. Words have great power. Don’t say you’ll do something unless you can be sure you will do it. Try to keep every promise that you make. Try to become *meticulous with your word*. You will completely transform your life. That I can assure you.”

“That sounds hard, being meticulous with my word. I mean I have so many commitments. It’s not easy to follow through on all of them.”

“Then stop making so many. Begin to underpromise so you can always overdeliver. Become more *selective* in what you promise. To be a great leader at home, you must first be a model of integrity. You must be the kind of person who does the right thing every time. The kind of person who lives by a private code of honor. In doing so, you will gain the respect of other people. Even more importantly, *people who keep their promises gain credibility*. Their family comes to rely on them and deeply believe in what they say...”

“Because they know it is the truth,” I interrupted excitedly.

“Yes, because they know it is the truth. And the truth really will set you free, little sister.”

“I’ve never thought that gaining credibility in the eyes of my family was that important. I’ve always thought that there were other priorities for me as a partner and parent.”

“Credibility is key, Catherine. Credibility promotes trust, and trust, as I have said, lies at the heart of every deep, meaningful relationship. So my suggestion to you is: don’t make a promise to someone or make a commitment unless you are certain you can deliver on it. Don’t say you will take Porter and Sarita to the circus this weekend unless you are sure you can take them. The promises of parents mean the world to little kids. Understand that when you break these promises, you break their hearts. And do not tell Jon that you will help him write up that new business plan he has been talking about unless you are positive that you’ll be able to do it. Within a very short period of time, you will see something wonderful start to happen in your life. The members of your family will start listening to you in a way they have never listened to you before. They will deeply respect you. They will come to know and love you as a person who is always true to her word. And that will build the love between you all.”

“Amazing knowledge. And yet it’s profoundly simple stuff.”

“‘Simply profound stuff’ is how I’d choose to describe this wisdom that the monks were good enough to share with me,” replied Julian, clearly tickled by his clever turn of phrase.

“Okay, Julian. I’m going to get really serious about keeping all my promises and committing to all my commitments. I’ll become meticulous with my word. When I say I’ll do something, I’ll have the strength of character to do it. I will try hard to become a woman of my word—true to my word—and stop living my life according to what’s easiest to do, concentrating instead on doing the right things. What else can I start doing to deepen human connections within our home?”

“Pardon me?”

“I said, what else can I start doing to deepen the human connections at home?” I repeated.

“What?”

“I said,” beginning to yell and wondering if Julian’s hearing was beginning to suffer in spite of his extraordinary physical condition, “what else can I start doing to deepen my human connections?”

“Run that one by me one more time, little sister.”

“You’ve got to be kidding, Julian. I just asked you the same question three times. Why aren’t you listening? It’s starting to drive me a little crazy.”

“Ah, thank you. Just the response I was hoping for,” said a pleased Julian, grinning from ear to ear. “You’ve helped me segue nicely into my next point about relationship building within the home.”

“I have?”

“You have. To really deepen your human connections and begin to consistently touch the hearts of your family so that your entire home life improves, you must become what I call an Aggressive Listener.”

“But isn’t your whole message that we have to take a softer, more compassionate approach to human relationships if we want to strengthen them? What’s all this about being more aggressive, Julian? I’m tired of being aggressive. I’m tired of driving hard all day long and pushing people relentlessly. That’s all I did when I worked downtown.”

“I’m not suggesting that you go back to those old patterns of action, Catherine. That was your former self. Stop even viewing yourself in those terms. Start living out of your imagination, not your memory.”

“Ooh, I like that phrase, Julian. That’s a good one.”

Julian pressed forward with his teaching. “Aggressive Listening isn’t about being a more aggressive person. It’s all about being a more committed listener. Too many people in this fast-paced age think that listening involves nothing more than waiting until the other person has finished speaking before they jump in. Becoming a masterful listener is a lost skill in these times of overscheduled living, and yet it is an essential way to build trust with your family. It will enrich your home culture in ways you cannot begin to imagine. You see, one of the deepest of all the Human Hungers...”

“What’s a Human Hunger?” I interjected.

“We all have a series of core human needs. The sages called them Human

Hungers and had taken the time to define them all. So as I was saying, we all have these Human Hungers—such as the need to actualize our talents, the need for love and community, the need to feel we are growing and learning and the need to feel that we are contributing to the lives of others as we journey along the path of life. Another of the Human Hungers is the need to be cherished and understood. We all have a deep need to be listened to and to feel that our words have been heard by those we are speaking to. When you Listen Aggressively, you focus every ounce of your attention on the words the other party is offering to you and listen with great empathy and care. This, in turn, sends a powerful signal to the person speaking that you respect, value and are interested in what they are saying. And that increases the trust level within the relationship.”

“I guess it goes back to what you were saying about people not lending you a hand until you touch their hearts. Aggressively listening seems like an excellent way to really connect with someone’s heart.”

“Yes it is, Catherine. There are few gifts on this planet as precious as the ability to listen completely to the person you are with, in a way that shows him that he is completely understood. It’s one of those rare acts of humanity that we never seem to get around to practicing. And with the greater understanding that deep listening promotes, this world would be a far better place. Understanding is the building block of love. Take Porter, for example. While he’s only six years old, I know for a fact that he loves it when you give him your undivided attention. That means when he is telling you about his day at school and what he did with his buddies in the schoolyard, you are there not only in body but also in mind. You are concentrating on his words completely, even though you might feel exhausted or be facing a crisis at work. And I know this can be hard at times, but the more you practice focusing on the conversation and blocking out all distractions, the better you will get at it. Listening is a skill to be mastered rather than a talent you are born with. The more you do it, the better you get at it.”

“You’re right. Porter’s eyes light up when I ask him questions about the things he is passionate about and then simply listen to his answers in a sincere and loving way. I know it makes him feel important.”

“And understood,” Julian added.

“And understood,” I repeated. “Anything else?”

“Just one final point of wisdom, Catherine, and I’ll be quick because I know I’ve given you a lot to think about this morning.”

“Believe me Julian, I’m loving this knowledge. Keep it flowing.”

“Okay. The final element of the Second Mastery of the Family Leader is to *become fanatically honest.*”

“Which means?”

“Which means that no matter how hard it feels to speak the truth in a given situation and how difficult it is to let your true thoughts shine through, be honest. Say what you mean to say.”

“Speak my truth?” I suggested, echoing Julian’s words from a previous lesson.

“Oh you’re good, little sister. Exactly. Now I should also clarify that in being fanatically honest I’m not suggesting that you be so blunt that you offend and insult people. My message is different. Being fanatically honest kind of gets back to what I was telling you earlier—it’s about being meticulous with your word. Don’t treat your words lightly. They are powerful. When you say anything, make certain you mean it. When you feel strongly about something in a situation with Jon, for example, express it. Dispense with all flattery and fluff and get down to the truth in all your conversations.”

“What effect does becoming fanatically honest have?” I wondered.

“A very dramatic one,” responded Julian. “Like the kind of effect keeping your promises and following through on your commitments has. It deepens the trust people have in you. They know that when you say something, it’s truthful. You gain immense respect in their eyes and you grow in power as a human being when you speak the truth in all circumstances. People know where you stand, and there is no longer anything fake about you. All of the superficiality that decorates most of our characters is stripped away and we become naked in our humanity. And that’s powerful, Catherine, really powerful. You become more than just an individual person. You rise to the level of a force of nature and you liberate this aura around you. Believe me, people can sense this strength about you.”

“Did the sages have this power?”

“In extraordinary amounts,” noted Julian, looking up at the sky. “That’s one of the things I remember most about those loving teachers. Each and every one of them was deeply devoted to the truth, not just in their speech but within their thoughts. Makes me think of the words of that great Roman philosopher Seneca, who wrote: ‘I will govern my life and thoughts as if the whole world were to see the one and read the other.’”

“I just got goosebumps from that phrase,” I remarked.

“Pretty strong words, aren’t they,” observed Julian. “And the sages lived

by that philosophy. Really *devoted* to the truth. As a consequence, they had this almost magical influence over me. Speaking the truth and becoming fanatically honest will lead to profound improvement in your home life, Catherine.”

“And in my business life too, I’m sure.”

“Very well said. In an age where people lie all the time, believing it will get them ahead, you will stand far and above the crowd as a beacon of integrity. And believe me, little sister, integrity and decency will give you a competitive edge far more powerful than any of the latest business processes would ever be able to provide.”

“I guess we need to show leadership in all areas of our lives. It reminds me of what Mahatma Gandhi once said: ‘One cannot do right in one department of life whilst he is occupied in doing wrong in another. Life is one indivisible whole.’ With all these lessons you are giving me, I’m starting to see how all the leadership principles that executives need to use to build great businesses are equally applicable within the context of the home and vice versa. I know you’ve been telling me this for months, but now it’s really becoming clear. And you’re so right: leadership is not the sole domain of the CEO. Practicing leadership by seeing myself as a builder of trust and a developer of people will do wonders for all my relationships, at work and at home.”

“You’ve got it now,” said Julian, walking out onto the sprawling patio that overlooked the shimmering lake. Sunlight danced off the waves, creating a dazzling effect. Julian reached into the single pocket of his robe, pulled out a pair of sunglasses and put them on. He looked hilarious. “Cool shades, brother,” I teased.

“My eyes can’t stand the glare,” Julian replied. “Speaking of eyes, little sister, I want to share a poem with you.” Julian then reached into his pocket and pulled out an ivory-colored piece of paper that looked both delicate and ancient. Before he read the words etched on it, he spoke.

“You are the author of your children’s days.”

I was taken aback by Julian’s statement. Although I did not fully understand it, I felt it had special meaning and was rich in wisdom. I remained silent.

“The actions you take and the habits you make as you pass through your days will influence Porter and Sarita for the rest of their lives. *Your conduct as a parent defines the days of your children.* Your behavior will have an influence on them every day, as long as they live. All eyes are on you,

Catherine. Never forget that,” he stated somberly as he handed me the piece of paper that had been hidden in his robe like some buried treasure. The words on the paper read as follows:

*There are little eyes upon you
and they're watching night and day.
There are little ears that quickly
take in every word you say.
There are little hands all eager
to do anything you do;
And a little child who's dreaming
of the day he'll be like you.
You're the little fellow's idol;
You're the wisest of the wise.
In his little mind about you no suspicions ever rise.
He believes in you devoutly,
holds all that you say and do;
He will say and do in your way
when he's grown up just as you.
There's a wide-eyed little fellow
who believes you're always right;
And his eyes are always opened,
and he watches day and night.
You are setting an example,
every day in all you do,
for the little child who's waiting,
to grow up to be like you.*

Anonymous

Tears streamed down my face as I finished reading the poem. I was deeply moved by what I had just read and the depth of the sentiment expressed in those words. Julian was so right when he said “words have power” and that I had to choose mine with care. At that moment, I began to feel that being a

leader within my family and becoming a world-class parent was a noble thing to do. Maybe having the courage to be a great parent and a family leader was actually a *heroic* thing to do.

All those fathers and mothers who take the time to read to their children after a long day at work and a busy night doing chores are heroes in a sense. All those single parents who step up to the plate in difficult circumstances and turn adversity into opportunity by transforming their homes into places of learning, leadership and love for the benefit of their kids must be seen as heroes of some sort. All of those people who consciously decide to give the very best that they have to give as human beings to their children, no matter how tough it is for them to do so, need to be honored, respected and perhaps even revered.

When we were growing up, Julian had once told me that I had one fundamental choice in my life: I could curse the darkness or I could be the one to light a candle. Recently I came across a saying from the ancient thinker Plato that spoke to this very sentiment: “We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when adults grow afraid of the light.” I realized that showing leadership in my home made me a light, perhaps for the first time in my life. It made me a noble person. It made me a bigger person. And it made me a hero. At that moment, standing in the sun-soaked patio that had seen so many wonderful times of family, it dawned on me that the act of raising my two wonderful children into decent, caring and strong adults would be the best work I could ever hope to do. And that realization opened my heart as it had never been opened before.

I looked up to thank Julian, but he was nowhere in sight. I felt completely alone. I surveyed the living room and then the kitchen, but no Julian. I walked out onto the vast front lawn—it was still wet from the cool morning dew of a miraculous spring day—but there was no sign of my brother there either. I grew worried. I then looked out over the lake and was stunned by what I saw. There, halfway to the buoy that floated in the middle of the water, was Julian. He had left his robe on the shore and was swimming wildly, the way he used to swim as a young boy when school had just ended and we drove up to this lake for the first swim of summer. As I looked more closely, I could see a broad smile on Julian’s face. And as I listened more intently, I could hear him singing something. It was the song my mother used to sing to us as children as we drifted off to sleep.



The Third Mastery of the Family Leader

Focus Your Child on Greatness, Not Weakness

Far away there in the sunshine are my highest aspirations. I may not reach them, but I can look up and see their beauty, believe in them and try to follow them.

Louisa May Alcott

The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it but that our aim is too low and we reach it.

Michelangelo

The rain beat down on the roof of my car as I pulled into the underground parking lot that would lead me up to the National Museum of Art and History, where Julian had asked me to meet him on this drizzly afternoon. It had been exactly two weeks since we had spent the day at the cottage, and the lessons that he had shared had already led to some remarkable breakthroughs in my role as a parent—and in my conduct as a person. The human wiring that had always determined my thought processes had begun to be reconfigured as new attitudes, outlooks and insights began to govern my days. I had become even more positive within our home and even happier with the way our lives were unfolding.

With the leadership that I was showing to the kids and the newfound love I was giving to Jon, our family life took on an almost spiritual quality that pushed it into a whole new dimension. My guess was that as the human connections deepened, personal gifts that had slumbered within us rose invisibly to the surface. As our home became a place where respect, trust and truth were honored, each one of us grew freer to show the feelings and talents that made us special.

I had recently read about a study performed by researchers at the University of Nebraska on what makes the happiest families in the world so happy. The study revealed a number of common traits. First, the happiest families were committed to making their family life their primary priority. To use Julian's words, they recognized that "Leadership in Life Begins with Leadership at Home." Second, the members of these families were openly affectionate with each other. Again Julian had hit the nail on the head with his advice about "human moments" and the importance of compassion within the family culture. Third, researchers found that the happiest of families all shared a

healthy respect for the importance of positive communication. Just as Julian had advised me, these families believed that listening and lots of honest family discussions were essential. And fourth, it was discovered that these peak-performing families spent lots of time together. As Julian had said, it's not just quality time that is important when building a richly rewarding family life. The right *quantity* has to be in place as well.

The study also found that marital happiness could play a large part in the overall happiness of the family. When the relationship between the parents was loving and built upon mutual respect, the family unit was often more loving as a whole, and each member showed greater respect for one another's needs. When the couple got along well, the family as a whole got along well.

But as I read more and more about successful families, prompted by the inspiration that Julian had given to me over his days with us, I came to realize that the makeup of contemporary families has changed greatly. I read of single fathers making splendid parents and raising fine children. I learned of dedicated single mothers who would hold down busy jobs during the day and then come home at night to create wonderful home environments for their children in spite of the fact that their bodies ached and their feet hurt. I found that growing numbers of grandparents were, for a wide variety of reasons, becoming primary caregivers for their grandkids, and doing extraordinarily well in the process. I had the chance to reconnect with one of my business school chums, a woman who had just undergone a painful divorce and was raising her three young children alone, discovering in the process that even though her hours were full and the demands on her were many, she had never been more fulfilled in all her life.

As I dug deeper and became more aware of this organization of human beings we call the family, I realized that this time-honored institution is going through the same dramatic change being experienced by every other organization on the planet. The traditional two-parent model, with the man working outside the home and the woman working within it, is no longer the norm. The more I looked and the wider I opened my eyes, the more I began to notice stay-at-home fathers grocery shopping with their kids in the middle of the afternoon. I became more aware of other hard-driving women executives who, like me, had decided to move their offices into their homes, and fast-track fathers who had decided to take a few years off to raise their children. I saw blended families that were the envy of their neighborhoods and intergenerational families where dinnertimes saw children, their parents and their grandparents sitting around the table, with much laughter and love in between. The big news of our day wasn't just the rise of the New Economy fueled by high-tech companies and a new business culture. We also had to

take into account the rise of the New Family—with all its permutations and non-traditional configurations—that, I discovered, is rapidly reshaping our human culture.

Riding up the elevator from the parkade to the museum, my thoughts drifted to my own parents. My father had been a gifted man whose ambition had taken him to the pinnacle of the legal world and whose big heart had made him tops in my own. My mother was a brilliant writer who loved the arts nearly as much as she loved her children. Growing up, I had always felt that Julian was her favorite, though in her final years she let me know that this had never been the case. She loved us both with equal intensity and though Julian rarely spoke of her, I knew he missed her as much as I did. Someone once told me that “as you raise your children, so you raise your generations.” I had been fortunate enough to have two great parents who, I now recognized, showed great leadership at home. They gave their generation a lovely head start, I thought.

As the doors opened, I walked into the main hall of the museum. I always loved coming to this place with its breathtaking Picassos and its spellbinding statues. These days, I tried to bring Porter and Sarita here on as many weekends as I could. Jon would meet up with us after exercising at the gym—a new habit he had adopted as part of our overall plan to live richer lives and be better role models for our children. I felt that it was important to give the children a healthy appreciation of the arts and to expose them to as many of the great creations of humankind that it was in my power to introduce them to. I knew it would eventually have a positive effect.

Julian had asked me to meet him in the Michelangelo Room. I knew he had been doing a lot of reading on the life of this great artist and respected him for the commitment to excellence he showed in his craft. I entered the room, looking for a tall, strikingly handsome man in a dazzling red robe, but Julian was nowhere to be found. The only company I had was a small group of tourists being led on a tour by a tour guide. I decided to sit down on the wooden bench and take in the sights while I waited for my brother. Part of the process of simplifying my life involved breaking my lifelong habit of feeling the need to fill every waking moment with frenzied action. I had begun to get more comfortable with taking some time for myself just to take in life’s basic but beautiful moments—like the way a spider’s web glistened after a rainstorm or the way the stars danced in the sky on a quiet, cloudless night. Sometimes, Jon would encourage me to take an hour for myself to browse through the wonderful secondhand bookstore that was within walking distance of our home or to retreat to the public gardens that our place backed on to.

I came to love these quieter moments of life just as much as I adored the noisy, playful times with my family. Emerson said, “Without the rich heart, wealth is an ugly beggar.” In all those years that I pursued and accumulated mountains of money, I had never had a rich heart. With all the inner work I was now doing, a rich heart had finally begun to beat within me.

As I glanced at the marble statues in the room, I started listening in on the tour guide’s explanations. I was struck by the depth of his knowledge and his obvious passion for the masterpieces that the museum housed. I was also a little surprised at what he was wearing. While he had on the traditional guide’s uniform of a white shirt and a black tie with matching trousers, an oversized baseball cap covered the better part of his head and white flaps kept most of his face out of view. I’d seen college students wearing caps like this on spring break in Florida to protect themselves from sunstroke as they consumed barrels of beer while relaxing on the beach. I thought the tour guide looked odd but no one else seemed to notice the inappropriateness of his attire. Perhaps the tourists thought he was dressed normally for a guide and planned to buy a hat like his once the tour was over.

The guide continued to speak and the tourists continued to listen dutifully. Not one of them asked a question. Then, in the middle of a sentence, the guide did something that made me laugh. He reached into his pants and pulled out a jumbo-sized hot dog that he had squeezed into his pocket. As he munched on it, he had the audacity to continue his lecture about Michelangelo’s work and its impact—food flying from his mouth all the while.

Suddenly an elderly woman from the back of the group pulled out a bottle of Dijon mustard from her purse along with a spoon and walked up to the tour guide. Without even speaking to him, she began to lavishly spread mustard over the hot dog. The guide did not say a word and the crowd didn’t even seem to notice. After performing this act of service, the woman returned to her place in the crowd and the guide continued his presentation, polishing off his hot dog as he went. The whole scene seemed surreal—like something out of a weird movie that you’d watch in black-and-white in the middle of the morning when the rest of the world was asleep. But I thought it would be best if I minded my own business. I prayed Julian would show up soon.

“All great sculptors envision their works of art before they even pick up their knives,” the tour guide continued, mustard dripping from his lower lip. “You see, ladies and gentlemen, all things in life are created twice: first when we dream them and then when we create them.”

“Hey, this guy’s pretty good,” I thought. “No wonder the museum lets him dress the way he dresses and do the things he does.”

“In your own life,” he added, pulling a granola bar from the other pocket of his pants and beginning to chomp on it, “you must create a compelling vision on the picture screen of your imagination and then live out this ideal.”

“Hey, wait a minute!” I said out loud, unable to contain myself. “I’ve heard those words before. And come to think of it, I’ve heard that voice before,” I exclaimed, beginning to put the pieces of this weird puzzle together. “This whole scene is far too bizarre to be real. It makes me wonder if this is some kind of a prank, a childish little prank put together by a childish big brother who’s been playing these kinds of practical jokes on people ever since he was a kid.”

The entire room was silent. The tourists were aghast. Finally, one of them spoke. It was the mustard lady.

“I beg your pardon, madam,” she asked, looking straight into my eyes, “but what the heck are you talking about?”

“This whole thing is a joke, isn’t it?” I persisted. “Julian called me up here and you are all probably people he knows posing as tourists. Right? I’m on to you all. The surprise is over. Nice job, though—you had me going for a while there,” I said, clapping my hands for effect and forcing a fear grin.

The room remained silent. Then the guide spoke.

“I’d better call security. We might have a little problem here, ladies and gentlemen,” he remarked as he reached for a red phone that sat on the wall amid the statues.

I became nervous, starting to doubt myself. Maybe this wasn’t one of Julian’s famous gags after all. My goodness, I thought, what if these people really are tourists and this guide is legitimate? Beads of sweat began to congregate in the pits of my arms. My breathing started to quicken. The Michelangelo Room was beginning to feel extremely hot. Then I caught myself and had the courage to listen to the still, small voice within me that was telling me that Julian had some part to play in this odd spectacle. I *had* to be right about this one.

With confidence renewed, I marched over to the tour guide and ripped off his hat. The crowd looked horrified. I started to laugh. Sure enough, it was Julian.

“Hey, little sister, can’t a man eat a hot dog in peace anymore?” he said, before beginning to howl with laughter. The “tourists” all followed, erupting into guffaws and high-fiving Julian.

“We fooled her, Mr. Mantle,” yelled the mustard lady. “We really fooled

her!”

Julian reached over and gave me a bear hug, squeezing me tightly as he continued to laugh. “We really had you going for a while there,” he whispered in my ear.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he said to the group, imitating a thespian of the English stage, “I give you my little sister, Catherine.”

The crowd roared, clapping wildly, clearly delighted at the show Julian had put on.

“Thanks for helping me out today, gang,” Julian said with great warmth.

“Who are all these people?” I asked my brother.

“These fine people are all actors. They belong to the Fern-brook Society.”

“You mean that troupe of actors that wins all those major awards every year?” I wondered.

“Yes. They’re pretty great, aren’t they? I won a big case for them when I was practicing law—one of the Hollywood studios tried to steal one of their ideas and use it in a movie. I decided to call in the favor this afternoon.”

“Anytime, Mr. Mantle,” the mustard lady, obviously the group’s leader, replied graciously.

As the actors streamed out of the room, they shook Julian’s hand and patted him on the back, appearing to accord him tremendous respect. Within a few moments, the room was empty but for Julian and I.

“I’ve got to hand it to you, Julian. You’re still a showman.”

“Thanks, Catherine,” replied Julian with a big smile. “We all need to let loose once in a while.”

“Hey, what about your robe? This is the first time I’ve seen you without it.”

“It’s at the dry cleaners,” Julian laughed, his face alight with positive energy.

“Okay, so why are we here?” I asked, getting down to business. “I know there’s got to be more to this meeting than that practical joke you just pulled on me. By the way, you really got my heart beating on that one. You’ve pulled some fast ones on me, but that’s got to be one of the best.”

“Yeah, it was pretty funny, wasn’t it,” noted Julian, still chuckling. “Thanks for being such a great sport. Well, you’re right Catherine, there’s

another lesson I want to share with you today. It's actually the Third Mastery of the Family Leader and it's certainly one of the most important."

"And the Third Mastery is?" I asked expectantly.

"The Third Mastery of the Family Leader is to *Focus Your Child on Greatness, Not Weakness.*"

"Wow, that sounds like another good one."

"And essential for the development of your children into leaders and effective human beings. The Third Mastery is all about recognizing Porter's and Sarita's strengths and concentrating on these talents so they expand and evolve. You see, Catherine, *most people spend more time focusing on their weaknesses than developing their strengths. And as a result of this, most people never connect with the greatness that it is their duty to discover.*"

"Does everyone have the potential for greatness in their life?"

"Everyone," came the unequivocal reply. "As I told you earlier, we are all here on this planet for some special reason. We all have something special to give to the world, in our own unique way. Your job as a parent is to cultivate the special strengths and top talents of your children so they shine as people and make the difference they are here to make."

"You know, Julian, what you are saying makes perfect sense. I've found that in business, for example, I used to try and be a jack of all trades. I tried to be a great communicator and a brilliant administrator. I tried to be a visionary leader and an excellent comptroller. I tried to be good at everything within the company and the result was that I was a master of nothing."

"Exactly—it's almost as if you were successful in spite of yourself, Catherine. But most people are not so fortunate. Most people try to focus on doing too many things and end up being good at none. The real key is to *specialize.*"

"Specialize?"

"Yes, to become an effective leader and a peak performer on the playing field of life, you cannot be a generalist, trying to be all things to all people. All of the geniuses who have graced this planet before us had one thing in common—they concentrated their lives on cultivating the gifts that made them special. Take Einstein for example. He had the good sense to figure out that he had a remarkable aptitude for physics, and then spent the rest of his life refining that gift. He did not move into the fields of biology or chemistry. He specialized in his core competency. And because he stayed with what he

did best and dedicated years and years to this mastery, a point eventually came when he achieved greatness as a human being.”

“Any other examples come to mind, Julian?”

“Well, I know you used to love rock music so how about the most brilliant guitar player of all time—Jimi Hendrix. Jimi figured out that he had an extraordinary ability to play the guitar. So rather than also trying to become good at playing the drums and the trumpet, he dedicated—no, devoted—himself to mastering his gift. For the remaining years of his life, most of his waking time was spent on the development of this passion. As with Einstein, a time eventually arrived when he achieved greatness.”

“But haven’t you been teaching me all along that a balanced approach to life is important? I mean, this kind of devotion to the development of our human gifts sounds fairly extreme to me,” I said earnestly, deeply engaged by the concept Julian was sharing with me.

“Excellent point, Catherine. Your intellect continually impresses me. But if I may make a suggestion.”

“Sure.”

“Begin to listen to your heart more. You see, the intellect only thinks but the heart always knows.”

“What does that mean?”

“Most people spend too much time thinking and not enough time feeling. Start listening to your heart more. Begin to connect with the inner wisdom it carries. When you listen to that small voice that resides deep within you, you will know the right way to live. Yes, many geniuses have lives that can be characterized as extreme. I certainly believe that we should all strive for balance and play and peace in life. But at the end of the day, we each have a destiny that has been laid out for us. For Einstein and Hendrix, their paths required deep devotion to their personal gifts. For most people, a simple dedication to the refinement of their highest talents will bring them the success they deserve. Reach deep into your heart to find out what your path requires you to do.”

“I already know what I am required to do, Julian. I’m almost certain that my path, at least for the foreseeable future, calls for me to dedicate myself to being an inspirational parent to Porter and Sarita and helping them grow into adults who are wise, decent, strong and successful. My career remains important to me, but I’ve achieved more in the past few years than most people will achieve in a lifetime—and I feel blessed for that. Now I feel its time I make my children my consuming occupation.”

“I know that is the path you must follow,” replied Julian. “And I’ve known it for quite some time,” he added mysteriously. “And that’s why the Third Mastery of the Family Leader is so important for you. You must focus Porter and Sarita on reaching for greatness in their lives rather than letting them be consumed by their weaknesses. One of your highest duties as a family leader is to lead your children to an appreciation of their core competencies—what the sages called a person’s ‘special strengths’ and their ‘true talents.’ Then you must inspire them to kindle these sparks into roaring fires that will blaze brilliantly for all the world to see.”

“But expecting Porter and Sarita to be as brilliant and famous as Einstein or Jimi Hendrix or Michelangelo is placing a little too much on their shoulders, isn’t it? I mean, that would almost be setting them up for failure. I don’t think I’d want to put that kind of pressure on anyone.”

“You’re missing my point, Catherine,” noted Julian lovingly. “I’m not saying that you need to raise your kids to become the best in the world at what they do and in the way they live. I’m simply saying that they must become inspired to become the best that *they* can be. You need to lead them to realize their highest personal talents and live their best lives. In doing so, you will have fulfilled your mandate as a parent.”

“The sages taught you that?”

“I told you, Catherine, these people were unbelievable thinkers. And really progressive human beings, I might add. They did not believe that deep fulfillment in life came through meditating on the top of a mountain all day. While they believed, of course, that we should carve out time daily for silence and reflection, the sages of Sivana believed that true success came through liberating our human potential and actualizing our highest talents for the greater good. *They believed that the ultimate purpose of life was to manifest our highest talents in a way that added value to the world and made it a better place to be.* It makes me think of the words of Albert Schweitzer: At that point in your life where your talent meets the needs of the universe, that’s where God wants you to be.”

“These sages were remarkable,” I muttered gently.

“They were. And so, taking their lead, I suggest that you make it a priority to help Porter and Sarita discover and then refine their special strengths so that one day, they will reach the point of personal greatness. They will be such unique and extraordinary human beings that they will stand high above the crowd.”

“But aren’t they too young for that right now?” I asked, always the pragmatist.

“Nope,” came the swift response. “Figuring out the special strengths and true talents of your children starts from day one, really. Often it can take years before you really discover what they are truly gifted at.”

“Once Jon and I discover the special strengths and true talents of the kids, I’m still not certain what the next step is,” I continued.

“After you discover these attributes, you should then help the kids become *aware* of their personal gifts so they develop an understanding of what makes them special as human beings. From there, you and Jon need to move into the cultivation stage of the process where the talents of the children begin to bloom and see the light of day. Helping the kids cultivate their special strengths and truest talents might also involve sending them to seminars or encouraging them to read books so that they continually improve on those capacities. But the real key is to encourage them to focus on their unique gifts as early as possible and for as long as possible.”

“So that’s what lies at the heart of the Third Mastery—Focus Your Child on Greatness Not Weakness—this imperative for us as parents to kindle the highest gifts that our children possess.”

“Yup,” replied Julian in a relaxed tone. “And that’s why I asked you to come to this room today—the Michelangelo Room. He was quite an impressive man, I’ve discovered.”

“Don’t tell me that the sages taught you all you know about Michelangelo?”

“No, I actually learned about this man’s extraordinary talents on my own through reading. And one of his organizing principles as an artist was his realization that many magnificent masterpieces began as raw blocks of marble. But through daily carving and sculpting with a steady hand and a dedicated eye, through endless industry and toil, this raw material could evolve into a sight to behold, a true work of art.”

“A true wonder of the world,” I added.

“Right. Michelangelo once said that ‘The marble not yet carved can hold the form of every thought the greatest artist has.’ But the real key to his greatness, I believe,” observed Julian, “was his remarkable capacity to *execute on his vision*. He was a man of action. He recognized that it is not enough to dream big dreams and to think great thoughts. *The heart of life mastery lies in doing whatever it takes to bring the dream to life.*”

“It’s just like you were saying earlier—everything begins as a vision; then it falls to the dreamer to make it all happen.”

“Yes, Catherine. And this same thinking needs to be applied to your role as a parent. Your children are like blocks of marble, raw in talent and rich in potential. But you must be like a great artist, sculpting, shaping and defining them through the leadership that you show.”

“So that they can then lead the lives they are destined to live.”

“Correct. So that they can live their best lives.”

“So what kinds of practical tools and strategies do you have in store for me today, big brother?”

“Four in particular. The sages called these *The Four Disciplines of Personal Greatness*. And simply stated, they are: envision daily, set goals weekly, walk with giants regularly and give graciously.”

“They sound intriguing. Was it only the children of the sages who practiced these four disciplines?”

“No, Catherine, everyone in the community lived by these four virtues. They felt that if they did, they would be certain to keep evolving on a daily basis. Eventually they would come to know themselves.”

“I’m not quite sure I follow you, Julian. Are you saying that these extraordinarily enlightened people didn’t even know who they were? I’m a bit confused.”

“All of life is nothing more than a quest,” came the reply after a minute’s silent reflection. “Enlightened people know that the whole purpose of the game is to spend your life trying to discover who you really are and what your main aim in life is to be. The whole objective is to discover and then manifest your Essential Self.”

“So you’re saying the purpose in life is to discover our ‘special strengths’ and ‘true talents’?” I asked earnestly.

“That and so much more. Discovering the gifts that make you unique as a human being is only part of it. Ultimately, the game of life is an inner game, one that is played between the ears. *Deep fulfillment in life does not come from accumulating objects but from actualizing our selves*. Life isn’t about collecting nice objects, although there’s nothing wrong with having them. But material pursuits shouldn’t be the main purpose that drives your days. If it is, if you sacrifice time with your family and time developing yourself for time spent chasing objects, one day you will end up in a very sad state. See, Catherine, through my own struggles and setbacks in life, I’ve come to the realization that *happiness in life does not come from getting, it comes from being*.”

“Can you elaborate on that a little more please? Actually, I’ve been thinking about this issue almost daily. I’d love for you to shed some more light on it for me.”

“Sure. What I’m saying is that the real joy of life lies in peeling back the layers of the onion.”

“What? I asked you to shed some light on the subject, not to plunge me further into darkness,” I replied with a grin.

“Human beings are like onions. In the center rests our highest selves, the people that we truly are. Our primary duty as people is to do all the inner work required—to peel back all the layers—until we discover our Essential Selves—our best selves. Having the right cars, houses and clothes is completely meaningless if you haven’t yet caught a glimpse of the person who you meant to be. *So stop trying to get more in life and try to be more for life. That’s where lasting happiness lies.*”

“But I thought you said that the ultimate purpose in life is to give—to make a difference in the lives of others through the value that we add?”

“Splendid point. You really have been doing lots of deep thinking. I’m so pleased that my time with you is time well spent. Yes, Catherine, the ultimate purpose of life is to make this world a better place through the lives we touch. *The purpose of life really is a life of purpose. But in order to be in a position to add real value to other people and contribute to the world as best as you can, you must first come to know who you really are as a human being.* Most people have no sense of their Essential Selves or of the fundamental makeup of their characters. They’ve never made the time to get deep into the DNA of their lives and figure out what drives them. Most of us plod through life responding to whatever the currents of the day blow our way. We never really get into the game. But wise people—true leaders—are very different in the way they conduct themselves. They make time for themselves and the activities that involve their inner work. And by doing this, they come to know themselves.”

“All of the philosophers have said this, haven’t they?” I chimed in. “All their statements like ‘know thyself’ and ‘the unexamined life is not worth living.’”

“Exactly. All of the planet’s greatest thinkers have realized that we must do inner work to figure out who we really are. Only then can we create magnificent lives. Here, follow me. There’s something else I want to show you in the museum.”

Julian then grabbed my hand and hurried me into an adjacent exhibit hall.

A sign at its entrance read “The T.S. Eliot Collection.”

“This room contains many of T.S. Eliot’s most famous works. I was in here early this morning and read a quote on one of these open pages. It’s in his own handwriting! Here, read it,” Julian said excitedly, pointing to a yellowed page in an old book that was encased in glass for protection. The quotation read:

We must not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time.

I marveled at the power of those words. Finally, I got what Julian was saying. I mean finally, I *really* got it. We are born into perfection. Everything we need to live glorious lives is not on the outside. It’s on the inside. What Julian was trying to tell me was that anyone who spends their life chasing material things in the pursuit of success is sorely misguided. Happiness does not lie at the end of that road, misery does. What my brother was telling me, in his own inimitable way, was that *the way to an extraordinary life lies in exploring ourselves, in learning of our greatest capacities and in understanding who we fundamentally are as people. Then, equipped with this essential knowledge, we can go out into the world to do what we have been wired to do and create the goodness that we have been placed here to create.* At that moment, a switch within me was turned on. Something deep inside of me had finally clicked. I realized that for my life to change in a fundamental way, I had to change in a fundamental way. I vowed, from the deepest recess of my heart, that I would never again sacrifice hours of my life *getting* the objects I wanted. I promised myself that from that day onwards, the focus of my life would be *becoming* the person I knew I could be.

“So back to *The Four Disciplines of Personal Greatness*,” Julian said with his usual enthusiasm.

“That will help the kids live their best lives,” I interjected.

“Believe me, Catherine, these four ideas will help *you* too. But yes, teaching them to Porter and Sarita will cause profound shifts in the way they conduct themselves and help them develop into the kind of adults we all dream of our children becoming. And speaking of dreaming, I’ll segue elegantly into the first discipline—Envision Daily—which is all about using our creative imagination to manifest our thoughts into reality.”

“Sounds kind of esoteric for me, Julian.”

“Actually, like so much of the philosophy I’ve shared with you, it’s immensely practical. The discipline of daily envisioning is all about the power of visualization and how we can improve the way we do things by

creating mental templates of the way we wish to be on the drawing boards of our imaginations. I suggest that when you have a little time, you read a book called *Peak Performance* by Charles Garfield, Ph.D., that details how Olympic athletes apply the process of visualization to gain competitive advantages they would never have previously enjoyed. Through regular use of this technique, they are able to tap hidden reserves of potential and perform at the highest level in their chosen sport. I cannot think of even one elite athlete who does not know of and use visualization as part of their training process. By seeing their ideal result in their mind's eye and rehearsing this successful outcome over and over, the internal wiring of their brains becomes predisposed to manifesting that success during the competition.”

“Amazing.”

“It truly is. Now here’s my point: if every elite athlete uses the technique of creative envisioning to help them perform at their peak, why shouldn’t we share this powerful technique with our children so they too can live at the level of their potential?”

“Agreed. So how can I teach this to Porter and Sarita—or are they too young right now?”

“I know of three-year-olds who have been effectively trained in the art of visualization. Hey, let’s not forget who the best dreamers on the planet are.”

“Young kids?”

“Absolutely. Watch three- or four-year-olds at play. They pretend they are scaling Mount Everest or walking on the moon. They live out of their imaginations and place no limits on what they can do or be. Teaching young children visualization involves nothing more than giving them a more formal structure for the dreaming that they are already doing.”

“That makes complete sense to me.”

“I knew it would. And never forget what Aristotle once observed: ‘The Soul never thinks without a mental picture.’”

“Fascinating.”

“So here’s what I suggest you do, Catherine. Every week or two, take the kids out to that great park in the neighborhood and sit underneath one of those huge oak trees. Ask them to close their eyes and breath deeply. This will help them still their minds and grow more relaxed so that the images they generate can take root more deeply.”

“Okay, then what do I do?”

“Well, next begin to imagine yourselves living with the new capacity or

ability you hope to have. I'll give you an example."

"Great. I think I need one."

"Let's say that you want the kids to have more courage—to be fearless. Once they are in a relaxed state sitting under that tree, ask them to imagine themselves acting in a brave way. Maybe encourage them to envision themselves climbing a tall mountain. Perhaps you could suggest that they picture a scene that has them standing up to the class bully. Whatever it is, the main thing is to encourage them to start flexing their imaginations and rewiring their brains so that the fears that are holding them back come to be replaced by the strengths that will push them forward."

"Could I use the process of creative envisioning to help Porter excel at his piano lessons?"

"Of course," replied Julian, putting his arm around me as we walked into the main hall of the museum. "In his relaxed state, tell him to imagine himself seated at the piano in the living room. Get him to really believe the scene is taking place. The more vivid the picture he creates, the more powerful the results that will follow. It's also essential that he bring his emotions into the picture. *What gets emotionalized gets realized.* Emotions drive actions. He should really *feel* that he is playing the piano and performing at the highest level he is capable of. Get him to experience what it would be like to play those lovely pieces he has been working on flawlessly. Encourage him to feel how he would feel when you, Jon and Sarita clap wildly for him as he completes his playing at a whole new level. Allow him to connect with the happiness he will enjoy as his teacher praises and congratulates him on the remarkable abilities he is displaying."

"How long should this visualization go on for, Julian?"

"Good question. For adults, I would almost say the longer the better. But with the kind of busy lives most people live, a twenty-minute session of visualization is fine. For children, even five minutes can be helpful. I guess the main point is to give them this tool. Let them know that there is a way that they can eliminate their weaknesses, improve their behaviors, conquer their fears and grow into peak performers. Let them know that as they grow, there exists this tool that will help them deal with difficulties, create a positive in the face of a negative and experience joy where others are feeling pain. It will then fall on their shoulders, as they mature, to master this technique and make it a part of the way they live."

"Okay. I think I'll go on the Internet later tonight and download a few more articles on visualization. I really want to learn more about the process

and share all its benefits with the kids. It will be one of my goals for this month.”

“Ah, again a perfect entry point to the next discipline,” laughed Julian. “The universe really takes care of things in such a splendid way.”

“Really?”

“Sure. The Second Discipline of Personal Greatness is to set goals weekly. Goal setting is such an important discipline to foster within your children, Catherine. Having clearly defined goals offers so many benefits. First, setting goals restores a sense of focus in our lives, lives that have become complicated by too many options. In this age we live in, there are simply far too many things to do at any given time. There are many distractions competing for our attention. Goals clarify our desires and help us to focus on only those activities that will lead us to where we want to go. I am reminded of the words of those extraordinary jugglers known as the Flying Karamazov Brothers who said: ‘It doesn’t matter how you get there when you don’t know where you’re going.’”

“That’s a good one,” I observed with a smile.

“Setting clearly defined goals provides you with a framework for wiser choices. If you know exactly where you are going, it becomes far easier to select those activities that will get you there. The alternative is to let life act on you and give you an existence that you just don’t want. ‘If you don’t get what you like,’ noted George Bernard Shaw, ‘then you’ll be forced to like what you get.’ Writing down your goals clarifies your intentions and, as you know so well from all your success with BraveLife.com, the first step to realizing your vision is defining it. Essentially, setting goals means that your days will be governed by your life’s mission rather than by your moods.”

“Nicely said, Julian,” I offered encouragingly.

“Another reason goal setting is so important is that it keeps you alert to new opportunities. The discipline of setting and then reviewing your personal, professional, social and spiritual goals every week—Sunday night works best—almost magnetizes your mind to seek out opportunities for their fulfillment. I’ve also found that by setting goals, I become committed to a very specific course of action. It becomes much easier to connect with the inner fire that burns within us and to engage the wellspring of motivation that exists within all of us. When I set goals, my life becomes filled with the promise of a richer existence. No matter how bad a person’s life has become at a certain moment and no matter how sad and disillusioned they might feel right now, they can lift their spirits up and feel so much better through the simple act of taking out

a piece of paper and writing down their dreams upon it. I guess I feel that setting worthy goals is all about kindling the slumbering passion within us.”

“Really?”

“Really. Setting big, juicy goals awakens the passion within us, passion that most of us have stifled as we have grown older and more cynical about the world. Goal setting reconnects us to the sense of limitless possibility that we knew as children, and it reminds us that we really can have almost anything we want in life if our commitment to our aims runs deep enough. As Sheila Graham said: ‘You can have anything you want if you want it desperately enough. You must want it with an exuberance that erupts through the skin and joins the energy that created the world.’”

“That’s a lovely quote. I’d love to connect with the energy that created this world, Julian.”

“Trust me, little sister, that’s exactly what you are now in the process of doing,” replied Julian in a mystical way.

“Oh, another key point about goal setting is to ensure that you *never leave the site of a goal without taking some action towards its advancement.*”

“Excellent point,” I offered with appreciation. “That’s one of the rules we have at BraveLife.com. If anyone comes up with a new idea or an important innovation, they must do something to put the idea into play. It’s not enough to just come up with it. The employee must act on it. That might mean making a phone call to explore the new idea’s viability. It might mean writing up a one-page proposal and submitting it to me. It might mean making a presentation to the rest of the team. But the key is to get the idea into play. To get some momentum behind it. Otherwise, we all know that life will get in the way and the idea will die a quick death.”

“I agree completely, Catherine. Each and every person on the planet comes up with ideas that have the potential to revolutionize our lives. Some choose to act on them and in doing so create great lives. Others choose to sit on them—and resign themselves to the ordinary.”

“You make goal setting sound like such a magical process, Julian.”

“Well, as a Harvard-trained lawyer, I’m always reluctant to use the term ‘magic.’ But I have learned through my own experience that goal setting works wonders. It makes no sense not to become excellent at this process and to teach it to your children. Sure, they might be too young right now to have concrete professional goals and the like. But the key is to expose them to the process and let them see for themselves how well it works. It’s all part of your duty as a parent to let the ‘bigness’ of your children shine through.”

“The bigness of my children?” I asked, struck by the power of this new phrase.

“Sure, another one of your primary duties as a parent is to make sure that your kids don’t fall into the trap nearly every adult on earth falls into.”

“Which is?” I inquired, my attention completely captured.

“Most of us live small lives. We think small. We act small and we play small.”

“Adults play small?”

“We do. We don’t step out onto the skinny branch of life and take bold risks. We think the same thoughts, do the same things and act the same way every day. We live our lives in an illusory zone of security, believing it is the safest place to be.”

“When it’s actually the *least* secure place to be,” I chimed in, proud of the lessons I had learned through my time with my brother.

“Exactly. Life is truly lived when you enter the zone of the unknown. We are fully alive only in those moments when we are stretching ourselves beyond our normal limits and reaching for the stars—in some way or another. Playing small is the road to a mediocre life. Letting our bigness shine through is the path to mastery.”

“And risks are a way to live a bigger life?”

“Yes, Catherine, so long as they are wise, calculated risks. No one is suggesting that you teach your children to do foolish things. My point of wisdom is that you can lead them to an understanding of the fact that they need to be willing to dare more often. They must listen to the call of their hearts regularly. If they get a big idea that will help them improve one of the core areas of their lives, they must have the courage to act on it. Remember, being a great leader in life is all about taking action.”

“So teach them to take smart risks and dare more often. Right?”

“Yes, and back to the Second Discipline of Personal Greatness—make sure they develop the ritual of setting goals on a weekly basis, even if it’s just a goal or two relating to what they want to see manifested in their lives over the coming week. One very specific suggestion I have for you and the kids is that you work with them to create a Dream Book.”

“What’s a Dream Book?” I asked.

“It’s an empty writing pad that each of you can keep to fill with your goals. Think of it as a vessel within which you and the kids can capture your

desires. You can list each and every one of your goals and dreams in it and record your highest aspirations. You can paste pictures of your heroes, the things you want and the places you wish to visit within it. You can jot down great quotes and inspirational words throughout it. It's an excellent way to get your kids into goal setting and, more importantly, goal getting."

"I love the idea, Julian! A truly splendid idea. I feel motivated already."

"Here, little sister," said Julian, grabbing my hand and leading me into a tiny room that I had never noticed before. The title "Gallery of the Greats" was marked over the entrance in bronze lettering.

"I've never been in here before," I remarked as we passed a series of breathtakingly beautiful and lifelike portraits of many of history's greatest women and men.

"It's brand new, actually. I just discovered this room myself. I can spend hours in here, just feeling the energy of these great human beings and reflecting on the way they conducted their lives. I always leave feeling inspired and committed to the path that I am on."

"Does coming in here have something to do with the Third Discipline of Personal Greatness?"

"You bet it does," replied Julian as he did a quick twirl and punched his fists into the air. "Oooh, I love this discipline!" he shouted.

"Okay, okay—let's hear it."

"The Third Discipline of Personal Greatness, a discipline I know will have a wonderful impact on Porter and Sarita's lives, is to 'walk with the giants regularly.'"

"Now you know I need some clarification on that one," I remarked, fascinated, as I crossed my arms and sat down on the single bench in the center of the room.

"'Walking with the Giants' is all about spending time with history's greatest people. Letting the most remarkable people of this world become your mentors of the mind. Would you like to spend some time with Mother Teresa later tonight?" asked Julian with a twinkle in his eye.

"You bet."

"How about relaxing with Nelson Mandela or reflecting with Gandhi?"

"Count me in," I offered, not quite sure where Julian was going with this line of questioning.

"You see, the gift of the knowledge age we live in is that you and I, and

everyone around us, have the privilege to spend time, each and every day if we so choose, with the greatest thinkers who have walked on earth. With nothing more than a library card, you can expose your children to the innermost thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi. With nothing more than an Internet connection, you can get deep into the mind of Helen Keller or Ben Franklin or Confucius or Albert Schweitzer. You can find out what made these leaders laugh and cry. You can discover how they handled adversity. You can learn the organizing principles by which they lived out their lives. To me that's amazing. We can befriend the world's most amazing people—whenever we want—through books, tapes, videos and other educational media. And here's the real key, Catherine: in spending time with history's wisest human beings, you cannot help but come away from the experience a fundamentally better person. It makes me think of the words of author Dorothea Brande who remarked: 'I found the idea which set me free. I was not consciously looking for it. I was engaged on a piece of research in a different field. But I came across a sentence in a book I was reading which was so illuminating that I put the book aside to consider all of the ideas suggested by that [one sentence]. When I picked the book up again, I was a different person.' Associating with great minds is definitely one of the best ways to improve the quality of your own mind. It's like when you play someone who is better than you in tennis."

"You always play better than you've ever played," I replied, having experienced this phenomenon on more occasions than I cared to recall.

"Right. So when you read the books of our world's mental, philosophical, scientific and spiritual giants on a regular basis, the way you think and act will improve correspondingly. You will rise to their level. You will find yourself thinking thoughts you have never thought before and behaving in positive ways that just might startle you. So carve out some time every week or so to expose Porter and Sarita to the works and the thoughts of the giants among us—men and women who have made major contributions to our civilization. Introduce them to the geniuses of our past as well as the leaders of our future. When you are driving them to soccer practice or ballet lessons, play compact discs of the biographies of Einstein or Mozart or Thomas Edison. You can be certain that their influence will play a significant role in the shaping of the characters, inspiring your two wonderful children to be more than they could otherwise have been. As Thomas Bailey Aldrich wrote: 'A person is known by the company their mind keeps.'"

"And Gandhi once said 'I will not let anyone walk through my mind with their dirty feet,'" I added, having recently read the autobiography of this great leader.

"Lovely, Catherine. He clearly understood that what you put into your

mind affects the way your life will unfold.”

Julian continued. “I find my companions in the ‘books of the giants’ that I read. You see, little sister, to me great books represent hope. They represent the promise of a better life. They help me envision a wiser and better world. And that makes books, and the daily habit of reading them, one of life’s most important pursuits.”

“Since Porter and Sarita are still so young, maybe I can begin to collect these great books you speak of. I still have to travel a little bit for my work with BraveLife.com and often have a few hours to kill at the airport. They always seem to have excellent bookshops.”

“Of course,” responded Julian. “Very successful people often fly. And very successful people always read. Booksellers have figured that out and put their best selections in those bookstores.”

“I could visit some of those great shops and find some amazing books that can inspire and influence the kids as they continue to grow.”

“That’s a wonderful idea, Catherine,” replied Julian. “In those stacks of books you will find gems of wisdom about raising children who are strong of mind, body and character. You will discover books that will help you balance career and family. You will see books that will inspire you to be your best self and books that will illuminate the path that you are destined to follow. For every possible question that you may have, you will find a book overflowing with answers. All it takes is the initiative to find the right books and then the discipline to read them.”

“Say, Julian, speaking of discipline, what are your thoughts on disciplining children? That’s always been a challenge for me in my home life, even though I have never had any problem disciplining employees at BraveLife.com. I find that when it comes to my kids, I find it hard to say no.”

“The essence of parenting well, when it comes to discipline, is to always follow the high road rather than the easy road. Always do what your heart and conscience tell you is the right thing to do, based on your morals and on your values, rather than what you might feel is the easy thing to do in that given moment.”

“It goes back to that point you made earlier. Leadership is all about doing what’s right.”

“Yup. And you also need to remember that discipline is a gift.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Many parents believe that constantly giving in to the demands of their

children and never saying no shows their children how much they love them. But what they forget is that children need clear boundaries. They crave consistent standards that give their lives structure. Though they may not tell you this, when parents enforce limits and ensure that family rules are followed, these limits make children feel loved. Employing a reasonable amount of discipline also builds character within your kids, since they are given a true sense of what is right and wrong in every given circumstance.”

“That’s so true, Julian. Even though I never liked the way Mom and Dad kept us in line, secretly I knew it was a sign of their love for us. I think I’ve been letting Porter and Sarita get away with too much for too long. I think I must be a little stricter with them.”

“Just don’t overdo it, Catherine. It’s all about balancing the importance of discipline with the importance of letting children be children. And also remember, when it comes to any form of punishment, always correct the behavior rather than the child.”

“Elaborate, please.”

“It’s so important not to damage children’s self-esteem. When they do something wrong, make sure that you tell them that it was *their behavior* that was bad—not them. It is so important for you to give them unconditional love and let them know that you adore them no matter what they do. Having said this, there are certain rules and limits that need to be enforced. Your children should know that whenever they step outside of these limits, they will be disciplined.”

“That makes sense, Julian. It is true that the self-esteem of children is fragile. Words that they hear when they are young stay with them for many years into their futures.”

“Quite true. I’d also suggest that you never discipline your children when you are angry.”

“Really?” I wondered, genuinely surprised at this kernel of advice.

“Yes, the whole purpose of discipline is to help a child channel her energies in more appropriate ways. It should never serve as an outlet for a parent’s frustrations. Never use it as a tool for the release of your stress, a way to make you feel better when you are angry at your child for some misdeed. Save it—and honor it—as a tool for the character development of the kids. Only then will it have the effect you hope it will.”

“And the final discipline, the Fourth Discipline of Personal Greatness, is the discipline of giving graciously. This is all about the importance of teaching your children the gift that is giving with an open hand and an open

heart. Remember that *the hand the gives is the hand that gathers and that giving begins the receiving process*. He or she that gives the most wins. This is one of the timeless laws of humanity that we forget all too often. Teach Porter and Sarita the importance of remaining focused on helping others and appreciating people for the value they add to the world. Make it a practice to give the gift of praise to someone who deserves it on a regular basis. When you visit one of your friend's houses with the children, always bring a gift so the kids pick up on this habit. It does not have to be elaborate. It is the thought that truly counts. It could be something as simple as the gift of a fresh flower from your backyard or a card that the children have made out of construction paper. It could be the gift of a warm hug or a big smile. Soon they too will get into the discipline of giving. Soon they too will realize how great it feels to share with others. They will connect to a higher part of themselves and experience great growth in the process. Once they discover how powerful it is to be kind and giving on a daily basis, they will have learned one of life's most significant lessons."

"Thanks, big brother," I replied with heartfelt conviction. "I love you."

"I love you too, Catherine. Oh, before I forget, I have a gift of my own for you."

Julian reached into the pocket of the pants he was wearing and pulled out a rumpled napkin that bore traces of mustard.

"I know it doesn't look like much, but the words I have written on this napkin are worth their weight in gold. I suggest you have them printed on a plaque that you can put up in a place at home where everyone can read it. Do you mind if I read them to you?" requested Julian, growing emotional, tears filling his eyes.

"Please go ahead," I said with gentleness.

"I don't know why these words resonate with me as strongly as they do. I connect so deeply to them, and they offer me such guidance. I guess they capture the essence of the life I dream of living and speak to the person I hope to be."

Julian read the words, a quote of Willian Penn:

I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again.

As Julian and I strolled out of the museum arm-in-arm it started to rain ever so slightly.

“In India, it is believed that a light sprinkling of rain is an omen of good things to come,” said Julian in a voice so soft I could barely hear it. He then looked up at the sky as the raindrops danced off his face. With his eyes closed and a titanic-sized smile on his face, Julian paused for a few moments and then yelled out in a voice so loud it stopped people in their tracks: “It’s a great time to be alive!”

With a mind filled with rich leadership lessons and a heart more open than ever before, I could not help but agree.



The Fourth Mastery of the Family Leader

To Be an Excellent Parent, Become an Excellent Person

Life's like a play: it's not the length but the excellence of the acting that matters.

Seneca

The only devils in the world are those running in our own hearts. That is where the battle should be fought.

Mahatma Gandhi

It was a very strange message. Miss Williamson, my reclusive neighbor—the one who lived with fourteen cats and the one who I had jokingly suggested had a crush on Julian—had left me a voicemail message requesting that I turn up in the garden she tended behind her house. Even more odd was the fact that she asked that I be there at 5 a.m. the following morning. “Trust me, Catherine,” she muttered in her squeaky voice, “there’s a gift waiting for you right by the tomato patch.”

Now I have to tell you that calling Miss Williamson an eccentric does not do the woman any justice. She was one of the most unique people I had ever met, and I could never understand why she lived as she did. But she was a loyal neighbor and she always offered me a smile when I passed her in the neighborhood, so I called her back and told her that I’d be happy to show up in the garden at the desired time.

Early the next morning, after showering and softly kissing Jon and the kids, I crept out the side door and walked down the street. As I made my way across Miss Williamson’s front lawn, three cats jumped out from behind a shrub and scared the living daylights out of me. I just stood there for a few seconds, startled, my heart beating madly, out of control. Quickly pulling myself back together, I carefully walked around the house to the backyard and then into the large garden that she devoted many of her waking hours to. I couldn’t believe what I saw.

Right next to the tomato patch was a towering scarecrow that appeared to be over six feet high. It was covered with a frilly cloth that I guessed Miss Williamson had bought at a garage sale, and was standing in one of those bizarre yoga postures I’d observed yogis taking up in documentaries Jon, the kids and I had watched on the Discovery Channel. Equally inexplicable was the large banner that ran from the scarecrow’s body to Miss Williamson’s

back porch. On it was inscribed a quote by Mark Twain, written in bright red lettering that seemed to leap off the plastic background in the golden rays of the early morning sun. The quote read simply:

If everybody was satisfied with himself, there would be no heroes.

And breaking the stillness of the dawn was music, loud music that was playing from a boombox that someone had strategically placed on the picnic table nearby. The song was unmistakable. It was the great Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World." I just stood there, basking in the positive energy of this extraordinary sight. I had no idea what was going on. I had no idea why I had been summoned here. And to be completely honest with you, I didn't really care. Something miraculous had been growing in my life since Julian had returned, and I was just so happy to be perceiving this, day by day. This was just another experience that I knew would make a brilliant story for my grandkids.

"Miss Williamson? Are you here?" I yelled, trying to make my voice heard above Louis's crooning.

When I received no response, I tried again.

"Hello! Miss Williamson, are you out here?"

Again, no reply. Just Louis completing the song with the words "I said to myself... what a wonderfuuuuul woorld."

Finally the garden was silent, and I made my way towards the tomato patch and the hilariously attired scarecrow. All of a sudden, a booming, deep voice sang out "I say to myself, this is a wonderful world." I looked around but I could see no one around me. As I continued along the garden path I heard the voice again. "Wonderful world!" was all that rang out this time around. The sound seemed to be coming from the vicinity of the scarecrow, right next to the tomato patch. "Maybe this has something to do with the gift Miss Williamson promised me in her voicemail," I thought.

As I drew nearer, the word "wonderful" appeared to emanate from the scarecrow's lips, lips that were nearly masked by the billowy black cloth that covered the rest of its face and circled its head. This charade had Julian's name written all over it, but I knew he wasn't here because he was vacationing in Connecticut, where he had signed up for a seven-day personal growth retreat.

"I need to get even deeper into myself," he remarked as we dropped him off at the airport.

Just as I reached the scarecrow, the words "If everybody was satisfied

with himself, there would be no heroes” belted out of the boombox. I felt a little scared. Who was behind this setup and why would they involve me in it?

Suddenly the scarecrow started to move. Slowly at first—then it started to wave its arms and legs in a frenzy. Soon it was twirling round and round in the tomato patch looking like a whirling dervish. After falling to the ground in dizziness, the scarecrow came to rest. Then it started to laugh. And laugh. And laugh.

Clearly there was a man under the disguise, and clearly it was a man that I knew. I reached down and pulled the cloth off the scarecrow’s face. Sure enough, the Prince of Pranks had struck again. It was Julian.

“I thought you were in Connecticut reconnecting with your highest self?” I said in mock anger, quite aware that a smile was growing on my face. “Don’t you have anything better to do with your time than to set up these scenarios and scare the heck out of me?”

“I quite enjoy these pranks, little sista,” replied Julian. “Things get kinda lonely from time to time when you wake up with the sun every morning.”

“Well now, why don’t you tell me what this lesson is all about. I can’t believe you recruited poor Miss Williamson for this practical joke. She’s almost ninety years old, you know.”

“She loved the idea and thinks I’m hilarious,” responded Julian as he looked up to the balcony of Miss Williamson’s second-floor bedroom.

“Hi, Julian,” she bellowed, leaning on the railing in her housecoat in between laughs. “Boy, you are good. That was one of the funniest things I’ve seen in a long time. C’mon in for a cup of tea after you’re finished with Catherine. I’d love to hear more about your adventures in India. Ta ta, handsome,” she concluded in a sensual voice I’d never heard before.

Julian just winked at me.

“Still the charmer,” I noted.

“Hey, she’s a lovely woman and besides, she brews the best chamomile tea I’ve ever tasted.”

“But seriously,” I said, “I thought you were at your spiritual retreat. How come you’re back?”

“I know it’s not the most responsible thing I’ve ever done, Catherine, and I apologize for that, but my intuition told me that I had to share the Fourth Mastery of the Family Leader with you sooner rather than later. Since my time with the sages up in Sivana, I’ve grown far more aware of what they referred to as the ‘silent whisperings from within.’”

“Oh, spare me all this mumbo jumbo, Julian,” I responded, surprised at my impatience, which I attributed to the ungodly hour.

“I’m completely serious. We all have a hidden ability to detect the truth in all circumstances in our lives. When we do all the inner work necessary to connect with our highest selves, this power—what most people know as intuition—becomes very obvious. My intuition told me that you needed to hear what I have to tell you about the Fourth Mastery far more than I needed a week of reflection and personal development. And so I’m here, at your service,” Julian joked as he bent down and mimicked a butler bowing to his boss.

“And do tell me what all this stuff about ‘If everybody was satisfied with himself, there would be no heroes’ has to do with me.”

“It has everything to do with you, Catherine. The fact that we are here in a garden has everything to do with you. The fact that I arranged for Mr. Armstrong’s famous song to be played has everything to do with you.”

“Get to the point, big brother,” I prodded.

“The Fourth Mastery of the Family Leader is about becoming the person you were meant to be. It’s about becoming your best self and realizing the full potential of your mind, body and spirit so you can be a great leader in your family. It’s about becoming a hero in your life,” noted Julian with a gentle look.

“What is the Fourth Mastery of the Family Leader, Julian?” I asked good-naturedly, my mood improving as my interest in this next life lesson grew.

“It can be stated simply—like all great principles of effective living. *To Be an Excellent Parent, You Must Become an Excellent Person*. This mastery is all about self-renewal and self-regeneration.”

“I’m not really familiar with that last term you used.”

“What would you think of a corporation that spent no money or time on research and development?” came his precise reply.

“Not much. I certainly would never invest in it,” I said.

“Right. Neither would I.”

“Oh, don’t tell me you’re playing the stock market again, Julian. I can just see the headlines now: ‘Millionaire lawyer turns enlightened monk and makes a killing in the market. With his riches, he buys a Ferrari,’” I giggled.

“My days of investing in the market are over. But my days of investing in myself have just begun. And it’s the best investment I’ve ever made. See, you

would not sink a penny into a company that paid no attention to improving on a daily basis, and yet most people in the world we live in fail to spend even one hour a month developing themselves. That's why I love the saying, 'If everybody was satisfied with himself, there would be no heroes' so much. *The people who really get on in this world and live big lives—personally, professionally or spiritually—are those who are never satisfied with themselves. They are constantly pushing the envelope of their potential and growing stronger, wiser and more effective.*"

"But isn't there something to be said for being satisfied with yourself and liking the person that you are?"

"I'm not saying that you should not love who you are and be grateful for all your personal gifts. I'm simply saying that we should not fall into the trap of being complacent. More importantly, I am saying that we need to continually strive to make our lives wonderful. Wonder-full," Julian emphasized.

"Ah," I sighed. "Now I get why you played that music and sang that song."

"Now you're cookin'," Julian replied, kissing me on the cheek.

"I still don't know why we are here in the garden though."

"The garden is a perfect metaphor for the idea of self-renewal and personal regeneration. It's the ideal example of how nature rewards care, cultivation and attention. Miss Williamson spends most of her days in here, tending to these vegetables, ensuring that they are properly cared for and given the best environment in which to grow. And 'as she sows, so does she reap.' She puts a great deal of time in and nature inevitably yields a rich harvest. It's the same for people. Taking time out of your busy schedule every day for a little self-renewal and personal regeneration will yield positive results in every area of your life."

"What exactly do you mean by self-renewal, Julian? Are you talking about making time to exercise and eat well?"

"That and so very much more." Julian paused and then led me to the picnic table. As he poured me a glass of fresh tomato juice, he continued his discourse on the Fourth Mastery.

"Remember when you were on that ill-fated flight?"

"Sad to say I do," I responded softly.

"Think about the instructions of the flight attendants."

"Well, they told us to remain calm. Not to panic. To put our heads on our

legs.”

“What did they say about the oxygen masks?”

“Well, every time I’m on a plane, the flight attendants tell us to do the same thing.”

“Which is?”

“Essentially, they tell us to make sure we get the oxygen masks up to our own faces first before we try and help other people with their masks.”

“Perfect answer,” noted Julian, happy with my reply. “That’s exactly what the Fourth Mastery of the Family Leader and the concept of self-renewal is all about.”

“I’m still a little lost,” I confessed as I began to sip the juice.

“Before you can help others, you must help yourself. To be a better parent, you must first become a better person. To manage your family in an excellent way, you must first manage yourself in an excellent way. What I’m really saying is that leadership on the outside begins with leadership on the inside.”

“I’d agree with that,” I observed.

“You can’t do great things for your kids unless you first think great thoughts,” continued Julian, clearly energized and rolling along like a Baptist preacher.

“True,” I sang out.

“You can’t do good in your life unless you feel good.”

“True again,” I said with a nod.

“And you cannot really love your children unless you first love yourself,” Julian wailed.

I fell completely silent. That last statement hit me hard. Then it moved me to tears. Julian’s wisdom pierced my soul. He was so correct. How could I really give love to the children and to Jon if I had not discovered self-love? How could a human being really show love to another unless she first found love for herself? What my brother was telling me was that before I could ever hope to become the kind of parent Porter and Sarita deserved, I needed to get serious about developing myself and “leading from the inside out.”

“And the funny thing is that not only will a deep commitment to self-renewal and personal development make you a more effective parent, it will

also make you a far happier person. As John F. Kennedy once said: ‘Happiness is the fullest use of one’s powers along lines of excellence.’”

“Okay, Julian, so what kinds of things can I do to renew myself and grow into a better, wiser and more complete human being?”

“One key is to start early,” came the swift reply.

“Please explain.”

“If you want to become a better person, I suggest you start by joining the Five O’clock Club, just like you did today.”

“You want me to get up at 5 a.m. every day of the week?” I exclaimed. “Are you crazy?”

“The sages rose at 4 a.m., but five will do just fine for you, Catherine. By winning the battle of the bed, by putting mind over mattress and getting up early, you will get far more living out of life. Getting up at five will give you a psychological edge. The rest of the world is sleeping while you are up, doing all those things that the rest of humanity knows are important to do for a great life but never has the time to do.”

“Like what?”

“Like watching the sun come up. Like walking in the woods. Like reading from the great books. As I mentioned to you earlier, reading a little bit each day will change your life. Reading inspiring, uplifting books for perhaps thirty minutes at the beginning of your day will infuse every remaining minute of your day with all the wisdom you connected with while others slept. It will improve the way you interact with the children. It will improve the way you interact with Jon. It will improve your relations with your employees. It will even make you kinder to complete strangers. As Judah ibn-Tibbon observed so sagely: ‘Make thy books thy companions. Let thy cases and shelves be thy pleasure grounds and gardens.’”

“Powerful statement.”

“Imagine having an extra hour or two every single morning for the rest of your life. Reserve that time for your inner work and watch your life soar to a completely new level. Use the time to meditate or visualize your ideal day or even your ideal life. Listen to lovely music to soothe your soul or spend the time cultivating a garden and communing with nature like our dear old friend Miss Williamson. As a matter of fact, she told me yesterday that she has woken up at 5 a.m. every day for over seventy years and it’s the single best habit she has developed in her life.”

“I didn’t know that.”

“Catherine, everyone on this planet—and I mean everyone— has a story to tell and a lesson to teach. The problem is that most of us are so busy—and so full of our own ‘stuff’ that we don’t take the time to learn from those around us. I’m not faulting you, little sister. You have a busy career and a lovely family that demand your attention. I’m just reminding you to remember that a great life is made up of great relationships. If you want to be happier in life, get more connected to the people around you and watch the joy you feel grow. *Fulfillment in life does not come from collecting more things. It comes from feeling more love.*”

“I agree totally, Julian. These past few months have been the best times of my life. I’ve never been closer to Porter and Sarita. I’ve never felt more loved by Jon. I’ve never felt so appreciated by my staff. And I’ve never been so grateful for you. I’ve got a long way to go, but I know I’m headed in the right direction.”

“No doubt about it. You are.”

“So what else can I do to renew myself so I can grow into a better person?”

“Care for the temple,” came Julian’s reply.

“The ‘temple’ being?” I wondered aloud.

“Your body is your temple,” Julian replied, removing the last vestiges of his scarecrow outfit to reveal the elegant robe that was now his trademark. “The ancient philosophers had a saying: ‘Mens sana in corpore sano.’”

“Do translate. My Latin is not what it used to be,” I said with a wink.

“It simply means that in a sound body rests a sound mind. This is such an incredibly important point of wisdom, and yet most people neglect it. Your body truly is your temple. You should come to see it as a vehicle that, when properly honored and cared for, will lead you to the greatest heights of your life. Striving for physical mastery is an excellent way to arrive at personal mastery.”

“Really?”

“Sure. Think about all the discipline it takes to get into the gym five or six times a week. Think about how hard it is to keep stretching beyond our comfort zones in terms of the levels at which we exercise, and how challenging we find the thought of working out a little harder at every session. Think about the self-resolve required to eat healthy, natural foods and drink lots of water every day when every place we go seems to offer us other temptations. But if you have the courage to respect your body—the temple

that houses the person that you are— personal mastery will not be far away. Each time you get into the gym for a workout on a day you just don't feel like exercising, you grow a little stronger as a human being. Each time you go out for a run on a cold winter's day when under the covers feels like the best place to be, you actualize your humanity just a little more. Working on improving your physical condition is a great way to improve your character and enrich the quality of your life. And not only will you improve as a person, you will improve as a parent."

"I'm not sure if I see the connection, big brother."

"Exercising regularly, eating well and taking time to relax and nourish your body will make you feel happier. It will provide you with more energy than you have ever known. It will give you greater stamina and mental toughness. It will make you more patient and loving. And you will feel more serene during the hours of your days. Wouldn't these benefits help you to be a better parent for Porter and Sarita?" Julian asked rhetorically.

"Absolutely."

"Caring for the gift that is your body will even make you a clearer, stronger thinker. And since your thoughts ultimately form your world, that benefit alone is priceless. There are 168 hours in a week. Surely each and every one of us can carve out four or five of them to care for our temples and work on mastering our physical state, even within our hectic schedules. I know you've been exercising recently and I congratulate you on your progress, but I suggest that you take it to the next level. Get even more serious about liberating your physical potential and getting into the best possible condition."

"But let me ask you, Julian—isn't an obsessive focus on making our bodies perfect unhealthy? I feel so much pressure as a woman to look a certain way, especially given the media images we are surrounded by."

"Good point. Here's the key: I'm not suggesting that one's goal in striving for physical mastery is to look more like a supermodel or a movie star. The entire purpose of the pursuit is to discover *your best you*. And arriving at that point requires you to shift from an external focus to an internal one. Stop judging your physical progress against the women you see in the fashion magazines and start measuring yourself against your previous self."

"That's a profound concept, Julian. I actually felt a tingle run down my spine when you said that."

"The great sages taught me that one. Remember the ancient Indian proverb that I told you about earlier? It said: 'There is nothing noble in being

superior to others. True nobility lies in being superior to your former self.”

“I remember it—and I love it!” I exclaimed. “That’s a far more sensible—and enlightened—approach.”

“So use your past self as your benchmark. And also remember that *the person who does not make time for exercise must eventually make time for illness.*”

“True,” I said reflectively.

“It never ceases to amaze me,” Julian continued with enormous enthusiasm, “how when we are young, we are willing to sacrifice all of our health for a little bit of wealth, and when we grow old and wise, we would be willing to sacrifice all of our wealth...”

“For a little bit of health,” I interjected.

“Exactly. And by the way, when it comes to staying in peak shape and exercising to stay fit, please remember that every time you don’t do the right thing, you fuel the habit of doing the wrong thing.”

“You lost me again.”

“Well, let me put it this way: a missed workout is much more than a missed workout.”

“C’mon, Julian, quit fooling around,” I stated.

“Okay. All I’m saying is that when you miss a workout, it’s not like you just stay at the same level you were at—you actually take a few steps back. Every time you miss a workout, you have done something to strengthen the habit of not working out. And the more workouts you miss, the stronger that negative habit grows. Miss enough workouts, and eventually that negative habit of not working out will replace the positive habit of exercising that you have worked so very hard to cultivate. So that’s why I say that every time you fail to do the right thing, you fuel the habit of doing the wrong thing. And this little principle applies throughout your life. Every time you forget to say thank you to someone, you have actually taken action to build the habit of never saying thank you. Every time you forget to return a phone call promptly, you have taken a step to develop the habit of never returning phone calls on time. Every time you tell your child you are too tired to read them a book at bedtime, you have done something to build the habit of never reading to them before they sleep. *Remember, Catherine, in life, the little things are actually the big things. And the quality of success you will experience in your life ultimately depends upon the tiny choices you make every minute of every hour of every day.*”

“I agree, Julian, it’s so easy to forget that small daily acts define how big we end up living,” I added, realizing that I was beginning to sound more and more like Julian as the days went by. “I guess that with the busy lives most of us lead, we just lose sight of The Things That Truly Count and end up focusing on the distractions. It brings to mind the words of management guru Peter Drucker—he said ‘There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all.’”

Julian began to laugh. “That’s brilliant. I’ll have to remember that one for sure. There’s such truth in that statement. It truly makes no sense to spend the most important hours of your days doing the least important things. Wise leaders—and remember, we are all leaders of one sort or another—spend their days concentrating on what is worthy and essential in life. They take the time to figure out what their highest-leverage activities are— those actions that will yield the highest return on investment— and then they devote their energies only to those things. This heightened level of concentration around real priorities is the secret of success. As the Chinese mystic Lin Yutang observed: ‘Besides the noble art of getting things done, master the noble art of leaving things undone. The wisdom of life consists in the elimination of nonessentials.’”

“What else can I do to renew myself and lead from within, Julian? Getting up early and caring for the temple are such excellent suggestions. I’d love to learn more.”

“Recording your life is the next idea I have to offer for self-mastery.”

“Here we go again! Okay, Julian,” I remarked, playing along. “What does ‘recording your life’ mean?”

“I’m encouraging you to begin keeping a journal. In doing so, you will be in a position to learn from the significant events of your life and grow wiser with each passing day. Keeping a journal allows you to let your past serve you. It provides you with a tool that will help you leverage past experiences into future successes. Writing down the events of your days, along with the lessons you have drawn from them, will give you greater self-awareness. This will allow you greater clarity about why you do the things you do and what aspects of your actions need to be changed if you hope to evolve to the next stage of living. Writing in a journal offers you the opportunity to have regular one-on-one conversations with yourself. This discipline forces you to do some deep thinking in a world where deep thinking and introspection are undervalued. It will also help you live in a more conscious and intentional way, so that you act on life as opposed to life directing you.”

“Journalling is that powerful a technique?”

“It is,” replied Julian, biting into a huge, ripe tomato from Miss Williamson’s garden.

“Shouldn’t you wash that, Julian?” I wondered.

“You worry too much, Catherine. I’ll be fine. Oh, in addition, a journal will provide you with a central place to record key insights on important issues, note key success strategies that you have learned from others or from observation and commit to all those things that you know are essential to achieving the high-quality personal, professional and spiritual life that you deserve.”

“Can you elaborate on what you mean by ‘spiritual life’?”

“Sure. Actually, there’s been a lot of confusion about the term these days. I’ll just quote the Dalai Lama who said: ‘When I use the word “spiritual” I mean basic human good qualities. These are: human affection, a sense of involvement, honesty, discipline and human intelligence properly guided by good motivation.’ See, Catherine, these are the qualities that make us human beings. And we are all born with them at birth.”

“We are?”

“Yup. We are all born as essentially spiritual beings—perfect in our imperfection. Unfortunately, as we grow, we tend to absorb negative patterns—those of our parents and then of our teachers and then of all those around us. Most people move farther and farther away from their authentic selves—the beings that they truly are—as they get older and more jaded by the world they perceive. My goal is to return to my essence and rediscover who I really am. To get back to the perfection that I once possessed before I allowed so much negativity to cloud the lens through which I see the universe.”

“Wow. You really make me think, Julian. Now getting back to the process of journalling, is a journal a diary?”

“Another excellent question. No, a diary is a place where you record events, while a journal is a place where you analyze and evaluate them.”

“Nice insight,” I applauded.

“Keeping a journal encourages you to consider what you do, why you do it and what you have learned from all that you have done. Medical researchers have even found that writing in a private journal for as little as fifteen minutes a day can improve your health, the functioning of your immune system and your overall attitude. Remember, little sister, if your life is worth thinking about—and it is—it is worth writing about.”

“Lovely advice.”

“Which brings me to my final recommendation for self-renewal and personal mastery: take a weekly sabbatical.”

“Sabbaticals are becoming popular in the business world these days. One of our managers just submitted a proposal to me in which he requests a year off to sail around the world with his family. He said he does not know who his kids are anymore and has lost his connection with his wife. Guess what my answer will be?” I smiled.

“I know. Good for you. But the kind of sabbatical that I am proposing to you is far less dramatic, but can be equally effective. In the ancient world, the seventh day of the week was called the Sabbath. It was reserved for some of life’s important but commonly neglected pursuits, including spending time with one’s family and pursuing one’s passions. The Sabbath Day provided an opportunity for hard-working people to recharge their batteries and spend a day living life more fully. As the pace of life has quickened, however, this wonderful tradition has been lost along with the tremendous personal benefits that flowed from it. I’m encouraging you to restore this ritual for your own life. Set aside six or seven hours a week to enjoy the things you love to do but never get around to doing. You might do it on the weekend or, with your flexible schedule, your sabbatical might take place on a Tuesday or a Thursday. The point is to make sure that not even one week slips by when you don’t take some time to show some loving kindness to yourself.”

“Two questions immediately come to my mind. First, should I be alone during this weekly sabbatical, and second, what kinds of things should I be doing?”

“Yes, definitely do this alone. This is your opportunity to think and to really *be*. It’s your chance to go for a solitary walk in the woods and feel the wind brush against your face. It’s your chance to stop and listen to a street musician and not worry about rushing off to your next meeting. It’s your chance to get lost in the shelves of your favorite bookstore while sipping on a cup of hot chocolate. It’s your chance to dance in a park with no shoes on or to stare at a spider’s web after it has rained—fully attentive and fully present. Really, it’s a splendid opportunity to be completely alive, each and every week for the rest of your life.”

“So a weekly sabbatical is a gift I give to myself,” I offered.

“Excellent point. It truly is. It’s your reward for a week well spent. And it will undoubtedly have the effect of keeping you happy, fresh, energized, relaxed and playful. It is an excellent use of your time, an investment that will allow you to perform at your best through the week as a parent, partner and person.”

“You know, this habit will work wonders for me, I just know it. It will give me a little breathing space. I think I’ll begin this Friday. The morning will start with a massage. Then I’ll write in my journal in some natural place. And I’ll cap the morning off with a vegetarian lunch at the new restaurant by the river.”

“Food’s excellent there,” Julian piped up. “The owner used to be a client of mine. He treats me like a prince every time I go there and loads up on the garlic, just the way I like it. Umm, umm—garlic power! Lucky I don’t have to share my room with anyone after those feasts,” he chuckled happily.

“You’re too much, Julian. I had no idea that’s where you’ve been disappearing to these days. You sometimes vanish for hours and hours,” I continued cautiously. “Sometimes we hear this sawing noise coming from your room. Other times we hear hammering. At other times, I hear you leaving in the middle of the night. I want you to have your independence, but I must confess that I really do worry about you.”

“Thanks for the concern, Catherine. I’ve got things to do and people to meet,” came the only reply I could elicit.

“Okay, back to this beautiful idea of taking a sabbatical each and every week to restore myself. Any other things I should know about it?”

“Well, I think you are on the right track. Use it as a time to play, to dance, to think, to nourish your spirit and to awaken to the wonders of life. It’s also a great chance to develop your attitude of gratitude. Take some time every week and list all the blessings in your life in your journal. Remember, what you focus on grows, what you think about expands and what you dwell on determines your destiny. The aspects of your life that you devote the most attention to are the ones that you will see blossom into even greater marvels. So stay centered on all the good in your life, and you’ll find it will grow. *Suffering in life is really nothing more than the difference between the way things are and the way you imagine they should be. If you can come to accept the blessings of your present reality without always feeling that your life is hollow as compared to the lives of others, you will have taken a quantum leap towards enlightenment.* Really commit to becoming a person who lives life in a constant state of gratitude and positive expectation. Dream big dreams, but also savor the place where you find yourself to be at any time. The road really is as good as the end. When you can maintain this frame of mind, the universe will be sure to shower its abundance on you. I love the words of Cicero, who noted: ‘Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the mother of all the rest.’”

Julian then began to walk into the center of the garden, his arms outstretched

as if he were expecting a gift from the heavens for all the wisdom and love he had shared with me. Just as his arms reached higher, a burst of light seemed to streak across the sky. “Did you see that?” he exclaimed, his face completely animated and his eyes wide as ever.

“Unbelievable. What was that?”

“I’m not sure,” replied Julian. “But it does help me make a point that I’ve been hoping to share with you all morning, Catherine.”

“Which is?”

“Be a light. Be a light to your children and show them the way. Be a light to Jon and illuminate his life. And be a light in this world so it becomes a better, wiser, more peaceful place to be. You are such an extraordinary woman. Please take the lessons I have given you and use them to grow into the person that I know, deep in my heart, you were meant to be. In everything you do, from now on, show up at your best and play full out. Be a light where there is darkness. Be a guide when others are lost. And never forget that a loving heart and a rich spirit will improve the planet in ways you cannot even begin to imagine.”

With that, Julian reached down and began to place his hands in the soil, digging down. He dug deeper and deeper, the expression on his face revealing the single-minded focus that had been one of the keys to the amazing success he had experienced over the course of his lifetime.

After a few minutes of feverish activity, Julian stopped. Sweat beaded on his brow, and his robe was flecked with sprinkles of dirt. Julian quickly reached into the hole he’d been digging and pulled out an object the likes of which I’d never seen before. It was about five inches long, appeared to be made from stone, and resembled a human being standing with hands outstretched.

“What’s that?” I asked with a pounding heart.

“It’s called an Inukshuk. They originated in the Arctic, one of the least populated places on the planet, but one that offers us many lessons about how the community of humanity needs to start living. According to Inuit legend, the Inukshuk is a guide for a safe journey through the travels of our lives and symbolizes the duty of each and every one of us to light up the path of those who may have lost their way. For centuries, these stone figures, shaped in human form, have guided travelers through the desolate lands of the Arctic and have comforted those in need of direction. You, my dear sister, are growing into a light—a guide of sorts—who will lead your family, as well as all the other people whose lives you will touch, into a much wiser way of

living. I knew such a day would eventually come. And so while my eyes were being opened to a whole new reality in India, I arranged for this gift to be placed here for you. All that time, I didn't know exactly when I would present it to you or whether it would even be here. But I trusted my heart and found it, exactly where I was told it would be."

As I reached over and grasped the Inukshuk from Julian's open hands, I saw four words scrawled on its stone surface. They read simply: "Pay Attention to Life." It made me think of the words of Henry Miller that Julian had written in huge letters on the centre of his ceiling:

The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself.



The Fifth Mastery of the Family Leader

Give Your Child Immortality through the Gift of a Legacy

Few will have the greatness to bend history itself but each one of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation.

Robert F. Kennedy

There comes a special moment in everyone's life, a moment for which that person was born. That special opportunity, when he seizes it, will fulfill his mission—a mission for which he is uniquely qualified. In that moment, he finds his greatness. It is his finest hour.

Winston Churchill

I hadn't been to the Oxford Movie Hall in years. In its heyday, it was known as the hippest place in the city to see films, rub shoulders with the stars and spend a memorable Saturday night. But the fast crowd had moved on to other venues, and the owners had let the Oxford run down. Though movies still played there, they were never the big releases, and the theater always remained half full at best.

It was a Tuesday night, and Julian had asked me to meet him there for the seven o'clock showing of a documentary about a woman named Oseola McCarty that was called *The Washerwoman Who Touched the World*. I knew nothing about the documentary, or about the woman who was its subject, but Julian said it was important that I learn more about her life and I relished the thought of watching the movie with my brother.

The six weeks that had passed since I learned of the Fourth Mastery of the Family Leader in Miss Williamson's back garden had seen changes in my life that could best be described as miraculous. I had taken Julian's advice and was well on my way to becoming a lifetime member of The Five O'clock Club. At first I wasn't at all sure that I had it in me to get up at that time every morning, but after surviving the first few painful weeks, the habit fit like a glove. In the extra hours I gained by getting up early, I would commune with nature, meditate and read through the books of philosophy that Julian had been leaving on the coffee table in our living room. Or I would use the time to plan out my days, strategize about my life and further define my dreams. Many mornings, I would simply sit in our uncluttered den and stare out the window at the huge rose garden that Jon and I loved so much, savoring the

silence and basking in tranquillity. Those times of solitude brought deep insights on how I was to live out the rest of my days and the value that I could add to the world if I truly became the leader that my family deserved. The French philosopher Blaise Pascal was so right when he said “All man’s miseries derive from not being able to sit quietly in a room alone.”

I rose to higher levels of thinking and being over those six weeks, experiencing new thoughts and feelings I never thought I owned. I came to see the world as a better and happier place and finally felt that my role within it was a significant one. I gave more love to the kids and Jon than I’d ever been able to give in the past and, in turn, I received more love from them than I ever thought possible. The darkness that had always seemed to engulf my heart slowly subsided, and I began to detect a sense of wonder in everything around me. Julian had said this would happen. And it did.

Taking Julian’s advice about caring for the temple made a profound improvement in my energy level and vastly improved my moods as well. I felt able to do more with Jon and the children and enjoy more time with myself. Keeping a journal helped heighten my awareness of how I was living each day and conduct each one that followed more wisely. And the weekly sabbatical concept reconnected me to my inner sense of spirit and joy—something that I had lost so many years ago. I began to feel I was “letting my bigness” shine through, as Julian would say, and liberating my best self in the process. And as my brother promised, becoming a better person most certainly made me a better parent.

But I must also confess that I had begun to feel a little sad. Though he never came right out and said it, I got the feeling that Julian was planning to leave us. One evening, as we all sat down for our family meal, he asked Jon how long it would take for a person to get to Mexico by bus. Another night he asked Porter to print out a map of Canada off the Internet. And on another occasion, Julian received a FedEx package marked with the message “Enclosed please find your information package on Italy.” I guess I knew in my heart that Julian had come to teach me the lessons I most needed to learn in my life and that once I had learned them, he would be off to find his next project. But my mind just couldn’t accept the fact that I might have to live the rest of my life without the enlightened presence of the brother whom I loved so much.

Adding to my unease were the strange noises that continued to emanate from Julian’s room above the garage. The hammering, sawing and sanding sometimes went on for hours on end, with Julian finally emerging with a huge smile on his face and sawdust dancing off his robe. He didn’t tell me what he was up to, and I didn’t ask him what was going on up there. Henry David

Thoreau once wrote “If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured and far away.” Giving Julian his space was, for me, all about letting him step to his own music.

As I walked into the movie hall, I saw no sign of Julian. He had told me to sit in the seventh row and to save him a seat in case he arrived late. As the lights dimmed, an usher walked to the center of the room, and a spotlight illuminated his youthful face. He began to speak. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thanks for joining us here tonight at the Oxford for the evening showing of a new documentary about a very special woman. Please turn your cellphones off and enjoy the show.” The theater was now completely dark, and the film’s opening music started to play. Just then, I felt a tap on my arm. I looked up and saw Julian carrying two large bags of popcorn, two big bottles of spring water and a bag of jellybeans. On his back was a knapsack which drew creases across the front of his robe.

“Sorry I’m late, little sister. I was cleaning a few things up at home,” he offered with a grand smile.

“No problem, Julian. I was beginning to think I would be stood up tonight, though,” I laughed as he sat down and passed me my portion of the goodies.

“Not a chance, Catherine. I’ve been looking forward to tonight all week. This is an amazing story,” he replied, reaching over and planting a light kiss on my forehead.

The story of the life of Oseola McCarty was indeed amazing. Born into poverty, she grew up in a tiny house that she never left except to go up the street to buy groceries and to visit her church. She made her living washing other people’s dirty laundry, carefully saving the nickels and the dimes and the quarters that were offered to her in return. She never learned how to drive and she never got married—although she did say to a reporter when she was in her late eighties that she was “still looking for a good man.” Oseola lived a simple, decent and frugal life, dutifully putting aside the money that she earned day after day, week after week, month after month as the decades slipped away.

One day, at the age of eighty-seven, she walked into her local bank and was greeted by a banker who asked her whether she had an idea how of much she had accumulated as a result of these small daily contributions she had been making over the course of her life. When she indicated that she had no idea, he smiled and informed her that over one-quarter of a million dollars sat in her bank account. Sensing that Oseola had no concept of how much money

that was, the banker took out ten dimes and placed them on the counter. “These ten dimes represent your money, Oseola. What will you do with them?” She pointed to the first dime and vowed to give it to the church. The next three dimes were reserved for her much-loved nieces and nephews. And then a lovely smile came to Oseola’s face as she said that the remaining dimes were to be used for something very special.

One month later, the local university in Oseola’s hometown received a check from her for \$150,000, with a request that it be used to set up a scholarship fund to help poor students fulfill their dreams. I learned from the documentary that this act of humanity touched people around the world. Oseola was honored by presidents and prime ministers and even received an honorary doctorate from Harvard University, Julian’s alma mater. Through all the hoopla, she maintained that she still wanted to live out her life in a simple and principled way. But she did have one dream—to see the first recipient of the scholarship she had created grace the graduation stage. But she confided that she never expected that dream to be realized given her advanced age. One month before Oseola died, however, the first recipient of her scholarship walked across the platform to receive her reward.

After Oseola passed away, a reporter called that young scholarship winner and asked her for a comment on the death of her benefactor. The student offered this response: “Heaven couldn’t have gotten a better angel. She was an inspiration, a blessing, a treasure to the entire earth.”

After the documentary ended and the crowd had left, Julian began to speak in the empty movie hall.

“Mankind’s common instinct for reality has always held the world to be essentially a theater for heroism,” were his first words, quoting William James, the brilliant early twentieth-century psychologist. “I brought you here to this old theater that our city has forgotten to make this essential point.

“Your life, Catherine, is ultimately a theater for heroism. The remaining days of your life—and there will be many—must become a stage for noble acts of leadership and kindness,” spoke Julian with heated emotion. I dared not interject.

“Look at the life of Oseola McCarty,” he continued. “She washed people’s dirty clothes to make ends meet. She lived in a tiny home and was unknown to the world. And yet through her small daily acts of contribution—saving those coins over all those years for a worthy cause—she blessed the world. What a glorious legacy this woman left.”

“Do we all have it within us to leave this kind of a legacy?” I asked softly.

“Absolutely. As a matter of fact, I learned from the sages that we are all programmed to do something special with our lives and live on in the hearts of others when we leave. The sad thing is that most of us think that, in order to leave a significant legacy, we must perform some truly great act. Only then, we feel, will our lives be validated and our highest duties fulfilled. But that’s not what is required of most of us. All we need to do to leave a meaningful mark on the world is focus on performing small acts of greatness each and every day. When you do this, your legacy will take care of itself.”

“Sort of how Oseola McCarty’s small, daily—seemingly insignificant—acts of depositing those coins into her account added up to something huge at the end of her life?” I asked.

“Exactly,” replied Julian with a satisfied look. “Do the little things with great love and attention and the big things will take care of themselves. And that’s really what the Fifth and final Mastery of the Family Leader is all about: *Give Your Child Immortality through the Gift of a Legacy.*”

“Wow, that one sounds incredible,” I said with a mix of excitement and sadness—this was the final lesson I was to learn from Julian.

“It is the most important mastery of all, Catherine. It’s the one that requires you to teach Porter and Sarita that at the end of the day, their destiny as people is to live for something more important than themselves. And if they accept this challenge, as I know they will, they will achieve immortality in the sense that they will live on in the hearts of those whose lives they have touched.”

Just then the words “Destiny Pictures” flashed across the movie screen. “Did you arrange that, Julian?”

“No,” he responded, “but it does speak to my point. You see, we all have a vital destiny that we are duty bound to follow if we hope to live our highest lives. Think of what Vaclav Havel said: ‘The real test of a man is not when he plays the role he wants for himself, but when he plays the role destiny has for him.’”

“And what can I do to help Porter and Sarita discover this ‘vital destiny’?”

“Easy,” replied Julian. “Coach them to listen to the gentle whispers of the holiest places of their hearts.”

“Please do explain,” I requested, as a cleaner walked in and began mopping up the floor.

“Good evening, Mr. Mantle,” he said.

“Julian, does everyone know you?” I asked in wonder. “I mean, how

would even the night cleaner of this particular theater know you?”

“Because I’ve been here to see this documentary about ten times over the past few weeks,” he replied with a laugh. “Oseola’s story is a good lesson for me. It reminds me of the importance of contribution, of making my life even more valuable by living it for others—by giving it over to the benefit of the world. Anyway, to answer your question, listening to the gentle whispers of the holiest places of the heart is all about discovering—and then heeding—the calls that come from the deepest place within you. Sometimes we hear these whispers when we are completely connected with nature, while we are out for a solitary walk in the woods on a magnificent autumn day, for example. Sometimes we hear these whispers while we are experiencing silence—in meditation or another form of contemplation. And sometimes these calls come to us in life’s most trying and seemingly hopeless moments, like when someone we love dies or when one of our dreams shatters. The point of wisdom is simply this: pay attention and be aware of the inner voices that will lead you down the path of your destiny. Listen to what your heart tells you to do. And commit yourself to living out your destiny so you will leave a meaningful legacy.”

“I’m not sure if I know how I can teach this to the kids at the age they’re at,” I confided.

“You are the best judge of that, Catherine. Yes, they are young, but you just might find that it’s an ideal time to give them an appreciation of the importance of listening to their hearts as well as living in a way that is helpful to other people. At least give them an understanding of the importance of enjoying silent moments. As they get older, let them know that no matter what they decide to do for a living, they will receive your unconditional love and support. Share with them how essential a regular period of soul searching is for their continued evolution. Inspire them to dream greatly and to see that success in life comes from living in a significant way, that is, a way that contributes to the world in some measure. A superb question that you should encourage them to ask themselves over and over is simply: ‘How can I be most useful and valuable to the world?’ Another excellent question is ‘What is the highest use of my time and talents?’ Kierkegaard once observed that the main responsibility of a human being is to ‘find an idea for which they can live and die.’ I’d have to agree. To discover a compelling cause that you would be willing to die for, some aim that can help even one life improve and that fires up your soul, is to begin to truly live. And at that moment, the entire universe becomes an agent for your success.”

“Really?”

“Most certainly,” replied Julian with complete confidence. “The universe

has a grand plan for each and every one of us. Once you figure out what the plan is and take steps to align yourself with it, sparks start to fly. So my final lesson to you is that you teach those lovely, intelligent, wonderful kids of yours that greatness as a human being comes from beginning something in their lives that does not end with them.”

“You’re talking about starting something that lives on after their lives end? A legacy?”

“Yes. See, the deepest need of the human heart is the need to live for something more important than ourselves. If Porter and Sarita get that point—if nothing else—they will succeed in a way that will astonish you. I’m talking about success in the truest sense. Success that goes far beyond having a nice BMW parked in the driveway or beautiful suits to wear to work. I’m talking about the kind of success that fills the world with light and with greater love. I’m talking about the kind of success that makes people want to be more and do more for others. I’m speaking of the kind of success that would make you the proudest parent on the planet.”

“I’m speechless,” I said, as tears welled up in my eyes.

“Each and every one of us needs to ask ourselves, not just as parents but as people, ‘What will my life stand for after I have died?’ We need to think about the footprints we will leave and how future generations will know that we have lived. I’m not saying we all have to be Gandhis or Mother Teresas. Those were the paths that were mapped out for those people. What I am saying is that we all need to conduct our lives in a way that will transcend ourselves. We need to avoid being shallow and complaining that the world will not take care of us. Instead, we need to take care of our world and live out our days in a way that shows compassion, concern and care for others. We need to let go of the shackles that keep our thoughts restrained and our actions small, and dare to see what our best selves really look like. To do this, Catherine, to be this, is to truly live. Give the gift of this wisdom to your children and you will be doing a noble deed as a parent. Govern your life by it and you will ensure that you will always be a great person.”

“Thanks, Julian,” I replied lovingly, as Julian reached over and gave me a tender hug that filled me with warmth and deep emotion.

“Catherine.”

“Yes,” I responded, fearing the worst.

“Tonight is my last night with you. I’ve said goodbye to Jon and the children, and now I must do the same with you. This is the most difficult parting of my life. I so dearly wish I could live with you until I die, but that is

not what I have been called to do. I promised the Great Sages of Sivana that I would spread the wisdom they so generously shared with me with those who need to hear it, and that is the work I must continue to do. I love you so very much, and am so proud of the things you have been doing, as well as the woman that you have become. You have embraced The Five Masteries with open arms and are leading your family to a place of greatness. You have grown into a wise guide and a powerful light that will lead your loved ones and others in your life to an understanding of what we are all meant to do while we reside in the world.”

Julian then closed his eyes and clasped his hands together in the traditional Indian way. “I honor the best within you, little sister. I will always be with you as you journey along life’s road. I will always be near you as you overcome life’s challenges. And I will always be sending you the purest love of a brother as you share yours with your family.” After a long pause he added: “May the saddest days of your future be far far happier than the happiest days of your past, little sister. I love you.”

And with that, Julian kissed me gently on my forehead, brushed the fallen morsels of popcorn off his robe and ran out of the theater, where I had learned what heroism in this gift we call life is all about.

I sat in my seat for what seemed to be an eternity, my heart filled with sadness at the loss that I felt. Finally, I stood up and prepared to leave. Jon would be wondering where I was, and I still had to make the children’s lunches for school the next day. As I moved toward the door, something fell off the seat that Julian had been sitting on and fell to the floor with a clank. I picked it up and carried it out of the theater into the street, where I was greeted by the shining beams of a strikingly beautiful harvest moon.

It was the key to Julian’s room above the garage. A typed label had been attached to it reading: *The key to wisdom lies within your own home*. I wasn’t sure what Julian was referring to, but I placed the key in my purse, wiped away the tears that had continued to fall and made my way to my family. On a hunch, I decided to go up to Julian’s room before going inside our house. I walked up the steps and inserted the key into the lock. He had left the lights on for me. As I walked into the small but impeccably kept room, I was astonished by what I saw.

The entire room had been transformed into a magnificent library, with ornately bound books lining the most beautiful shelves I had ever seen. The smell of sandalwood wafted through the air and a feeling of deep peace pulsed through my body. I looked at the books, which bore names like *A Manual for Living* by Epictetus, *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* and

Letters from a Stoic by Seneca. The collection had been lovingly treated and organized with immense care.

I then found a note from Julian. It read:

Words cannot express my love for you, Porter, Sarita and Jon so I will not even try to do so. Instead, my dear sister Catherine, I will give you the greatest gift I know of—the gift of wisdom. This library, containing some of the most important books ever written, is for Porter and Sarita. It is my great hope that you and Jon will share many happy moments and many great times up here with these two very special children. And as you all learn from the pages of these extraordinary books, perhaps you will think of me.

The note was signed “In leadership and in love, your brother Julian.”

As I walked out of our new library and down the recently painted steps, my heart danced with joy. I felt exhilarated and excited by the promise of our family’s future. I felt wiser, happier and more enlightened than ever before. As I entered my home, I paused to enjoy the song that gently flowed out of the open window of Julian’s room—he had left the cd player running. The words I heard— “What a wonderful world”—began to make me cry. Then they made me smile.



About the Author

Robin Sharma is one of North America's most widely respected leadership experts and the author of six books, including the runaway international bestseller *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, its sequel *Leadership Wisdom from The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* and *Who Will Cry When You Die?*, also major bestsellers. Robin Sharma is also one of the brightest stars in the world of professional speaking, keynoting at over 85 conferences a year for FORTUNE 500 companies as well as other associations and organizations that are dedicated to inspiring their people to show greater leadership in all that they do.

A former lawyer who holds two law degrees, including a Master's of Law, Robin Sharma is the founder and CEO of Sharma Leadership International (SLI), a firm that offers a wide range of services and products to help employees at every level realize their highest potential and add more value to the world. With offices in San Francisco and Toronto, SLI also runs the highly acclaimed Robin Sharma Coaching Program™, a revolutionary coaching process where individuals have the unique opportunity to have Robin work with them as their personal coach over the course of one year to create the lives they truly want. Sharma Leadership International also offers The Monthly Coach® program, a book/tape of the month club where Robin personally selects new material that will enhance your growth and enrich your lives and sends it to you every 30 days. For more information on any of these services, or to see our complete line of learning products, visit www.robinsharma.com or call 1-888-RSHARMA.

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ALSO BY ROBIN SHARMA

MegaLiving

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

Leadership Wisdom from The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

Who Will Cry When You Die?

Family Wisdom from The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

The Saint, the Surfer and the CEO

Discover Your Destiny with The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

The Greatness Guide

Daily Inspiration from The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

*To the Dreamers amongst us—those brave souls willing to ignore the
chattering voices of their critics in passionate pursuit of their highest ideals.
You are the Great Ones.*

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“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

1

BE THE BEST YOU

Warren Buffet once observed, “There will never be a better you than you.” Brilliant insight. From a brilliant guy. There will never be a better me than me. And there will never be a better you than you. Some might try to copy the way you think, speak and act. But no matter how hard they try, they will only be a second-best you. Because you are unique. Only one of you alive today. Among the billions of us. Makes you stop and think, doesn’t it? Makes you realize you are pretty special. No, very special. And that there really isn’t any competition.

And so today, what will you do with you as you march out into a world that needs people playing at extraordinary with their lives more than ever before? Will you exert more of your hidden potential? Will you liberate more of your natural creativity? Will you uncover more of your authenticity? And will you be more of the you that you are meant to be? Just wondering. Because there will never be a better time to be the best you than today. And if not now, then when? Makes me think of what the philosopher Herodotus once said: “It is better by noble boldness to run the risk of being subject to half of the evils we anticipate than to remain in cowardly listlessness for fear of what may happen.” So beautifully said.

There will never be a better time to be the best you than today.

2

INVISIBLE FENCES

I'm sitting here at the airport in Los Angeles. Was here to speak to a group of General Electric's high-potential employees. About Leading Without Title. About standing for world-class. About their outright Greatness in all they do.

After the presentation I reflected on why so many of us play small in the core areas of our lives. Why we avoid change. Why we don't innovate and express the creative genius that resides within each one of us. Why we refuse to accept the call on our lives. And why so many of us refrain from being remarkable. The answer I came up with? Invisible Fences.

Here's what I'm talking about: I took a drive out into the countryside last week. To breathe. To renew. To think. I saw a sign from a dog training company on someone's lawn. It spoke of an Invisible Fence. It's a system that sets an invisible boundary that the dog can't get past. The dog eventually becomes conditioned so that even when that fence is gone, it will not run beyond it. The dog sets up imaginary limits that determine its reality. We're like that too. As we grow up, we adopt negative beliefs and false assumptions and sabotaging fears from the world around us. These become our Invisible Fences. We believe they are real. When we bump up against them at work (and in life), we retreat. We believe the boundary is true. So we shrink from all we are meant to be/do/have. The illusion seems so real. But it's not. Please remember that.

So I invite you to question your Invisible Fences. Be aware of them. Observe them. Challenge them. So that when one confronts you, rather than running away from it, you exercise the force of will and talent of heart to run through it. Toward the poetic possibilities your life is meant to be. Because what you resist will persist. But what you befriend, you will transcend.

As we grow up, we adopt negative beliefs and false assumptions and sabotaging fears from the world around us. These become our Invisible Fences.

3

THE POWER OF SIMPLE

I learn so much from my children. Not only are they my heroes— they are two of my best teachers. They have shown me how to live in the moment, helped me to see life as an adventure and taught me how to open my heart. And they’ve taught me so many lessons on The Power of Simple. These days, I’m all about simple. A simple message about everyone being a leader—no matter what they do or who they are. Simple ideas and tools (that actually work) to help people and organizations get to world class. And living a far simpler life (because, at heart, I’m a very simple man). Simple, to me, is so powerful (Google co-founder Sergey Brin made the point superbly when he said that at his company “Success will come from simplicity.”) Which brings me to Colby, my son.

We went to New York City a few weeks ago. A shared experience that we’d planned for a long time; it was all about celebrating his thirteenth birthday (a kid only becomes a teenager once). We hung out in SoHo. Went toy shopping at FAO Schwarz. Had a beautiful lunch at Bread (one of my favorite lunch places on earth). And saw the great play *Wicked*. A weekend full of precious pleasures and unforgettable memories. Between a father and his son.

Sunday night, on the flight home, I asked my young buddy, “What did you like best about our weekend?” He sat silently. Thought deeply. Then he smiled. “Dad, you know that hot dog you bought me on the street yesterday? I loved that the most.” The Power of Simple.

Success will come from simplicity.

BE SO GOOD THEY CAN'T IGNORE YOU

Here's comedian Steve Martin's advice to young comics: "Be so good they can't ignore you." Love it. Life favors the devoted. The more you give to life, the more life sends back. It's just not possible for you to be great at what you do, always reaching for your brilliance and standing for excellence, and not win in the end. (Jerry Garcia of The Grateful Dead once said, "You do not merely want to be the best of the best. You want to be considered the only ones who do what you do.")

Sometimes discouragement sets in. Happens to all of us. We try hard, stay true to our dreams and pursue our ideals. Yet nothing happens. Or so it seems. But every choice matters. And every step counts. Life runs according to its own agenda, not ours. Be patient. Trust. Be like the stonecutter, steadily chipping away, day after day. Eventually, a single blow will crack the stone and reveal the diamond. An enthusiastic, dedicated person who is ridiculously good at what they do just cannot be denied. Seriously.

Steve Martin's insight speaks to me deeply. "Be so good they can't ignore you." (Management guru Peter Drucker made the point slightly differently when he observed: "Get good or get out.") Apply that philosophy at work. Apply it at home. Apply it in your community. Apply it to your world. Having the courage to present your gifts and your highest capacities will yield magnificent rewards. Life is always fair in the end. Trust it.

Life is always fair in the end. Trust it.

THE SUCCESS EXPANSION PRINCIPLE

Here's a powerful idea that just might revolutionize the way you work and live if you embrace it at a DNA level: Your life will expand or contract in direct relationship to your willingness to walk directly toward the things that you fear. Do your fears and you'll shine. Run away from them and you shrink from greatness. Reminds me of what Frank Herbert wrote in *Dune*: "I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain."

So amazing what happens when you encounter a situation that makes you feel uncomfortable/insecure/scared and yet, instead of heading for the metaphorical exit door, you stay strong and do the thing you know you should do. First, you realize that the fear was mostly a hallucination. And second, you get some kind of unexpected reward for your bravery, because on the other side of every fear door lie gorgeous gifts, including personal growth, confidence and wisdom. I've seen it time and time again. It's a law of life, I guess. So run toward fear. Start small. Slow and steady always wins the race. And watch the success you so dearly deserve begin to show up. When you most need it.

On the other side of every fear door lie gorgeous gifts.

6

WEAR SHINY SHOES

Okay, your shoes don't need to shine for you to be a superb leader. And please remember, leadership isn't about your position, it's a way of being—Leading Without Title, to be precise. Leadership is about holding yourself to world-class standards, taking personal responsibility (versus playing the victim), being excellent within the sphere of your influence, building beautiful relationships and elevating others by your example. My point with this chapter is simply this: The way you do the little things says a lot about the way you will do the big things. And resigning yourself to mediocrity around your minor pursuits sets you up for mediocrity when it comes to the major ones.

If your yard or home is well organized, I'll bet your life is well organized. If you are attentive to details like remembering the birthdays of your friends and sending thank-you notes after every meeting, my guess is that you will be attentive to the details around your larger projects and bigger opportunities. And if your place of business is spotless, there's a great chance the work you do for your customers will reflect the same commitment to excellence. (I can tell a lot about a business by the cleanliness of their bathrooms; an immaculate bathroom shouts "We care!" and that caring translates into remarkable service.)

So pay attention to the details. Focus on the small stuff (like crazy). Commit to OAD: Obsessive Attention to Detail. World-class people and organizations always do. Because the little things truly are the big ones.

My point is simply this: The way you do the little things says a lot about the way you will do the big things.

LISTEN CAREFULLY

Just read these immensely important words of celebrated designer Bruce Mau that I need to share with you: “Every collaborator who enters our orbit brings with him or her a world more strange and complex than any we could ever hope to imagine. By listening to the details and the subtlety of their needs, desires, or ambitions, we fold their world onto our own. Neither party will ever be the same.”

We are shaped by our conversations. We are influenced by the ideas we hear and the people we meet. (Big idea: Every person you meet knows at least one thing you don’t; don’t let them leave without learning it.) Listening is a master skill for personal and professional excellence. Leaders listen. Staggeringly well. Mau’s absolutely right: When we go deep into listening to the person we are communicating with, when we allow them to share what they know, we have the opportunity to get behind their eyeballs and learn, grow and evolve into our highest and best. And if you are lucky enough to be talking to the right person—at the right time—that single conversation might be the one that changes the way you think, feel and behave forever. Their stardust will rub off on you. And you’ll be transformed. For good.

Every person you meet knows at least one thing you don’t; don’t let them leave without learning it.

DREAM LIKE DAVID

There's a man I wish you could meet. I was introduced to him while I was in Mexico City to deliver a speech to business and social leaders. He moved me with his story. And he humbled me by his courage.

David Mejia was born without ears. Doctors predicted he would suffer from poor hearing throughout his childhood and that he would be unlikely to live a full adult life. His youth was riddled with operation after operation, a great deal of pain, and the hurtful taunts of classmates who made fun of his appearance. But David persevered. Greatness, in so many ways, is determined by whether you persist through failure or let it consume you. David dreamed. He worked hard. And he believed. Because he knew he was meant to do extraordinary things.

David Mejia has been blessed. With a powerful mind. With a big heart. With a strong spirit. And with wonderful parents, who told him on a near-daily basis that if he looked for the best from life, he would find it. They encouraged him never to play victim. Told him to find the opportunity amid his challenges. And so he has. Masterfully.

The man I met in Mexico City is a leader. A hero. An inspiration. Why? Because he has taken what life sent him and turned what most of us would spend our days crying about into gold. He now has prosthetic ears. He's healthy and remarkably vital. He has achieved superb success in his career. He has found great love and joy. He has more friends than most people I know (far more than me). And he is stunningly positive in a world where people who have nothing to complain about spend most of their time complaining about trivialities.

You can curse the darkness, or you can light a candle and show up as a leader. Life is all about how you exercise the choices available to you. And your daily choices stack up to craft your destiny. Day by day. Week by week. Month by month. Year by year. David Mejia knows how to make the choices that will raise him to his own personal mountaintop. So do you.

You can curse the darkness, or you can light a candle and show up as a leader.

DO IT NOW

Woke up this morning with the following line from Mick Jagger's solo album *Goddess in the Doorway* screaming through my head: "No use getting misty eyed, it all screams by so fast." True. Life really does scream by.

Why postpone what you can do today to some time off in the distance? Why put off playing your greatest game as a human being to some point in the future? Why delay having a remarkably good time until you are old? The other day I read about a young woman who was reflecting on her retirement savings plan. She said, "I want to make sure I've saved up a lot—that way I can have at least some fun at the end of my life." I don't get it. Why wait until you are old to love living?

I'm in no way suggesting that you neglect the importance of planning for your future. Take the long view and prepare for a full life. As always, it's a balance. Do your plans. Save for retirement. Be strategic. But at the same time, live in the moment. Play full out. Take daily risks. Smart. Emirates Airlines has an ad that asks: "When was the last time you did something for the first time?" Smart.

So fill your days with color. Hunt for the best that this very day will bring. Laugh a lot. Love a lot. Dream a lot. And if there's an opportunity that the coming hours present to you—and we both know there will be—seize it. Because life screams by. So fast.

Why delay having a remarkably good time until you are old?

JBN (JUST BE NICE)

Question for you: Why don't we see being "noticeably nice" written into any job descriptions? There's a ton of stuff in those descriptions about what needs to get done each day, but nice is just an accessory, it seems. An add-on. An afterthought. I don't get it.

I believe that being nice is, in many ways, the very lifeblood of a world-class business. Being nice to teammates (so they love coming to work each day) attracts and retains superb talent. Being nice to your suppliers (so they go to the wall for you) is excellent for operations. And being nice to your customers (so they keep coming back) is the best way to grow your community of loyal and passionate followers. Nice is what builds enduring businesses. Here's an example.

Went to my local deli yesterday. Felt like some protein and veggies for lunch. I was in an ultra-creative mode and wanted to feed my brain well. I decided on a portion of turkey and a snow pea salad. I asked for what I wanted. The young woman behind the counter replied with a smile, "The rule is to sell the turkeys whole but I'm going to go see if I can break it for you." A minute later, I had my piece of turkey. She added with a wink, "I'll give you the one with the most seasoning—you'll love it." And on it went. Helping me. Wowing me. Being stunningly kind to me. A delicious experience of exceptional customer service. Because she was uncommonly nice.

Guess where I had lunch today? I returned there because, like most human beings, I do business with people who treat me well. Who doesn't want to help the nice ones succeed? Nice got my loyalty. It got my repeat business. It generated an evangelist. To world-class businesses, nice matters. So JBN. Daily.

Nice is what builds enduring businesses.

THERE ARE NO MISTAKES

It's so easy to beat yourself up over mistakes you've made. Too many among us live in the past rather than loving the present and building a dazzlingly bright future. Some people stay stuck for years over something they did or a failure they experienced. Sad. A life is a terrible thing to waste.

But let me ask you a question: Is there really such a thing as a mistake? First of all, no one tries to fail or mess things up. Every one of us wakes up in the morning, walks out into the world and does the best we can do based on what we know, the skills we have and where we are on life's journey. But even more importantly, every so-called mistake is actually a rich source of learning. An opportunity to build more awareness and understanding and gain precious experience. Experience that will help us do, feel and be even better. Everything that has happened to you in your life—the good and the difficult—was necessary to help you become the person you are now. Why make it wrong? So, just maybe, there are no mistakes. Just maybe what we could call failures are actually growth lessons in wolf 's clothing. And just maybe the person who experiences the most wins.

*Everything that has happened to you in your life—the good and the difficult—
was necessary to help you become the person you are now.*

THE BLANK SLATE OF TOMORROW

At midnight tonight, you'll get a most amazing gift: a fresh set of 24 hours. These hours are pure and flawless and limitless. They offer you the opportunity to show courage, behave brilliantly, connect compassionately, and forge those new habits of mastery that will get you to a better place of being. And they offer you a space to laugh. To create value. And to do your dreams. Whether you'll admit it or not, tomorrow is incredible. Not everyone gets one.

I just got home from Kazakhstan. Loved my time there. Almaty is such a beautiful city, surrounded by those mountains, and those apple trees. Filled with truly delightful people and rich with unforgettable culture. The leadership seminar I delivered was such a joy for me. On the long flight back, I read Peter Mayle's book *A Good Year*. I had enjoyed *A Year in Provence*, so I thought I'd find this one relaxing—and I did. It's a perfect vacation-reading book. One line in the work struck me: "It's better to die standing than live your whole life on your knees." Unbelievably powerful phrase. Thanks, Peter Mayle. For waking me up. To what's most important.

So make tomorrow special. No, make it outrageously great. Wildly wonderful. A piece of art—one that you can tell your grand-kids about. Just amazing what one can do in a single day. Each one is a chance to be more of what we are all designed to be.

"It's better to die standing than live your whole life on your knees."

GET GREAT AT GRATITUDE

A while ago on CNN's *Larry King Live*, King interviewed Carolyn Thomas, who lost most of her face when her ex-boyfriend shot it off. There she sat, with bandages, one eye and more courage than I've seen in a long time.

This got me thinking about gratitude. Powerful idea: What you value in your life increases in value. What you think about and focus on grows. What you appreciate begins to appreciate. Appreciate your good health. Appreciate your family. Appreciate your gifts, your friends, your work and your life, and your perception will begin to shift. You'll see the blessings of your life (versus the broken parts).

I'm big on lists. My suggestion for you: List 50 things you are grateful for (yes, 50). The first 10 are easy: loved ones, job, home, etc. But go down to the roots. Dig (the pearls always require deep diving). Be grateful for the fact that you can speak English (or Japanese, Spanish, Hebrew or Hindi). Be grateful you have two eyes or a healthy heart or for the fact that you don't live in a war zone. And be grateful to others. Bless the farmer whose effort brought the fruit that's on your breakfast table. Bless the factory workers who put together the car you drive. Bless the cashier at the store where you buy your toothpaste. And bless the person who serves your food in the next restaurant you visit (this is life-changing stuff, even though it doesn't seem like it).

The attitude of gratitude. Counting your blessings. Not taking things for granted. I'll bet you have a lot more to be thankful for than you currently see. Just think about it. Just get grateful. Then fasten your seat belt. And watch what comes.

What you value in your life increases in value.

TAKE CHARGE FAST

Real leadership truly is about assuming personal responsibility. It's about creating rich results. It's about taking charge to get things done—whether you are on the front line or in the C-Suite. Here's what I mean.

Was buying groceries yesterday. Standing in line. Nothing moved. I looked ahead and saw a flustered woman—seemed her debit card didn't work. The cashier looked like a deer caught in headlights. He just froze. Didn't explain what was going on (I later learned the system went down). Didn't apologize to his customers for the delay. Didn't do anything to try to move things along. Just gave us a little fear-grin and started to whistle a nervous little whistle. Sounds so obvious, but it's true that leadership occurs in moments of challenge, not during moments of ease.

Leadership shows up when things at work—and in life—test us. Each of us, as a Leader Without Title, must rise to that challenge. We need to shine when things don't go as planned. And we have to take charge. Fast. Eventually, the system got back up, the debit card was put through and I moved through the line. But next time I'm at that grocery store and I have a choice, I'll find a cashier who gets it. Who thinks quickly. Who gets things done, when others just freeze.

Sounds so obvious, but it's true that leadership occurs in moments of challenge, not during moments of ease.

IDEAS ARE WORTHLESS

Controversial chapter title? Perhaps. But I think it's true. I've heard so many gurus say that ideas are the currency of success and thinking drives business and we become what we consider all day long. But, to me, ideation without execution is mere delusion (I dare you to share that line at your next team meeting). In other words, an idea, no matter how big, only assumes value when it's acted upon and brought to life.

This world of ours is full of great thinkers who never realized their greatness. They were strong on the thinking side but weak on the execution side. And they suffered as a result of that constraint. (German poet Johann von Goethe said, "Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic.") World-class people get both right. They are superb strategically and brilliant tactically. Really creative and really good at getting things done.

So jump-start your commitment around execution. Yes, capture your ideas and bask in the glow of a remarkably imaginative thought that has the power to improve how you work or the way you live. And then reach deep into yourself and have the discipline to do whatever it takes to make that idea a reality. Because nothing happens until you move.

This world of ours is full of great thinkers who never realized their greatness.

OPEN YOUR EYES

Just saw something that stunned me. I walked up to my favorite Starbucks. Saw a car, engine running, baby in the back seat—and no driver. The father had pulled up to the front of the store and dashed in to get his morning java. Coffee over kid?

It's easy to get so caught up in the rush of busyness and the call of our routines that we forget the imperative of being aware of the very things we are doing. "Most men would rather die than think," wrote philosopher Bertrand Russell ("Many do," he added). Human beings are the only creatures in the world that can step out of themselves and reflect on their thoughts and actions. Monkeys can't do this. Dogs can't. Cats can't. Only we can.

If you can breathe oxygen today, then in my mind you have the gift of being able to show leadership behavior over the coming hours (and days/months/years). Leadership is about showing up at your best. You know that. It's about being excellent amid changing times and celebrating the people around you. And leadership is about being aware. Aware of your thoughts. Aware of your actions. Aware of your mission. Aware of your priorities. Aware of your talents. Aware of your fears. Aware of your passions. Aware that time is short. Aware of the brilliance presented to you by the life you get to lead (and yes, mine gets messy too).

So live with your eyes wide open. Clarity precedes mastery. Think about things. Shine brighter than ever before. Act impeccably. And stand guard over babies in cars.

It's easy to get so caught up in the rush of busyness and the call of our routines that we forget the imperative of being aware of the very things we are doing.

SYMBOLS OF GLORY

Walking to school with the kids today. Breathtaking autumn morning here in my hometown. Fall colors, fresh air, crisp temperatures. My favorite time of the year.

Colby tells me that one of his buddies has a rubber turtle in his car. Said it reminds his parents to drive slowly and respect the lives of others on the road. Nice. Made me think about the importance of symbolic reminders—tokens we can strategically place at important places to help us remember what’s most important. What matters. What we want to stand for.

One of the simplest tactics I suggest to clients at my leadership workshops is to put your three most important professional and personal commitments on a 3-inch × 5-inch card and post it on your bathroom mirror, so that you see them first thing in the morning. (I know it sounds cheesy, but it works.) This little practice affects your awareness. Radically. Your awareness then shapes your choices. And your choices shape your results. Extraordinary people are dramatically focused on their best To Do’s. It’s all they think, talk and dream about. (I recall reading about John Risley, founder of Clearwater Fine Foods—one of the world’s largest sea-food companies—who said, “When I want a deal, I think about nothing else but how to get it done. I wake up at night to use the bathroom, I’m thinking about the deal. I’m very focused.”) And with that rare focus, they get to where they need to be. With fewer detours than the rest of us.

So what Symbols of Glory might you use to keep you in your finest form? What tokens of excellence can you find that will quickly help you get back to your priorities when the crush of daily events clamors for your attention? You deserve to live an extraordinary life. Start by finding your symbols—ones that represent the person you are ready to become.

What tokens of excellence can you find that will quickly help you get back to your priorities when the crush of daily events clamors for your attention?

BE UNREASONABLE

One of my favorite quotes comes from George Bernard Shaw, who noted, “The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.” Please think about that idea for a moment. I suggest it’s a big one.

Sure, be practical and operate intelligently as you move through your world. I agree, it’s important to use common sense. True, foolish risks can lead to difficult consequences. But having said that, don’t be so scared of failure and disappointment that you fail to dream. Don’t always be so reasonable and practical and sensible that you refuse to seize glorious opportunities when they show up. Push the envelope as to what’s possible for you. Remember, critics have always laughed at the visions of bold thinkers and remarkable visionaries. Ignore them. And know that every outstanding piece of human progress was achieved through the heroic efforts of someone who was told their idea was impossible to realize. The world needs more dreamers. Unreasonable souls who fight the urge to be ordinary. Who resist the seduction of complacency and doing things the way they have always been done. You can be one of them. Beginning today.

Kahlil Gibran, in *The Prophet*, made the point far more beautifully than I ever could, when he wrote, “The lust for comfort murders the passion of the soul.”

Remember, critics have always laughed at the visions of bold thinkers and remarkable visionaries. Ignore them.

NOT ALL LEADERS ARE THE SAME

Many executives come up to me after presentations and ask me about my statement “Everyone’s a leader.” I’ve observed that the best companies on the planet have one trait in common: They grow leaders throughout the organization faster than their competition. Making that happen is their number-one focus. And they do it fast.

But I’m not saying everyone should run the company. That makes no sense. Everyone can show leadership behavior but that doesn’t mean everyone will lead the organization. Here’s a metaphor that I hope will make this distinction clearer.

I love U2. Bono is the lead singer. Larry Mullen, Jr., is the drummer. Chaos would ensue if Larry tried to be the lead singer and Bono got confused and played the drums. Or imagine the tour manager thinking he could be Bono for a night and walking out on stage to do so while Bono was in his dressing room. Not good.

Know your role. Everyone needs to behave like a leader— no matter what they do. That means that everyone needs to take responsibility for generating the superb results for which they are accountable. Everyone needs to do their part to shape culture. Everyone needs to be positive and inspirational. Everyone needs to go the extra mile for customers—and view change as an opportunity to make things better. Everyone really can be a leader and have a profound impact by standing for excellence within the area of their responsibility. But not everyone is the same.

Everyone can show leadership behavior but that doesn’t mean everyone will lead the organization.

I LEARN FROM MY MISTAKES (sometimes)

There's nothing wrong with making a mistake. We are human. Mistakes offer us a powerful way to learn and grow. Just don't make the same mistake more than once. That shows you're resisting the lesson available to you. Suggests you're not listening to life. Shows you're not paying attention.

In *The Greatness Guide*, I wrote about how I missed a window of opportunity to meet Harvey Keitel in a Toronto hotel lobby. Just didn't seize what Carlos Castaneda called "the cubic centimeter of chance" that presented itself. But I vowed to make amends. I promised you I would. Well, I kept my word. Was downtown for meetings with my publisher. Was having a quick sushi lunch at my favorite Japanese restaurant. Guess who was sitting at the next table? Eric Clapton. Seriously.

When the time was right (the time to seize an opportunity will never be ideal, but I let the man finish his tempura), I said hello. Sure my pulse quickened (you know I'm a very ordinary person). And yes, I worried about rejection. *But if you don't try, you'll never know.* I realized that if I took the leap, I had a chance to meet him. But that if I didn't, I'd be sure that I never would. So I did. We ended up having a nice chat. Interesting person. Another conversation that somehow will shape me—as every conversation does.

Each day life sends you chances to learn, grow and step into your best. Don't miss them. Some opportunities never come again. Regret is a choice.

If you don't try, you'll never know.

ASK POWERFUL QUESTIONS

One of the fastest ways to find the solution to an issue or challenge you are facing is to ask the right question. The right question inevitably leads you to the correct answer. Questions matter. In business, remarkable performers are dazzlingly good at getting to the right question. The one that speeds them to the place they need to reach and offers them the missing piece they need to find. And in life, asking yourself a powerful question will allow you to step into a whole new set of possibilities that you may have missed while you were locked into an old way of seeing things. Like the lesson amid a so-called failure. Or the opportunity that inhabits a setback.

Here are six questions that I share with the clients with whom we do leadership development work. I suggest you write them down and then find some time today to answer them in your journal.

- *What one thing—if I did it—would profoundly improve the way I work (and how I live)?*
- *What needs to happen between now and the end of the next 90 days for me to feel that this is the best quarter of my work and personal life? (Remember, clarity precedes mastery.)*
- *Who do I need to express appreciation to? (Make your list long.)*
- *What would I like to improve, professionally and personally?*
- *What could I be grateful for that I'm currently not grateful for?*
- *How do I want to be remembered at my retirement party?*

And as you make this day extraordinary, I'll leave you with one of my favorite quotes (which comes from Mark Twain): "If everyone was satisfied with themselves, there would be no heroes."

In business, remarkable performers are dazzlingly good at getting to the right question, the one that speeds them to the place they need to reach.

BE BREATHTAKINGLY HUMBLE

It's 4:15 a.m. (best time of the day). I'm drinking a perfect cup of coffee. Listening to Simple Plan's song "Perfect World." Thinking. About life, learning. And authentic excellence. Powerful thought I want to share with you: The humblest is the greatest.

Canada's richest man, Kenneth Thomson, died a while ago. *The Globe and Mail*, one of Canada's national newspapers, published a profile on him titled "A Billionaire's Breakfast." Thomson's brunch ritual was described: "... meals didn't come with a side of caviar ... every weekend he would stroll into (a small local) restaurant and order a brunch buffet for \$10.95." Love it.

In an interview, the restaurant owner spoke of Thomson's extraordinary humility and noted, "He was always so gracious, but simple. He joked with the staff and never let on who he was." He always got his own food from the buffet table, smiled when he entered and, last Christmas, even took the time to take a photo with all the staff, which he then had developed, later returning to the restaurant with a copy for each staff member. "Now everyone has something to remember him by."

Something to remember him by. Unforgettable words. Humility. An essential element in the creation of a beautiful legacy.

Humility. An essential element in the creation of a beautiful legacy.

BE A COOL BRAND

You are a brand. No matter what you think, when people hear your name, they conjure up some association. When people see you, an emotional response gets evoked. Like it or not, you (and your reputation) truly are a brand. So I gently suggest that you manage it. Well. Actually, what I really want to challenge you to do is to take the steps you need to take to become a cool brand. One that shouts “cutting edge,” “with it,” “original” and “revolutionary.”

Cool brands that immediately come to mind for me include Apple, Virgin, Phat Farm and Prada. They are fresh and hip and stylish. They *get* it. And they stand out in a world that loves conformity. They make me go “wow.” You could do the same—for yourself.

What would it take for you to become a cool brand? So that when people think of you, words like *innovative* or *world class* or *unique* infuse their minds. What would it take for you to become the Steve Jobs of your team or the Salvador Dali of your workplace or the Russell Simmons of your division? How could you become so strikingly great at what you do and who you are that everyone around you adores everything about you? Something to consider. Something to act on.

What would it take for you to become the Steve Jobs of your team or the Salvador Dalí of your workplace or the Russell Simmons of your division?

CHERISH CONFLICT

Everybody runs from conflict. It makes us feel bad, so we avoid it. Hope it will somehow resolve itself. It never does. Instead it just festers like a bad wound (what we resist really does persist).

Here's my take on conflict: Conflict is nothing more than an opportunity for greater growth and a deeper personal connection. Every conflict carries within it a chance for you to learn a powerful lesson and to grow as a human being (in your understanding and awareness and perspective). And every conflict, whether with a loved one or a customer, is a gorgeous opportunity to forge an even closer bond with them. By turning their dissatisfaction into a wow for both of you.

So don't run from conflict. Don't send the email when you know you need to speak some truth face to face. Leadership is about balancing compassion *with courage*. And though it can feel so messy, in truth it's a gift. Embrace it. Relish the potential it carries. Celebrate it. It can serve you so well.

Here's my take on conflict: Conflict is nothing more than an opportunity for greater growth and a deeper connection.

THE RESPONSIBILITY METER

Imagine a dashboard with a meter on it. At one end is the word Freedom. At the other, the word Responsibility. To me, being a leader and living a remarkable life means striking the delicate balance between the two. In other words, the needle on your Responsibility Meter should stay in the middle. Ideally.

Life's all about balance. And one of the most vital of all balance points is the one involving freedom and responsibility. Yes, be free. Enjoy the moment. Be wildly passionate. Have a fabulous time. Live in the now. And yet, be responsible. Set your goals. Keep your promises. Get important things done. Fulfill your duties.

Where does your life—this very minute—register on the Responsibility Meter? Too much time enjoying your freedom and not enough time doing what's required to build a world-class career and world-class days? Or the other way around? Being at either extreme means being out of balance. So here's an excellent idea: Think about what being at the middle of the meter would look like. Because better awareness drives better choices. And better choices create better results.

Life's all about balance. And one of the most vital of all balance points is the one involving freedom and responsibility.

A LUST FOR GROWTH

Just read a quote that provoked me: “Growth is the only evidence of life.” Intelligent words. They come from John Henry Newman. You know I adore the whole notion of growth. I believe that’s why we are here. To grow and expand through the work we do, the actions we take and the lives we lead (please remember: Don’t just live your life, lead it). Growth matters. It’s what ultimately makes us feel fulfilled (we are happiest when we are growing, and realizing our potential). Growth energizes us (even when it’s uncomfortable—and most growth is). Makes us who we truly are.

What comes to mind when you think about your best teacher or mentor or boss? Good thoughts, right? You appreciate the lessons and learning and growth that that human being promoted in you. So why would you feel any differently about the most trying/challenging/frustrating events of your life? Are those not the very events that have most shaped you? And evoked your best and highest? Taught you what you needed to learn to get you to where you stand today? They too were your teachers. They too championed your personal expansion. They too inspired your growth. So honor them. Because they have helped you more than you know.

I adore the whole notion of growth. I believe that’s why we are here.

CREDIT DOESN'T MATTER

“You can accomplish anything in life, provided that you do not mind who gets the credit,” observed Harry Truman. Splendid thought. Leave your ego at the front door when you go to work today and just do superb work. Good things will happen. For you.

It's so human to crave applause and recognition and acclaim. We all want to be appreciated by our peers and revered by the tribe. But leadership is about a lot more than trying to look good in the eyes of others. It's about standing for a Cause (as Pablo Picasso added, “It's your Work in life that is the ultimate seduction”). It's about being BIW (Best in the World) at what you do. It's about leaving people better than you found them. And it's about not worrying who gets the credit for a job well done.

People who are outstanding always get found out. The cliché is true: The cream always rises to the top. The best always come to light. And the Great Ones among us can never be held back.

“You can accomplish anything in life, provided that you do not mind who gets the credit,” observed Harry Truman.

THE BRILLIANCE OF ACCEPTANCE

I'm reading a book by my dear friend Richard Carlson, author of *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*, who sadly passed away a while ago. The book's called *Don't Get Scrooged*, and I just finished the chapter "Acceptance: The Ultimate Solution." Made me stop. And think.

Richard writes, "Acceptance may sound like inaction, but when you try to practice it, you'll see that it is anything but doing nothing. It sometimes requires more effort than the complaining, confronting or clamming up you would normally do. But ... once you experience the freedom it brings—acceptance can become almost second nature."

Acceptance. Looking for the blessing in disguise amid adversity. Relaxing into whatever situation you find yourself in. Embracing the age-old adage that life doesn't give you what you want but just might send you what you need (thanks again, Mick). We all get hard days and mean seasons, from time to time. That's because you and I are enrolled in Greatness School. And challenge, conflict, confusion and uncertainty are beautifully orchestrated vehicles for our growth. But days do get better and seasons always change. By accepting "what is," the bitter times will be shorter and your gorgeous days will get longer. And that's my highest wish for you. Always.

We all get hard days and mean seasons, from time to time. That's because you and I are enrolled in Greatness School.

BE A BEAUTIFUL THINKER

I'm sitting in my hotel room in Karachi as I write this. An absolutely fascinating city. The sounds. The culture. The people. All a wonderful education for me. I'm grateful to be here.

Reading Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. Beautifully written. It prompted an idea: Become a Beautiful Thinker. Commit to making each of your thoughts a thing of beauty. Devote yourself to coming up with stunning insights and ideas and reflections that are outright masterpieces. You've heard it a hundred times in as many different ways: You become what you think about. And the thoughts you use become self-fulfilling prophecies. Expect extraordinary things to unfold for you, and they will. The motivators say it. The teachers say it. The sages say it. Ever wonder why?

I think I finally understand why the idea is accurate. It's not some esoteric philosophy. It's simple logic. Here we go: The actions you take each day create the results of your life. And since every action you take has been preceded by a thought (thinking truly is the ancestor of performance), what you focus on does drive your reality. British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli said it so well when he wrote, "You will never go any higher than your thinking." As a human being you will never act in a way bigger than your thoughts. Dream big and your behavior will follow. Think small and you'll play small.

This concept cascades through every dimension of our lives. Think people are good and you walk through your days with an open heart. And that very behavior actually creates your reality, because people *do good things for good people*. Think you deserve the best and your actions will reflect that confidence. Better actions will then drive better results. Expect to be world class in your career or within your community and that brilliant thinking will shape the way you work as well as the way you live. And that exceptional conduct will drive exceptional outcomes.

I hope I have been able to express this point clearly. Because I believe it's a big one that is too easy to neglect. Your thoughts do shape your reality. Your thinking does form your world. What you focus on truly will expand. And what you dwell upon will most definitely determine your destiny.

Commit to making each of your thoughts a thing of beauty.

OPINIONS DON'T MATTER

It doesn't matter what other people think of you. All that matters is what *you* think of you. We waste so much energy worrying about the opinions of others, wanting to be liked, needing to please. But authentic leadership and real personal mastery are all about rising above social approval—to self-approval. Respect you. So long as you are living by your values, being authentic, running your own race and doing your dreams, why worry what anyone else thinks or feels or says about you? Success isn't a popularity contest. And at the end of each day, what matters most is whether you were true to yourself.

Success isn't a popularity contest.

ARE YOU JOKEABLE?

Bianca, my 11-year-old daughter, is a wise, wonderful and hilarious kid. She wants to be the drummer for Green Day when she grows up. She loves her dog, Max. And when Bianca laughs, the whole world laughs with her. Loudly.

So we are having a great conversation (I spend a lot of time just talking with my kids; I never have my BlackBerry on when I'm with them). She tells me the boys in her class think she's cool. They love making her laugh. They get that she's got a big spirit. Then she shares a line that cracks me up: "Dad, all my friends say I'm jokeable."

So let me ask you a question: How jokeable are you? When was the last time you allowed someone to make you laugh so hard tears streamed down your cheeks? How often do you sit back and giggle at life—even at the messy stuff? (Life's messy at times, isn't it; love the messes—your richest growth resides in them.) The best among us don't take themselves too seriously (no one will take you seriously if you take yourself too seriously). They do their best and then let go, letting life do the rest. Life has its own intelligence.

So be jokeable. Relax. Yes, go for world class. But blend that drive with a sense of amusement and festivity. Hold on to life with a loose grip. Every setback carries the seeds of an even greater opportunity (it's taken me about 43 years to get that one). And life was never meant to be an ordeal. It was meant to be pure joy.

When was the last time you allowed someone to make you laugh so hard tears streamed down your cheeks?

HOW TO GET POWER

Here's a simple truth I've learned from the best leaders I've worked with as a success coach, professional speaker and leadership consultant: The only way to truly get power is to give it away. The more you rely on, trust and believe in your team and the bigger the investment you make in getting them to their greatness, the larger will be the commitment, engagement and outright devotion they have toward you.

Power doesn't come from forcing people to listen to you and coercing them to do what you say because you have the right title on your business card. Nope. Real power comes when you spread your passion, offer people a reason to climb your strategic mountaintops, treat them with rare respect and give them permission to shine, grow and Lead Without Title. Be there for people and they'll be there for you. Simple stuff, but as I mentioned earlier, I'm a pretty simple guy.

Here's a great line from Richard Kovacevich, CEO of Wells Fargo (I had to read it a few times to get it): "It's the best five players that win the game, not the five best players."

The only way to truly get power is to give it away.

HABITS ARE HIP

Okay, so maybe habits aren't the hippest thing in the world. But they just might be the most important. What separates the best from the rest comes down to habits. A few good ones (that's really all it takes—two or three really good ones) will make a massive difference in the way your career and your life looks at the end. They will make the difference between mediocrity and mastery. So choose them well.

Here's a metaphor that may serve nicely to make my point: A good habit is like a sturdy oak tree. It starts off as a little seed, planted in a single moment. Fail to nurture it daily and it dies a fast death. But tend to it, just a bit each day, and the thing grows. Until one day it's so strong that it is next to impossible to break.

Your habits will define how close to your personal mountaintop you get. Ones I've observed in world-class people include the following:

- *Align all your actions with the highest levels of excellence and integrity*
- *Put relationships with people first*
- *Leverage adversity to make you/your career and your life even better.*
- *Get up early.*
- *Under-promise and over-deliver (always give people more than they expect and you'll win).*
- *Be a passionate learner (read daily, listen to audio programs by insightful thinkers and attend seminars).*
- *Spend the first 60 minutes of each day dreaming, planning or simply working out to maintain remarkable personal vitality.*
- *Balance being tremendously good at what you do with becoming a tremendously interesting and well-rounded human being.*

Just a few to pick from. To get you going. To plant your seeds.

What separates the best from the rest comes down to habits.

FIND PERFECT MOMENTS

I had a Perfect Moment today. It wasn't a standing ovation in front of a thousand people. It wasn't a phone call from a publisher sharing some good news. It wasn't a Fortune 500 company calling to book a leadership presentation or coaching engagement for their team. No, it was a far more important thing that occurred in my life on this morning. And it was incredibly basic (as are the best things in life).

As I got out of my car in the parking lot of our office, I noticed an amazing fragrance in the air. It was pure beauty. So sweet and breathtaking. I looked around and saw that I'd parked under a tree overflowing with red and pink blossoms. Spring had sprung, and the tree was spreading its magic. I just stood there. Closed my eyes, entranced by the smell. And the moment. I felt grateful to be alive. Sure, I have challenges I'm dealing with (the only ones who don't are dead). Sure, life could always be better. But happiness is all about gaining a sense of proportion and perspective. And we all have many blessings in our lives, like people who love us or work that gives our days meaning or healthy kids or simple gifts like food on the table and two eyes to see through. Like the Perfect Moment in the parking lot.

Life is so very short. Yes, it's important to focus on excellence in your career and arriving at splendid success, however you define it. I totally agree with that. But equally important is enjoying the ride. Laughing. Having fun. Experiencing adventure. And not missing out on Perfect Moments. Mostly, they are free. And they are right in front of you. Today. If only you make the time to look for them.

Sure, life could always be better. But happiness is all about gaining a sense of proportion and perspective.

THE PARADOX OF PRAISE

I was driving Colby to school and got an idea I want to share with you. We were talking about *Everybody Loves Raymond*, the television show my kids adore. In particular, we discussed the tension between Raymond's (cranky) mother, Marie, and Ray's (loving) wife, Deborah. Colby said they don't like each other because Marie doesn't like Deborah's cooking. I asked him to go deeper and to figure out the real issue. After we discussed it for a while, we both heard the coin drop: We got that the real reason Marie doesn't like Deborah is that she feels threatened by the love between Deborah and her son Raymond. She's insecure. Thinks she might lose him. So she's hard on Deborah and has no praise for her. Ever.

Made me think about praise within the workplace (and within the home). A rare commodity. Praise, to me, is like the sun: The more you give away, the more everything around you grows toward you. However, most people don't give praise freely (even though it's free). According to a Gallup Organization survey, the number-one reason employees leave an organization is that they don't feel appreciated by their supervisor. Yet, most managers give away neither praise nor appreciation. Because they think it makes them look inferior.

Here is the truth as far as I can tell: Giving praise to all those around you, when they most deserve it, makes you look like more. It elevates you. It makes you look like a hero. It makes you look like a giant within the workplace. To everyone around you. So don't withhold what your teammates most crave. We all want to feel special. I do. You do. And so does Deborah.

Giving praise to all those around you, when they most deserve it, makes you look like more. It elevates you. It makes you look like a hero.

LUCK VERSUS LAW

It's true what they say: The harder you work, the luckier you get. You may wonder, "Is a remarkable life the result of luck or are there a series of natural laws at play that produce great results once we align ourselves with them?" Well here's my answer. Good things happen to people who do good things. Do the right things and you cannot help but see the right results.

I've been thinking a lot lately about farming. No, I don't plan on giving up this leadership and personal success stuff and spending my days planting corn (though it would be a cool way to live). But just think about it: The laws of the farm and the laws of nature are the same laws that rule our business and personal lives. As you sow, so shall you reap. Care for and nurture your farm and a bountiful harvest cannot help but develop. Care for and nurture your career or your health or your relationships and do you really believe that you will be denied an abundance of produce? Not possible.

Sure, sometimes we get lucky. That's just icing on the cake. To me, a rare-air life is the result of living in alignment with the laws of nature. Doing things like adding value to your customers and all those who surround you. Treating everyone you meet like a VIP. Being unexpectedly honest and surprisingly enthusiastic. Just keep doing these things and you'll be fine. And remember, the more seeds you plant, the more plants you'll see.

Good things happen to people who do good things. Do the right things and you cannot help but see the right results.

CAMEL'S BACK SYNDROME

Most organizations don't fall apart as a result of one big blow. Most relationships don't end because of one grand argument. Most lives don't fall to pieces due to one sad event. No, I suggest to you that sustained failure happens as the consequence of small, daily acts of neglect that stack up over time to lead to a blowup, and a breakdown.

Remember the camel's back metaphor. Pieces of straw kept getting piled on the poor animal. Each piece alone was light and caused little harm. But piece after piece got placed on the camel's back until eventually the load was so heavy that a single added straw broke his back.

I call this Camel's Back Syndrome. A little neglect inevitably leads to businesses and lives of striking disrepair. The best truly do sweat the minor details. They get the seemingly insignificant things right. They have the discipline to shine at the tiny projects and activities and To Do's, which give birth to the spectacularly big ones. They understand that lasting success comes via evolution, not revolution. And so can you.

Sustained failure happens as the consequence of small, daily acts of neglect that stack up over time to lead to a blowup, and a breakdown.

BURN THE EXTRA 1 PERCENT

Reading British *GQ* on a flight home from Rome. (Rome's fantastic. As an Aussie friend said to me recently, "You can take any turn and discover a history lesson.") The biggest idea I ran across in the magazine comes from Chris Carmichael, the coach of seven-time Tour de France-winner Lance Armstrong who said, "The last 1 percent most people keep in reserve is the extra percent champions have the courage to burn." Magnificent thought. I hope we never forget it.

Spend every bit of your energy playing at your best and creating world-class results. Offer every bit of your potential to all you do. And awaken your talents. And your inner fire. So at the end, you can say, "I gave it my all. I did my best." That would be fantastic. Wouldn't it? And please remember—the opportunity for outright greatness comes at the very moment that ordinary people give up.

"The last 1 percent most people keep in reserve is the extra percent champions have the courage to burn."

REMEMBER RECIPROCITY

It's only human nature to want to help those who've helped us. Each of us has a deep-seated hunger to do unto others as they've done unto us. And so I do believe that we get back what we give out. An example.

I just drove 20 minutes out of my way to buy gas. Why would I do that when I have a big list of To Do's and a full schedule for today? Why would I do such an inconvenient thing when convenience suggests that I go to the station two minutes away from my office? Answer: I did it because I wanted to return a favor. To someone who was good to me. To a good person.

A few weeks ago, after dropping the kids off at school I noticed I had a flat tire. I went to three gas stations, and only one could fix my tire quickly. An elderly gentleman in overalls with the name Tony stitched over his heart said he'd be happy to help me. Offered me a coffee while I waited. Entertained me while he did the repair. He did his work with obvious joy. A Leader Without Title. People like him inspire me. Make me want to be a better man.

So I've been looking for an opportunity to show my appreciation. It starts today, by giving him my business. And then I'll be sending my friends over. And they'll tell others and so on. Because Tony deserves to win. And I want to reciprocate.

It's only human nature to want to help those who've helped us. Each of us has a deep-seated hunger to do unto others as they've done unto us.

SAY WHAT YOU MEAN

Ever notice that it's the people we love most that we take most for granted? Odd, isn't it. It's easy to spend less time with your family because they will always be there for you (or so you assume). It's easy to put off expressing your love to your loved ones because there seems to be no urgency to do so. It's easy to let home relationships slip because you assume there are more pressing things to deal with. But what could possibly be more important than your family? What's the point of being über-successful, but alone? A full family photo album is far more impressive to me than an overflowing bank account. Honestly.

So pick up the phone and tell your parents that you love them. Before you leave for work, give your spouse a kiss—like you really mean it. And please, hug your kids and tell them that you adore them. Your kids will only be young once. And when that window of opportunity closes, it will close forever.

It's the people we love most that we take most for granted.

RICHARD BRANSON AND OUTRAGEOUS OPTIMISM

Just finished an issue of *Fortune*. One article described a tech conference held on Necker Island, the Caribbean hideaway Richard Branson bought 25 years ago. Of the young Net geniuses in attendance and their visionary insights. Of the fun had by all as they sailed and drank great wine and engaged in powerful conversations (each of us need to inject “powerful conversations” into our weeks to energize, elevate and sustain us). And then it came down to Branson, founder of the Virgin conglomerate. The writer, David Kirkpatrick, noted that Branson can speak to anyone about almost anything, from food to sports. But what struck him most about the man was his infectious good cheer. Branson seemed to be in good spirits all the time. A News Corp executive agreed and added, “That’s something I’ve noticed about these moguls. They’re almost always the most optimistic people in the room.” Interesting.

So our takeaway is that optimism isn’t superficial or soft or boring. Nope. It’s a mission-critical tool for anyone devoted to getting to authentic excellence—and a life fully lived. Every day brings challenges to those who dare and risk and dream. That’s just part of the game when you are devoted to being great. Being the most optimistic person in the room will help you transcend the rest. And get to where you’ve always wanted to be.

Being the most optimistic person in the room will help you transcend the rest.

BEWARE OF VICTIMSPEAK

Back to a theme I shared with you in *The Greatness Guide*: the power of words. Words shape the way you feel. They influence the way you process reality. And they can either take you closer to your mountaintop or draw you nearer to the valley. Use world-class words and you'll get to your world-class life.

I was in a Starbucks in Manhattan yesterday. The guy in front of me ordered a chai latte. The barista said she was out of chai. He looked wounded. Seriously. I wish you could have seen his face. Like he just got an arrow through the heart. His reply? Classic victimspeak: "How could you do this to me?" I waited for his smile. It never came.

No matter what life sends us, we are responsible for the way we respond. We truly are. We can own our reaction. We can choose what we do with the situation. We can be bitter, or show up better. Tons of choices—at *all* times. Starting with our words. Choose them well. Leaders do.

No matter what life sends us, we are responsible for the way we respond.

I'M STRETCHING TOO

I know I encourage you to push the envelope. To innovate. To elevate. To step up to the next level with the work you do and within the life you have the privilege to lead. And I know I talk a lot about running to your fears (remember that most of the stuff we are afraid of never even comes close to happening) and hugging your discomfort. Well, I do my best to do the same. Here's an example.

I just spent two days last week in a recording studio. For a long time I've had the dream of making music with a powerful message. I used to play guitar in a rock band in law school (poorly yet passionately) and I needed to get back to that love. And you know this: There will never be the ideal time to do the dreams in your heart. So I took a risk. (Al Pacino recently told Larry King, "You will only be as good as the chances you take.") I reached out to the two amazing partners at the Orange Record Label and shared my vision. Guess what, "no ask, no get." They signed me to a deal. Immediately.

These past two days found me in a studio with some of the most creative people I've ever met. Writers and musicians. Visionaries and dreamers. All banded together to help me create brilliant music that will inspire people to make their lives extraordinary. Genuine works of art. I had to sing (stop laughing). I had to play guitar. I had to let go of my safe harbor and be a beginner again. "How was it?" you ask. Breathtakingly great. (If you want to see me playing, watch the CNN clip at robinsharma.com.) I was scared, excited, joy-filled and delighted. I trembled. And I laughed. It was an experience I'll never forget—one that is part of the personal story I call life. So get out there. Risk. Ask. Dream. Dare. Fall. Fail. And never let anyone tell you that your dreams can't come true. Eventually someone's going to do what you dream of doing. Why not you?

Never let anyone tell you that your dreams can't come true. Eventually someone's going to do what you dream of doing. Why not you?

STOP TRYING SO HARD

One of the core organizing principles of my life is that success is the result of a delicate balance between making things happen and letting things happen. Yes, we have the responsibility to set our goals and realize our potential and play at our very best. We need to do our part. Good things definitely unfold for people who are devoted to doing great things. But I suggest we also need to show a gentle commitment to letting things unfold. In other words, do your best—then let life do the rest.

Life will always lead you to a place that's better (even when it may not seem like it). I've learned it is important to let life lead you (not an easy lesson to get—I know; still working on that one myself). If you've tried everything possible to realize an outcome and it just hasn't worked out as planned, stop trying so hard. Relax. Maybe nothing's wrong. Maybe the timing's not right. Maybe what you wanted wasn't in your best interests. Maybe while one door seems to be closing, another is actually opening. And often, once you let go of what you thought was best, space is created for something even better to arrive. Because every ending ushers in a brand-new beginning.

Life will always lead you to a place that's better.

THE MIRROR TEST

I believe it's important to remember that when you know better, you can do better. With higher levels of awareness, you can make smarter choices. And the more clarity you get as to who you want to become, the more quickly you can start making the choices needed to get you there. Clarity really does offer a framework for more intelligent decision-making (and we become our decisions).

Here's a simple tool for you: the Mirror Test. Look into the mirror and ask yourself the following question: "What one thing could I do today that if I did it, my professional and personal life would get to its NLG: Next Level of Greatness?" Then think about that one thing. Reflect on executing that step superbly. And go out and do it. Act with courage. Now. Remember, small daily improvements lead over time to stunning results.

Ask yourself the following question: "What one thing could I do today that if I did it, my professional and personal life would get to its NLG: Next Level of Greatness?"

FIND UNCOMFORTABLE FRIENDS

Okay, this one might challenge, provoke and even irritate you a bit (if so, I've done my job). Because we grow through ideas and experiences that stretch us. And all I want to do is help you grow (into your greatness).

The idea centers on the importance of surrounding yourself with people who cause you to leave the SHK: Safe Harbor of the Known. Why spend time with people at work who play at mediocre? Why have friends in your personal life who resign themselves to being ordinary? We really do become who we drink coffee with. We really will become our associations.

Powerful thought: You will become a lot like the five people you spend most of your time with (hope I didn't scare you). So my suggestion is that you invite people into your professional and personal life who inspire you. Who will uplift you. Who will make you more extraordinary/authentic/unforgettable (and loving). Who are viscerally committed to world class. And, most importantly, who see the world through a different set of eyes. They'll challenge you. They'll push you. And sometimes maybe they'll even irritate you (if so, fantastic). This practice will serve you well. So that you grow. And reach. And evolve. So that you will never be the same.

Why spend time with people at work who play at mediocre? Why have friends in your personal life who resign themselves to being ordinary?

INNOVATE WHERE YOU ARE

To get to world class, it is absolutely essential to become an excellent innovator. Relentlessly making things better and passionately discovering new ways to add value, work smarter and move faster are core creative traits that the best in business live by. And to be astonishingly creative and generate those big ideas that catapult you to your highest level, you don't need to go walking in the woods or find some sanctuary. Some of the best insights come from innovating and thinking outside of the box at the very place where you now stand. As Tom Kelley, president of the Silicon Valley-based design firm IDEO, observed, "Brainstorming at ski lodges and beach resorts can be counterproductive. Do you want your team members to think that creativity and inspiration can only happen at high altitudes or within walking distance from an ocean? Don't get me wrong: Off-sites are fine. But remember, you want the buzz of creativity to blow through your offices as regularly as a breeze at the beach." So perfectly said.

To get to world class, it is absolutely essential to become an excellent innovator.

PRIDE IN PARENTING

Leadership begins at home. Your family is an organization that needs to be managed, cherished and elevated if you aim to truly get to the rare air life I believe you deserve. I also believe that the highest moments of our lives are the moments shared with those we love.

I just dropped Bianca off at school. Saw a car with a fantastic license plate. It said simply, rkidsroc. Made me smile.

How proud are you of your kids? Are they your primary priority? Mine definitely are. I'd let go of all I'm doing in my work life in a second, if my children needed me to. Do you spend quantity time with your kids as well as quality time? I've been a father for 13 years now and I must share with you that no matter what toys, video games or gifts I give my gang, nothing beats my time. That's all they really want. That's all they've ever really wanted. As I wrote in *The Greatness Guide*, I can't tell you how many über-rich executive coaching clients have flown their jets to meet me in Toronto, sat down with me and shared that though they "have it all," they have nothing. Because they missed their kids' childhoods. Money is not the most important form of wealth. It just isn't.

So today, love your loved ones. Cherish them. And tell them all the things you've wanted to say but haven't had the courage to. You'll never regret showing them how proud you are of them. Ever.

Money is not the most important form of wealth.

THE HIDDEN MACHINERY

I recently read a fascinating issue of *Time*. All about the 100 Most Influential People in the World. Jobs is in there. So are Branson and Gore. Mittal makes the cut, as does Oprah. But one of the profiles that intrigued me most is the one on Leonardo DiCaprio. Because of a single turn of phrase used by filmmaker Martin Scorsese. He describes the first time he saw DiCaprio acting: “In his performance, I didn’t see the machinery.” I had to put down the magazine after I read those words.

Masters make everything look so simple. The most brilliant of the best do their craft with effortless ease and exceptional grace, or at least, make it look that way to you and me. We can’t see the machinery. We don’t see all the early mornings and late nights spent working hard to be BIW (Best in the World). We don’t observe the fierce determination that was invested to overcome impossible odds and make the dream come true. And we don’t hear the laughter of the critics that needed to be ignored to get to the mountaintop. Remarkable performers—in entertainment, business, politics, education—all make it look easy. But it wasn’t. It can take years to become an overnight sensation. Let’s not forget that.

Masters make everything look so simple. The most brilliant of the best do their craft with effortless ease and exceptional grace, or at least, make it look that way to you and me.

DON'T WAIT FOR CHANGE

You know I've never claimed to be perfect. I've always maintained that I'm no guru and most definitely a work in progress. Very ordinary. I have my strengths. And my flaws (like every human being). One of my weaknesses is impatience. I just have this aching need to get great things done. Can't stand slow change. Need to make my impact, and to spend my talents (we all have them). Now.

Like some weaknesses, it's also a great source of success. I move things forward fast. Just love speed. Only results matter (I'm generalizing, a bit). Makes me think of what Clint Eastwood said in a recent issue of *Best Life*: "Sometimes if you want to see a change for the better, you have to take things into your own hands." Exactly.

Sure, work with your team. Yes, collaborate. Of course delegate to others who have strengths where you don't. But sometimes, when everyone else is waiting for someone else to take the first step, *you need to be the one to drive the change*. To me, that's courage in action. To me, that's using your life well. To me, that's leadership— and standing for being extraordinary.

Sometimes, when everyone else is waiting for someone else to take the first step, you need to be the one to drive the change.

FIRST PRINCIPLES FOR GREAT RELATIONSHIPS

The quality of your life comes down to the quality of your relationships. With your customers, with your suppliers, with your loved ones, with your self (big idea there). Commit to insanely great relationships and you'll have an insanely great life. And being a great human connector is pretty easy stuff. Remember, success is all about a masterful consistency around fundamentals.

The following seven First Principles are profoundly simple and yet simply profound—and isn't that the case for all great truths?

- *Be the first one to say hello (or Namaste/Shalom/Hola/Salam Malekam, or whatever may be appropriate) when you encounter another person. In other words, be kind first (which takes courage, because we're all scared of rejection).*
- *Smile a lot. It's one of the best ways to have someone open up to you. Remember, we make lasting impressions on people within the first few minutes of meeting them.*
- *Use people's names. This is really important. It shows that you care, and is a mark of respect.*
- *Look people in the eye when you speak to them.*
- *Become a world-class listener. Get this one right and you'll own the title of "Relationship Superstar." Most people don't listen. Most people are so self-focused that they fail to ask good questions when they meet another person. Listening and asking questions shows humility. It shows you are interested. It demonstrates that you are engaged—and not in love with yourself. Most people's idea of listening is waiting until the other person has finished speaking so that they can interject.*
- *Offer sincere compliments. Praise is free. Never miss an opportunity to celebrate and elevate another person, whether at work or at home. You'll connect with the best within them. And then they'll give you their best. Leave people feeling better than you found them.*
- *Treat everyone like royalty (and I do mean everyone; it scares me when someone's really nice to me but rude to a waiter—no consistency there). Behave as if you'll never see them again. When I get home from work each day, my kids come flying around the corner and hug me. Every day. Makes me feel like a king.*

Sure the above seven ideas are simple. Master these First Principles and

you'll get to your mountaintop more quickly than you can imagine. *Greatness comes from mastery around the fundamentals.*

Never miss an opportunity to celebrate and elevate another person

WORRY VERSUS REFLECTION

So many thought leaders counsel us to avoid living in the past. “Live in the now,” they advise. “Enjoy the moment.” “The past is a grave.” Well, I get what they are saying. But isn’t there something good about going back and delighting in the delicious moments of the journey so far? And in learning from all we’ve experienced?

Which brings me to worry versus reflection. Whether you should revisit the past, to my mind, depends on your intention. If your intention in and reason for going back into your past is to dwell on bad experiences and to worry over things you cannot change and to rehash painful times, then I suggest it’s an unhealthy act (a complete waste of time, actually; just keeps you stuck). But, if your intention is to reflect on the lessons that events have taught you and to grow in wisdom and to savor the precious memories that you were blessed enough to experience, well, then I think that’s a good thing. Because you are letting your past serve *you*. And make you better.

I guess what I’m inviting you to consider is that it’s a waste of time to fret over and regret things you’ve done that cannot be changed. But it’s an intelligent use of time to bask in the good times, feel gratitude for them and use even the challenging times of your personal history to leverage your future success.

But isn’t there something good about going back and delighting in the delicious moments of the journey so far? And in learning from all we’ve experienced?

BELIEVE IN OTHERS

I took my kids to see Hilary Swank's movie *Freedom Writers*. It inspired me deeply. Brought tears to my eyes. Made me want to be and do and give more. Made me want to improve things. Profoundly.

One of the things I took away from the film is that leadership is all about believing in others (and yourself) when no one else does. The kids in the movie were gang members. Tough lives. Hard hearts. But their teacher saw them for what they truly were: smart/good/caring human beings who'd been knocked down and had given up. The school wouldn't even give them new books—didn't think they were worth it. But their teacher did. Treated them with respect. Bought the books herself (worked two extra jobs to do it). She challenged them. Celebrated them. Believed in them. And they transformed. Because when you see the best in people, they'll give you their best.

I've seen it happen in organizations around the world. Develop, honor and inspire people, and they will fly. As the wonderful teacher Leo Buscaglia once said, "Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment or the smallest act of caring—all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

Leadership is all about believing in others (and yourself) when no one else does.

THE BEST PRACTICE IS PRACTICE

Imagine Lance Armstrong stopping his spectacularly disciplined daily practice regimen and still hoping to win the Tour de France. Imagine Steve Nash giving up his crushing daily workouts and post-game analyses and still expecting to be in his finest form. Just think about Tiger relaxing his extraordinary commitment to never-ending refinement and improvement of his golf game. Ridiculous, you say. And yet how many of us, on the playing field of business and life, are devoted to consistent daily practice? Few.

How can you get better if you don't practice? Success doesn't just occur. Brilliant results don't just show up by chance. The finest things in life take patience, focus and sacrifice. To get to world class, you need to work at it. Daily. Relentlessly. Passionately.

Just hoping you'll get to great as a leader (and human being) is nothing more than magical thinking. It's a waste of time. Remember the 1 percent wins. *A few little improvements each day, the result of your daily practice, amount to staggering results over time.* Athletes get better through practicing their sport. Leaders get better by cultivating their craft. By elevating their skills. By deepening their impact. By consciously stepping toward their mountaintops. Until they get there.

Brilliant results don't just show up by chance. The finest things in life take patience, focus and sacrifice.

PAIN SERVES YOU WELL

I'm rereading an excellent book called *What Happy People Know*, by Dan Baker, a psychologist and the director of the Life Enhancement Program at Canyon Ranch. I want to share a few of his words with you, on the subject of optimism and dealing with life's trials elegantly and with grace.

When he was younger, his newborn son died. That event devastated him and plunged him into dark despair. In the book he writes of his lessons and says that through his challenges, "I learned what optimism really is: it's knowing that the more painful the event, the more profound the lesson. There are so many lessons in this life we just don't want to learn. You just can't tell someone these things and expect him to become wise. Wisdom only comes the hard way."

Profound words. Perhaps the things that break our hearts are the very things that serve to open them. Pain can serve us so well (if we choose to learn the lessons that it carries). And just maybe life's greatest challenges present its biggest opportunities.

Perhaps the things that break our hearts are the very things that serve to open them.

YOUR TEAM'S ONLY AS GOOD AS YOU

Watched a road crew at work this morning while walking Colby to school. The team leader was having a bad day. A bus driver was hitting her horn because a traffic barricade was slowing her down. The team leader yelled, threw a fist into the air and then kicked over the barricade. One angry man.

Then he started yelling at his crew. Mocking them. Spitting out his venom. Ranting like a madman. They looked down at the ground and kept on working. I sense they felt humiliated by the public spectacle. But their leader continued. Pouring his toxic waste out onto the busy street for all to see. Tonight he'll blame his crew for a low-performance day. And probably scream at his kids.

Big idea: Your team will never be greater than you are (even if you are not the team leader). You set the standard to which you all can rise. Each finger affects the strength of the hand. When organizations bring me in to help their people get to world-class performance and create extraordinary results, I gently remind everyone in the room that “everything begins with you.” I suggest that’s a mission-critical idea. Forget blaming others—that’s just excusing yourself. And it all starts with your inner world. External leadership begins with internal mastery. You can’t help in the building of an excellent organization until you commit to becoming an excellent person.

That team leader I saw out on the street might want to look in the mirror. Might want to clean up his own messes. Deal with his personal anger. Work on his limiting beliefs. Develop his own character. Open his own heart. “Soft stuff, Robin,” you say? No, I really don’t think so. It’s hard stuff. (How many people have the courage to do it?) The stuff that ultimately drives better business results. Boosts profits. Gets organizations to greatness. And did I mention that it all starts with you? Because it really does.

You set the standard to which you all can rise. Each finger affects the strength of the hand.

MUSIC MAKES LIFE BETTER

It's 4 a.m. I'm drinking coffee. The kids are sleeping. And I'm writing in my journal. (Journaling is all about having a conversation with yourself. Helps you build a superior you.) Reflecting. And listening to Maná's CD *Amar Es Combatir*. I love it. Here's the question: How much music do you invite into your life?

Music has helped me get through very painful times. It's offered me inspiration when I needed it, joy when I craved it and peace when I ached for it. It made me a more colorful, engaged and alive human being. I suggest that to live and work at your best, we need to be over-flowing with passion, happiness and a relentless desire to win. Music will help. A lot. It will make every moment better. It is the soundtrack to a brilliant life. And you can start with Maná.

Music will help. A lot. It will make every moment better. It is the soundtrack to a brilliant life.

DON'T FIGHT FOR YOUR EXCUSES

“I can’t be better than I am at work.” “I don’t have the time to exercise.” “I can’t do this project (or reach that dream) because it’s too hard/scary/impractical.” It’s so very human to fight for your excuses. And the more you fight for them, the more they’ll own you. Don’t feed what you don’t want. Let them go. And step into your power.

“We have forty million reasons for failure—but not a single excuse,” observed Rudyard Kipling. Successful people don’t make excuses. They create results. And no great life was ever built on a foundation of excuses. So stop making them. Most of them are self-created delusions, designed to help you avoid doing the things you are afraid to do. Yes, beneath every excuse lives a fear. A fear of changing. A fear of the unknown. A fear of failure. A fear of success.

Today can be the day you burn the bridges that lead to your excuses (*please* do). Today can be the day you step up to the possibilities that lie just off the beaten path of your life. Today can be the day you Lead Without Title. And access your genuine greatness.

No great life was ever built on a foundation of excuses. So stop making them.

ABC (ALWAYS BE CONNECTING)

Leadership has so much to do with relationships. True leaders build strong social networks and trusted communities of teammates, suppliers and customers that will help them get to where they're going (while they, in turn, reciprocate). And exceptional leaders know how to connect. Extremely well.

I'm on the flight home from Hong Kong as I blog on my BlackBerry. A pleasant Air Canada flight attendant has been finding ways to connect with her passengers all through the trip. She remembers our names. And she makes us smile. She just asked if I wanted to eat. I said no (I try to eat little when I fly). Her reply was a classic: "I guess you've had an elegant sufficiency of enoughness." Made me laugh—which made her even more memorable.

So find ways to connect. With the people you work with. With the loved ones you live with. And with the strangers with whom you share this journey called life. You'll not only attract more professional success, you'll also become a happier person.

Find ways to connect. With the people you work with. With the loved ones you live with. And with the strangers with whom you share this journey called life.

WHAT SEPARATES YOU?

Starbury One basketball shoes look a lot like those peddled by Nike and Reebok. They are worn on-court by N.Y. Knicks guard Stephon Marbury. And they are built to last, like those of their competitors. So what makes them special? The fact that they are only \$14.98 a pair (really). The best businesses know their Separation Points—their competitive advantages—and then have the discipline to stay brilliantly focused on them until the whole world knows what makes them special. Tesla just put out a sports car— \$100,000 a pop. But here’s the thing: It does 0 to 60 mph in four seconds, is electric powered and will go 100,000 miles per battery. Masterful Separation Points.

So have the courage to be different. Have the boldness within your industry to create value that has never before been created. Be strikingly creative, always getting better and dreaming bigger. And know what separates you from everyone else. Because if you don’t know what makes your business special, how can you tell everyone else?

Know what separates you from everyone else. Because if you don’t know what makes your business special, how can you tell everyone else?

TIME PASSES TOO FAST

Dropped Bianca off at school today. Watched her walking away from me. Toward her friends. She's 11 now. Growing up. Seems like yesterday I carried her around on my back and bought her bubble gum and watched her coloring with crayons. Now she's into Avril Lavigne and Beyoncé and Hilary Duff. As I mentioned earlier, she wants to be a rock drummer when she grows up. (When she was younger, she wanted to be a dentist—and a dollar-store owner.)

One of my favorite music artists (musicians really are artists), English songwriter Lloyd Cole, has a song that reminds us that time is a lot like an airplane, flying by too fast. Don't blink. Before you know it, your kids will be gone, off living lives of their own. Time's like that. Slips through our fingers like grains of sand. So today, please do love your loved ones. Give your best at work. Go the extra mile in all you do. Speak truthfully. Live with honor. And have some fun. Because one day, your time will run out.

Go the extra mile in all you do. Speak truthfully. Live with honor. And have some fun. Because one day, your time will run out.

WHAT HAPPENED TO QUIET?

I was in an airport, about to fly to Las Vegas and give a speech to 3,000 network marketers. Had some time, so went up to the business lounge to read. Too noisy. Cell phones rang (with those grating ring tones that cause me to toss in my sleep). People talked too loud on their BlackBerries (RIM is one of our clients—still love you guys). One passenger was playing an electronic game on a PlayStation Portable, sans earpiece. So we all heard him as he battled the dragons and invaded new lands (kind of funny, actually). I shut out the world courtesy of my iPod. Thanks, Steve Jobs. But I shouldn't have had to.

Then I went to the gate. Guess what? Noise. Noise. Noise. Someone had installed three flat-screen TVs there—the volume now at 10. Pretty hard to believe. Not everyone was in the mood to watch TV, or wanted the interruption. No one asked for our permission. Again, out came the iPod. I need my peace. Crave it, actually. (I believe world-class results come from alternating periods of peak performance with periods of deep renewal; big idea there.)

Sure, I appreciate technology. Helps us work better and live better, if used intelligently. But whatever happened to silent spaces and noiseless places? Too much noise gets in the way of dreaming and good conversations and time to just be. And we all need that. If we want to live a good life. And get to great.

Too much noise gets in the way of dreaming and good conversations and time to just be.

A STAINLESS CHARACTER

Stainless steel—a tremendous invention. But what about a stainless character? One that is noble, aspires for mastery in all pursuits and never gives up in moving closer to its ideals. What is within must always appear without. What I mean by that is that the quality of your inner world eventually is reflected in the quality of your outer world. Your external life can never grow bigger than your internal one. Life really is a mirror— reflecting who we are, rather than all we want.

A person who dreams pristine dreams and who is impeccably honest, good, ethical and stands for what's best will soon act in alignment with those values. And those actions cannot help but drive extraordinary results. Inner always creates outer. Always.

Last night I saw *Spiderman 3* with Bianca. Best line in the movie was the most obvious one: “We always have a choice. We can always choose between right and wrong.” This leadership/ success/greatness stuff really is pretty simple. Simple—but not easy (and excellent is all about doing what's right versus what's easy). The best things in life do take effort and commitment and discipline. (My friend Nido Qubein once said, “The price of discipline is always less than the pain of regret.”) And sure, it all seems so obvious. But what's most obvious is what's most often forgotten.

“We always have a choice. We can always choose between right and wrong.”

SET PEOPLE FREE

The best leaders turn their teammates loose. They clearly communicate the vision, coach and develop their people and, once done, set them free. Free to use their own creativity and ingenuity to get the results needed. Free to do excellent work and find splendid solutions. Free to feel what it's like to succeed. And free to fail, because making mistakes is part of getting to success.

People want to be a part of an organization that lets them bring their gifts to work and be fully alive. People want to be engaged and feel proud of their contribution. At the deepest level, each of us aches to know the work we do—and the lives we lead—make a difference. Will you let the people around you realize this longing by setting them free? Because if you don't, someone else will.

People want to be a part of an organization that lets them bring their gifts to work and be fully alive.

A DAY OF LISTENING

Listening is, in so many ways, the social equity of the world-class cultures that evolve into world-class organizations. Listening makes people feel special (and talent leaves organizations mainly because they didn't feel special). Listening shows respect. Listening allows you to gather the data that will improve everything you do. I guess what I'm suggesting to you is that brilliant performers are brilliant listeners.

Today, just for a day, make the decision to listen (versus just hear). Don't interrupt. Don't rehearse your answer while the other person is speaking. And don't dare check your e-mail or search for text messages while another human being is sharing their words. Just listen. Deeply. Be there for that person. Because everyone has a voice. And each of us craves to have ours recognized. Watch the great things that unfold once you do.

Everyone has a voice. And each of us craves to have ours recognized.

SMART COMPANIES COMPETE FOR EMOTION

Powerful thought: The main competition is not for “share of wallet” (as I hear at so many of my clients’ conferences). No. It’s for share of your customers’ hearts. In today’s world of business, what smart companies compete for are the emotions of the people they serve.

People buy with their emotions. I drink Colombian coffee. Why? Because it tastes extraordinary, and makes me feel happy. I try to buy from companies with a social conscience. Why? Because doing so makes me feel good about myself. I adore my old, ripped Levi’s. Why? Because they make me feel relaxed—and grounded. That’s all emotional engagement.

I love staying at the Mercer in New York and Hotel Victor in Miami and the Savoy in Florence and the Ritz-Carlton in Singapore and the Leela Palace Hotel in Goa. Why? Because they wow me. And make me feel special (there’s that feeling thing again).

Connect with your customers’ heads and your product or service may be seen as a commodity: They’ll leave you when a competitor comes in at a cheaper price. But connect with their hearts and you can have them for a lifetime. Great businesses don’t have customers who like them. They have customers who *love* them. And that’s what allows them to endure.

The main competition is not for “share of wallet.” No. It’s for share of your customers’ hearts.

YOU'LL KNOW WHEN YOU KNOW

I did a show on SIRIUS Satellite Radio yesterday. The host, Jesse Dylan, asked me a thoughtful question: “Robin, we all have goals and aspirations. But sometimes things don’t go as planned. How do you know when to quit?” My answer was straightforward: “You’ll know when you know.”

No one gets to world class in their work or within their personal lives without a relentless devotion to not giving up. All acts of heroism were accomplished by human beings who refused to lose. They just wouldn’t let go—no matter how bad or impossible or impractical things looked. But having said that, life often sends us curve balls and has other plans for us. (Comedian Gilda Radner, who died of ovarian cancer at age 42, put it so very well: “Now I’ve learned the hard way that some poems don’t rhyme and some stories don’t have a clear beginning, middle and end. Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the most of it without knowing what’s going to happen next. Delicious ambiguity.”)

We long for something to happen and some dream to get done. But no matter how hard we try, the clouds never part. We never get the break. Luck never smiles on us. We continue to toil in darkness, fueled purely by faith. That’s fine—if deep within you your fire burns brightly and every fiber within you tells you to carry on (self-faith is a hallmark of greatness). But sometimes, you get to a point where you just know it’s time to change strategy. It’s not about losing hope. You just *know*. It’s about trusting life. Trusting that there’s an even better thing waiting for you. And that it’s time to course-correct.

For the past few years, I’ve tried to live by the pretty simple philosophy that I shared with you in an earlier chapter: Do your best and let life do the rest. It’s not easy to let go of what you want (I know how painful that can be). But why wouldn’t you, if something even better is waiting just around the corner?

Do your best and let life do the rest.

BE A HERO

On a recent flight with Colby, I flipped through the newspapers while he read a Hardy Boys book. Saw an article about Tristan Unsworth, an 11-year-old boy who is now the hero of his small hometown in Canada. The other day, his snowboarding buddy was sitting next to him in class, sucking on a candy. Someone said something funny, the kids started to laugh, and that sent the candy down the boy's windpipe. Everyone in the classroom was too stunned to do much. The boy started choking. His face turned purple. He said later that he thought it was his day to die. But Tristan's grandmother had taught him the Heimlich maneuver. He rushed into action, and saved his friend's life. Beautiful.

The school principal said yesterday, "He's the most humble boy I've ever met in my entire life. He's the most wonderful boy." A powerful reminder for you: Greatness inhabits each one of us. And that's true whether you are an entrepreneur in Moscow or a teacher in Tel Aviv or a student in Bogotá or a manager in Manila. Let's not forget that. Let's not mask our brilliance. Let's not bury it so deep that we neglect the essence of who we are. Let's model ourselves after Tristan. And be remarkable.

Greatness inhabits each one of us. And that's true whether you are an entrepreneur in Moscow or a teacher in Tel Aviv or a student in Bogotá or a manager in Manila.

WHY PLAN?

Personal planning and goal-setting are not sexy topics. But they are incredibly important and central to an extraordinary experience of life. I see it time and time again among the clients who I coach: lots of time spent articulating a clear and detailed vision for what the key areas of their lives will look like, then a written plan with the vision broken down into sequenced goals so that the vision isn't so overwhelming and the big picture can be seen as manageable steps to drive daily action.

One of the best effects of planning that I've discovered personally is what it does to my mind. Let me put it this way: Few things focus the mind as well as setting plans on paper and then sequencing them into goals. The very act of doing it heightens your awareness as to what's most important. And with better awareness, you will make better choices. And as you make better choices, you are certain to experience better results.

So give yourself a gift: Take out a nice, crisp white sheet of paper. Sharpen a pencil. And then start writing about the work and home you desire to create. It's a lot easier than you may think. And the results will stun you.

Give yourself a gift: Take out a nice, crisp white sheet of paper. Sharpen a pencil. And then start writing about the work and home you desire to create.

ASK TO GET

You'll never know if you don't even try. There is enormous power in asking for what you want. All too often, our internal chatter prevents us from taking the steps needed to get us to our own unique form of greatness. We are kept small from our inner imaginings—so many of which are lies.

The most brilliant of the best, those who live glorious lives that matter, ask like crazy. They understand that it's a habit that must be polished for it to shine. And the more you do it, the easier it gets (like any skill). So they ask. For the support and help they need at work. For the understanding they may seek at home. For a win they need for their business. For a better table at their favorite restaurant. For a better seat at a sold-out concert. And because they ask more, they get more (success always has been a numbers game).

Nothing happens until you ask. People are not mind readers. They need to know what's meaningful to you. And if you ask nicely, they just might say yes.

The most brilliant of the best, those who live glorious lives that matter, ask like crazy.

DO NEW THINGS

Human beings crave control—that’s just the way we are. It’s a survival mechanism that goes right back to the days when we lived in caves. We need certainty, and anything less makes us uncomfortable. But leadership is all about getting good at being *uncomfortable*. It’s about running toward, not away from, the things that intimidate and frighten you. And leadership is about trying new things.

It’s so easy to eat the same food each day. But if you don’t try new foods, you just might miss out on the opportunity to discover your new favorite meal. It’s easy to associate with the same people and have the same conversations each day. But if you don’t expand your community, you just might miss out on meeting your new best friend. It’s so easy to do the same things at work each day—to get stuck in a rut. And if you don’t stretch, you’ll miss an achievement that could flood you with a sense of confidence and fulfillment that will be the start of a whole new world of work.

So I invite you to use each day as a platform for filling your life with more adventure, passion and energy by injecting into it more new things. Listen to Boozoo Bajou if you usually listen to Bach. Eat Malaysian food if you usually do meat and potatoes. Read *Dwell* magazine if you subscribe to *Fortune*. It’s a big, interesting world out there. And it’s yours for the taking.

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ON PERSONAL MASTERY

Two beautiful words: *personal mastery*. They have an inspirational vibe to them. They offer hope. They challenge. They provoke. They affirm—and remind us of our highest possibilities.

To be given the gift of life is to be given an awesome responsibility. Each of us must go out into the world each day and live our best. Yes, life doesn't always seem fair. We'll encounter difficult customers and low-performing suppliers and angry commuters. We'll face hard and confusing times. We'll feel alone, or like giving up on standing for our highest and best. That's just life happening. But, at the same time, life offers you daily opportunities to shine. To polish your gifts. To release your chains. To achieve personal mastery.

Make a commitment today that will alter the course of your life. Forever. Dedicate yourself to *personal mastery*. Think about your thinking. Detect your authentic values and what you aim to stand for. (How can you be who you are if you don't know who you are?) Get to know your fears. Reflect on your personal genius and human potential. Learn to let go of the emotional baggage from your past. Refuse to tolerate negativity. (Kahlil Gibran once wrote that "Doubt is a pain too lonely to know that faith is his twin brother"; every one of us has so many more choices than we can currently see, and as we dare, doors we didn't even know existed begin to open up.) Read more. Learn more. Get fit—no, get *ultra* fit (sad that—too often—good health only matters to those who have lost it). Become remarkable at what you do for work. Become so good at your craft that your organization cannot run without you. Become the friendliest person you know. Work on compassion and understanding. Be nice. Be good.

Life offers you daily opportunities to shine. To polish your gifts. To release your chains. To achieve personal mastery.

BE UNPOPULAR

If you read my blog regularly, you know I'm a fan of Ian Schrager's hotels. Stayed in my first one nearly a decade ago when I did the U.S. book tour for *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* (the Paramount in NYC). In *The Greatness Guide* I wrote about St Martins Lane in London (still one of my all-time favorite hotels on the planet). Why do I like Schrager's hotels? Because, when they first came out, they were unlike anything else (now most boutique hotels have some of the elements from the early Schrager days). They are unforgettably cool. They have the confidence to be part modern art gallery and part place to sleep. They lead rather than follow—like all the best businesses (and human beings).

I'm reading a splendid book by Harry Beckwith called *What Clients Love* this morning as I drink my Colombian coffee. Reflecting on business and on life. In the book, Beckwith quotes Schrager who, true to form, says, "Let twenty-four despise [my hotels] for all I care— just so one in twenty-five love them." The big idea for us: Businesses that try to be all things to all people end up being nothing to anyone. You need to stand for something. You need to play ferociously. Passionately. Emotionally. To get to world class. Or don't play at all.

The big idea for us: Businesses that try to be all things to all people end up being nothing to anyone.

OWN YOUR GREATNESS

Read a letter scribbled in pencil from an inmate in an American prison this a.m. He said *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* changed his life. Because it helped him remember that he was made to make a difference and realize his potential. He'd forgotten who he was meant to be. Because life had hurt him. A lot.

I hear this all the time. People appreciate being reminded that they are meant to play at great. That there are no extra people on the planet. That every life has a purpose. We knew these truths as kids. So we dreamed. We reached. We acted fearlessly. Lived life passionately. And stood in possibility. But we lost that wisdom—as we grew up and walked farther out into the world, away from our Real Nature.

Maybe self-improvement is a waste of time. Maybe *self-remembering* (and reconnecting to the brilliance/creativity/ authenticity/greatness you once knew) is where the action is. Lots of letters to me from *The Greatness Guide* readers speak of this. That life has a habit of making us forget. We fall into routine. We take things for granted. We stop taking risks. We stop aiming for the mountaintop. We stop speaking truth. We play small with the gift of our lives. But we deserve better than mediocrity. Ordinary people can do remarkable things. By recalling who they truly are. And living at their best.

People appreciate being reminded that they are meant to play at great. That there are no extra people on the planet. That every life has a purpose.

BE LIKE COLDPLAY

I saw Coldplay in Toronto a while ago. For two hours they rocked the stadium with nearly 20,000 people on their feet, cheering. I had an amazing time, and finally realized why the pundits are saying “Coldplay is the next U2.” I also got a bunch of leadership ideas from watching the band that I hope you will use to get to your next level.

The four Big Ideas. First, from start to finish, they understood what they were there for: to create an experience for their clients. The lighting was superb, the visuals were world class, and the staging was perfect. Second, they engaged the audience and made us part of the show. They had us singing, dancing and laughing. Third, they showed us love. (How many businesses actually show you love and make you feel special when you do business with them? Well, Coldplay did.) They thanked us for making them so successful, they showed genuine gratitude and they seemed truly humble (and people connect with vulnerability). And fourth, they were really good at what they did. Fantastic songs with great delivery.

Yes, Coldplay over-delivered. And guess what—because of that, I’m a real fan. My challenge to you: Be the Coldplay of your market space. Create fans, then delight them. And do whatever it takes to get them coming back for more.

Create fans, then delight them. And do whatever it takes to get them coming back for more.

STOP SLEEPING SO MUCH

I know I'm unpopular on this point but I owe you my truth: Most people sleep more than they need to. They fall into the trap of spending some of the best hours of their lives on a mattress. They squander their potentially breathtaking gifts. They lose the battle of the bed. They trade their greatness for a snooze button.

Here's an insight I invite you to consider: Sleep begets sleep. The more sleep you take, the more you need. Ever noticed that as you sleep more, you feel sleepier? Strange, isn't it. But it's true.

Yes, I get that sleep is essential to keep us radiant, renewed and healthy. My fear is *too much* sleep. The kind that keeps great people ordinary. The kind that minimizes high-potential lives. The kind that sucks the living out of human beings destined to stand for excellence (and you know who you are). Happens to a lot of us. Because we fall in love with a pillow.

Too many important things to do and too many great places to explore and too many Big Hairy Audacious Goals (thanks, Jim Collins) to get, for us to sleep too much. Life is for the living. I need to repeat that: Life is for the Living. You and I have been given a gift today: to have the opportunity to make a difference and exercise our talents and have a phenomenally fun time doing it. And we need to seize (and respect) that gift. So sleep less. Live more. And as Benjamin Franklin observed, "There will be plenty of time to sleep when you're dead." I've always liked that guy.

My fear is too much sleep. The kind that keeps great people ordinary. The kind that minimizes high-potential lives.

GO PERPENDICULAR

In Italy on vacation with the kids. Working on a new book too. The writing's going really well. And I'm doing some relaxing and renewing. I've never eaten so much pasta in my life. I'm keeping our neighborhood trattoria in business. (Maybe my next project should be a diet book?)

Yesterday afternoon the kids and I rented a little boat and headed down the Amalfi Coast. We hugged the shoreline, stayed close to land, never strayed far from home. This got me thinking. About Christopher Columbus. And about taking smart risks.

Every explorer before him feared losing sight of the shore. They clung to the known. They opted for security. They didn't dare. Columbus did something different. He was brave. Went straight out to sea. Went perpendicular to the shoreline. And found a new world. Good on him.

Of course I needed to be safe with my kids. I'm just trying to make a point: Greatness, as a leader and as a human, sometimes requires that you leave the constraints of safety. Sometimes you just have to let go of the known. And sail out into the unknown. To try a new way. To think a new thought. To behave in a new way. And to go perpendicular when the rest of the world hugs the shoreline and clings to safety. Yes—I get it's so human to feel frightened as we experience the Blue Ocean of Change, transition and growth. But as Lord Chesterfield said, "It is not possible to discover new oceans unless one is willing to lose sight of the shore."

"It is not possible to discover new oceans unless one is willing to lose sight of the shore."

DO YOUR LIFE

It's a serene Sunday morning as I write this chapter. "Café del Mar" plays while I enjoy a delicious cup of java. My kids are reading and I'm moving in slow motion. Love it.

Something happened a little earlier that made me laugh, and I want to share it with you. Bianca and I were playing. Role-playing to be precise. She was pretending to be me and I was being her. She sat in my study and wrote in my journal, mimicking the way I speak. I, in turn, talked nonstop about dogs, rock bands and hip CDs. After a few minutes of imitating me, here's what she said (honestly): "I don't want to be you anymore, Dad. It's too hard. I just want to be me." Perfect.

What's more important in life than being yourself (and loving who you are)? Most of us really do end up living someone else's life. And we dismiss happiness as a result. Fulfillment comes from living your truth. Doing your values. Pursuing your desires and ideals. "To thine own self be true," wrote that British sage, Shakespeare. No point in getting to the end and realizing you never let the real you come out to play. An excellent life grows out of an authentic one. Truly.

An excellent life grows out of an authentic one.

GIVE TO GET

Walking down the street today I heard a man repeating this mantra to all those who passed by him: “Have you helped someone today besides yourself ?” He was trying to raise money. For his Cause. But it got me thinking about giving. You need to give to get. Giving does begin the receiving process.

Give support to get it. Give praise to receive it. Give your best to attract it. Give more respect to experience it. And give more love to become beloved. (Powerful thought: If you make five people feel better about themselves each day, by the end of one year you will singlehandedly have elevated the lives of nearly 2,000 people. Continue this practice and—after a decade—you’ll have positively impacted 20,000 people. Factor in the number of people that those you touch, in turn, influence and you’ll quickly realize that your “little daily gestures of inspiration” can end up helping hundreds of thousands of human beings over the course of your lifetime.)

Give to get. Nice refrain. And so staggeringly simple (as the truest ideas are). All about servant leadership. Help others reach world class. And they’ll joyfully help you get to your cherished ideals.

You need to give to get. Giving does begin the receiving process.

BE LIKE J.K.

The very nature of a visionary is that they see what others miss. (Makes me think of what the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer once said: “Talent hits a target no one else can hit; genius hits a target no one else can see.”) It’s like an inside joke that only they get: They see this vivid dream/opportunity/desire in their imaginations and then spend their days breathing life into it—even though everyone around them thinks they’re wasting their time, or are eccentric, or foolhardy or even crazy. Think Gandhi. Think Edison. Think Disney. Think J.K.

J.K. Rowling was a single mother struggling to pay her bills when the idea of a book about a misfit young wizard downloaded into her mind over a four-hour train ride. She says on her website that she feels blessed she had no pen with her at the time, because writing down all the miraculous ideas that were coming to her would have slowed the flow. Once the manuscript was done, her agent began to send Harry Potter to publishers. Most rejected the book instantly. One didn’t. And that’s my point about visionaries: They see an opportunity that most around them just don’t get. Imagine that. Rejecting Harry Potter. Thinking no one would buy the book. Missing out on one of the best-selling books in the history of humankind.

Being a visionary and stepping into the higher reaches of your life necessarily means dealing with the fact that people will question you. They will not get where you are going. They might call you odd or foolish or unorthodox. They will laugh at you. All good. Thank them for the compliments and keep doing what you need to do to get to where you need to get. The world will be a better place once you do. As Maya Angelou observed, “If one is lucky, a solitary fantasy can transform a million realities.”

And that’s my point about visionaries: They see an opportunity that most around them just don’t get. Imagine that. Rejecting Harry Potter.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO COMMITMENT?

When I was in Dubai delivering a leadership presentation for the Young Presidents' Organization a while ago, a woman approached me and said, "Robin, I loved reading *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, but you make it all sound so easy. Making improvements in my life is hard." Hmm. Made me think. A lot. Here's where I'm at with that one.

We live in a world seduced by the easy. We want to look great and be spectacularly fit but we don't want to have to exercise to get there. We want to be successful in our careers but we wonder if there's a way to reach world class without having to work hard and be disciplined (every great executive is strikingly disciplined, as is every great company). We dream of living fearless, joy-filled lives, but we all too often avoid the very best practices (like getting up early, taking risks, setting goals and reading) that are certain to deliver us to our ideals. Nothing comes for free. There truly are no free lunches. The best things in life require sacrifice and devotion. Each of us, to get to our own unique forms of personal and professional greatness, must pay the price. And the more we pay, the more we'll receive.

Wanting to live your best life, at work and at home, without having to work at it and stay disciplined around our important To Do's, is like wanting an amazing garden without having to plant anything. Or like hoping to be in superb physical condition without having to give up the daily chocolate bar. Or like praying to have a great business by swallowing some magic pill. Whatever happened to commitment? And dedication?

Great lives don't just occur out of the blue. They are crafted and built, like the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall of China, block by block, day by day. And superb businesses don't just appear. They are forged through continuous and never-ending improvement and effort. Let's not fall into believing that the best things in life come without effort. Give your best, and the best will come to you. Guaranteed.

Nothing comes for free. There truly are no free lunches. The best things in life require sacrifice and devotion.

GET EXCITED OR GET UPSET

The most important of all of our human traits is the power we have to choose. To choose how we live. To choose what we will do. To choose how we will view and consider a circumstance.

I'm up here in the mountains on a quick ski trip with my kids. Yesterday it rained. We could have grumbled. We could have complained. We could have got frustrated. Instead, we stepped back, decided to make a better choice and then viewed the whole thing as a giant adventure. We got excited versus upset. We donned the plastic covers that the resort provided. Suited up. And skied like there was no tomorrow. Guess what? The skiing was actually amazing. Soft snow. No crowds. Clean runs. It's going to take me a week to wipe the smile off my face. Each day we have the opportunity to make choices. And the way we choose shapes our destiny. So don't get upset. Get excited. As author Paul Theroux once observed, "Only a fool blames his bad vacation on the rain."

Each day we have the opportunity to make choices. And the way we choose shapes our destiny.

BUILD BRIDGES, NOT FENCES

Had a conversation with a VIP today (Very Interesting Person). Thirty-two years old. Grew up in the Caribbean. Builds fences for a living. A philosopher at heart.

Told me how everyone is into building fences these days. To block out their neighbors. To insulate themselves. To maintain privacy. And to foster separateness. “I grew up in St. Vincent,” he shared. “On our little island, we were like one big family. It really took a village to raise each child. Everyone talked to each other. People cared about one another. We were part of each other’s lives—a real community.”

Community. Beautiful word. Every single one of us has a deep psychological need for it. We all crave to belong. To know we are part of a larger whole. It gives us a sense of security. Safety. And happiness. The best organizations foster community and build workplaces where people feel safe to be themselves again. The best families do the same thing—honoring each other and creating rich shared moments. So maybe we should stop worrying so much about building fences. And start creating true security—by building bridges.

We all crave to belong. To know we are part of a larger whole.

FAIL FASTER

Full disclosure: I'm not the first to use the term "fail faster." But I do love it. The CEO of Coca-Cola at the annual meeting informed shareholders that the company was now going on an innovation tear and that his organization's reinvention plan was contained in a document entitled "The Manifesto for Growth." He noted that spending on marketing and innovation would increase by US\$400 million and then—and here's the big line—observed, "You will see some failures. As we take more risks, this is something we must accept as part of the regeneration process." Which brings me to the imperative of Failing Fast.

At a leadership presentation I gave a while ago to the sales team of a large pharmaceutical company, someone came up to me afterwards and said, "Robin, I loved your speech. Especially the idea about failure being the price of greatness." That reminded me that too many of us are so afraid of failure that we don't even try (Seneca once said, "It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare. It is because we do not dare that things are difficult"). Many of us are frightened of looking silly or being embarrassed by failure and as a result, we don't take the risk and seize an opportunity. We think failure is bad. It isn't. It's good. No, it's great.

There can be no success without failure. It's just part of the process. The companies and people who have reached the heights of success are the same ones that have failed the most often. You need to fail to win. And the faster you fail, the more quickly you'll learn precisely what you need to do to win. So Fail Fast. Out-fail the competition. Out-fail the person you once were. I'll leave you with a quote from Robert F. Kennedy: "Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly."

There can be no success without failure. It's just part of the process... You need to fail to win.

ANGELS IN YOUR EVOLUTION

An idea just came to me. You've heard it before, but the more we get exposed to a good idea, the more deeply we get to integrate it. Like reading a powerful book for a second and third time. Seems like a whole new book on every new reading. Did the book change? No. You did. Your capacity to understand got bigger. Your world-view got broader. Your ability to take in the insights grew. And so you discovered a whole new level of knowledge in that book. That was always there. You just didn't have the eyes to see it before.

The idea I feel so passionately about on this sunny afternoon can be stated in a simple phrase: Angels of Evolution. Nothing soft and irrelevant about this one. Just a way to look at life's challenges in a better light. As blessings rather than curses. Because they just might be. Angels of Evolution. Everyone who is causing you stress, struggle and challenge in your life just might be an angel of sorts. They just might be the very messengers carrying the lessons you most need to learn to get to your Next Level of Greatness.

The difficult teammate might be an angel of sorts, here to teach you understanding. The mean salesclerk might be an angel showing up to help you with compassion or communication or standing up for yourself. A business setback or professional disappointment might be an angel sent to build your resolve and commitment. A health issue might be an angelic wakeup call to get you to commit to a better diet, regular exercise, relaxation and meditation. Each encounter represents a defining moment that gets you to the excellence meant for you.

Angels of Evolution. The hardest stuff in your life is the ideal stuff to get you to where you've always dreamed of being. The people and events that irritate, anger and hurt you are the ideal educators to help you learn the lessons that will help you shine— at work, at home and in life. So that you evolve. And grow.

Everyone who is causing you stress, struggle and challenge in your life just might be an angel of sorts ... carrying the lessons you most need to learn.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

I had a conversation with an old friend the other day. He's done some tremendous things with his business and carved out a meaningful life. He said something that I wanted to share with you. Because it speaks to the best way to influence other people. Leadership by example.

"Robin," he said, "the greatest sermon in life is the one you see." To me that meant, Make your life your message. Live your truth. Walk your values. Behave your philosophy. That's how you move those around you to play at their best.

It's so easy to talk a great game. Far harder to live it. But the great ones do. Elegantly. Consistently. Passionately. As famed psychologist Abraham Maslow said, "In order for us to become truly happy, that which we can become, we must become."

"The greatest sermon in life is the one you see."

BE AN IDEA FACTORY

One big idea could revolutionize your life—and even the world around you. All it takes is that single genius thought to change the whole game. I'm reading a fantastic book called *Humble Masterpieces: Everyday Marvels of Design* by Paola Antonelli, curator of architecture and design at New York's Museum of Modern Art. In one of the (little) chapters, I learned of designer Daniel Cudzik. He's the brave dreamer who invented the stay-on metal tab that you now see on every single one of the billion aluminum cans made every year. Before his invention, tabs were pulled off and thrown away, creating tons of litter, not to mention hurt feet. One idea transformed all that.

Cudzik was watching TV one night with his two kids when the vision came to him. (Your best ideas will come when you least expect it. Most revolutionary thoughts don't come when you are keeping a frenetic pace, they come when you're having fun, so have some fun—it's good for business, as well as for your soul.) Rather than letting the idea slip away (like most of us do), he wrote it down, sketching his plan for the stay-on tab. He quickly gave it to a draftsman, and they soon created the prototype. Guess what? It worked. Brings me to my suggestion: Become an idea factory. Of course, you also need to have a passionate commitment to breathing life into your big ideas through near-flawless execution. Couple the two and you just might produce something extraordinarily valuable. And wouldn't that be a wonderful thing?

*One big idea could revolutionize your life— and even the world around you.
All it takes is that single genius thought to change the whole game.*

SPEAK YOUR TRUTH

This past weekend the kids and I returned to Halifax, Nova Scotia, an amazing city on the Atlantic Ocean with very special human beings and outrageously good fish and chips (which also happens to be the place where I grew up). We were there to celebrate a friend's fortieth wedding anniversary. As we walked out of a bookstore, a car drove by with a bumper sticker that I'll never forget. It said, SPEAK YOUR TRUTH—EVEN WHEN YOUR VOICE SHAKES. Brilliant.

Too many people talk the good talk these days. Tons of empty promises. And hype. And lofty statements that never amount to anything. True leaders are different. They talk less and do more. I love the quiet leaders. Those silent souls who under-promise and over-deliver. And when they do speak, they speak Truth. The Merchants of Wow among us understand that a person's word is their bond. And that every promise kept builds credibility, the foundation of trust. So make the commitment to be impeccable with your word.

You really can be a leader, no matter what your title is. In the theater they say, "No role is a small role." And in life, no person is an insignificant one. ("Every calling is great when greatly pursued," observed Oliver Wendell Holmes.) Each day, at work and at home, you have an opportunity to create an impact, to make a difference and to reveal your potential. And one of the things that separates leaders from followers is that those who lead speak openly, honestly and courageously. Even when the very thought of doing so frightens them. Even when their voices shake.

One of the things that separates leaders from followers is that those who lead speak openly, honestly and courageously.

LEADERSHIP BEGINS AT HOME

I was on my way to a meeting and saw a billboard that caught my eye. Its words: What are you teaching your children? The big idea? Leadership really does begin at home.

What are we teaching our children by the lives we are leading and the examples we are setting? I believe that the best way to influence your kids is to be true to yourself and to lead the best life that you can, so that they will adopt the same values, though their path may be different. What message are you sending to those little leaders who watch your every move and model your every act? Are you showing them what's possible by being remarkable in each of your pursuits? Or are you teaching them to play small by resigning yourself to average?

The fruit never falls far from the tree, and your children will become a lot more like you than you may believe. You can help your kids get to their greatness. It starts with you leading the way.

The fruit never falls far from the tree, and your children will become a lot more like you than you may believe.

RESPECT RULES

Eyes sometimes glaze over on the topic of respect in the workplace. The concept is so obvious that it seems not even worth discussing. We all know that if you treat your people well, they'll treat your customers well. We all know that employees excel when they feel cared for, trusted and valued. We all get that everyone wants to work within an organization where they can grow, have friends and be themselves. Or do we?

I just read about a study of 370,378 employees performed by Sirota Survey Intelligence on this seemingly obvious subject of respect at work. Guess what? Out of all those human beings polled, only 21 percent of those in non-management posts felt the respect management gave them was at a "very good" level. Maybe the importance of respect within our organizations isn't as ingrained as we all believe it to be. Splendid opportunity here.

The study confirmed too that the people who felt most respected were also the ones who felt the most loyalty to the companies they worked for. And in a world where attracting—and keeping—superb talent is one of the most critical of all success factors, anything that breeds greater loyalty needs to be done. So, Respect Rules. Treating people well rocks. Making your teammates feel special is job number one. Because they are special.

Here are a few practical strategies to unleash respect at work:

- *Say "please" and "thank you."*
- *Be on time (punctuality is a mark of the great ones).*
- *Reward people for excellent performance.*
- *Become a brilliant listener (people will love you for it).*
- *Coach the people you work with and help them realize their potential (we all want to get better).*
- *Write thank-you notes.*
- *Promote candor and truth-telling.*
- *Give people permission to take sensible risks and the freedom to fail.*
- *Encourage creativity and authenticity.*

When people feel respected, they feel better about themselves. And people who feel good, do good.

Making your teammates feel special is job number one.

LEARN FROM MICHAEL J. FOX

I saw television star Michael J. Fox being interviewed on NBC the other night. You probably know he has Parkinson's disease. The condition would knock most of us down. Not M.J.F. He said that he actually felt Parkinson's brought many blessings into his life, and shared during the interview how it pushed out all the superficial things, making way for much richer ones such as wisdom, understanding and love.

Powerful thought: Life's most painful experiences are the very circumstances that introduce us to our best. During times of ease, we can get caught up in shallow pursuits and pleasures. Hard times cause us to go deep. The unmeaningful stuff falls aside and we awake to what's important. Things like family, friends, relationships, presenting our best to the world, enjoying each day's gifts and leaving the world better than we found it.

Every life is terminal. No matter how long we get to live, we are all headed for the same end. When you remember that before we know it we'll all be dust, the things that currently limit you (like fear, pride and past disappointments) just fall away. And you discover that the time to shine—and be great—really is now. So thank you, Michael J. Fox. For showing courage and leadership. For speaking honestly. For being a light in a world with far too much darkness.

*Every life is terminal. No matter how long we get to live, we are all headed
for the same end.*

THE JOURNEY'S AS GOOD AS THE END

Just read something in a Cadillac ad in an issue of *GQ*. It quotes actor Andy Garcia as saying, “It’s important, when going after a goal, to never lose sight of the integrity of the journey.” I so appreciate the way he languaged that. And he’s right. The journey toward any result—whether that result is being amazingly good at what you do for a living or great in the way you conduct your life—is just as important (if not more important) than the end. I guess what I’m inviting you to consider is that the climb offers you far more value and as many rewards as getting to your mountaintop. Why? Because the climb to your ideas shapes your character, offers you opportunities to realize your potential and tests you to see how much you really want to win. It’s the climb that teaches you, transforms you and evokes the genius that inhabits you. You get to develop the Qualities of Greatness, such as perseverance/courage/resilience/compassion/understanding. Sure, getting to the dream feels deliciously wonderful. I’ll be first to agree with you on that. But it doesn’t bring you the same sustained gifts that the journey does. We learn more from the times that test us than we do from times of success.

So the next time you feel impatient or frustrated or hopeless en route to the professional and personal life that you want, remember that precisely where you are might just be the best place you could possibly be. And maybe the journey is better than the destination.

I guess what I’m inviting you to consider is that the climb offers you far more value and as many rewards as getting to your mountaintop.

WHAT IS SUCCESS?

To me, success is all about being *in the process* of joyfully creating a life that reflects your highest values, your deepest beliefs and your greatest dreams. There's a lot in that statement and I invite you to break it down and reflect on it. There's the part about the "process" of creating life on your terms (the journey really is better than the end). There's the part about "joyfully" journeying through life because life is meant to be fun. There's the element of living by your values and beliefs, which is all about being true to yourself and living life on your terms. And there's that aspect of chasing your dreams, as these are what get us out of bed each day and fill our hearts with hope.

This reminds me of the words of Mark Twain: "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." That's true success.

To me, success is all about being in the process of joyfully creating a life that reflects your highest values, your deepest beliefs and your greatest dreams.

YOUR HIGHEST FREEDOM

One of my favorite books is *Man's Search for Meaning*, written by Viktor Frankl, an Austrian psychotherapist who survived confinement in Nazi concentration camps. So many of those around him perished. They lost hope. They fell into despair, then death. He managed to get through the ordeal by applying what I believe is our highest human freedom: our ability to choose how we respond to and process any event that happens to us. We can look for some good or we can become haunted by the bad. Frankl writes, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing, the last of the human freedoms to choose one's attitude to a given set of circumstances, to choose one's way." Such a magnificent thought.

"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing, the last of the human freedoms to choose one's attitude to a given set of circumstances, to choose one's way."

GO HOLLYWOOD

I was watching *The Big Idea* with Donny Deutsch the other night. I don't watch much TV but I enjoy his show. Great guests. Interesting insights. And a ton of inspiration. He had on the creator of *CSI*, a man who used to drive a tram in Las Vegas for \$8.50 an hour. His big idea? To write a script for a television show that married the traditional police show with forensics. That winning concept has made him rich. It also got me thinking. About screenplays and Hollywood writers. They get to write their own stories. List the cast of characters. And determine how the whole thing concludes. So do you. True, we can't predict how life will unfold. In so many ways, the only thing we can expect is the unexpected. But by writing our stories and then doing our best to act them out daily, we can get a lot closer to our own Hollywood endings than those who don't. So many of our professional and personal desires really can come true—if we write the script. And that's a beautiful thing.

Many of our professional and personal desires really can come true— if we write the script.

ON THE BURDEN OF GREATNESS

I just watched the powerful Hilary Swank movie *Freedom Writers* once again with my kids. The story reminded me of what's most important. At the end of our lives, the only thing that endures is who we became, the difference we made and the love we gave. In one scene, her onscreen father, proud of her inspired work with inner-city kids that other teachers had given up on, told her, "You've been blessed with a burden." I believe the same is true for each of us. As Google co-founder Larry Page once said, leadership really is about "a healthy disregard for the impossible."

We all have talents, resources and capacities that make us special. And with those gifts come responsibilities. To use them. To refine them. To polish them and make them brighter so that we create more value, and so that we elevate the world around us (I adore the Harley-Davidson ad that encourages us to "Leave behind shoes no man can fill"). To forget the burden on you to be great is to neglect the call on your life. And no failure could be bigger than that.

At the end of our lives, the only thing that endures is who we became, the difference we made and the love we gave.

LIVE AN INTENSE LIFE

I like my music loud, my coffee strong and my dreams large. I like days with color, people with passion and conversations that call out the best within me. I want to live like there's no tomorrow, achieve the best within me, and love the people in my life like I really mean it. I want to do my part to elevate our world. I want to live with intensity.

What a beautiful word: *intensity*. Live a high-volume life. Play full-out. Take risks. Reach high. Don't look back. Be authentic. Be great. "Live to the point of tears," said novelist Albert Camus. I so love that line.

Sure we need to enjoy the journey, tread lightly and balance our courage with striking kindness. But do it all with rare passion, with bravery and with a sparkle in your eye. Do it all with intensity. All of the great ones do.

Do it all with rare passion, with bravery and with a sparkle in your eye. Do it all with intensity.

MAKE YOUR MARK

In an issue of *Best Life* I came across a line from George Clooney: “You only have a short period of time in your life to make your mark.” Obvious? Maybe. Yet so true.

It’s easy to get so caught up in the daily administrivia that you forget about building your legacy. Easy to become so focused on your problems that you neglect to chase your ideals. Easy to get so pulled into the ordinary pursuits of life that you lose sight of the Extraordinary. Yet, life spins by at an alarmingly fast rate. And if you don’t use each day to do even one thing to make your mark and to advance your vision and to become your brilliance, you may miss what truly counts. Makes me think of the words of consultant Richard Leider, who observed, “People over 65 were asked ‘if you could live your life over, what would you do differently?’ They said three things: I’d take time to stop and ask the big questions. I’d be more courageous and take more risks in work and love. I’d try to live with purpose—to make a difference.” That says it all.

If you don’t use each day to do even one thing to make your mark and to advance your vision and to become your brilliance, you may miss what truly counts.

CREATE YOUR BODY OF WORK

It is early morning as I write this. Relaxing in my library. Listening to Luciano Ligabue, an extraordinary Italian rock star who I got turned on to in Rome and whose music has been shaking the foundation of our home for the past few weeks. And I'm reflecting—about leadership and life.

Just read a little piece in an issue of *Vanity Fair* on Art Buchwald, the writer, who is now 80 and battling kidney failure. Coming close to death brings a human nearer to what's most important in life. Brings tremendous clarity. Strips away all the accessories that we think are so essential when we are younger. Connects us with the Truth (and the truth sets us free, doesn't it?).

He was asked, "What is your idea of perfect happiness?" "Being healthy" was the reply. He was asked, "Which talent would you most like to have?" "Living" was the reply. Then he was asked, "What is your most treasured possession?" "All of my writing—my 32 books and all of my columns." The point of wisdom that you and I can take away? Greatness comes when you create something with your life that is not only bigger than you but outlasts you. Legitimacy and recognition and prestige and material things are all fine and are all very human pursuits. But there's something far more important: Legacy. Making a difference. Having an impact. Creating something special. And meaningful.

What Body of Work will you create over your life so that the generations who follow will know that you've been here? What bold acts and brave moves will you make This Very Moment to let the greatness that slumbers within you come out and visit the light of This Very Day? What will your "most treasured possession" look like? And, at the end, what will you have done with all that talent with which you've been blessed? Just wondering.

Greatness comes when you create something with your life that is not only bigger than you but outlasts you.

BIG LIKE MANDELA

I'm reading a beautiful book on Nelson Mandela, a man I admire enormously. A visionary. A freedom fighter. An amazing example of the heights to which human beings can rise. (He invited three of his jailers to his inauguration as president of South Africa— how's that for forgiveness?)

I wanted to share part of the introduction from Bill Clinton, as it speaks to the path you and I—as dreamers, Leaders Without Title and human beings devoted to our best—are on:

“Every time Nelson Mandela walks into a room we all feel a little bigger, we all want to stand up, we all want to cheer, because we'd like to be him on our best day.”

Nelson Mandela is an amazing example of the heights to which human beings can rise.

WILL YOU BE GREAT TODAY?

Someone reading this book today will walk out into their world and do something that will get them to their Next Level of Greatness. Someone near you will make the decision over the coming hours to raise their standards and step up to their highest potential. Someone around you will start something—even if it appears to be a little gesture—that over time will cause breathtaking improvements and results in the way their life looks, in all its dimensions. Why not make that person you?

Forget what anyone's ever told you. Stop listening to the small thinkers. Muffle the voices of the critics. Get to the truth: You are meant to play big with your life. To go out there and be remarkable. No, *extraordinary*. And every time you refuse to listen to that call, you betray yourself.

So honor you. Make this day—and your life—a special and unforgettable one. One tiny step truly can result in gigantic consequences over time. Remember who you truly are, and all you have been built to be: a Leader Without Title, a Rare-Air human being—and someone who made things better. I'll leave you with the words of philosopher Marcus Aurelius, who said, "To live each day as though one's last, never flustered, never apathetic, never attitudinizing—here is the perfection of character." Wonderfully said. I wish you Greatness.

Get to the truth: You are meant to play big with your life.

ABOUT ROBIN SHARMA

Robin Sharma is one of the world's leading experts on leadership and personal success. His books, including *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* and *The Greatness Guide*, have topped bestseller lists across the globe and have been published in over 40 countries—helping millions of people create extraordinary lives. His work has been embraced by celebrity CEOs, rock stars, top entrepreneurs and royalty. As well as being a much sought-after speaker, Robin is also a widely respected success coach for top businesspeople ready to be truly remarkable in all they do.

Robin is the CEO of Sharma Leadership International Inc., a premier training and coaching firm that helps people and organizations get to world class. Clients include Nike, BP, General Electric, NASA, FedEx, IBM and Microsoft. In a recent independent survey of the world's top leadership gurus by leadershipgurus.net, Robin appeared in the top 10—right after Jack Welch. He has been profiled by CNN, the Biography Channel and PBS.

robinsharma.com is one of the most popular resources on the Internet for leadership and success ideas, and offers Robin's blog, robinsharmaTV, along with his acclaimed eNewsletter, The Robin Sharma Report.

To book Robin to speak at your next conference or to discover how Sharma Leadership International Inc. can help you and your organization get to great, visit robinsharma.com today.

RESOURCES FOR PERSONAL GREATNESS

Sharma Leadership International Inc. offers a complete range of learning tools and coaching services to help you realize your highest potential and live an extraordinary life. Getting you to world class in your career as well as in your personal life is our mission.

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ELEVATE YOUR LIFE, TRANSFORM YOUR WORLD™

At this content-rich website you will find Robin's blog, podcasts to keep you inspired and on your best game, robinsharmaTV, The Robin Sharma Report (free monthly eNewsletter), daily inspirational quotes, audio learning programs available for instant download, on demand eCourses, DVDs and inspirational T-shirts, as well as Robin's other books. robinsharma.com is also home to a worldwide discussion forum, where you can exchange ideas with other people dedicated to greatness, and to a full listing of upcoming events with Robin.



Once a year, people from all around the world attend one of the most remarkable and powerful personal development workshops they will ever participate in. The Awakening Best Self Weekend™ (ABS) is a transformational experience that will help you triumph over your fears, reconnect with your highest potential, get clarity on what you want your life to stand for and discover a life-changing system that will help you be your very best. ABS works (and is also one of the most fun learning experiences you'll ever have). For more details, video testimonials and to register for the next ABS Weekend, come and visit robinsharma.com today.

Free Audio Download for Readers of THE GREATNESS GUIDE, BOOK 2

To help you get to your greatness quickly, you can now listen to Extraordinary Leadership for free—one of Robin's most popular audio programs (retail value \$24.95 USD). In this thought-provoking, potent and practical presentation, you will learn unique ideas to get you to world class, both in your career and within your life. Simply visit robinsharma.com, sign up for our free newsletter and download your copy. We only ask one thing of you: that you share this program with others so that, together, we can positively impact many lives.

RESOURCES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL GREATNESS

“Though Sharma rejects the guru label, it’s hard not to think of this CEO that way.” —*Publishers Weekly*

Sharma Leadership International Inc. offers a wide range of products and services to help you increase the leadership performance of your people. For information on Robin Sharma’s keynote presentations and workshops as well as to learn more about his results-oriented e-learning programs, visit robinsharma.com.

Grow The Leader™ is a revolutionary and strikingly powerful web-based training program that helps employees lead without title and organizations get to world class. Many of the world’s best-known companies are using Grow The Leader™ to develop leadership cultures, realize the highest performance potential of their staff, unleash innovation and create an extraordinary team that wins in their market.

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- *discover what the best performers in business do to achieve work-life balance and show personal leadership.*

For more information on how **Grow The Leader™** and our other resources can get your organization to world class, visit robinsharma.com.

Give the gift of GREATNESS



The Greatness Guide makes an ideal gift for members of your organization. Inspirational, energizing and rich with real-world strategies for leadership and personal mastery, this is a book that will help your people work and live at their very best. Great organizations know that investing in their people is always a superb investment.

“Robin Sharma’s books are helping people all around the world live great lives.”

PAULO COELHO, author of the international bestseller *The Alchemist*

Discounts available on multiple-copy orders. For pricing information, contact our Special Markets Department at HarperCollins Publishers 2 Bloor Street East, 20th Floor, Toronto, ON M4W 1A8 or call 1-800-387-0117.



101 simple yet powerful lessons that will help you
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Compelling, engaging and truly unforgettable, this much-anticipated sequel to the international bestseller *The Greatness Guide* will help you:

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- learn how the best achieve stunning success
- find the inspiration, passion and enthusiasm you need to become extraordinary
- discover happiness and have more fun
- get through hard times with courage and grace
- simplify your professional and personal life

Within the pages of *The Greatness Guide, Book 2*, you will receive uncommon advice that will excite, energize and elevate you, in sections such as:

- Be So Good They Can't Ignore You
- Be a Cool Brand
- Live an Intense Life

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REALIZING YOUR GREATEST POTENTIAL
AND DISCOVERING REAL SUCCESS

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VOLUME - 8

ROBIN SHARMA



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About the Author



ALSO BY ROBIN SHARMA

MegaLiving

The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

Leadership Wisdom from the Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

Who Will Cry When You Die?

Family Wisdom from the Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

The Saint, the Surfer and the CEO

Discover Your Destiny with the Monk Who Sold His Ferrari

The Greatness Guide

I dedicate this collection of quotes from the books in The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari series to you, the Reader. It takes a special person to have the courage to look within and then do what needs to be done to create a life of authenticity, abundance, happiness and wonder. So I honor you.

I also dedicate this book to my two children. I am blessed to be their father.



January

Impact and Legacy

Personal Greatness



Impact and Legacy

January 1

When I was growing up, my father, translating a Sanskrit saying, shared something with me that I will never forget. He said, “Son, when you were born, you cried while the world rejoiced. Live your life in such a way that when you die the world cries while you rejoice.” We live in an age when we have forgotten what life is all about. We can easily put a person on the moon, yet we have trouble walking across the street to meet a new neighbor. We have technology to help us stay connected, yet in many ways we have never been less connected in the history of humankind. We know more than ever, yet we also know less, about what it means to be truly great—as a human being.



Impact and Legacy

January 2

Purpose is the most powerful motivator in the world. The secret of passion truly is purpose.



Impact and Legacy

January 3

Success cannot be pursued; success ensues. It flows as the unintended byproduct of efforts concentrated in the direction of a worthy cause.



Impact and Legacy

January 4

The word *duty* is often viewed negatively in our culture. Many people don't like the idea of it, feeling that duty would restrict them and hinder them from living in the moment. To me, the word *duty* represents freedom and happiness. And leadership and authentic success is about doing what's right rather than what's easy.



Impact and Legacy

January 5

Once you connect with some kind of higher purpose in your life, there will be a corresponding release of passion and energy. The secret of generating extraordinary levels of passion in your life is to discover your larger purpose. Once you find your calling, you get excited. And you begin to stand for something higher than yourself.



Impact and Legacy

January 6

Look at people who discovered a cause that they gave their lives over to, people such as Benjamin Franklin, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, Albert Einstein and Nelson Mandela. They connected with some kind of a crusade that they decided their lives would represent. This engaged their hearts. This made them emotionally charged up about what they were doing. And once you can develop some emotional engagement around a pursuit, rather than simply an intellectual engagement, the excitement flows and the energy explodes.



Impact and Legacy

January 7

Connect to a compelling cause with your heart, not your head. And then fasten your seatbelt because your life will soar. The mind can be a limiter. The emotions are the liberator.



Impact and Legacy

January 8

You can find your cause—your crusade—exactly where you are. No one has to leave a job to find something to engage their heart and excite them. Often all that is required is that a person see things differently. And to take that first step. Today.



Impact and Legacy

January 9

A cause to stand for unleashes energy, no matter if it's one about creating incredible experiences for the men and women who give you business or one that involves saving the world. All remarkable creations begin with energy—and commitment. Resolve to be extraordinary in all that you do.



Impact and Legacy

January 10

Find your cause, and then do your work with pride and love—love is such an incredible force for good. It's the most powerful thing in the world.



Impact and Legacy

January 11

In the past, most of us were content to have a job that simply paid the bills. But now, we crave so much more in our work. We want fulfillment, creative challenge, growth, joy and a sense that we are living for something more than ourselves. In a word, we seek meaning. One of the best ways to find the higher meaning in the work you do is to use the technique of creative questioning to become aware of the impact your work has on the world around you. Ask yourself questions like, Who ultimately benefits from the products and services my company offers? or What difference do my daily efforts make? Once you do so, you will start noticing the connection between the work you do and the lives you touch. This will inspire you.



Impact and Legacy

January 12

One day, my father posted a poem by Rabindranath Tagore on the door of our fridge. It read simply, “Spring has passed, summer has gone and winter is here. And the song that i meant to sing remains unsung. I have spent my days stringing and unstringing my instrument.” These words were about a man whose heart was filled with regret over a life half-lived. The time to start building your legacy is today, not ten years from today when you “have more time.” Reflect on what it is you want to create in your life and, more importantly, what gift you wish to leave the world when you are no longer here. Greatness comes from beginning something that does not end with you.



Impact and Legacy

January 13

Balance success with significance. What is the point of achieving great things without having a great impact? At the end of our lives, what will be most important is who we have become—and the difference we have made.



Impact and Legacy

January 14

One of the timeless truths of life can be stated simply: When you shift from a selfish compulsion to survive into a heartfelt commitment to serve, your life cannot help but explode into success.



Impact and Legacy

January 15

The celebrated inventor Thomas Edison is well known for his statement “Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration.” While I believe that hard work is essential to a life of real success and fulfillment, I think that being filled with a deep sense of inspiration and commitment to making a difference in the world is an even more important attribute.



Impact and Legacy

January 16

One of the greatest lessons for a highly fulfilling life is to rise from a life spent chasing success to one dedicated to finding significance. And the best way to create significance is to ask yourself one simple question: “How may I serve?” All great leaders, thinkers and humanitarians have abandoned selfish lives for selfless lives and, in doing so, found all the happiness, abundance and satisfaction they desired. Joy comes from giving.



Impact and Legacy

January 17

Each and every one of us needs to ask ourselves, not just as parents but as people, “What will my life stand for after I have died?” We need to think about the footprints we will leave and how future generations will know that we have lived. I’m not saying we all have to be Mahatma Gandhis or Mother Teresas. Those were the paths that were mapped out for those people—and that they chose to live. What I am saying is that we all need to conduct our lives in a way that will allow us to transcend ourselves.



Impact and Legacy

January 18

All too often, people attempt to live their lives backwards: they spend their days striving to get the things that will make them happy rather than having the wisdom to realize that happiness is not a place you reach but a state you create. Happiness and a life of deep fulfillment come when you commit yourself, from the very core of your soul, to spending your highest human talents on a purpose that makes a difference in others' lives. When all the clutter is stripped away from your life, its true meaning will become clear: to live for something more than yourself. Stated simply, the purpose of life is a life of purpose.



Personal Greatness

January 19

Nothing so destroys the heart as the knowledge that you had the chance to manifest the gorgeous potential within you and you refused to accept the call.



Personal Greatness

January 20

We all have special talents that are just waiting to be engaged in a worthy pursuit. We all have some form of personal genius within us. We are all here for some unique purpose, some noble objective that will allow us to manifest our highest human potential while we, at the same time, add value to the lives around us. Finding your calling doesn't mean you must leave the job you now have. It simply means you need to bring more of your talents into your work and focus on the things you do best. Today, decide to be brilliant at what you do. And in how you live.



Personal Greatness

January 21

Success on the outside means nothing unless you also have success within. There is a huge difference between well-being and being well-off. The person with a rich inner life is the richest of all.



Personal Greatness

January 22

The most joyful, dynamic and contented people of this world are no different from you or me in terms of their makeup. We are all flesh and bones. We all come from the same universal source. However, the ones who do more than just exist, the ones who fan the flames of their human potential and truly savor the magical dance of life, do different things than those whose lives are ordinary. Foremost among the things that they do is adopt a positive paradigm about their world and all that is in it. Where others see adversity, they see opportunity.



Personal Greatness

January 23

People who feel superb about themselves generate superb results. Self-respect is a beautiful thing.



Personal Greatness

January 24

Your life is a treasure and you are so much more than you know. The life you live today doesn't have to be the life you lead tomorrow. Make a choice. Take a leap. Rise above your circumstances to your next level of greatness.



Personal Greatness

January 25

The mind is a wonderful servant but a terrible master. If you have become a negative thinker, this is because you have not cared for your mind and taken the time to train it to focus on the good. Remember, we become what we think about all day long.



Personal Greatness

January 26

The people who get on in life are those who dream big dreams and then take whatever risks are necessary to bring their vision to life. They face their fears directly, get into the game and live their days with courage. They break through their fear doors, no matter how scared they feel. It's better to be a lion for a day than a sheep all your life.



Personal Greatness

January 27

The best antidote for fear is knowledge.



Personal Greatness

January 28

Luck is nothing more than the remarkable marriage of relentless preparation with well-presented opportunity.



Personal Greatness

January 29

Most people spend the best years of their lives in the place of the known. They lack the courage to venture out into foreign territory and are frightened to leave the crowd. They want to fit in and are afraid to stand out. They dress like everyone else, think like everyone else and behave like everyone else, even if doing so doesn't feel right to them. They are reluctant to listen to the call of their hearts and try new things, refusing to leave that shore of safety. They do what everybody else does. In so doing, their once-shining souls begin to darken. Success lies in being true to yourself—and living life on your own terms.



Personal Greatness

January 30

Clinging to safe shores in your life is nothing more than making a choice to remain imprisoned by your fears. And it's impossible to discover new oceans without letting go of the shore.



Personal Greatness

January 31

Courage is not the absence of fear but the willingness to walk through your fear in pursuit of a goal that is important to you. You are among the living dead when you live in a safe harbor and cling to the known. You come back to life and your heart starts to beat again when you venture into the unknown and explore the foreign places of your life. The adventure and thrill of living returns. Remember, on the other side of your fears you will discover your fortune.



February

Personal Greatness



Personal Greatness

February 1

Saying that you don't have time to improve your thoughts and your life is like saying you don't have time to stop for gas because you are too busy driving. Eventually it will catch up with you.



Personal Greatness

February 2

Thoughts are vital, living things, little bundles of energy, if you will. Most people don't stop to consider the nature of their thoughts and yet the quality of your thinking determines the quality of your life. Your thoughts form your world. And what you focus on shapes your destiny.



Personal Greatness

February 3

You truly cannot afford the luxury of even one negative thought. A worrisome thought is like an embryo: it starts off small but grows and grows. Soon it takes on a life of its own. Stop feeding what doesn't serve you.



Personal Greatness

February 4

Awareness precedes change. Before you can change something in your life, you must first become aware of it and begin to really pay attention to it. You must build some awareness around it. You will never be able to eliminate a weakness you don't even know about.



Personal Greatness

February 5

The best possible use of your time, bar none, lies in cultivating your mind, heart, body and spirit so that you can bring more brilliance to this world. Awakening these four dimensions of your inner world is the best move you can make. Outer greatness is preceded by internal excellence. Your external life can never be larger than what exists within.



Personal Greatness

February 6

When you run inspiring, imaginative pictures through the movie screen of your mind, wonderful things start to happen in your life. Einstein said that “imagination is more important than knowledge.” Spend some time every day, even if it is just a few minutes, in the practice of creative envisioning. All extraordinary acts begin with a dream.



Personal Greatness

February 7

So many of us have shifted our focus from a quest for the external to a voyage into the internal. For many, the human journey has become an inner journey. We have realized that the gateway to lasting success does not swing outward, it opens inward. The greatest treasures are the treasures that lie within. We, as a global community, are now beginning to think far more about the needs of our souls and devoting more time to activities like personal growth, being more loving and compassionate and leaving a legacy. Success is important but significance is even better.



Personal Greatness

February 8

Feelings are the doorways into your soul, and they must be acknowledged and then felt to completion. Feelings carry important information and serve to foster your self-relationship if explored fully.



Personal Greatness

February 9

As your awareness expands, you will become aware of things you previously could neither see nor understand. We don't know what we don't know—until we start looking within. All is good here. All that has unfolded for you is leading you to a fantastic place.



Personal Greatness

February 10

If you really want to improve your outer world, whether this means your career, your relationships or your finances, you must first improve your inner world. The most effective way to do this is through the practice of continuous self-improvement. self-mastery is the DNA of life mastery. Greatness is an inside game.



Personal Greatness

February 11

In our society, we all too often label the ignorant as weak. However, those who express their lack of knowledge and then seek instruction find the path to wisdom before anyone else.



Personal Greatness

February 12

Zen tradition speaks of a beginner's mind: those who keep their minds open to new concepts—those whose cups are always empty—will always move to higher levels of achievement and fulfillment. Never be reluctant to ask even the most basic of questions.



Personal Greatness

February 13

Fear is a conditioned response, a life-draining habit that can easily consume your energy, creativity and spirit if you are not careful. When fear rears its ugly head, beat it down quickly. The best way to do that is to do the thing you fear. Fast.



Personal Greatness

February 14

Understand the anatomy of fear. It is your own creation. Most of the things we are afraid of never even happen. So why let your fears own your life?



Personal Greatness

February 15

All human progress, all of the advancements in the world— ranging from the discovery of fire to the creation of the personal computer—have come about by people who had the courage not to listen to the crowd but do what they felt was right, regardless of the fact it provoked uncertainty and fear within them.



Personal Greatness

February 16

To take risks is to provoke fear. But to take risks is to be most alive. We are most alive when we are taking risks, being bold and visiting the unknown spaces of our lives. Big risks, big life. Small risks, small life.



Personal Greatness

February 17

Why postpone your greatness? There will never be a perfect time to live your dreams and step into the poetic possibilities your life was meant to be. So why not take the leap today?



Personal Greatness

February 18

Every one of us creates a story about his own life, even if he only tells it to himself. For some, the story is all about being a victim. Playing the victim is easy. You do not have to assume any responsibility for the way your life looks. You can blame everyone else for what's not working in your life, never having to look at yourself and make the changes required. But when you play victim, you give away your power to that which you allege is victimizing you. It's a very impotent way to live.



Personal Greatness

February 19

Personal transformation is not a race. Actually, sometimes the harder you try to change, the longer it takes. So many people treat self-discovery like an extreme sport—rushing to get all their healing at a frenetic pace. They read book after book. They visit guide after guide and attend seminar after seminar. They want to know the answers to the big questions they are struggling with. But someone who cannot sit in the mystery of their lives and enjoy the process of personal growth is a person standing in fear.



Personal Greatness

February 20

You are what you think about all day long. You are also what you say to yourself all day long. If you say that you are old and tired, this mantra will be manifested in your external reality. If you say you are weak and lack enthusiasm, this too will be the nature of your world. But if you say that you are healthy, dynamic and fully alive, your life will be transformed. Words have remarkable power.



Personal Greatness

February 21

You will never be able to eliminate a weakness you don't even know about. The first step to eliminating a negative habit is to become aware of it. Once you develop an awareness about the behavior you are trying to change, you will be well on your way to replacing it with one that is more helpful. Just as shadows held into the light dissolve, weaknesses brought into the light of self-awareness begin to disappear.



Personal Greatness

February 22

Fear is the primary factor that causes people to live small, inauthentic lives.
And most fears are illusions.



Personal Greatness

February 23

Freedom is like a house: you build it brick by brick. The first brick you should lay is willpower. This quality inspires you to do what is right in any given moment. It gives you the energy to act with courage. It gives you the control to live the life you have imagined rather than accepting the life that you have. Discipline is an antidote to regret.



Personal Greatness

February 24

The mind is a splendid tool, to be used for planning, patient reflection and learning from past mistakes so they will not be repeated. The mind will help you gain knowledge and receive education from life's teachings. But the mind must not run the show, as it does for most people. Balance living in the mind with operating from the heart. Actually, lead from the heart.



Personal Greatness

February 25

The mental chatter that fills most people's minds is mostly about why we shouldn't do something and the adverse consequences of failure. The mind all too often keeps us small.



Personal Greatness

February 26

One of the timeless truths of successful living can be stated simply: your thoughts form your world. What you focus on in your life grows, what you think about expands and what you dwell on determines your destiny. Life is a self-fulfilling prophecy—it gives you just about what you expect from it. Take a good, hard look at your environment. Your thoughts are shaped by the people you associate with, by the books you read, by the words you speak and by your daily physical surroundings. When you take steps to make the environment you work and live in a better one, you will quickly detect improvements in the way you think, feel and act.



Personal Greatness

February 27

To get the best from life, be completely present and mindful in every minute of every hour of every day. Yet, on most days, our minds are in ten different places at any one time. Rather than enjoying the walk to work, we wonder what the boss will say to us when we get to the office, or what we will have for lunch, or how our children will do at school that day. Our minds are like scampering puppies or, as they say in the East, like unchained monkeys, rushing from place to place without any pause for peace. By developing presentmoment awareness and an abundance of mental focus, you will not only feel much calmer in your life, you will also unlock the fullness of your mind's potential. And that marks the beginning of greatness.



Personal Greatness

February 28

Without the ability to concentrate, a full and complete life is not possible. If you lack the mental focus to stay with one activity for any length of time, you will never be able to achieve your goals, build your dreams or enjoy life's dazzling process. Meditation is not some contrarian practice reserved for monks sitting atop mountains. No, meditation is an age-old technique that was developed by some of the world's wisest people to gain full control of the mind and, in doing so, to manifest its enormous potential for worthy pursuits. Meditation is a method to train your mind to function the way it was designed to function. And here's the key benefit: the peace and tranquility you will feel after twenty minutes of daily meditation will infuse every remaining minute of your day. You cannot afford not to discover the power of this 5,000-year-old mind-training discipline.



March

*Personal Greatness
Destiny and Life's Purpose*



Personal Greatness

March 1

Balance head with heart. Balance chasing dreams and making things happen with letting things happen and trusting in the higher plan. Balance an awareness that the purpose of life is to return to our greatest selves with an appreciation that we are human beings with various imperfections, who reside in a world with many lovely pleasures that can—and should—be savored without guilt.



Personal Greatness

March 2

When you go after what you want, with love and wild abandon, you tap into the energy that created the stars and the seas. A kind of magic begins to enter your life and things happen that defy your comprehension. Signs start to appear, suggesting that you are on the right track.



Personal Greatness

March 3

When you do your best and dedicate yourself to excellence, life supports you and puts wind beneath your wings. It sees a human being who is reaching for his ideals and trying to become what he was meant to be. That kind of effort never goes unnoticed by the eyes that watch over the world.



Personal Greatness

March 4

Every gift we have been given—and every one of us has gifts—has been given to us for a reason. With each of the gifts we have received comes the responsibility that we sculpt it and develop it and then apply it out in the world in a way that enriches the lives of other people.



Personal Greatness

March 5

People who are not willing to set an intention for all they want from life and then to boldly pursue it are ultimately people with much fear stirring within their hearts. Don't let your fears deny you your freedom.



Personal Greatness

March 6

To blame my moods, my inactions and my mistakes on the way the planets are aligned is to give away the power I have been given as a human being to the planets, the moons and the stars. It's a weak way to live. Remember, you are not your moods but a force far bigger than them. You are not your psychology but a power far wiser than it.



Personal Greatness

March 7

We are not our thoughts. Instead, we are the creators of the thoughts that flow through our minds and, given this fact, we can change our thoughts if we choose to do so. Just as you are not your thoughts, you are not your moods. You are the creator of the moods you experience, moods that you can change in a single instant. If you choose to do so, you can feel peace in a moment of stress, joy in a time of sadness and energy during a time of fatigue.



Personal Greatness

March 8

The way to an extraordinary life lies in exploring ourselves, in learning of our greatest capacities and in understanding who we fundamentally are as people. Then, equipped with this essential knowledge, we can go out into the world to do what we have been wired to do and create the goodness that we have been placed here to create. Remember, you have a duty to shine, and this world will be less of a place if you choose to play small with your life.



Personal Greatness

March 9

Self-examination is the first step to personal greatness.



Personal Greatness

March 10

Reflection is the mother of wisdom. Carve out some time each day to ask ourselves why we are here, how we are living and whether we are making the highest use of the gifts that life has given us. Make the time to think. Daily.



Personal Greatness

March 11

Most people believe that it takes months and years to transform their lives. Actually, you can literally change your life in an instant by making a single decision never to go back to the way you have been living—no matter what. What takes months, years and sometimes decades is the maintenance required to live by that decision.



Personal Greatness

March 12

Just as a shadow fades when brought into the sunlight, a fear invited into the light of our human awareness begins to evaporate. Look within. And resolve to build a better you.



Personal Greatness

March 13

What we resist will persist. And if we refuse to do the inner work required to look at and then work through our fears, they will always run us. But if we have the courage to self-explore and get to know our fears, they will move through us, and then be released. What we befriend, we transcend.



Personal Greatness

March 14

Make the time to confront your resistances and examine yourself when frustrations or fears surface, rather than making it about others and avoiding self-responsibility. That's a giant key to growing more powerful and peaceful as a person. Our lives are mirrors. And life sends us not what we want but who we are. As we shine more brightly and stand more greatly, our outer lives cannot help but follow.



Personal Greatness

March 15

No matter who you are and no matter what your background is, you still have the power to choose how you will process the events of your life. That capacity to choose the way we will interpret what happens to us is our highest human endowment. So don't expect others to change in order for your circumstances to get better. You go ahead and take the noble path. You make the changes that need to be made. Others around you will eventually follow. The best way to influence another is to lead by example. Become who you wish others would be.



Personal Greatness

March 16

Your beliefs in life are really nothing more than mental contracts you have made with yourself about the state of affairs you find yourself in. Some people believe they are too busy to hug their children many times a day to show them their love. In doing so, they have made a contract with themselves in an effort to justify that “fact.” Some people believe that they can never live great lives because their pasts have been too difficult. In doing so, they have made a contract with themselves and resigned themselves to live by that “fact.”



Personal Greatness

March 17

It is not what you are that is holding you back in life. It's what you think you're not. It is what is going on in your inner world that is preventing you from having all that you want in your outer world. And the moment you fully grasp this insight and set about ridding your mind of all its limiting thoughts, you will see almost immediate improvements in your personal circumstances.



Personal Greatness

March 18

Happiness does not arrive when you achieve certain things. It comes when you think certain thoughts and feel certain feelings. Happiness is nothing more than a state of mind that you create by the way that you process and interpret the events of your life.



Personal Greatness

March 19

There are four dimensions of your authentic self to awaken so you can become whole once again: your mind, your body, your heart and your spirit. When you awaken these four dimensions, you will remember who you truly are.



Personal Greatness

March 20

Reading the book of another person is a reflection of their truth. Hearing a speaker at a seminar means that you will hear their truth and their philosophy on the world and on life itself. That may be fine at this stage of your journey. Learning what others think will help you to figure out what you really think. But don't make the mistake of believing that the truth of another person is necessarily your own truth. True success arrives once you live by your philosophy. Trust yourself to lead you where you dream of being.



Personal Greatness

March 21

One of the natural laws that runs the world is that when you focus on what you don't want in your life, you actually block what you do want from entering. What you invest your attention in will grow in your life. Focus on what you don't want and you'll get more of it.



Personal Greatness

March 22

Feelings are like rainstorms, with a beginning, a middle and an end. If we stifle them, they will fester like wounds. If we pay attention to them and bring them into the light of our awareness, we will move through them and they will complete. And we will move to greater and greater health.



Personal Greatness

March 23

We always have choices as human beings. Each of us has far more choices than we are aware of. We think we are so limited in life that we have to live and do what we currently do. That's just more of the language that victims are prone to use. It's always up to you—how far along the path home from your social self to your authentic self you want to go. And when you assume personal responsibility for what's not working in your life and then bravely start taking action to improve what needs to improve, doors you didn't even know existed will begin to open up.



Personal Greatness

March 24

Patience is required on this path to truth and self-awakening. Your timing may not be life's timing.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

March 25

You are far greater than you have ever dreamed of being. And no matter what you are experiencing in your life right now, trust that all is good and unfolding in your best interests. It may not look pretty, but it is exactly what you need to learn for you to grow into the person you have been destined to become. Everything occurring in your life has been perfectly orchestrated to inspire your maximal evolution as a human being and bring you into your true power. Learn from life and allow it to take you where you are meant to go—it has your highest interests in mind.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

March 26

The Abundance Principle holds that the more you give to others, the more you will ultimately receive yourself. I've discovered that if you want more abundance and prosperity in life, you need to give more. Abundance is an energy that circulates in the world, and the more you send out, the more you will see come back to you. Good things always happen to people who do good things.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

March 27

Be patient and live with the knowledge that all you are searching for is certain to come if you prepare for it and expect it. Your answers are coming. Relax.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

March 28

The mind craves external power, the kind based on worldly— rather than inner—things such as money, position and possessions. The problem with external power is that it is fleeting: when you lose the money, position and possessions, you lose the power. If you have tied your identity to those things, you will also lose a sense of who you are when they fall away. The only power worth anything is authentic power—that which comes from within.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

March 29

The heart lives in the present moment, knowing that is where life is to be lived. The heart is concerned with healing into wholeness, love, compassion, understanding and service to other human beings. It is aware that each of us is connected at an unseen level, that we are all brothers and sisters of the same family and that happiness comes from giving and supporting the growth of others into their greatest selves.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

March 30

Most of our evolution, as human beings, to date has been marked by a focus on the physical, on the external. It has, until now, all been about accumulation and hoarding. The dominant value has been “he who has the most wins”—he who has the most fame, he who has the biggest fortune, he who wields the most power over others. And given this value, “survival of the fittest” has become the name of the game. It’s all about competition because we have come to believe that there is not enough for everyone to win. But this philosophy no longer serves us as a race. It is one born of scarcity. And behind this thought of scarcity is outright fear. Since our intentions and what we think create what we see in our outer world, all we see is lack—there’s never enough for us. And so the cycle begins, we never feel as if we have enough and we are never happy.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

March 31

From today onwards, take complete control of your life. Decide, once and for all, to be the master of your fate. Run your own race. Discover your calling and you will start to experience the ecstasy of an inspired life.



April

Destiny and Life's Purpose



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 1

As human beings, our tendency is to tell life to listen to what we want. But life doesn't work that way. It gives us what we need, what is best for us—what is in our highest interests. Your life will work much better once you begin to listen to life. Let it lead you rather than trying to push the river.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 2

Trust that where life carries you is exactly where you are meant to be. Let go of all your resistance and move into a posture of surrendering to whatever is unfolding. Doing so is one of the ways you will ensure that you will walk the path of your destiny, your true path.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 3

One of the greatest regrets people can ever have is getting to the end of their lives and realizing they did not fulfill their dreams. Getting to the end or even the middle of your life and waking up one day to the understanding that you did not dare, that you did not reach for the stars, that you did not realize even one-tenth of your potential will break your heart.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 4

The past is a grave and it makes no sense to spend your life living in a grave. Every ending represents a new beginning. Or to put it another way, you cannot move forward in life if you're stuck looking in the rearview mirror.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 5

Most people don't discover what life is all about until just before they die. While we are young, we spend our days striving and keeping up with social expectations. We are so busy chasing life's big pleasures that we miss out on the little ones, like dancing barefoot in a park on a rainy day with our kids or planting a rose garden or watching the sun come up. We live in an age where we have conquered the highest of mountains but have yet to master our selves. We have taller buildings but shorter tempers, more possessions but less happiness, fuller minds but emptier lives. Do not wait until you are on your deathbed to realize the meaning of life and the precious role you have to play within it.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 6

No one discovers their destiny. Your destiny will discover you—it will find you, provided you have done the preparation and inner work required to seize the opportunity when it presents itself.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 7

Stop worrying about finding your destiny. Spend your time getting to know yourself. Tear down the façade you show to the world and do the deep inner work on yourself needed to know who you really are.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 8

Most of us know what we need to do in order to live happier, healthier and more fulfilling lives. The real problem is that we don't do what we know. The mark of an exceptional character lies not in doing only what is fun to do or what is easy to do. The sign of deep moral authority appears in the individual who consistently does what he ought to do rather than what he feels like doing, showing a flawless execution of what's most important.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 9

Trust that your timing is not necessarily nature's timing. Flow into the process. You are not meant to know all the answers, at least not right now. When you are ready for a piece of learning and a specific lesson, it will come. What fun would it be if you knew all the plot twists of a movie halfway into it?



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 10

Too many people can't handle the notion that their plans and goals will not unfold as they anticipate. That kind of thinking reflects a control issue on their part. And behind their need to control is often fear. Life has bigger plans for you than you can possibly know.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 11

Yes, make plans and set goals. Work hard and go for what you desire. That's part of being a responsible person—it is true that setting intentions does make many of them come to life. But hold on to your plans and goals with a very loose grip. Often, the universe will send you a treasure in an unexpected package.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 12

Unless you reduce your needs, you will never be fulfilled. You will always be like that gambler in Vegas, staying at the roulette wheel for “just one more spin” in the hope that your lucky number will come up. You will always want more than you have. Lifelong happiness does come through working and doing your part to realize your dreams. The key is not to make your happiness contingent on finding that elusive pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. The journey is always better than the end.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 13

Within you lie the sun, the moon, the sky and all the wonders of this universe. The intelligence that created these wonders is the same force that created you. All things around you come from the same source. We are all one.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 14

When you nourish your own mind and your own spirit, you are really feeding the Soul of Life. When you improve yourself, you are improving the lives of all those around you. And when you have the courage to advance confidently in the direction of your dreams, you begin to draw upon the power of the universe.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 15

When you are ready to receive a certain lesson, you will receive the perfect experience or person who will represent an opportunity for you to learn that lesson. And once you get the lesson, time must elapse so you can integrate it. There's no hurry. It's all a beautiful journey. Trust that where you are, at any given point, is precisely where you are meant to be.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 16

Let go of your need to control the path of your destiny. Because, no matter how hard you try, you just can't. Sure, you can make wise choices and your choices will have an impact. But ultimately, you are not in control. We are so arrogant as human beings. We think that we are more intelligent than the universe. This universe that created the sunsets and the rainbows. This universe that created the stars and the moon. We think that we know more about what's in our best interests than the source that created all that exists.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 17

If you keep choosing to grow and walk in the direction of your fears, you will move to higher and higher stages of personal freedom and individual greatness. you will be able to discover what life's really all about. You will begin to know the universal truths and natural laws that govern the operation of the world. Once you know these, you can keep choosing to align yourself with them. And when you align yourself with the natural laws that run the world, your life automatically works.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 18

Generally the things that we value most when we are in our twenties, thirties and forties become the things we value least at the end of our lives. And all those things that so many among us currently value least, like deep human connections, random acts of kindness, being in superb physical condition, devoting ourselves to excellence in our work, creating a legacy and carving out time each day to work on ourselves so that the best within us shines, will—in the end—reveal themselves to be most valuable.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 19

On our deathbeds, none of us wishes we had more money in the bank or a bigger car sitting in the driveway. Instead, as we take our last few breaths, we wish that we had lived a life that was courageous, authentic and remarkably loving.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 20

Each and every one of us has an incredible amount of choice in the way our lives ultimately unfold. It is by our specific choices that our ultimate destinies are created. It's almost as though a rough design or sketch of our lives has been made for us by that wise architect in the sky and it falls to us to draw out so many of the details.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 21

There's no doubt that, as human beings, we cannot control all that happens to us—that's the fate part. Life runs along according to its own course. But what we do have enormous control over is the way we respond to what life sends our way. So that's the partnership: do your best—the very best that you know how to do in every dimension of your life—and then let life do the rest. It's really a delicate balance between making it happen and letting it happen.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 22

We really can make our own luck a lot of the time, and good things generally do happen to people who do good things. But once you've done your absolute best, let go and trust that whatever comes is perfectly suited for the growth you need to evolve into your best self.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 23

Many possible paths to our best lives have been written for us.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 24

One of the most enduring of all the ancient laws of humanity is that we see the world not as it is, but as we are. By improving, refining and defining who we are, we see the world from the highest, clearest perspective. By mastering ourselves, we see the world and all its limitless opportunities and potential from the top of the mountain rather than from the bottom.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 25

There are many paths to the mountaintop of peace.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 26

Just as there are many routes you can take to get home from work, there are many routes you can take to get to your biggest life, the life that has been meant for you—and getting there is a homecoming of sorts as well. There are many jobs you can take that will get you to your destiny. Similarly, there are many soul mates available to you, each offering different lessons, but all able to help you grow into and awaken your best self. Getting home to the place of brilliance, love and fearlessness you have forgotten is the reason for your existence. Now, it's up to you which path you take as you attempt to get to your authentic life. Taking one path might mean a longer trip. Taking another might be like taking an expressway to your destination, with a smooth ride and cloudless blue skies. It's up to you. It is, in large part, determined by the choices you make within the moments of your days. You co-write the script that has been written for the story of your life.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 27

Do good and be good. This world of ours is run according to a series of immutable natural laws, laws created by the same force of nature that built the world and sent you here. You cannot play a game like golf without knowing the rules. Well, life's like a game as well. And in order to play—and win—it's essential that you learn the rules. Live your life in alignment with them and your life will work.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 28

Life wants you to win. Did you know that? You just need to get out of your own way and figure out the rules to the game as quickly as you can. And learning the rules of the game takes some effort, deep thinking in silent places and a genuine willingness to be a philosopher.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 29

Everyone, if they hope to walk the path of their destinies to their biggest lives, must develop an appreciation for wisdom and a hunger to understand what their life is all about. This world would be a much better place if we all began to view ourselves as philosophers, thoughtfully—and artfully—being in the process of sculpting more delightful and meaningful lives.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

April 30

Govern your daily actions by the timeless natural laws and you will automatically take the expressway to your greatest life. Disregard them and you'll be taking the long way home.



May

Destiny and Life's Purpose

Authenticity



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 1

Natural laws have governed the operation of the world since it began. They include core principles such as “always help others get what they want while you get what you want,” “have impeccable integrity,” “live in the present moment,” “become the kindest person you know,” “do your best and be excellent in all you do,” “be true to yourself” and “dream bravely.” Most of us know these principles but so few of us live by them.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 2

While on his deathbed, Plato was asked by a friend to summarize his great life's work, *The Dialogues*. After much reflection, he replied in only two words: "Practice dying." The ancient thinkers had a saying that captured the point Plato made in other terms: "Death ought to be right there before the eyes of those who are young just as much as before the eyes of those who are very old. Every day, therefore, should be regulated as if it were the one that brings up the rear, the one that rounds out and completes our lives." Time is a priceless commodity and the best time to live a richer, wiser and more fulfilling life is now.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 3

Life is not ignorant of your heart's longings. The part of the plan that has been written for you would never involve you doing something that was wrong for you. The whole idea is for you to be happy. Your destiny will never lead you to do something that would make you unhappy.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 4

Remember that not everything will work out the way you want it to. There's a higher intelligence at play whose logic we often cannot understand. But if you just keep doing your best and letting life do the rest, accepting whatever comes with the knowledge that it's for your highest good, life will work out wonderfully. Better than expected, actually.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 5

Human beings have been given free will for a reason: to take the steps required to bring our dreams and our destinies to life. There are lots of blanks we have the power to fill in and lots of dots to connect. You must put in the effort and make the sacrifices required to live the life of your dreams. Hard work, self-discipline and daily improvement are essential elements to becoming remarkable.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 6

Every second you dwell on the past you steal from your future. Every minute you spend focusing on your problems you take away from finding your solutions. And thinking about all those things that you wish never happened to you is actually preventing all the things you want to happen from entering into your life.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 7

After you've done your part by giving your best, relax and accept whatever comes back to you. You did all you could do. You acted responsibly and made the best moves and highest choices that were within your power to make. Now let the higher power take over and lead you to where you were meant to go. Let life take you to the path of your destiny.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 8

Deep fulfillment in life does not come from accumulating objects but from actualizing our selves. Life isn't about collecting nice things, although there's nothing wrong with having them. But material pursuits shouldn't be the main purpose that drives your days. If it is, if you sacrifice time with your family and time developing yourself for time spent chasing objects, one day you will end up in a very sad state.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 9

Confusion always gives rise to clarity over time and a moment does come when all the new learning becomes wonderfully integrated within your understanding. This is the beginning of real wisdom. Celebrate your confusion because it is simply a reflection of your growth. It is always a little chaotic when we leave the Safe Harbor of The Known and sail out in search of New Oceans.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 10

A wise sage met a beggar on the street one day. The beggar, not knowing to whom he was speaking, stopped the sage and asked him three questions: Why are you here? Where are you going? Is there an important reason that you are going there? The sage looked at the beggar and asked how much money he generally made on a given day. On hearing the honest answer given to him, the sage said, "Please come and work for me. I will pay you ten times that amount if only you will ask me these three questions before I do my meditation, early each and every morning."



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 11

We must frequently be in connection with our dreams. This universe of ours really is a friendly place and we would not be able to dream a dream without having the corresponding capacity to bring the dream to life. So keep making the time to think about your dreams and most closely cherished visions.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 12

When a seeker on the path home to his true self—to his destiny—makes the decision to commit to walking toward the life that was meant for him, he will inevitably reach a point when he begins to see there is an entirely different world out there than he has ever known. This is an incredible place for a human being to arrive at. The limits vanish. He's ready to play with possibility.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 13

As you leave the illusion that your life has been and start seeing the world for what it really is—a place of astonishing beauty—the pace of synchronicity in your life will quicken, as well. The more courage and conviction you show in living the life that the universe wants you to live, the more it will send you its blessings. It will give you its green lights.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 14

Life is a growth school, ideally created to give us opportunities to learn each of the lessons we need to learn over the course of our lives on the planet. We live on "Schoolhouse Earth."



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 15

The past is water under the bridge and the future is a distant sun on the horizon of your imagination. The most important moment is now. Learn to live in it and savor it fully.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 16

The saddest part of life lies not in the act of dying, but in failing to truly live while we are alive. Too many of us play small with our lives, never letting the fullness of our humanity see the light of day.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 17

If you don't act on life, life has a habit of acting on you. And the days slip into weeks and the weeks into months and before you know it, your life will be over. Life's pretty short— no matter how long you get to live. Before you know it, you'll be dust. The point of wisdom is clear: stop living your life by default and start living your life by design. Get back into the game and take action to create the richer reality you know deep within your heart you were destined to create.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 18

The fact that you are asking big questions means you are growing and awakening. You are leaving the crowd and becoming more conscious. Asking the right question is often how you find the right answer. In doing so you are discovering your truth and your authentic life.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 19

Questioning unlocks the knowing that already exists within your heart. Ask the right question and I promise you, the answer you seek will surface—when the time is right. Questions are powerful.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 20

One key natural law is this one: we never get more than we can handle. The path is lovingly planned for you and you will never receive more knowledge or truth than you are ready for. So all the pieces come to you only when you are ready to receive them. The student must be patient. Timing is important and the answers will come.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 21

It is easy not to listen to what the Quakers call the “still, small voice within,” that inner guide that is your personal source of wisdom. It is often difficult to march to your own drumbeat and listen to your instincts when the world around you pressures you to conform to its dictates. Yet, to find the fulfillment, abundance and outright greatness that you seek, you must listen to those hunches and feelings that come to you when you most need them.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 22

You are on the path that has been walked by many great human beings before you. Your experience is not unique. Just keep the faith and continue choosing to go deeper and deeper within yourself. All of the answers that you are looking for are within you.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 23

Life is a beautiful tapestry that has been perfectly woven together. We often do not receive what we want but we always receive what we need. We always get what's in our highest interest. That's one of life's greatest lessons.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 24

No book could ever come close to teaching you what life itself can teach you if you live it with your eyes wide open and are awake to its lessons. To risk is to live. We play small, thinking that's a safe way to live when that's actually the most unsafe place to be. There is no safety in the Safe Harbor of The Known. That's just an illusion we get seduced by. And it can waste a good life.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 25

A caterpillar cannot remain in the cocoon forever. A butterfly must emerge when the time is right. Just trust in nature's timing; it's not on the same clock as you. Remember that always. Your pain will pass—it always does.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 26

There is a brilliant coherence that runs our lives. The more we can stop trying to force outcomes and simply be in the flow, the more the magic that our lives are meant to be will appear. Trying to make everything happen and force results without balancing things off with a willingness to let things happen is nothing more than control.



Destiny and Life's Purpose

May 27

Not everyone who embarks on the path home will reach the destination. Most do not. But every single day offers us the opportunity to step a little closer to the ideal and become more of who we were meant to become. Every single day on the path brings greater blessings and more personal power— if we look for them. And the authentic power that you reclaim by working on yourself can never be taken from you. It stays with you for life.



Authenticity

May 28

Newborn children represent perfection and the state of being to which each of us is duty-bound to return. In the instant after you were born, you were fearless, pure love, innocent, infinitely wise, of boundless potential and beautifully connected with the unseen hand that created the universe. Most of us on the planet today have lost this connection to our authentic selves, this original state of being in which we were unafraid to walk toward possibility and reach for the stars. We have forgotten who we are.



Authenticity

May 29

Every single one of us has a light side as well as a dark side. Each of us has flaws to mend and wounds within us that cry out to be healed. Every single one of us has a splintered soul. This condition of imperfection is actually what makes us human.



Authenticity

May 30

You are a seeker, as are so many others on the planet today. The world is transforming as people who were once willing to live ordinary lives now step out of their comfort zones to explore the wilderness of the extraordinary. People are no longer willing to settle for being half-alive, divorced from their authentic power. They want to live greatly and soar among the clouds, to walk among the giants, to dance with the stars.



Authenticity

May 31

If you want to improve your life and live with all that you deserve, you must run your own race. It doesn't matter what other people say about you. What is important is what you say to yourself, being comfortable in your own skin. Be true to you. That's a key source of happiness.



June

Authenticity

Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment



Authenticity

June 1

Every human being needs to carve out the time to articulate a philosophy for his or her life—it's one of the most important things a person can do. Every person, to live truly and greatly, must define how he wants to live and what his biggest life will look like. We all need to have a statement on a piece of paper that we can revisit every morning while the rest of the world is asleep. Such a statement will serve as a moral compass to direct the choices of our day, and it will serve as an anchor to lock us into our best moves. Without a statement of philosophy, you will live your life by accident, reacting to whatever shows up within your days.



Authenticity

June 2

Most people spend more time planning their summer vacations than they do planning their lives. Be thoughtful about your life. Ask yourself: “How am I meant to live?” Question what you are meant to do, what things you will no longer tolerate in your life and what standards of excellence you will hold yourself to.



Authenticity

June 3

As infants, we really are perfect. We are still connected to the force that created the world. But as we begin to age, we adopt fears from the world around us. We want our parents to love and adore us. So we model them and take on their fears, limiting beliefs and false assumptions so we can be more like them. It's all done because we crave love. Who you are in this moment is not who you truly are. Rather, it's someone you've become as a result of being in this world. To clear all those fears that you have assumed from the world around you, you will need to go back and explore the source of all your fears. Then you'll have to work through them until they are no longer part of your psyche.



Authenticity

June 4

If you do not know who you are and what it is you truly want to be, then how can you recognize and seize your destiny when it presents itself to you? Know yourself and your destiny will find you. Clarity precedes mastery.



Authenticity

June 5

Truly successful people never seek to be like others. Rather, they seek to be superior to their former selves. Don't race against others. Race against yourself. Just resolve to be better than who you were yesterday and extraordinary things will unfold for you.



Authenticity

June 6

There's not a soul on the planet who doesn't have some fear that limits him from realizing his truest potential. The very condition of being human is one of imperfection and much of this imperfection arises due to the fears we have picked up as we have left the perfection of our original nature and traveled out into the world.



Authenticity

June 7

Stop bending to the demands of social pressure at the expense of your uniqueness. When you study the lives of the world's most successful and revered people, you will see that they did not care what other people thought of them. Rather than letting public opinion dictate their actions, they had the courage to let their hearts drive them. And in taking the road less traveled, they found success beyond their wildest dreams. Authentic success isn't a popularity contest.



Authenticity

June 8

It takes great strength to leave the crowd and be true to your original nature. But that's what leadership is all about—leaving the crowd and being true to who you really are. Running your own race. Living your truth.



Authenticity

June 9

We already are everything we've always dreamed of being. We've just forgotten it along the way. The main aim, then, is not to develop ourselves so that we become someone new. The endgame is really to discover who we truly are—and stand in all we are meant to become.



Authenticity

June 10

There's not one person on the planet who needs to improve— one cannot improve upon perfection and any suggestion that we need to do so only makes us feel more guilt about not being enough. The duty of every human being is not self-improvement but self-remembering. To self-remember is to reclaim the state of being and the authentic power that we lost when we left the ideal state of newborn children and walked out into this fear-filled world of ours, a world that spoiled us along the way.



Authenticity

June 11

Nothing's more important than having the bravery to live your life.



Authenticity

June 12

Most people who live among the crowd never press the pause button in their lives and stop for even sixty seconds to reflect on why they are here and what they are meant to do. Leadership and personal success require that we become more thoughtful than ordinary people. Stop being busy being busy. Become more reflective.



Authenticity

June 13

So as you continue along this path to your authentic life—as you leave the crowd and begin to live by your values, your beliefs and your heart’s desires, you, as a seeker, will inevitably reach the “choicepoint.” How you respond at this juncture will make all the difference in terms of how the rest of your life will unfold.



Authenticity

June 14

The purpose of life is all about making the journey home to wholeness, back to a place of integrity, back to your authentic self—the one that is fearless, all-knowing and of boundless love.



Authenticity

June 15

The process by which we leave our authentic self and become people that we are not—by taking on beliefs, values and behaviors from those around us—is known as enculturation. And as we leave our true selves, morphing into our social selves, a gap begins to form. We leave our original nature and assume the false mask of personality.



Authenticity

June 16

The greater the gap between who we truly are and the public personas that we present to the world, the less our lives will work. And the less joy we will experience. Why? Because there can be no happiness when we are betraying ourselves.



Authenticity

June 17

Darkness is nothing more than an absence of light: once you pour the light of human awareness and understanding into the darkest recesses of your being, you will become a being filled with light. Where there was once fear, there will be love. Remember what it means to be “en-light-ened”: one filled with light.



Authenticity

June 18

With every move you make to be love when fear wants to own you, you reclaim—and remember—your original nature. Every single thing you do to present your biggest self to the world has the corresponding effect of helping you take back more of the authentic power that you were born with.



Authenticity

June 19

Most of us live our entire lives wearing a social mask that hides our true selves. Rather than showing the full colors of our humanity, we work hard to sculpt an image of the person we think the world wants us to be. We say the things other people want us to say and wear the clothes other people want us to wear and do the things other people want us to do. Rather than living the lives we have been destined to live, we end up living the lives of other people. And in so doing, we die a slow death.



Authenticity

June 20

Make the time to connect to your more playful side, the child within you. Take the time to study the positive qualities of children and model their ability to stay energized, imaginative and completely in the moment no matter what might be going on around them.



Authenticity

June 21

All of the great wisdom traditions of the world have arrived at the same conclusion: to reconnect with who you really are as a person and to come to know the glory that rests within you, you must find the time to be silent on a regular basis. Sure, you are busy. But as Thoreau said: “It is not enough to be busy; so are the ants. The question is what are you so busy about?”



Authenticity

June 22

As you move to higher and higher stages on the path to self-mastery, you will develop your own philosophy about the way life works and your place within it. You will select the truths of others that resonate with the deepest part of you. You will integrate the wisdom of others that rings true to you. And you will discard those ideas that do not speak to you and fail to make sense. In doing so, you will forge your own authentic code and personal constitution for living your biggest life. That's when you begin to shine.



Authenticity

June 23

When we awaken the spirit we nurture our highest self. This looks like different things to different people. To some, the spirit may involve prayer. For others, caring for the spirit may be reflected by communing with nature or listening to moving music. For yet others, awakening the spirit involves service, volunteerism, and living for a crusade larger than oneself.



Authenticity

June 24

Wise people remind themselves that every day could be their last. In doing so, they make it their commitment to be love rather than fear during the hours of their day. And they continually choose to be extraordinary—even when it's difficult—versus ordinary.



Authenticity

June 25

The more deeply we know ourselves, the more we can make authentic choices to make the leadership journey back home to the place that we have always known, at our core, we have wanted to be. In the Greco-Roman temples of the past, above the entrance one would often find the following words: “Know thyself and you will know the secrets of the universe and the gods.”



Authenticity

June 26

Growth sometimes comes in difficult ways. But growth is always good. If you could look down at your life from a 50,000-foot perspective, you would see that everything that's happening is very beautiful. Priceless, actually.



Authenticity

June 27

We are literally afraid of who we truly are. We are afraid of our light. We are afraid of our brilliance. We are afraid of our highest possibility. We are afraid to stand tall and let our light shine into the world. With great gifts comes great responsibility. Most human beings don't want to look at their gifts because they don't want to deal with the responsibility that those gifts present—the responsibility to live fearlessly and make a difference in the world. And in doing so, they shrink from their greatness.



Authenticity

June 28

Conversation deepens conviction. The more you can converse about the things that you want to become, the more you will be able to dedicate yourself to doing what needs to be done. Words do have power.



Authenticity

June 29

Listening to the gentle whispers of the holiest places of the heart is all about discovering—and then heeding—the calls that come from the deepest place within you. Sometimes we hear these whispers when we are completely connected with nature, while we are out for a solitary walk in the woods on a magnificent autumn day, for example. Sometimes we hear these whispers while we are experiencing silence—in meditation or another form of contemplation. And sometimes these calls come to us in life's most trying and seemingly hopeless moments, like when someone we love dies or when one of our dreams shatters. The point of wisdom is simply this: pay attention and be aware of the inner voices that will lead you down the path of your destiny. Listen to what your heart tells you to do. And commit yourself to living out your destiny so you will leave a meaningful legacy.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

June 30

Your wounds can be turned into your wisdom. Your stumbling blocks can become your stepping stones if you choose. Do not miss the remarkable opportunity that adversity and even tragedy presents. Your life can be made even better by the things that break your heart.



July

Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 1

Immediately before a great victory, one will often experience a stunning defeat. The key is to maintain your focus and keep on believing. Don't give up.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 2

No matter what happens to you in your life, you alone have the capacity to choose your response to it. When you form the habit of searching for the positive in every circumstance, your life will move into its highest dimensions. This is one of the greatest of all the natural laws of success and happiness.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 3

There are no mistakes in life, only lessons. There is no such thing as a negative experience, only opportunities to grow, learn and advance along the road of self-mastery. From struggle comes strength. Even pain can be a wonderful teacher.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 4

Suffering has always been a vehicle for deep spiritual growth. Those who have endured great suffering are generally the ones who evolve into great beings. Those who have been deeply hurt by life are generally the ones who can feel the pain of others in a heartbeat. Those who have endured adversity become humbled by life and, as a result, are more open, compassionate and real.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 5

We may not like suffering when it visits us, but it serves us so very well: it cracks the shell that covers our hearts and empties us of the lies we have clung to about who we are, why we are here and how this remarkable world of ours really functions.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 6

When we face hard times, we think the way we see the world reflects the way it really is. This is a false assumption. We are simply viewing the world from our hopeless frame of reference. We are seeing things through sad and hopeless eyes. The truth of the matter is that when we begin to feel better, our world will look better. And when we return to a state of joyfulness within, our outer world will reflect that feeling to us.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 7

The world is a mirror. We receive from life not what we want but who we are. There are seasons to our lives and painful times never last. Trust that the winter of your sorrow will yield to the summer of your joy, just as the brilliant rays of the morning always follow the darkest part of the night.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 8

Pain and adversity are powerful vehicles to promote personal growth. Nothing helps you learn, grow and evolve more quickly. Nothing offers you as big an opportunity to reclaim more of your authentic power as a person.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 9

You would not have the wisdom and knowledge you now possess were it not for the setbacks you have faced, the mistakes you have made and the suffering you have endured. Once and for all, come to realize that pain is a teacher and failure is the highway to success. You cannot learn how to play the guitar without hitting a few wrong notes and you will never learn how to sail if you are not willing to tip the boat over a few times. Begin to see your troubles as blessings.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 10

It is a truth that in our darkest times we are willing to go the deepest. When life is good, we live superficially; we are not very reflective. But when the seas get rough, we step out of ourselves and ponder why things have unfolded as they have. This leads to remarkable learning and growth. And life is all about growth and stepping into who we are meant to be.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 11

We all travel different roads to our ultimate destinations. For some of us, the path is rockier than for others. But no one reaches the end without facing some form of adversity. So rather than fight it, why not accept it as the way of life? Why not detach yourself from the outcomes and simply experience every circumstance that enters your life to the fullest? Feel the pain and savor the happiness. If you have never visited the valleys, the view from the mountaintop is not as breathtaking.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 12

Adversity tends to make us more philosophical. During times of challenge, we begin to ask ourselves the bigger questions of life, such as why does suffering happen, why do our best-laid plans not work out as we expect, and is life ruled by the silent hand of chance or the powerful fist of choice.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 13

Things are never as bad as they seem. The situations that cause us sorrow are the same ones that introduce us to the strength, power and wisdom that we truly are.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 14

There is nothing wrong with making mistakes. Mistakes are part of life and essential for growth. But there is something very wrong with making the same mistakes over and over again, day in and day out. This shows a complete lack of self-awareness, the very quality that separates humans from animals. Learn from your life and let your past serve you.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 15

Once and for all stop being so hard on yourself. You are a human being and human beings have been designed to make mistakes. Coming to the realization that we all make mistakes and that they are essential to our growth and progress is liberating. We lose the need to be perfect and adopt a more sensible way of viewing our lives. We can begin to flow through life the way a mountain stream flows through a leafy forest, powerfully yet gracefully. We can finally be at peace with our true nature.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 16

Failure is not having the courage to try, nothing more and nothing less. The only thing standing between most people and their dreams is the fear of failure. Yet failure is essential to success in any endeavor. It offers us lessons and guides us along the path of genuine success.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 17

Some people learn from the errors others have made. They are the wise. Others feel that true learning comes only from personal experience. Such people endure needless pain and distress over the course of their lives.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 18

The only people without problems and adversity are six feet under the ground. To live is to face problems, pain and suffering. These things are vehicles for growth, expansion and lifelong learning. They are part of the human experience.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 19

Life's trials are nothing more than opportunities to collect wisdom and platforms to remember more of our authentic power, if we choose. But let's not forget, every life will have its share of triumphs and beautiful times as well.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 20

No hardship ever lasts. No setback is forever. No misery lasts an eternity. It may seem as though adversity will never go away as we experience it but that's not the truth. Life has its seasons, its chapters, if you will. And the hard times are ultimately the times that sculpt us into something better.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 21

We can reduce the suffering in our lives by assuming absolute personal responsibility for ourselves and making wise choices during the hours of our days. In this way, we do shape our destiny and have the power to live much happier lives.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 22

Albert Camus once wrote, “In the midst of winter, I found there was within me an invincible summer.” We really don’t discover how powerful and resilient we are until we face some adversity that fills our minds with stress and our hearts with pain. Then we realize that we all have within us the courage and the capacity to handle even the greatest curves life may throw our way. Hard times do make us stronger.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 23

Nothing that happens to us in life has any meaning other than the meaning we attach to it. Pain and suffering only come from judgment. As we release judgment and stop labeling things as “positive” or “negative” and simply accept them as opportunities to evolve into our biggest selves, our lives transform. And we become filled with peace and joy.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 24

There really is no such thing as a “bad experience” or even a good one. Life just is. Just maybe, it’s all good.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 25

Suffering in life is really nothing more than the difference between the way things are and the way you imagine they should be. If you can come to accept the blessings of your present reality without always feeling that your life is hollow as compared to the lives of others, you will have taken a quantum leap toward becoming a happier, more peaceful person.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 26

Before a seeker reaches the final destination of her biggest self, she will be presented with a trial. Before she reaches the treasure she has been longing for, she will be given a test. That's just the way life works on the path. If you study any great book of wisdom that describes this voyage of personal awakening, you will see that that seeker—or the hero— always faces some trial or adversity just before he gets the prize: the life that has been desired.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 27

Most people give up just before they reach their dreams. Most people quit only steps away from getting everything they wanted. Don't let that happen to you.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 28

Remember that life is a series of seasons. Every human being will have to endure the harshness of a few winters in order to get to the glory of the best summers. And never forget that winters do not last.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 29

Keep in mind, at all times, that we grow the most from our greatest suffering. As we go through it, it hurts. But as we move through it, it also heals. When a jug of water falls to the floor and cracks, what was hidden within begins to pour out. When life sends you one of its curves, remember that it has come to help crack you open so that all the love, power and potential that have been slumbering within you can be poured into the world outside you. And, like a fractured bone, we do become stronger in the broken places.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 30

During tough times, there is a tendency to let go of yourself. As you encounter adversity, have the discipline to maintain your routine. Get up early. Do your holy hour. Eat very well. Exercise. Spend time with nature and make sure that you do all you can to keep all four of your central dimensions—the mind, the body, the heart and the spirit—in fine operating order.



Overcoming Adversity and Disappointment

July 31

Feel your feelings. When you are facing hard times, some people will tell you to “just think positive thoughts.” Such advice is not helpful. One must not rush to reframe a so-called negative event as a positive one. Doing so will throw you into denial. Feel through the feelings of hurt, anger or sadness that will naturally surface. It’s okay to be with them. It’s actually healthy to do so. Processing through them allows you to release them. Just don’t get stuck in them. Grieve when you need to. Then, when it’s time to go and move on, move on. Life is for the living.



August

Understanding Human Nature

Leadership

Honor and Strength of Character

Real Success



Understanding Human Nature

August 1

Only people in pain can do painful things. Only people who have been hurt can hurt others. Only people with closed hearts are able to act in less than loving ways.



Understanding Human Nature

August 2

To conquer, One first must yield. Rather than going against the change, one should flow with it. The nature of water is to flow. It goes with the current. It does not resist. It does not hesitate before it yields. But it is also one of the most powerful forces on the earth.



Understanding Human Nature

August 3

Keeping your cool in a moment of crisis can save you years of pain and anguish. A strategy to control your temper is what I call the “Three Gate Test.” The ancient sages would only speak if the words they were about to utter passed three gates. At the first gate, they asked themselves, are these words truthful? if so, the words could then pass on to the second gate. At the second gate, the sages asked, Are these words necessary? If so, they would pass on to the third gate, where they would ask, Are these words kind? If so, then only would the words leave their lips and be sent out into the world.



Leadership

August 4

Leadership is really a philosophy for life. While CEOs and managers can be great leaders, so can caring teachers, committed scientists and compassionate mothers. Coaches lead sports teams and politicians lead communities. And it all begins within, by having the self-discipline to lead and know yourself. So lead Without Title.



Leadership

August 5

Visionary leaders show their people a higher, more inspiring reality when the rest of the world sees darkness. And they lead by example—ensuring their video is aligned with their audio.



Leadership

August 6

True leadership of human beings lies in commending them rather than in condemning them. The deeper your relationship with others, the more effective your leadership of them will be. The best leaders are people who feel great about themselves.



Honor and Strength of Character

August 7

To become an effective leader and a peak performer on the playing field of life, you cannot be a generalist, trying to be all things to all people. Specialists win. Focus your best talents on your biggest opportunities.



Honor and Strength of Character

August 8

Every promise you break, no matter how small and seemingly inconsequential, steadily chips away at your character. Each time you don't honor a commitment, you chip away at the bonds between you and the people in your life.



Honor and Strength of Character

August 9

Living life without a devotion to excellence dishonors the priceless gifts and talents that have been given to you.



Honor and Strength of Character

August 10

Do the right things. Act in a way that is congruent with your true character.
Act with integrity. Be guided by your heart. The rest will take care of itself.



Honor and Strength of Character

August 11

No matter how big a house you have or how slick a car you drive, the only thing you can take with you at the end of your life is your conscience. Listen to your conscience. Let it guide you. It knows what is right. It will tell you that your calling in life is ultimately selfless service to others in some form or another.



Honor and Strength of Character

August 12

Don't treat your words lightly. They are powerful and can have dramatic consequences. When you say anything, make certain you mean it. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Authentic communication is powerful. And rare.



Real Success

August 13

Success lies in a masterful consistency around the fundamentals. The best get better by staying wildly focused on the simple principles of excellence, principles such as treating people well, working hard, refusing to give up, seeing opportunity where others see failure and staying true to you.



Real Success

August 14

The secret of happiness is simple: find out what you truly love to do and then direct all of your energy toward doing it. Once you are concentrating your mental power and energy on a pursuit that you love, abundance flows into your life, and all your desires are fulfilled with ease and grace.



Real Success

August 15

Lasting happiness comes from steadily working to accomplish your goals and advancing confidently in the direction of your life's purpose. This is the secret to kindling the inner fire that lurks within you.



Real Success

August 16

The happiness you are searching for comes through reflecting on the worthy aims you are dedicated to achieving and then taking action daily to advance them. This is a direct application of the timeless philosophy that prescribes that those things that are most important should never be sacrificed to those things that are the least important.



Real Success

August 17

Have your beautiful things but do not be imprisoned by them. Own them but do not let them own you. Give the main aim of your life over to far more important pursuits such as discovery of your highest potential, giving of yourself to others and making a difference by living for something more important than yourself. Success is fine but significance is the real name of the game.



Real Success

August 18

What's the point of spending your life climbing a mountain, only to discover you've scaled the wrong one?



Real Success

August 19

Remember that there are many forms of wealth, financial wealth being only one of them. One who has rich relationships and a loving community around her is, in my mind, wealthy. One who has a life of excellent health, adventure, excitement and continuous learning has wealth of a different sort. And one who is deeply connected to all of life and wakes up every morning feeling deeply at peace and aware of the truth must certainly be considered to be one who has accumulated yet another form of riches. The crowd—our tribe called Society—has taught us that economic wealth is the only type of wealth we should chase. Not true.



Real Success

August 20

Money is only a byproduct of adding value and doing good for others. Focus on being great at what you do. Dedicate yourself to offering others all you can to make their lives better. Be truly outstanding in every element of your professional and your personal life. Create extraordinary value for others. The money will follow.



Real Success

August 21

All too often we get caught up in thinking that we need to achieve certain heroic acts in order to validate our lives and bring us great success. We get fooled into believing we must accumulate expensive toys and an excess of belongings in order to be fulfilled at the end of the day. But that's not the way to real happiness. Real and lasting happiness comes through the progressive accumulation of unforgettable memories and special moments.



Real Success

August 22

Living an excellent life is a manifestation of self-love. Someone who conducts his life as if he were one of the greatest people on the planet—a true heavyweight—is someone who not only has enormous self-respect but one who has deep respect for the force of nature that created him.



Real Success

August 23

A seeker on the path home to his or her authentic and biggest self will always have to face fears he or she never knew existed. While living an unconscious life, many of our fears live within the realm of our subconscious minds. Consciously, we do not even know they are there. They lie dormant within us. But they are, affecting every one of our choices and running our lives at an invisible level. As we awaken and choose to see our lives from a more truthful frame of reference, our fears begin to see the light of day—and we must confront them if we want to transcend them.



Real Success

August 24

Create a life that will be considered a work of art. You have that potential. We all do, as a matter of fact. It all comes down to whether you want to do the inner work required to get there. Self-mastery is where life mastery begins. Your outer world cannot be bigger than you.



Real Success

August 25

Writing in a journal on a regular basis is very powerful. This helps you get to know yourself and deepen your self-relationship. Your journal should be a place you visit and examine yourself. With the awareness that brings, you can then pledge to make better choices. And better choices lead to better results.



Real Success

August 26

If you have the courage to respect your body—the temple that houses the person that you are—personal mastery will not be far away. Each time you get into the gym for a workout on a day you just don't feel like exercising, you grow a little stronger as a human being. Each time you go out for a run on a cold winter's day when under the covers feels like the best place to be, you actualize your humanity just a little more. Working on improving your physical condition is a great way to improve your character and enrich the quality of your life. Good health is true wealth. What's the point of being the richest person in the graveyard?



Real Success

August 27

In life, the little things are actually the big things. And the quality of success you will experience in your life ultimately depends upon the tiny choices you make every minute of every hour of every day.



Real Success

August 28

One of the timeless secrets to a long, happy life is to love your work. The golden thread running through the lives of history's most satisfied people is that they all loved what they did for a living. When psychologist Vera John-Steiner interviewed one hundred creative people, she found they all had one thing in common: an intense passion for their work. Spending your days doing work that you find rewarding, intellectually challenging and fun will do more than all the spa vacations in the world to keep your spirits high and your heart engaged.



Real Success

August 29

One of the most powerful things you can do is to write the story of your life in advance. It may not turn out exactly as you articulate it, but as the old saying goes: “If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will get you there.” Better to have a plan in place than no plan at all. Planning is a powerful act of personal responsibility.



Real Success

August 30

Happiness is not about chasing greater net worth—it's about cultivating a greater self-worth. It's not about having more money but about finding more meaning. And it's not about only being successful but about being truly significant—a person who creates lasting value in the world.



Real Success

August 31

Maturity as a human being is loving what you have rather than worrying too much about having what you love.



September

Extraordinary Achievement



Extraordinary Achievement

September 1

Failure is a choice. Nothing can stop a man or a woman who simply refuses to be kept down. Just make a decision from the center of your heart that, no matter what happens to you, you will keep walking the authentic path and consistently stay true to crafting a remarkable life.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 2

The Law of Diminishing Intent says that the longer you wait to implement a new idea or strategy, the less enthusiasm you will have for it. Act daily on your strategy for change before it dies a quick death, burying your future vision with it. World-class people never leave the site of a great idea without taking some action to bring it to life. Ideation without execution is nothing more than delusion.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 3

Most ineffectiveness stems from the fact that most people do not have the self-discipline to do what they know they should do when they have to do it. They put off doing the important things in business and in life in favor of the easy and immediate things. But then they get to the end and realize that they lost a life.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 4

Doing the same things every day will not deliver new results. To change the results you are getting, you must change the things you are doing.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 5

The real secret of personal effectiveness is concentration of purpose. There are activities that are worthy of your energy and attention and there are activities that are unworthy of them. The real secret of getting things done is knowing what things need to remain undone. Focus is central to success. As Confucius observed, “The person who chases two rabbits catches neither.”



Extraordinary Achievement

September 6

Never forget the importance of each and every one of your days. Your days are your life in miniature. As you live your days, so you live your life. Don't waste even a single one of them. The past is history and the future is just a figment. This day, the present, is really all you have. But what you do today powerfully influences what tomorrow will look like.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 7

Quick fixes do not work. All lasting inner change requires time and effort. Persistence is the mother of personal change. And great things don't happen without hard work and sacrifice.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 8

Calculated risk taking will pay huge dividends. How will you ever get to third base with one foot on second? The biggest risk is not taking risks.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 9

The things that get committed to paper are the things that are committed to in life. And the things that get scheduled are the things that get done.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 10

The more disciplined you are with yourself, the easier life will be on you. The stricter you are with yourself, the gentler life will be on you. When you get stronger with yourself and rein in all those weaker impulses and have the self-discipline to do what's right—every time—your life is certain to turn out great.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 11

One would think that the more we relax and have fun the more we will have the chance to experience true happiness. However, a key source of happiness can be stated in a word: achievement. Success is really about the progressive achievement of outcomes that are important to you. And creating the lives we want always brings the feeling of satisfaction and joy. The point is to have fun—while you achieve great things.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 12

You will never be able to hit a target that you cannot see. People spend their whole lives dreaming of becoming happier, living with more vitality and having an abundance of passion. Yet they do not see the importance of taking even ten minutes a month to write out their goals and to think deeply about the meaning of their lives. Goal-setting will make your life magnificent. Your world will become richer, more delightful and more spectacular. Remember, clarity precedes mastery.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 13

Pressure is not always a bad thing. Pressure can inspire you to achieve great ends. People often achieve magnificent things when their backs are up against the wall and they are forced to tap into the wellspring of human potential that lies within them.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 14

A burning sense of passion is the most potent fuel for your dreams.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 15

Courage allows you to run your own race. Courage allows you to do whatever you want to do because you know that it is right. Courage gives you the self-control to persist where others have failed. Ultimately, the degree of courage you live with determines the amount of fulfillment you receive.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 16

The only limits on your life are those that you set yourself. When you dare to get out of your circle of comfort and explore the unknown, you start to liberate your true human potential.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 17

Get into the arena, forget about the critics and play big with the gifts of your days. If you listen to your critics, you will never do anything great with your life. Life is short and the years will slip away very quickly, like grains of sand passing through your fingers on a hot day at the beach. You were meant to shine and let your talents see the light of day.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 18

In order to awaken your best life, it's important that you “die while you are alive.” Most people live as if they have all the time in the world. They wish they had more time in their days and yet they waste the time they have. They put off living until some event in the future occurs. In order to awaken to your best life, every day should be lived as if it were your last day on the planet.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 19

What sets highly actualized people apart from those who never live inspired lives is that they do those things that less developed people don't like doing—even though they might not like doing them either.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 20

Truly successful people, those who experience deep happiness daily, are prepared to put off short-term pleasure for the sake of long-term fulfillment.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 21

There is but one failure in life and that is the failure to try. The greatest failure in life is the unwillingness to play your highest game and walk toward the places that frighten you.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 22

Before Columbus, all previous adventurers sailed close to the shore, within sight of land. That was the accepted way to sail. Columbus dared to be different. He refused to do what all others had done. He took a risk: he sailed perpendicular to the shore—straight out to sea. And because he let go of the known and had the bravery to sail out into the unknown, he became one of our greatest heroes.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 23

All progress comes from unreasonable people, people who follow their hearts and the instructions of their consciences rather than the commands of the crowd. All progress has come from risk-takers and men and women who were willing to visit the places that scared them. Greatness arrives once you refuse to buy into what others see as impossible.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 24

Knowledge is only potential power. For the power to be manifested, it must be applied. Most people know what they should do in any given situation, or in their lives, for that matter. The problem is that they don't take daily, consistent action to apply the knowledge and realize their dreams.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 25

If you want to live greatly, you must also be willing to risk greatly. To get to the pearls, the diver needs to be willing to go deep and visit the places that the timid souls would never visit.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 26

You will always feel a little discomfort when you are installing a new habit. It's sort of like breaking in a new pair of shoes—at first it's a little hard to wear them but soon they fit like a glove. The best amongst us get comfortable being uncomfortable.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 27

Remarkable people are priority-driven. This is the secret of time mastery.
Build your days around your priorities and you will play in rare air.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 28

The real value of setting and achieving goals lies not in the rewards you receive but in the person you become as a result of reaching your goals and arriving at your mountaintop. When you achieve a goal, whether that goal was to be an extraordinary leader or a better parent, you will have grown as a person in the process. Often, you will not be able to detect this growth, but the growth will have occurred at an invisible level. You have built awareness and self-discipline, discovered new things about your abilities and manifested more of your human potential. These are rewards in and of themselves.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 29

Most of us live as if we have an infinite amount of time to do all the things we know we must do to live a full and rewarding life. And so we procrastinate and put the achievement of our dreams on hold while we tend to those daily emergencies that fill up our days. This is a certain recipe for a life of regret. Commit yourself to managing your time more effectively. Develop a keen sense of awareness about how important your time really is. Don't let people waste this most precious of commodities, and invest it only in those activities that truly count.



Extraordinary Achievement

September 30

The more you ask, the more you get, but it takes practice to get good at it. success is a numbers game. As the Buddhist sages observed, “Every arrow that hits the bull’s eye is the result of one hundred misses.” Flex your “asking muscles” by asking for a better table at your favorite restaurant, for a free second scoop at your local ice cream shop or for a complimentary upgrade on your next airline flight. you might be surprised at the abundance that will flow into your life when you just ask sincerely for the things you want.



October

Extraordinary Achievement

Best Practices



Extraordinary Achievement

October 1

To build a will of iron, it is essential to take small, tiny acts in tribute to the virtue of personal discipline. Routinely performed, the little acts pile one on top of another to eventually produce an abundance of inner strength. Perhaps the old African proverb says it best: “When spider webs unite, they tie up a lion.”



Extraordinary Achievement

October 2

You need not change your world in a day. Start off small. The thousand-mile journey begins by taking that first step. We grow great by degrees. Small daily steps lead to stunning results over time.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 3

Those who use time wisely from an early age are rewarded with rich, productive and satisfying lives. Those who have never been exposed to the principle that “time mastery is life mastery” will never realize their enormous human potential. And they will live a life full of regret.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 4

Plan your week and manage your time creatively. Have the discipline to focus your time around your priorities. Shift to lean. Move from complexity to simplicity. The most meaningful things in your life should never be sacrificed to those that are the least meaningful. And remember, failing to plan truly is planning to fail.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 5

Never forget that time spent enriching your non-work hours is never a waste. It makes you tremendously efficient during your working hours. Our biggest ideas often come during our most relaxed times.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 6

When you devote yourself to excellence in everything you do, you begin to feel a greater sense of positive pride about the way you are conducting your days. This in turn increases self-respect and confidence, which, in turn, release greater energy and passion. You begin to feel good about yourself. People who feel good about themselves do great work and create remarkable things. And this, in turn, just makes them raise their standards of excellence even higher. It's an upward spiral that takes people to ever-increasing places of joy, meaning and internal peace.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 7

Make being extraordinary your way of being—your default.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 8

Remember that when you settle for mediocrity in the small things, you will also begin to settle for mediocrity in the big things. And anything less than a conscious commitment to extraordinary personal performance is an unconscious commitment to ordinary personal performance.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 9

A golden thread of a highly successful and meaningful life is self-discipline. Discipline allows you to do all those things you know in your heart you should do but never feel like doing.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 10

Without self-discipline, you will not set clear goals, manage your time effectively, treat people well, persist through the tough times, care for your health or think positive thoughts.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 11

Protect your time. Learn to say no. Having the courage to say no to the little things in life will give you the power to say yes to the big things.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 12

Encourage yourself to do more and to experience more. Harness your energy to start expanding your dreams. Yes, expand your dreams. Don't accept a life of mediocrity when you hold such infinite potential within the fortress of your mind. Dare to tap into your greatness. This is your birthright.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 13

Act as if failure is impossible, and your success will be assured. Wipe out every thought of not achieving your objectives, whether they are material or spiritual.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 14

Be brave, and set no limits on the workings of your imagination. Never be a prisoner of your past. Become the architect of your future.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 15

There is a difference between simply existing and truly living. There is a distinction between simply surviving and really thriving. The sad thing is that most people have lost sight of the human gifts that lie within them and have resigned themselves to spending the best years of their lives watching television in a subdivision. Too many people spend more time focusing on their weaknesses than developing their strengths. By concentrating on what they don't have, they neglect the talents they do have. The greatest people who have gone before us all had a simple strategy that ensured their success: they knew themselves. They made the time to reflect on their core abilities—those special qualities that made them unique—and spent the rest of their lives refining and expanding them.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 16

When you set big goals and chase big dreams, you are engaging in a hugely creative act. You are using your imagination and your abilities to build something wonderful. That's creativity in action.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 17

Staying in your room and meditating or praying all day for the life of your dreams is not going to give you the life of your dreams, and believing differently is nothing more than engaging in magical thinking. The best among us are people of action. Personal leadership is all about getting important things done. Results matter.



Extraordinary Achievement

October 18

Chase your dreams. Do all you can to build the life you want. Visit the places that scare you and do not shrink from the greatness that you know in your heart you were meant to present to the world. And once you've done everything in your power, as a human being, to make your desires hap-pen—and only then—let go of outcomes.



Best Practices

October 19

It is easy to say yes to every request on your time when the priorities of your life are unclear. When your days are not guided by a rich and inspiring vision for your future, a clear image of an end result that will help you act more intentionally, it is not hard for the agendas of those around you to dictate your actions. The solution is to be clear about your life's highest objectives and then to learn to say no with grace.



Best Practices

October 20

Happiness is our birthright. We have been hardwired to do extraordinary things with our lives and present exceptional gifts to the world.



Best Practices

October 21

All of the geniuses who have graced this planet before us had one thing in common—they concentrated their lives on cultivating the gifts that made them special. Take Einstein, for example. He had the good sense to figure out that he had a remarkable aptitude for physics, and then spent the rest of his life refining that gift. He did not move into the fields of biology or chemistry. He specialized in his core competency. And because he stayed with what he did best and dedicated years and years to this mastery, a point eventually came when he achieved greatness as a human being.



Best Practices

October 22

Having clearly defined goals offers so many benefits. First, setting goals restores a sense of focus in our lives, lives that have become complicated by too many options. In this age we live in, there are simply far too many things to do at any given time. There are many distractions competing for our attention. Goals clarify our desires and help us to focus on only those activities that will lead us to where we want to go.



Best Practices

October 23

Become a person of action, one of those indomitable souls who goes out and hunts down his greatest life. Do the best that you know how to do. And then let go and accept whatever comes to you with a happy heart and perfect certainty that this is what nature intended for you.



Best Practices

October 24

It takes great resolve and power to leave the gravitational forces of the crowd and begin to live more truly. The space shuttle uses more fuel during its first three minutes after takeoff than it requires during the remainder of its orbit around the entire earth for this same reason: there is a pull exerted by the world that takes great energy to overcome. But overcome it you must, to avoid a life of regret and sadness.



Best Practices

October 25

Every act of courage, every act of goodness and every act of self-responsibility will have an immediate payoff for you: each time you act with love rather than fear, you become more of who you were meant to be. Every time you reach for your dreams and listen to your heart, you remember a little bit more of who you are. And you gently transform.



Best Practices

October 26

When Olympic athletes return home from the games, some of them suffer from what psychologists call POD (Post-Olympic Depression). It seems that having achieved the pinnacle of success, there is no higher target for them to aim for and so life loses its meaning. To maintain a healthy level of optimism and passion for life, you must keep on setting higher and higher goals. On attaining one goal, whether it is a career goal or a personal one, it is essential that you quickly set the next one. Make certain your goals are worthy of you. Make sure they are the kind of challenges that will force you to reach into your heart and bring out the best within you, helping you grow in the process.



Best Practices

October 27

One of the most wonderful things about time is the fact that you cannot waste it in advance. No matter how much time you have squandered in the past, the next hour that comes your way will be perfect, unspoiled and ready for you to make the very best of it. If you so choose, tomorrow can be the day that you start getting up earlier, reading more, exercising, eating well, worrying less and playing at a level called extraordinary. No one is stopping you from opening your journal and, on a blank page, rewriting the story of your life. This very minute, you can decide the way you would like it to unfold, change the central characters and create a new ending. The only question is will you choose to do so?



Best Practices

October 28

If you do not act on life, life will act on you. The days will slip into weeks and the weeks into months ... before you know it, your life will be over. Do not let the brilliant and beautiful treasure of your life slip away.



Best Practices

October 29

It's always darkest before dawn. A time comes in everyone's life when they have to play at the edges and take some big chances. A time comes for every seeker when he or she knows, deep down in the heart, that refusing to take the risk will resign him or her to a life of mediocrity. But making the leap, though it involves great fear along with great courage, will allow them to travel to a whole new land. A land of potential, happiness and freedom. Go deep and listen to the inner voice within you. Then trust in its guidance.



Best Practices

October 30

Never ever give up when a trial presents itself on the path. And many trials will present themselves along the way. Yes, before your greatest victory you will certainly face your greatest challenge. With an awareness that this is all part of the route that you must travel to return home to your authentic self, it will be easier for you: you will be prepared.



Best Practices

October 31

Join the Hope Club. Big, beautiful and seemingly impossible goals are superb vehicles to keep you inspired as you walk through adversity. When you are reaching for great and noble goals that speak to the best within you, your desire to reach them will pull you through the tough times that you will encounter along the seeker's path.



November

Best Practices

Building Remarkable Relationships



Best Practices

November 1

Getting up early is a gift you give to yourself. Few disciplines have the power to transform your life as does the habit of early rising. There is something very special about the first few hours of the morning. Time seems to slow down and a deep sense of peace fills the air. Joining the Five o’Clock Club will allow you to start controlling your day rather than letting your day control you. Winning the “Battle of the Bed” and putting “mind over mattress” by rising early will provide you with at least one quiet hour for yourself during the most crucial part of your day: the beginning. If spent wisely, the rest of your day will unfold in a wonderful way.



Best Practices

November 2

According to one study, the average four-year-old laughs three hundred times a day while the average adult laughs about fifteen times a day. With all the obligations, stresses and activities that fill our days, we have forgotten how to laugh. Daily laughter has been shown to elevate our moods, promote creativity and give us more energy. Comedian Steve martin reportedly laughs for five minutes in front of the mirror every morning to get his creative juices flowing and to start his day on a high note.



Best Practices

November 3

Natural surroundings serve to stifle the endless chatter that fills our minds so that our true brilliance can be liberated. While you spend time enjoying nature, observe your surroundings with deep concentration. Study the complexity of a flower or the way the current moves in a sparkling stream. Take your shoes off and feel the grass under your feet. Give silent thanks that you have the privilege of enjoying these special gifts of nature. Life's simplest pleasures are life's best ones.



Best Practices

November 4

You become your environment. Become more selective in the news you expose your mind to. Be more deliberate in the way you read your newspaper and in the way you watch your television. Before you start reading the morning paper, have a purpose in mind. Use it as an information tool to serve you and to make you wiser rather than as an excuse to help you pass time. And resolve to expose yourself to influences that help you become the person you want to be.



Best Practices

November 5

It takes about 21 days to develop a new habit. Yet most people give up on creating a positive life change after only the first few days when they experience the stress and pain that is always associated with replacing old behaviors with new ones. Once you get past those first 21 days you will find that staying on course with a new habit will be far easier than you imagined. Take the time to study your personal habits and promise to make the necessary changes. The quality of your life will be determined in large measure by the nature of your habits.



Best Practices

November 6

Spending one hour a day working on yourself will surely give you dramatic results in thirty days—provided you do the right things. It takes about one month to fully install a new habit. After this period, the behaviors, strategies and tools you are embracing will fit like a second skin. The key is to keep on practicing them every day if you want to keep on seeing the results. Commitment is a powerful thing.



Best Practices

November 7

As you prepare your body, so you prepare your mind. As you train your body, so you train your mind. Take some time every single day to nourish the temple of your body through vigorous exercise. Get your blood circulating and your body moving. There are 168 hours in a week. At least five of those hours should be invested in some form of physical activity. Health is something most of us take for granted until we lose it. Don't let that happen to you.



Best Practices

November 8

Develop a lust for learning. Read regularly. Reading for 30 minutes a day will do wonders for you. Do not read just anything. Be very selective about what you put into the garden of your mind. It must be immensely nourishing. Make it something that will improve both you and the quality of your life. Something that will inspire and elevate you.



Best Practices

November 9

According to *U.S. News & World Report*, over the course of your lifetime, you will spend eight months opening junk mail, two years unsuccessfully returning phone calls and five years standing in line. Given this startling fact, one of the simplest yet smartest time management strategies you can follow is to never go anywhere without a book under your arm. While others waiting in line are complaining, you will be growing and feeding your mind a rich diet of ideas found in great books.



Best Practices

November 10

Solitude and quiet connect you to your creative source and release the limitless intelligence of Life.



Best Practices

November 11

Make the time to think. Get into the regular habit of introspection. By looking at what you are doing, how you are spending your day and the thoughts you are thinking, you give yourself a benchmark for measuring improvement. The only way to improve tomorrow is to know what you did wrong today.



Best Practices

November 12

To let go of the mental clutter that your problems tend to generate, list all your worries on a piece of paper. If you do so, they will no longer be able to fester in your mind and drain your valuable energy. This simple exercise will also permit you to put your problems into perspective and tackle them in an orderly, well-planned sequence. It will help you move to freedom and let go of the past.



Best Practices

November 13

The 10-minute period before you sleep and the 10-minute period after you wake up profoundly influence your subconscious mind. Only the most inspiring and serene thoughts should be allowed into your mind at those times.



Best Practices

November 14

Remember that it is the quality and not the quantity of sleep that is important. It is better to have six hours of uninterrupted deep sleep than even ten hours of disturbed sleep. The whole idea is to provide your body with rest so that its natural processes can repair and restore your physical dimension to its natural state of health, a state that is diminished through the stresses and struggles of daily use.



Best Practices

November 15

Laughter is medicine for the soul. Even if you don't feel like it, look in the mirror and laugh. You can't help but feel fantastic. William James said, "We don't laugh because we are happy. We are happy because we laugh." So start your day on a deliciously fun footing. Laugh, play and give thanks for all you have. Every day will be an exquisitely rewarding one if you choose it to be.



Best Practices

November 16

Writing things down is an incredibly important practice for self-discovery. The discipline of journaling transforms lives. Just as you get to know another person by having deep conversations with them, by journaling every morning you will come to know yourself through writing. Writing promotes clarity and clarity precedes mastery. And since your life is worth living, your life is definitely worth recording.



Best Practices

November 17

Most people use sleep as a drug. They use sleep to distract them and pass the time. As people begin to live a life that is incongruent with their biggest lives and their highest possibilities, a well of pain begins to form within them. Most people are not conscious of this—it happens at the subconscious level—but that does not mean it's not there, affecting them in every moment, in every choice and at every plane. So many among us use sleep to avoid that pain, to escape. But once you find your calling, you get excited. And the greater the excitement you will feel for this calling and for your life in general, the less you will need—or want—to sleep.



Best Practices

November 18

Designate some time every single day for personal renewal. Time spent recharging your batteries is never a waste but a necessary aspect of any peak performance routine. Recreation is about re-creation.



Best Practices

November 19

According to a study involving 17,000 Harvard alumni, it was found that every hour you exercise adds another three hours to your life. That's an excellent return on investment. As the sages say, The person who doesn't make time for exercise must eventually make time for illness.



Best Practices

November 20

While you cannot go on a major vacation every week, you certainly can go on a minor one. A mini-vacation begins with closing the door of your office, holding all calls and relaxing in your chair. Then close your eyes and begin taking deep breaths. Once you feel deeply at peace, begin to imagine you are at your favorite vacation spot. Vividly see the colors, hear the sounds and feel the emotions that this special place evokes. After only a few minutes of this mental escape, you will be rejuvenated, ready for the rest of the day ahead.



Best Practices

November 21

Music makes life better. Music can lift your mood, put the smile back on your face and add immeasurably to the quality of your life. Get serious about listening to music that inspires you. Build a collection of your favorite pieces and play something that fills your heart with joy every single day of the week. Listening to even a few minutes of music every day is a simple yet exceptionally powerful way to manage your moods and remain at your best.



Best Practices

November 22

The way you begin your day determines the way you will live your day. The first thirty minutes after you wake up are “The Platinum 30” since they are truly the most valuable moments of your day and have a profound influence on the quality of every minute that follows. If you have the wisdom and self-discipline to ensure that, during this key period, you think only the purest of thoughts and take only the greatest of actions, you will notice that your days will consistently unfold in the most marvelous ways.



Best Practices

November 23

Stress itself is not a bad thing. It can often help us perform at our best, expand beyond our limits and achieve things that would otherwise astonish us. The real problem lies in the fact that in this age of global anxiety we do not get enough relief from stress. So to revitalize yourself and nourish the deepest part of you, plan for a weekly period of peace—a weekly sabbatical—to get back to the simpler pleasures of life, pleasures that you may have given up as your days grew busier and your life more complex. Your weekly sabbatical does not have to last a full day. All you need are a few hours alone, perhaps on a quiet morning, when you can spend some time doing the things you love to do the most.



Best Practices

November 24

A simple technique to reshape your awareness involves nothing more than selecting a phrase, known as a mantra, that you will focus on at different times throughout the day. If it is inner peace and calm you seek, the phrase, known as a mantra, might be, “I am so grateful that I am a serene and tranquil person.” If it is more confidence that you want, your mantra could be, “i am delighted that I am full of confidence and boundless courage.” If it is material prosperity you are after, your saying might be, “I am so grateful that money and opportunity are flowing into my life.” Repeat your mantras softly under your breath as you walk to work, as you wait in line or as you wash the dishes to fill otherwise unproductive times of your day with a powerful life improvement force. Try to say your personal phrase at least two hundred times a day for at least four weeks. The results will be profound as you take one giant step to finding the peace, prosperity and purpose your life requires. We become what we talk about.



Best Practices

November 25

Even more so than through laughter, we can connect with each other through the common sharing of our pain. If everyone in the world came together for half an hour and shared all of the personal suffering they have endured over the course of their lives, we would all be friends. There would be no enemies. There would be no wars.



Best Practices

November 26

One simple strategy to conquer the worry habit was to schedule specific times to worry—what I call “worry breaks.” If we are facing a difficulty, it is easy to spend all our waking hours focusing on it. Instead, schedule fixed times to worry, say, thirty minutes every evening. During this worry session, you may wallow in your problems and brood over your difficulties. But after that period ends, train yourself to leave your troubles behind and do something more productive, such as going for a walk in natural surroundings or reading an inspirational book or having a heart-to-heart conversation with someone you admire or love. If during other times of the day you feel the need to worry, jot down what you want to worry about in a notebook, which you can then bring to your next worry break. This simple but powerful technique will help you gradually reduce the amount of time you spend worrying and eventually serve to eliminate this habit forever.



Best Practices

November 27

The gift of the knowledge age we live in is that you and I, and everyone around us, have the privilege to spend time, each and every day if we so choose, with the greatest thinkers who have walked on earth. We can befriend the world's most amazing people—whenever we want—through books, audio downloads and CDs, videos and other educational media. In spending time with history's wisest human beings, you cannot help but come away from the experience a fundamentally better person. Their stardust cannot help but rub off on you.



Best Practices

November 28

The more you can put a voice to your fear, the more the fear will move through you. The more you can talk about this, the more the hidden shadows come out into the light where they can be examined and released.



Building Remarkable Relationships

November 29

Begin to see your family as your own personal community and the place where most of your personal satisfaction will come from. Our greatest moments are the moments we spend with the people we love. Understand that through your family, you can gain a richer understanding of yourself and develop greater insight, knowledge and wisdom. Through your family, you can increase your humanity and actualize your inner strength. Leadership in your life begins with leadership in your home. Your family is your foundation, just like the launching pad of a rocket. Once it is secure and in perfect order, you can soar to heights previously unimagined.



Building Remarkable Relationships

November 30

The best way to inspire your children to develop into the kind of adults you dream of them becoming is to become the kind of adult you want them to be. All children believe that the way their parents act is the correct way to act. You teach them how to act by the way you act. Your values and beliefs become their values and beliefs. Your negative patterns will inevitably become their negative patterns. You need to remember that your children are always watching your every move.



December

Building Remarkable Relationships

Enjoy Life's Journey



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 1

After quality time, the second best gift you can give to your kids is the gift of a good example.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 2

Speaking your truth means speaking from your heart. Far too many people in our world speak only in the words they know the people around them want to hear. They use their words to manipulate and control rather than to express their true feelings and build the kind of understanding that always leads to greater love. In using words that do not reflect what they really mean or how they truly feel, they live their lives in a state of spiritual dishonesty. Only by speaking your truth—what you truly feel, believe and know—will you be in a position to be the leader that you are destined to be. Speak your truth—even when your voice cracks.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 3

Before anyone will lend you a hand, you must touch their heart. Be like the sun: the sun gives all it can give. But in return, all of the flowers, the trees and the plants grow toward it.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 4

The little things are the big things. What small acts can you do today to deepen the bonds between you and the people you value the most? What random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty can you offer to someone in an effort to make his or her day just a little better? The irony of being more compassionate is that the very act of giving to others makes you feel better as well.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 5

Too many people believe that listening involves nothing more than waiting for the other person to stop talking. And to make matters worse, while that person is speaking, we are all too often using that time to formulate our own response, rather than empathizing with the point being made. Taking the time to truly understand another's point of view shows that you value what he has to say and care about him as a person. When you start "getting behind the eyeballs" of the person who is speaking and try to see the world from his perspective, you will connect with him deeply and build high-trust relationships that last.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 6

Focus on rebuilding your self-relationship. Get to know your deepest and truest values. Get to know your preferences and priorities—not those that others have taught you are the most important but those that you feel to be of the highest value. And remember that you can't give what you don't have. To love others you must first love yourself.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 7

Forgiveness is a great act of spirit and personal courage. It is also one of the best ways to elevate the quality of your life. I have discovered that every minute you devote to thinking about someone who has wronged you is a minute you have stolen from a much worthier pursuit: connecting with those people who will elevate you.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 8

Saying things we don't really mean becomes a habit when we practice it long enough. The real problem is that when you don't keep your word, you lose credibility. When you lose credibility, you break the bonds of trust. And breaking the bonds of trust ultimately leads to a string of broken relationships. Be a person of your word rather than being "all talk and no action." Say what you mean and mean what you say. That simple practice will have powerful results.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 9

Talk is cheap and the evidence never lies. You can tell the world that your family comes first, but if you miss family dinners for business meetings most days of the week, the fact of the matter is that your family really does not come first. You can preach the power of reading and offer your children good books, but if you spend most of your free time watching sitcoms on TV, well then you really don't believe that learning is the priority you say it is.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 10

Your primary duty as a parent is to become a builder of human trust. Trust forms the cornerstone of every great family culture.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 11

Cultivating great friendships is one of the surest ways to find more happiness and joy in your life. Recent studies show that those with a wide circle of friends and family live longer, laugh more and worry less. But friendships, like all other good things in life, take time, energy and commitment. To build deeper friendships, you must be willing to move out of your comfort zone, break the ice with people you might not know very well and show sincere warmth. If you plant the seeds of friendship, you are bound to receive a rich harvest of great friends.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 12

Although being a parent is a great joy, it is also a privilege that involves tremendous responsibility. We need to develop the skills of excellent parents. We cannot just hope that the way we are raising our kids is the right way and pray that we will be lucky enough that they become thoughtful, caring and wise adults. Take the initiative to improve your parenting abilities by attending seminars, reading books and listening to audio downloads and CDs by the leading thinkers in this field. Then have the courage to keep trying to refine the ideas learned in the laboratory of your own life in order to find the parenting strategies that best suit your family. Those miraculous years of your sons' and daughters' childhoods will never come again. So act now.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 13

We are all connected at an invisible level. We are all brothers and sisters who belong to the same family. It's only an illusion that we are separate. Sages have told us that for thousands of years—we are all cut from the same cloth, and when you hurt another person, you hurt yourself as well. Be the kindest person you know.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 14

It is easy to fall into the habit of condemning others, even those we love most. We criticize the way someone eats or the manner in which she speaks. We focus on the most minute details and find fault with the smallest of issues. But what we focus on grows. And if we keep focusing on a small weakness in someone, it will continue to grow in our minds until we perceive it to be a big problem in that person. To live a happier, more peaceful life, begin to see that the richness of our society comes from its diversity. What makes relationships, communities and countries great are not the things that we have in common but the differences that make us unique. Rather than looking for things to criticize in those around you, why not begin to respect the differences?



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 15

There is something special about being in the presence of a person who is genuinely humble. Practicing humility shows that you respect others and reminds us that there is so much for us yet to learn. It sends a signal to those around you that you are open to receiving the gift of their knowledge and listening to what they have to say. The more you are as a person, the less you need to prove yourself to others.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 16

It's been said that laughter is the shortest distance between human hearts. When we laugh together, all the social constructs that keep us apart fall to the wayside and we connect as real people. It's a beautiful thing to behold.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 17

When you blame others for the things that anger or irritate you, you lose a precious chance to get to know more of the shadows that are controlling you. You lose the opportunity to go deep and bring what was within the realm of the subconscious into the realm of the conscious, where it can be healed and released. Blaming others is excusing yourself.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 18

Realize that the most noble thing you can do is to give to others. The sages of the East call it the process of “shedding the shackles of self.” It is all about losing your self-consciousness and starting to focus on a higher purpose. This might be in the form of giving more to those around you, whether this means your time or your energy: these truly are your two most valuable resources.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 19

Compassion and daily acts of kindness make life far richer. Take the time to meditate every morning on the good you will do for others during your day. The sincere words of praise to those who least expect it, the gestures of warmth offered to friends in need, the small tokens of affection to members of your family for no reason at all, all add up to a much more wonderful way to live.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 20

Live your children's childhood. Few things are as meaningful as being a part of your children's childhood. What is the point of climbing the steps of success if you have missed the first steps of your own kids?



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 21

It's a strange world we live in. We can send a message across the world with pinpoint accuracy, yet we have trouble walking across the street to meet a new neighbor. We spend more time watching television than we do connecting with our children. We say we want to change the world but are not willing to change ourselves. Then, as the sun sets on our lives and we allow ourselves some time for a little deep reflection, we catch a glimpse of the joys we could have experienced, the kindnesses we could have given, and the people we could have been. But by then, it's too late.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 22

Love is what we need more of in this world. And i'm not only referring to loving other people. We must show love to our work. We must show love to our surroundings, and most importantly, we must show love to ourselves. Only then can we really give our love fully to other people. Everything you do as you live out your days should speak of love.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 23

When you have not forgiven someone, it is almost as if you are carrying that person on your back—which is a very heavy load. And once you forgive them, you release them. You can finally move on with life. They are no longer pulling you down. You become much more free as a human being.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 24

Forgiving someone is different from condoning his or her behavior. Forgiving them is simply seeing that people in pain do painful things. I encourage you to understand that people who hurt other people have themselves been hurt. People who do not love themselves cannot show love to others. And people who do not have any self-respect have no idea how to give respect to others.



Building Remarkable Relationships

December 25

Do you know how happy every person on the planet would feel if they made a little bit of time every day to be of greater service to others? Please think about the joy that enters a person's being when they dedicate themselves to creating real and lasting value for other people? Helping other people get to their dreams is, when viewed from this frame of reference, a great gift you give yourself. But too many people don't see this truth.



Enjoy Life's Journey

December 26

Start to revere life again and celebrate all its wonders. Awaken yourself to the power you have to make things happen. Once you do, Life will brilliantly help you to work wonders.



Enjoy Life's Journey

December 27

Do what you need to do to develop a love for life. Make the time to get excited about the simple pleasures of life, the ones we cherished as children. Most of us don't appreciate what we have until we lose it.



Enjoy Life's Journey

December 28

Life is such a fragile thing. It is a priceless treasure that we are given to guard and make use of to the best of our ability. That it will not come again is what makes it so sacred.



Enjoy Life's Journey

December 29

Really commit to becoming a person who lives life in a constant state of gratitude and positive expectation. Dream big dreams, but also savor the place where you find yourself to be at any time. The road really is as good as the end. When you can maintain this frame of mind, life will be sure to shower its abundance on you.



Enjoy Life's Journey

December 30

Life's a game. Don't take it too seriously. Have fun. Dance. Laugh. Love.
And maintain a rich amount of perspective.



Enjoy Life's Journey

December 31

Have fun while you are advancing along the path of your goals, purpose and dreams. Never forget the importance of living with unbridled exhilaration. never neglect to see the exquisite beauty in all living things. Today and this very moment that you and I are sharing is a gift. Remain spirited, joyful and curious. Stay focused on your lifework and on giving selfless service to others. Yet have a great time along the way because your life is a treasure to be celebrated.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robin sharma is one of the world's top experts on leadership and personal success. The author of eight major international bestsellers, including *The Greatness Guide* and *Who Will Cry When You Die?*, robin is the CEO of sharma leadership international inc., a boutique training frm with a simple mission: to help people and organizations get to world class. Clients include microsoft, nike, FedEx, BP, ibm and GE. his enormously popular website, www.robinsharma.com, offers his blog, podcasts and robinsharmaTV, as well as information on booking him for a presentation to your group.



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This book is dedicated to fellow seekers, those brave souls who exercise the courage to leave the crowd and find their way home to a place called authenticity.

May your resolve to awaken and live in *true* power be indomitable. May the lessons you are due to learn arrive in gentle ways. May your dark nights of the soul be few and far between. And may you shine so brightly that, at the end of your days, all will pause and say, “Ah, there was one who lived life fully and completely.”

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unconditional love, boundless creativity and genuine joy. You two bring so much wonder to my life, and I love you more than words can say.

*The hidden well-spring of your soul must needs rise and run murmuring to
the sea;*

And the treasure of your infinite depths would be revealed to your eyes.

But let there be no scales to weigh your unknown treasure;

And seek not the depths of your knowledge with staff or sounding line.

Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet

*Gravedigger, when you dig my grave, could you make it shallow so that I
can feel the rain.*

Dave Matthews, Some Devil



An Introduction from Robin Sharma

You are far greater than you have ever dreamed of being. And no matter what you are experiencing in your life right now, trust that all is good and unfolding in your best interests. It may not look pretty, but it is exactly what you need to learn for you to grow into the person you have been destined to become. Everything occurring in your life has been perfectly orchestrated to inspire your maximal evolution as a human being and bring you into your true power. Learn from life and allow it to take you where you are meant to go—it has your highest interests in mind.

Within the pages of this book, you will discover many answers to life's most important questions. I pray you will find many truths and gain much insight into the way the world works and how you can succeed within it. But, ultimately, the answers you are seeking already lie deep within your heart. There is nowhere else to look. Yes, my words may prompt openings for you and serve to help you remember what you already know at your core. But do not doubt that there is, indeed, a treasure trove of wisdom, power and love slumbering within you—waiting to be awakened by your most courageous part. Isn't that incredibly inspiring to know? *You already are everything you have always wanted to become.* You simply need to do the inner work required to remove the blocks that have been covering—and denying—your original nature.

The purpose of human life, I believe, is to walk the path of this Great Awakening of Self and to return home to who you once were (and the place you once knew). My closely held belief is that newborn children represent perfection and the state of being to which each of us is duty-bound to return. In the instant after you were born, you were fearless, pure love, innocent, infinitely wise, of boundless potential and beautifully connected with the unseen hand that created the universe. As a very young child, you were filled with wonder and fully alive to life. Indeed, at that time you were nearly enlightened (to be enlightened is to be all light: one who is all light has no shadows, no dark side, no fears, no anger, no resentments and no limitations).

Most of us on the planet today have lost this connection to our authentic selves, this original state of being in which we were unafraid to walk towards possibility and reach for the stars. *We know not who we are.* We have morphed into people who behave selfishly, fearfully and hurtfully. This behavior is not a reflection of our essential nature but is, instead, a reflection

of the wounds we have suffered as we have left the innocence to which we were born and traveled along the journey of our days. Only people in pain can do painful things. Only people who have been hurt can hurt others. Only people with closed hearts are able to act in less than loving ways.

The whole reason we are alive, I believe, is to grow into our greatest selves and *remember* the truth about who we fundamentally are. Life will support you perfectly in this quest. You will be sent people, events and trials that will invite you to reveal more of your brilliance and discover more of your possibilities. Often, your lessons will not come easily. Suffering has always been a vehicle for deep spiritual growth. Those who have endured great suffering are generally the ones who evolve into great beings. Those who have been deeply hurt by life are generally the ones who can feel the pain of others in a heartbeat. Those who have endured adversity become humbled by life, and as a result, are more open, compassionate and real. We may not like suffering when it visits us, but it serves us so very well: it cracks the shell that covers our hearts and empties us of the lies we have clung to about who we are, why we are here and how this remarkable world of ours really functions. Once emptied, we can be refilled with all that is good, noble and true. Troubles can transform, if we choose to allow them to do so. As Joseph Campbell wrote: “Where you stumble, there your treasure lies.”

Discover Your Destiny is a book about reclaiming your greatest life. I have tried to pour my heart out onto these pages and share all I know about personal leadership, self-discovery and living from a place of authenticity. You should know that I am very human. I struggle daily with my limitations, my fears and what I call my “ancient patterns,” those old ways of behaving that I have learned along the way. I see myself as a work in progress and continually challenge myself to use each day as a platform to evolve into the higher reaches of my inner life. There is a myth out there that people who write these kinds of books are enlightened beings who spend their days in bliss and transcendence, offering words of truth from the mountaintop. In reality, I have learned that every single one of us has work to do, no matter how much work we have done on ourselves, no matter how evolved we are. Every single one of us has a light side as well as a dark side. Each of us has flaws to mend and wounds within us that cry out to be healed. Every single one of us has a splintered soul (as we try to reconcile being spiritual with being human). This condition of imperfection is actually what makes us human. And the deeper I go within myself, the more I realize how little I know. As I wrote in *The Saint, The Surfer and The CEO*, “the top of one mountain is the bottom of the next.” As we reach the summit of the mountain we are currently climbing, guess what we see? Other peaks to scale. This is what life on Schoolhouse Earth is all about: never-ending growth and learning

that comes for the sole purpose (or should that be “soul purpose”?) of helping us remember and reclaim the greatness—and wholeness—that, sadly, we’ve lost.

And though I have my human limitations, I will also admit to you that I have come a long way in a short period of time in terms of removing the blocks that have kept me small (and so can you if you follow the extraordinary process explained on the pages that follow). Only a handful of years ago, I was a litigation lawyer on the fast-track to worldly success, chasing money, acclaim and materialism. I was living life from the outside in rather than from the inside out (no wonder it wasn’t working). I endured a very hard divorce and now raise my two incredible children as a single father. Along the way, I suffered great setbacks and, at times, seemingly endless personal trials. *But we grow most from our greatest challenges.* I’ve realized that these experiences were sent to help me clean up my act and me to move through my weakness. Life’s biggest hurts are, in truth, glorious opportunities for personal growth, positive transformation and reclaiming the authentic power you’ve lost as you left the perfection of infancy and walked into the world. Embrace them for the gifts they are.

Through all the highs and lows that this incredible (and short) game of life has sent my way, I have never given up on my commitment to accept responsibility for my part in all that has unfolded and to reach for my biggest self in the process. I believe that much of what we experience in life has been prescribed. But I also believe that we, as human beings, have an *enormous* amount of choice to create the beautiful lives of our dreams. Fate and our choices work in concert to sculpt the look of our lives. And it is in our conscious choice-making that, ultimately, our destinies are realized. To forget this is to play the victim. To disregard this truth is to deny the power that has been granted to you to create all that you want.

The pathway I’ve described in this book—The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening—reflects the eternal, archetypal journey of the leader or the hero. In the tradition of the previous books of *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* series, the messages in this book are revealed through the fictional adventures of Julian Mantle. But it is important to remember that they are *very* real and exceptionally powerful. The process embodied within the seven stages can be found, in various forms, in many of the ancient texts of both Eastern and Western wisdom literature. You are the hero or heroine of your life. If you choose to play your biggest game as a human being (and I know you will), this is the path that you too must walk. Traveling it *guarantees* you authentic success.

The best way to learn is to teach. If you really want to own this material

and integrate it into your life, it is *essential* that you teach it to someone within twenty-four hours of completing this book. This will serve two purposes: first, it will help you to integrate the knowledge; second, it will help those around you remember who *they* truly are. And as you read *Discover Your Destiny*, engage those you love in conversations about what you are learning. Share your insights. Put a voice to the changes you are committed to making in the move towards your greatest life. Doing so will deepen your conviction and generate results *that last*.

Thank you for picking up this book; I hope it delivers all you seek from it (and so much more). I am grateful that you would give me the hours of your life required to read and reflect upon this work. And I genuinely honor you for taking this *giant* step towards discovering your destiny. As you read this book and others in *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* series, you will be joining other women and men from around the world who have become part of a community. Extraordinary conversations happen at our gathering place, robinsharma.com, a site where you will find a wealth of tools and support as you walk the path of your destiny.



We are all connected at an invisible level. As you do your healing, you aid in the healing of the world. As you let your brilliance shine, you silently invite those around you to do the same. As you do the work required to let your life stand for the highest and the best, you serve as a model for others to play their highest game. And, as one of my coaching clients often says, “This is a beautiful thing.”

I wish you immense blessings along this voyage called a life.

With Love,



Robin Sharma

CHAPTER 1



A Spiritual Emergency

Life does not listen to your logic; it goes on its own way, undisturbed. You have to listen to life; life will not listen to your logic, it does not bother about your logic.

—Osho

I could feel the coolness of the metal against my head. How could it have come to this? I was actually sitting in a shabby motel room with a gun pushed up against my temple, ready to squeeze the trigger. Sweat was pouring down my forehead and my heart was beating wildly. My hands were shaking uncontrollably. No one knew where I was. No one seemed to care anymore. I had nothing to live for. So I was preparing to die.

I could see the headline of my obituary right now: “Dar Sandersen, international hotel entrepreneur, divorced father of three, dead at age 44—by his own hand.”

But as I closed my eyes and said a final prayer aloud, something unexpected—no, miraculous—happened. I began to feel dizzy and fell to the floor, the gun dropping out of my hand. As I lay there, motionless, a blinding white light began to fill my body. But before you dismiss my story, please know that I’ve always been a very grounded and reasonable person. Nothing like this had ever happened to me before. I’d always chuckled on hearing stories of the mystical, deeming them flaky and irresponsible. I didn’t—and still don’t—talk to angels, nor do I run my life according to the daily position of the stars. Yet, I cannot discount or deny what happened to me in that motel room only twelve months ago. Was it an experience of the divine? Was it a spiritual awakening? Was it simply a physical reaction to the extreme stress I was experiencing? Truthfully, I do not know. What I do know is what happened there set into motion a series of events that have transformed every element of the life I once knew.

The light grew brighter and brighter. Soon, my entire body began to shake, as if I were experiencing a massive seizure. Sweat flowed out of me in torrents as my arms, legs and torso trembled on the cold and filthy floor. This continued for what seemed like an eternity. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, came these words that pierced the deepest part of me: “*Your life is a treasure and you are so much more than you know.*”

That was it. Once these words flashed across my mind, I stopped shaking.

I just lay there, in a pool of perspiration, staring up at the ceiling. I had never felt such internal peace in all my life. I was completely in my body, fully within my heart. *Life is a treasure and you are so much more than you know.*

After a while, I slowly rose to my feet and packed up my belongings. Something deep within me had shifted, though I can't explain it—I just *felt* it. I no longer had an interest in taking my own life. Maybe that voice was right—maybe I did have much more within me than I was currently aware of.

Generally, when we face hard times, we think the way we see the world reflects the way it really is. This is a false assumption. We are simply viewing the world from our hopeless frame of reference. We are seeing things through sad and hopeless eyes. The truth of the matter is that when we begin to feel better, our world will look better. And when we return to a state of joyfulness within, our outer world will reflect that feeling to us. I've learned that the world is a mirror. *We receive from life not what we want but who we are.* I've also learned that there are seasons to our lives and painful times never last. *Trust that the winter of your sorrow will yield to the summer of your joy, just as the brilliant rays of the morning always follow the darkest part of the night.*

I no longer was a desperate case, feeling sorry for myself. I no longer saw no way out. Some sort of power had been returned to me that day. And though my life was still a mess, truth be told, I had begun to know that I possessed the power to improve it. For some reason, *I trusted* that help was on the way and that happier days were coming. Little did I know how wonderful this help would be and how beautiful my life would become. But before I get into these details, you may be wondering what circumstances led my spirit to fall into such a state of decay that I could even consider taking my own life.

Only a few years ago, I thought I was living the life everyone dreamed of. I had a lovely and intelligent wife who loved me deeply. I had three healthy and happy children who excelled at all they chose to do. I was making more money than I could have ever imagined, as the owner of a string of hip boutique hotels located at sophisticated hot spots around the globe. Movie stars, the fabulously wealthy and the glitterati in general were among my clients. I traveled to exotic places, accumulated many toys and became fairly well known, at least in the market-space within which I worked.

Then, one day, my entire world fell apart. I arrived home late after a business dinner with the vendor of a property I was interested in buying. Rachel usually left a few lights on for me but, on this night, the house was completely dark. It made no sense—it was only ten o'clock. Where was Rachel? Where were the kids?

I walked inside and turned on the lights in the entrance hall and the kitchen. Only silence greeted me. But on the kitchen table was a note in Rachel's familiar handwriting. It read:

Dar, I've taken the kids to my mother's place. I do not love you anymore. I'm sorry. My lawyer will call you in the morning.

Nothing can prepare you for a letter like that—nothing. Although I had pretended that my marriage was working, I knew we had drifted apart. All the time away from home, traveling and doing business, had been time stolen away from my marriage and family, and the love we once knew was gone. I had also pretended to be a good father and, from the outside, I probably seemed that. But the wise souls of my children knew the truth. Even when I was sitting right next to them, I wasn't really there. My mind never left the business and emotionally, I was unavailable. I guess the truth is that I was an extraordinarily selfish man back then. I believed the world revolved around me. No one else's needs and no one else's feelings mattered nearly as much as mine. I wanted to be rich. I wanted to be recognized. I wanted to win. And in the process, I lost what was most important.

The letter and the divorce litigation that ensued ripped my heart out. I was forced out of my own home and began to live in one of my hotels. I could see my kids only once a week and every few weekends. I began to drink heavily and gained an embarrassingly excessive amount of weight. I had always been ruggedly handsome and very fit, but that all unraveled. I'd wake up with searing migraines that would not leave me until I doused them with alcohol. Thankfully, I did not lose my business. I'd been smart enough to put in place a first-class management team who, out of loyalty to me, ran the show while I was busy licking my wounds. Sure, I'd attend the odd meeting and close the odd deal. But, mostly, I was home alone, sitting in a dark room listening to old Billie Holiday songs and having long conversations with Jack Daniels. This was the misery that eventually led me to that seedy motel room I told you about. But you should know that this was the misery that also led to my salvation.

I have discovered that pain and adversity are powerful vehicles to promote personal growth. Nothing helps you learn, grow and evolve more quickly. Nothing offers you as big an opportunity to reclaim more of your authentic power as a person. Our human eyes view it as a negative experience. This is pure *judgment* and behind this false belief is pure fear. You see, suffering occurs when something happens that we did not want. It occurs when life gives us something unexpected, some new condition. And the appearance of a new condition in our lives, whether this means an illness or the loss of a loved one or a financial setback, means we must change and leave the old, the

shores we once clung to. We are asked to let go of what we expected and, for a human being, letting go can be frightening. We are afraid to leave the safe harbor of the familiar and the known. We resist traveling to the unknown places our lives sometimes lead us towards. The very thought of doing so scares us. Behind all resistance to the new is fear.

But there is nothing to fear. This universe of ours is a far friendlier place than we realize. A boat that never ventures beyond its moorings will never be damaged, but that's not what boats are made for. Similarly, a human being who never dares to walk out into the unknown spaces of his or her life will never get hurt—but that is not what human beings were designed for. We were made to experience the growth that comes from visiting foreign places as travelers through life. Our wiser eyes know this truth and see change and suffering for what it really is: a caring physician that comes to heal the sick part of our selves. Suffering serves to deepen us. Suffering comes to help us and causes us to know who we truly are. Suffering cracks us open, forcing us to let go and surrender all that we have known and clung to, like a little child on her first day of school, afraid to let go of her mother's hand and walk alone into a classroom full of new friends where she will learn so many new and beautiful things. The unknown is where "the new" exists and the new is the only place in the world where you will find *possibility*. And every human being is hardwired to run towards possibility and potential in their lives. We were all designed to be great. So how can you say suffering is bad when it is the very thing that makes you better? Yes, the human side of us feels the pain as we endure it. That's natural. But this pain will eventually subside and a richer, stronger, wiser you will emerge.

"Fear not the unknown, for it is where your greatness resides," said a very special teacher of mine, one whom you are about to learn much about. Most people spend the best years of their lives in the place of the known. They lack the courage to venture out into foreign territory and are frightened to leave the crowd. They want to fit in and are afraid to stand out. They dress like everyone else, think like everyone else and behave like everyone else, even if doing so doesn't feel right to them. They are reluctant to listen to the call of their hearts and try new things, refusing to leave that shore of safety. So they do what everybody else does. In so doing, their once-shining souls begin to darken and wrinkle. "Death is only one of many ways to lose your life," said adventurer Alvah Simon.

Clinging to safe shores in your life is nothing more than making a choice to remain imprisoned by your fears. There may be the illusion that you are free when you keep living within the box that your life may have become but, believe me, it's just that: an illusion—a lie you tell yourself. When you leave

the box for new vistas and stop following the crowd, of course, fears will surface—you are human. But courage requires that you feel these fears and then move ahead anyway. *Courage is not the absence of fear but the willingness to walk through your fear in pursuit of a goal that is important to you.* You are among the living dead when you live in a safe harbor and cling to the known. You come back to life and your heart starts to beat again when you venture into the unknown and explore the foreign places of your life. The adventure and thrill of living returns. *Remember, on the other side of your fears you will discover your fortune.*

Here's a strong metaphor I'll offer you. If you have spent your whole life in a jail, many fears will surface on the day of your release. While in jail, though you had no freedom, you lived within the realm of the known because there was a strict routine in place for you: you knew when you were required to wake, you knew when you could exercise and you knew precisely when and what you could eat. Now, though you are no longer imprisoned, you feel afraid. You do not know what to do and where to go. There is no structure, only uncertainty. Your tendency is to return to the known rather than face the seeming insecurity and discomfort of the unknown. You would rather choose to be a prisoner than regain your freedom. It makes no sense but that's how most of us operate through life.

I have learned all this philosophy from the teacher I briefly mentioned. This teacher has been the single greatest influence on my life to date. The wisdom and the remarkable seven-stage process he began to share with me just over twelve months ago have completely revolutionized my life. I have never been so happy. I have never felt so alive. I have never had so much self-respect. I have found the love of my life. My health is perfect. And my business is soaring. I never imagined life could be this good. The same can hold true for you. The gifts I've received are gifts available to you as well. Sure, you will have to make some new choices and take a few chances. Sure, you will have to invest some time and energy to reconnect with the great and magnificent parts of yourself that you may have lost. Sure, you may have to face a few fears that have been keeping you small, whether you've acknowledged it or not. But in so doing you will awaken your highest and greatest self. And what could possibly be more important than that?

The teacher I've mentioned is the wisest, most powerful and most noble person I know. He is an eccentric—a true original—and his ways are unorthodox, to put it mildly. Actually, he's a bit of a wildman at times. You have never met anyone like him and you never will. But he is so very gifted in his ability to impart life-altering knowledge in a way that speaks to your soul and causes you to experience changes that will open up a beautiful life for

you. His lessons will be very helpful as you seek to discover your destiny and live the gorgeous life that is your birthright.

I guess there are no accidents. I met my teacher the day after my epiphany in the motel room. I went to work that day for a meeting with my team, and my human resources manager, Evan Janssen, walked into my office with two tickets to a motivational seminar later that evening. Evan loved these kinds of events and was a huge fan of the whole personal growth movement. I, on the other hand, was a skeptic. To be honest with you, I don't like motivational speakers at all. I've always found them to be a bit like cotton candy—sweet for a few moments but you soon discover that nothing lasts.

Evan's little boy had his first piano recital that night, so Evan couldn't attend the seminar. He wanted me to go. He thought the event would lift my spirits and perhaps inspire me to make the changes in my life he knew I needed to get back on track, not only professionally but personally. I told him I didn't want to go and just couldn't stomach the trite aphorisms and clichéd homilies commonly recited by motivators. I mentioned that I was still struggling with a lot of things and felt it best to be alone that evening. Then something interesting happened. My colleague, a highly intuitive man, looked deep into my eyes and said, "Dar, trust me on this one. I feel there is a reason you need to go to this seminar. It's just a feeling I have in my gut. *Please go.*"

I have always been a man who lived mostly in his head. Reason rather than passion drove me. If something didn't make sense at an intellectual level, I'd usually discount it. But I'd lived that way my whole life and my life still wasn't working. I love Einstein's definition of insanity: "Doing the same things and expecting different results." If I wanted new results in my life I knew I had to behave in *new* ways. Otherwise my life would look the same, until I died.

Something deep within me suggested that there just might be another way to operate as a human being. I had recently read my very first book of philosophy, though I had never touched that kind of thing before. I don't know what compelled me to pick it up but I did. Maybe, being in so much pain, I was ready to look anywhere for salvation. *It is a truth that in our darkest times we are willing to go the deepest.* When life is good, we live superficially; we are not very reflective. But when the seas get rough, we step out of ourselves and ponder why things have unfolded as they have. Adversity tends to make us more philosophical. During times of challenge, we begin to ask ourselves the bigger questions of life, such as why does suffering happen, why do our best-laid plans not work out as we expect, and is life ruled by the silent hand of chance or the powerful fist of choice.

In this book I picked up, the author wrote that the mind is limited while

the heart is limitless. The mind can be cruel, causing you to spend the best years of your life living in the past or squandering the present worrying over things that will never happen. The mind craves *external* power, the kind based on worldly—rather than spiritual—things such as money, position and possessions. The problem with external power is that it is fleeting: when you lose the money, position and possessions, you lose the power. If you have tied your identity to those things, you will also lose a sense of who you are when they fall away. The only power worth anything is authentic power—that which comes from within.

The heart, according to this book, has no desire for these minor pursuits. The heart lives in the present moment, knowing that is where life is to be lived. The heart is concerned with healing into wholeness, love, compassion and service to other human beings. It is aware that each of us is connected at an unseen level, that we are all brothers and sisters of the same family and that happiness comes from giving and supporting the growth of others into their greatest selves. “Give up the drop, become the ocean,” said the brilliant Sufi poet Rumi. The heart knows this truth. Yes, the mind, with all its ability to reason and reflect, is a great *tool* that the heart should use to support its work, a tool that can be used for things like planning, learning and thinking. But these functions must be done in concert with the heart, and under its guidance. The head and heart must forge a lifetime *partnership* if one wants to live a beautiful life, the book informed me. They must work in *harmony*. Live completely in the head and you cannot *feel* the breath and rhythm of life. Live completely in the heart and you may find yourself acting like a love-struck fool, with poor judgment and no discipline. It’s all a fine balance, one that takes time, energy and understanding to get right.

Standing there, with Evan waiting patiently, I felt a pull to explore something new. Taking a moment to pay attention to what was happening below the surface, I decided to let go of the limitations of reason for a while and trust my deeper feelings. I agreed to go and took the tickets.

Evan reached over and gave me a hug. “We love you, you know.”

I was quiet as emotion welled up inside me on hearing this statement of profound kindness from my long-time colleague. Tears began to flow, partly over the sadness I felt from the way my life had unfolded in recent times and partly from the unconditional love I felt from another human being.

“Thanks, Evan,” I replied. “You’re a good man. I appreciate you.”

“Trust me, Dar, this seminar’s going to be really important for you. And who knows who you’ll meet there?”

Little did I know, I was about to meet the man who would lead me to my

greatest life.

CHAPTER 2



The Seeker Meets a Master

We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

—T.S.Eliot

That night found me sitting in a room with five thousand other people seeking the answers to life's biggest questions. Rock music blared from the speakers and a dazzling light show lit up the otherwise dark and cavernous room. There was a palpable energy in the room. Then the speaker emerged. He was handsome, articulate and extremely charismatic. He spoke eloquently and kept the audience's rapt attention for nearly two hours as he took us on an emotional roller coaster that made us laugh, cry and think about why we lived as we did and how each one of us could make things better. He talked about his childhood growing up without a father. He discussed his brush with cancer and how it helped connect him to the simpler, yet commonly neglected things in life. And he made us laugh at some of his insights, such as "the only thing you can expect in life is the unexpected" and "if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans." I also appreciated his humility. He said he was not a guru but simply a student of life and joked that his morning prayer involved the request: "God, please help me to become the person my dog thinks I am."

"Your wounds must be turned into your wisdom," he repeated throughout the presentation. *"Your stumbling blocks can become your stepping stones if you choose. Do not miss the remarkable opportunity that adversity and even tragedy presents. Your life can be made even better by the things that break your heart."*

By the end of his speech, the speaker had each of his listeners spellbound. There was utter silence as we hung on his every word. He closed his presentation with the following statement: "Most people don't discover how to live until it's time to die—and that's a shame. Most people spend the best years of their lives watching television in a subdivision. Most people die at twenty and are buried at eighty. *Please, don't let that happen to you.*"

After receiving a thunderous standing ovation, the speaker left the stage. I just sat there silently as question after question began to surface in my mind. "Why was I feeling so empty in life?" No matter how much money I made or how successful I became, I still didn't feel any differently. I also wondered whether my chosen career was the one I was supposed to be doing or if there

was something else that was destined to be my “life work.” As well, I questioned whether I would find true love in my life and whether soul mates could really exist. It was interesting to me that so many questions began to arise once I took just a little bit of time to be silent and still.

As I dug deeper, more questions surfaced: Did I have choice as to how my life unfolded or was it all predetermined according to some grand master plan? If I did have choice, what was keeping me from taking steps to make things better? Was there truly a better life waiting for me out there or was that just wishful thinking? I also wondered whether everything that had happened between Rachel and me had been orchestrated by some invisible force of nature or whether the way things unfolded for us was nothing more than a reflection of my personal choices: to put my business ahead of my family, to put my needs first, to do whatever I wanted to do instead of being big-hearted, compassionate and caring. I closed my eyes and thought about these important questions. I then did something I had never done before: I began to pray for answers.

After only a few minutes, I heard someone call out my name. I looked around but, oddly, I couldn’t see anyone I recognized. Given the traumatic experience of the night before, I wondered whether I was going crazy. Only twenty-four hours earlier I had experienced white light flooding through my body and received the message “*Life is a treasure and you are so much more than you know,*” and now I was hearing my name being called out in a near-empty auditorium after an unforgettable motivational seminar. I closed my eyes once more—only to hear my name being called again! I quickly opened my eyes and looked around, but again, I could see no one I knew. This time, though, I saw a strange but unmistakable clue on the chair next to mine: a crisp white envelope, with my name inscribed in elegant red handwriting. It had been sealed. I ripped it open and read the words on the page: “Stop living your life as a lie, Dar. Be true to yourself and your destiny will come knocking. I’ll meet you backstage. Nice shirt, by the way—I like the stripes, very hip.”

What was going on? Evan had told me something important would happen at this motivational rally, but this was bordering on the surreal. My heart started beating quickly, and I wondered if this was a practical joke or if I was perhaps being drawn into a dangerous situation. But something within me had been stirred by the motivational speaker’s presentation, as if he had planted some seeds that were already beginning to germinate. One word quickly came to my mind: *trust*. I picked up my notes and put them into my Gucci briefcase. I then stood up and, not without reservation, walked to the edge of the stage from which the speaker had delivered his inspirational

performance. I made my way to the curtains near the front of the stage and slipped through an opening in the folds of fabric.

Backstage, all was a flurry of activity. The speaker was not in sight, but the audiovisual technicians were hard at work, packing equipment into aluminum boxes. No one seemed to notice me. As I continued walking around the backstage area, a door slowly opened, allowing a bright light to emerge and illuminate the dimly lit area. I felt as if I was being guided towards that door, odd as that may sound. I literally felt *pulled* in the direction of that door; I moved through it and into a hallway. My heart was beating rapidly and my stomach was knotted with anxiety as I walked down the hall. I felt shaky and uncertain. But I also felt a confidence I had not previously encountered, one that gently suggested to me that somehow things were taken care of.

The hallway led to a red door with nothing but a silver star on it. I guessed that this was the dressing room reserved for the stars who gave performances in this auditorium. I knocked three times on the door. No one answered. I knocked again, with more vigor. Again, there was no response. I waited for a few moments and then decided that maybe I was wasting my time. The note had instructed me to go backstage but no one was here. It all made no sense. I was feeling tired and was in serious need of some sleep. It had been a rough two days and a hot cup of tea might soothe my frazzled nerves.

I was about to turn away when, as if by magic, the door opened. I couldn't see anyone behind the door but the door continued to open wider. As I stepped into the room, I was *stunned* by what I saw. Rose petals had been strewn across the floor. A tall figure stood before me wearing a scarlet robe, the kind worn by monks in Nepal. His back was facing me and he stood motionless. The intricate embroidery on the back of his robe caught my eyes. It was beautiful and rich with color. For some reason, I began to relax and let out a sigh. I felt— don't ask me why—that I was in the presence of a friend.

Slowly and dramatically, the figure turned towards me and looked straight into my eyes. He seemed to touch my soul with his striking gaze. In my entire life, I have never met anyone who exuded such power. He looked youthful, tanned, had a thick head of dark hair and seemed to be in superb physical condition, looking like some Greek god from a bygone era or, perhaps, a movie star from Hollywood. And his eyes! I will never forget those eyes. They were the most piercing and remarkable eyes I have ever seen.

Who was this man? Why was he staring at me? Why wasn't I afraid? I didn't know what to do and just stood there, awestruck by the entire experience. The room remained silent and this stranger remained motionless

and without expression. Then his mouth curved in a gentle smile and his eyes began to sparkle like a child's. He spoke in a confident tone.

“Only you can discover your destiny, Dar. Only you can know the path that has been laid out for you, the one your heart is calling you to walk. But having a guide will make the journey easier—we all need a good life coach to help us reach our biggest lives. The Zen sages say that when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. Now, that phrase may be overused, but it also happens to be true. I'm so happy that you trusted your instincts and came here tonight. You don't need to be afraid. I know what's happened to you. I know of your loss. I know of your suffering. I know of your confusion. I also know something of your longings.”

“My longings? What do you mean?” I asked in a quiet voice.

“You are a seeker, as are so many others on the planet today. The world is transforming as people who were once willing to live ordinary lives now step out of their comfort zones to explore the wilderness of the extraordinary. People are no longer willing to settle for being half-alive, divorced from their authentic power. They want to live greatly and soar among the clouds, to walk among the giants, to dance with the stars!” His forceful voice rose passionately to fill the small room.

Now he began to laugh. What a heartfelt and contagious laugh!

“Forgive me, Dar, I'm getting a little carried away. It's just that I am so excited about what's happening in the world today. Millions and millions of people are standing up for their best lives. So many people are refusing to play the victim and instead choosing to play the victor. So many people are going deep within themselves to visit and conquer their fears. Hearts are opening right across the globe and people are reclaiming the brilliant and wonderful parts of themselves that they lost as they grew up and became adults. It's an extraordinary time to be alive. The whole world is becoming a better place to be. Actually, there's never been a better time to be a human being.”

“It doesn't seem like it to me,” I offered, the skeptic in me coming to the surface. “There are wars, famine, crime. Our environment is in a mess. Don't get me wrong, I'm not the most socially conscious guy out there, but even I can see that the world is a very uncertain and turbulent place.”

“Quite true,” the man replied with humility, as if he had nothing to prove to me, no ego investment in appearing right. “There is still much darkness in the world. But, trust me, there is also more light in it than ever. So many people have come to realize that you can curse the darkness or you can have the courage to be one who lights a candle. That's what leadership as a human

being is all about—lighting candles amidst darkness. Darkness only exists in the absence of light. And candles are being lit all across the planet, metaphorically speaking. We are moving towards a critical mass, a tipping point when there will be a massive shift. It's not so far away. When enough people awaken to who they truly are and reclaim their highest potential, there will be a quantum leap. This whole world will be a lovely place to be—Heaven on Earth.”

“Heaven on Earth? A quantum leap?”

“Yes. There will be a quantum leap in the numbers of people who will be on the path to authenticity—a path that involves living life on your own terms, according to your deepest values and highest ideals. It's a path that involves living with a wide open heart and a well-developed mind. It's a path that's all about confronting your fears and the things that keep you small so you can let your bigness shine. It's beautiful, baby!” the stranger said with a wink.

“There will be a quantum leap in the numbers of people who will be willing to heal their shadow sides and never do anything to hurt or limit another person. There will be a quantum leap in the numbers of people who will refuse to live a life that is less than noble, good and fearless. There will be a quantum leap in the numbers of people who will assume genuine *leadership* over their lives. There will be a quantum leap in the number of people who will become seekers, just like you, Dar, searching for happiness, inner peace and a life of deep meaning. There is a huge evolutionary shift occurring for humankind. The whole species is changing. We are refusing to accept anything less than personal greatness,” he added enthusiastically.

“What do you mean by an ‘evolutionary shift’?”

“Thanks for asking. There are no silly questions in this important conversation, you know. Most of our evolution, as human beings, to date has been marked by a focus on the physical, on the external. It has, until now, all been about accumulation and hoarding. The dominant value has been ‘he who has the most wins’—he who has the most fame, he who has the biggest fortune, he who wields the most power over others. And given this value, ‘survival of the fittest’ has become the name of the game. It's all about competition because we have come to believe that there is not enough for everyone to win. But this philosophy no longer serves us as a race. It is one born of scarcity. And behind this thought of scarcity is outright fear. Since our intentions and what we think create what we see in our outer world, all we see is lack—there's never enough for us. And so the cycle begins, we never feel as if we have enough and we are never happy.”

“Fascinating. I’ve never heard anything like this,” I remarked, sitting down on a chair in the dressing room. The stranger remained standing with his hands folded behind him.

“Now here’s what I mean by the ‘evolutionary shift’: many human beings on the planet are taking their focus away from the single-minded concern over the physical and paying far more attention to the spiritual. We are moving from independence, where it’s all about ‘me, me, me’ to an appreciation for the paramount importance of ‘interdependence.’ Many of us have become conscious of the fact that we are all part of the same family. The most evolved among us in the world today, the *authentic* leaders—and by leaders I do not necessarily mean CEOs, presidents and military generals, but all women and men who have refused to follow the crowd—have realized that, at the deepest level, we are all connected. They know that when you hurt another, you are really hurting yourself. They know that when you help another, you are really helping yourself. Even frontier science is now showing this, confirming empirically what the mystics have been saying for thousands of years. Quantum physicists have discovered that the universe is a stunningly interconnected system where everything is in relationship with—and affected by—everything else. The English poet John Donne was speaking truth when he wrote: “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main ... any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

“This is very interesting,” I replied, truly engaged in this new information I was hearing.

“So many of us have shifted our focus from a quest for the external to a voyage into the internal. For many, the human journey has become an inner journey. We have realized that the gateway to lasting success does not swing outward, it opens inward. *The greatest treasures are the treasures that lie within.* We, as a species, are now beginning to think far more about the needs of our souls and devoting more time to activities like personal growth, being more loving and compassionate and leaving a legacy. *Success is important but significance is even better.* Just look at the books on the bestseller lists around the world—so many of them are about the quest for self-knowledge and personal freedom. People all over the planet, in masses, are asking the big questions of life, such as ‘why am I here?’ and ‘what is my destiny?’ And, as I say, the more people change, the more the whole world will change. It’s a very beautiful process that’s taking place. And it really is an exquisite time to be alive.”

“That’s very inspiring,” I noted, relaxing even more and fully absorbing

what I was hearing. I unfolded my arms.

“Now don’t get me wrong,” said the monk. “There’s nothing wrong with making money, having nice things and living a physically beautiful life. We are spiritual beings having a human experience and life can be made better through enjoying the wonderful things human beings have created. Money makes life easier and affords a great deal of freedom. Anyone who tells you otherwise is probably suffering from the Ostrich Syndrome.”

“What’s that?”

“Too many people avoid dealing with the truth. It’s easier to stick your head in the sand like an ostrich than confront your resistances to the truth. And the truth of the matter is that there’s absolutely nothing wrong with making money and having beautiful things. Who came up with the silly notion that you cannot have nice things and, at the same time, be spiritual, good and evolved anyway? Have a lovely home. Drive a fine car. Travel to exotic places. Wear beautiful clothes. I’m *not* suggesting that you do not experience and enjoy such worldly pleasures. Ultimately, these were created by the same hidden force that created the streams, the mountains and the trees. But remember that beauty is only skin deep. These things must not be your driving force. Do not base your identity and your self-worth on them. Know that they will not last. It’s more a matter of priorities—do not make the accumulation of such external things your primary priority. We come into the world with nothing and we leave with nothing. I’ve never seen a U-haul following a hearse on the way to a cemetery. That’s the key thing to remember. *Have your beautiful things but do not be imprisoned by them. Own them but do not let them own you. Give the main aim of your life over to far more important pursuits such as discovery of your highest potential, giving of yourself to others and making a difference by living for something more important than yourself. Success is fine but significance is the real name of the game,*” he re-emphasized.

All of this man’s wisdom was exactly what I needed to hear at this juncture of my life. Perhaps I really was the student and perhaps I had finally arrived at a place where I was ready to learn, and now the teacher appeared. Maybe nothing I had experienced in my life up to this point was a waste. Maybe it was all meant to be—all preparation to get me to this point of readiness. Evan, my human resources manager—a very spiritual man—frequently used the phrase “all is well in the universe” whenever something did not go as planned. No matter what unfolded for him at work and in life he’d say that it was “all good,” even when it was painful. I was getting the sense that he was speaking truthfully. Perhaps there really were no accidents

and the intricacies of our lives all happened according to a subtle yet perfect intelligence that, try as we might, we could not understand.

“I hope you don’t mind my asking, but who are you?” I asked, mustering up my courage and hoping not to offend, in any way, this peculiar yet unforgettable man who was sharing his profound wisdom with me.

“My name is Julian Mantle and I have come to serve as your guide. I’m here to help you discover your destiny,” came the simple reply.

He then reached into a wide silk pocket that had been sewn into his robe and pulled out a banana. Can you believe that? A banana! He peeled it and began munching away on it contentedly.

“Want one?” he asked graciously. “I have another in my knapsack,” he said, pointing to a tattered canvas bag in the corner. “Bananas are excellent fuel for the body. The body must be nourished with only the best foods if you want it to perform at its highest level.”

I hardly heard what he said—my mind started racing. Julian Mantle! Unbelievable! I knew who Julian Mantle was. *Everyone* I knew recognized the name of Julian Mantle. I could not contain my excitement.

“Julian Mantle! The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari? Are you serious?” The whole scene felt surreal: the monk in front of me, the wise words he had offered, the chomping of the banana. It was as though I was having an out-of-body experience, watching the whole thing unfold from above. Yesterday I had a gun to my head, ready to take my life. Only one day later, I’m hanging out backstage after a motivational seminar with an eccentric monk who is telling me about the value of banana-eating and sharing his thoughts on the spiritual transformation that is occurring across the planet. Simply unbelievable.

I had heard about Julian on a regular basis since I was young. My father was a litigation lawyer who worked with one of the largest firms in the city and he would constantly entertain me with stories of “the great Julian Mantle.” Julian was one of the nation’s best trial lawyers and a man who was known far and wide not only for his abundant legal gifts but also for his high-flying, jet-set lifestyle. Julian Mantle was a superstar in the truest sense of the word. He had everything a human being could want. But he threw it all away.

Julian had graduated from Harvard Law School and was destined for a life of success. He was a “golden boy” and seemed unstoppable as he attracted the biggest cases, the best clients and scored win upon win. Along the way, he made more money than my father ever imagined a lawyer making and gained more publicity in one month than most lawyers generated over their entire

careers. Dad said he dated the most beautiful women in the city, mostly fashion models, and was loved by all for his larger-than-life persona and roguish charm. When I was younger, my dad would drive me through the most posh area of the city and point out Julian's sprawling mansion, which sat only a few doors down from the home of one of the world's most famous rock stars. Julian appeared to live fully and to have it all. He even had a bright red Ferrari that he used to park in the center of his driveway. I still remember how much I loved looking at that car as a boy. I would have given anything for a ride in it. Dad said it was Julian's most loved possession.

And then something happened to Julian Mantle, according to my dad. He began to unravel. He gained weight and started to smoke too much. He began taking too many chances and lost too many cases. I wasn't really sure what caused this undoing but it was the most striking fall from grace that any one of us had ever seen. I guess the higher you go, the harder you fall. And then one day, in the middle of a packed courtroom amidst a particularly high-profile trial, Julian collapsed, apparently of a heart attack. My dad told me that that was the defining moment of Julian Mantle's life—the turning point. How we show up when we meet the turning points of our lives has a big influence on how our lives ultimately unfold, I have learned. What Julian did next altered the course of his life forever.

After months of recuperation, Julian resigned from the practice of law and left the country. He sold his mansion. Sold his possessions. He even sold his prized Ferrari as he departed for India, that exotic land of a million adventures and timeless wisdom. My guess is that he was looking for some answers and that India seemed to offer him some promise of finding them. No one heard from Julian for a long, long time. Many thought he was dead.

A number of months ago I read a front-page article entitled "*Julian Mantle: The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari. One Man's Crusade to Improve the World.*" The article revealed that Julian Mantle had undergone a remarkable transformation while he was in India. High in the Himalayas, he had discovered a little-known group of monks. They had shared with him an ancient and profound philosophy for personal transformation and living one's greatest life. Through the extraordinary wisdom he learned, Julian experienced massive—and wonderful—changes in his own life. Physically, he recreated himself so that he looked many years younger than his actual age, exuding a vitality that was truly exceptional. Intellectually, he accessed the most universal truths upon which a rich and meaningful life is built and integrated them into the way he viewed the world, finding inner peace in the process. Emotionally, he became aware of many of the wounds that he had suffered during his childhood, wounds that were still running his life as an

adult and blocking him from experiencing the joys that each one of us deserves to experience on a daily basis. This then allowed him to clear much of the anger he had been carrying with him through life, affecting him physically and psychically. He was able to heal the hurts of the past. Spiritually, he accessed his deepest values and reconnected with his highest self. Julian took off the social mask he had been wearing his whole life and became authentic, now living his life on *his* own terms, congruent with *his* highest values and according to the dictates of *his* heart. He stopped living to please others and stopped caring about looking good in the world. He refused to follow the crowd and betray himself, in any way. All he cared about now was *being real and doing good*. “Julian Mantle has discovered his destiny and this has made him a very happy man,” I recalled the account stating.

The article also said that Julian had made it his central mission to come back to the West and help as many other people as he could to live their best lives and access the fullness of their potential. The story explained how Julian had been popping up, in his red robes, at different places and helping some of his old friends, family members and strangers reclaim their personal greatness and live far happier, healthier and fulfilling lives. The reporter wrote that Julian’s work was creating an enormous buzz and that many people across the country were starting to put together expeditions to seek him out. Julian had become a folk hero of sorts and a mystique had begun to arise around him. But Julian was remarkably elusive: no person who had actively searched for Julian had been able to find him. Julian had not been interviewed in the story, but many had started calling him “The Reluctant Guru.” The tale of Julian’s life would have made for a fabulous movie in this age when so many of us are so spiritually starved.

“Are you really Julian Mantle?” I asked, still not quite believing. “Why did you come looking for me? My dad used to tell me about you. He was one of your colleagues, you know.”

“I know *exactly* who your father is,” came the gentle reply. “He was a friend of mine, and I value my friendships enormously. Your dad told me a lot about you, and I heard about what happened to your family life recently. I’ve come to be of service. Servant leaders are the most powerful of all, you know.”

“Never knew that,” I responded.

“*Things are never as bad as they seem. The situations that cause us sorrow are the same ones that introduce us to the strength, power and wisdom that we truly are.*”

He continued. “I know things have been extremely difficult for you, Dar. I

am very sensitive to what you are going through and I would never minimize your feelings. *Feelings are the doorways into your soul and they must be acknowledged and then felt to completion. Feelings carry important information and serve to foster your self-relationship if explored fully.* To deny them is to deny a natural part of you. To pretend you are not feeling what you are feeling would be a very unhealthy thing to do, both psychologically and physiologically. Swallowing your feelings leads to disease. But there is a much bigger picture at play, one that you cannot comprehend with your current perception. Remember, we see the world not as it is but as we are. As you change, the way you see the world changes. *As your awareness expands, you will become aware of things you previously could neither see nor understand.* All is good here. All that has unfolded for you is leading you to a fantastic place. As human beings, our tendency is to tell life to listen to what we want. But life doesn't work that way. It gives us what we need, what is best for us—what is in our highest interests. *Your life will work much better once you begin to listen to life. Let it lead you rather than trying to push the river. And trust that where life carries you is exactly where you are meant to be. Let go of all your resistance and move into a posture of surrendering to whatever is unfolding.* Doing so is one of the ways you will ensure that you will walk the path of your destiny, your true path.”

“I read a story about you in the paper a little while ago,” I said. “It’s incredible what you’re doing to help make the world a better place.”

“Yes, I read that article,” Julian replied with a grin. “I actually have it with me somewhere. I am an idealist and it makes me feel so happy when I read that piece because I am reminded that I am making a difference. I measure my life not by decades but by deeds. I’ve learned that lasting happiness comes by giving, not getting. The Chinese say it so well: ‘A little fragrance always clings to the hand that gives roses.’ And yet we all too often forget that. In business, for example, we fail to act in win-win ways. We buy into the false assumption that someone has to lose for us to win. We guard our territories and refuse to operate from a frame of reference that sees the value in helping all those around us succeed. There’s no truth in that. As a matter of fact, the best way to lead the field in business is to devote yourself to adding more value to your clients and customers than they have any right to expect. The true leaders in business understand who puts food on their tables and, therefore, treat their customers like royalty. They serve, cherish and love their customers. Love is an incredibly powerful business tool, you know?”

“I’ve never thought of it that way.”

“Well, it’s true, my friend. *And before anyone will lend you a hand, you must touch their heart.* Be like the sun: the sun gives all it can give. But in

return, all of the flowers, the trees and the plants grow towards it. In your business life alone, by dedicating yourself to delighting and loving your clients, you will create an army of goodwill ambassadors who will run out into the world and tell everyone they know about what you do and who you are. Even when it comes to your so-called competition, try to do whatever you can to help them. Forge alliances with them. Develop friendships with them. Business is all about relationships. Help them get what they want and the ancient law of reciprocity will kick in—they'll begin to help you get what you want. Giving begins the receiving process.”

“Very nice point,” I agreed, sensing the power of this man’s words.

“So, as I say, the bit about the difference I’m making in that article makes me feel good about myself since it reminds me I’m blessing lives, in my own small way. But I don’t take all the recognition I’m getting too seriously. *No one takes you seriously when you take yourself too seriously, you know.*”

I smiled on hearing that line. This guy was good.

“I can’t believe they’re calling me a sage,” he continued, lifting a speck of banana off his pristine robe. “What do I know about that kind of thing? I’m just an ordinary man who has, with the help of some very powerful teachers, discovered a philosophy that will lead anyone who chooses to adopt it to a beautiful life. Every human being needs to carve out the time to articulate a philosophy for his or her life—it’s one of the most important things a person can do. Every person, to live truly and greatly, must define how he wants to live and what his brightest life will look like. We all need to have a statement on a piece of paper that we can revisit every morning while the rest of the world is asleep that will serve as a moral compass to direct the choices of our day. This will serve as an anchor to lock us into our best moves. Without such a statement of philosophy, you will live your life by accident, reacting to whatever pops up within your days. Living like that is a recipe for disaster—you’re just begging for trouble when you live like that. Makes me think of a saying: ‘If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will get you there.’”

“So I need to take some time to think about what I want my life to stand for?”

“Absolutely, Dar. This is one of the *musts* of life. Successful and fulfilled people make the time to think, plan and reflect. They are awake to their lives because they know that each day is an incredibly precious gift. If you don’t believe that, walk into a hospital on the way home and talk to someone in the cancer ward. Ask them what they would give for an extra day of life.”

What Julian said shot through me. I had taken so much of life for granted. I had never viewed each day above ground as a gift and an opportunity to

create something great or make a difference.

“Most people spend more time planning their summer vacations than they do planning their lives. What a shame. Be thoughtful about your life. Ask yourself: ‘How am I meant to live?’ Question what you are meant to do, what things you will no longer tolerate in your life and what standards of excellence you will hold yourself to, on a go-forward basis. Living life without a devotion to excellence dishonors the priceless gifts and talents that have been given to you.”

Julian continued, taking a few steps as he spoke and raising his hands into the air for effect. “Without a philosophy that reflects *your* truth in terms of how you want to live and what you aim to be, how can you make choices that are right for you? Without a philosophy, you will live your life according to other people’s wishes. You’ll be like those lemmings, following the crowd as they walk off the cliff to their deaths. *Without a philosophy, you just might find yourself on your deathbed and wonder ‘what if my whole life was a lie?’*”

“That explains the writing on the card. The line about ‘Stop living your life as a lie.’ I assume you were the one who left that for me, Julian?”

“Of course. What fun is life without a hint of mystery? What joy is life without a little adventure? I was trying to inject some wonder into your life. This path you are interested in walking is not for the faint of heart, my friend. It requires great courage. You must confront your fears and then move through them. It will not be easy but it will lead you to the place that the deepest part of you is hungering to know. Anyway, as I was saying before, I can’t believe people are calling me a guru. I’m just a student of life who has some pretty powerful insights to share. Think of me more as a guide. I drop into people’s lives to guide them in the right direction. I look for people who have a *willingness* to make some big changes in their lives because they know, deep within, that there is so much more to life than what they are currently experiencing. Makes me think of what Rumi once said: ‘Whoever enters The Way without a guide will take a hundred years to travel a two-day journey’”

I chuckled, appreciating the depth of wisdom being shared. This *must* have been Julian Mantle. Who else could share what he was sharing? I relaxed even more, releasing the last bit of uncertainty about this unusual man’s identity.

“Maybe a better way to look at what I do is to consider me a life coach. I coach people on becoming their highest selves and help them play their biggest games as human beings. I help people discover their destiny and live

their dreams. *It's hard to believe that we live in a world where most people are more concerned with following the crowd and doing what everyone else is doing than living their dreams.* I'll tell you something I pray you never will forget: *One of the greatest regrets a person can ever have is getting to the end of their lives and realizing they did not do their dreams.* Getting to the end or even the middle of your life and waking up one day to the understanding that you did not dare, that you did not reach for the stars, that you did not realize even one-tenth of your potential will break your heart. Trust me on this one—I see it all the time. At the end of our lives, what fills our hearts with regret are not all the risks we took. Instead, what causes us to feel immense sadness is thinking about all the risks we *didn't* take, all the opportunities we did not seize, all the things we did not do. Do not live your life as a timid soul, my friend. Get into the arena, forget about the critics and play big with the gifts of your days. Life is short and the years will slip away very quickly, like grains of sand passing through your fingers on a hot day at the beach. You were meant to shine and let your talents see the light of day. *There is but one failure in life and that is the failure to try.* The greatest failure in life is the unwillingness to play your highest game and walk towards the places that frighten you.”

“I agree, Julian. I completely agree. I regret so much of the way I've lived up until now.”

“Be gentle with yourself. We grow from our mistakes. What's that expression—good judgment comes from experience, experience comes from making mistakes and mistakes come from bad judgment.” I'd rather be willing to experiment with life and make a few mistakes than forego growth by refusing to step out of the confines of my comfort zone. So you made some mistakes. Forgive yourself and move on. *The past is a grave and it makes no sense to spend your life living in a grave. Every ending represents a new beginning. Or to put it another way, you cannot move forward in life if you're stuck looking in the rearview mirror.* As Cicero noted: ‘The souls of wise people look to the future state of their existence; all of their thoughts are concentrated towards eternity.’ The key is to *learn* from your mistakes and build a foundation of wisdom. Blend self-responsibility with self-forgiveness. The key is also to keep running towards rather than away from your fears because on the other side of your greatest fears lives your greatest life. If you do not keep running towards your fear wall, you will never—ever—discover personal freedom. Freedom lives on the other side of your fears. How often do you think most people are frightened?”

“I have no idea,” I replied honestly. “Maybe once every few months.”

“If you do not feel some fear on a *daily* basis, you are living life within a

safe harbor and clinging to the shore. Do you know the story of how Columbus came to the New World?" Julian asked warmly.

"No, I don't, Julian. I used to read a lot of history but I have no idea what the answer to your question is."

"He went perpendicular," said Julian as he brought his bronzed hands together to form a "T."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Before Columbus, all previous adventurers sailed close to the shore, within sight of land. That was the accepted way to sail. Columbus dared to be different. He refused to do what all others had done. He took a risk: he sailed perpendicular to the shore—straight out to sea. And because he let go of the known and had the bravery to sail out into the unknown, he became one of our greatest heroes. You see, my friend, heroes are revolutionaries. All progress of humankind has been made by people who refused to think, feel and act like everyone else. John F. Kennedy stating he would work hard to put a man on the moon was the talk of a revolutionary, one who refused to follow the crowd and play small. Mahatma Gandhi's dream of freeing a nation was the fantasy of a revolutionary who refused to let his fears run him. Mother Teresa's goal of ridding Calcutta of the shackles of poverty was the ideal of a revolutionary who refused to listen to the shouts of the naysayers telling her it could not and should not be done. George Bernard Shaw said it so very well: 'The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one tries to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.' That's such an important point of wisdom. All progress comes from unreasonable people, people who follow their hearts and the instructions of their consciences rather than the commands of the crowd. All progress has come from risk-takers and men and women who were willing to visit the places that scared them."

"That is a great point, Julian," I agreed. "All human progress, all of the advancements in the world—ranging from the discovery of fire to the creation of the personal computer—have come about by people who had the courage not to listen to the crowd but do what they felt was right, regardless of the fact it provoked uncertainty and fear within them."

"To take risks is to provoke fear, amigo. But to take risks is to be most alive. I deeply feel that we are most alive when we are taking risks, being bold and visiting the unknown spaces of our lives. '*Big risks, big life. Small risks, small life,*' is the way I view it. If you want to live greatly, you must also be willing to risk greatly. To get to the pearls, the diver needs to be willing to go deep and visit the places that the timid souls would never visit."

“Good example.”

“When you ask for something you’ve never asked for from someone and your heart starts beating rapidly, that’s when you are truly alive. When you want to say something to someone but the very thought of doing so sends butterflies through your stomach, that’s when you are most alive. When you do something that you’ve never done before but follow through on it because you know in your heart it’s something that will make your life richer and better, that’s when you are most alive. Papa Wallenda, the great high-wire walker, said it so well when he observed: ‘Life is on the wire. The rest is just waiting.’”

Julian continued with a level of enthusiasm that is rare in our world today. “So see me as your life coach. All smart businesspeople have coaches to help them get where they want to go. Every elite athlete has a coach to help them play at their best. Well, think of yourself as an elite performer on the playing field of life—you need a coach to guide, inspire and champion you as you evolve into who you are destined to become. I knew you’d be here at the seminar tonight. That guy was pretty good out there—I really liked what he had to say. I hope I didn’t frighten you by the way I drew you to me.”

“Oh no, Julian, you didn’t,” I lied.

Julian continued. “It’s just that the people I work with must be people willing to take some risks. At each step along the journey of our lives, we have choice. We can confront the things that we are resisting, and in doing so grow as human beings. Or we can choose not to stretch ourselves and, in doing so, remain stagnant and small. In other words, our choices either free us or they limit us. So I placed a few little challenges in your way to see how you’d respond. And you did great.”

“Well, Julian—and I hope you don’t mind me calling you Julian ...”

“Of course not, Dar. We’ll be getting to know each other quite well over the coming weeks. Let’s do away with any formality,” replied Julian as he sipped from a bottle of Evian water.

“I’d love to have you as my life coach. Actually, I’m very honored that you would choose me as your next project. You’re right. I have a great sense that I am ready to discover my destiny and live my true life. Something miraculous happened to me yesterday that opened up that awareness within me. I can’t really get into it right now, but let me simply say that I’m beginning to appreciate what a treasure this gift of life is. I’m also starting to realize that each of us has far more potential for greatness than most of us can fathom.”

“Very true,” Julian affirmed.

I continued. “Julian, let me ask you a basic question that I think a lot of people are wondering about: how does one actually go about discovering his destiny?”

Julian ran a hand along the embroidery on the front of his robe. He closed his eyes, as if he was seeking guidance from a higher source. After a long silence, he spoke.

“No one discovers their destiny, Dar. Your destiny will discover you—it will find you, provided you have done the preparation and inner work required to seize the opportunity when it presents itself. Carlos Castaneda said it so well: ‘All of us, whether or not we are warriors, have a cubic centimeter of chance that pops out in front of our eyes from time to time. The difference between the average person and a warrior is that the warrior is aware of this and stays alert, deliberately waiting, so that when this cubic centimeter of chance pops out, it is picked up.’”

“Neat.”

“Here’s the key. Stop worrying about finding your destiny. Spend your time getting to know *yourself*. Tear down the façade you show to the world and do the deep inner work on yourself needed to know who you really are. Focus on rebuilding your self-relationship. Get to know your deepest and truest values. Get to know your preferences and priorities—not those that others have taught you are the most important but those that *you* feel to be of the highest value. Get to know what genuinely makes you feel happy. Bring the subconscious patterns and ways of reacting to things out into the light of your awareness, so they can be healed. Get to know your fears and how you came to make them your own. As you come to know who you are, you can then claim your destiny as it draws closer to you. As you get to know who you truly are and what you are really all about, you will be able to seize that ‘cubic centimeter of chance’ when it pops out in front of you. And trust me, it will.”

“Okay. Makes perfect sense. I’m open to doing all this ‘inner work,’ as you call it—even getting to know my darkest fears.”

“Someone gave you your fears, you know? Someone taught them to you.”

“Really?”

“Of course. At the moment of your birth, you were truly fearless. At the moment of your birth, you were pure perfection. Henri Amiel once wrote that ‘Childhood is blessed by heaven because it brings a piece of paradise into the

cruelties of life. All these thousands of everyday births are fresh additions of innocence and purity which fight against our spoiled nature.”

“So true, Julian. Children do come to us more highly evolved than adults to teach us the lessons we need to learn. I know I’ve forgotten that lesson many times. In so many ways, children are the teachers. They know so much more than we allow them credit for.”

“Exactly, amigo. As infants, we really are perfect. We are still connected to the force that created the world. But as we begin to age, we adopt fears from the world around us. We become ‘spoiled.’ We do this because we want to fit in and be like everyone else. We want our parents to love and adore us. So we model them and take on their fears, limiting beliefs and false assumptions so we can be more like them. It’s all done because we crave to be loved. *Who you are in this moment is not who you truly are. Rather, it’s someone you’ve become as a result of being in this world.* To clear all those fears that you have *assumed* from the world around you, you will need to go back and explore the source of all your fears. Then you’ll have to work through them until they are no longer a part of your psyche. To know yourself so that your destiny will come calling, you must also pay more attention to your life and reflect on the lessons that need to be learned. You must be strict with yourself and examine your story.”

“My story?”

“Every one of us creates a story about his own life, even if he only tells it to himself. For some, the story is all about being a victim. They are the way they are because of their childhoods or because of where they grew up or because of the bad things that have happened to them. So many people in the world today are professional victims.”

“Why?”

“Because playing the victim is easy. You do not have to assume any responsibility for the way your life looks. You can blame everyone else for what’s not working in your life, never having to look at yourself and make the changes required. *But when you play victim, you assign away your power to that which you allege is victimizing you. It’s a very impotent way to live.*”

“So true,” I replied, nodding my head in agreement.

“The story that people create may be that they are too old to chase their dreams or not attractive enough to find the mate they desire or not smart enough to do what they wish to do. It goes on and on. My point is really this: *The best move you can make is to work on your self-relationship.*”

“Just like you did in the Himalayas,” I interjected.

“Just as I did in the Himalayas,” Julian echoed. “Most people have lost the connection with themselves. They have forgotten who they truly are. That makes me so sad. Every single one of us has greatness written into our DNA. Our lives were meant to be joy-filled, exciting and rich with love, peace and beauty. Happiness is our birthright. But we get in our own way. We have fallen into the trap of mediocrity. We believe that we are not meant for miracles. We play small for fear that, should we step out into our higher possibilities, we will get hurt or people will not love us or our lives will not work.”

“So true.”

Julian continued enthusiastically. “We buy into the lie that only money will bring us happiness and so we sell our souls. We just don’t know who we are anymore and what we were meant to become. We’ve unconsciously traded in the authentic power we are born with for the external power that comes from being in the world. We really have forgotten who we truly are. And if you do not know who you are and what it is you truly want to be, then how can you recognize and seize your destiny when it presents itself to you? *Know yourself and, I promise you, your destiny will find you.*”

Julian paused. “Okay, time to wrap up our first coaching session, Dar. It’s getting late and I’m sure you’ve had enough excitement for one night.”

Julian then put one of his muscular arms around my shoulders as we left the dressing room and walked down the hallway. Just being next to Julian brought me to peace.

“And all I ask is that you trust me. If you are willing, I will take you to a place you never dreamed of being. Frederick Faust said it well when he noted: ‘There is a giant asleep within every person. When that giant awakes, miracles happen.’ I will share the secrets that I learned high up in those mountains with you. I will show you all you need to know to taste the deliciousness that life can be. Just ‘let out all the length of the reins’ for once in your life, my friend.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Well, it’s a phrase I love. It speaks to the need for each and every one of us to walk into our fears, if we want to live big and gorgeous lives. It comes from something Mary Cholmondeley once wrote. Here, take this. It’ll be helpful.”

Julian handed me a slip of paper from the pocket of his robe. It looked crumpled from much use. It read simply:

Every year I live I am more convinced that the waste of life lies in the

love we have not given, the powers we have not used, the selfish prudence that will risk nothing, and which, shirking pain, missed happiness as well. No one ever yet was poorer in the long run having once in a lifetime 'let out all the length of the reins.'

“Amazing quote, Julian. Please know that I’m willing to do whatever you advise me to do,” I replied quickly, recognizing the giant opportunity that Julian’s life coaching invitation presented. I’d been hearing a lot about the value of having a life coach from many of my friends who also ran businesses, and I felt blessed that Julian had entered my life at this point in time. “How long will my transformation take?”

“Personal transformation is not a race, Dar. Actually, sometimes the harder you try to change, the longer it takes. So many people treat self-discovery like an extreme sport—rushing to get all their healing at a frenetic pace. They read book after book. They visit guide after guide and attend seminar after seminar. They want to know the answers to the big questions they are struggling with. But someone who cannot sit in the mystery of their lives and enjoy the process of personal growth is a person in fear.”

“Really?” I asked, surprised to hear this. One of the dominant values of our society is “faster is better” and to hear Julian reject this notion only heightened the mystique that surrounded him and his untraditional philosophy.

*“Trust that your timing is not necessarily nature’s timing. Relax into the process. You are not meant to know all the answers, at least not right now. When you are ready for a piece of learning and a specific lesson, it will come. What fun would it be if you knew all the plot twists of a movie half-way into it? *Your life is like a thriller, my friend—half the fun is not knowing what’s going to happen. Life is so fluid. Everything’s always changing. The way you think it’s going to unfold is not the way it’s going to unfold. That’s the fun of the whole exercise. That’s also the gift.*”*

“What do you mean?”

“Part of the purpose of life is to learn to simply *accept* that it’s all a mystery. Part of what your whole journey is about is to *learn to let go* of all your fears about it not working out the way you want it to work out. Life will never work out the way you expect it to. Once you know that you can begin to relax and enjoy the adventure of it all. Just look back on the way your life has unfolded to date. Has it turned out as you planned it would?”

“I’ve often thought, over the past few months, that I never imagined it would look like this.”

“Right. Everybody’s life is like that. And if you reflect on my question longer and dig deeper, I predict that you will discover that while you may not have expected some of the lows, the same could be said for the high points of your life.”

“Yeah, that’s completely true, Julian. I’m going through a really hard time right now but, to be honest, I’ll admit that I never dreamed I would have enjoyed all the successes I’ve had along the way. Totally unexpected how wonderful many things have turned out.”

“Exactly. So the lesson really is that no one can control life or understand its grand design. But, trust me, there is a perfection to it. Even what you are now experiencing you will, over the passage of time, come to see as a beautiful blessing that has added enormous value and richness to your life.”

“Seriously?”

“Seriously,” said Julian.

He added: “Too many people can’t handle the notion that their plans and goals will not pan out as they anticipate. That kind of thinking reflects a control issue on their part. And behind their need to control is often fear. These people do not trust in nature’s ways. Such people have little faith in the love the source of all creation has for them. Yes, make plans and set goals. Work hard and go for what you desire. That’s part of being a responsible person—it is true that setting intentions does make many of them to come to life. *But hold on to your plans and goals with a very loose grip.* Often, the universe will send you a treasure in an unexpected package. If you are so busy holding on to—and hunting down—what you think is best for you, you may miss what’s *truly* best for you.”

“I have never heard anything like this. Those sages in India must have been pretty amazing people.”

“That’s an understatement, my friend. So, back to what I was sharing,” said Julian, maintaining a laserlike focus on the point he wanted me to grasp, “let go of your need to control the path of your destiny. Because, no matter how hard you try, you just can’t. Sure, you can make wise choices and your choices will have an impact. But ultimately, you are not in control. We are so arrogant as human beings. We think that we are more intelligent than the universe. This universe that created the sunsets and the rainbows. This universe that created the stars and the moon. We think that we know more about what’s in our best interests than the source that created all that exists. It’s even funny when you think about it. We of so little faith.”

“It is all our fear, I’m beginning to appreciate.”

“Correct,” replied Julian. “Fear is the number one factor that causes people to live small, inauthentic lives. To go back to your original question about how long transformation takes, I want to repeat that personal growth is not a big race to the finish line. Instead, it’s a very *organic* process. You must allow time for the lessons I will reveal to you to become integrated within the depths of your being. When you are ready to receive a certain lesson, you will receive a perfect experience or person who will represent an opportunity for you to learn that lesson. And once you get the lesson, time must elapse so you can integrate it. There’s no hurry. It’s all a lovely journey. Trust that where you are, at any given point, is precisely where you are meant to be.”

“Okay, I’ll loosen up a little more. I see that it’s not a race. I’ll let my transformation unfold ‘organically,’ as you say, Julian,” I remarked.

Julian led me down the long hallway that would bring us back to the auditorium. Seeing an empty soda can that someone had thrown on the cement floor, he reached down and picked it up. “Every small act counts,” he said. I wasn’t quite sure what he meant by this comment but I remained silent.

“Over the coming weeks and months, I will share a seven-stage process that will help you reclaim the perfection you knew as a newborn child. This process will awaken the highest and best within you. But you must be patient. If you follow it to its absolute conclusion, you will taste enlightenment as a human being.”

“Enlightenment? Wow!” I said, sensing the joy that was awaiting me.

“You must commit to this journey, Dar. You must be willing to do the inner work required to move through The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening and bravely walk the path I will reveal to you. Please know that, at every step of the way, you will have a choice—human beings always have choice in the way their destinies unfold. You can resist the growth that I’m going to encourage you to take or you can embrace it. And if you keep choosing to grow and walk in the direction of your fears, you will move to higher and higher stages of personal freedom and individual greatness. You will be able to discover what life’s really all about. You will begin to know the universal truths and natural laws that govern the operation of the world. Once you know these, you can keep choosing to align yourself with them. And when you align yourself with the natural laws that run the world, your life *automatically* works. You begin to discover the truth. You begin to know who you truly are. You begin to access your personal brilliance and the limitless possibilities that lie at the essence of your life. That’s when your life becomes magic.”

“Will this cost anything, Julian?” I asked, as we entered the auditorium where the motivational speaker had spoken earlier in the evening. “I’ve heard

personal coaching can be very expensive.”

“Of course not. My services are free—just keep me well supplied with bananas,” Julian said with a grin. “Seriously, I’m on a crusade to help people realize what they’re truly made of. It is my highest joy to help a person in need of my knowledge. *Selfless service is the rent I pay for living on this wonderful planet.* I want people to know what it means to be a fully functioning, self-awakened human being. It hurts me to see the shape the world is in,” observed Julian as he stopped walking. He was silent for a moment and perfectly still but for the tears that began to well up in his eyes.

“It is a place where people have forgotten how to dream. I want to help people dream again. Wouldn’t it be incredible if the human race could come together as a band of dreamers? Imagine what our world would look like. Imagine the legacy we could leave behind for our children! I want to help people trust again. I want to help people live again. And I mean *truly* live. I want to show people how to *love* again. So, my friend, it is my *duty* to help you. It will be a joy to be of service to you. I’m a servant leader in the truest sense of the word, if you don’t mind my saying so. Giving to others provides me with great happiness. That is more than enough of a reward,” Julian said.

“I’m grateful, Julian,” I said, expressing my heartfelt appreciation for this man who was so interested in helping me.

“The word ‘duty’ is often viewed negatively in our culture.

Many people don’t like the idea of it, feeling that duty would restrict them and hinder them from living in the moment. To me, the word ‘duty’ represents freedom and happiness. The great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore said it far more elegantly than I ever could: ‘I slept and dreamt life was Joy, and then I awoke and realized life was Duty. And then I went to work—and lo and behold, I discovered that Duty can be Joy.’ My destiny is to serve. And doing what I am meant to do— performing the work that I have been placed on the planet to perform—is sheer joy and absolute bliss for me. Woodrow Wilson spoke truth when he observed: ‘*You are here not merely to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget that errand.*’”

“Okay, Julian,” I replied. “I promise you that I will be a great student. I’ll listen to your wisdom. I commit to making the changes that you will suggest. Thank you for finding me. Thank you so much. I have a sense that my life will never be the same after tonight.”

“You’re right about that, my friend. Meet me at The Q Hotel tomorrow morning. We will begin our first full lesson then.”

“That’s one of my hotels,” I laughed.

“I know,” said Julian, beaming. “I’m staying there. Like I said, there’s nothing wrong with living a materially beautiful life. Just don’t make it what you’re all about.”

“It’s great to know that. Awakening my best self wouldn’t be so fun if I had to give up everything I’ve worked so hard for. Some of these things, like my sailboat, make me so happy. I love being out on the water on a perfect summer day. For a while there, I thought you were going to tell me that the only way I could find enlightenment is to sell everything I own and go live on a mountaintop in isolation.”

“I believe that in many ways that would be a cop-out, actually. Anyone can find a certain degree of peace by divorcing themselves from the world and spending their lives in solitude. No one and nothing can press your buttons when you are all alone. I’ll never forget reading about a monk who had spent seven years in solitude, living in one of the temples of Tibet. He would often go for months in silence, stilling his mind and ridding it of impurities. A time came when he felt he had reached the state of enlightenment. So do you know what he did?”

“Tell me.”

“He returned to New York City. On the day of his return, he went out to do some shopping in that glorious metropolis. Within minutes, he was overcome by stress. The honking horns, the swelling crowds and the frenetic pace frightened him. Hardly the response of an enlightened being. Now, I’m not saying that silence and solitude are *not* important in reconnecting with your highest self. Kahlil Gibran, the brilliant philosopher, once wrote: ‘There is something greater and purer than what the mouth utters. Silence illuminates our souls, whispers to our hearts, and brings them together. Silence separates us from ourselves, makes us sail the firmament of spirit, and brings us closer to heaven.’”

“Beautiful words,” I said, luxuriating in the profound quote Julian had just shared.

“They are. So silence and solitude are essential for you to take part in all the possibilities that your life is meant to offer. But what really takes courage and strength of character is to find enlightenment right here in the middle of the city. What really takes wisdom is to find inner peace right where you are.”

“What about the monks you met? I wonder how they would have reacted in New York City?” I wondered aloud.

“These monks are known as the Sages of Sivana. Few people have ever

been able to find them, as they are extremely reclusive and reside in a particularly remote part of the Himalayas. And you should know that these monks are *genuinely* enlightened beings. Put them *anywhere* in the world and place them in *any* situation and I promise you they will remain perfectly at ease, deeply at peace. These sages were nothing less than magical people. I know I'll never meet human beings like them again," said Julian as he glanced towards the floor. I guessed he was missing them.

"What time do you want to meet at The Q in the morning?" I asked gently.

"Five A.M."

"You're kidding."

"Would I kid you about something like that, amigo?" asked Julian with a wink, perking up. "If you want the wisdom of a monk you need to play like one. The sages believed that the hours of the very early part of the morning have an almost mystical quality that offer an excellent space for learning and deepening."

And with that statement of belief, Julian reached over and gave me a quick hug and strode down the hallway, robe swaying from side to side. I remained there, standing in silence for several minutes. I literally did not move. I could not believe my good fortune. Just when I thought I would never find the answers I had been seeking, a genuine Master had appeared in my life.

Making my way out of the auditorium, I saw that someone had dropped a leather wallet on the floor. I picked it up, with the intention of giving it to a security guard or late-night supervisor. My curiosity got the better of me and I couldn't help opening it up to check the contents. There was no money and no credit cards or other pieces of identification inside it. In fact, the wallet was empty except for one thing: within the billfold was something that surprised me. It was a copy of the article that our local newspaper had written on Julian and his adventures. I removed it and stared at it. Julian had obviously left this for me. The last two sentences of the article had been underlined in red. They read: "Julian Mantle—The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari—believes in the power of the human spirit to be a force for good in the world. He appears to have discovered the truths upon which every glorious life has been built and maybe, if you are very lucky, you will be his next student."

I folded the paper and placed it in my shirt pocket—the one next to my heart.

CHAPTER 3



The Seeker Learns the Power of a Calling and About the Hidden Meaning of Destiny

Just imagine that the purpose of life is your happiness only—then life becomes a cruel and senseless thing. You have to embrace the wisdom of humanity. Your intellect and your heart tell you that the meaning of life is to serve the force that sent you into the world. Then life becomes a joy.

—Leo Tolstoy

I tossed and turned during that short night of sleep, and had some of the strangest dreams I'd ever had. I dreamt I was running through the streets naked. I had another dream in which I was locked in my car as it ran off a bridge and into the sea. And I had yet another dream in which I possessed the happy ability to fly. Each of these dreams, I guessed, had some significance for what I was going through. "Dreams are the language of the soul," I'd read somewhere.

Running through the streets naked was probably about my heart's longing for me to be more vulnerable and taking off the façade—the public mask—I'd worn all my life in an effort to fit in and be like everyone else. The dream was likely about being more authentic, but also about the fear of being open. Being locked in the sinking car probably spoke to the fears that had started coming up after Julian left me last night. I began to doubt some of the things he told me. Could I really transform my life? Would my destiny really unfold if I simply went within and got to know myself? Was it true that most people had resigned themselves to lives of mediocrity and missed out on the dazzling existence that was meant for them? And what about Julian's 7 Stages of Self-Awakening? While I did trust Julian, and his intellectual brilliance was beyond challenge, some of what he had shared with me seemed so very mystical.

And the dream about flying, well, my gut told me that had something to do with the deepest part of me—my soul—craving to rise to my highest potential. I thought of the words that came to me in the motel room, only two days before: *Life is a treasure and you are so much more than you know.* Thinking over my dreams in the early-morning darkness, I began to feel more

and more sure that, with Julian as my wise and caring coach, my life couldn't help but soar.

The Q Hotel was one of my favorite properties in our boutique hotel portfolio. It was stylish and very popular among the fashionistas and the jet-set. I had woken up at 4:30 A.M. with much difficulty but I didn't want to be late for my meeting with Julian. I knew that he was a punctual man who valued promise-keeping. My dad had told me so.

As I drove up to The Q, with its chic, minimalist look, I couldn't help noticing the stunning car parked right out front. It was a classic Ferrari. Red, gleaming—in mint condition. I couldn't take my eyes off it. It immediately brought back memories of my childhood when my father and I used to drive by Julian's sprawling mansion and stare at his car.

I really missed my dad. He was a great man. He passed away a number of years ago, and I still feel sadness when I think about it. I miss him every day. I also miss my kids a lot. Sure, I see them every week but they are a part of my heart and I wish they could be with me all the time. Anyway, as I say, the Ferrari brought back a flood of memories, really good ones.

As I parked my car behind the Ferrari, the new bellman, Jake, hurried over to greet me.

“Good morning, Mr. Sandersen, and welcome to The Q,” he said with a laugh. “It's really great to see you, Boss.”

“Great to see you too, Jake,” I replied sincerely. “Whose baby is this?” I asked, pointing to the car.

“I'm not sure. All I know is that we have a monk staying in the hotel this week. Everyone's talking about him. He drove up in it at about four o'clock this morning, just after I started my shift. The guy really knows how to drive a Ferrari—you should have seen him racing up the street! The guy's pretty cool, if you don't mind my saying so—he even tipped me a twenty.”

The great Julian Mantle, always full of surprises. I knew he had few possessions—the newspaper article confirmed this. It said that he wasn't interested in going back to his old lifestyle. But I knew Julian still enjoyed *all* aspects of living, this was clear. He made no apologies for his love of life's luxuries and his taste for the best. It was more a case of these sorts of things no longer sitting atop his list of life's priorities. While he enjoyed these things for the pleasures they offered, he had absolutely no requirement for them.

I had no idea where Julian got the Ferrari from and did not know how he had enough money to stay at The Q. *I just trusted that everything was in perfect order in the universe.* I shook Jake's hand and entered the lobby.

Maria, the beautiful Italian concierge, greeted me. “Mr. Mantle is waiting for you up in his room, Mr. Sandersen. I wish you a wonderful morning.”

“Which room’s he in, Maria?”

“We gave him the Lotus Loft.”

“That’s one of the most expensive rooms in the hotel!” I said with surprise.

“Well, he came in here and asked for a room. He said it didn’t matter which room we gave him, he would be comfortable with anything. And he was so polite and friendly. So we gave him our favorite room in the hotel. I just love the Lotus Loft—it’s not the biggest but it has the best energy, as far as I’m concerned.”

I just shook my head and smiled. I walked towards the elevators and rode one up to Julian’s floor. As I walked down the hallway to Julian’s room, I could hear someone singing along to some recorded music. It wasn’t loud enough to wake any of our sleeping guests, but it was noticeable. As I drew closer to my destination, I realized the rock star wannabe was (of course) none other than the great Julian Mantle.

As soon as I knocked on the door, it opened ... to an amazing sight: Julian was standing there with a huge smile, wearing nothing more than a pair of crisp white boxer shorts. His body was lithe and tanned, striations from his taut muscles peeked out from the skin. I had seldom seen anyone in such outstanding physical condition and certainly not a man who was about the same age as my father would have been, had he still been alive. Julian’s hair was stylishly swept back and he looked peaceful but energetic. In his hand he held a glass of orange juice.

“Good morning, amigo, c’mon in,” he said with great gusto. “I’m just listening to some music. It’s Dave Matthews—the song’s called ‘Gravedigger.’ I love it. To me, it speaks to the importance of living fully while we have the chance to do so. Living full out. Enjoying every moment, even the less than ideal ones. Because soon life will be over. Before we know it, we’ll be six feet under and all those simple pleasures we took for granted, like feeling raindrops on our faces or watching our children laugh or seeing the sun come up, will be things of the past. I’ll tell you something, Dar: generally the things that we value most when we are in our twenties, thirties and forties become the things we value least at the end of our lives. And all those things that so many among us currently value least, like deep human connections, random acts of kindness, being in superb physical condition, devoting ourselves to excellence in our work, creating a legacy and carving out time each day to work on ourselves so that the best within us shines, will

—in the end—reveal themselves to be most valuable. *On our deathbeds, no one wishes they had more money in their bank accounts or a bigger car sitting in the driveway. Instead, as we take our last few breaths, we wish that we had lived a life that was courageous, authentic and highly loving.*”

“So true. And yet we spend the best years of our lives chasing things like fame and fortune.”

“Right. We do so because we are taught by those around us that these are the values that matter. But we have a choice: we can buy into the values of the crowd or we can dare to be true to ourselves and live life on the terms that feel right to us, at our most deep and true level. Again, there’s nothing wrong with money. It’s actually a wonderful thing that brings much happiness and does much good if properly handled. Making money is great and it *should* be one of your priorities if you desire to live a beautiful life.”

“It’s just that the pursuit of money should not be my highest priority.”

“Exactly. Never make the mistake of placing it above your commitments to serve the force that sent you here, to make a difference while you walk the planet, to love your family and to reclaim your biggest self. Remember that there are many forms of wealth, financial wealth being only one of them. One who has rich relationships and a loving community around her is, in my mind, wealthy. One who has a life of adventure, excitement and continuous learning has wealth of a different sort. And one who is spiritually connected to all of life and wakes up every morning feeling deeply at peace and aware of the truth must certainly be considered to be one who has accumulated yet another form of riches. The crowd—our tribe called society—has taught us that economic wealth is the only type of wealth we should chase. A lie. And please consider this essential fact about money: money is only a *byproduct*.”

“A byproduct of what?”

“Of adding value and doing good for others. Focus on being great at what you do. Dedicate yourself to offering others all you can to make their lives better. Be *truly* outstanding in every element of your professional and your personal life. The money will follow, this I guarantee you. You see, Dar, *money is the unintended yet inevitable byproduct of a life spent helping others get what they want. Money is nothing more than payment rendered by the universe in return for value you have added to others. As you sow, so shall you reap.*”

“Uh, Julian,” I interjected, “where are your robes? I know that last night you said we should strip away the formalities, but isn’t this a little much? Nice boxers, though,” I said with a chuckle. I knew I could be playful with Julian—he was a fun guy.

“My robes are being dry-cleaned, Dar. Quite the staff you have here—I’m impressed. They said they’d have them back in a few hours. So for now, I’m relaxing in my boxers. Just loving this music—music makes my soul sing. It’s so important to me in my life. It makes me feel incredibly good. I couldn’t imagine life without music.”

A monk who loves Dave Matthews, chic hotels and good things. Pinch me. Julian polished off his glass of orange juice and then turned off the CD player. He looked at me apologetically. “I hope I didn’t embarrass you by wearing these shorts to the door. I didn’t give my attire a second thought. I was just having so much fun this morning. One of the things that I’ve developed as a result of meeting the Sages of Sivana in India is what I call ‘a lust for life.’ Everyone must do what they need to do to develop a lust for life. We all must make the time to get excited about the simple pleasures of life, the ones we cherished as children. For me, those pleasures are things like skipping stones across the water or making angels in the snow on a crisp winter’s day. Or dancing to music as if you were completely alone. I get so caught up in the moment these days, I sometimes forget about some of the social graces that I used to worry about when I was a litigator. None of that kind of thing seems important to me anymore. Being fully engaged in the present—now that’s so much of what life’s all about. Nothing’s more important to me than being here fully. *Life is lived in the now*, my friend. Like I said before, the past is a grave. Life is for the living. The wise among us get that. As the great writer and philosopher Paulo Coelho confirmed in his beautiful book *The Alchemist*, ‘I’m interested only in the present. If you can concentrate only on the present, you’ll be a happy man. You’ll see that there is life in the desert, that there are stars in the heavens and that tribesmen fight because they are part of the human race. Life will be a party for you, a grand festival, because life is the moment we’re living right now.’”

“Should I be writing all these lessons down, Julian?” I asked earnestly.

“No, not for now. Writing things down is an incredibly important practice for self-discovery. The monks I met up in the Himalayas taught me about the tremendous value of daily journaling. The discipline changed my life, Dar. Just as you get to know another person by having deep conversations with them, by journaling every morning you will come to know yourself through writing. I discovered what I wanted and what was holding me back from living my greatest life. My journal offered me a place to record my learning, an outlet to process through unfelt emotions that were blocking me and a vehicle to articulate the philosophy that I promised myself I would live by. But, though journaling can be wonderful for emotional clearing and healing, it is also a mind-centered activity. And for now, I want you to move away from

your mind and closer to your heart. I want to guide you from your intellect into your feelings. You've lived your whole life in the mind and where has it brought you?"

"I'm still miserable," I replied in all honesty.

"Okay, so maybe, just maybe, there's an element or two that's missing," Julian offered in a kind tone. "My guess is that you need to open up your heart, my friend. And living in the moment happens in the heart, not the mind. Have you ever sat before a stunning sunset and found yourself thinking about work or about your schedule for that day or about some problem you were dealing with rather than paying attention to the perfection of the scene right in front of you?"

"Sure."

"Well, that happened because your mind was running the show. *The mind is an excellent servant but a tyrannical master.* The mind is a splendid *tool*, to be used for planning, patient reflection and learning from past mistakes so they will not be repeated, to use but a few examples. The mind will help you gain knowledge and receive education from life's teachings. But the mind must not run the show, as it does for most people. Balance living in the mind with operating from the heart, as I told you last night. It's that all-important harmony or partnership between head and heart. The heart wants you to take in every gift of that sunrise. The heart knows that life is lived in the present moment."

Julian fell silent. The Lotus Loft looked out over the entire city, an exquisite view. *Travel and Leisure* said this was one of the best hotel rooms in the world.

"Hey, what's with the car?" I asked, as I remembered the Ferrari downstairs. "I heard you drove it over here early this morning. Don't you sleep?"

"Sure I do. A good rest is essential for the body. I just don't sleep as much as most people do. Life is short and I don't waste my time. I could die tomorrow—who knows? So I live each day completely. Life's too much fun to miss out on. I have a calling to fulfill and a legacy to leave. I have been given some wonderful gifts and have a mission to pursue, one that I pray will help many people live richer lives. *Once you connect with some kind of higher purpose and main aim in your life, there will be a corresponding release of passion and energy into your life. The secret of generating extraordinary levels of passion in your life is to discover your larger purpose.* Once you find your calling, you get excited. And the greater excitement you will feel for this calling and for your life in general, the less you will need—

or want—to sleep. Most people use sleep as a drug. They use sleep to distract them and pass the time. As people begin to live a life that is incongruent with their biggest lives and their highest possibilities, a well of pain begins to form within them. Most people are not conscious of this—it happens at the subconscious level—but that does not mean it’s not there, affecting them in every moment, in every choice and at every plane. So many among us use sleep to avoid that pain.”

“That’s an interesting perspective, Julian. I’ve never considered that. I’ve always thought of pain as something more overt,” I recognized.

Julian nodded, then continued. “But look at people who discovered a cause that they gave their lives over to, people such as Benjamin Franklin, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa and Nelson Mandela. They connected with some kind of a crusade that they decided their lives would stand for. This engaged their hearts. This made them emotionally charged up about what they were doing. *And once you can develop some emotional engagement around a pursuit, rather than simply an intellectual one, the excitement flows and the energy explodes.* That’s the big idea for you to think about at this point, my friend. Connect to a compelling cause with your heart, not your head. And then fasten your seatbelt because your life will soar.”

“Do I have to leave the business world and my current job to find this cause that my life must stand for? The people you mention were freedom fighters and social activists. No offence, Julian, but those kinds of things just aren’t *me.*”

“Excellent point. Of course you can find your cause—your crusade—exactly where you are. No one has to leave a job to find something to engage their heart and excite them. Often, all that is required is that they see things differently. For example, you, as an owner of these hotels, can make a profound difference in many people’s lives. Now that’s something to get excited about.”

“I can?”

“Sure. All the people who work for you spend more time at work than they do at home. They leave their families each morning and come in here to help you build your dream. Imagine that—they give you some of the best hours of the days of their lives. So in return for this gift, what if, through your efforts, you did whatever it took to create a workplace where it was safe to be human again. Imagine what it would do for your employees if being at work was a thing of joy for them and a place where they could grow, learn and let their natural creativity come out to play. What if you made it a priority to

make their work fun and molded the culture into a place where noble values were the norm. You can create this kind of a culture at each of your wonderful hotels if you choose to do so. All it takes is time, effort and some innovation. I was in London recently and stayed at Ian Schrager's St. Martin's Lane. That hotel is the ideal example of a place where people are having fun, being innovative and loving their work. And, I must tell you, their passion was contagious. I loved my time there. Remember, *people love doing business with people who love doing business.*"

"Yes, that's true," I noted.

"Just imagine how energized you will feel knowing that you are creating a special place for human beings to work and do business. And if you make some shifts in perception, you can not only discover this cause by serving the people who work for you. You can also generate an enormous amount of excitement and emotional engagement when you think about what you can do for each customer who walks through your doors. Through your efforts and the efforts of your team, you can create beautiful memories. You can make them laugh and feel good. Many of them are on vacation and you can bring great joy to their lives by showing up at your best. Imagine waking up each morning and devoting yourself to creating 'unforgettable experiences' for your customers. Would this excite you?"

"Definitely. I'm feeling so inspired and excited even thinking about the opportunity. And the deeper I go on these kinds of commitments, the more I can see my excitement levels soaring. Now I get why you sleep less than most of us—you're connected and committed to a special purpose. And it's clear that your 'cause,' as you call it, fuels and energizes you."

"Yes, Dar. It gives me hope and gives me so much energy. *A cause to stand for, no matter if it's one about creating incredible experiences for the men and women who give you business or one that involves saving the world, unleashes energy.* Big idea to remember. When you connect to some main aim that taps into the highest and best you have to give, the greatest part of you feels you are spending your life in a worthy way. Your heart starts to open and pound, as never before. You see, my friend, the intellect—while it's useful in planning, reflecting and learning—is often limiting. The mental chatter that fills most people's minds is mostly about why we shouldn't do something and the adverse consequences of failure. The mind all too often keeps us small. *The heart and the emotions are the liberators. They cause us to step up to the plate and reach for greatness. They create excitement and passion and invite our biggest selves to come out to play.*"

"I definitely see the value of what you are sharing. My guess is that discovering a cause or crusade is also what keeps people going through tough

times.”

“Superb point!” exclaimed Julian. “My you are a wonderful student, Dar—one of the best yet.” He walked over and inhaled the scent of a single rose that was standing in a simple, silver vase. “Leonardo da Vinci said it so well when he observed, ‘Fix your course to a star and you can navigate any storm.’ Once you know your main aim in life—this central mission of which I speak—it will serve as a North Star for you, guiding you through both good and bad times.”

Julian paused and passed one of his bronzed hands through his hair. “Forgive me for going off on a bit of a tangent in reply to your question about why I sleep less but I know you realize that what I’ve just shared with you is extremely important for the creation of your best life. Find your cause, and then do your work with pride and love—love is such an incredible force for good. Do it with a devotion to excellence. The world will reward you in unimaginable ways.”

“Pride, love and a devotion to excellence—love those terms.”

“*Positive* pride is such an important element in the creation of a beautiful life. You know, Mahatma Gandhi once said: ‘No matter how insignificant the thing you have to do, do it as well as you can, give as much of your care and attention as you would give to the thing you regard as most important. For it will be by those small things that you shall be judged.’ Here’s the sequence, Dar: when you devote yourself to excellence in *every* thing you do, from your role as a leader here at work to your role as a father in your personal life, you begin to feel a greater sense of positive pride about the way you are conducting your days. This in turn increases self-respect and confidence which, in turn, release greater energy and passion. That ‘lust for life’ I was telling you about earlier begins to kick in. You begin to feel good about yourself. People who feel good about themselves do great work and create great things. And this, in turn, just makes them raise their standards of excellence even higher. It’s an upward spiral that takes people to ever-increasing places of joy, meaning and internal peace.”

“Hearing this really inspires me, Julian,” I said, as I sat down on the sleek designer sofa near the large window. “Now, let me ask you, do each of us have a *specific* calling that it is our duty to discover and then follow if we want to live authentic lives?”

“Big question, my friend. No one really knows the answer to that, do they? Many pretend they do though, if you read all those books out there in which the authors write as if they have a direct connection to the source of all creation. Unless you are enlightened, you can’t know the answer—the best

you can do is to discover a way of understanding how life works that feels right for you. I personally have come to believe that there is a very general pre-scripted plan for our lives that has been written in advance of our lives. Call it fate if you will. Having said that, I also believe that each and every one of us has an *incredible* amount of choice in the way our lives ultimately unfold and it is by our specific choices that our ultimate destinies are created. It's almost as though a rough design or sketch of our lives has been made for us by that wise architect in the sky and it falls to us to draw out the details. I need to say it again: we have tons of say in how our lives end up looking. We can have the lives we dream of, in so many ways. There's no doubt that as human beings, we cannot control all that happens to us—that's the fate part. Life runs along according to its own course. But what we do have enormous control over is the way we respond to what life sends our way. So that's the partnership: *do your best—the very best that you know how to do in every dimension of your life—and then let life do the rest. It's really a delicate balance between making it happen and letting it happen.* We really can make our own luck, a lot of the time, and good things generally happen to people who do good things. It's not as if life will happen according to a blueprint and the way you show up makes no difference. That's nonsense and a myth fostered by people afraid to assume personal responsibility over the conduct of their lives. But once you've done your absolute best, *let go and trust that whatever comes is perfectly suited for the growth you need to evolve into your best self.*"

"Which is really what you have been suggesting is the purpose of life, Julian, right?"

"Yes, I believe the purpose of life is growth and self-remembering. Growing into and remembering the brilliant creatures that we first were, the instant we were born— before we took on all the garbage of the world around us that soiled our perfection. Before we became spoiled and fell asleep to the truth about who we are and what beautiful and brave things we are destined to do."

"I'm still not quite sure about whether we have a *specific* calling or destiny, Julian. I know this is a complicated area and a big question, but it's important to me. Is there a specific job that I am meant to perform? Is there a specific woman—a soul mate—I am meant to find? Could you please elaborate a little on these points?"

"You're right—these are very challenging questions. Good for you for asking," said Julian, clearly pleased. He walked over to me and patted me on the back with a warm smile.

"First, let me suggest again that, in many ways, there are no answers to

your questions. You are trying to understand that which is not understandable, at a human level, with our limited perception. But the fact that you're asking means you are going deep and thinking about a life philosophy that will fit you. While a part of me wants to say that these are simply life's mysteries, another part of me wants to tell you that I have a gut feeling about the answers you are seeking. And please know that the sages I met in India were enlightened souls who discovered so many of the truths that the average human being has not been able to access, so much of what I tell you comes from a very reliable source."

"I understand," I said, feeling slightly impatient to hear a series of little-known secrets that would change my understanding forever.

"Here's the way I believe it all works. Many possible paths to our best lives have been written for us. There are many doorways into the mansion of bliss. Just as there are many routes you can take to get home from work, there are many routes you can take to get to your biggest life, the life that has been meant for you—and getting there is a homecoming of sorts as well. There are many jobs you can take that will get you to your destiny. Similarly, there are many soul mates available to you, each offering different lessons, but all able to help you grow into and awaken your best self. Getting to your highest self and biggest life is the main purpose of life. Getting home to the place of brilliance, love and fearlessness you have forgotten is the reason for your existence. Now, it's up to you which route or path you take as you attempt to get to your authentic life. No one path is better than the other—they just look different. Taking one path might mean a longer trip, just like taking one particular route home may mean you need to travel a longer distance and face a few bumpier roads. Taking another path might be like taking an expressway to your destination, with a smooth ride and cloudless blue skies. It's up to you. It is, in large part, determined by the choices you make within the moments of your days. *You co-write the script that has been written for the story of your life, my friend.*"

"Okay, Julian, so now I need to ask: How does one go about taking those express routes to the place we are meant to be, according to this rough and general plan that you've mentioned has been set for our lives?"

"*Just do good and be good,*" came the direct reply. "This world of ours is run according to a series of immutable natural laws, laws created by the same force of nature that built the world and sent you here. You cannot play a game like soccer without knowing the rules. Well, life's like a game as well. And in order to play—and win—it's essential that you learn the rules. Live your life in alignment with them and your life will work. The universe wants you to win, did you know that? You just need to get out of your own way and figure

out the rules to the game as quickly as you can. And learning the rules of the game takes some effort, deep thinking in silent places and a genuine willingness to be a philosopher.”

“To be a philosopher?” I questioned.

“Sure. The definition of ‘philosophy’ is ‘a love of wisdom.’ Everyone, if they hope to walk the path of their destinies to their biggest lives, must develop an appreciation of wisdom and a hunger to understand what their life is all about. This world would be a much better place if we all began to view ourselves as philosophers, thoughtfully—and artfully—being in the process of sculpting more delightful and meaningful lives. So, back to these timeless natural laws, govern your daily actions by them and you will automatically take the expressway to your greatest life. Disregard them and you’ll be taking the long way home.”

“What are these natural laws anyway?” I asked, anxious to know more.

“They are the laws that have governed the operation of the world since it began. They include core principles such as ‘always help others get what they want while you get what you want,’ ‘have impeccable integrity,’ ‘live in the present moment,’ ‘become the kindest person you know,’ ‘do your best and be excellent in all you do,’ ‘be true to yourself and ‘dream bravely.’ Most of us know them but few of us live by them. It’s like what Voltaire once said: ‘Common sense is anything but common.’”

“That’s true, Julian. These days, it’s almost as though if something is not complex and sophisticated, we place little value on it. Yet, most truths really are simple, aren’t they?”

“If it wasn’t simple, it wouldn’t be a truth,” replied Julian sagely.

“Now you say ‘Govern your actions by these natural laws and you will take the expressway to your greatest life. Disregard them and you’ll be taking the long way home.’ Are you then saying that those of us who encounter pain and suffering as we travel through life—and who doesn’t encounter some hardships along the way?—have violated a natural law that has taken us off the freeway and onto one of those slower, more winding roads?”

“Look, Dar, as you have noted, every person on the planet will face good times and bad times—even if they live like saints. Painful events come to help us learn the lessons we need to learn at that point of our paths. Sad experiences arrive to help us heal, deepen and grow more philosophical. No one can avoid them because no one is perfect. So, being imperfect, even if we are living kind, noble and bold lives, means we still have many lessons to learn, right?”

“Makes perfect sense,” I said with a grin, playing off Julian’s words.

“So even the most awakened among us will still face pain and suffering because these experiences come to offer the specific lessons needed to rise to the next level of understanding and evolution. ‘There are no mistakes, no coincidences. All events are blessings given to us to learn from,’ said Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. Do you now see why pain and suffering are both wonderful and necessary?”

“Yes.”

“One sage said it brilliantly when he recognized that life is like a river with two banks. On one bank we will find happiness and on the other we will see sorrow. As we move along the river, we will inevitably brush up against both banks. The real trick is not to stay stuck on either one too long.”

“That’s good. I like that metaphor a lot, Julian. So no one has a life without problems and sadness because these things come to teach us lessons and each of us, no matter how evolved we are, have lessons to learn?”

“Right. The only people without problems and adversity are six feet under the ground. To live is to face problems, pain and suffering. These things are vehicles for growth, expansion and lifelong learning. Life’s trials are nothing more than opportunities to collect wisdom and platforms to remember more of our authentic power, if we choose. But let’s not forget, every life will have its share of triumphs and beautiful times as well. No hardships ever last. No setbacks are forever. No misery lasts an eternity. It may seem as though they will never go away as we experience them but that’s not the truth. Life has its seasons, its chapters, if you will. And the hard times are ultimately the times that sculpt us into something better. The real point to take away though is that *if we choose to pay attention to these natural laws I speak of and live out our lives in a way that respects them deeply, we will spend a lot more time on the expressway than on those detours that are filled with challenges and pain. In this way, we clearly can minimize the amount we suffer.*”

“So, if suffering comes to teach us lessons that we need to learn, such as ‘be a better person’ or ‘stop playing small with your life,’ if we understand these truths or ‘laws’ as you call them, there is no need for us to learn them in painful ways. We’ll experience less suffering in our lives, because suffering only happens when we are out of alignment with the laws that run the world. So we *can* have a dramatic influence on the way our lives unfold.”

“Excellent, Dar!” exclaimed Julian as he raised his fist into the air with happiness. “But remember, you still might experience hardship because, being imperfect as we are, there will always be lessons for you to learn and sometimes these lessons need to come in ways that hurt. That’s just the way it

is. But yes, we can reduce the suffering in our lives by assuming absolute personal responsibility for ourselves and making wise choices during the hours of our days. In this way, we do shape our destiny and have the power to live much happier lives.”

“Oh,” Julian continued as he walked over to the CD player and began looking through the CD cases that sat atop it, “*the universe is not ignorant of your heart’s longings*. The part of the plan that has been written for you would never involve you doing something that was wrong for you. The whole idea is for you to be happy. Your destiny will never lead you to do something that would make you unhappy to do. If you love doing business, the plan for you will probably not be for your life’s work to be centered on being a doctor or becoming an actor. If a person loves being a writer—her heart soars when she’s alone in front of her computer, writing with great conviction and passion as if nothing else mattered—her soul’s purpose will not likely be for her to become a door-to-door salesperson. *The universe really does want you to win. The plan is for you to be very happy indeed.*”

Julian showed me some of the CDs he had collected, like a child might share his favorite toys with a good friend. There was Morcheeba’s *Parts of the Process*, Coldplay’s *A Rush of Blood to the Head*, a Bon Jovi bestseller and two I’d never seen before: one from a group called Our Lady Peace entitled *Gravity* and another by Lloyd Cole called *The Negatives*.

“Pretty eclectic musical tastes, Julian. You must be the hippest monk on the planet.”

That made him laugh. His whole face lit up. “It’s like I told you, Dar, music makes my soul sing. It’s one of the sweetest pleasures of my life. I spend a lot of time in music stores and bookshops. Music and books. Two of my greatest pleasures.”

On Julian’s unmade bed were three books that looked tattered from many readings: *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius, *The Greatest Salesman in the World* by Og Mandino and the curiously titled *The Saint, The Surfer and The CEO*—the titles some of these authors dreamed up never ceased to amaze me! He had few clothes in the room. His knapsack sat in the corner. There was no doubt that Julian lived simply.

Julian set aside a pair of khaki shorts, a white T-shirt and a pair of sandals. I saw that he had bought the sandals from The Gap. It was becoming increasingly clear to me that while Julian had few possessions and traveled through life lightly, he was not one of those spiritualists who shunned the real world and felt that the only route to enlightenment was to become an ascetic. He made no apologies for his love of the pleasures this world has to offer. His

overall philosophy, to me, seemed very balanced. Balance head with heart. Balance chasing dreams and making things happen, with letting things happen and trusting in the higher plan. Balance an awareness that the purpose of life is to return to our spiritual selves with an appreciation that we are human beings with various imperfections, who reside in a world with many lovely pleasures that can—and should—be savored without guilt. *Ultimately, it seemed to me that Julian believed the golden key to a beautiful life was to balance Heaven and Earth. And that felt right to me.*

Julian reached for the Og Mandino book and pointed to a line that had been highlighted in yellow ink. “Here, read this jewel of truth, amigo.” The line was simple, as I’d just learned all truths are. It read: “I am not on this earth by chance. I am here for a purpose and that purpose is to grow into a mountain, not to shrink to a grain of sand.”

“Thank you, Julian,” I said softly. “Thank you for saving my life.”

CHAPTER 4



The Seeker Learns of the Crime of Self-Betrayal and How to Unchain Himself

Cherish your visions; cherish your ideals; cherish the music that stirs in your heart, the beauty that forms in your mind, the loveliness that drapes your finest thoughts, for out of them will grow all delightful conditions, all heavenly environment; of these, if you remain true to them, your world will at last be built.

—James Allen, *As You Think*

How can you hesitate? Risk! Risk anything! Care no more for the opinion of others, for those voices. Do the hardest thing on earth for you. Act for yourself. Face the truth.

—Katherine Mansfield

Julian knew I was deep in thought and he left me alone for a few moments, as if to allow me to process all that he had offered. While he went into the bathroom, I pondered the way that I had conducted my life all these years. I could hear him singing as the water from the tap flowed. A great sense of regret began to well up inside me as I reflected on the many mistakes of my past. Rather than using these mistakes to my advantage, as fodder for growth and learning, I had been asleep to the lessons they carried, walking through life blind to the opportunity for growth and wallowing in self-pity. I felt sad that I had not been exposed to Julian's philosophy at a much earlier age and lived a life that was more closely aligned with the natural laws he spoke of. So many precious years had slipped away, years I could have spent walking the path to my best and most true life rather than squandering the talents and gifts I'd been given on a life that was lived to please the expectations of others. I'd been swallowed up by the crowd, and had almost allowed it to destroy me.

When Julian returned, he put his arm around me. He could tell what I was going through. "‘Forgiveness is the fruit of understanding,’ said the wise monk Thich Nhat Hanh. You are exactly where you are meant to be on your path. As that understanding—and your awareness of the way life unfolds—grows, a beautiful sense of self-forgiveness will appear within you. You are far too hard on yourself," Julian said gently, surprising me by the depth of his intuitive power.

He led me out of the room, into the hallway. Beautiful art hung on the

walls and lounge music flowed softly from a series of well-hidden speakers. It seemed as though most of the hotel's guests were still asleep.

"Tell me more, Julian," I said, gathering myself and feeling ready to hear more of the profound wisdom my brilliant, if unorthodox, life coach was sharing with me.

"Good enough, amigo," he replied as we walked into the elevator. "A person who plays his biggest game as a human being—that is, lives according to his largest potential and walks the path of his authentic mission—is a person who is in love with himself," he said. "*Living an excellent life is a manifestation of self-love.*"

"I've never considered that," I said.

"Someone who conducts his life as if he were one of the greatest people on the planet—a true heavyweight—is someone who not only has enormous self-respect but one who has deep respect for the force of nature that created him. There's a lot of talk these days about 'living in the moment' and 'savoring the now.' Don't get me wrong, that kind of thing is *essential* to living well. I believe in it and espouse it completely. You've even heard me talk that kind of talk in our short time together. *But it's all a balance*, and there's absolutely nothing wrong with also making time to reach for the stars and let the talents within you shine in a *big way*. *As a matter of fact, when you set big goals and chase big dreams, you are engaging in a hugely creative act. You are using your imagination and your abilities to build something wonderful. That's creativity in action.*"

"Nice insight. I never really thought of going after my most meaningful goals as a creative act. But it is, isn't it? Doing so involves creating something from nothing more than the initial idea. Building a new business or launching a new product or chasing a real passion is no different than what an artist does as she transforms the vision in her mind into a beautiful work of art."

"Yes. And as we create the lives of our dreams, guess who we model?"

"No idea."

"We model the infinitely powerful force that created the entire world. Call that force 'God,' 'the universe' or 'Nature'— the label you put on it is just a word and I don't want to get hung up on labels. The point is that when you go after what you want, with love and wild abandon, you tap into the energy that created the stars and the seas. A kind of magic begins to enter your life and things happen that defy your comprehension. Signs start to appear, suggesting that you are on the right track. You are driving home and drive through ten green lights in a row, just as you are wondering whether the person you just

courageously asked out on a date is the right one for you. Or the right person happens to call you at the right time, helping you decide if the job you were struggling with is the best one for you. Or the ideal solution to a difficult problem appears in a book you just happened to pick up while you were sitting in your dentist's waiting room, ready to have your teeth cleaned. What's that old expression: '*Synchronicity is God's way of remaining anonymous.*'"

"Oooh, that's a good one, Julian."

"Don't I know it," he said with smooth confidence as we walked out of the elevator and into the gleaming lobby. Sun poured through the floor-to-ceiling glass windows and the gerbera daisies that filled the lobby gave the space a magnificent feel. I was proud of this hotel and what it stood for. I felt good about what I'd created here.

"When you do your best and dedicate yourself to excellence, the universe supports you and puts wind beneath your wings. It sees a human being who is reaching for his ideals and trying to become what he was meant to be. That kind of effort never goes unnoticed by the eyes that watch over the world. Now, remember, not everything will work out the way you want it to. There's a higher intelligence at play whose logic we often cannot understand. But if you just keep doing your best and letting life do the rest, accepting whatever comes, with the knowledge that it's for your highest good, life will work out wonderfully. Better than expected, actually."

Just as I was letting that insight sink in, Julian got down on the floor of the lobby and started doing some strange maneuvers. The front desk team began to look and then giggle quietly. Maria was entranced. Julian ran his own race, that's for sure. He paid little attention to what others thought of him. It seemed so clear that so long as what he did felt true to him, he would do it. He lived life on his own terms. And as he had taught me, that was the *real* meaning of success.

"I'm doing the downward facing dog. Yoga is one of the practices I use each day to keep me energized and in good physical condition. You ought to try it. It's been around for thousands of years for a reason: it works. Hey, if Madonna and Sting swear by it, it can't be so bad, can it?" he said with a grin, as he focused in the posture, his muscles rippling as he moved gracefully.

After he had held the pose for a few moments, he rose to his feet and continued. "Anyway, back to my point. Too many spiritualists in our world today suffer from a disease I call 'spiritual apathy.' They will tell you not to chase your dreams or play too big, saying that this is controlling your destiny

and forcing outcomes. What nonsense!” said Julian as he waved his arms in the air with dramatic flair.

“Yes, as I hope I’ve made clear all along, those who are living their best lives—the lives their destinies wished for them— have managed to strike a delicate balance between making it happen and *letting* it happen. I agree that trying *too* hard is nothing more than pushing the river and forcing outcomes. But too many spiritual seekers seem to believe that working hard, being disciplined and going for what you want is unhealthy and unspiritual. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Setting goals, managing your time well and taking calculated risks to get what you want is actually *very spiritual* because you are applying the talents and power that have been invested in you for a worthwhile cause. People who believe otherwise may be at the other extreme from the workaholics of this world, but their views are still extreme and unbalanced. And as far as I am concerned, extremism in any form is unhealthy.”

“Is it possible for a person to be *too* spiritual?”

“Sure. Staying in your room and meditating or praying all day for the life of your dreams is not going to give you the life of your dreams and believing differently is nothing more than engaging in magical thinking. It’s delusional actually. I told you that I believe there is a rough plan in place for our destinies—it was written before we were born into this world. Having said that, human beings have been given free will for a reason: *to take the steps required to bring our destinies to life*. There are lots of blanks we have the power to fill in and lots of dots to connect. You must put in the effort and make the sacrifices required to live the life of your dreams. You must be disciplined and make wise choices. Actions have consequences and to reap the harvest you dream of, you must sow the seeds. That’s another of nature’s laws. And if you don’t believe me, just talk to any successful farmer. They will tell you that nothing grows in their fields without hard work and diligent seed-planting. If they just sat around meditating or praying all day, they’d lose the farm.”

“That feels right to me,” I said. “I can’t imagine that my destiny will come knocking if I don’t do anything to draw it to me. I agree with you, Julian, the more I think about it: we wouldn’t have been given personal power, as human beings, if we were not meant to exercise it.”

We walked outside, into the fresh air of the early morning.

“Exactly, Dar. Every gift we have been given—and every one of us has gifts—has been given to us for a reason. With each of the gifts we have received comes the responsibility that we sculpt it and develop it and then

apply it out in the world in a way that enriches the lives of other people. People who are not willing to set an intention for all they want from life and then to *boldly* pursue it are ultimately people with much fear stirring within them. They are frightened. They have issues that need to be healed and shadows that need to be examined.”

“What kinds of fears might be running them, Julian?”

“Fear of failure, fear of success, fear of the unknown, fear of rejection, fear of being different, fear of not being good enough ... I could go on. Anyone who is not out there, doing their best, devoting themselves to playing their highest game and living at a standard of excellence is, at some root level, a person with fears within them in need of healing. Now, I need to be clear: there’s not a soul on the planet who doesn’t have some fear that limits him from living his truest potential. Again, the very condition of being human is one of imperfection and much of this imperfection arises due to the fears we have picked up as we have left the perfection of our original nature and traveled out into the world.”

“So all that talk by so many people these days about ‘letting go of outcomes’ and ‘being present-centered’ shows fear, right?”

“Not quite, Dar. The philosophy, in theory, is right *but the way they are executing it* is wrong. Remember the phrase I’ve been coaching you on: *do your best and then let life do the rest*. Chase your dreams. Do all you can to build the life you want. Visit the places that scare you and do not shrink from the greatness that you know in your heart you were meant to present to the world. And once you’ve done *everything* in your power, as a human being, to make your desires happen—and *only then*—let go of outcomes. After you’ve done your part of the equation by giving your all, relax and accept whatever comes back to you. You did all you could do. You acted responsibly and made the best moves and highest choices that were within your power to make. Now let the higher power take over and lead you to where you were meant to go. Let life take you to the path of your destiny. It is at this point that you need to just relax and surrender.”

“Okay, I’m getting it. It’s that balance thing again. I need to do my part and then life or nature or Infinite Intelligence or God, whatever label we want to put on the higher power that ultimately is in control, does the rest. And whatever comes, I should understand that it has come for a reason.”

“It’s actually come for your highest good and to take you where you need to go. *If you’ve done your very best and lived in accordance with the laws of nature, whatever comes will be a blessing, even if it initially looks like a curse.*”

“Very powerful ideas, Julian. Very powerful. So these so-called spiritualists and all their talk about letting go, living life without goals and surrendering to the moment are people who are, in truth, scared. They are playing small and letting their fears run their lives. They are out of balance,” I observed, trying to distill and summarize what Julian had just taught me.

“Yes. For many of them, their ‘spirituality’ is nothing more than a mask they wear to protect the frightened little children within them who are running the show. They are afraid that they will fail or not be good enough or that the path might be difficult. So they make excuses to absolve themselves of any responsibility. They govern their lives by the position of the planets or by what some fortune-teller says is their fate. Don’t get me wrong, Dar, I learned in India that astrology is a magnificent science that can be very reliable. It’s been used with success for thousands of years. But it truly is all about a balance. To *completely* run my life by it is to play the game of the victim. To blame my moods, my inactions and my mistakes on the way the planets are aligned is to give away the power I have been given as a human being to the planets, the moons and the stars. It’s a weak way to live. *Remember, you are not your moods but a force far bigger than them. You are not your psychology but a power far wiser than it.*”

“What I hear you saying, Julian, is that, for someone not to do what’s needed to go after the life they want, to the fullest extent of their human capacity, is actually *irresponsible* because they are not using the gifts they have been given.”

“It’s like I mentioned in the dressing room last night, ‘Happiness is our birthright.’ We have been hardwired to do extraordinary things with our lives and present exceptional gifts to the world. Martin Luther King Jr. said it well: ‘Everyone has the power for greatness, not for fame but for greatness.’ But we betray ourselves. We play small and timid with our lives. We buy into the belief system by which those around us teach us to govern our lives that says: ‘do not dare,’ ‘do not dream,’ ‘do not shine too brightly or else you will stand out— and fail.’”

We walked out into the sunlight of a perfect day. The Ferrari was drawing admiring looks from many of the people arriving at the hotel. It was a stunning vehicle and appeared to be in immaculate condition, even though it was an older model. Julian smiled when he looked at it.

“Come on, amigo, let’s go for a ride.”

I’d never been in a Ferrari and was delighted by every aspect of the sensual experience it offered. As I relaxed into the tan-colored seats, I closed my eyes and luxuriated in the smell of rich Italian leather. When Julian turned

the ignition, the engine roared to life. He shifted the car elegantly into first gear and sped away from the hotel as onlookers stared at the car and its two fortunate occupants.

Julian reached over and turned on the CD player. U2's *Beautiful Day* rang out from the superb sound system as we headed through the city's still-quiet streets and onto a freeway that would lead us into the countryside.

"Hey, Julian," I said. "Whose car is this anyway?"

"It's a secret," he replied simply as he tapped his fingers along with the music.

"Could you at least tell me where we're going?"

"The Camden Caves," Julian replied as he stepped on the accelerator. His eyes were completely focused on the road and his face reflected the joy that he was feeling. He clearly loved driving this car.

I'd heard of the Camden Caves. They were a series of ancient caves next to a waterfall that archeologists and adventurers alike frequently explored. I had no idea why Julian was taking me there. And I did not ask.

"It's time for me to start coaching you on The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening, Dar. Last night and earlier this morning was all a primer. You are doing beautifully—I know you will begin to see powerful results over the coming weeks and months. I can tell when I look into your eyes that you are committed. 'Commitment' is a very big and important word for me. Living a committed life is an incredibly important pursuit. 'Commitment' and 'accountability' are words that must flood the core of your being. You must think about these words often and devote yourself to standing by them."

"I promise I will take them seriously, Julian," I said with sincerity.

"The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening is a remarkably potent process for living your biggest life and walking the path to your destiny. The seven stages are a blueprint for awakening your best self and manifesting the potential that you have been given by the force that sent you into the world. Few people in the world today are aware of these seven stages, but that will soon change," said Julian with an air of mystery. "The seven stages reflect the pathway that every seeker needs to travel to return to his or her original nature—the state of mind, body and spirit that they first experienced when they were perfect and pure."

"And if I go through all seven stages, what will I be like as a person?" I wondered, hopefully.

"If you go through all seven stages, my friend, you will reach a state of

being commonly referred to as ‘enlightened.’ Only a handful of people who have graced the planet before us have ever gone all the way to the end of this process, but that also is about to change. Once the world discovers this process for self-awakening that I am about to share, the world will change.”

“That’s an incredible promise, Julian.”

“I know it is. I also know that while the system I’m about to share with you is simple to understand, the challenge comes in integrating it into your life. Now please don’t get me wrong— I’m not saying that it’s a difficult system to follow. Actually some parts of it are unbelievably easy. It’s just that you will need to dedicate yourself to learning the process and staying with it until it becomes second nature.”

“Okay, so what are The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening?” I asked.

“Stage One is the stage that most people on the planet are currently at. It’s the stage of living an unconscious life—being asleep at the wheel, so to speak. This stage is known as ‘Living a Lie’ because people at this beginning platform of personal evolution are caught up in a lie about the way the world works and how they exist within it. Now I’m not, in any way, judging people who spend their entire lives at this stage. Who am I to judge another human being? But I am stating a fact when I tell you that this is the lowest level of consciousness that a person can operate at, when measured against all seven stages. You see, those of us who are at Stage One have no connection with the truth.”

“What do you mean, Julian?”

“Well, over the coming weeks, I will share many truths with you as to how this world of ours operates and what you must do in order to find *authentic* success within it. To be unaware of the truths is to live a lie. To be unconscious as to what life is all about and why we are here is to be caught up in a misrepresentation. And sadly, that’s the case for the vast majority of people on the planet. Like I told you last night, that’s changing very quickly and there will be a quantum shift in the level of consciousness of most people soon. Did you see the movie *The Matrix*?” asked Julian.

“Yeah, I did. Pretty cool special effects,” I acknowledged.

“Dar, that movie was about so much more than neat special effects. That’s all that most people took from that movie. For many, it was just another Hollywood action film. But for the seekers among us—that is, for those of us searching for answers to the questions we have about why we are here and the true nature of the world—*The Matrix* was a philosophical masterpiece. It is a

very deep movie. Actually, I'll go out on a limb and say that *The Matrix* is the most philosophical film ever made."

"Seriously?" I asked, surprised by Julian's statement.

"Absolutely. You see, as Morpheus explained to Neo in the film, this whole world of ours—the one we see through the eyes of our current level of perception—is nothing more than an illusion. It's a lie we tell—and sell—ourselves. Now, in the movie, everything the characters thought to be the real world turned out to be a computer-generated hallucination known as the Matrix. That's the sci-fi, Hollywood part of the movie. This world of ours is not, of course, a computer-generated fantasy. But what you currently see as the real world, my friend, is just an illusion."

"I think you're losing me, Julian. What exactly do you mean when you suggest that the world I'm seeing is not what I think I'm seeing?"

"Well, the way you see the world is a function of the way you have been taught to see it. From the time you were a small child, you were trained and conditioned to believe certain things. For example, you were told to fit into the crowd and behave like everyone else. You were taught not to sing too loud when you were happy and not to dream too big when you were feeling inspired. You learned that those who are different would not be accepted and that conformity would lead to success. You were taught not to speak your truth and not to be too loving or else you'd be taken advantage of. You were taught that possessions and external power would bring you lasting happiness."

"Who taught us these beliefs?"

"Your parents. Your schoolteachers. Religious figures. Your friends. Television and the media."

"And what I was taught is untrue?"

"Well, there's a lot more going on in the world than most people are aware of. Or let me put it in a better way: You are not who you currently think you are. You have far more internal power and potential than you can imagine in your wildest dreams. You are destined for great things. And a lot of what you have been taught to believe about this big, beautiful world of ours is absolutely wrong."

"Like what?"

"First of all, *we are all connected at an invisible level. We are all brothers and sisters who belong to the same family. It's only an illusion that we are separate. Mystics and sages have told us that for thousands of years—we are*

all cut from the same cloth, and when you hurt another person, you hurt yourself as well. This is one of the fundamental truths of nature and, yet, with the limited level perception available to people at stage one, most people can't see it. So we live a lie. We compete against each other for what we believe are scarce resources. We fail to support each other. We hoard and grab because we are in fear."

"In fear?"

"Yes, we fear that if another wins, we must lose. We fear that there just isn't enough abundance and prosperity in the world for everyone. We fear that if we genuinely help another person, we will somehow lose something rather than seeing the truth behind this lie which is that the more we help others, the more abundance will flood into our lives. One of the timeless truths of the universe can be stated simply: *When you shift from a compulsion to survive into a heartfelt commitment to serve, your life cannot help but explode into success.*"

"Powerful line," I observed.

"So stage one is all about this self-betrayal I've been hinting at since we first met. We were born into perfection—fearless, infinitely wise, of boundless potential and in a state of pure love. And, in our fear of not fitting in with the crowd, we begin to *forget* our original nature and adopt the beliefs, values and behaviors of the world around us. But look at the hatred in the world around us. The world has lost its way and is in the most sorry state it's ever been in. Too much fear and hatred on the planet today," Julian noted with some sadness. "It takes great strength to leave the crowd and be true to your original nature. But that's what leadership is all about—leaving the crowd and being true to who you really are. 'You don't find diamonds in storerooms, sandal trees in rows, lions in flocks and holy men in herds,' said the mystic Kabir."

"Why would anyone consciously betray themselves and begin to live a lie?"

"Excellent question. First let me say that when you do, in fact, betray yourself, the deeper part of you knows what you are doing. Each one of us has a witness—a deep place of knowing that lives at our authentic core—that watches *everything* we do. This place of knowing is commonly called a conscience. When we do not live authentically, the witness sees it. When we cheat or lie or act in selfish ways, the witness sees it. When we dishonor ourselves by playing small with our lives and refusing to live up to the magnificent potential that has been invested in us, the witness sees it. When we fail to pour love into the world, the witness sees it. All this betrayal of our

true selves leads us to a slow and painful death. The witness cannot believe what we are doing to ourselves. It cannot believe that we are being so incongruent. It cannot bear to watch these kinds of crimes against our own humanity. So it begins to withdraw and shut down. We, as people, begin to lose self-respect. Our self-worth plummets. We begin to feel unhappy, angry and irritable. At a physical level we lack energy and vitality and may even grow ill. We do all this to ourselves but it generally happens at an unconscious level. We just buy into this lie about who we must be and how we must live. And it ends up killing us. Then, on our deathbeds, we finally understand that we did not live the lives we were meant to live. But, by then, it's too late."

"So why would anyone do this to themselves?" I pressed.

"Because we do not know better. It all starts when we are infants. And as infants, we look to our parents to teach us how the world works. We are hungry for their love. And so we do whatever we need to do to become like them, hoping that if we think, feel and act like them, we will receive their adoration. Unfortunately, in doing so, we leave our true selves behind."

"Self-betrayal," I stated.

"Exactly. So to awaken your best self, it's really a journey from where you now are—as an adult—to the place that you once knew—as a newborn. It's a journey home. It's a return to your original nature. We already are everything we've always dreamed of being. We've just forgotten it along the way. And that's why I believe the whole notion of self-improvement is nonsense. There's not one person on the planet who needs to improve—one cannot improve upon perfection and any suggestion that we need to do so only makes us feel more guilt about not being enough. *The duty of every human being is not self-improvement but self-remembering.* To self-remember is to reclaim the state of being and the authentic power that we lost when we left the ideal state of newborn children and walked out into this fear-filled world of ours, a world that spoiled us along the way."

"And this 'spoiling process,' if you will, has caused each of us to see an illusion. A filter gets set up between the truth of life and our human perception. This filter or personal context is comprised of all the lies we've been taught. The world we think we see, if we are living our lives at stage one of the process, is actually nothing more than a fantasy. It truly is a lie, of sorts. What we are seeing is not the truth but a composite of all the ways we have been trained to see by those around us, well-meaning as they were."

"It's almost like we are a bunch of lab mice that have been conditioned to run on a treadmill for a little piece of cheese," I said.

“I’d agree with that. Remember, *we see the world not as it is but as we are*. We see the world through the filter of our personal perception, which comprises all the beliefs, fears, assumptions and values that we have assumed from our parents, early teachers and the world at large, in an effort to fit in with the crowd and be loved.”

“Absolutely amazing, Julian. Hard to believe, actually. I’ve never, even once, stopped to think that the world I’m seeing as I go through my days just might not reflect the truth of what’s actually happening.”

“A while ago, I was coaching another individual and we were sitting in a classroom as I delivered the relevant lesson. He asked me a question and I gently gave him my answer. Instantly, his body language changed and he grew angry. Upon delving into what he believed caused this adverse reaction, he explained that he felt I had rejected him. The truth of the matter is that I did no such thing. As we went deeper into the source of his discomfort, he had a profound breakthrough. His father had been an exceedingly demanding person who often made my student feel like he was rejected. A belief had been set up within him that said ‘people reject me’ and this ancient pattern repeated itself throughout his life. Knowing this was extremely important for my student. Remember that awareness precedes choice and choice precedes change,” Julian said as he turned off the freeway onto a single-lane road that led to the Camden Caves.

“What does that mean?”

“Once you become aware of something that’s not right in your life, you can make new choices. And these new choices are what lead to positive changes. Let’s say, for example, you have a scarcity mentality. You think you are the most generous person in the world but that’s nothing more than denial. You don’t want to look at what’s really going on for you, beneath the surface. The truth of the matter is that you are very selfish and you try to keep everything you can for yourself. Everyone around you sees your selfish behavior. They can tell that you do not see the world as an abundant place, so you hoard. If they have done some work on themselves and have a certain level of personal evolution, they know that you are acting like this because, at some level, you are in fear. Fear of losing what you have, fear of being taken advantage of, fear of failure—the deeper issue is not important right now. But they can see that fear is driving your behavior and they know it comes from a childhood hurt—as all fears do, for every person on the planet. Anyway, you think of yourself as loving and generous. Now, let’s say you have the courage to start asking people for honest feedback about how you could improve as a person. And let’s say your loved ones are courageous enough to speak truthfully. They tell you what they have known all along: you operate from a

perception of scarcity and you are not as giving as you have always thought yourself to be. If you listened to them, this would build new awareness in you. The shadows that were once within the realm of the subconscious would now move into the realm of the conscious where you could look at them. *Self-examination is the first step to personal greatness.* You could investigate where this belief system came from and where the fears first started. This new awareness, in turn, would lead to new choices, if you were willing to make them. You could be more giving and refuse to act in your old, selfish ways. These new choices would lead to new changes in the way you thought, felt and acted. And your life would then change. Nice little process, isn't it?"

"Very interesting, Julian. I know we are almost at the caves. Wow, this sure is a beautiful part of the world," I said, as I looked out at the lush meadows filled with yellow flowers. A stream ran alongside the road and an alley of oak trees lined the way. "What about the rest of the seven stages? Stage One is when people are unconscious to the truths of life and have little idea how the world really works. They are asleep to the fact that they project their own fears, false beliefs and biases out into the world and, as such, get a skewed vision of reality. I get that most people are at this stage and this is why the world is as messy as it is. We are divorced from our original nature. We have grown into false figments of our once magnificent selves. This self-betrayal has shut us down and given rise to self-loathing. My guess is that as we leave our loving, fearless and extraordinary selves and stuff ourselves into molds that allow us to fit into the crowd, we begin to hate ourselves at a deeper—perhaps subconscious—level. No wonder most people are so miserable and angry."

Julian began honking the horn. He raised one fist into the air while he kept the other on the steering wheel and started singing "It's a beautiful day" at the top of his lungs. He was once again pleased with my understanding of the wisdom and process he was sharing. I knew he was happy to be my coach and I was delighted to be his student. What I was learning from Julian was truly priceless. If more people could hear what I had been hearing, this world of ours really would be a very different place. It would be a place of greater justice, authenticity and love. In that moment, I committed to not only mastering the information I had been blessed to receive, I dedicated myself to spreading it to others. The term "evangelist" has taken on negative connotations these days. In truth, it simply refers to "one who spreads good news." I would spread Julian's message. I would become an evangelist.

Julian parked the car on a grassy slope and we began to walk along the path that would take us to the caves. He took off his sandals and walked barefoot. Julian did not say anything, instead preferring to hum a song while

taking in the gorgeous gifts of nature that surrounded us. As we drew near to one of the caves, he began to speak.

“The first of the seven stages is ‘Living a Lie.’ Asking the right question evokes the right answer, you know? Questions offer powerful vehicles to promote self-awareness. Actually, that brings up a good little point: a great question to journal on when I’m not around is ‘what things will I no longer tolerate in my life?’ Anyway, I know you will no longer betray yourself and live a life that is not yours. Stage Two of the seven stages is known as ‘The Choicepoint.’ Once you grow aware that you are following the crowd and living an unauthentic life, you are presented with a choice.”

“That’s the part in *The Matrix* where Neo is given the choice between swallowing the blue pill or the red pill, right? I’m beginning to see how deep and meaningful that movie really is, Julian. I need to see it again,” I promised.

“Good idea. And you are right. Once you see that you have bought into the illusion the crowd wants you to believe is reality, you will have a choice: continue to live as you have always been living—and in so doing, resign yourself to a life of unhappiness and mediocrity—or take the red pill, so to speak, and step up to your biggest life. And never forget what poet David Whyte once observed: ‘The soul would rather fail at its own life than succeed at someone else’s.’ Nothing’s more important than having the bravery to live *your* life. Stage Three is called ‘Awareness of Wonder and Possibility.’ At this stage, you begin to see with a new set of eyes. You see more of the truth than you have ever seen before. You begin to understand that the world wants you to win and that it is a place of great abundance, opportunity and majesty. You also begin to see that people, at their core, are good and it is only because of the hurts that life has visited on them that they do bad things. I’m not saying that we all don’t have choices—of course we do and everyone can choose to be kind, whole and good, no matter how much they have suffered. All I’m suggesting is that, at this stage, you begin to separate who people truly are from *their behavior*, which might present as hurtful and mean. You begin to see that people who act like this are in pain. No one with a wide open and happy heart could *ever* hurt another person. At this point along the process of self-awakening, you also become intimately aware of your best self. You see all the self-betrayal more clearly than ever and come to know what you are truly made of. This is an incredibly inspiring stage of the journey home.”

“What’s Stage Four?”

“Well, after you’ve left the stage of Living a Lie and passed The Choicepoint by making the decision to awaken your best self, and after you’ve become aware of the world beyond the illusion—a world of extraordinary wonder and limitless possibility—you reach the fourth stage:

‘Instruction from Masters.’ It is at this stage that the seeker usually begins to search for various teachers and explores many different paths to learning. She is hungry for answers and healing. It can be a very confusing time because when lots of new knowledge comes at the seeker in a short space of time, it is hard to assimilate it all. But please know that *confusion always gives rise to clarity* over time and a moment does come when all the new learning becomes wonderfully integrated within your understanding. This is the beginning of *real* wisdom. After this comes Stage Five: ‘Transformation and Rebirth,’ which can be the most challenging stage. But it is also one of the most unforgettable. It is at this stage that your biggest self starts to present itself on a daily basis and your entire world begins to change. True, change is not always easy, but the benefits that you will receive at this point of the process will serve you well for the remainder of your life. Stage Six is ‘The Trial.’ Before a seeker reaches her treasure, she will face a trial. The purpose of the trial is twofold: first to ensure that she has learned all the lessons she was meant to learn along the way and second, to see how badly she wants the prize. It is at this stage that most people give up. Too many people retreat at this point when, sadly, had they persisted a little bit more, their greatest gift would have been available just around the corner. And finally, Stage Seven is ‘The Great Awakening of Self.’ To get to this point—and few do, as I’ve suggested—you reach the state of enlightenment. You become all those things that reflect your original nature. You return to the way of being that you knew when you were connected to the force of nature that sent you into the world. You become fearless, innocent, infinitely wise, of boundless potential and pure love. No shadows—all light. You can get to that stage—if you are willing and *devoted*. But to get to this final place, you have to want to get there more than you want life itself. Makes me think of what Sheila Graham once wrote: ‘You can have anything you want if you want it desperately enough. You must want it with an exuberance that erupts through the skin and joins the energy that created the world.’”

“Beautiful words,” I applauded.

“And what better place could any human being ever aspire to reach than enlightenment?” asked Julian as we walked into a darkened cave. “Now I must tell you, The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening is not a magic-bullet, quick-fix kind of a process for personal transformation. It takes effort, patience and time to happen. Over the coming weeks, I’ll take you through various experiences to bring the seven stages to life for you. I am your coach and it is my duty to show you the seven-stage process. But it will fall to you to live it over the weeks, months and even years that will follow my visit with you.”

I felt a tinge of sadness within me. Julian had just entered my life last

night and to speak so soon of his leaving was dismaying. In our short time together, he had already filled my heart with great inspiration and taught me so much wisdom. I knew that if I chose to act on even a small amount of the knowledge he had already given me, my whole life would assume a very different look.

Once again, Julian sensed my feelings.

“Hey, amigo, not to worry, we have big things to do together and I’m around for a while. And by the time I’m done with you, you won’t need me. You’ll be having too much fun on your own,” he said with a healthy laugh.

Julian then took my arm and gently led me into the dark cave. After walking for about a minute, he asked me to sit down on the ground and stare at the wall in front of me. “Stay completely focused on that wall, Dar. Do not take your eyes off it. Promise?”

“I promise,” I replied.

All of a sudden, the cave lit up. I had no idea what was going on behind me but I could hear Julian shuffling around. As I stared at the wall, I saw various images being projected on the rock face in front of me.

After about ten minutes of watching the objects dance across the wall of the cave, I heard Julian speak.

“What you are watching on the cave’s wall is a mere illusion. It is a lie. Now it’s time to see the truth. Are you willing?”

“Yes, I am,” I said, still keeping my eyes on what was going on in front of me.

“Then turn around and see what’s *really* happening.”

I turned around and saw that Julian had lit a small fire. He also had, in his hands, a number of small stone objects that he was placing in front of the fire. These objects projected the images I was viewing on the cave wall in front of me.

“Ever read Plato’s *Republic*, Dar?” asked Julian.

“No, never got around to it.”

“It’s important to read the great books first, you know. Otherwise, you just might find that you run out of time. Anyway, there is a section in the book in which a crowd of people are sitting in a cave, much like this one. This crowd is watching the images projected on the wall, much as you did. The sad thing is that, for their entire lives, they believed that what they saw was the truth; they never realized that they were only viewing an illusion. One day, one of

the people from among the crowd dared to be different. He dared to become a seeker and he searched for the truth. He unchained himself from the ground and left the crowd by having the courage to see what was behind him, rather than continue to stare at the projected images in front of him. And what he saw shocked him.”

“He saw a fire, I’ll bet. And he saw that the images on the wall were mere projections of the objects being placed in front of the fire. He stopped believing the lie he had always believed and, for the first time in his life, he saw the truth.”

“Perfect,” Julian said, as he nodded his head with great satisfaction. “Perfectly noted. And that new awareness changed his life. Now that you’ve got my point, let’s get out of here. It’s a little creepy in this place if you ask me,” he said with a chuckle. Julian put out the fire and we stumbled out of the cave, towards the light.

Julian led me down a path in a wooded area. The smell of pine and cedar brought back childhood memories of hiking in the woods with my father. Soon, I heard the sound of water. As we drew nearer, I saw a small waterfall, and above it, a rainbow.

“That’s a good sign,” said Julian happily. “Now, stand under the waterfall,” he instructed.

“You’re kidding!”

“No. I only need you to do it for a few minutes. It will cleanse you and serve as a metaphor for letting go of impurities you have collected since leaving your once-perfect state of being. Get under the waterfall and close your eyes. Imagine the water washing away all your limiting beliefs, false assumptions, fears and biases.”

I did what Julian told me to do and, though the water was cold at first, the experience was amazing. I felt lighter, happier and more pure.

“You are now aware of the illusion under which you have lived your life,” said Julian as I stepped into the sun to dry off. “You are now ready to stop lying to yourself and leave the crowd in search of the truth. Let go of the chains binding you to the ground and stand up for your biggest life. In doing so—in letting go of the lie and living the life meant for you—you will find something every one of us craves: *freedom*. You are now ready to leave Stage One of The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening.”

Julian then asked me to close my eyes and sit on a grassy bank next to the waterfall. “These are the words of the great author Herman Hesse, and I want you to commit them to heart, Dar. They speak to what you’ve learned this

morning.” Julian spoke in a loud voice, as if to proclaim to all of nature the truth of what he was uttering:

“It is time to come to your senses. You are to live and to learn to laugh. You are to learn to listen to the cursed radio music of life and to reverence the spirit behind it and to laugh at its distortions. So there you are. Nothing more will be asked of you.”

CHAPTER 5



The Seeker Discovers the Single Most Important Choice a Human Being Can Make

I know of no more encouraging fact than the ability of a man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor. It is something to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so make a few objects beautiful. It is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look. This morally we can do.

—Henry David Thoreau

We were leaving the wilderness where I had completed the first stage of The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening. Julian was once again at the wheel of the red Ferrari.

“Every true seeker on the path to awakening and self-realization eventually reaches a place where he will be presented with the opportunity to make a choice that will dramatically alter his life forever. Sometimes this turning point is brought on through intense suffering such as the loss of a loved one, an illness, a financial crisis or a tragic accident. At other times, it will surface simply because the seeker is ready to get to the next level of living and has done the advance inner work required to make this a possibility,” offered Julian as he took a sharp turn onto one of the highways that would lead us back into the downtown core. “If you have left Stage One of The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening by becoming aware of the self-betrayal you have been engaging in, you cannot help—as a seeker of the truth and an explorer of your biggest life—but reach Stage Two: The Choicepoint.”

“And my guess, Julian, is that the way the seeker shows up at this Choicepoint, in many ways, determines his destiny. Make one decision and you get to ride one of those freeways you taught me about earlier. Take another and you ride the bumpier routes.”

“Yes, that’s right, Dar. The true decision you will face at The Choicepoint comes down to either showing a heartfelt willingness to advance confidently on the conscious path to your authentic life, or a regression to the life you once lived, a return to the waking sleep you once knew. *Ultimately, The Choice-point offers you the chance to choose your biggest life or to stay small*

and remain among the herd of lemmings, unconsciously following those around you as each in turn falls off the cliff. I'll tell you one thing from personal experience: if you do not make the higher and more noble of the two decisions that present themselves at The Choicepoint, you will be setting yourself up for a life of deep regret and utter heartbreak by the time you reach the end. Nothing so destroys the heart as the knowledge that you had the chance to manifest the gorgeous potential that you were meant to be and you refused to accept the call. *To refuse to accept the call of your best life is to insult the force that created you,*" Julian stated, with even greater intensity than usual. Suddenly, he pulled off the freeway onto a side road that led to a small community hospital located in a suburb of the city.

"Why are we going in here, Julian?" I asked, somewhat confused. Julian's coaching never ceased to be rich with adventure and suspense.

"You'll see," came the prophetic reply.

As we walked in through the main reception area of the hospital, two attractive nurses rushed over to greet Julian. "Hey, honey," one of them said flirtatiously, "nice of you to stop by to say hello." The other grinned as she teased, "Hi, Julian. Finally decided to have that physical?" Both of them erupted into laughter and gave my one-of-a-kind life coach a warm hug. "Seriously, Julian," the one who had spoken first said, "It's great to see you again. Go on up, they're expecting you."

"Could you keep an eye on my friend for a second, ladies?" asked Julian. "I need to pop into the gift shop for a minute."

While Julian went off to do his errand, I tried to figure out what was going on. I needed some answers.

"How do you both know Julian?" I asked.

"Oh, he comes here nearly every day," one of them said. "He's our best volunteer," the other chimed in. "Everybody loves Julian. He walked into this place one day, just a few weeks ago, as a matter of fact, and said he wanted to help out. Specifically asked to be placed in the terminal care ward. I still recall him saying something about 'needing to be an instrument of service and adding value to human beings.' Julian's quite an idealist, you know?"

"I know," I responded with a nod.

Julian returned with a huge bouquet of flowers in his arms. "Come on, Dar, there's a special group of people I'd like to introduce you to."

We walked down a long corridor with sterile white walls. The whole place smelled of ammonia and coffee. At the end of the hallway was a lounge. As

we entered it, the six people sitting within it immediately stood up to greet Julian with smiles and hugs. It was clear they held Julian in enormously high regard. It was also clear that Julian was moved by their generous display of affection. I detected tears in his eyes. He saw what I saw.

“There’s nothing wrong with a man crying,” he whispered into my ear. “Never forget that. A person closed off from his feelings lacks sensitivity, compassion and empathy. Such people are of the kind who start wars, commit crimes and spread hate. Do not avoid your feelings, Dar. They are an essential part of the authentic person that you are.”

Now Julian spoke aloud to the group gathered in front of us. “These ladies and gentlemen are my friends,” he said. “Ladies and gentlemen, please say hello to my friend Dar.” Each of them warmly shook my hand. I was asked to sit down, which I did.

“We’ve been expecting you, Julian. Is this the man you asked me to speak to?” asked a man who appeared to be in his eighties. He wore a checkered suit with a white shirt and a bowtie. His thinning gray hair had been neatly slicked back.

“Yes, Peter, this is the man. Why don’t you share with him what you shared with me a week or so ago when I came in to visit you. Your words were very powerful. I wanted him to hear them from you.”

“Well,” said the elderly man, “I just told our young friend Julian here that now that I am at the end of my life, my greatest regret is not letting the music within me sing. I know, deep in my heart, that there was a song inside of me that needed to be expressed,” he said poetically. “There was a creative mission hidden in me that called out to be liberated and realized. What I mean is that we all have special things we are meant to do with our lives. Each and every one of us is a special creature, endowed with miraculous capacities and unbelievable abilities.”

“Peter here used to be a motivational speaker before he ended up in this place,” one of the women kidded. The whole group began to laugh. It’s been said that laughter is the shortest distance between human hearts. When we laugh together, all the social constructs that keep us apart fall to the wayside and we connect as real people. It’s a beautiful thing to behold. It was in that moment that I realized the truth of one thing Julian had told me: we are all brothers and sisters of the same family. We are all bonded together at an invisible level and a voice of knowing within me told me that to disregard this truth was to buy into the illusion fostered by the crowd. We are not separate, I appreciated. We *are* connected with unseen ties. Even more so than through laughter, I have since discovered that we can connect with each other through

the common sharing of our pain. If everyone in the world came together for half an hour and shared all of the personal suffering they have endured over the course of their lives, we would all be friends. There would be no enemies. There would be no wars.

The old man continued. “As I was saying, *my greatest regret is not listening to myself*. I knew I could do great things in my life. I was a very good writer when I was younger; I had even won some literary prizes during my university days. But my mother wanted me to be an accountant. She said that if I didn’t listen to her, it would be the mistake of a lifetime. Actually, the mistake of my lifetime was not being true to myself and doing what I felt I was meant to do. So now—and you should know that the doctors in here tell me that I probably only have a few weeks left—I am so sad at the choice I made. I feel I’ve wasted my whole life. Eighty-seven years have gone by in a flash. It feels like it was just yesterday that I got married to my bride, Margaret. It feels like just yesterday that I watched my children being born. Now Margaret’s dead and my children have gone off to lead lives of their own. Your life will whiz by quicker than you could ever imagine. The days will slip into weeks, the weeks into months and the months into years. You look pretty young now, but watch out—you’ll look like me before you know it. Life’s like that. So live the life that you are meant to live. Your life is far too important to wait until you are just about to die to wake up. I lived my mother’s life when I should have had the wisdom to live my own. I spent my life trying to please others. But where are they now? All those people I lived to please are no longer around. *On your deathbed, the only person you’ll have to answer to is the person you look at in the mirror every morning. You’d better be true to him*. I committed ‘the crime of self-betrayal,’ to use Julian’s phrase. That’s what’s really going to kill me. Not the cancer.”

The room fell completely silent. Peter’s friends looked down, each apparently feeling sadness on not only hearing the tale of another man’s deepest regret in life, but on being reminded that he would soon no longer be with them. *Life is such a fragile thing. I never truly knew that until now. It is a priceless treasure that we are given to guard and make use of to the best of our ability. That it will not come again is what makes it so sacred*. And yet, most people who live among the crowd never press the pause button in their lives and stop for even sixty seconds to reflect on why they are here and what they are meant to do.

After we left the Camden Caves, Julian had shared a little story with me. A wise sage met a beggar on the street one day. The beggar, not knowing to whom he was speaking, stopped the sage and asked him three questions: Why are you here? Where are you going? Is there an important reason that you are

going there? The sage looked at the beggar and asked how much money he generally made on a given day. On hearing the honest answer given to him, the sage said, “Please come and work for me. I will pay you ten times that amount if only you will ask me these three questions before I do my meditation, early each and every morning.”

I’ve since learned that reflection is the mother of wisdom. We must carve out some time each day to ask ourselves why we are here, how we are living and whether we are making the highest use of the gifts that life has given us. We must pay attention to life. We must frequently be in connection with our dreams. This universe of ours really is a friendly place and we would not be able to dream a dream without having the corresponding capacity to bring the dream to life. “The universe wants us to win,” Julian often said. “We just need to get out of our own way.”

Peter’s comments touched me deeply. I knew that’s what Julian hoped would happen. I needed to make some decisions. I needed to take a stand for my biggest life, once and for all.

We spent about half an hour at the hospital, drinking herbal tea and sharing stories with the lovely people Julian had befriended. Julian also spent a few moments arranging the fresh flowers in the room for them. He was a man of extraordinary compassion and sensitivity. We thanked them for their hospitality and then the group walked with Julian and me out to the Ferrari. Everyone really did love Julian. And everyone adored that car.

“So as you continue along this path to your authentic life— as you leave the crowd and begin to live by *your* values, *your* beliefs and *your* heart’s desires, you, as a seeker, will *inevitably* reach The Choicepoint. How you respond at this juncture will make all the difference in terms of how the rest of your life will unfold,” summarized Julian as we rolled out of the hospital’s parking lot with my new friends waving goodbye to us. “Never forget what Harriet Beecher Stowe once wrote: ‘The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone.’ Become a person of action, one of those indomitable souls who goes out and hunts down his greatest life. Do the best that you know how to do. And then let go and accept whatever comes to you with a happy heart and perfect certainty that this is what nature intended for you.”

“Got it, coach. Hey, you still haven’t told me who owns this car. It’s not yours, is it?”

“No, it’s not mine. I travel too light these days to own something like this. I’m a very simple man. But it was mine,” Julian admitted. “This was my old Ferrari.”

“Really?” I exclaimed. “When I was a kid, my dad used to take me for drives through your neighborhood. I used to stare at this car all the time. Man, I loved this baby.”

“I know,” replied Julian. “I’d catch you looking at it from time to time,” he said with a wink.

“Really?”

“Sure. An industrialist client of mine bought the car from me just before I left for India. He said I could buy it back from him if I ever wanted to—no questions asked. He also said I could drive it whenever I returned to the city. He’s been very generous to me, in many ways. He’s loaned it to me while I’m here.”

We drove in silence for a long time. As we entered the hotel’s driveway, Julian brought the car to a halt. The bellman smiled at both of us and gave me the thumbs-up sign. He appeared duly impressed.

“Open up the glove compartment, Dar—there’s something in there for you. I want you to look at the present after I leave you, which, unfortunately, must be in a few minutes. I have a massage scheduled and I never like to be late for massage appointments. It’s a regular gift I give myself.”

“I’d never have guessed you’d be such a big fan of massages,” I replied.

“Why not, Dar? Massage therapy is a wonderful way to promote vitality, eliminate toxins and elevate overall health. I have a whole series of what I call ‘success structures’—practices that I build into my week—that I rely on to keep me healthy, happy and in deep peace. Daily exercise, an elite performance diet, meditation, time spent in nature and a massage every seven days are things I do for myself so that I’ll live a long time and be able to do the work I’ve been called to do. I have a mission in this life of mine and I intend to do it. A massage a week might seem expensive to some people but to me, it’s an investment, not an expense. It’s money well spent. I’m of no value to anyone if I’m lying in a hospital room. I just see my massages as a cost of doing business, so to speak.”

“Interesting way to view it, Julian.”

“Today’s been a big day for you, Dar. I’ve planted some seeds that will flourish into some wonderful insights over time. Trust me on that one—you got some big pieces of learning today.”

“I’m very grateful for this day with you, Julian. You shared some pretty profound lessons with me. I know that. And the way you shared them made

them unforgettable. I had no idea learning could be so fun, memorable and moving.”

“Learning should be fun, memorable and moving. Learning from books, intellectually, is great. But learning in a way that engages you at an *emotional* level is even more powerful and sustaining. That’s why I try to set up experiences to help you learn what you need. Experience is always the best teacher. Anyway, nicely done today.”

I opened up the glove compartment and found a gift-wrapped package inside. It was evident from the uneven edges that Julian had done the wrapping himself, but I gave him full marks for effort and thoughtfulness.

“Thanks, Julian. I can’t imagine what’s inside but I know I’ll value it, coming from you.”

“Oh, by the way, these are for you as well,” he stated as he handed me the keys to the Ferrari.

“Do you want me to park the car?” I asked, willing to help Julian in any way I could.

“No, my friend,” he paused. “The car’s yours.”

I was *stunned*. Was Julian really offering his former car to me? As I kid, I could not have imagined a better dream coming true. Even now, owning a classic Ferrari in immaculate condition was a notion that thrilled me.

“I don’t want to manufacture The Choicepoint for you, Dar—one will intersect the path you are on—the journey of the seeker—naturally. As you continue to open your eyes in search of the truth, a Choicepoint will necessarily present itself. But I really want to do my best to bring The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening to life for you and so I’ve tried to create some memorable experiences that will teach you the essence of each stage. I’m now giving you a choice—and I’m totally serious: you can have this Ferrari, if you want it. My former client is perfectly fine with it. He said that whatever I want is whatever he wants. I’ve done him some very big favors in the past. But there is one little catch.”

“Let’s hear it,” I said with a smile, fearing the worst.

“Well, if you make the choice to take the car, I can no longer be your coach. It’s either this car or my coaching. We can still be friends, but I’ll have to move on to my next assignment. You see, that’s what The Choicepoint is all about: making some kind of a sacrifice. Nothing good comes without some kind of sacrifice. The Choicepoint is all about leaving the world you have known and venturing out onto the unknown frontiers of your highest life. And

to access that highest life, you have to want it more than anything else in the world. You have to want it more than even this Ferrari. Most people believe that it takes months and years to transform their lives. Actually, you can literally change your life in an instant, by making a single decision never to go back to the way you have been living— no matter what. What takes the months, years and sometimes decades is the *maintenance* required to abide by that decision.”

“Nice distinction, Julian,” I said.

“So it’s your choice, amigo: this rare and exotic sports car or the chance to be true to yourself. It’s completely up to you.”

“Oh, Julian,” I replied with a sigh. “You’re killing me, man,” I added with a laugh. “You know what my answer is—I’m no fool. I’ll take the coaching. I’ll choose my biggest life!” I exclaimed.

Julian clapped his hands, delighted with my decision. “As far as I’m concerned, that’s the only choice to make at The Choice-point—the choice to reach for the stars and advance towards the life that has been destined for you. But, I’ll tell you what, since you’ve been such a good sport about things, I’ll make you another offer. If you don’t mind dropping this car off at my friend’s home, you can take it for a spin around the city. Deal?”

“Deal.”

Julian gave me a hug and exited the car. Then he popped his head back in. “Let’s meet back here seven days from now, at five A.M. sharp, please. I want to explain Stage Three of The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening to you. You’ll love what you learn. Until then, be gentle with yourself. You are going through a lot of change, so make time for lots of self-care activities. Go for long walks in the woods. Listen to your favorite music. Get a massage. And of course, find the time to experience silence, stillness and solitude. You’re doing great. I’ll see you soon, my friend.”

And with those instructions, the former superstar lawyer turned all-knowing monk and sage life coach walked into The Q Hotel and out of sight. I remained in the passenger seat of the Ferrari for a long time, reflecting on the day and committing from the deepest place within me to keep walking the conscious path of life. I unwrapped Julian’s gift. It was a brand new copy of Plato’s *Republic*. As I flipped through the pages, I saw Julian’s writing on two of the blank pages at the front. Here’s what it said:

Dear Dar,

First, let me honor you for your bravery. It takes great resolve and power to leave the gravitational forces of the crowd and begin to live more truly. The

space shuttle uses more fuel during its first three minutes after takeoff than it requires during the remainder of its orbit around the entire earth for this same reason: there is a pull exerted by the world that takes great energy to overcome. But overcome it you must, my friend, to avoid a life of regret and sadness.

By the time you look through this book, you will have already made the single greatest choice of your life: to walk the path of your destiny and reach for your greatest life (I knew you would make that choice—your father was a wise and great man and the fruit never falls very far from the tree). I'm now inviting you to make some daily choices that will help you play your biggest game as a human being. These are five essential practices to integrate into your life over the coming weeks and months if you really want to live the beautiful life that's meant for you. I call these The 5 Daily Devotions:

- 1. Devote yourself to rising at 5 A.M. each and every morning. Those who get up early are those who get the best from life.*
- 2. Devote yourself to setting aside the first sixty minutes of your day as your "Holy Hour." This is your sacred time to do the inner work required to help you become your best. Use this period to read from the wisdom literature, to meditate or pray, to reflect on the state of your life and the progress of your dreams in your journal or to think deeply about what must unfold over the coming hours of the day in order for you to feel it was a successful one. Performing this ritual daily will help you to shine brightly in the world and live at your highest.*
- 3. Devote yourself to displaying a standard of care, compassion and character well beyond what anyone could ever imagine from you. In doing so, you will be doing your part to aid in the building of a new world.*
- 4. Devote yourself to displaying a standard of excellence at work far higher than anyone would ever expect from you. Abundance and fulfillment will flow back to you.*
- 5. Devote yourself to being the most loving person you know and thinking, feeling and acting as though you are one of the greatest people currently on the planet (because you are). Your life will never be the same and you will bless many lives.*

Let me close by telling you that I admire you, as a man. You have been through a lot and far brighter times are coming— as they always do. "In every Winter's heart lies a quivering Spring. Behind the veil of each night waits a smiling dawn," wrote the wise poet Kahlil Gibran. You know he was right.

Your fan ... Julian

I had no doubt that the happiest seasons of my life were still in front of me. I had no doubt that my best was yet to come.

CHAPTER 6



The Seeker Walks into Wonder and Possibility

With life I am on the attack, restlessly ferreting out each pleasure, foraging for answers, wringing from it even the pain. I ransack life, hunt it down.

—Marita Golden

The World is a great book, of which they who never stir from home read only a page.

—St. Augustine

In the week since my last visit with Julian, profound shifts had begun to occur. I began to feel differently, sensing that I was beginning to live life on my own terms and with far greater consciousness than ever before. I was paying attention to the choices I was making in terms of how I thought, felt and acted and ensured each of these came from a place of impeccable integrity and genuine honor. This, in turn, led to me feeling more confidence and inner peace than I had experienced in my entire life. In many ways, I felt unstoppable. I felt alive. I felt so much joy. I felt I was becoming a better version of myself. I knew I was awakening.

However, to be truthful, many fears began to surface. A seeker on the path home to his or her authentic and biggest self will always have to face fears they never knew existed. While living an unconscious life, many of our fears live within the realm of our subconscious minds. Consciously, we do not even know they are there. But they are, affecting every one of our choices and running our lives at an invisible level. As we awaken and choose to see our lives from a more truthful frame of reference, our fears begin to see the light of day—and we must confront them. This is usually a scary thing.

But I've learned that our fears are straw monsters. If we deny them, they remain in the basement, secretly sabotaging our lives and keep us running away from our dreams. But if we confront them, by inviting these scary monsters upstairs for a cup of tea—if we get to know them—we realize they were so much smaller than we first thought. Just as a shadow fades when brought into the sunlight, a fear invited into the light of our human awareness begins to evaporate. You see, what we resist will persist. And if we refuse to do the inner work required to look at and then work through our fears, they will always run us. But if we have the courage to self-explore and get to know

our fears, they will move through us, and then be released. What we resist will indeed persist. What we befriend, we inevitably will transcend.

Julian once told me of a story about a mountain climber who reached the summit of the peak he was scaling at midday. The challenge then became getting back down, to a place of safety, before the sun had set. As he descended, he noticed the sun getting lower and lower. He quickened his pace but, as the hours slipped away, the light faded and the sun sank lower on the horizon. He began to grow frightened and many fears began to surface. He felt that if he did not get to the bottom of the mountain, he would be caught midway and be placed in an extremely dangerous position, perhaps even falling to his death.

Finally, the sun set and the climber found himself in utter darkness. Desperate, he fumbled to find something he could hold on to, eventually clinging to a branch that grew from a crevice in the stone face of the mountain. The climber spent the night hanging on to that branch, frozen with fear, believing that if he let go of it, he would fall to his death on the rocks below. The night was a nightmare for him—pure terror.

But when the first rays of the morning cast light once again, he began to laugh. He could not believe what he saw. *His fear was only an illusion.* Only six inches below him rested a ledge. In the darkness, he could not see it. But in the light, he realized that all he had to do was go six inches lower and he could have spent the entire night in safety and relative comfort. His fears were unfounded. His terror had no basis in reality. And fears, I have learned, are like that. They keep us small, shackled; they spoil our lives. And yet every single one of the fears that limits us is truly only six inches deep. Do not let these fears own you. Do not let them spoil your life.

I arrived at The Q precisely at 5 A.M. It had become much easier to get up early and I was enjoying the extra hours the discipline of early rising offered me. As suggested by Julian, I would use this “base camp” time at the front end of my day to plan, visualize, contemplate and read from the great books of wisdom. This connected me to the essential truths that lay at the foundation of every great life. Reading each morning also inspired me, reminding me that no life, no matter how wonderful, is free of problems and challenges. The only individuals without any problems are those in their graves. Actually, it is the existence of problems and challenges that makes us bigger, stronger and wiser. We can run from them, and become bitter, complaining that life is hard. Or we can embrace them, and become better. It is generally in the times of our greatest pain that we are most intimately connected with who we truly are—and were meant to be. Martin Luther King Jr. once said: “The ultimate

measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of confidence but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

As I walked through the lobby doors, I saw Julian chatting with the front desk staff. He had them laughing and he was chuckling along with them. Just hearing him laugh made me laugh. His laughter was so pure, real and childlike. I had never met anyone like Julian. He was so genuine and had no façade. He seemed, to me, to be the kind of person that each one of us wants to become: playful, loving, wise—and fearless.

I was surprised to see that Julian had his robe on today. I had expected him to dress informally again, but was delighted by his attire and the splendor that it reflected. I sensed that Julian was proud to wear this traditional dress of the Sages of Sivana. I also got the feeling that wearing the robes not only reminded him of his chosen path, it reminded him of them.

“Good morning, amigo,” he bellowed from across the lobby. “Just having some fun with these early risers over here. Important club we all belong to, you know. Nothing like having some discipline in your life to make it a big and beautiful one.”

“I hear you, Julian. I’m getting used to it.”

“Well, great,” he said as he walked over and put one of his bronzed arms around me with great affection. “I missed you, you know.”

“I missed you too, Julian. That was quite a day we had last week. I can’t wait to see what today’s coaching session is all about.”

“Today you will learn about Stage Three of The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening, Dar. Stage Three is all about seeing with a new set of eyes. You see, my friend, most people on the planet today are walking through life blindly, just following the crowd. They are living a lie. They think they see reality as they advance through their days but they are just part of that crowd watching false images appearing real on the wall of the cave. They are viewing an illusion. Life is so much more than they appreciate. They do not have to betray themselves by living under beliefs, values and assumptions that, deep within them, they know are not right for them. They do not have to live as others expect them to live. They do not have to bury their dreams and live lives of utter mediocrity and boredom. They can break their chains, stand up for their biggest lives and see the world through a new set of eyes, eyes that see the truth rather than eyes that see lies.”

“So, can you remind me what Stage Three is called, Julian?” I asked as we left the hotel and got into a taxicab.

“Stage Three is called ‘Awareness of Wonder and Possibility.’ When a

seeker on the path home, to his true self—to his destiny—leaves the lie of Stage One and makes the decision to commit to walking towards the life that was meant for him at The Choicepoint of Stage Two, he will inevitably reach Stage Three. This is the time he begins to see there is an entirely different world out there than he has ever known. This is an incredible place for a human being to arrive at. Just think about it. The seeker has left the shackles of the crowd and is doing things in a much more authentic way. The limits are off. *He's ready to play with possibility.* He is reflecting on the values, beliefs and behaviors that feel right to him, regardless of what others think. He is being true to himself. He is also going deeper into himself than ever before, looking at his fears, his attitudes and all the ways of conducting his life that those around him have taught him to believe are the ways to succeed in the world. It's a time of much change, for sure. But it's also a time of great excitement.”

“How so?”

“Because he really is beginning to see the truth. He is beginning to appreciate that this world of ours is a miracle. It is a gorgeous universe of wonder and possibility. Yes, at this stage, the seeker is leaving ‘the known,’ the place where he has lived his life to date, and walking directly into the unknown, a place of uncertainty and mystery. And, of course, that will give rise to fear because human beings always feel fear when they leave their areas of comfort. But it is only within the realm of the unknown that new possibilities live. Nothing new lives within the realm of the known, because if it did, it wouldn't be new, would it?” asked Julian.

“I think I follow you,” I replied, seeing where Julian was going with this line of reasoning. “You are saying that it's only in these unknown, foreign places that the highest possibilities for my life live. Right?”

“Exactly. Columbus was the first European to see the New World because he was willing to leave the places that he knew and visit the places that scared him—new, uncharted lands. All discoveries and all innovation are the result of women and men who dare to try the unknown. You need to walk towards your fears and be willing to go to new places to grow as a person and to uncover the treasures that are awaiting you as a human being. To stay in the world you have always lived in is to stay small and timid.”

“Got it,” I said with satisfaction.

“So as the seeker on the path to enlightenment leaves the lie he's lived under and makes the primary choice to reclaim his authentic power and true life, the way he will see the world begins to shift. He really will see the world through a new set of eyes. He really will see an entirely new experience of

reality begin to unfold. He will walk into a brave new world rich with wonder and new choices. I know this has already started to occur in your life, Dar. And as you continue to walk the conscious path you have chosen, even more of this will unfold for you.”

“Could you give me some examples?”

“Sure. As you move into Stage Three, you will begin to feel feelings that you have never felt. Or, to be more accurate, you will begin to feel the feelings that you once felt as a little child but then repressed when the world around you taught you that it was not polite to sing too loudly or shine too brightly. You will begin to feel the kind of joy that brings tears to your eyes and the kind of gratitude for being alive on a sun-soaked day that makes your heart beat more strongly.”

“Very cool,” I said with excitement, eager to experience the wonders Julian was speaking of and knowing that some of these wonders had already begun to enter my life since his coaching began.

“You will experience your feelings at a whole new level—and I should mention that you will not only begin to feel the highs you have not felt in many years, but some of the lows,” Julian said. “Yes, at this stage you will feel greater happiness and delight than you have in years. But you will also be able to access your well of pain. You will begin to know yourself more deeply than ever before because you are leaving the lie that your life once was and awakening to the truth. And the truth is that you have denied much of your sadness. As you have left the person that you once were—as you have left your original nature through the process of self-betrayal, a part of you has died. And that has hurt you. As you have left your authentic self and walked out into this world of ours, a world that is filled with fear rather than love, a great sadness grew within you. Not only that, but the world hurt you in various ways. People crushed your hopes. People stifled your spirit. People stepped on your dreams. They told you to act in ways that you knew were not right for you. They taught you to be afraid of things and to behave in ways that the biggest and best part of you knew were wrong. But you did it.”

“To be loved and to fit into the crowd,” I chimed in, remembering what Julian had taught me.

“Exactly. So you must process through this sadness. You must work through the hurts that you have been carrying and the ancient wounds that have been festering within the subconscious part of you. In doing so, the narrow band of feeling that leads most people to live gray and colorless lives begins to widen. As you feel more of the sadness and pain you have swallowed, you also become able to feel more of the joys and delights of life.

You will begin to feel moved by a sunrise and delighted by a rainbow. You will detect that the world is a far more colorful and vital place than you once thought it to be. You will also begin to feel more love than you have felt in a long time. And this will not just be love for those around you but love for yourself.”

“Incredible.”

“At Stage Three, as you leave the illusion that your life has been and start seeing the world for what it really is—a place of astonishing beauty—the pace of synchronicity in your life will quicken, as well. You see, my friend, the more courage and conviction you show in living the life that the universe wants you to live, the more it will send you its blessings. It will give you its green lights. Things will happen that will blow your mind. People will show up in your life at perfect times, almost as if they are angels sent to help you get whatever it is you want. In some ways, you will almost feel that you are guided by a pair of invisible hands leading you to the beautiful life that once lived only in the realm of your imagination. Your dreams will begin to become your reality.”

As the cab drove along the barren city streets, Julian reached into his robe and pulled out a piece of cloth. Before I could say a word, he reached over and gently draped it over my eyes.

“Julian, what’s going on?” I said with a mixture of surprise and excitement. “I can’t see a thing.”

“Just relax, amigo. There’s a point to this. You see, most people on the planet today are wearing a blindfold of sorts as they venture through their lives. They are in the dark, so to speak. They are in a state of total ignorance about the way the world truly works and the role they are meant to play within it. Essentially, most people—and I do not mean to show any disrespect to anyone, I’m just speaking some truth here—are living in a way that can only be described as ‘unconsciously incompetent.’”

“What exactly do you mean by that, Julian?” I questioned as we continued our cab ride to an unknown destination.

“Well, in learning any skill—whether that is the skill of learning how to ride a bicycle or the skill of living a great life— there are four plateaus the learner must proceed through en route to a level of mastery. The initial plateau or phase is that of ‘unconscious incompetence.’ At this point, the student is not only incompetent but has absolutely no awareness as to why he is incompetent. In other words, at this phase, the student doesn’t know what he does not know. So, using the bike example, the student cannot ride the bike

and has no idea what knowledge he lacks to ride the bike. Sadly, many people live the best years of their lives at this level of the beginner.”

“They go through life with a metaphorical blindfold on, being unconscious of who they truly are and how they were meant to live,” I confirmed, keeping the blindfold on.

“Exactly. Such people make no time to reflect on how they are conducting themselves, the quality and nature of the choices they make and what needs to improve in order for them to live their biggest games as human beings on the playing field of life. Now, if there’s a willingness to improve, some people rise to the second phase, which is known as ‘conscious incompetence.’ At this level, the learner is still incompetent with respect to the skill but at least he has become conscious of all he does not know and needs to learn. In the bike scenario, he still cannot ride it but he knows he must improve his balance, hold the handlebars in a certain way and use the pedals in a specific fashion in order to move the bike forward. Awareness is growing. And as awareness of what you don’t know grows, new choices can be made. And new—and better—choices cause positive changes.”

“What about a human being at the level of ‘conscious incompetence’ with respect to the skill of living a life? What would that look like?”

“Excellent question,” Julian noted as the cab sped up. “Such an individual would still be far from a place of mastery, but at least would be waking up to reality in the sense that he would be acutely aware of all he did not know and needed to work on. Though he would still be incompetent at living life, he would possess the awareness required to see all the mistakes he was making. For example, he could see all the areas in his life where his fears were running him or all the times where he was out of integrity. He could see all the instances in which he is not being authentic or settling for mediocrity instead of magnificence. And since awareness precedes choice and since new choices create new changes in one’s life, he would be making some giant steps forward. This kind of knowledge would then bring him to the third plateau, which is known as ‘conscious competence.’ At this level, the student has become competent. Yet he still must invest much energy in paying attention to what he is doing; he has not yet reached a level of mastery but there is no doubt he is doing well. In terms of the bicycle metaphor, the learner can now ride the bike nicely. But he still must be very conscious of how he holds the bars, the way he balances himself on his bicycle and the way he pushes the pedals.”

“And what does someone at the phase of ‘conscious competence’ *in his or her life* look like?”

“They are doing well. They have accessed many of the natural laws that govern the world. They have left the lie that their lives once were and become acutely conscious of all their self-betrayal. They have left the crowd and are now living lives on their own terms, listening to the silent whispers of their hearts and heeding the suggestions of their consciences. But they still have to make their daily choices in a very conscious and deliberate way. They still must pay a lot of attention to everything they do. Many seekers on the path to their greatest lives reach this place and I should tell you, it’s a wonderful place to get to. But, if you are willing and if you are devoted, you can get to an even higher level of operating and that’s the plateau of ‘unconscious competence.’ At this lofty plane, the student reaches the level of true mastery of the skill being learned. At this plateau, the rider of the bike doesn’t have to think about anything anymore. He just runs outside, hops on his bike and races down the street, paying far more attention to the wind on his face and the sunbeams on his back than on how he positions the handlebars. And someone living life at this level is fully engaged in the present moment. He would be masterful in the way he advances through his days. He would be infinitely wise and awakened. And this would be a beautiful thing,” observed Julian as the taxicab screeched to a stop.

“We’re here, my friend. Please leave your blindfold on until we get inside the building.”

“Where are we?”

“One of the most important things you must do at Stage Three of The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening is release control. You must be willing to let go. *You must be willing to surrender all you have known and walk into a new reality.* Yes, this can be very challenging, but it will also be one of the best moves you will ever make, opening up a universe of possibilities and a whole host of precious gifts. The writer Marcel Proust said it well when he observed: ‘Do not wait for life. Do not long for it. Be aware, always and at every moment, that the miracle is in the here and now.’ E. E. Cummings said it even more succinctly: ‘It takes courage to grow up and become who you truly are.’”

We stepped out of the car and Julian led me by the arm to a building, the blindfold still covering my eyes.

“Okay, amigo, you can come out of the darkness now and into the place of wonder.”

I took off the blindfold. I immediately realized that we were in one of the main exhibit halls of our local art gallery. Julian was grinning.

“All month long, the gallery is host to an international Salvador Dali

exposition. They have some of his most famous work here. His art is incredible—I've spent hours each day here, just staring at his paintings. I brought you here to make a point that's relevant to Stage Three of the seeker's journey. Once you leave the lie that your life once was and have made the choice to awaken and walk the conscious path, Stage Three will inevitably occur in your life and you will begin to see the world through a new set of eyes, as I've suggested. This path will not always be an easy one to travel—you know that now. But it's the only path to walk if you want to live the noble life that was laid out for you. 'Everyday courage has few witnesses. But yours is no less noble because no drum beats before you and no crowds shout your name,' wrote Robert Louis Stevenson. The blindfold that once blocked you from seeing how big, beautiful and rich this world of ours truly is will come down and you will see your life as a work of art. Salvador Dali's art is like that of no other painter. He saw the world through a different set of lenses and, as a result, he created pieces that are breathtaking in their power and unrivaled in their creative impact. I want you to keep stepping out of the darkness that your life once was. I want you to keep being 'consciously competent' in the way you run your days so that one day, you will reach that level of mastery and authentic power known as 'unconscious competence.' I want you to create a life that, indeed, will be considered a work of art. You have that potential. We all do, as a matter of fact. It all comes down to whether you want to do the inner work required to get there. Become the Salvador Dali of your life, my friend, and just watch the wonders unfold."

The rest of the morning, Julian and I strolled through the gallery, studying the art and enjoying each other's company. Julian opened up even more to me, telling me about the personal challenges he had faced as a lawyer and some of the circumstances that led to him leaving the law and trekking to India in search of answers to the questions he had been struggling with. He made me laugh more than I had laughed in a long time as he shared some of his war stories and adventures as a jet-setting litigator. And he moved me to tears as he shared how his widely publicized demise as a lawyer had been prompted by the little-known death of his only child after a drunk driver collided with the car in which she had been a passenger.

"'Life will bring you pain all by itself,' Julian said, quoting the famed psychologist Milton Erickson, 'your responsibility is to create joy.' Life has handed me some pretty large setbacks. But I'm a survivor and nothing can keep me down. I've also discovered that nothing that happens to us in life has any meaning other than the meaning we attach to it. Pain and suffering only come from judgment. As we release judgment and stop labeling things as 'positive' or 'negative' and simply accept them as opportunities to evolve into our biggest selves, our lives transform. There really is no such thing as a 'bad

experience' or even a good one. *Life just is*, if you get what I'm saying. Through the way we interpret and process the experiences of our lives, we shape our reality. Our thoughts form our world, in so many ways. I see life as a splendid adventure. The hard times fuel my growth and make me wiser. The easy straights fill me with joy and seem to be rewards for living in alignment with the natural rules of the game. As Peter told us last week, life really is short, my friend, and we need to take daily steps to access the greatness that resides within. Life is a sensational voyage and I, for one, intend to enjoy it."

CHAPTER 7



The Seeker Receives Instruction from Masters

First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do.

—Epictetus

What if I should discover that the poorest of the beggars and the most impudent of offenders are all within me, and that I stand in need of the alms of my own kindness; that I myself am the enemy who must be loved—what then?

—Carl Jung

It had been a full month since my last encounter with Julian at the art gallery. I had been getting up early each morning and spending much time in silent reflection, going deeper within myself than I had ever gone. I became intimately aware of many of the patterns I had been running over the years, ways of thinking, feeling and acting that, prior to my coaching with Julian, I had never recognized. Awareness really did precede new choices. How could I choose better ways to live if I wasn't even aware of what needed to be improved? And my new choices really did lead to new change. I began to see how often I'd sabotage myself and limit the size of the life I was living. I went behind my behaviors, and for the first time in my life, did some serious self-examination as to what the root causes of them were. It was a tremendously exciting time for me as I grew to know myself. It was also a time of some melancholy as I began to observe how frequently I betrayed myself.

During the weeks I was apart from Julian, I also started to catch myself just as I was about to fall into one of those old self-defeating behaviors I could now see had led me into so much pain and suffering. Whereas, in the past I would have reacted in a negative way, without thinking, I now would pause before I reacted. It was hard to believe how often people or circumstances would push my buttons. In the old days, I'd blame my feelings and reactions on the people or circumstances. Now, thanks to Julian's sage counsel, I took ownership over the way I felt and realized *it all began with me*. This was an amazing thing for me to observe and it made me feel much better about myself. I guess I truly was growing and becoming more of the person I was destined to be.

In a phone call I made to Julian, he confirmed this was, indeed, one of the most noticeable signs of personal growth. He also let me know that neuroscientists had recently discovered that human beings have a .25 second window of opportunity between a stimulus and the corresponding response to catch their thinking and make a better choice. He suggested that it was within this .25 second space that I could rescript much of my behavior and reshape much of my life, making the higher decisions required to lead me to a far more awakened state.

The more I thought about all that Julian had shared with me, the more I began to understand that he had developed a profoundly wise yet extraordinarily practical philosophy for the conduct of a beautiful life. Yes, my daily choices would have a big impact on the way my life turned out. I had a huge role in creating what I wanted. But the way in which my destiny would ultimately unfold would be the result of so much more than what I, as a human being, could choose or control. As Julian often told me in our coaching sessions: “You do your best and then let nature do the rest.” All I could do was to try to be the best person I could become and live as truly as I possibly could at every stage of the path. Life would then take over and lead me to where I was meant to be. I might not always like where I ended up but Julian emphasized that I needed to trust that wherever I was guided was the place I would experience the greatest growth, the highest healing and the most effective learning. There was a higher order ultimately running the show, a higher order that was not possible for me to understand under the limited perception available to me as a human being.

I used to play a lot of tennis while I was growing up and Julian’s personal philosophy about the partnership between fate and choice, as they impact on the way our destinies unfold, sometimes reminded me of that game. It seemed that the only thing I could control was what happened on my side of the court. My only obligation was to deliver my best serve, and hit my best shot. I had a duty, in respect to life, to let my light shine and take action around my dreams. To do anything less was to dishonor the gifts that had been granted to me. But once I did that, and the ball went onto the other side of the court, I needed to detach from outcomes—and relax. I needed to trust in the friendliness of this infinitely wise universe of ours. It was only my fear that caused me to worry about the results. Once I let go of the fear, Julian promised, and trusted in the larger plan, I would see that *things always worked out for the best*.

I also deepened my understanding of the imperative of personal responsibility and the notion of accountability in the month since Julian and I last met. While I did appreciate that fate had a rough destiny mapped out for

me, I felt more clear than ever about the power I possessed to fill in the blanks as to how my destiny would look by the way I showed up in the moments of my days. If I was authentic, did what was right, applied my talents to create what I wanted and chased my dreams, there was no question in my mind that my life would work better than it ever had. “Heaven helps those who help themselves,” Julian had told me. “You really can create much of your luck.” It really was all one giant balancing act, between the power of my choices and the hands of fate, of making things happen and letting things happen, of doing and being.

Of all my new learning, perhaps what struck me most powerfully was the growing awareness of all that I had been resisting in my life. Julian was a strong believer in “constantly confronting one’s resistances” and the more I considered this, the more I saw all the things I had been running from. The author Sam Keen once wrote that “we are caught by what we are running from.” Truthful words.

Julian had requested that I meet him at a schoolhouse owned by the Stone Institute for Gifted Children. He had appointed a meeting time quite late in the evening and I wondered what my adventurous coach had planned for me during this learning session. I also wondered how much longer I would have the privilege of being coached by Julian. The media had not become aware that Julian was back in the city and I knew that he had been keeping a low profile. From what I could gather, he spent his days volunteering at the hospital where I’d met Peter, communing with Salvador Dali at the art gallery, working with me when the time was right and working on himself through meditation, reading, journaling and patient reflection. He also informed me that he spent a lot of time walking in the woods and communing with nature. Julian truly was a man of great simplicity. It was also becoming clear to me that Julian was a truly great man—period.

As I entered the building, I saw a piece of paper, with Julian’s handwriting on it, taped to the wall. He had written: “Life is a growth school, ideally created to give us opportunities to learn each of the lessons we need to learn over the course of our lives on the planet. We live on ‘Schoolhouse Earth.’ And one of your teachers is enthusiastically awaiting your arrival. I’m in room 101. Tonight’s program is entitled *Awakening Best Self*.” At the bottom of the page were the following letters: “T.M.W.S.H.F.” I knew this stood for The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari. Next to the letters was a smiley face.

I walked down the darkened hallway. Suddenly, I heard the sound of a drum beating. As I walked towards it, it became clear that it was emerging from Room 101. I had no idea what to expect next. The door was shut and the

drum beats grew louder as I approached. My heart started to pound with a nervous excitement. What was happening on the other side of the door?

“Visit the places that frighten you” was one of the phrases I had committed to live by, based on Julian’s teachings. So I bravely opened the door and walked in. The room was dark except for the luminous glow from hundreds of tiny candles placed in a large circle. In the center of the circle stood none other than Julian, wearing his robe and playing his drum in a rhythmic and dramatic fashion. His eyes were closed and he was softly chanting the following slogan: “Within your heart, all answers lie. Walk towards your fears and then you’ll learn to fly.” He kept repeating this over and over. Not once did he open his eyes. It was almost as if he was in a deep trance. I shut the door behind me and simply stood there. After about five minutes, Julian stopped beating the drum. The room was completely silent. He opened his eyes.

“Welcome, Dar. Forgive my unorthodox teaching methods,” he said with a grin. “As always, judge by results. You will discover, as time passes, that my coaching process will work wonders in your life. Just keep trusting. You’ve been a brilliant student to date. I want to recognize you for that. And I know you are already drawing your biggest life towards you.”

“Where do you want me to sit, Julian?” I asked, in a state of high anticipation for the life coaching I was about to receive.

“Come here, into the center of the Truth Circle. The Native American Indians believe that life is lived in a circle; ‘The Circle of Life,’ they call it. At the end of our lives, we return to the place where we first began the journey. A circle speaks of wholeness and integrity. Within this circle tonight, we will only speak the truth. *Remember, the purpose of life is all about making the journey home to wholeness, back to a place of integrity, back to your authentic self—the one that is fearless, all-knowing and of boundless love. The purpose of life is to close The Integrity Gap.*”

“I’m not familiar with the concept of The Integrity Gap. Should I be?”

“No, amigo. I’m just introducing it to you now because you are ready for it. I’ve spoken since we first met about what happens to a human being after we are born—the process by which we lose the connection with who we truly are. We are born authentic and pure. We are born fearless and with wide-open hearts. We are born knowing the natural laws that rule the world and why we are here. But—and I know you now know this—we want to please those around us and fit into the crowd ...”

“The crowd watching a figment of reality dancing on the cave wall rather than an accurate representation of the truth,” I interjected, referring to the

cave metaphor from Plato's *Republic* that Julian shared with me during the coaching session at the Camden Caves.

“Right on,” he bellowed, pumping a fist into the air. “The process by which we leave our authentic self and become people that we are not—by taking on beliefs, values and behaviors from those around us—is known as *enculturation*. And as we leave our true selves, morphing into our social selves, a gap begins to form. We leave our original nature and assume the false mask of personality. We fall out of integrity, hence, The Integrity Gap. The greater the gap between who we truly are and the public personas that we present to the world, the less our lives will work. The greater the chasm, the less the universe will support us because we have forgotten who we are and are no longer playing by the rules we were meant to play by. With a wide Integrity Gap, we will feel little joy, have little energy and live small lives. We will be living in the ‘cult of personality,’ which is not the way we were meant to live. Your personality is not real. It is simply something you have created to be liked—no, to be loved. You have put on a social mask, out of fear.”

“Seriously?”

“Seriously. A small child who craves love is running the show for most people. This little child is afraid of not being loved. This little child is afraid of not fitting in. This little child is projecting his mom and dad on all those other adults around him and hoping that if he acts like them—like the crowd—he will find the approval he so desperately seeks. Are you beginning to see why so many among us are afraid to walk this path of truth? At a very deep and often unnoticed level, they are afraid they will not be loved. And every human being has a primary desire to be cherished. So we fall into a trap. We betray ourselves, give up on our dreams and adopt ways of being that were never intended for us.”

“And this sets up an Integrity Gap that shuts us down and limits our lives. And it’s all driven by fear. I now see why it’s so important for a person to work on himself. Once we do the inner work required to move through the fears that are running us, we move these shadows into the light of human awareness. And as you mentioned, moving a shadow into the light causes it to disappear. The fear leaves us.”

“Actually, Dar, the fear not only begins to disappear, it becomes replaced by love. Like I told you, darkness is nothing more than an absence of light: once you pour the light of human awareness and understanding into the darkest recesses of your being, you will become a being filled with light. Where there was once fear, there will be love. Remember what it means to be ‘en-light-ened’: one filled with light. Every step you take to close The Integrity Gap is a step home, towards the state of enlightenment that you truly

are. Every move you can make to be love when fear wants to own you, you reclaim—and remember—your original nature. Every single thing you do to present your biggest self to the world has the corresponding effect of helping you take back more of the authentic power that you were born with. That’s why I told you I think the whole notion of self-improvement is nonsense. The job of every human being is not to improve—we already are perfection, at the deepest level, and you cannot improve upon perfection. Have I shared the story of the golden Buddha with you, amigo?”

“No, I don’t believe you have.”

Julian sat down in the center of the Truth Circle and crossed his legs. The room looked mystical as the candle flames flickered. Julian looked enormously peaceful and his gaze seemed to connect with a deep part of me. It almost felt as though he was looking inside me, calling for the most noble and real part of me to reveal itself.

“Many years ago, in the East, there was a band of monks who had a huge golden Buddha statue that they idolized. They would pray to it, meditate around it and cherish its presence in their lives. A time came when the place where they lived faced the threat of attack from foreign invaders. Each of the monks feared that they would lose the prized possession of their community, so they all began to think of ways to protect it. One of the monks came up with a simple yet seemingly effective plan: the monks would work together to place layers of mud over the golden Buddha in an attempt to cover it up and hide it. And the plan worked: the invaders did not find it.”

“Very interesting.”

“But there’s more, my friend. Years later, a young monk was taking his morning walk when he saw something shimmering amidst the mountain dirt he had passed by so many times before. He called out to his monk sisters and brothers and they began to peel through the layers. And as they moved through each layer of mud covering up the golden Buddha, more and more gold began to show. Finally, with all the layers removed, the full glory of the golden Buddha could present itself. They beheld a priceless treasure.”

“Great story,” I acknowledged.

“Well, it serves as a powerful metaphor for us in this school-house tonight. You see, life is all about getting an education. Each day life will teach you the lessons you need to learn if you pay attention to it. The problem is that most people don’t. The problem is that most people are asleep, unconscious. As you now know, they remain at Stage One of The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening. But as you awaken and move through the stages towards reclaiming your best self and the ultimate end-state of enlightenment, you will

be getting to know your original nature. Each day will provide you with opportunities to move through another layer of the mud that is covering up the brilliance and gold that you truly are. And that's why the primary way to get back home and close The Integrity Gap is self-discovery and performing the inner work I often speak of. You must make the time to confront your resistances and examine yourself when frustrations or fears surface, rather than making it about others and avoiding self-responsibility. When you blame others for the things that anger or irritate you, you lose a precious chance to get to know more of the shadows that are running you. You lose the opportunity to go deep and bring what was within the realm of the subconscious into the realm of the conscious, where it can be healed and released. Every person alive today has layers of mud covering up our authentic selves. Some of us have more layers to move through than others. We assume these layers as we leave our authentic selves and join the crowd."

"And this process is known as enculturation," I added.

"Correct. The purpose of life is to remove the layers so more of the gold within us can shine and see the light of day, just as more of the golden Buddha peeked out as the monks removed the layers. And the exciting thing is that *every act of courage, every act of goodness and every act of self-responsibility will have an immediate payoff for you: each time you do what you know is the right thing and follow your truth rather than the dictates of the crowd, a little more of the mud covering up who you truly are begins to shine. Each time you act with love rather than fear, you become more of who you were meant to be. Every time you reach for your dreams and listen to your heart, you remember a little bit more of who you are.* This is how you get to know yourself. This is how you play your highest game. This is how you live your destiny."

Julian paused. "So what I must teach you today—the most important lesson you can learn on Schoolhouse Earth—is that *the purpose of life is to close The Integrity Gap.* Ideally, there would be no gap and the person that you present to the world would be the person you truly are. Ideally, the person you present to the world would be a perfect reflection of your authentic self. You would have no fear requiring you to pretend, in an effort to fit in and be loved. You would have so much self-love that it would not matter what others thought of you. So long as you were true to yourself, all would be good. And that, my friend, is what real success as a human being is all about."

"Your philosophy is profound, Julian. Life-altering, in fact. What are some of the specific tools I should be using here on 'Schoolhouse Earth,' as you call it, to close The Integrity Gap?"

"Writing in a journal on a regular basis is very powerful. This helps you

get to know yourself and deepen your self-relationship. Your journal should be a place you visit and examine yourself. With the awareness that brings, you can then pledge to make better choices. I've also mentioned meditation and silence. Spending time alone in silence every day is a tool that will help you awaken and reclaim your authentic power. Of course, to succeed on Schoolhouse Earth, you will also need to have good teachers. And that brings me elegantly to Stage Four of The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening.

“Seekers on the path of awakening are like travelers leaving an old world and entering a new one. When you visit a new place, you need guides to give you direction and show you the way. Stage Four is about seeking ‘Instruction from Masters.’ At this stage, seekers turn to teachers, books and other types of learning resources. It is at Stage Four that many seekers journal for hours at a time and read book after book after book. Sometimes, a feeling of panic might even arise within you. You feel *frustrated* and afraid because your world is changing. There is so much to learn in so little time. Everything is in transition. By learning from many different sources you are playing the role of a good student. And you are more committed than ever in your quest for the truth about how life works and your role within it.”

“Julian, this is *exactly* what I've been experiencing. The more I've been releasing control and walking into the unknown places of my life, the more questions have been coming up for me. I wonder who I truly am. I wonder what my destiny is. I wonder what my deepest values truly are. I struggle with the assumptions that I've made about the way the world works and want to know the true laws of nature upon which the world has been built. I've also been wondering whether there's a God and why I've had to suffer as I have. And I want to know how my life will turn out and exactly what I need to do to live my best, most authentic life.”

“All those struggles are good. The fact that you are asking those big questions means you are growing and awakening. You are leaving the crowd and becoming more conscious. And so you question everything. Great! Asking the right question is often ninety percent of finding the right answer. In doing so you are discovering *your* truth and *your* authentic life. And remember, questioning unlocks the knowing that already exists within your heart. Ask the right question and I promise you, the answer you seek will surface—when the time is right.”

“What do you mean by ‘when the time is right,’ Julian?”

“Well, one key natural law is this one: *we never get more than we can handle*. The path is lovingly planned for you and you will never, ever receive more knowledge or truth than you are ready for. So all the pieces come to you

only when you are ready to receive them. The student must be patient. But the answers *will* come.”

Julian continued: “Trust that you are exactly where you need to be. You are on the path that has been walked by many wise souls before you. Your experience is not unique. Just keep the faith and continue choosing to go deeper and deeper within yourself. All of the answers that you are looking for are within you. Yes, the books and teachers and seminars will help you. But remember one thing: reading the book of another person is a reflection of *their* truth. Hearing a speaker at a seminar means that you will hear *their* truth and *their* philosophy on the world and on life itself. That’s fine at this stage of your journey. *Learning what others think will help you to figure out what you really think.* But don’t make the mistake of believing that the truth of another person is necessarily your own truth. Don’t be too much of a follower. Be a leader. Leaders go where no one has gone and blaze their *own* path. This whole adventure is about being authentic. As you move to higher and higher stages on the path to self-mastery, you will develop your *own* philosophy about the way life works and your place within it. You will select the truths of others that resonate with the deepest part of you. You will integrate the wisdom of others that rings true to you. And you must discard those ideas that do not speak to you and fail to make sense. In doing so, you will forge your own authentic code and constitution for living your biggest life. That’s my definition of success—living your life in your own way. And authentic success is also about being in the process, in every moment of your days, of creating the life that you choose. You will not be living the life others have prescribed for you but living according to your heart’s truth. And in so doing, you will grow into a power that will make you a force of nature in the world.”

“This is truly fascinating, Julian. As I say, that’s exactly what I’m going through right now. I’ve had this hunger within me awakened. I’ve let go of control more than ever before and am keenly aware of my ignorance. And the result is that I’m reading book after book. I’m searching for all these answers. I guess I really *have* become a seeker.”

“Yes, Dar. You *are* becoming conscious. You *are* awakening. You are looking for ways to get back home. Some books preach the route to enlightenment or, at least, a happy life through positive thinking. Other books tell you to get out of your head and live in your heart. Yet other guides encourage you to become a ‘go-getter,’ set hundreds of goals, and chase after what you want. And other books invite you to ‘be in the now’ and let life gently show you what it has in store for you.”

“Exactly. Who should I believe? Everything seems so contradictory. Do I live in the world or choose the spiritual path?”

“Ah,” sighed Julian. “These are the questions that must be asked to find *your* truth. You really are growing and all this is good. You are seeking ways to close The Integrity Gap, to reclaim who you truly are and *remember* your authentic self. So you experiment with many different modalities and are open to many different teachers and this is perfect,” noted Julian with a confident smile.

“There seems to be so much coming up. I’m starting to notice how far out of integrity I am—my Integrity Gap must be pretty large. I seem to wear my social mask in every possible instance. I think I’ve lived much of my life simply pleasing other people, my parents and others around me. I don’t think I even know who I am anymore. You talk about having a great self-relationship and ‘knowing thyself as a means to enlightenment. I really have no idea who I am. That fills me with a great amount of sadness, to be honest.” Tears began to well up in my eyes. I’d never felt such emotion.

“Feel that sadness, Dar. I’ve mentioned that to you before,” replied Julian as he gently placed a hand on my shoulder.

“The more you can feel your feelings, the more they will complete themselves within you. Feelings are like rainstorms: they have a beginning, middle and an end. And as you complete each one of your feelings—whether those feelings are of anger, sadness, resentment or disappointment—you will move through the layers to remember the golden Buddha within you.”

Julian patiently waited until I had regained my composure.

“Okay, Dar. If the *purpose* of life is to close The Integrity Gap, the question becomes what is the *process* by which life nudges you to do so. You see, as I’ve said, the universe wants you to win. Life is set up in such a way that you are hardwired to be happy and designed to be great.”

“But I need to play by the rules of the game,” I replied. “And if I’m asleep to them—still at Stage One—there’s no way my life will work.”

“Superb,” exclaimed Julian as he gave me a hug. He began to beat the drum again, first softly—then lovingly. I knew this was his way of honoring me for the wisdom I was assimilating. Julian stopped and the room fell silent once again.

“The *process* by which nature or the universe or God or Infinite Intelligence—whatever label you want to put on the source of all creation—prods you to close your Integrity Gap is known as ‘recycling.’ Recycling is a term that explains how much of life works. Essentially it describes the phenomenon whereby, as we advance through life, we will be sent specific people and circumstances to teach us the lessons we most need to learn at that

stage of the path. Let's say the lesson we need to get at a particular point of our journey is that of forgiveness. Well, in that case, this perfectly designed universe of ours will send us a person, for example, who betrays us. As always, we have a choice as to how we respond to whatever occurs in our lives. If we make it all about that other person and play the blame game, similar types of 'teachers' will show up in our lives. Similar types of people will *recycle*. The only problem is that the more you resist the designated lesson, the stronger, more intense and more painfully it will revisit you."

"So it will get my attention, right?"

"Yes. Just remember, what you resist will persist but what you befriend, you will eventually transcend. Nature wants you to close The Integrity Gap, learn your lessons while you walk Schoolhouse Earth and, in so doing, get home to your place of authenticity. Recycling occurs to support this movement, this journey to awaken your best self. But if you are asleep to the process of how life works, life will hit you harder. If you pay attention and wake up and live a *conscious* life by assuming personal responsibility for your healing and growth, you will learn the designated lesson and move closer to your true self. As you accept—instead of resist—your lessons and learning, the gap will close and life will get better."

"Incredible," was the only reply that came to mind on hearing Julian's understanding of how life works. I realized that if I blamed others for what provoked anger or irritation or jealousy within me, I was resisting an opportunity to learn a lesson intended for me. The lesson would recur in my life, with greater intensity and suffering. To me, the essential point was simply this: *by taking personal responsibility for what went on within me and by getting to know myself and the root causes of my negative reactions, I could literally minimize recycling in my life.* By refusing to blame others for my less than loving responses, I could dramatically cut down on the hurts of life. I'd be playing by the laws of nature so nature would support me. I'd be awake to *the truth* of the way life really works so life would hand me greater rewards.

Julian stood up and left the Truth Circle, walking over to a blackboard on the other side of the classroom. He had placed a series of candles next to the blackboard so I could see what he drew on it. He used the chalk to make a large circle. He divided it into quadrants. In the first quadrant he wrote "Mind." In the second he wrote "Body." In the third he wrote "Emotions." And in the fourth he wrote the word "Spirit." Above the circle he wrote the following words: "The 4 Awakenings." He looked at me and continued his discourse.

"As I mentioned to you, taking the leader's journey back home to your

authentic self—and this is a *leadership* journey—is all about closing The Integrity Gap. Integrity means wholeness. Wholeness is reflected by a circle. The *purpose* of life is to return to wholeness. The *process* by which life supports that return is called recycling. The final piece involves the specific *practices* that close The Integrity Gap. At the instruction stage of the path to awakening—Stage Four—you begin to make conscious choices to get back to wholeness. There are four dimensions of your authentic self that need to be awakened for you to become whole once again. When you awaken these four dimensions, you will remember who you truly are. So here are The 4 Awakenings,” Julian said, pointing to the board. “As you journey home, you must awaken your mind *and* your body *and* your emotions *and* your spirit.”

“This is very interesting, Julian. I’ve been struggling with this point. Some books, as you mentioned, say that we find our best lives when we cultivate the highest potential of our minds. These authors suggest that we should read more books and learn more to keep exploring the quality of our thinking. They say our thoughts create reality. They say that our lives will transform when we change what we think.”

“That’s quite true, Dar. But that’s not the end of the story. Awakening the mind is only *twenty-five percent* of getting back to wholeness and restoring your integrity. Yes, you must awaken the mind, which means exploring your core beliefs, your assumptions and your fears. This can be done by learning and discovering the truths of other people through their books, CDs and seminars. Awakening the mind—what I refer to as The First Awakening—can also be done by journaling, patient reflection and by being silent so that you pay more attention to the way that you live and become aware of all that you do not know. The First Awakening is all about accumulation, knowledge, learning and being conscious of the higher choices available to you. This is the intellectual work that needs to be done by a student on the spiritual path. But along with awakening the mind there are three other dimensions to be awakened to return to wholeness and close any Integrity Gap: the body, the emotions and the spirit. You must awaken the body, for sure. A healthy mind without a healthy body reflects no integrity. There’s no wholeness there. So along with The First Awakening, you must perform The Second Awakening as well.”

“So what can I do to awaken my body?”

“Regular exercise, a superb diet, sunlight, massage, fresh air, plenty of water, vitamins and supplements, reiki, yoga ...”

“I get the point, Julian,” I responded. “There are a whole series of tools that are available to me, aren’t there?”

“Absolutely. The Second Awakening—the healing of the body—is all about making sure that your physical dimension is in wonderful condition. And *while* you awaken the mind along with the body, make sure you awaken your emotions. This is the Third Awakening. It is important that you process through any anger that you have been carrying through life. It’s important that you forgive any people who have wounded and hurt you. Forgiveness is something you do for yourself, you know?”

“I didn’t know that,” I offered sincerely.

“It is. When you have not forgiven someone, it is almost as if you are carrying that person on your back—which is a very heavy load. And once you forgive them, you release them. You can finally move on with life. They are no longer pulling you down and you are much more free as a human being. But I must tell you that forgiving someone is different from condoning his or her behavior. Forgiving them is simply seeing that people in pain do painful things, as I said earlier.”

“But is it really healthy not to speak out against hurtful behavior?” I asked.

“I guess what I’m trying to tell you is that one must go deeper and realize the truth beneath your judgment about other people. I encourage you to understand that people who hurt other people have themselves been hurt. People who do not love themselves cannot show love to others. *And people who do not have any self-respect have no idea how to give respect to others.* Keep on remembering this and you will be set free. Keep on journaling about these realities and timeless truths so that they sink deeper within your consciousness. Keep on putting a voice to your fears and they will move through you. Remember, feelings are like rainstorms, with a beginning, a middle and an end. If we stifle them, they will fester like wounds. If we pay attention to them and bring them into the light of our awareness, we will move through them and they will complete. And we will move to greater and greater health.”

“And what about The Fourth Awakening, that of the spirit?” I asked as I walked over to the chalkboard and pointed to the final quadrant.

“Excellent question. When we awaken the spirit we nurture our highest self. This looks like different things to different people. To some, the spirit may involve prayer or talking to God. For others, caring for the spirit may be reflected by communing with nature or listening to moving music. For yet others, awakening the spirit involves service, volunteerism, and living for a crusade larger than oneself. Whatever modality or tools that you use, just

remember that we need to begin the process of awakening *all four of our core dimensions at the same time.*”

“This seems like a lot of work, Julian,” I stated honestly.

“Remember, the thousand-mile journey begins with a single step. You don’t have to do all of this in a week or a month. Just make sure that every single day, you do *something* to awaken to who you truly are, no matter how insignificant it may appear to be. I deeply recommend that you make a commitment to yourself here in this room. Use much of the first sixty minutes of every day—your holy hour—to work on your Four Awakenings. This is an incredibly powerful way to live your biggest life and realize your destiny.”

“I can do that,” I pledged. “I’ve already been spending time each morning, as you told me to do, advancing my inner work. This makes so much sense, Julian.”

“Make a self-promise here in this room that you will spend time at the beginning of your day working on the four core areas of your inner life. You might spend this time journaling or reading or meditating. You could use part of this time for prayer and another part of the hour for exercise. This one strategy alone really will transform your life if you adopt it and integrate it into your days. Trust me on this one. You see, my friend, if you do not act on life, life will act on you. The days will slip into weeks and the weeks into months ... before you know it, your life will be over. Do not let the brilliant and beautiful treasure of your life slip away. Keep making choices that will help you remember who you are. Take sixty minutes at the beginning of your day to do the inner work required to deepen yourself and to awaken to the golden Buddha within you. It will be the single greatest gift you have ever given yourself.”

Julian returned to the Truth Circle.

“There is one final piece around Stage Four—the stage of Instruction from Masters—that I want to share with you. It is a very wise philosophy to connect to your mortality every day. Remember that life is short and you don’t know when it’s going to end. We both could be taken tomorrow, Dar. The key is to play your highest game and to live your greatest possibility now. Wise people remind themselves that every day could be their last. In doing so, they make it their commitment to be love rather than fear during the hours of their day.” Julian reached over to a desk next to him and lifted up an elegant piece of writing paper.

He continued. “We all have the choice and opportunity to write the story of our lives if we want to. Each day is an opportunity to make a difference in how our obituary will read. Life need not act on us. We can choose to take

conscious steps within the hours of our days to close The Integrity Gap and reduce recycling. We can make a daily decision to do something to promote The Four Awakenings. We can use each day as a springboard to live a higher and bigger life. In our choices, our *specific* destiny is shaped.”

“One of the most powerful things you can do is to write the story of your life in advance. It may not turn out exactly as you articulate it, but as the old saying goes: ‘If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will get you there.’ I’d rather have a plan in place than no plan at all. You know my philosophy: one should do one’s best and then let nature do the rest. Try your best, set clear intentions, chase your dreams and then accept what comes. Life’s a gentle balance between making things happen and *letting* things happen. Do the *very* best you know how to do. Set your goals and state your intentions, chase your dreams as to what you want to receive from life. Then have the bravery and wisdom to let go. Surrender your intentions and accept *whatever* comes, knowing that it is for the best, even if it may not seem like it at the time. Life is a beautiful tapestry that has been perfectly woven together. We often do not receive what we want but we *always* receive what we need. We always get what’s in our highest interest. That’s one of life’s *greatest* lessons.”

“So what do you want me to do?”

“I want you to write the story of your life. I want you to write your obituary. I want you to dream big again and play with the potential that your life is meant to be, my friend. This is an emotional experience; it may even bring tears to your eyes. But I want you to write with all your emotion and every ounce of your love. Open your heart to this exercise.”

In that room, on that night in spring, I wrote the story of my life, surrounded by candles and a loving person who wanted the best for me. I wrote about the person I wanted to become and the life I wanted to create. I wrote about the woman I would find and the husband I would become. I wrote about the family life that I had always felt I deserved. And I wrote what I wanted my life to stand for as a human being. I wrote powerfully about the values, authentic beliefs and standards that I would hold myself to. I dedicated myself, on that magical evening, to playing my biggest game as a person and letting the light that I had discovered within myself see the light of day. The layers over my gold would come off. The chains that had bound me would continue to be broken. I would keep moving towards the truth and enlightenment. I would keep waking up to life.

Tears began to flow from my eyes. I began to cry out loud. Soon I was sobbing like a little child. Julian began to cry as well, clearly moved by my courage as well as by my willingness to “visit the places that frightened me”

and go deeper than I'd ever gone. I could feel that this man's heart was wide open. He put his arms around me and comforted me. Then he asked my permission to read what I had written. I was happy to share the longings of my heart.

After he put down the paper he looked at me and simply said: "Beautiful. You're making your way back home."

CHAPTER 8



The Student Begins to Transform and Recreate Himself

“A dreamer is one who can only find his way by moonlight, and his punishment is that he sees the dawn before the rest of the world.”

—Oscar Wilde

Small doubt, small enlightenment. Great doubt, great enlightenment.

—Zen saying

In a dark time, the eye begins to see.

—Theodore Roethke

This was the most difficult time of my life. It had been six weeks since I had met Julian at the schoolhouse. I now saw the world through a new set of eyes and the very foundations upon which my old world rested had begun to crumble. Much of the time, I wondered what was happening and sometimes felt confused. On leaving me at the end of our last session, Julian had explained to me that as I let go of my old way of seeing things, my *greatest* fears would surface and I would cling to what I once knew, my old world view. He said that, as always, I had choices around everything. I could continue to move farther along the path home towards who I truly was or I could resist this leadership journey and remain stagnant. Julian quoted the philosopher Joseph Campbell who said: “The heroic life is living the individual adventure. To refuse the call means stagnation.” In the deepest place within me, I wanted to keep advancing along the journey I had begun when I first met Julian at the motivational seminar but, more and more, it became harder.

What if Julian was wrong, I sometimes wondered. What if the way he sees the world and all his theories were wrong? What if my old way of seeing the world was correct and letting go of this familiar paradigm was going to take me into an unknown place where my life could get even worse? What if all those beliefs and assumptions I’d relied on my whole life— such as, “If you give too much to others, they will take advantage of you,” or “The only way to succeed is to dominate the competition” or “The more one accumulates, the happier one feels”—were the *real* truths that rule the world? If I didn’t obey them, maybe my life would become a *total* failure. Maybe Julian—though well-meaning—was out of balance and extreme in his philosophy.

Much of my time at work was a blur. I was consumed by the internal struggle I was facing. In moments of clarity, I realized that perhaps my confusion arose from the fact that I had one foot remaining in my old world and one foot entering a whole new one. I had found a quotation from Aristotle that made some sense of the challenges I was encountering on this voyage home to authenticity and my greatest life. I placed it on my bathroom mirror so I could read it each morning. Here's what it said:

The beauty of the soul shines out when a person bears with composure one mischance after another, not because he does not feel them, but because he is one of high and heroic temper.

It was scary—letting go of the world I knew and opening up to a new one I'd never known. But Julian told me that we are most alive when we are walking into the unknown and have the courage to walk through our fear walls. I also kept on reminding myself about what Julian had taught me about confusion always giving way to clarity and chaos eventually resulting in confidence. I *had* to trust Julian. None of my friends would understand what I was talking about these days and my work colleagues would have thought I was going crazy. During this period, I felt very alone and decided to spend a lot of time in nature. I would go out and walk in the woods. I somehow felt comforted. I felt part of a larger universe and a sense of peace filled me.

During this period of intense self-examination and transition, I would wake up in the middle of the night, sweating and shaking, sometimes with a sharp pain searing my heart. "What did I get myself into with this coaching process?" I would wonder. Things were so much easier before. I can see why philosophers have said that ignorance is bliss. I may not have known the truth before I met Julian, but there was some comfort in the illusion of my old life.

And yet, along with all the giant fears and confusion that had begun to present themselves and all the questions that raced through my mind and all the old pain that began to surface as I went deep into my worldview, came a new-found sense of joy. It didn't happen very often, at first, but I began to *feel* more alive than I'd ever felt in my lifetime. Maybe I really was awakening to life as never before. All this happened as I began to process through those "ancient wounds" Julian had spoken of, and take responsibility for the mistakes I had made in the past. By reflecting on my childhood as well as adult experiences, emotions and old, long-forgotten memories began to appear. I would journal about them on a daily basis. I also would write letters to myself as a way to process through the feelings. And the more I began to feel my feelings, the deeper I went within myself. It really was as if I was moving through different layers, peeling away at the old so I could get to the

truth. I was getting to know who I truly was. And Julian said that was “noble work.”

Again, I need to be honest with you: this process wasn’t an easy one. But it became *extremely* fulfilling, the deeper I went. And as I say, more and more, I started feeling a happiness that I hadn’t felt before. The place of knowing deep within me knew that this was *real* joy.

One morning I got up at the crack of dawn and watched the sun come up. I found myself crying, awestruck at the beauty of this natural scene from nature. At other times, the music that I used to listen to on a daily basis was now something that I felt at a whole new level. A smile would come to my face as I felt moved by a brilliantly written opera or inspired by a pop song. And the way I related to people also began to change. I saw my friends and family members as well as my colleagues through a new set of lenses and felt a love for them I’d never known. Things people did that would have irritated me in the past bothered me far less because I realized they were simply acting from their wounds and their fears. They were doing the best they could do based on what they knew, and as Maya Angelou has said: “When we know better, we can do better.” I reminded myself that deep within each and every one of them, there lay gold, magnificence and a loving human being. Every time someone did something to hurt me, even in the smallest of ways, I remembered Julian’s point that “people in pain do painful things.” People in fear act in fearful ways. They needed my forgiveness, not my anger. If I could not find forgiveness within myself, I needed to take responsibility for that and go deeper until I could access more of my heart. Within every thing that bothered me about another person there lived a gift of personal growth. In every circumstance that caused me frustration, there lay a superb opportunity to move through one of my own layers and, in so doing, to *remember* more of my best self—to reclaim more of my authentic power. The choice was mine: *blame or reclaim*.

This was a new philosophy for me, to state the obvious. Few people from the world I came from thought this way. But it felt right; the place of knowing within me knew that the more I embraced this way of living, the better my life would become. My instincts told me this way to live was the way of wisdom.

Julian had asked me to meet him at the Metro Zoo. In particular, he had asked me to show up at the section known as Butterfly Heaven, which was home to thousands of butterflies, from the purely domestic to the highly exotic.

As I made my way to the designated location, the smell of the sweet flowers that lined the walkway brought a wonderful feeling to me and reminded me of the beauty of life. Life truly is a lovely blessing. So often, we get wrapped up in what’s not working within our lives and pay no attention to

the things that are. Julian had told me that one of the natural laws that run the world is that *when you focus on what you don't want in your life, you actually block what you do want from entering*. And what you invest your attention in will grow in your life. Focus on what you don't want and you'll get more of it. The world is a mirror. As he taught me, we receive from life not what we want but who we are, as spiritual beings. I had come to realize that, in so many ways, the simple pleasures of life are the most fulfilling. So that's what I began to focus on.

I looked around for Julian, but he was nowhere to be found. I actually asked a few of the guides who were there to serve tourists whether they had seen a good-looking man wearing a monk's robe. "There's no way you could miss him," I said. They smiled and said they hadn't seen such a person. I used the opportunity, while waiting for Julian to arrive, to review some of the notes I had made in my journal. I found that the act of writing not only recorded the steps of this remarkable journey I had embarked upon but my journal offered me a vehicle to get to know myself, to try to gain clarity over the awakening that was occurring in my life.

Journaling allowed me to think on paper and then to step out of myself and objectively evaluate my thoughts and actions. Journaling allowed me the chance to literally think about the quality of my thinking. If one way I thought or behaved was not well-suited to the life I was dedicated to creating, I could make new choices that were more aligned with who I wanted to become and what I wanted to have. It just felt great to be able to have a place for self-expression and, as Julian described it, a conversation with myself. The point was well taken: if we don't have conversations with ourselves, how can we get to know ourselves? And the deeper we know ourselves, the more we can make authentic choices to make the leadership journey back home to the place that we have always known, at our core, we have wanted to be. In the Greco-Roman temples of the past, above the entrance one would often find the following words: "Know thyself and you will know the universe and the gods." This made more sense to me than ever before.

I got up and continued looking for Julian, but after ten minutes or so, I still had seen no sign of him. All of a sudden, I heard a loud knock coming from one of the glass rooms where the rare butterflies were housed. I looked in and could not believe my eyes. Julian never ceased to amaze me! He was inside the enclosure, covered by hundreds of the most breath-takenly beautiful butterflies I had ever seen. There were so many colors and so much life in that room. He still had on his red robe. He still had on his ever-present sandals. But this time, Julian also had on one of those hats that zookeepers often wear, with a net that completely covered his face. He was laughing as he

shouted to me through the glass: “Come on in here, amigo. Today’s lesson is a big one! And I know you’re ready to discover it. There’s one of these hats for you outside the door; I’ve arranged everything with the zoo.”

I made my way to the door and put on the hat with the net dangling from it, as instructed by my eccentric but highly effective life coach. I entered the room and was awestruck at the miracle of nature that those butterflies embodied. Maybe the world is perfect and everything that unfolds does so according to a vastly intelligent plan. We try to understand why our lives play out as they do, but perhaps we are trying to make sense of something that has been created by an intelligence higher than human reason. Perhaps there is a perfection to *each* of our lives, a perfection that we miss if we look through the lenses of judgment and fear. Yes, our choices count. Yes, actions have consequences. Yes, we have much power to sculpt the way our destinies look. But there is a much more powerful force that is ultimately at play and in control.

Julian looked like a little kid, playing with the butterflies, revealing a sense of wonder and joy. He was laughing and clapping his hands as he flitted around the room, butterflies in tow. He then waved the butterflies off; they seemed to do as he instructed. He walked towards me.

“How are you doing, my friend?” he asked happily as he walked over and embraced me, a few butterflies remaining perched on his shoulder.

“Well, I’ve had better weeks,” I replied, speaking truthfully. “So much is coming up for me. I don’t know whether I’m coming or going sometimes, Julian. There is actually a lot of pain that I’m experiencing. I never thought this path of awakening would involve suffering.”

“It’s all part of the seven-stage process, Dar. This path requires immense courage. You are learning that through first-hand experience, which is the best way to learn. No book could ever come close to teaching you what life itself can teach you if you live it with your eyes wide open and are awake to its lessons. To risk is to live, my friend. We play small, thinking that’s a safe way to live when that’s actually the most unsafe place to be. That’s part of the illusion.”

“I agree, Julian. Neale Donald Walsh said: ‘You are so afraid to live, so afraid of life itself, that you’ve given up the very nature of your being in trade for security’”

“Beautiful,” said Julian. “Never heard that one.” He closed his eyes, apparently in contemplation, absorbing what I’d just said. Julian was a great listener. I loved being with him. He made me feel special.

“Here, have a look at this,” Julian said as he pointed to a cocoon. “Richard Bach once wrote that ‘what the caterpillar sees as the end of the world the master sees as the butterfly’”

Those words spoke to me at a soul level. They *felt* right.

Julian continued. “You are going through a metamorphosis. You are experiencing a deep transformation. You lived your entire life as one big lie. You betrayed yourself and lived inauthentically simply to fit into the crowd. Your choices and conduct were based on an illusion. Remember those false images that appeared real on the wall of the cave?”

“How could I ever forget, Julian?” I replied.

“You’ll recall that Stage Two of the truth-seeker’s path involves a basic choice: to remain asleep and small or to embark on a conscious journey towards enlightenment and her biggest self. If the latter decision is made, the seeker then moves through Stage Three, where she sees a whole new reality beginning to unfold, and Stage Four, where she craves the answers offered by masters as to what’s happening to her and seeks a truer understanding of the world that exists behind the illusion. That brings us to Stage Five, the stage of ‘Transformation and Rebirth.’ It’s a hard, hard time for the seeker because it’s a time of *deep* transition. It’s also the most exciting and important time of her life. Growth sometimes comes in difficult ways. But growth is always good. ‘The way to your dreams can only be found with one foot in eternity and the other on shaky ground,’ is how noted thinker Rick Tarquinio puts it.”

Julian continued: “I know how confused you must feel these days. I understand the pain that you are enduring. There *is* suffering involved as you walk the path. I do not want to minimize what you’re going through. But I must tell you that, if you could look down at your life from a fifty-thousand-foot perspective, *everything* that’s happening is very beautiful.”

“Beautiful? I’ve never suffered so much in my life. I’ve never been so confused in my life. My life seems to be moving into chaos rather than getting to a better place.”

“That’s just your perception right now,” replied Julian. “Your human eyes see confusion and chaos. But you are in the process of gaining new vision. As you do, you will see that all that is happening to you is part of the process of letting go of your old paradigm for living. All that is occurring for you is a reflection of the fact that you are going through a time of massive growth. You are releasing everything you know and all the ways of seeing and behaving that governed your former life. And as you let go and empty yourself of all that you have been, you are making room in your life for new things to enter. You are making space for a new consciousness and a new way

of operating and being. Yes, it's messy at times. How could it not be? The very foundations upon which you have lived your life are being challenged and then torn down. But trust me when I say that this is the best thing that's ever happened to you. Your mind is awakening. Your heart is opening. Your emotions are healing and your spirit is soaring. You are reclaiming your authentic power, which is far different from the external power provided by big titles, large bank accounts and corner offices. Those things come and go with the tides of life. And when they are gone, so is your power. But no one can take authentic power away from you, Dar. You earn it and then you own it—forever. So all this *is* beautiful. You are letting go of the control that once dominated your days. Like a caterpillar going through a cocoon, you are moving through the darkness and becoming something new. And yes, it's dark in that cocoon and on some days it may seem that there's no way out. But, in truth, the caterpillar is becoming a butterfly. Stagnation is turning into freedom. This is what deep change looks like and I hear you when you say it's not pleasant. At this stage of your journey as a seeker, it's almost as if the entire inner government by which you previously ran your life is being toppled and replaced by a whole new regime. There's a revolution underway. New beliefs are forming. New assumptions in terms of the way the world works are being forged. Fears are being released and transcended. A greater commitment to personal authenticity is being realized. Do you see how incredible this is? Try not to resist what's going on. You are headed to a wonderful place, my friend. The transition phases of our lives are the richest times of life. You are walking towards the light. The darkness will pass. The butterfly is coming."

"Really?" I couldn't help but ask.

"The laws of nature explain the laws of life," offered Julian. "You know that. A caterpillar cannot remain in the cocoon forever. A butterfly *must* emerge *when the time is right*. Just trust in nature's timing; it's not on the same clock as you. Remember that always. Your pain will pass—it always does. And as Carl Jung said: 'There is no coming to consciousness without pain.' Again, release control and just realize that there is a larger unfolding taking place. And all good."

"How do you know this is true?"

"Because I've walked this path to awakening in my own life. Remember what T. S. Eliot said: 'Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.' You are going through what the mystics have called the dark night of the soul. I know that you're questioning everything. That's good. Questioning everything means you are no longer taking the status quo as truth. You are no longer a sheep blindly following the flock. You are

waking up and growing. That's what leaders do. They leave the crowd once and for all and create their own paths. Mahatma Gandhi didn't follow the crowd. He set his own original vision and then had courage to stand by it. Helen Keller, Amelia Earhart, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr. and all other leaders—from leaders of nations to leaders in the arts like Salvador Dali and Picasso—did the same thing. Dali didn't try to be more like Rembrandt or Michelangelo. He lived out of his own imagination and had the bravery to pour the creative brilliance that had been embedded in his heart out into the world.”

“So true,” I acknowledged, letting two butterflies rest on one of my hands.

“You are no longer living your life to please others and to fit in because you are afraid of being abandoned. Instead, you are moving into your heart and beginning to pour more love into the world by the way you show up fully as a human being. You really are reclaiming your authenticity. You are becoming a butterfly and regaining your freedom. I'm so happy for you. And yes, this process creates pain in one's life.”

Julian continued with another helpful metaphor. “When a baby comes down the birth canal, there is tremendous pain involved. But the baby and the mother do not give up. They persist through the transition phase, knowing that the outcome will be a miracle. You *will* experience a miracle if you are willing and keep choosing. We always have choices, as human beings. Each of us has far more choices than we are aware of. We think we are so limited in life that we *have* to live and do what we currently do. That's just more of the language that victims are prone to use. It's *always* up to you—how far along the path home from your social self to your authentic self you want to go. Some people never get on the conscious path and stay asleep an entire lifetime. Others make some steps home and remember some of who they truly are. And a handful of women and men have made it all the way home and completely remember who they are. These courageous souls fully reclaimed their authentic power, a power that each of us has within us, and are known to the world as ‘enlightened ones.’ These were true leaders on the planet, the spiritual giants, if you will. The pain that you are now enduring is because you are coming down the birth canal. You are experiencing a rebirth and a whole new being will emerge when the time is right. This universe is far more intelligent than we give it credit for, it really is. There is a brilliant coherence that runs our lives. The more we can stop trying to force outcomes and simply be in the flow, the more the magic that our lives are meant to be will appear. Trying to make everything happen and force results without balancing things off with a willingness to let things happen is nothing more than control. Just become aware that you are going through a time of transformation and be in

the moment with it. Make a decision to enjoy and appreciate what you are going through and where it is taking you. Simply experience it without labeling it as bad. Release all judgment—it's only a part of the illusion. It's not real. The crowd taught you this kind of thing is 'bad.' Have faith. Feel the feelings that are coming up and process through them to completion. In the passage of time, you will look back at this as *the defining moment* of your entire life.”

Now Julian pulled a well-worn book from his knapsack. “Here, look at this,” he said. “These are some of the poems of Rumi. I love them.” He read from a page: “*I saw grief drinking a cup of sorrow and called out, ‘It tastes sweet, does it not?’ ‘You’ve caught me,’ grief answered, ‘and you’ve ruined my business. How can I sell sorrow when you know it’s a blessing?’* Your sorrow is, in truth, a blessing. It is shaping and awakening you. Please remember that as you go through the fifth stage.”

“Well, how do I get through this stage, then, Julian? I have to be honest with you. I feel like giving up. I don’t know who to listen to anymore. My friends and colleagues come from a different world. Part of me knows they belong to the crowd and their beliefs are based on an illusion. But it’s so hard to disregard what they tell me. I guess what I’m saying is that it’s hard, at times, to remember that the way I used to see the world is based upon a lie and that there’s a whole new and far more truthful way of operating as a human being. I feel like I’m caught between two worlds. Sometimes, I find myself questioning whether everything you’re saying to me is indeed the truth. I don’t question your honesty and integrity at all. That’s not what I’m saying, Julian. I’m just wondering—what if you’re wrong? What if I’m just making my life worse and creating more complexity for myself?”

“Excellent work, Dar. The more you can put a voice to your fear, the more the fear will move through you. The more you can talk about this, the more the hidden shadows come out into the light where they can be examined and released. Thank you for speaking your truth; so few do. Remember, talking about your fear and bringing it out into the open is a lot like inviting the monster who lives in the basement upstairs to the kitchen table for a cup of tea. The monster starts to dissolve once it is brought into the light of your awareness. What was once hidden within the realm of the subconscious now enters the area of the conscious mind where you can examine and evaluate it, making choices around it if you wish to. Most fears are nothing more than an illusion. You know that now. And yet they rule our lives. They keep us small. They keep us chained and fill our lives with limitation rather than possibility. All I’m asking is that you keep on trusting me. *It’s always darkest before dawn. A time comes in everyone’s life when they have to play at the edges and*

take some big chances. A time comes for every seeker where he or she knows, deep down in the heart, that refusing to take the risk will resign them to a life of mediocrity. But making the leap, though it involves great fear along with great courage, will allow them to travel to a whole new land. A land of potential, happiness and freedom. Go deep and listen to the inner voice within you. Then trust in its guidance. 'Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage,' wrote Anais Nin."

"You know what, Julian? I'm starting to hear some kind of an inner voice getting louder within me these days. That's another thing that's shifting. Before, I was simply being guided by your wisdom. Your coaching is what led me to this point. It's almost as if I couldn't access my inner wisdom and my personal truth. But that's starting to change, now that I think about it."

"So well said, Dar. And that's another reason why you want to keep on having *conversations*, not only with yourself but also with other people who are walking the same path you are on. And many people in the world today are. As I mentioned to you earlier, conversation deepens conviction. The more you can converse about the things that you want to become, the more you will be able to dedicate yourself to doing what needs to be done."

Julian began to play with the butterflies. The child inside of him was clearly alive and well. The butterflies seemed to love him, resting on his arms and shoulders. I joined in. We looked like two kids frolicking in a schoolyard, totally in the moment, and fully alive, free of any self-consciousness or inhibition. Maybe I had been taking life too seriously in the past. Maybe this was the most important and rich time of my life. I knew this was truth as I reflected more deeply. I felt it in my body, at its very core. The chatter in my mind wanted to tell me otherwise. But Julian was right: often that chatter is nothing more than the voice of fear. The head is a limiter, the heart the liberator. More than ever, I wanted to play like a leader in my life. I wanted to show up fully and play big with my remaining days. I wanted to let go of my limitations and make the journey back home. I wanted to reclaim, remember and recover the person who I truly was, beneath all the layers that built up as I picked up the limiting beliefs, assumptions and fears of the world around me. My bigness was coming out.

We are literally afraid of who we truly are. We are afraid of our light. We are afraid of our brilliance. We are afraid of our highest possibility. We are afraid to stand tall and let our light shine into the world. With great gifts come great responsibility. My guess is that most human beings don't want to look at their gifts because they don't want to deal with the responsibility that those gifts present. The responsibility to live fearlessly and make a difference in the

world. And in doing so, they shrink from their greatness. I vowed never to let that happen to me.

In the days that followed my meeting with Julian at the zoo, more and more pieces came to me. Things began to make so much sense. *Patience was required on this trek to truth and self-awakening.* If all that I wanted to know and occur in my life happened immediately, I guess there would be nothing left for the journey. The whole reason we are alive, I realized, is to spend our lives finding our way back home. And it is a *journey*. But many answers did start coming. I observed that they seemed to appear only when I was ready to accept them. Questions that I had been struggling with seemed to be answered in an almost organic way. The more inner work I did, the more solutions and growth I received. The deeper within myself I went, the more my outer world began to shift.

In my old world, I thought that the way to salvation and happiness was to focus on externals. In other words, I believed that a more expensive car or a hipper suit would make me feel better on the inside. But the more time I spent with Julian, the more I learned that happiness is an inside job. It's not about chasing greater net worth—it's about cultivating a greater self-worth. It's not about having more money but about finding more meaning. And it's not about only being successful but about being truly significant—a person who creates lasting value in the world. By this I mean everything seemed to unfold naturally. As if there was a higher intelligence leading me. I'd always fought life. I know that this was all about control. I now lived in a different way: I let life lead me. This is not to say that I didn't act in a responsible way. Everything in life *is* a delicate balance. I still set my goals, took the action I needed to take and acted in a practical way. But rather than resisting life, I relaxed. I surrendered more. *I did my best and let life do the rest.* If, after doing my best, something still didn't work out, I felt it wasn't meant to be. And something even more perfect for my personal evolution would present itself. When one door closes, another always opens and every ending truly is also a new beginning.

I began to balance making things happen with letting things happen. I began to balance doing with being. I began to balance using my mind with listening to my heart. Reason with passion. Ultimately, my guess is that I was beginning to balance Earth with Heaven.

CHAPTER 9



The Seeker Is Tested

*If there is something great in you, it will not appear on your first call.
It will not appear and come to you easily, without any work and effort.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

In the four weeks since my visit with Julian at the zoo, so many blessings had appeared in my life. My relationship with my children, whom I saw every week, grew more open and loving. I began to listen to them at a level never available to me in the life I lived prior to meeting Julian, and the bonds of love between us grew exponentially. They told me I was far more relaxed, much more caring and so much more playful than they had ever known me to be. I was finally growing into the father I had always hoped to become.

As well, while attending a lecture on self-discovery and personal transformation one evening at our local library, I met Sasha, a lovely and intelligent chiropractor. I fell in love with her; I never thought I could feel that way about a woman. She was so calm and grounded, so wise, loving and funny. I knew, on meeting her, that we were destined to spend the rest of our days together. It was just a feeling I had—one I intended to pay a lot of attention to as I went through my days.

Thanks to Julian’s coaching as well as his “holy hour” concept, my inner world was recreated. To advance *The First Awakening*, I read many books to develop and refine my base of wisdom. I also journaled on a daily basis, refining the philosophy of life that I intended to follow. I had decided, thanks to Julian’s advice, to do my own thinking rather than letting others do it for me. I flat out refused to live someone else’s life—the life that the crowd encouraged me to live. But since awakening the mind is only twenty-five percent of what is required to return to wholeness and close *The Integrity Gap*, I also focused on nurturing the body, healing my emotions and caring for my spirit. Four times a week I would trek off to yoga class. Three times a week I set aside time to consider my emotional self and process through any repressed anger or latent sadness I had stored so that they did not subtly affect the way I thought, felt and behaved. And each day I would do something, no matter how small, to awaken my spiritual side. On some days I prayed. On others I would go and sit in the garden for part of my holy hour, just smelling the roses and feeling the rays of the sun on my face. And, of course, I always kept my commitment to remaining true to myself and living by the values that

feel authentic to me rather than being pulled into the crowd at the forefront of my consciousness.

This all might seem as though I spent a lot of time and energy on awakening my biggest life. The truth of the matter is that the time I spent on my inner work was borrowed from all the time I would waste in my former incarnation, engaging in various distractions ranging from watching television to oversleeping. I also became clearer than ever that the reason I had spent so much time doing those things was that, at a deep and subconscious level, I was in pain. I was suffering from the fact that I had been betraying myself by not living the extraordinarily beautiful and full life I was destined to live. Until I began to know myself and increase my awareness of what was really going on within myself, I had no idea why I lived as I did. I just followed the crowd and didn't think much about it. I was caught up in the lie. I had been trapped within an illusion. And it was killing me. "How many people are trapped in their everyday habits: part numb, part frightened, part indifferent? To have a better life," said Albert Einstein, "we must keep choosing how we are living."

Life became a joy to live. I had more energy than I had ever felt. My friends all told me that I looked ten years younger. I felt so connected to other human beings. My confidence and desire to be a great human being exploded. And my business soared. I guess it's true what Julian so often told me: "We attract into our lives not what we want but who we are." As I become more loving, wise and authentic, this infinitely intelligent universe of ours reached out to me and offered me the wind beneath my wings.

Julian gave me his personal copy of *The Saint, The Surfer and The CEO*, the book I had noticed in his hotel room at The Q. A story written about a man on an odyssey to discover his greatest life, the book revolves around three special teachers who reveal powerful lessons that help him make his transformation. It was a wonderfully inspiring read and I loved the many quotations it contained. I can see why it spoke to Julian. Near the end, one quotation in particular became a daily affirmation for me during this time of my life. I posted it on to my bathroom mirror along with the Aristotle quotation I mentioned earlier and read it aloud each morning. The words were from Henri Frederic Amiel and they were as follows:

The process of life should be the birth of a soul.

This is the highest alchemy, and this justifies our presence on earth.

This is our calling and our virtue.

Other books I read during that period that moved me to keep digging deep and shining `more brightly in the world included *Hope for the Flowers* by

Trina Paulus, *Siddharta* by Herman Hesse, *Synchronicity* by Joseph Jaworski, *Sacred Hoops* by Phil Jackson and a wonderful little book about never giving up called *The Go-Getter* by Peter B. Kyne. I had never fully appreciated the power of great books to introduce me to my best self.

At this time of great introspection and personal growth, I also devoted much time to fully understanding the process that Julian had been teaching me. I understood that The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening represented an elegant model of the path that every seeker has to travel to get home to her essential self. It brought together so much of the thinking of many different cultures and of so many different mystics as to why we are here and the way our lives work in a simple, easily understandable structure. The journey Julian had described was the journey home to truth and enlightenment, two goals that human beings have reached for since the dawn of the species. I also understood that, while Julian was taking me through the process over a few months and setting up scenarios that would help me understand what each stage was about, I would *naturally* experience each and every one of the seven stages of the path as I moved through my life, so long as I remained willing and devoted to traveling this road to self-awakening and authenticity. As he once said, “The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening is the process that every seeker must walk as he heads home to the place where his heart has always wanted him to be.” And rather than taking a few months, Julian explained that the journey could—in reality—take a lifetime to complete. As a matter of fact, not everyone who embarks on the path home will reach the destination. Most do not. But every single day offers us the opportunity to step a little closer to the ideal and become more of who we were meant to become. Every single day on the path brings greater blessings and more personal power. Every single moment on the conscious journey causes more of the layers covering the golden Buddha within us to shine through the mud of our fears, limiting beliefs and false assumptions. Julian had simply collapsed the process to help me understand it quickly. He was trying to offer me a clear and powerful framework explaining the spiritual path. He was trying to give me as much value as he could and help me as much as he could in the limited amount of time that he had.

I realized that there were so many people across the world that Julian wanted to serve and I knew he needed to get to his next assignment. I often expressed my gratitude to him for finding me and helping me transform my life, as he undoubtedly had. He had been a loyal friend to my father and I regularly told him so. This made him happy. “Friendship is an incredibly important thing to me, Dar. I value—and love—my friends. Your dad was a wonderful man. It is my joy to help you, in the only way I know how.”

Recently, Julian had even told me that he wanted to get involved in the global peace movement and was exploring ways to be of service in that arena. Various political leaders were becoming aware of his work as his message spread and Julian mentioned that he welcomed the chance to help as much as he could. He felt strongly that his wisdom and philosophy could profoundly reduce conflict in many of the world's troubled spots such as the Middle East and Northern Ireland, just to name a few. I fully agreed and awaited the day that Julian emerged on the world stage as a statesman, showing presidents and prime ministers how opening their own hearts and reclaiming their best selves was the real key to ending wars, developing "win-win" alliances and making the world a better, more love-filled place. "To eliminate hatred in the world, we must first eliminate any hatred we carry within ourselves," Julian told me one evening as we chatted on the telephone. I knew he would have taken a bullet in defence of that truth.

Julian also shared with me that a film producer had somehow been able to find him a number of months ago. He was informed that there was much interest in a movie being made of his life and all he was doing to build a new world. Great things were unfolding for Julian. I knew he did not seek any attention and did what he did from the purest of intentions. But I was happy to see Julian getting some of the recognition he deserved. He was an evangelist in the truest meaning of the word—he was all about spreading good news on a planet that desperately needs it.

I was to meet Julian at the courthouse at 9 A.M. He had informed me that he had planned a very special coaching session for me, one that would bring the next lesson to life in a way that was unforgettable.

As I walked up the concrete steps to the courthouse, a police officer rushed over to me. I was surprised when he knew my name.

"Mr. Sandersen?"

"Er, yes," I said, wondering what this was all about. "What's going on?"

"Just come with me, please. My name is Officer Perez and I've been asked to escort you into the building. I cannot say anything else—sworn to secrecy."

Part of me felt that Julian was behind this. But another part of me grew a little concerned. The police officer seemed so serious. Yet I was a decent, law-abiding citizen who minded his own business and kept out of trouble; what could the police want from me?

Officer Perez led me down a hallway lined with ancient paintings of judges in gowns and legal attire. He was completely silent and very official. I

walked a step or two behind him. I had never been in the courthouse and was intrigued by the whole environment. I used to enjoy watching all the legal dramas that fill today's television screens. My mother had wanted me to become a lawyer.

"Here we are, Mr. Sandersen. Make it a great day, Sir," he said with a thin smile.

I had been delivered to Courtroom Number 6 and now stood before two huge wooden doors. The building smelled musty and the carpets were in dire need of replacement from many years of traffic. There was no one around. I pushed the doors open and entered the room, with no idea what to expect. My heart was beating rapidly.

The courtroom was empty except for two people. At the front of the cavernous space was an elderly judge who sat behind the bench. And before him was a tall lawyer dressed in a gray pinstripe suit, with his back facing me. Being a connoisseur of premium-quality suits, I knew that the one worn by the lawyer was very expensive. The judge and the lawyer were discussing some issue, though I could not hear what they were saying. Both seemed very animated, with the judge moving his hands back and forth while the lawyer nodded. I took a few steps forward and sat down on one of the long wooden benches reserved for members of the public who wished to sit in on trials. I cast my eyes down to the ground.

"Not there, Mr. Sandersen—up here," commanded the judge, pointing to the seat normally reserved for prisoners.

"What have I done wrong?" I asked, struggling to maintain my composure. "A friend of mine asked me to meet him here at the courthouse at 9 A.M. As I walked up the steps, a police officer, Officer Perez, stopped me and escorted me into this courtroom. I have no idea what this is all about. My friend must be looking for me, and I'm feeling frustrated because I don't know why I've been asked to come in here. Have I been charged with some offence?"

"The crime of self-betrayal, amigo," stated the tall lawyer forcefully as he turned around and began to laugh. It was Julian! He rushed over and gave me the warmest hug he had ever given me. I glanced over at the judge who was laughing like a schoolchild.

"Hope we didn't scare you, Dar. Walter over here ... I mean Judge Ford," Julian said, with a wink at his accomplice, "agreed to participate in this little charade to help me teach you about today's lesson. Walter and I used to spend a lot of time together when I was practicing law and we grew to be great

friends. I called him up last night and asked him for a little favor,” Julian explained with a smile.

Now the judge spoke up, addressing Julian with great affection and warmth. “You were the best lawyer I’ve ever met, Julian. No one could match your skills as a litigator. I truly have never encountered a better legal mind in my entire career on the bench. And I’ve seen some pretty brilliant lawyers in my time. But it’s great to see you again, old friend. We all wondered where you had gone after you left your law practice. Pretty incredible story about your transformation up in the Himalayas—thanks for sharing it with me. The way you look now is going to take some getting used to. I mean, you’re a young man again! Unbelievable—never seen or heard of anything like it. If you want to drop by for dinner any night, my door’s always open for you, you know that, don’t you, Julian?”

“I do. Thank you, Walter,” responded Julian graciously.

“Julian, the whole legal community misses you. And as for you, Mr. Sandersen, I don’t know what Julian over here is teaching you but I have a sense he’s going to change your life.”

“He already has, Sir. Already has,” I responded, feeling more relaxed and finding the humor in Julian’s endless shenanigans. I knew he liked to keep things interesting and shake things up.

The judge descended from his perch and gave Julian a two-armed handshake, the kind politicians on the campaign trail favor to show their warmth to voters. He then left the courtroom from a private entrance in the back.

“Of course you have committed no offence, my friend. I know you left the stage of self-betrayal many weeks ago. I just wanted to do something that would bring the sixth of The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening to life for you. You see, the sixth stage is all about a trial.”

“In a courtroom?”

“No, Dar, it’s about a trial of a different sort. Before a seeker reaches the final destination of her biggest self, she will be presented with a trial. Before she reaches the treasure she has been longing for, she will be given a test. That’s just the way life works on the path. If you study any great book of wisdom that describes this voyage of personal awakening, you will see that that seeker—or the hero—always faces some trial or adversity just before he gets the prize: the life he has always desired.”

“Why does the world work in this way, Julian? Why are the laws of nature set up in such a way as to send the seeker a trial just before he gets to the end

of his journey?”

“Good question. There are two reasons that nature sends a trial. First, it comes to ensure that the seeker has learned and fully integrated all the lessons he was meant to learn in his lifetime. And, second, it comes to test the resolve of the seeker. *Most people give up just before they reach their dreams. Most people quit only steps away from getting everything they wanted.* It’s like the old story of the gold miner. He spent his entire life searching for the big nugget of gold that would make him a rich man. One day, as he was chipping away at a large piece of rock with his hammer, he decided he had had enough. Thirty-five years and he was still struggling to make ends meet. So he threw away the rock, laid down his hammer and left the mine forever. The next morning, a young man on his first day on the job picked up the large rock that the older miner had thrown away. He noted that much of the chipping had already been done so decided to take one good hard crack at it. Upon so doing, the young man could not believe what happened. The rock split in two, revealing the largest piece of gold any of the other miners had ever seen. The young man had struck it rich simply because the old miner had not had the wisdom and courage to persist until he got what he wanted.

Julian was speaking very passionately now. “‘Adversity calls forth the soul’s courage to bear unflinchingly whatever Heaven sends,’ observed Euripides. You must *never ever give up when a trial presents itself on the path.* And many trials will present themselves along the way. Yes, before your greatest victory you will certainly face your greatest challenge. Just before you reach the *highest* point of your personal evolution, you can be sure you will face a *massive* test. That’s what Stage Six speaks to. But having said that, before you receive some of the wins that you will earn by going deeper and deeper and remembering more of who you truly are, you will be sent many trials. With an awareness that this is all part of the route that you must travel to return home to your authentic self, it will be easier for you: you will be prepared.”

“I understand. And you’re right. Just knowing that I should expect some setbacks or that I will encounter some obstacles gives me a greater understanding of the way this process works. When the pitfalls do come up, I’ll know that every other seeker on the path has experienced a similar kind of thing. That will make it easier. And I have a sense setbacks also come to strengthen me. Hard times do make us stronger people,” I said. “Great suit, by the way,” I added with a grin.

“I just borrowed it for the morning. Couldn’t show up at this palace of justice without it. Coming back to this courthouse brings back so many memories. You know, amigo, I love my new life, the one I’ve lived since my

return from India. I have never felt so comfortable in my own skin. I feel I am completely on-purpose and living the life I have been called to live. I wake up each morning with a splendid feeling of joy and boundless energy, eager to go out into the world and make something of the gifts and talents that have been granted to me. I really don't miss my old way of living much. It wasn't me. On the outside, I know it must have looked like I had it all. Gorgeous women around me, a jet-setting lifestyle, legal victories that were splashed over the front pages of the newspapers, more money than I knew what to do with. But, inside, I felt like a dead man walking. I had no spark. My internal light was dim. That was no way to live and, believe me, I do not miss that existence. But coming here today does bring back many memories. I made a lot of friends in the profession. And I met a lot of really good people. You know, Dar, *everyone* has goodness within them. When people act in mean or hurtful ways, don't make the mistake of believing that what you are seeing is an accurate representation of who they truly are. No one is bad at their core—they just *behave* in bad ways. I'm in no way saying that you need to remain around people who mistreat you. Of course you must set boundaries and protect yourself. I'm simply saying that you shouldn't fall for the illusion that there is such a thing as a bad human being. Those who do hurtful or vicious acts have been badly and viciously hurt by others. Don't make what they do about you, because it's not."

"I hear you, Julian. Interesting point. In our society, we rush to judgment on so many things. Someone does something we don't like and we instantly label them as 'bad' or 'ruthless' or 'selfish' or 'controlling.' What I understand you to be saying is that's a very superficial way of viewing the situation. We need to go deeper to discover the truth. Being a seeker is all about getting to the truth of what's really going on in a certain situation or in life in generally, isn't it?"

Julian nodded and smiled. He was happy with all that I was learning.

"And, at a deeper level, people who act in harsh ways are really doing nothing more than replaying the old tapes that have always run them. They are acting out the patterns and ways of behaving that they picked up in childhood, in an effort to cope and survive in the world. They don't know any better. Because they are asleep to what's going on for them internally, they blame the outside world for what's not working in their lives. In doing so, they never bring their own shadows, shadows which run them, into the light of their conscious awareness. So they remain small and trapped in the lie that is their lives. And when people are taught a wiser and better way of doing things, they can begin to live a wiser and better life. When they realize that, in order

for their lives to change, *they* must change, they wake up and begin to step towards their biggest lives.”

Julian clapped his hands. He then got up on to the shining table in front of him and did a strange little dance. I was not sure if he learned that up in the Himalayas or from one of the other people that he coached. I had never seen anything like it. Julian saw me laughing but he didn’t care. He just kept on waving his hands into the air and moving his feet from side to side. After a few minutes, he got down from the table and led me out of the courtroom.

“Let this courtroom and the mock trial I set up remind you of Stage Six of The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening. Before great things happen, sometimes, hard times occur. And please let my quirky little dance remind you that life’s a game. Don’t take it too seriously. Have fun. Dance. Laugh. Maintain a healthy dose of perspective. I know you have faced painful times in the recent past. I am sensitive to that. But I do invite you to remember that you have many many blessings in your life. Did you know that on the planet today, over one billion people will go to bed hungry tonight. There are children without food. There are people locked up and being tortured in prisons. There are other human beings—our brothers and sisters in this tribe called humanity—imprisoned in hospital rooms, struggling to survive the ravages of some disease. There are so many people who have far less than we do. And my heart cries out to them,” said Julian, his tone softening. “I wish I could help each and every one of them. Remember what Mother Teresa said: ‘There are no great acts, only small acts done with great love.’”

“She also said ‘If I did not pick up that first person in Calcutta, I would not have picked up the forty-two thousand,’” I added. “I read that in one of the books I’ve been studying. And you are right, Julian. In the past, I always focused on what was missing in my life rather than on all the good I had. I guess maturity as a human being is loving what you have rather than worrying too much about having what you love. I know you believe we need to be proactive and chase our dreams. But I also hear you saying that bringing a deep sense of gratitude into one’s life is important.”

“Makes me think of that ancient Persian proverb: ‘I cursed the fact I had no shoes until I saw a man who had no feet,’” noted Julian.

We left the courtroom in silence. Julian glanced at the paintings that lined the corridor as we walked towards the exit. On leaving the building, Julian stopped and looked out at the lush park across the street. He reached inside his suit jacket and handed me a piece of lined, legal-sized paper, the kind lawyers favor as they take their notes during court cases. On the top, it read: “Rules for Winning Trials.”

“Here, amigo, this is for you,” said Julian as he handed me the sheet of paper. “I’d like you to memorize these rules so that when challenging times appear on the path to awakening your biggest and best self, you’ll have some specific ideas and tools to help you move through them.” Julian paused and looked up to the sky. I heard him say the following words to no one in particular: “Please give me strength to be of greatest service.”

He then looked at me once again. There was sadness in his eyes. “You are a powerful man,” he said. “Only a few short months ago, you were ready to take your own life. But something within you wouldn’t let you do it. Instead, you began letting life lead you, and began to be open to a new way of seeing things. This takes immense courage and speaks volumes about the person that you are. Since I have been coaching you, you have invested your trust in me and followed my instructions, strange as they appeared at times. You have gone deep, confronted your resistances, investigated your shadows and opened your heart. You are a good man in the process of becoming a great one, Dar. I so deeply feel that the world needs more people like you, more men and women who will heed the call of their hearts and awaken to their best lives. It breaks my heart to see people living at only a tiny fraction of their power and potential. It hurts me to see people acting in selfish ways, putting their own interests above those of others when they should be living in ways that help others *and* help themselves. Do you know how happy every person on the planet would feel if they made a little bit of time every day to be of greater service to others? Do you have any idea the joy that enters a person’s being when they dedicate themselves to creating real and lasting value for other people? Helping other people get to their dreams is, when viewed from this frame of reference, a great gift you give yourself. But most people don’t see this truth.”

Julian became quiet.

“Most people are living with blindfolds over their eyes, thinking that the world they are viewing is the only reality. You know that now. And they think that the mediocre and small lives they are leading are the only lives that are available to them. Each of our lives is destined to be great. That’s part of the ‘rough destiny’ that has already been carved out for us. But it falls to us to build out the details of the destiny. It’s that partnership I spoke of in an earlier coaching session. Life is a co-creative process. Do your best. Chase your dreams. Open your heart. Do your internal work. Take lots of action. Get up early and be disciplined. Do whatever is possible for you to do to close The Integrity Gap, stop recycling and realize The 4 Awakenings. Then—and only then—let go and accept what comes, knowing that it is what’s best for you.”

Julian’s faith in the potential of human beings moved me. He was a

believer in a society where too many people have given up the notion that each one of us can be great. Somewhere along the way, most of us bought into a lie that greatness was reserved for the chosen few. Somewhere along the way, someone sold us a bill of goods that our lives were not meant to be extraordinary. Julian knew otherwise. He knew we were designed to play big. He understood we have been hardwired to shine brightly. He was awake to the truth that there are no extra people on the planet and we are all duty-bound to have an impact and bless the lives of those who surround us.

“I need to leave the city tomorrow. My next assignment is in England and I have a flight to catch at nine in the evening. I feel sad that I have to leave you, amigo. I am so very proud of what you have become and what you are growing into. And you deserve all that is happening for you. I offered the pathway and delivered the wisdom to you. But you had the bravery and good sense to execute the knowledge I shared. *Wisdom without execution is worthless.*”

I couldn't believe Julian was leaving. I had grown to love this man of few possessions who drove fast cars and sometimes donned fine suits. I had come to respect him enormously and care deeply for his welfare. And, to be honest, I noticed myself feeling a little afraid, now that I had learned I would be on my own, without a guide on the path. As always, Julian sensed what I was experiencing.

“You know you will never be alone, Dar. You now have Sasha. And you should know that as you venture farther along the path, you will naturally draw more seekers into your life. You will find more support along the way than you have ever imagined. Please do not worry. And also,” Julian noted, “remember that, ultimately, all answers reside within you. You don't need a guide. This journey is not really about learning things you need to learn so much as it is about remembering things you have forgotten. The golden Buddha is already within you. All you need to do is remove the layers and all will be well in your universe.”

“Thanks, Julian. I love you like a father, you know?”

“I know. Thank you. I'll be watching your star rise,” he replied. “So let's meet tomorrow morning at five o'clock. I'd like you to meet me at the Rolling Hills Cemetery. I know you have questions about why we will be meeting there, but the answers will soon be apparent.”

Julian gave me one of his trademark bear hugs and then walked slowly down the steps of the courthouse. I watched him say hello to a panhandler and then enter the park. Tears filled my eyes as I watched him. There would be a big hole in my life without Julian.

I glanced down at the paper in my hands. I read “Rules for Winning Trials”; there were seven of them and I knew they would be helpful in getting me through hard times. They read as follows:

Rule #1: Remember that life is a series of seasons. Every human being will have to endure the harshness of a few winters in order to get to the glory of the best summers. Never forget that winters do not last.

Rule #2: Join the Hope Club. Big, beautiful and seemingly impossible goals are superb vehicles to keep you inspired as you walk through adversity. I once quoted da Vinci’s words to you: “Fix your course to a star and you can navigate any storm.” When you are reaching for great and noble goals that speak to the best within you, your desire to reach them will pull you through the tough times that you will encounter along the seeker’s path.

Rule #3: Keep in mind, at all times, that we grow the most from our greatest suffering. As we go through it, it hurts. But as we move through it, it also heals. When a jug of water falls to the floor and cracks, what was hidden within begins to pour out. When life sends you one of its curves, remember that it has come to help crack you open so that all the love, power and potential that had been slumbering within you can be poured into the world outside you. And, like a fractured bone, *we do become stronger in the broken places.*

Rule #4: Failure is a choice. Nothing can stop a man or a woman who simply refuses to be kept down. The book I mentioned—*The Go-Getter*—will be very helpful to you on this point. Read it often. Just make a decision from the center of your heart that, *no matter what happens to you*, you will keep walking the authentic path. Doing so will ensure you a life of *real* success.

Rule #5: During tough times, there is a tendency to let go of yourself. As you encounter adversity, have the discipline to maintain your routine. Get up early. Do your holy hour. Eat very well. Exercise. Spend time with nature and make sure that you do all you can to keep all four of your central dimensions—the mind, the body, the emotions and the spirit—in fine operating order.

Rule #6: Feel your feelings. When you are facing hard times, some people will tell you to “just think positive thoughts.” Such advice is *not* helpful. While I agree that you cannot move the car forward if you are staring in the rearview mirror and that living in the past is unhealthy, one must not rush to reframe a so-called negative event as a positive one. Doing so will throw you into denial. Feel through the feelings of hurt, anger or sadness that will naturally surface. It’s okay to be with them. It’s actually healthy to do so. Processing through them allows you to release them. Just don’t get stuck in them. The key is really to strike a balance. Experience the feelings that arise so

you do not end up swallowing them and allowing them to fester. At the same time, use your intellectual powers to see the silver lining that every dark cloud brings. This is not a scientific process and ultimately you need to do what feels right for you.

Rule #7: Remember that, no matter how hard things get, *you are never alone.*

I folded the paper. Julian's wisdom was profound as well as practical, although I wasn't quite sure of what he meant at the end about never being alone. I guessed that time and experience would bring the answer. Life was, I was discovering, the finest teacher.

I sat on those courthouse steps for an hour or more. I watched people walk by and birds soaring in the sky. I felt the rays of the sun on my face and a soft breeze wash through my hair. Julian would leave me tomorrow. My coach would be gone. He'd brought so much to my life. I vowed to begin giving back.

CHAPTER 10



The Seeker Awakens

When you are inspired by some great purpose, some extraordinary project, all your thoughts break their bonds; your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world. Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive, and you discover yourself to be a greater person by far than you ever dreamed yourself to be.

—Patanjali

The sun was rising as I drove out to the Rolling Hills Cemetery. This small and little-known cemetery was situated outside the city in a place known for its open spaces and beautiful meadows. Turning off the highway, I followed a winding road that took me past a lake where I used to fish with my father when I was a little boy.

As I drove up to the cemetery, I could hear loud chanting. As I came to a stop and got out of the car, I realized that someone was playing what appeared to be a Gregorian chant CD. With the chanting and the early morning fog still floating over the rolling hills, the whole environment took on a mystical air. Julian was nowhere to be seen.

I walked along the dirt path towards the small building that rested at the top of a grassy hill. As I headed up the slope, I stared out at the field of crosses and reflected on the lives that they stood for. More than ever, I realized that even the longest life is incredibly short when measured against the benchmark of eternity. We make so much of trivial things as we advance through life, forgetting what's most important and failing to appreciate that life will pass us by unless we get into the game. Often, by the time we wake up, it's too late and our best years have slipped away.

I had spent so much of my life chasing recognition and fortune. Yet no matter how much I achieved, it was never enough. It was almost like an addiction. Nothing could take the craving away and no matter how hard I tried to fight it, I was always pulled back in. Along the way, I had lost what meant most to me. I knew that I would never make that mistake again. Sure, outward success was important. I liked the fact that Julian's philosophy for personal fulfillment allowed for making money, having nice things and being "in the world." Actually, he suggested that such pursuits were very positive. We are spiritual beings but we live in a very human world and there was no reason to apologize for enjoying the material gifts this world presents to us.

Julian's big idea was that chasing these kinds of fleeting rewards should not be the *main* aim of living. It truly was a matter of priorities and awakening my best self had to remain job number one.

As I neared the building, the chanting grew louder. I knew that Julian was somewhere close by. This was, undoubtedly, another one of his unorthodox coaching scenarios. A smile appeared on my face.

"Julian," I called out. "I know you are here. Might as well tell me where you are."

There was no reply. I spoke more loudly. "Come on, Julian. I know you're up here. Where are you?"

Then I saw a figure approaching me through the mist. It was Julian and he was wearing his robe, with the hood covering his head. Both of his hands carried a bouquet of fresh flowers. On his back was his knapsack.

"Good morning, Dar," he said seriously. "I'll be leaving for the airport later today. But I needed to meet with you. This is our last coaching session together. I must share the final stage of The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening with you. Please follow me," Julian instructed as he led me away from the building and out into the field of tombstones. The chant music continued to play.

We walked for only a minute or so before Julian stopped at a freshly dug grave. He knelt down and encircled the gravesite with the fresh flowers he had been carrying. He was completely silent and appeared to be exceptionally respectful of the sacred place we were at.

"Julian, whose grave is this?" I asked softly.

"Yours," came the reply.

I had absolutely no idea what Julian meant by that comment. As we go through our days, people say things to us or act in certain ways. Much of the suffering we experience as human beings stems from the fact that we make certain assumptions about what happens to us. For example, we walk into work and a colleague does not say hello. We assume he is angry with us. That is our false assumption. The truth could be that his child is ill and he is preoccupied with that concern. The only way to test the truth of our assumptions is to have the courage to ask questions to clarify our understanding. This is nothing more than becoming good at communicating. But most people never do it. Over the past few weeks, I had committed to discovering the truth in all situations. I realized that, in the past, I had often misperceived certain situations and had decided to speak my truth when I needed more answers.

“Julian, what are you saying? How could this be my grave? I’m not dead. I’ve never been healthier or happier. I’ve never been so alive. What are you suggesting? I’m a little confused.”

“Relax, amigo. This grave is a metaphor for the last lesson I have to share with you. This grave *could* be your grave. This grave could be *my* grave. It could be anyone’s grave. The point is simply this: *in order to awaken to your best life, it’s important that you die while you are alive.*”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Most people live as if they have all the time in the world. They wish they had more time in their days and yet they waste the time they have. They put off living until some event in the future occurs. Such people say ‘I’ll spend more time with my family once I get that big promotion’ or ‘I’ll have more fun in life once my children grow up’ or ‘I’ll chase my dreams once I make a little more money’ or ‘I’ll improve my health as soon as I get through this stressful time.’ *Life waits for no one.* One of the most important things I can teach you is to connect with your mortality on a regular basis. Remind yourself that time is your most precious commodity. Telling yourself that you will be your biggest self at some time in the future is presuming a lot. You, or I, could die today. As I told you when we met at The Q, none of us knows when our time is up. Every day should be lived as if it were the last day you had on the planet. Treat every one you meet as if you would never see them again. Take big risks as you move through your hours and seize all opportunities for personal greatness as they present themselves. I suggest that you get up nice and early every Sunday—or even every few Sundays—and come up here. Do it alone. Make it a regular ritual.”

“And what exactly should I do once I get here?”

“Connect with your death. Think about the life you know you are capable of creating and remind yourself that you dishonor yourself if you don’t live and breathe it each day. Every single moment above ground is a giant opportunity. I told you that, Dar. Every single day you wake up is a gift to be celebrated. You are destined to shine. Come here to reconnect with the delicacy of life. Just think about it: some of the people on the planet who will wake up today will be dead by the time the sun sets. Most of them will not imagine that such a thing is about to happen to them. They had all these great plans for when the time was right. *No one ever plans to die.*”

That last phrase hit me hard. I knew I was living more consciously and with a greater sense of joy and enthusiasm than I had ever experienced. But I was still holding back. I was still holding back some of my love from Sasha. I could be so much more for her. And as I reflected more deeply, I realized that

behind that resistance was fear. I feared that if I completely opened my heart to her, I could be hurt or perhaps taken advantage of. My fear had no basis in reality—Sasha was an incredible woman, in all respects. But fears often have no basis in reality; they are merely illusions we set up. And they truly are only six inches deep.

I had also been playing smaller than I should have been with my children. I knew I could become an extraordinary father and, in that moment, I made a self-promise to do so. The more I thought about it, the more I came to see that there was so much more that I could do and be. Why couldn't I be one of the greatest leaders in my industry? Why couldn't I add incredible value to hundreds if not thousands of lives? Why couldn't I get closer to the state of personal enlightenment than I had ever imagined myself getting to?

“Do you remember the exercise I asked you to do the time we met at the schoolhouse?” asked Julian.

“How could I forget?” I asked. “You asked me to write my obituary. You requested that I write out the story of my life so that I would have the wisdom and the awareness to live my life backwards. By knowing where I dreamed of being at the end, I could make the choices required in every moment of every hour of every day to get me there.”

“Perfectly said.”

“And I often read my obituary aloud during my morning holy hour. Right after I wake up, it's generally one of the first things I do. That single act alone has made a profound difference in the way I think, feel and act during my days.”

“That leads me elegantly to the seventh and final stage of the process of self-awakening. After you leave the lie that your life once was by deciding to embark upon the path of the truth at The Choicepoint ...”

“Stages One and Two of the process,” I interjected.

“Correct. Well, after you move through those first two stages you get to the third stage which is where you begin to see through a new set of eyes. You begin to discover the truth. You realize how much power has been sleeping within you. You begin to grow in awareness as to how you have been betraying and limiting yourself. You start to see how wonderful this world of ours is and how much joy is waiting for you. What comes next, amigo?” Julian asked.

“Stage Four. This is where, as the seeker advances along the path, he or she hungers for answers to the many questions that begin to surface. At this stage, the seeker looks for guides and masters to help him find his way. All

the new learning and heightened awareness that the seeker is receiving then leads to confusion.”

“Yes. The very foundations upon which the seeker has stood begin to crumble. All the beliefs and assumptions about the way the world works and how he occurs within it are being questioned and re-evaluated. Stage Five is a time of enormous upheaval and change. It’s also a time of very beautiful personal growth. The caterpillar may be experiencing the darkness of the cocoon, but guess what’s really happening?”

“A butterfly is being born,” I replied confidently.

“You got it. *It’s all good.* Next comes the inevitable trial that every seeker on the path will experience. Just before great victory, life always sends the traveler a big test. How we respond at such times in many ways defines our destinies. Choosing to be courageous and pressing forward is your best move. And this, of course brings me to the final stage, The Great Awakening of Self. You have experienced pieces of every stage during the time we have been together. Yes, I have manufactured some scenarios for you so that each part of the process would come to life. I did this to help you learn and grow in your understanding. But a lot of what you experienced came organically. As you left the lie and made the choice to wake up, you yourself turned to books and guides to help you learn and build your base of wisdom. And as you did, you yourself experienced the confusion and transformation that Stage Five presents. And because you did not give up, *real* transformation has occurred in your life. It all looks very different than it did just a while ago, doesn’t it?”

“No doubt. My life has become beautiful, Julian. I’ve never been happier. I am so grateful to you.”

“You are most welcome, Dar. And after I leave, life will bring you its own scenarios and experiences and you will go through some of the stages without my being around. Life will become your coach and best teacher—if you’ll let it.”

Julian rubbed one of his hands along the embroidery on his robe.

“Stage Seven is the final destination. To get completely to this point on the path is to become enlightened. As I’ve mentioned, few have reached this lofty place. But that will change. I want you to help me by spreading my philosophy to all those whose lives you touch. I have a strong sense that you want to give something back to me for what I’ve given you. Please know that I have no need for any worldly things. Sure I had fun driving my old Ferrari and wearing that splendid suit at the courthouse. But they are not what’s most important to me. I want to change the world, my friend. I want to have an impact on as many people as I possibly can. I was an unhappy lawyer,

struggling in life—spiritually speaking. My life was completely out of balance and dramatically out of control. But just look at me now,” Julian said excitedly. “What I learned up in those mountains works and I want every single person I have the opportunity to affect to discover what I uncovered up there with those enlightened sages. The only thing I ask you to do is to tell others about what I’ve shared with you. The best way to learn is to teach, so you’ll be doing yourself a favor in the process.”

Julian walked over to me and put both his hands on my shoulders. He looked up into the blue sky a final time. He closed his eyes.

“Dar, you have been an excellent student. I couldn’t be happier for you, in terms of the way things look in your life today. You are headed to magnificent places and you cannot imagine the wonders that are awaiting you. I have enjoyed our time together enormously. You have treated me with great kindness, respect and love. Please continue to keep listening to that little voice that’s growing within you. It’s the call of your heart and, if you keep trusting it, it will lead you to where you need to go. Keep letting the talents you’ve been given see the light of day. Continue to create value for everyone in your life. And keep walking this path, no matter what things may come up. In so doing, your life will be a great one and your legacy will be large.”

Julian opened his eyes. A single tear ran down his cheek and onto his robe. He looked down at the spot it made and laughed.

“Every ending is a new beginning. You taught me that a while ago—don’t forget it, coach,” I said playfully.

“Well said, amigo. It’s just that it’s hard for me to leave the people I’ve grown to love. You, and the rest of the people I’ve coached since I returned from India, are my heroes. The bravery you all show humbles me. I wish I could remain here and guide you along the path. But that’s not what you need. And that’s not what I’m destined to do. Before I leave, I want to do something, if I may?” asked Julian.

“Of course, Julian, anything you want to do is fine with me.”

Julian took off his knapsack and opened it up. He pulled out a worn, leather-bound journal and opened it up to a particular page. Standing at the edge of the grave, and speaking in a strong, loud voice, Julian said: “I want to do something I’ve never done. I want to read my obituary aloud.” He then paused before he spoke the following words:

The Obituary of Julian Mantle

Julian Mantle was a man who believed in the power of the human spirit to be a force for good on the planet. He was an idealist and a person who truly

believed that every person alive could make a genuine difference if they chose to accept the call on their lives to do so.

Julian was a simple man. He loved great books, sunsets, star-filled nights and a thick piece of chocolate cake every once in a while. Most of all, Julian loved people and spent his life helping them discover who they truly are.

He made a lot of mistakes in his time. But he learned from them. He encountered much personal pain, but he grew from it.

Julian never ran from his fears. Instead, he ran to them, and in so doing, he reclaimed his freedom. He was authentic, courageous and loving.

Julian died last night, at the tender age of 108. He touched many lives and his presence will be missed.

On hearing Julian's words, I began to cry. When I looked up, I saw that he was gone. I looked across the field but Julian was nowhere to be seen. The chanting could still be heard from the small building on the hill, and the sun was shining brightly. There was not a single cloud in the sky.

As I made my way past the tombstones, something sparkled amidst the grass. I bent down and was stunned by what I saw. It was a small golden Buddha that had been attached to a long, thin piece of leather so that it could be worn around the neck. On the back of the carefully crafted object were the following simple words, written in a tiny script:

*Awaken Best Self and Keep Shining.
With love, JM*

I put Julian's gift around my neck and walked towards my car. I couldn't stop smiling. My life had become beautiful.



The 7 Stages of Self-Awakening

STAGE 1: Living a Lie (The Stage of Self-Betrayal)

STAGE 2: The Choicepoint (The Stage of Releasing Control and Breaking Your Chains)

STAGE 3: Awareness of Wonder and Possibility (The Stage of Seeing with New Eyes)

STAGE 4: Instruction from Masters (The Stage of Learning, Failing and Preparation)

STAGE 5: Transformation and Rebirth (The Stage of Emptying and Refilling)

STAGE 6: The Trial (The Stage of Testing and Confirmation)

STAGE 7: The Great Awakening of Self (The Stage of Fearlessness)



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4. Display a standard of excellence at work far higher than anyone would ever expect from you. Abundance and fulfillment will flow back to you.
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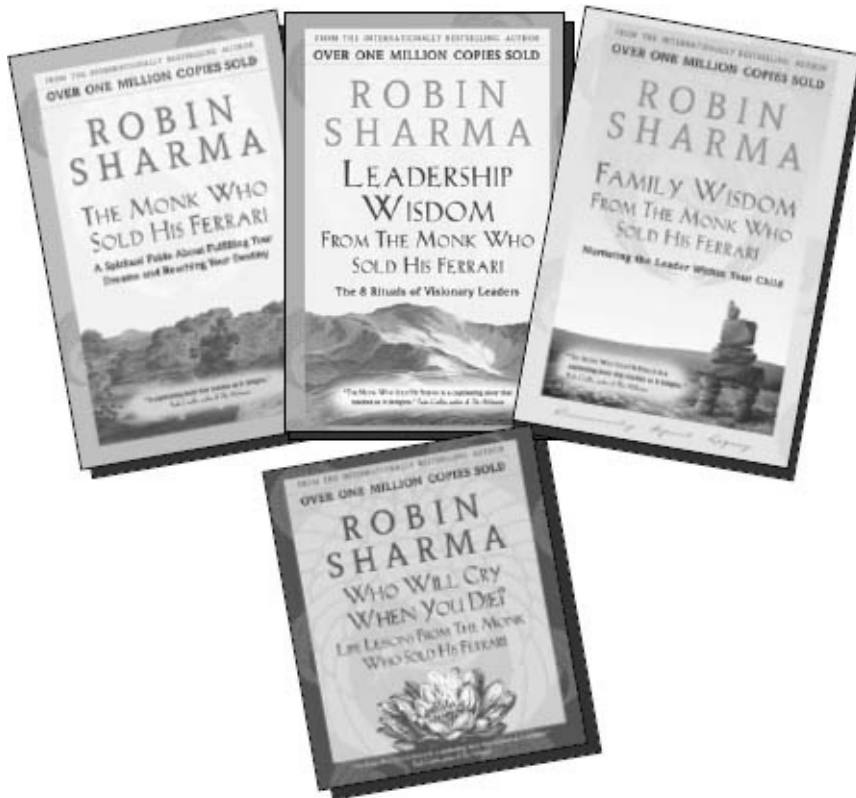
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ABOUT ROBIN SHARMA

Robin Sharma is one of the world's premier experts on leadership, elite performance and self-discovery. He is the author of numerous bestsellers, including the #1 international bestseller *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, its popular sequels *Leadership Wisdom from The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* and *Family Wisdom from The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, *Who Will Cry When You Die?* and *The Saint, The Surfer & The CEO*, a #1 bestseller at amazon.com. A frequent guest of the national media, Robin has starred in his own PBS special and appeared on over 1,000 television and radio shows. He is also in high demand across the globe as a keynote speaker and frequently shares the stage with such individuals as Jack Welch, Bill Clinton, Christopher Reeve, Dr. Phil, Deepak Chopra and Wayne Dyer.

A former lawyer who holds two law degrees, one of them a masters, Robin is the visionary CEO of Sharma Leadership International (SLI), a widely respected learning services firm that helps employees and entrepreneurs realize their highest professional and personal potential. SLI also runs the highly acclaimed *Elite Performers Series*[™], a strikingly effective 2-day coaching process that helps individuals show excellence in all they do, and *The Monthly Coach*[™] program, Robin's Book and CD of the Month club. As well, Robin is a top executive/life coach to CEOs, entrepreneurs and some of the planet's most successful people.

Robin's personal mission is to help people rediscover who they truly are and live in a way that creates value for others. Through *The Robin Sharma Foundation for Children*, he helps underprivileged children stand up for their dreams.

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*Go as far as you can see. When you get there,
you'll be able to see farther.*

—Thomas Carlyle

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PROLOGUE

MY WORDLESS GUIDE was moving quickly ahead of me, as if he too disliked being down here. The tunnel was damp, and dimly lit. The bones of six million Parisians were entombed in this place...

Suddenly the young man stopped at the entranceway of a new tunnel. It was separated from the one we had followed by a piece of rusted iron fencing. The tunnel was dark. My guide moved the fence to one side and turned into the blackness. He paused and looked behind at me, making sure I was following. I moved uncertainly out of the anemic light as his back disappeared in front of me. I took a few more steps. Then my foot knocked against something. A wooden rattle filled the air, and I froze. As I did, light flared around me. My guide had snapped on his flashlight.

Suddenly I wished he hadn't. The gruesome orderliness was gone. Bones were everywhere—scattered across the floor around our feet, cascading from loose stacks against the walls. The glare from the flashlight caught on waves of dust and tendrils of cobwebs that hung from the ceiling.

“Ça c'est pour vous,” said my guide. He thrust the flashlight at me. As I took it, he brushed past me.

“What—” I began to call out.

Before I could finish my question, the man snapped, “Il vous rencontrera ici.” And then he was gone, leaving me alone, fifty feet underground, a solitary human being standing in a sea of the dead.



CHAPTER ONE

IT WAS ONE OF THOSE DAYS you find yourself wishing was over before you've got even ten minutes into it. It started when my eyes opened and I noticed an alarming amount of sunlight seeping in under the bedroom blinds. You know, an eight-a.m. amount of light—not a seven-a.m. amount of light. My alarm had not gone off. *That* realization was followed by twenty minutes of panicked cursing and shouting and crying (my six-year-old son did the crying) as I careened around the house, from bathroom to kitchen to front door, trying to gather all the ridiculous bits of stuff Adam and I needed for the rest of our day. As I pulled up in front of his school forty-five minutes later, Adam shot me a reproachful look.

“Mom says if you keep dropping me off late at school on Mondays, I won't be able to stay over Sunday nights anymore.”

Oh, boy.

“Last time,” I said. “Last time, I promise.”

Adam was sliding out of the car now, a doubtful expression on his face.

“Here,” I said, holding up a bulging plastic bag. “Don't forget your lunch.”

“Keep it,” Adam said, not looking at me. “I'm not allowed to bring peanut butter to school.”

And then he turned on his heel and raced through the deserted school playground. *Poor kid*, I thought as I watched his little legs pumping toward the front door. Nothing worse than heading into school late, everyone already in class, the national anthem blaring through the hallways. *That* and no lunch to boot.

I threw the plastic bag onto the passenger seat and sighed. Another

“custodial” weekend had come to an inglorious end. I had, apparently, failed spectacularly as a husband. Now it appeared that I would fail with equal flamboyance as a separated dad. From the moment I picked Adam up, I seemed to provide an unending series of disappointments. Despite the fact that all week I felt Adam’s absence like a missing limb, I invariably arrived late on Fridays. The promised treat of pizza and a movie was dampened by the tuna sandwich that Annisha made Adam eat as his dinner hour came and went. And then there was my phone, which chirped incessantly, like it had a bad case of hiccups. It beeped during the movie, and when I was tucking Adam into bed. It beeped during our breakfast of slightly burned pancakes, and while we walked to the park. It beeped as we picked up takeout burgers, and all through story time. Of course the beeping wasn’t the real problem. The real problem was that I kept picking the thing up. I checked my messages; I sent responses; I talked on the phone. And with each interruption, Adam became a little quieter, a little more distant. It broke my heart, yet the thought of ignoring the thing, or turning it off, made my palms sweat.

As I raced to work, I brooded about the botched weekend. When Annisha had announced that she wanted a trial separation, it felt like someone had backed over me with a truck. She had been complaining for years that I never spent time with her or Adam; that I was too caught up with work, too busy with my own life to be part of theirs.

“But how,” I argued, “does leaving me fix any of that? If you want to see more of me, why are you making sure that you see *less*?”

She had, after all, said she still loved me. Said she wanted me to have a good relationship with my son.

But by the time I had moved into my own apartment, I was bruised and bitter. I had promised to try to spend more time at home. I had even begged off a company golf tournament and a client dinner. But Annisha said that I was only tinkering—I wasn’t committed to fixing what was wrong. Every time I thought of those words, I clenched my teeth. Couldn’t Annisha see how demanding my work was? Couldn’t she see how important it was for me to keep moving ahead? If I hadn’t been putting in the kind of hours I was, we wouldn’t have our great house, or the cars, or the awesome big-screen TVs. Well, okay, I admit it—Annisha didn’t give a damn about the TVs. But, still.

I made a promise to myself then—*I will be a great “separated dad.”* I’ll

lavish attention on Adam; I'll go to all the school events; I'll be available to drive him to swimming or karate; I'll read him books. When he phones at night, I'll have all the time in the world to talk with him. I'll listen to his problems, give advice and share jokes. I'll help him with homework, and I'll even learn to play those annoying video games he likes. I'll have a wonderful relationship with my son, even if I can't have one with my wife. And I'll show Annisha that I'm not just "tinkering."

The first few weeks apart, I think I did pretty well. In some ways, it wasn't so hard. But I was shocked by how much I missed both of them. I would wake up in my apartment and listen for the tiny voice I knew wasn't there. I would pace around at night thinking, *This is the time when I might be reading a bedtime story. This is when I might give Adam his good-night hug. And This is the moment I would be crawling into bed with Annisha, the moment I would be holding her in my arms.* The weekends couldn't come soon enough for me.

But as the months ticked on, those thoughts began to fade. Or, more truly, they were crowded out by everything else. I would bring work home each evening or stay at work late. When Adam called, I'd be tapping away on my computer and hearing only every other sentence. Whole weeks would go by without me thinking once about what he might be doing during the days. When the school break came, I realized that I hadn't booked any time off to spend with him. Then I scheduled a client dinner on the night of Adam's spring school concert. I also forgot to take him for his six-month dental cleaning, even though Annisha had reminded me just the week before. And I started to show up late on Fridays. This weekend was just another installment of "quality" time that was anything but.

I gave Danny, the security guard, a little wave as I pulled into the office parking lot. After my crazy rush to be here, I suddenly wished I wasn't. I pulled into my space, but I didn't turn off the engine right away.

In my defense, my obsession with work was completely natural. It was a highly stressful time at the company. Rumors had been flying for months that we were about to be sold. I had spent the last twelve weeks doing nothing but churning out reports: sales reports, inventory reports, staffing reports, profit-and-loss statements. When I closed my eyes at night, all I could see were the crowded grid lines of a spreadsheet. That was what awaited me inside the

building, but I couldn't put it off any longer. I turned the engine off, grabbed my laptop case and headed in.

I said hello to Devin, our receptionist. His head was bent studiously over his computer screen, but I knew he was playing solitaire. As I veered right, I could see Devin smirking, but maybe I was just imagining that. The shortest route to my office is to the left, but I no longer went that way. Devin obviously thought that was because Tessa's desk was to the right. But that was only an added bonus. If I went to the right, I didn't have to go past Juan's office. *Juan*. Damn. I don't know why I should be bothered so much after all this time. It was only an unused office now. The blinds were up, the desk was clear, the chair was vacant. There were no pictures of Juan's wife and children on the filing cabinet, no coffee mugs on the credenza, no plaques on the wall. But it was as if the shadow of all those things hovered over the empty spaces.

I slowed my pace as I approached Tessa's cubicle. Tessa and I had worked together for years. We had always got along well—we shared the same sense of humor. I wasn't sure what was going to happen with Annisha, but I had to admit that I'd found myself thinking a lot about Tessa since the split.

I caught a glimpse of her dark hair, but she was on the phone. So I kept going.

Almost as soon as I was through my office door, I found myself turning around. I wondered if I should check out the new prototype before I started on more pressing work. I knew the design team would let me know about any developments, but the thought of distracting myself with a few minutes in the lab was tempting.

The design lab was where I'd started out. One of my first jobs was in the development sector of this place—an auto parts manufacturer. It was my dream job. Juan, the technical director, took me under his wing. Juan was my mentor.

But the thing is, even if you love your job, you can't stay put. That's a career killer. But no one had to *tell* me that. I was like a dog wagging my tail so hard that I'd put my back out. The people above noticed. When the next rung of the corporate ladder was offered to me, Juan took me into his office.

"You know," he said, "if you take this position, you'll be out of research and design for good. You'll be selling and managing. Is that what you want?"

“I want to move ahead, Juan,” I said, laughing. “And I’m sure not going to wait for you to retire to do that!”

Juan gave me only a weak smile, but he didn’t say anything else.

After that first step, I moved up through the ranks pretty quickly. Now I was overseeing all our projects and product production for our biggest client.

I picked up my coffee mug, about to head down the hall to the lab. But then I stopped. There was no need for me to be there. I put my coffee cup down and dropped into my chair. I snapped on my computer, opened a file and turned my eyes to the maze of numbers that filled my screen.

A few hours later, I had just finished yet another profit-and-loss statement and was about to return to my overflowing inbox, when the phone rang. It took me a few seconds to recognize my mother’s voice. She sounded upset. *Good lord*, I thought. *Now what?* My mother had been inordinately interested in my life in recent months. It was beginning to annoy me.

“Sorry to have bothered you at work, Jonathan, but this is important,” she said. “I’ve just been talking with Cousin Julian, and he needs to see you right away. It’s urgent.”

Me? I thought. *Why on earth would Cousin Julian need to see me?*

To be frank, I didn’t really know Cousin Julian. He wasn’t my cousin, but my mother’s. She had been close with Julian and his sister Catherine when they were all small, but I grew up on the other side of the country. Far-flung relatives were as interesting to me as last week’s newspaper.

The only time I ever met Julian, I was about ten. We were visiting Cousin Catherine, and she arranged a dinner at her house. I don’t recall whether Julian’s wife was with him, or whether he was already divorced. To tell you the truth, I don’t remember anything at all about the visit, except for one thing: Julian’s bright red Ferrari. I had heard Catherine mention it, so I was waiting on the front steps when he peeled up the driveway. The car was even more fabulous than I had pictured. Julian saw my face (my chin must have been scraping the top of my shoes), and he invited me for a ride. I had never been in a car that moved so fast. It felt as if, at any moment, the wheels might leave the pavement, and we would be airborne. I don’t think I said a word the whole ride. When we arrived back at the house, Julian got out of the car, but I didn’t move.

“You want to hang around in the car for a while?” he asked.

I nodded. He turned to leave but before he could go, I stopped him.

“Cousin Julian?”

“Yes,” he said.

“How did you get this car?” I asked. “I mean ... does it cost a lot of money?”

“It sure does,” he said. “So if you want one of these yourself, Jonathan, you’re going to have to work really, really hard when you grow up.”

I never forgot that.

As I remember, Julian didn’t stick around long after dinner—Mom and Cousin Catherine seemed disappointed, maybe a little annoyed. Although I was only ten, I could imagine that Julian had much more exciting places to be. He was clearly living the kind of life that I wanted when I got older. I watched with envy as Julian’s fabulous sports car tore down the street.

After years of saying nothing about the man, Mom had begun to invoke Julian’s name every time we got together. She had recently told me the Ferrari was long gone. Cousin Julian had, apparently, gone through some sort of life-changing experience. He’d quit his extremely lucrative job as a high-powered litigator, sold the Ferrari and embraced a “simple” existence. Mom said he had studied with a little-known group of monks who lived deep in the Himalayas and that he now often went around in a crimson robe. She said he was an utterly different man. I wasn’t sure why she seemed to think this was such a good thing.

And she had been trying to get the two of us together. She had suggested that I make time to visit with him when I was in his city on business. But frankly, if I didn’t have enough time for Annisha or Adam, why would I take a day off to spend with a man I hardly knew? Besides, if he’d still been a phenomenally successful lawyer with a glamorous lifestyle and a flashy sports car, I might have seen the point. But why did I need to spend time with an unemployed old man with no Ferrari? There were plenty of guys like him hanging around in my local bar.

“Mom,” I said, “what are you talking about? Why does Julian need to see me?”

Mom didn't have details. She said Julian needed to talk with me. He needed my help with something.

"That's nuts," I said. "I haven't seen Cousin Julian in years. I don't know the guy. There has to be someone else who can help."

Mom didn't say anything, but I thought I could hear her crying softly. The last couple of years since my dad died had been tough on her. "Mom," I said. "Are you okay?"

She sniffled a bit, but then started talking in a steely tone that I barely recognized.

"Jonathan, if you love me, you'll do this. You'll do whatever Julian wants you to do."

"But what..." I didn't get a chance to finish my question.

"There will be a plane ticket waiting for you when you get home tonight." She started another sentence, but her voice began to crack. "Jonathan, I need to go," she said and then hung up.

It was hard to concentrate for the rest of the afternoon. The phone call was so unlike my mother—her forcefulness and desperation unnerved me. And then there was the whole mystery of the thing. What on earth did Julian want me to do? I wondered about this life change of his. Had he gone completely off his rocker? Was I going to meet with some old coot ranting about government conspiracies? Some wild-haired fellow who shuffled down the street in his housecoat and slippers? (I knew that's not what mom meant by "crimson robes," but I couldn't get that image out of my mind.) I was so preoccupied by these thoughts that I walked right past Juan's office as I left for the day. It wasn't until I entered the lobby that I realized what I had done. It felt like a bad omen.

When I got back to my apartment, I almost forgot to check the mailbox. I struggled with the bent key for a few minutes, and then the little metal door flew open, spitting pizza flyers and insurance offers all over the floor. As I shoveled them up, my hand settled on a thick envelope. It was from my mother. I sighed, stuffed it in my pocket and headed up the stairs to my apartment.

I opened the envelope while my frozen lasagna entrée spun around in the

microwave. Inside was a short note from my mother explaining that Julian was temporarily living in Argentina, and a return airline ticket to Buenos Aires. Good lord, I thought. They want me to take a twelve-hour flight to meet up with a distant cousin for an hour or two? Over the weekend? Great. I would have to spend my entire weekend in a flying sardine tin and disappoint my son. That, or upset my mom even more than she was already disappointed.

I ate my lukewarm lasagna in front of the TV, hoping a large tumbler of Scotch would mask the crumminess of my dinner and the misery of my mood.

I put off phoning Annisha until I was sure Adam would be in bed. Annisha is a stickler for routine, so there was no guess-work there. When she answered the phone she sounded tired, but not unhappy. I braced myself for her mood to change when I told her about my possible weekend plans. But Annisha knew about it already.

“I’ve talked with your mom, Jonathan,” she said. “You need to do this. Adam will understand.”

So that was that.



CHAPTER TWO

THE TAXICAB HAD MOVED from the highway onto an extraordinarily wide boulevard. It looked like a typical city street, lined with trees on either side, a green island separating oncoming traffic, but it was at least ten lanes wide. I had never been to South America before and was surprised by how much Buenos Aires looked like a European city. An enormous obelisk, resembling the Washington Monument, split the scene in front of me, but the buildings and the streets reminded me a little of Paris.

Julian had booked me on a red-eye on Friday night. I had surprised myself by falling asleep on the flight, waking just as the plane was setting down. And now, here it was morning, but in another hemisphere from the one I had fallen asleep in.

The belle époque–style stone buildings, black cast-iron balconies and window boxes continued as we drove, but eventually we moved into an area that looked older, a bit tatty around the edges. There was graffiti on the walls, stucco chipping off the sides of buildings, dusty faded awnings. Although it was a cool fall day here, a number of windows were open, and I could see curtains flapping in the breeze. On one corner, musicians were gathered, playing for a small group of onlookers.

The cab was slowing now, pulling up to a storefront. The sign painted on the window announced tango lessons. Music drifted out of the half-open front door. I double-checked the address Julian had given me. This dance studio appeared to be it. I showed the piece of paper to the cabbie to make sure we were in the right part of town, that this wasn't some sort of mix-up. He nodded and then shrugged his shoulders. I paid and got out of the cab.

Wow, I thought, peering through the half-open door. *When Mom said that Julian had changed his life, she wasn't kidding.*

The room was long but not deep. Its walls were painted a rich red, and glass chandeliers hung from the ceiling. Men and women, holding each other closely yet with a certain formality, stepped around the room in time with the pulsing music.

As I watched, a tall, stylishly dressed man separated himself from his partner and threaded his way through the twirling dancers. When he got close to me, I could see he was smiling.

“Jonathan,” he said. “I’m so glad you made it.” He held out his hand and we shook.

It took me a minute to reconcile the man standing before me with the picture I had imagined on my way here. Julian looked far younger than he had when we met over twenty years ago. His lean, muscular frame bore no resemblance to the pasty, bloated figure who had sat behind the wheel of that Ferrari. His face was unlined and relaxed. His bright blue eyes seemed to cut right through me.

“Please excuse me,” Julian said, waving his hand around the room. “I wasn’t sure what time your flight would arrive, so I thought I would take my Saturday lesson. But now that you’re here, let’s head upstairs.”

Julian led me to a door, which I hadn’t seen from the entranceway. Opening it, he gestured for me to head up the stairs. When I got to the top, he moved past me and opened another door. “Come in, come in,” he said as he stepped into the room.

The apartment was bright and spacious, but nothing like the kind of home I imagined Julian living in. The furniture was an odd assortment of old and new. Posters of musicians and dancers doing the tango adorned the walls, and stacks of books sat on the floor. It looked a bit like the home of a college student.

“I’m sorry to have made you travel such a distance at short notice, but I’ve been staying in this gorgeous city for the past few months. A friend was looking to sublet his apartment, and since I’ve always wanted to learn to tango, I thought this was the perfect opportunity. Let me get changed, and then I’ll make us some coffee.”

Julian disappeared down a long, narrow hallway. I sank into a chair that was covered with a cotton throw with the words “Be Extraordinary”

embroidered in its center. I could hear the tango music drifting up the stairs and feel it humming under the floorboards.

As I waited for Julian, my mind began to race. *What was I doing? What did I know of this man?* I felt a powerful sense of unease move through me. Somehow I knew that as soon as Julian walked back into the room, my life would never be the same. I sensed that what lay ahead of me was going to be difficult and exhausting. *I don't have to do this*, I thought. I looked over my shoulder to the doorway, wondering how long it would take me to find another cab. Just then Julian walked back into the room.

He was now wearing a long crimson robe. The hood draped his head.

“Tea or coffee?” he asked as he moved into a small kitchen at the far end of the living room.

“Coffee, please,” I said.

I felt awkward sitting in the living room alone; I got up and followed Julian into the kitchen. As Julian prepared the coffeemaker, I looked out of the window, down to the narrow cobble-stoned street. The dance class must have broken up because couples were pouring out onto the sidewalk below. The syncopated music had been replaced with the sound of talking and laughing.

Finally I turned to Julian. “What...” I hesitated, trying not to be too indelicate. I started again, “What do you need from me? Why did you want to see me?”

“Jonathan,” said Julian, as he leaned against the counter. “Do you know my story?”

I wasn't sure what Julian was getting at. I told him that I knew he had been a litigation lawyer who had made a fortune and had lived a lavish lifestyle. I told him that I heard he'd had a change of heart and left his practice. I wasn't clear about the details.

“It's true,” said Julian. “At one point, I was more successful than I had ever dreamed I could be—as far as fame and money go. But I was destroying my life. When I wasn't consumed by work, I was smoking cigars and drinking expensive cognac, having a wild time with young models and new friends. It ruined my marriage, and my lifestyle began to take a toll on my career. I was

in a downward spiral, but I didn't know how to stop. One day, in the middle of arguing a big case, I crashed to the floor of the courtroom. A heart attack."

That rang a bell. Mom had probably told me something about this, but I obviously hadn't been paying too much attention.

Julian shook the hood from his head and then reached up to a shelf above the sink to pull down two mugs.

"I spent months recovering my health. During that time, I made a decision."

I sighed. This is where that lovely Ferrari got tossed.

"I sold my mansion, my car, all my possessions. And I headed to India, hoping to learn what I could of the wisdom of the world. You see, building my net worth had become less interesting to me than discovering my self-worth. And chasing beautiful women had given way to pursuing enduring happiness."

I stifled a sigh. It sounded as if this was the beginning of a long story. I was impatient to hear what any of it had to do with me.

"During my travels deep in the Himalayas, I had the great good fortune of coming upon an exceptional man. He was a monk, one of the Sages of Sivana. He took me high into the mountains, to the village where the sages lived, studied and worked. The sages taught me many remarkable lessons that I would love to share with you."

Julian paused and looked down toward my feet. I realized with embarrassment that I had been tapping my foot like some impatient customer in a shop line.

Julian smiled. "But I sense that now is not the time."

"Sorry," I said. "I guess I'm just a little anxious to get back home."

"Not to worry," Julian said gently. "A story should be told only when a listener is ready to hear it."

"You want to know why I asked you here today?" Julian said. I nodded.

The coffee was ready. Julian poured two mugs. "Milk? Sugar?" I shook my head. Julian handed me a mug and then headed into the living room. Once we had both settled in chairs, he continued his story.

“One of the things that the monks taught me was the power of the talismans.”

“Talismans?” I said.

“Small statues or amulets. There are nine of them. Each holds a piece of essential wisdom for happiness and a life beautifully lived. Individually, they are just symbolic tokens, but together they hold extraordinary transformative powers. They can, in effect, be lifesaving.”

“You need to save a life?” I asked. It sounded a little melodramatic. Or a little crazy.

“Yes. There is someone I know who is in desperate trouble. Others have tried to help, but with no success. This is our last resort.”

“Does this have something to do with my mother?” I asked. She had been very upset on the phone.

“It does,” said Julian. “But I am not at liberty to explain how.”

“Listen, if my mother is sick or something, I have a right to know.” I felt my chest get tight, my breathing shallow.

“Your mother is in no danger,” said Julian. “That’s all I can say.”

I was about to press him, to ask more questions, but Julian had drawn his lips together, put his coffee cup down on the table in front of me. It looked as if he was ready to end the conversation. I sighed and looked down at the floor for a minute.

“Okay,” I said, “but where do I fit in? What do you need me for?”

Julian had left his chair and moved over to the window. He looked out toward the street below, but his eyes seemed to be focused much farther in the distance.

“When I left the village,” Julian said, “the monks gave me the talismans in a leather pouch and asked me to be their new keeper.

“But after I left the Himalayas, I traveled for a while. One night a fire broke out in the small hotel I was staying in. I was out at the time, but my room was destroyed. I was carrying the talismans on me, so the only thing I lost was a pair of sandals. At another inn, I heard a fellow traveler talk of being mugged on a side street in Rome. It occurred to me that while the talismans were

being held by the monks in the village, they had been safe. I was the only visitor who had reached that remote place in a very long time. But now that I had these treasures, they were at risk. At any time, they could be stolen, lost or destroyed.”

Julian went on to explain that he had decided it would be safer if he sent each talisman to a different trusted safekeeper who would turn it over when Julian had need of it. With each object, he had sent a letter with some descriptions about what he understood the talisman to mean. Now it was clear that he needed these talismans back. He said he wanted me to go and get them.

“What?” I sputtered. “I mean, isn’t that what FedEx is for?”

Julian smiled. “I don’t think you understand the importance of these talismans. I can’t entrust them to a courier or to the mail. They are scattered all over the world, and I need someone I know to pick them up in person.”

“And you can’t go?” I asked. I knew I was being a little rude, but the image of Julian tangoing across the floor downstairs was still in my mind.

Julian chuckled. “I know that I may not appear to be terribly busy,” he said, his tone getting more serious now. “But it is really not possible for me to do this.”

I was silent for a few seconds. How could I put this?

“Cousin Julian,” I said. “No offense, but you said you need someone you know to pick these things up. You don’t *really* know me. I met you once—when I was ten.”

“I know you better than you think,” said Julian. His pleasant smile had vanished. His eyes were dark, and there was a gravity in his expression that was disconcerting.

“Listen to me, Jonathan,” he said quietly. “I can’t tell you how I know this, but I do. The *only* person who can collect those talismans is *you*.”

He paused and then added, “I know that my answers aren’t very satisfying. But trust me, Jonathan, when I say that this is a matter of life and death.”

We sat for a long while in silence. I was thinking about the sound of my mother crying on the phone. The feel of the empty space on Annisha’s side of

the bed. The look in Adam's eyes when I disappointed him. It isn't very often when you are the "only" one—the only son, the only husband, the only father.

Finally I broke the silence.

"How long will this take?" I asked.

"I've written to all the safekeepers," Julian said. "I haven't heard back from everyone. But I've got a place for you to start—a friend of mine in Istanbul. As far as time goes, well, getting all the talismans will take a few weeks. Maybe a month."

Good lord. That was all my vacation time and then some. I took a deep breath. Julian looked at me and cocked his head.

"Jonathan?" he said.

I looked back at Julian. There was such kindness in his eyes. For a moment, he reminded me of my father, and I realized how much I missed my dad. I also realized that I had made a decision. Words caught in my throat, so I only nodded.

Julian smiled. Then he stood up and ran his hands along the side of his red robe.

"And now," said Julian, "since we have concluded our business, I shall make you some lunch, and then perhaps we should check out the neighborhood. It's called San Telmo. And it's become one of my favorite places on the planet."

I SPENT A PLEASANT, if odd, afternoon with Julian. He took me to a ballroom a few streets away where seasoned tango dancers were giving a show. As the music thumped through my body like a second heartbeat, I noticed Julian's feet tapping, his legs moving slightly as if he were imagining himself doing the moves. Then we walked through the winding alleys until it was time for me to head back for another red-eye flight home. As we stood on the sidewalk outside Julian's apartment, music wafting out of the studio and filling the air around us, Julian turned to me.

"One more thing, Jonathan," he said. From a pocket in his robe, he pulled a small leather-bound notebook. "I'd like you to keep a journal while you are

away.”

“A diary?” I asked. “What for?”

“Not a diary, Jonathan. A journal. The talismans lend power to those who hold them. But those who have them give these tokens power as well. It is important for me to know your thoughts and feelings about this journey—and about what the talismans mean to you once you are in their presence.”

My shoulders slumped. I didn’t know what was worse— taking weeks out of my life to travel around the world collecting someone else’s stuff, or having to write about it. Self-reflection has never been my forte.

“I think once you are on your own, once you have these incredible talismans in your hands, recording what’s in your heart won’t be as onerous as it sounds,” said Julian.

I was about to say, *sure, whatever*, but I stopped myself. What did it matter? If I was going to do this crazy thing, I might as well do it the way Julian wanted.

Just then the cab pulled up in front of us. As I climbed in, my resolve was nicked by small points of fear. It had been a very long time since I had started something new, begun any sort of adventure. I shut the door and looked back at Julian as the taxi began to edge away from the sidewalk. Julian raised his hand to wave, and then called out to me.

“Jonathan,” he said, “be joyful. It’s not every day that you get to save a life!”

IT TOOK ALL MY NERVE to get in my car on Monday morning and head into the office. I had three weeks of vacation coming, and I would have to take them as soon as possible. But if the journey took longer than that, I could be in real trouble. All I could ask for was unpaid time off, and if the answer was no, I guess I was out of a job.

But honestly, I said to myself, as I hauled my reluctant carcass out of the car and forced myself through the front doors of the office, what did one foolish choice matter? After all, in the past, I had always made what I thought were great decisions at the time. And where had that got me? My job had

become a constant source of stress and frustration. My wonderful wife was leaving me. Whatever savings I had built up through all my hard work were going to be decimated by divorce. And even the joy I felt with Adam was being eaten away by the guilt I had, seeing him only on the weekends—and being such a lousy dad even then. Could one crazy move like this trip really cause me any more pain than all my sensible decisions had brought me?

I spent an hour swiveling in my desk chair, wallowing in disappointment and pessimism. By the time I walked into my boss's office, I had accepted my whole predicament with fatalistic resignation. I had, in fact, almost forgotten how difficult this discussion was going to be.

I was quickly reminded, however, once the first few sentences had left my mouth.

I had settled into one of the strategically low office chairs that faced David's mammoth desk. He had hardly looked up from his computer as I walked in. But as I explained that I needed to take my vacation, and perhaps even more time to deal with a family emergency overseas, he raised his head. His expression could only be described as "stunned." As I launched into an explanation about my accumulated vacation days, he held up his hand.

"Let me get this straight," David said. "You want twenty-one days off in a row, without notice?"

I couldn't help myself. "Well, technically, Saturday and Sunday are called 'the weekend,' so no, not twenty-one straight days."

"Jonathan, you know damn well that no one is allowed to take more than two weeks' vacation in a row," he shot back.

The conversation only got worse when I said that I didn't know exactly when I would return.

"Of all the people in this organization," David said, "you're the last person I would have thought would pull a stunt like this."

"I know," I said. He was right.

"You know, Jonathan, you're considered a rising star around here. And before today, if you asked me to name one person who was going to come out of this sale or merger or whatever it is looking like the golden boy, I would have said it was you. But you take off like this, at this time..."

He turned to look at the window. He was twirling a pen between his fingers, a frown stiffening his face.

I didn't need to hear this.

"Look," I said. "I talked to Nawang over the weekend. She has agreed to manage my projects during my absence. She knows what she's doing. And she can always try me on my phone in an emergency. So—can I take my vacation, or do I have to resign?"

"Take the vacation," David said tersely. "But I'll tell you one thing. If we can do without you for a month, we can probably do without you forever."

I got up from the chair and headed for the door. Before I crossed the threshold, I stopped and turned.

"David, would you have said the same thing if I'd made this request because something was going on with my wife or son?"

David continued to stare out the window. His expression was unreadable.

The walk back to my office was a long one. It was chilling to think that David might not care about helping me if my child was ill or in need. But why did I expect anything different? This place did things to people. I had seen that with Juan.

Juan. There wasn't a day I didn't think about my old boss, my old friend. As the months passed, I had found it increasingly difficult not to be distracted by his absence. I often found myself waking up in the night, unable to fall back to sleep, going over and over events in my mind, reliving my part in the whole disaster. But no matter how often I replayed it, I couldn't put it behind me. Getting away from it all was probably the best thing I could do.

THE NEXT FEW DAYS were a maelstrom. I scrambled to resolve things at work. I let loose a tsunami of messages and phone calls. I blew around town, doing banking, picking up dry cleaning, attempting drive-by visits with my son. Even packing was chaotic—how did I know what to take if I didn't even know all the places I would be heading to?

And then I was sitting on the red-eye flight. To Turkey. On my way to meet

a friend of Julian's. My phone was turned off; there was no paperwork in my overhead luggage. I had many quiet hours by myself with nothing I had to do, nothing I *could* do. I was hoping to rest, but my mind was still racing. I took out a piece of paper from my jacket pocket. Julian had sent me a brief note with the airline tickets.

“Thank you,” it said, “for taking time away from your family and your work to take this voyage. I know you had a dozen reasons not to go, but one of the best gifts we can give ourselves is to get rid of our excuses. Rudyard Kipling once wrote, ‘We have forty million reasons for failure, but not a single excuse.’ And the dangerous thing about excuses is that if we recite them enough times, we actually come to believe they are true. This task I’ve asked you to do involves a lot of travel, but I hope that you can focus on the opportunities it provides rather than the inconveniences it may pose. Life itself is a journey after all, and what matters most is not what you are getting, but who you are becoming.”

Julian had also sent a small leather pouch on a long cord. I was supposed to wear it around my neck and put the talismans in it as I collected them. For now, it was in my jacket pocket. I fingered the soft leather absentmindedly.

Everyone around me on the plane was falling asleep. There was a gentle hum of the engines; the subtle rattle of the drinks cart disappearing to the back. I closed my eyes. I thought about Annisha and Adam. Somehow I knew, being so far away, I would miss them all the more. Then I thought about the other people missing from my life. My dad's absence was a dull ache that was lodged in my chest. But it was pain with a certain gentleness, accompanied as it was by so many happy memories. Then there was Juan. Julian's words came back to me. “It's not every day you get to save a life.”

Wasn't that the truth?



CHAPTER THREE

JULIAN HAD NOT GIVEN ME a list of the places I would be going or the names of the safekeepers I would meet. “Different locations” was all he would reveal in Buenos Aires. “Europe, Asia, North America. I haven’t managed to contact everyone yet,” he had said. I would start, however, in Istanbul, where I would meet his old friend Ahmet Demir.

“Ahmet will meet you at the airport. I know he’ll want to show you a little of his wonderful city, but, I’m sorry, you won’t have much time to play tourist. You’re booked to fly to Paris the following day.”

Play tourist! That made me laugh. I just wanted to get these talisman things as quickly as possible and get back to work. Even as I stumbled off the plane at the Atatürk airport, I was snapping on my phone, checking for messages from Nawang, thinking about what might be happening in my absence at the office. There were a number from people asking me how long I would be gone. A message from my mother was chipper and evasive. I had asked her if she knew anything more about who Julian was trying to help with these talismans, but she was claiming to be unsure. I didn’t believe her—I had heard the emotion in her voice.

The messages on my phone kept me distracted as I made my way through the long passport line and the baggage claim. So when I finally stood at the arrivals exit with my suitcase in hand, it was the first time I had wondered how I might recognize this Ahmet fellow—how we were expected to find each other in the crowd.

As I scanned the gathering of family members, drivers and other eager people clustered in the arrivals lobby, I spotted a tall man holding up a sign with my name on it. He had silver hair, a short gray beard and a warm grin. I gave him a little wave and headed over.

When I got close, Ahmet dropped his sign and took my outstretched hand in his, pumping it vigorously. “*Ho,s geldiniz, ho,s geldiniz,*” he said. “A pleasure to meet a member of Julian’s family. I am honored.”

I muttered something inadequate in reply, overwhelmed by Ahmet’s enthusiasm.

“You have everything?” asked Ahmet. “Are you ready to go?” I nodded, and Ahmet picked up the sign, placed his hand gently on my elbow and guided me out of the terminal.

Ahmet led me through the crowded car park and stopped in front of a shiny silver Renault. “Here we are,” he announced, taking my bag and popping the trunk. I opened the passenger door and was just sliding across the seat when my phone started to beep. “Excuse me,” I said to Ahmet. I buckled my seat belt and started to read.

A message from Nawang said that she had received a call from one of my clients. An alarming number of complaints had come in from the man’s dealers about a new component we had designed for their most popular sedan model. I had a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. This was the kind of thing that could lead to a recall, if not some kind of financial claim against us. Nawang would need to get the quality control department started on testing to get to the bottom of the problem.

“I’m sorry,” I said to Ahmet as he pulled out of the parking lot. “I just have to send out a few messages. Work emergency.” Ahmet nodded kindly. “Do what you have to do,” he said. “We will get acquainted soon enough.”

The car hurtled along, although I saw nothing of the world we moved through. My eyes were glued to the screen of my phone. I was vaguely aware of a congested highway and speeding traffic, then of moving across a bridge over water. But by the time I really looked up, we were weaving in and out of narrow streets, the car clearly headed up a steady incline.

Ahmet seemed to notice that he had me back.

“I thought that after your long flight you may want to clean up a bit before we head out again. I am taking you to my apartment in Beyoğ lu.”

We were moving slowly now, past cafés and shops, narrow sidewalks filled with pedestrians, low-rise buildings of gray and yellow stone and brick.

Ahead I could see a tower rising at the top of the hill, a blue-gray peak pointing into the sky, with two rows of windows below. There were people moving around a walkway outside the upper set of windows.

“The Galata Tower,” said Ahmet. “Stunning views of the city from there.”

Ahmet slowed and pulled the car into a small space on the street.

“Here we are,” he said, pointing to the three-story building next to us. Out on the sidewalk, Ahmet opened the heavy wooden door of the building and ushered me in. There was a set of marble stairs in front of us.

“You don’t mind climbing, do you?” said Ahmet.

“Not at all,” I replied.

AHMET’S APARTMENT WAS beautifully furnished, the floors covered with elegantly patterned carpets, the brocade sofa adorned with brightly colored pillows, the walls tastefully appointed with framed pictures of seabirds and boats, flora and fauna. But it seemed curiously impersonal. Julian had told me that Ahmet was a ferry captain. I had imagined him living in more rustic quarters.

“As you may have guessed, I don’t spend much time here,” said Ahmet. “I bought this apartment several years ago, as an investment. Usually it is rented out to foreigners who work in the embassies or businesses in this part of the city. But my wife died a few years ago, and I recently sold our family home in Besiktas. So I use this place when I am ferrying the boat or showing people around the old city. The rest of the time, I spend in the village where I grew up, just up the Bosphorus.

“Come,” said Ahmet, walking over to the windows. “Let me show you.”

I hadn’t appreciated how high up we had climbed in the car, or where Ahmet’s building was located, but as I gazed out the living room windows, I became immediately aware of how wonderful his investment had been. Stretched in front of me was the breadth of one of the most amazing sights I have ever seen.

“There,” said Ahmet, pointing to the river below us. “That river, that is the Golden Horn. There’s the Atatürk Bridge and the Galata Bridge. My little

boat is docked in that harbor there. And to your left, that great body of water is the Bosphorus Strait. My city continues on the other side of it. But here you stand in Europe. Once on the other side of Istanbul, you stand in Asia.”

I looked across to the Asian continent, but then back to the skyline directly in front of me.

“Ah, yes,” said Ahmet. “That is something, isn’t it? The old city. Sultanahmet. The Bazaar Quarter. Seraglio Point.”

I could see in the distance two enormous complexes with domed roofs and minarets, gardens and walls.

“Hagia Sophia?” I asked. It was the only thing I really knew about Istanbul. The great domed church built by Emperor Justinian when this place was Constantinople, the seat of the Roman Empire, the adoptive home of the Christian Church. It had been converted later into a mosque, the minarets added and the interior modified, but the original mosaics remained. Still stunningly beautiful I had heard.

“The one just to the left,” said Ahmet, pointing. “The Blue Mosque behind her. And the Hippodrome, Topkapi Palace, the Cistern, museums—so much to see.” Ahmet swept his hand back and forth across the vista in front of us. “But this afternoon, I will take you to the Spice Bazaar and the Grand Bazaar before we head for the boat.”

“The boat?”

“Ah, yes,” replied Ahmet, moving away from the window. “I’m sorry. I don’t have the talisman here. It is at my village home, in Anadolu Kavađi.”

I had forgotten all about the reason for my visit.

“We could drive, but what’s the point, really?” Ahmet continued. “A boat is the best way to get there. My son has the boat out this morning for a private tour, so we will go tonight and come back tomorrow morning.” Ahmet was gesturing for me to follow him. “Now I will show you where you can clean up. Then we will have tea and lunch before we head out to the bazaar.”

THE FIRST THING that hit me when we walked into the Spice Bazaar was the fragrance. It was like walking through some sort of aromatic garden, the

scents shifting with every step we took, mingling, each overtaking the next.

Stalls followed one after another. There were mounds of dates and other dried fruits, all sorts of nuts, great pyramids of softly colored halvah. There were cylinders of nougat and torrone, and an astonishing assortment of jewel-colored Turkish delight—*lokum*, Ahmet told me it was called here.

Counters were filled with open boxes of tea. Small hills of ground spices spilled from the front, stall after stall—turmeric, cumin, cardamom, paprika, nutmeg, cinnamon.

Ahmet bought some dried apricots, dates and figs before we left and made our way to the enormous stone complex that housed the thousands of shops of the Grand Bazaar.

The Spice Bazaar had dazzled my senses, stupefying me with its exotic aromas. I had been moving about utterly absorbed by my surroundings, not thinking at all about myself or my life. But here, in the Grand Bazaar, my mind kept jumping to the people I missed. As I walked through the huge, endless arched corridors, I saw so many things that Annisha might like—mosaic lamps, delicate silk scarves, intricately patterned ceramics—and everywhere a riot of color. That was one thing that had struck me when I first met Annisha. No matter what she wore, there was always a splash of vibrant color somewhere on her—bright green earrings, a purple scarf in winter, a brilliant orange beret. Her apartment was like that, too—an eclectic assortment of things, a jumble of pattern and hues, chaotic yet surprisingly harmonious. Of course I would be traveling for the next few weeks, so I couldn't buy anything bulky. And I was overwhelmed by the choices. Eventually I picked out a *nazar* necklace for her—the glass “evil eye” bead is believed by many to ward off harm—and for Adam I bought a little embroidered vest that I thought he'd get a kick out of.

The carpet sellers most distracted me. They called out each time I passed, and each time I found myself slowly looking over the beautiful carpets.

Ahmet noticed my attention. “Ah, yes,” he said. “You must come back someday when you have more time, when you can really shop and bargain. Choosing a good carpet is not easy—you must learn about the art, the weaving and knotting, the fiber, the dyes. But you must also learn how to value them—and how to bargain for them. I would love to instruct you in this.”

Ahmet's eagerness to teach me reminded me of my parents. They were a dynamic duo who encouraged lifelong learning. Mom was a voracious reader, and when my sister and I were in elementary school, she took a job at a small bookstore. She came home with so many books that I'm sure the store kept her employed so they wouldn't lose their best customer. She bought fiction for herself, nonfiction for my dad, and picture books and early readers for Kira and me.

Dad was delighted with this development, and he devoured the reading material with glee. But Dad's enthusiasm didn't stop there. Nothing gave Nick Landry more pleasure than *sharing* his knowledge. He was, in fact, an elementary school teacher, but teaching was more than his job—it was his passion. Between the two of them, my parents created a classroom atmosphere wherever we went—much to the consternation of their children.

Every year, we took one family trip during the summer holidays. It was never anywhere exotic, but Mom and Dad always did their research before we got there. Hiking through the woods, Mom would pull a field guide from her knapsack and tell us how Jack pines actually needed the intense heat of forest fire to open their cones so they could seed themselves. Then Dad would explain how a beaver constructed its dam, or how the hills we climbed were once the shores of ancient lakes. At any historical site, Mom and Dad knew more about the place than the guides. Even a theme park could be a lesson in centrifugal force or pop culture references.

Mom and Dad seemed almost addicted to information and ideas, and our travels were always punctuated with exclamations. "Isn't that something!" Mom would say anytime we made a discovery. And Dad loved it when my sister and I showed curiosity. "Great question!" he would blurt out with joy and pride when we asked anything at all. You would have thought we had just discovered a cure for cancer.

These days I remember that enthusiasm with fondness, but as a child I often wearied of it. And when I hit my teens, our little excursions, the constant instruction, the endless trivia were like nails on a blackboard. Slumped in the backseat of a hot car on a summer afternoon, while Dad gave us a heartfelt account of the Erie Canal, Kira and I would roll our eyes, raise our index fingers to our temples and fire imaginary guns.

This place, this city, I thought sadly, would have fascinated my parents.

This was the kind of trip they always dreamed about, the kind of place they hoped to visit. That was their big plan for their retirement: travel. In fact, when Dad left work, his colleagues presented him with a set of luggage. In the months following their retirement, travel books sprouted up around the house like mushrooms on a wet lawn. Stacks piled up beside his favorite living room chair, volumes spilling out from under his bedside table, brochures and maps peeking out of the magazine rack in the bathroom—Ireland, Tuscany, Thailand, New Zealand. Dad printed off itineraries and posted them above his computer desk. He and Mom were planning to be on the road for almost half a year.

Then one day, several months before their planned departure, Mom heard a crash from the garage. Dad was putting away the patio furniture for the winter when an aortic embolism struck. He was dead before he even touched the floor.

For months after the funeral, Mom moved as if under water. Slowly the itineraries disappeared from the bulletin board, the travel books were moved to a shelf in the basement, and Mom went back to her part-time job at the bookstore. Kira thought Mom might return to thoughts of travel someday, but right now, she still couldn't bear to think about it without Dad.

One last shout from a carpet seller interrupted my thoughts about my parents. Ahmet began heading out of the bazaar into the late afternoon sunshine.

"Time for dinner," Ahmet said as ushered me around the side of the building. We turned down one alley, then another, winding our way through the narrow streets of the old city. Eventually Ahmet stopped in front of a bright red awning that stretched out from a low stone building.

"Here we are," he said. I followed him into the shade. The café was dim and cool, but brimming with color. Red and gold rugs hung from the stone wall, and underneath them were low benches lined with huge blue and orange pillows. Small, squat tables, covered in bright red-striped cloth, sat in front of the benches. A little brass lamp adorned each table.

Over a dinner of peppers stuffed with rice and pine nuts, lamb with pureed eggplant, and sesame-seed bread, Ahmet and I talked about our work and our lives. More than once, however, friendly silences fell over the table. The quiet might be punctuated by "Try this," from Ahmet, or "That was good," from

me, but there were long stretches when we let the distant sound of voices from the street take over. I felt far away from everything I had ever known.

The sun was just beginning to lower in the sky when we arrived at the dock. The tang of salt water spiced the air. The harbor was crammed with boats large and small, huge commercial ferries dominating the space. Ahmet, I learned, was not just a ferry captain. He had actually owned one of these big ferry companies, but sold it a number of years ago. He was now semiretired. He had kept only one boat from the fleet—a vessel that originally was a fishing boat and had served as the first ferry in the early days of his business. “I could not bear to part with it,” he told me. “I take it out now and then for private trips up the Bosphorus. I had already booked one for today when Julian called. So my son took it out for me.”

We walked past the docks where the large public ferries waited, and past the large tourist boats. Alongside one of the docks was a long, shallow craft with ornate bow and stern decorations, an elaborate canopy and gunwales shining with gold gilt. “A replica of an imperial caique,” said Ahmet. “For tourists.”

Eventually we arrived at an area where the slips held smaller vessels. Ahmet walked up to a modest white boat with blue trim. “Here it is,” he said, laughing. “My pride and joy.” It was a sturdy-looking tug-like boat. Near the prow was a small open-topped wheel house, and behind a small wood-and-glass partition were the control panel and wheel. A worn leather stool was placed behind the wheel. Wooden benches lined the stern, and a few seats ran behind the wheel house. The white and blue paint of the sides and floor was cracked, but clean. Old, but well cared for.

“It seems we have missed Yusuf. Oh well. Perhaps on your next visit I will be able to introduce you to my family,” said Ahmet as he untied the boat from the dock.

It did not take long for us to get out of the harbor into the open strait. We were moving slowly, but at this time of night it seemed as if everything was operating at such a leisurely speed. A large ferry with its lights twinkling churned toward the Asian shore, and smaller boats were off in the distance. The water felt unnaturally quiet. In the twilight I could see Istanbul stretching out from both shores—an elaborate quilt of mosques, palaces and other

elegant buildings, interspersed with redtiled roofs, apartment houses, palm trees, shops and cafés. We

slipped under the Bosphorus Bridge and headed north. I could make out elaborate wooden houses, what Ahmet told me were *yalis*—summer homes of the rich—hanging over the water’s edge as if they were floating instead of anchored onshore. With every passing minute, the sky became a deeper blue, until the full moon looked like a giant pearl hanging before an inky pool. Its light bounced against the water, and Ahmet slowed the engine even further. I could feel the boat bob against the gentle rhythm of the current.

“It is special here, no?” said Ahmet. I nodded.

“It doesn’t seem quite real,” I said.

“But it’s so hard to say what is real, isn’t it?” Ahmet went on.

“I suppose.” This wasn’t the kind of thing I usually spent much time thinking about.

I walked to the stern of the boat and looked back at the disappearing city.

“Did you know,” continued Ahmet, “that a strait is not like a river? Water does not flow in one direction only.”

I turned around to look at Ahmet and shook my head.

“No,” said Ahmet. “Not like a river at all. Water is pulled in and out by ocean tides. Just as Europe is meeting Asia here, at this spot, the waters of two seas, the Marmara and the Black Sea, are coming together, mingling. And yet, even this is not exactly what it seems.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“There were marine scientists from England, Canada and Turkey studying this strait a few years ago,” Ahmet explained. “And you know what they discovered?” Ahmet had been facing ahead as he steered, but now he looked over his shoulder at me. I shrugged my shoulders and shook my head.

“At the very bottom of this strait, there runs an undersea river. Water, mud and sediment, heavier than the salt water above, flowing from the Marmara Sea into the Black Sea.”

“An underwater river?” I said. “How bizarre.”

“It makes you realize,” said Ahmet, “just how complicated things are. How things are seldom simply what they appear to be.”

I had moved around the boat and now joined Ahmet in a seat next to the wheel. We were both silent for several minutes. Then Ahmet tilted back in his seat.

“We have spent the better part of the day together,” Ahmet said thoughtfully. “But in truth we don’t know much of each other. Of my dear friend Julian’s relative, I know only this: you are an electrical engineer; you are married; you have a six-year-old son. But who are you really?”

I didn’t have an answer for that. Ahmet glanced at my blank expression and smiled.

“And it is no different with me,” he said. “I told you at dinner that I am a sixty-year-old business owner. That I am a widower with four grown sons. But do you really know me?”

“It is a place to start, I suppose,” I answered. “I mean, I could ask you more about your company or your sons.”

“But it would take us a long time to truly get to know one another, wouldn’t it?”

“Yes, I guess so.”

“That’s the way it usually is. But just imagine if we started our conversations with other things. What if I told you that for me life is on the water. Ever since I was a child, all I wanted to do was live and work on or near the water? My mother used to tell me that the only time I was really content as a baby was when she gave me a bath. Water, fishing, swimming. Boats, boats, boats. No doubt about what I wanted to do. When I am not on one of my boats, I always feel a strange sense of restlessness. Sometimes that was hard for my wife, for my sons, to deal with. But our best times were always together, on the seashore or on the boat. It’s as if that was where we could all be ourselves. I have always needed to be on the water—to think, to really understand the world and my life. It was on this same little boat that I decided that Kaniz was the woman I wanted to marry. It was here where I have made all my plans and all my biggest decisions.” Ahmet turned the wheel of the boat slightly. “I feel if told you *that*, you might really begin to understand me.”

“I guess most of what we understand about people is just the surface stuff,” I offered.

“Yes,” said Ahmet, nodding. “And that is a sad thing.” Ahmet was silent for a moment.

“But that is not the saddest thing,” he continued reflectively. “The saddest thing is that this is often all we understand about ourselves: that so often, we live our neighbor’s life, instead of our own.”

It was hard to tell how long we were actually on the Bosphorus. The phosphorescent water, the shimmering moon, the soothing hum of the engine made the journey seem like a dream, a moment out of time. But then Ahmet was turning the wheel and pointing at distant lights dotting the shore on the Asian side.

“Anadolu Kavađi,” Ahmet said pointing ahead. You cannot see it, but up there, on the hill, are the ruins of the Genoese Castle. From the fourteenth century. My little house is the other way, at the southern end of the village, along the shore.”

It didn’t take us long to dock the boat and then drive the little car that Ahmet had parked at the docks to his home in the village. The small stone house was nothing like the apartment that Ahmet kept in the city. Terra cotta tiles lined the floors, uneven plaster covered the walls, and the dark, rough timbers of the ceiling seemed to hold echoes from a distant past. Open shelves in the kitchen were lined with heavy crockery and brass cookware. Here and there were small bits of mosaic and brightly colored glass, but the woven window coverings and faded spreads on the furniture had the muted shades of time. Ahmet carried my backpack into a tiny room. He pointed to the small bed, no larger than a twin, its hand-carved frame pushed against the wall.

“The bed in which I slept with my two brothers,” Ahmet laughed. He put my knapsack at the foot of the bed, and then led me back to the living room. “Shall we sit outside for just a bit?” he asked.

We put on sweaters and moved out to the little stone patio overlooking the moonlit Bosphorus. Ahmet told me more about his favorite place, the water.

“It is said that the Black Sea used to be a freshwater lake. Thousands and thousands of years ago, there was an enormous flood, the Mediterranean

spilled into the Bosphorus Strait here and turned the Black Sea into a saltwater ocean.”

“And the undersea river—do you think it might be a remnant of that?” I asked him.

“That’s what it sounds like, doesn’t it?” said Ahmet. “You know, some people think that the flood was the one that the Bible talks about—Noah’s flood.”

“No kidding,” I said.

“And the Bosphorus figures in Greek mythology as well. Are you familiar with Jason—of the Golden Fleece?”

I shook my head.

“Well, in Greek mythology, the Bosphorus was the home of the Symplegades—floating rock cliffs that would clash together and crush boats that dared make passage here. When Jason sailed down the Bosphorus, he sent a dove to fly between the rocks. The rocks crashed together, but the dove lost only its tail feathers. Then Jason and the Argonauts followed. The stern of their ship was clipped, but the boat did not founder. After Jason’s passage, the rocks stopped moving and the Greeks finally had access to the Black Sea.”

I smiled and nodded. My mom would have loved Ahmet and his stories.

“Oh dear,” said my host. “I had almost forgotten why you were here. Julian’s talisman. Let me get that for you.” Ahmet stood up quickly and entered the house. He returned a few minutes later with a small square of folded paper and a little bundle of red silk. He handed both to me.

“Well, now that you have what you came for,” he said, “we should go to bed. Tomorrow we will get up early. Head back to Istanbul. I can take you to Ayasofya—Hagia Sophia—before we make our way to the airport. But you will have to promise me to return someday so I can show you the rest of my home.”

I agreed happily and reluctantly rose from my chair.

WHEN I GOT BACK into the room, I placed the small bundle on a little round

table next to the bed. I sat on the edge of the bed for a minute before I picked up the parcel again. Slowly I unfolded the soft square of silk. There in the middle was a small brass coin. Well, not a coin exactly. It was a disk, about the size of a nickel. On one side was stamped a sun, its rays radiating from a raised circle. On the other side, a crescent moon. I put the coin on the table and picked up the piece of folded parchment. I opened it and placed it on my knees. I read:

The Power of Authenticity

The most important gift we can give ourselves is the commitment to living our authentic life. To be true to ourselves, however, is not an easy task. We must break free of the seductions of society and live life on our own terms, under our own values and aligned with our original dreams. We must tap our hidden selves; explore the deep-seated, unseen hopes, desires, strengths and weaknesses that make us who we are. We have to understand where we have been and know where we are going. Every decision we make, every step we take, must be informed by our commitment to living a life that is true and honest and authentic to ourselves and ourselves alone. And as we proceed, we are certain to experience fortune well beyond our highest imagination.

I went to my backpack, and from the bottom I dug out the journal that Julian had given me. Then I slipped the parchment between its covers and put the journal back inside. I picked up the talisman again and turned it back and forth in my hands. Then I took the little leather pouch from my pocket and slipped the disk inside before turning back the covers on the bed and crawling in.

I WOKE THE NEXT MORNING, realizing that I had not moved a muscle all night. It was the kind of deep sleep I enjoyed only on vacation. When I padded into the kitchen, the wonderful aroma of Turkish coffee, pungent and dark, filled my nostrils. Ahmet served rich yogurt and fruit with the coffee, and then hustled me out the door, back through the cobbled village streets and to the water once more.

After we climbed into the boat, Ahmet started the engine and carefully backed away from the dock. Once the boat was out in the open water, he accelerated. We were moving faster than we had the night before, but that wasn't the only thing that was utterly changed.

Despite the early hour, the sun was blazing in the sky. The villages, the green hills, the water—everything seemed bright and clear, sharp and vibrant. It was stunning, but the myth and mysteries of the previous night had evaporated. “It all looks so different,” I said to Ahmet. “Beautiful, but different.”

“Yes,” said Ahmet thoughtfully. “I often find that myself. Night hides many things, but reveals others.”

“It happens in cities, too,” I said. “Some often look magical at night but humdrum during the day.”

“And yet both versions are equally real.” Ahmet paused, and then added, “I suppose that is why it is never a good idea to make quick judgments about things. It takes a long time to really get to know places, people, even ourselves.”

The boat was humming through the water as birds circled and swung above us. Up ahead I could see two men throw a net from a small fishing boat. A young boy broke away from a group of people gathered on a dock and waved vigorously at us. I felt for a moment that I had traveled along these shores before but was only noticing them for the first time.

“Yes,” I said to my new friend Ahmet. “Yes, I am beginning to see the truth in that.”



CHAPTER FOUR

THERE HAD BEEN MOMENTS WHEN, moving around Istanbul, I felt as if I were a character in a movie. As if I were seeing the world through a camera, as if every word that came out of my mouth had been written by someone else. It was disorienting, but at the same time refreshing, as if the world was full of possibility. The night I'd floated down the Bosphorus, with the moon above, the water below—I don't think I'd felt that sense of wonder since I was a child. Julian had said that life was about "becoming." I was beginning to feel that.

But here, sitting in the Atatürk airport, *that* Istanbul was slipping quickly into the rearview mirror. I had shut off my phone previous afternoon and, until now, had forgotten to turn it on. It hummed awake, producing an inbox stuffed with semi-hysterical subject lines: "Urgent shipping request"; "QC question"; "XD95 failure"; "Monthly account reports due!"; "Where the Hell R U?" I noticed several texts from Nawang, and I read through those first. It sounded as if the first quality control tests were going well. Then I tackled the ones from David. Just requests for reports I'd already given him, information I had already shared. How much of my time did I waste resending stuff, repeating myself, churning out documents and messages no one ever bothered to read (but were nevertheless due—and submitted—on time, each month, each week)? Forty minutes clicked by before I turned to the messages from Annisha and Adam. Annisha wanted to know if I had arrived in Istanbul safely. Damn. I should have let her know as soon as I had arrived. Adam wanted to tell me about his school play. I quickly typed replies and then called the office, hoping I could catch Nawang.

BY THE TIME I was herded into my seat on the plane, I was thoroughly back in *my world*. I couldn't keep ignoring my work, my life, every time I landed in a new place. And if my inbox wasn't full the next time I turned on my phone, what would that mean? It couldn't be a good thing. I pulled a few items from my carry-on and then wrestled it into the overhead bin. I could hear the fellow behind me huffing and puffing. A baby was already wailing at the back of the plane. I gritted my teeth and sighed. As I struggled into the kindergarten-sized seats that pass as airline accommodation these days, I could feel the muscles in my neck tightening up. The leather pouch that Julian had given me for the talismans was on a long leather cord. I had put it around my neck, figuring I was less likely to lose it this way. But now I could feel the leather string digging into my skin. The pouch felt unnaturally heavy. Too heavy for the tiny amulet it contained. I clicked my seat belt in place, then took the pouch from under my shirt. I pulled out the little coin and turned it back and forth. The sun and the moon. Yin and yang. Heart and head. Heaven and Earth. Hidden and revealed. I put it in the pouch and dropped the leather bag back under my shirt.

Then I pulled the journal from my jacket pocket. Julian's note about authenticity was inside. I hadn't really thought about it since I first read it. In Istanbul, I felt as if I wasn't really living my life. Or maybe it was more like standing outside my life, looking at it as a stranger might. Now I wondered if what I saw was real. What was my "authentic" self? Who was I, really? I remembered my conversation with Ahmet on the boat. I had told him I was an electrical engineer. A husband. A father. All those things were true, but they could apply to thousands of other men. How would I describe myself if I couldn't rely on those three labels?

I pulled down the tray table and laid the notebook open on top of it. As I've said, I have never been the kind of person who spends a great deal of time on self-reflection. Mostly, I just couldn't see the point.

I took a pen from my pocket and, at the top of the first page, wrote, "Who am I?" I felt foolish.

I stared at the blank page until the flight attendant broke my trance by offering me a beverage. She served me with a bright smile and then continued down the aisle. I took a sip of coffee and was about to snap the notebook shut,

but stopped myself. This was ridiculous. I should be able to answer the question I had posed.

But even after I had finished my coffee, I was staring at a blank page. The flight was almost four hours long. I had promised myself I would write something before it was over. Maybe if I couldn't describe my "authentic" self, I could think about times in my life when I felt I really knew who I was, when I felt aware of my life, when I felt I was living just as I wanted to rather than how everyone around me suggested I live.

The first thing I wrote was "story time." It seemed like a strange moment to highlight because it wasn't a single moment or even a single time. And it was so, so long ago. During all the years of my childhood, we had a family ritual. Once dinner and baths were out of the way, my mother would take my sister and me into one of our bedrooms. The three of us would climb into bed, and Mom would begin to read. When I was tiny it was picture books. Later it was short novels, and then, eventually, long tomes, like *Kidnapped* or *Gulliver's Travels*. We kept that up longer than I would ever have admitted to any of my friends. There was something about those times as a child, however, that acted as a touchstone for me. No matter what had happened during the day, what trouble I had got into, what fights Kira and I had had, what disasters had befallen me at school—in that hour on the bed at night, my mother's soft voice reverberating in the air, the sound of Dad downstairs banging around the kitchen as he cleaned up, my sister's contented breathing filling in the spaces—everything fell into place. I knew who I was and where I belonged.

Next I wrote about a more specific memory. "Hiking with Annisha in the Rockies," I put down. That was just before we got married. Climbing the Grassi Lake trail outside of Canmore, a town in western Canada, we had crossed a small creek. Annisha was following me; I reached out to help her across. When we got to the top of the trail we gazed at the landscape surrounding us, the mountains that encircled us. Then I looked at Annisha. I remember so clearly that I was overcome with the feeling that this improbable place was exactly where I wanted to be, exactly where I *should be* at this moment.

Of course, back then I couldn't imagine the feeling that overcame me when Adam was born. That was my third point. I remember thinking, while holding him as Annisha dozed in the hospital bed, that my place in the universe was

forever defined by this small baby. I was a father. And I always would be. There was a certainty about it that was sobering and yet comforting.

And finally I wrote, “Fuel-injection design trial run.” It seemed like an oddly technical, professional event to follow Adam’s birth, but there it was. The first independent project I had completed at work. Juan had asked me to take a crack at a new fuel-injection system. “Don’t just tinker with the previous designs,” he said. “You’ve talked to me about doing things differently. So do it. Start from scratch. Rethink the whole thing.”

I worked for months on that design. But it hardly felt like that. I would sit down at my desk in the morning and barely move until it was six p.m. I would get out of my car in the evening, stand in the driveway and wonder how I got there. I was so consumed with ideas, overcome with energy. I got up in the mornings itching to get to the office.

When I eventually presented my drawings and schematics to Juan, he looked thoughtful. “Well,” he told me. “There’s really only one way we can find out if this will work. Let’s build it.”

So we did. Then we ran it. Eventually we put it into a vehicle. And we drove that car. I didn’t sleep at all the night before. Watching the car speed around the test track, I could almost hear my heart ringing, like a chiming clock.

Four things. That was enough for one day. I closed the book and shoved it into my pocket. I leaned my seat back as far as it would go, closed my eyes and tried to sleep.

AS SOON AS I got into the terminal at Charles de Gaulle Airport, my pulse started to race. The lineup at customs seemed interminable, the wait for my bag an eternity. When I burst through the glass doors in front of the cab stand, I sped to the first taxi like a kid running for an ice cream truck. I love Paris, and I was eager to start walking its streets.

But the cab ride into the city was slow. It was about six p.m., the expressway thick with traffic. Unlike my time in Istanbul, this felt oddly familiar. I was surrounded by commuters: drivers watching the road with only half-hearted attention, their minds congested with thoughts of their day—

what they had accomplished and what they would face tomorrow. That should have been me, only on the other side of the globe. Instead, here I was, a passenger, chugging through a landscape that was familiar yet foreign, the wall of gray suburban high-rises lining the highway reminding me that, in a city of millions, I knew no one.

Julian had told me that I would be staying at a hotel on the Champs Élysées. But I didn't want to get out of the cab when it pulled in front. I almost told the driver to keep going. Nothing appealed to me more at that moment than the thought of driving through the Paris streets until the sun set—the lights of the Eiffel Tower twinkling in the background everywhere we went. Julian, however, had said that I would be meeting with a man named Antoine Gaucher, but he couldn't tell me exactly when. Antoine, he said, would leave a letter for me at the desk, telling me where to meet him—and I supposed that Antoine could be waiting for me even now. After all, Julian had said, “Antoine is an interesting individual. It may be an unusual meeting.”

As the cab drove away, down the Champs Élysées, I pushed myself through the doors of the hotel. The lobby was crowded. Dozens of people in business clothes, their name tags around their necks, lined up in front of the reception desk, with more of the group gathered in clusters throughout the lobby. Near the concierge's desk, a small girl sat on top of a suitcase, sobbing. A haggard-looking woman stood over her, digging in her purse for something. The lobby was reverberating with shouts, laughter, chatter and tears.

I guess the flight, the ride from the airport and the noise had worn me down a bit because by the time I got to the reception desk, I was no longer thinking of the bright lights of Paris but rather of a café chair and a stiff drink. When the clerk handed me the key card and said “Room 1132,” I snapped.

“No, absolutely not,” I said. I wasn't even trying to speak in French. “Nothing higher than the fourth floor.” The clerk looked at me quizzically. “I can't ...” I said, then stopped. I didn't want to explain myself.

The authentic me? Well, here's a bit of authentic me. I'm claustrophobic; petrified of small, cramped spaces. And that makes elevators a challenge. Not too many people know this about me—I've made climbing the stairs seem like part of my dedication to a healthy lifestyle. Juan started referring to me as “the Stairmaster” after I'd climbed the stairs to an eighteenth-floor hospitality

suite at an automotive convention. But the truth was I'd rather appear sweaty and winded in front of my colleagues than panic-stricken.

It took a few minutes for the clerk to find me a room on the fourth floor. Before I left the counter, she slid a small envelope across the surface with my room key. It must be from Antoine, I thought, dropping it in my pocket. I sent my bags up with the bellhop and headed for the stairs.

Once in the room, I kicked off my shoes and dropped onto the bed. I lay back and pulled the envelope from my pocket. It contained a single sheet of paper with this short note: "Antoine Gaucher, archivist," it said. "Catacombes de Paris, 1, avenue du Colonel Henri Rol-Tanguy. Meet me at my place of work, *s'il vous plaît*. Wednesday, 17:30 hours, after the museum closes."

Clearly, Antoine was not a chatty fellow.

Wednesday—that was tomorrow. I would have the whole day in Paris to myself. My first reaction was delight. A day to roam around one of the most spectacular cities on the planet. Where would I go? Notre Dame? Le Marais? Montmartre? The Louvre? But another thought began to nudge those places out of my mind. *A whole day*. I pulled my phone from my pocket. I had been away for two days, and I still had eight more talismans to collect. At this rate, how long would I be gone? Three weeks seemed possible, but very ambitious—and what if something went wrong? I tried to slow my breathing, loosen my clenched jaw. There was nothing I could do about the timing. Why worry about it, I told myself. Relax. Relax. Enjoy the opportunity you've been given. I took a deep breath and headed into the bathroom to clean up.

STROLLING DOWN THE Champs Élysées as the sun began to set, I felt wistful. Paris was really a place to be with someone else. I watched couples holding hands as they walked, men and women leaning close to each other as they sat at small tables in the outdoor cafés. If Annisha were here... If Annisha were here, we would have to talk about our relationship. What went wrong, how I was frustrating her, disappointing Adam. Damn. The magic of Paris was evaporating. Change tack. What would it be like to be here with Tessa? That was better. The romance of the unknown.

I walked a distance into the park, before turning around and heading back

up the wide avenue. I could see the magnificent outline of the Arc de Triomphe in the distance. I stopped in one of the little bistros for dinner. I was ravenous. I ordered a salad and a carafe of red wine. Duck to follow, and then a selection of cheeses to end the meal. This was the way to eat.

The bistro was crowded. I tried to listen in on the conversations around me. A mother and daughter, clearly on vacation. What would they do tomorrow? Shopping or take the train to Versailles? Some businessmen talking about a presentation they would do at the end of the week. A couple talking about their neighbor's bad-tempered dog.

I lingered over the cheese tray for a long while, then paid my bill and headed back into the night. The sun had set, and the City of Lights was ... alight. I made my way up the avenue to the Arc de Triomphe and climbed the three hundred or so stairs to the roof. I wouldn't be going up the Eiffel Tower (elevators), so this was the next best way to look at the city. Once at the top, I walked around the perimeter of the observation area. The Eiffel Tower was shimmering to the west. Cars and cabs blinked their way down the streets radiating from the Place de l'étoile. Tiny figures moved down the sidewalks, in and out of storefronts and doorways. So many people, so many lives; all different, all shifting and changing. Were all these souls living "authentic" lives? And if they weren't, would they know it?

I was still uncertain about what my authentic life was, but I had a suspicion I wasn't leading it. If I were, would there be so much that I wanted to avoid thinking about? Annisha? My father? Juan? If I were, wouldn't I be feeling a lot happier more of the time? I turned to head back down the stairs. Around and around the steps, the stone walls cool and silent. With each turn I felt energy draining from me. It had been a long day. A long several days, actually. Since meeting Julian, it had all been a whirlwind. My home, my work, seemed distant now. And the coming weeks loomed ahead like gigantic question marks. Time to head for the hotel bed; time for the forgetfulness of sleep.

THE NEXT MORNING, I took the metro to the Marais district of Paris, to a little café I remembered from a previous visit. A *café au lait* and a *pain au*

chocolat. As I sat at the tiny table, I pulled out my phone. I answered a few messages and then switched to the Internet. I typed in “Catacombs of Paris.”

I had heard about the catacombs but had never seen them. Reading about them now, that seemed like a very wise decision.

Like people in other Christian countries, Parisians buried their dead in the consecrated ground of the churchyards. The problem, apparently, was that as the centuries unfolded, these cemeteries began to fill. And of course, as time marched on, the populations who lived around the cemeteries grew. By the late 1700s the earth of the graveyards was choked with the victims of plague, epidemics, starvation and war. For decades, the corpses were piled one on top of the other, and the burial grounds spat bones and decomposing flesh through the mud. The air around these fields was rank; the oozing soil was contaminating the water and the food supplies. Diseased rats invaded homes and public space, and in one particularly grisly incident, the walls in a restaurant basement crumbled under the pressure of the rotting contents of the Saints Innocents Cemetery on the other side. Cadavers and bones flooded into the restaurant’s cellar. I read that a mason inspecting the mess contracted gangrene after putting his hand on the remains of the cellar wall.

There must have been a public outcry during those years, but apparently it was that crumbling wall next to the Saints Innocents Cemetery that moved Parliament to close the cemetery and turned the mind of a police lieutenant, Alexandre Lenoir, toward a solution. Five years after the Innocents disaster, government officials acted on Lenoir’s suggestion that the bodies from that cemetery and others throughout the city be transferred to the underground medieval stone quarries. The tunnels that lay south of the city gates were chosen, and the bones from Parisian cemeteries were exhumed and transported in elaborate processions to the newly consecrated ossuary. There was no way to preserve skeletons intact, so instead, bones were sorted by type and stacked and arranged along the tunnel walls together with grave markers taken from the original cemeteries. The catacombs, I learned, held the remains of six million people.

As I read, I looked at a few pictures and was relieved that Antoine had asked me to meet him after the catacombs had been closed for the day. There was no way that I would be taking a tour. Bad enough to spend time with piles

of bones, but small, dark tunnels... I felt a little lightheaded just thinking about that.

After breakfast, I wandered through the streets. By midmorning the sun was hot, beating down through a clear spring sky. The brilliance and the pulsing warmth reminded me of the “authenticity” talisman—that little sun and moon coin. It was supposed to have some sort of restorative power. How exactly did that work? Did it help you become your truest self? And if it did, how was that healing? As I walked, I looked at the faces around me. I started playing a little game, identifying each person I passed as living their authentic life—or not. The tall young man with his nose buried deep in a Paris guidebook—not. The child clutching a small stuffed dog— authentic. The middle-aged waiter who stood in the doorway of a small bistro, pulling on a cigarette and scowling—not. The woman putting up a display of brightly colored scarves in a shop window—authentic. I kept at this for several blocks before I started to wonder what was making me come to those conclusions. It was, I thought, a certain look of contentment on the faces of the people which made me feel they were living their “real” lives versus constructing some plastic life that society had convinced them to inhabit. A look that suggested they were sure of who they were, what was important to them and what their days stood for. Who else had that look? I think my mom and dad had it. Maybe that’s just a child’s assumption, but even when they would grumble about our cramped house or our clunker of a car, they seemed undisturbed, always utterly satisfied, in fact. It drove me crazy. I thought of a few friends, and then Juan’s face popped into my mind. Not Juan of the most recent years, but the Juan I had met when I first walked through the doors of the company.

JUAN MUST HAVE BEEN in his early forties when I met him, but he had the wise expression and intellectual enthusiasm of an old scholar. During my interview with Juan, he had seemed distracted, indifferent even; so I was surprised when he called to offer me the job. I would come to recognize that, during the interview, I had simply witnessed Juan lost in thought. Apparently he was so impressed with my aptitude tests, my previous work experience and my opening remarks that he was thinking ahead to what projects he could assign to me. On my first day, however, I was greeted with a thoroughly engaged Juan.

“There he is!” he announced as I hovered in the doorway. “Come, everyone,” he said to those scattered around the lab. “Come meet the new member of our team—the young but impressive Jonathan Landry.”

There were introductions and a tour, a team lunch afterward at a local greasy spoon. Juan had me start in right away, working on a redesign. I spent the afternoon hunched over a computer screen, conscious with every second that ticked by of how much I wanted to succeed. At about five o’clock I felt a hand on my shoulder. I looked up to see Juan smiling at me. “I’d say that was a pretty busy first day, wouldn’t you?” he said. “I’ve got some paperwork to finish up, but you should head home. Good work.” It hardly felt as if I had accomplished anything, but Juan’s confidence in me was reassuring. I took a deep breath, saved my work and then shut down the computer.

The entire week proceeded like that. I would be sitting over the computer, concentrating intensely, and just as my shoulders started to cramp or a headache began to dig into my temples, Juan would appear at my side to ask how I was doing or to offer a suggestion, or even, on occasion, to suggest I take a short break. But despite all his support, I managed to blunder before my very first month was out—a careless miscalculation that had sample plans rejected. Juan’s boss had marched into the lab and flung a sheaf of papers onto one of the counters. “Whose work is this?” he demanded. Juan appeared immediately, picked up the papers and scanned them.

“Many apologies, Karl,” he replied. “I can see we made an error here. I’ll be sure to get you corrected plans by the end of the day.” Karl hovered a moment, casting a suspicious glance in my direction. “My mistake,” said Juan, moving toward the door, clearly trying to get Karl out of the lab. “But it’s a quick fix. We’ll get at it immediately.”

After Karl disappeared down the hallway, Juan came over to my workstation. “Just shows that we can’t be too careful in our work,” he said as he dropped the report down in front of me. “But you should never be afraid of making mistakes,” he added. “It’s how we learn.”

That was Juan in a nutshell. No blaming me or the fellow who had checked my work before it went out. Calm and philosophical. Unfailingly positive. Supportive of everyone who worked for him. He got the best out of us. I truly believe that.

Back then I couldn’t have guessed that, eight years later, Juan would be

gone. And before Juan disappeared completely, a harried, harassed version of the man would be all that was left. His shoulders stooped, his face pinched, his hair an astonishing shock of gray. I would no longer be working for him, but worse still, I would no longer be speaking to him.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE SEINE interrupted my thoughts of Juan. I had arrived at the Notre Dame bridge. I headed across and then wandered the streets until I reached the cathedral. I stood for a long time outside those magnificent doors, the stone walls peopled with saints and gargoyles, the glass of the rose window flashing in the sun. What breathtaking work. What a humbling accomplishment. I took out my phone and snapped a couple of photos to show Adam when I got home. Then I headed in.

I spent the rest of the day walking and hopping on and off the metro, hitting the tourist spots, exploring the streets of the Latin Quarter, eventually stopping for a late afternoon rest in a bistro called Les Deux Magots near Boulevard Saint-Germain. The sky had become overcast, but I still chose a table outside. I ordered a *citron pressé* and leaned back on my cane chair. I put my hand over the little pouch that hung under my shirt and watched the pedestrians file past. It had been a pleasant day, but now I felt my heart sag in my chest. I was on my own—and for how long, I had no idea. I wanted to be back home. Adam would come for the weekend. I would be with people all week at the office. Maybe I would get up my nerve to ask Tessa to lunch. Or dinner. That would be a good way to avoid my empty apartment for a while. The thought of her dark curls made me smile.

I could have sat there until the sun set, but my phone beeped at me, reminding me that I had to be at the catacombs soon. I paid the bill and reluctantly headed out to the metro.

After a short ride, I exited at the Denfert-Rochereau metro stop and climbed the stairs. I stumbled around the parkette at Place Denfert-Rochereau, looking for signs, and soon made my way to a stone building that I had read was part of the former Barrière d'Enfer city gate. The short dark structure attached to it appeared to be the ticket office of the catacombs. But the small door was firmly shut, and there was no one around. I knocked and waited, but no answer. I knocked again, this time drumming hard on the dark wood. I

thought I heard footsteps on the other side, and then the door slowly opened inward. A pimply young man of about eighteen was standing in front of me.

“Antoine?” I asked doubtfully.

“*Non,*” said the fellow, rolling his eyes. “*Il travaille. Suivez- moi.*” He turned and walked into the building, and I had no choice but to follow. He was walking quickly, so I had to hurry behind him.

“*Où est ...*” I began in my limited French. My guide waved his hand dismissively and repeated, “*Suivez-moi.*” After a few steps, he disappeared through a stone doorway. When I reached the threshold, I saw with horror that it opened onto a set of steep stone stairs—spiraling down. The catacombs. We were heading into the tunnels. My heart leaped in my chest, my shirt collar felt tight, air seemed to be blocked from my lungs. But despite the rising panic, my feet were pounding down the narrow stone stairs, the sound only slightly louder than my thumping heart. Down, down, down we went. My head was spinning, the constant turning around the stairs was making me feel nauseated. I had no idea how far down we were going, but by the time the stairs ended, it felt as if we were several stories underground.

My wordless guide was moving quickly ahead of me, as if he too disliked being down here. The tunnel was damp, and dimly lit. The bones of six million Parisians were entombed in this place. But I hadn’t seen any skeletons yet, and it wasn’t the dead that were haunting me. It was the tunnel, the low ceilings, the tight walls. As I hurried behind my escort, I felt my breath become increasingly shallow and rapid. Beads of perspiration were forming on my brow, although I was shivering. Waves of dizziness were washing over me, and it was an effort to put one foot ahead of the other. I didn’t know if I could go on, but the thought of losing sight of the young man kept me going. I knew I needed to distract myself.

Just then, we passed a small recess that was walled off with Plexiglas. Behind the barrier were a worn wooden chair and a small table with a candle on it. A plaque on the wall said something about the Second World War. I remembered another thing I had read about the catacombs. During the war, resistance fighters had hidden in these winding networks of tunnels. Spent years down here, in fact.

What would it have been like to have worked against the Nazi stranglehold? Did French resistance fighters live in a constant state of fear

and foreboding? Or did their commitment to their cause, to justice, to freedom, imbue them with courage? It was probably both sets of feelings, I realized. True bravery can happen only in the face of fear—if you aren't afraid, then how can your actions be brave?

But what irony. Living in these small, cramped spaces, surrounded by relics of the dead, testaments to inevitable mortality, did the fighters ever look upon the bones and think that, whatever the resistance did, everyone they were trying to save would end up here? Did it matter if they slowed human suffering and needless death? Did it make any of them doubt their struggle, wonder if it was all worth it? The bones in these tunnels belonged to people whose lives had passed by—some with great meaning and significance, others without. Did it matter, really, which way they had lived? Which way anyone lived?

My guide was continuing to snake ahead of me. I picked up my pace just in time to turn the corner and face the first stack of bones.

Despite myself, I slowed my pace. My panic had ebbed. The long, sloping walls were encased with bones—neat stacks of femurs, precise piles of tibias. Intricate, ornate patterns were spelled out in clavicles and ribs. Directly ahead of me was a column of grinning skulls. I thought of those hiding in the catacombs. Of course it mattered how people lived. The resistance fighters knew that. They must have looked at these bones and realized that the horrors underground were nothing compared to the horrors that were being committed above them, in the occupied streets of Paris, of Lodz, of Berlin, of Amsterdam. All resistance fighters, wherever they lived, must have realized that it would be better to face the terror than try to ignore it.

Suddenly the young man stopped at the entranceway of a new tunnel. It was separated from the one we had followed by a piece of rusted iron fencing. The tunnel was dark. My guide moved the fence to one side and turned into the blackness. He paused and looked behind at me, making sure I was following. I moved uncertainly out of the anemic light as his back disappeared in front of me. I took a few more steps. Then my foot knocked against something. A wooden rattle filled the air, and I froze. As I did, light flared around me. My guide had snapped on his flashlight. Suddenly I wished he hadn't. The gruesome orderliness was gone. Bones were everywhere—scattered across the floor around our feet, cascading from loose stacks against

the walls. The glare from the flashlight caught on waves of dust and tendrils of cobwebs that hung from the ceiling.

“*Ça c’est pour vous,*” said my guide. He thrust the flashlight at me. As I took it, he brushed past me.

“What—” I began to call out.

Before I could finish my question, the man snapped, “*Il vous rencontrera ici.*” And then he was gone, leaving me alone, fifty feet underground, a solitary human being standing in a sea of the dead.

There was nothing to distract me now. The air was still but the tunnel walls seemed to be squeezing in on me. The ceiling appeared to shudder—I was sure that, at any moment, it would come crashing down. *This isn’t real*, I tried to tell myself. *This is an anxiety attack*. But panic was beating through me, threatening to tear me apart. I wanted to lean against something, to hold myself up, but I was too afraid to move through the bones.

After what seemed like hours but was probably only a few seconds, I heard the sound of footsteps.

A small man appeared out of the shadows. “*C’est moi, Antoine,*” the figure announced. Just as he did, I began to sway.

“*Mon dieu!*” said Antoine. He grabbed my arm and steadied me. Then he moved to a gap between the piles of bones along the wall. He retrieved two small folding stools and brought them to the middle of the tunnel, unfolding them on the uneven ground.

“*Asseyez-vous,*” he said. “Sit, sit.”

Antoine was probably in his fifties, white curly hair surrounding a pale, wrinkled face. He wore small round glasses and something that approached a dark lab coat. Like Ahmet, he had a kind face, but there was a studious air about him.

“I apologize for making you wait here for me,” said Antoine. “I’m working this evening—restoration. Gradually, the bones settle, fall over. And there have been incidents of vandalism. It is a constant effort.”

My breathing was beginning to slow. The one good thing about my panic attacks was that they didn’t last long. It was as if my body simply couldn’t sustain the energy they required. I wiped my brow and muttered, “It’s okay.”

Antoine nodded and smiled gently. “I’m not surprised you don’t like it down here,” he said. “Most people are okay until the place empties. They don’t really want to be alone with their thoughts down here, the way I am each day. But you know, we grow fearless by doing those things we fear.” He patted his pockets and pulled out a small tin. Lifting the lid, he offered me a candy. I shook my head, and he popped one in his mouth before settling the tin back in his pocket. “As a very young boy, I lost my father,” he said. “Everything I knew about him was from the past—perhaps that’s why I became so interested in history, in archives. But the sight of him in his coffin haunted me for years. Haunted me. When this job opened up, I thought, *No, no working with bones, with the dead. That’s the last thing I want to do.* But then I realized that it was precisely because I feared the dead that I should take this job. It has been,” he laughed, waving his hands around, “liberating.”

Then he leaned forward and stared at me. “Are you feeling better?” he asked. I nodded.

“Oh,” he said then, as if remembering something. “Here.” He handed me a small parcel and a square of folded parchment, like the one Ahmet had given me in Turkey. “I have to continue working,” he said. “But I know you won’t mind leaving me now, will you?” I shook my head and attempted a smile, a little surprised at the brevity of the meeting I’d traveled so far for. We both stood up. “I think you can find your way out,” Antoine said. He moved toward the metal barrier and pointed down the dimly lit tunnel. “That way,” he said. “Just follow the tunnel and don’t go down any of the offshoots that are fenced off. I’ve asked Jean to leave the door open so you can let yourself out.”

I had pocketed the package and the parchment. “Thank you,” I said, as I moved past Antoine. “Thank you.”

As I hurried down the tunnel, I heard Antoine call out, “Courage, Jonathan! That’s the only way to live. And remember, bravery isn’t really something you feel. It’s something you show.”

I moved through the tunnels. The symmetry, the neatness, the intricate arrangement of bones was a relief compared to the raw mess of Antoine’s tunnel. If I hadn’t been so anxious to get out of the tight space, I would have lingered to admire the artistry. Instead, I took deep breaths and reminded myself that the end was just around the corner, or the next one. Eventually, I

made my way to the bottom of another stone staircase. I climbed up as quickly as I could, my legs aching slightly from yesterday's Arc de Triomphe climb. When I reached the top, I moved outside with relief. The fresh evening air was like a blessing. I took several greedy gulps before I headed down the sidewalk toward a bench.

I lowered myself onto the seat and turned my attention to the small bundle that Antoine had handed me. I peeled back several layers of yellowed tissue paper. At the center of the tissue was a tiny metal skull. The jaws of the skull were parted, making it appear to be grinning at me. Or laughing. That made me smile. I turned the miniature skull over in my hands. Antiqued bronze, perhaps. Or some sort of iron alloy. I took the leather pouch from around my neck and dropped the talisman in. Then I carefully unfolded the parchment.

Embrace Your Fears was the title. I chuckled. Of course this talisman would be about fear. I continued to read:

What holds us back in life is the invisible architecture of fear. It keeps us in our comfort zones, which are, in truth, the least safe places in which to live. Indeed, the greatest risk in life is taking no risks. But every time we do that which we fear, we take back the power that fear has stolen from us—for on the other side of our fears lives our strength. Every time we step into the discomfort of growth and progress, we become more free. The more fears we walk through, the more power we reclaim. In this way, we grow both fearless and powerful, and thus are able to live the lives of our dreams.

I pulled the notebook from my jacket pocket and tucked the parchment inside. Then I put the pouch back around my neck and headed for the metro.

It was not quite six-thirty. My whole catacomb ordeal had taken less than an hour. In the afternoon I had received a message from Julian, saying there would be a plane ticket waiting for me at the terminal the next morning. I had the whole evening before me. I decided that I would return to the hotel and clean up a bit. Then I would head for Place du Trocadéro, across the river from the Eiffel Tower. I would have dinner in a restaurant there, and then watch the lights of the tower before I headed for bed.

I got off the metro at the Charles de Gaulle Étoile station and headed down

the Champs Élysées. I was lost in thought the whole way back, thinking about my dark moments in the tunnel, my panic and my survival. When I got to the hotel lobby, I headed over to the elevator. When the doors opened, I stepped in and pressed “four.” I looked out through the doors, toward the lobby, but I didn’t move. The doors slowly slid shut. And then the elevator started to lift. This was the first time I had taken an elevator in twenty years. I was terrified. But it felt okay.



CHAPTER FIVE

I HAD TRIED TO REACH JULIAN several times while in Paris, but his phone remained unanswered. No explanation of where I might be heading, or of whom I was to meet, or about how long I would be. I clenched my teeth. I deserved some details, some information. I called him one more time, but there was no answer.

So there I was the following morning, standing like an idiot in front of the startled Air France check-in attendant, my eyes bulging and my voice suddenly hitting the heights of a soprano. “Osaka?” I squeaked. “Japan? Are you kidding me?”

I don’t know why this particular destination should have rattled me. I suppose it was the prospect of putting my already jet-lagged body on a twelve-hour flight. My head hurt just thinking about going off to yet another place I had never before been, about dropping into a country where I knew no one and spoke not one word of the language.

As I shuffled down the aisle on the plane, I realized with despair that I was in a middle seat—a middle seat in the middle aisle. On one side of me was a large man who immediately commandeered the armrest. On the other, a slight woman who quickly pulled a book out of her bag and rested it on the pull-out seat table: the international sign for “don’t talk to me.” That was fine by me. I was in no mood to chat.

I thought I too might read or watch a movie, but my mind was racing about, touching on everything that had happened over the past few days. And I couldn’t seem to get comfortable. It wasn’t just the fellow spilling over the seat next to me or the jet of cool air blasting past my right ear, courtesy of my other neighbor’s efforts to adjust the overhead fan. My clothes felt tight and itchy, my throat dry, and the leather pouch that held the talismans seemed to

be digging its cord into my neck again. With some difficulty, I got the thing out from under my shirt. I put it into my pants pocket, but I couldn't seem to position it in a way that would keep it from jutting into my hip. My carryon was now buried in the overhead compartment, and I didn't want to put the pouch in the seat pocket in front of me. I was sure I would accidentally leave it there when I got off the plane. As I was fiddling with my pockets, shifting around in my seat, the woman next to me sighed audibly. That annoyed me, but she was right. I was making a nuisance of myself. I put the cord around my neck and stuffed the pouch back under my shirt.

Six hours into the flight, I began to brood about what lay ahead. I would be arriving in Osaka in the early morning, although it would be late at night on the Paris clock. I would miss an entire night of sleep. What's more, I had six hours stretching ahead of me, six more hours in this cramped space. The only solution, I thought, would be to take a nap—hoping a few hours of sleep would both hurry the trip and make my first day in Japan bearable. Clearly other people around me had the same idea. The fellow next to me had nodded off; the woman on the other side had finished her book and was reclining her seat and closing her eyes. In fact, everyone around me seemed to have fallen silent. Everyone, that is, except two young women directly behind me.

They were speaking in English. During the course of the first few hours of the flight, I had overheard one of them saying she was heading to Osaka to teach English as a second language. The other young woman had explained, in French-accented English, that she had relatives living in Osaka. She was going to use their place as base for a three-month trek through Asia. They had been exchanging bits and pieces of information, but at the halfway mark of the trip they seemed to hit a new level of intimacy. The conversation was now imbued with an energy and enthusiasm—and a *volume*—that might have been more appropriate in a noisy nightclub than in a crowded plane. I tried to ignore their talk, but I couldn't. I pulled out my airline headphones and put them on. I flipped stations, looking for one that was playing soothing music, but nothing could quite drown out the percussion of voices behind me. I couldn't figure out how the guy next to me was snoring through the racket.

The hours stretched on and on. I heard about cheating partners and fair-weather friends. About awesome yoga classes and tasteful tattoos. About hair extensions and deep colon cleansing. By the time they hit their plans for the future, I was feeling homicidal. Eventually I reconciled myself to a string of

comedies on the movie channel, but the second-rate hijinks did nothing to lighten my mood.

When I finally stumbled off the plane half a day after I had first shuffled on, an impossibly tedious twelve hours of recycled air and leg cramps behind me, I was in a fog, beyond rational thought. Not knowing what else to do, I followed the crowd until I ended up wedged in a mass of bodies pressing toward the baggage carousels.

I was fully aware that there was no real need to squeeze in around the conveyor belt yet. Sometimes airline baggage arrives so slowly, it seems it came over on the *Queen Mary* rather than on the same plane you had been flying on.

I moved over to a wall and slid down until I was squatting. Then I pulled my phone from my pocket and turned it on.

I noticed immediately a message from Julian.

Dear Jonathan,

So sorry not to have been available when you called, and not to have given you more details. I did leave a message with the name of the next safekeeper and instructions, but it sounds as if that call somehow went missing from your hotel system. At any rate, you will be staying with a delightful young woman named Sato Ayame (Ayame is her first name) at her family's inn in Kyoto. She will meet you at the airport. Enjoy your time in Japan.

Have fun,

Julian

I sent Annisha and Adam a message, telling them I had landed in Osaka, and then placed the phone back in my pocket. As I did, a familiar voice caught my ears.

“It’s just been so great getting to know you!” The voice was coming from one of two young women standing shoulder to shoulder in front of the baggage carousel. My incessantly chatty neighbors. I felt a headache ratcheting up. There seemed to be nothing happening with the baggage, so I

stood up and escaped down the hall to find a bathroom. By the time I had returned, bags were clunking down from the chute and making their way around the conveyor belt. The dark-haired girl was leaning over the baggage, pulling a pink plaid duffel bag off the belt. I moved closer to the carousel. After watching one revolution, I could see that my bag had not yet fallen, so I turned my eye to the chute. Twenty minutes later I was still there, still willing my luggage to come cascading down toward me. But it was clear there was nothing left to disgorge. I turned my attention back to the few bags that remained on the revolving circuit. But as much as I wished it, my own was not among them.

I had a toothbrush and one pair of clean underwear in my carry-on, but all my toiletries and most of my belongings were in that absent baggage. I could feel tension squeezing my temples. My head was thumping, my chest tight. *Why me?* I thought. A million miles away from home, without my stuff. And now facing an enormous hassle.

Most of the crowd from my flight had disappeared. I looked around the area. The Kansai airport was new, bright and sleek, but like so many large airports it had a labyrinthine feel—a confusing vastness that made it seem both crowded and chillingly empty. The signs were in Japanese and English, but the English looked abbreviated. I was beginning to despair of figuring out where I should go or what I should do. And there was still customs and immigration to navigate before I could exit the area and find Ayame.

The long flight, the nattering passengers, my deep fatigue—it was as if a little switch had been thrown. In an instant, I was no longer anxious, but in a rage. My heart was pounding and my limbs felt twitchy, as if electricity were running through my veins. I noticed a man standing some distance off, in a uniform that looked like it might have been airport issue. I almost lunged at him.

In retrospect, I see how enormously lucky I was. It is not a wise idea to lose your temper in an airport these days. It was a miracle I wasn't hauled off to some interrogation room or, worse yet, arrested. But somehow or other, I was escorted through customs and immigration, was introduced to the airline employee who promised to find my luggage, and was courteously deposited in the arrivals meeting area, shaking and spent. Before all that, however, I had unloaded my mind, in English and a few halting bits of French, to everyone

who would listen. I had to wonder if a language barrier kept most of what I said a bit of a mystery to the people who had helped me. It seemed hard to imagine that simple politeness or kindness could keep anyone from telling me what I could do with myself and my missing baggage.

My temper tantrum, and all the ensuing maneuvers, had left me feeling hollow and frail. All I wanted to do was collapse in a car and be chauffeured to a comfortable bed. I looked around the arrivals area desperately. Standing several yards away, near some seats and a bank of phones, was a woman of about thirty. She had shiny neck-length hair and wore a bright green shirt and faded jeans. She wasn't holding a sign as Ahmet had been, but she was clearly looking for someone. When our eyes met, she cocked her head and walked toward me. As she got close, she smiled. "*Hajime-mashite. Jonathan Landry-sama?*" she asked. I nodded, and she bent at the waist to give me a little bow.

I thought back to when I had moved into sales, and the firm had sent me to a seminar on business etiquette in other countries. I had forgotten nearly everything, but now I realized that, in my hour in the Kansai airport, I had probably broken every rule of Japanese civility. It really was a marvel that I had been treated with such patience. Now I bowed in return, trying to make it a little deeper than Ayame's.

"Welcome to Japan," Ayame said. "It is a great honor to meet you."

"Oh thank God! You speak English," I said before I could stop myself.

Ayame bowed again and smiled.

"Yes," she said. "I teach English literature at Kyoto University, so it's something of a prerequisite."

I tried to recover myself by apologizing for my comment about her English and explaining my relief. "It's just that they've lost my luggage," I told Ayame. "I need to go back to the airline desk and give them an address where they can send it when they find it."

Ayame accompanied me to the airline counter. She asked for my permission to do the talking—an offer I gratefully accepted. My nerves were still raw. I didn't trust myself not to fly off the handle again.

Ayame talked to the attendant in Japanese. When she turned from the

counter she told me that my baggage had been located and was on a later flight to Osaka. It would be sent by courier to the inn in Kyoto as soon as it arrived. She then started walking down the long glass-walled corridor. I expected to be led to the car park, but Ayame said we would be taking the train from the airport station to Kyoto, and then a cab to her parents' *ryokan* in East Kyoto.

"A *ryokan*," she explained, "is a traditional Japanese inn. I hope you will find it comfortable. Many travelers enjoy the change from Western-style hotels."

THE TRAIN WAS CROWDED, but Ayame and I found two seats together. As we settled ourselves, she told me that the ride would take about an hour and a half. I couldn't stifle a deep sigh. Ayame looked at me with a raised eyebrow.

"I'm sorry. I'm not deliberately trying to be offensive. It's just that I'm so tired from all this travel. I don't even know what time it is—or what day of the week! And this still seems ridiculous to me. I just don't understand why you 'safekeepers,' or whatever Julian likes to call you, can't mail these things back."

"I know that Julian must have good reasons for wanting to do things this way," Ayame replied. "Perhaps what you need to do is just be a little more philosophic about the adventure. After all," she added gently, "life is a journey. ..."

"Yeah, yeah," I couldn't stop myself now, "but this isn't a journey. This is some kind of messed-up fun-house ride. I've been all over the flipping world in the last little while ... Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Paris ... and God knows where I'll be tomorrow or next week."

"Umm, yes. That's difficult," Ayame said gently. "But you know what they say? It doesn't matter where you are going, just who you are becoming."

But I was in no mood for homilies.

"What is it with you people?" I snapped. "You all sound the same. You all sound like Julian."

Ayame looked bemused rather than annoyed.

“Does that surprise you? We are all good friends of Julian. We have all learned so much from him. We have all changed our lives because of him,” she said.

“Well, my life is changing, too,” I said, “but I’m not so sure it’s going to be for the better. Everything’s going to hell at work. And my wife...”

I stopped there. I didn’t want to talk about that. I didn’t want to think about all the things that were missing from life. My wife. My son. My luggage.

After a moment of quiet, Ayame spoke up again.

“You must be worried too about Julian,” she said.

“What?” I said.

“That he has asked you to collect the talismans. That he needs them. Are you worried about why he needs them? About the person he needs to help?”

I hadn’t been thinking much about that lately. What if Julian wasn’t telling the truth about my mother? What if my mother was ill? My mother is one of those people who generally makes life look effortless. I think I was about twelve before I realized that she got sick like everyone else.

If it wasn’t Mom, maybe it was my sister, Kira. Although she was two years younger than me, I always thought of her as the responsible one. She was the one who watched over Mom when Dad died, who reminded me of Mom’s birthday or told me when Mom needed a phone call or a visit. She was the one who kept in touch with me, who did all the heavy lifting in the relationship. Would she even tell me if she was sick or in trouble? And then there were my aunts, uncles and cousins.

And even if the person who needed Julian’s help wasn’t a family member, did that mean I shouldn’t be thinking about the importance of this task I’d been sent out to do? I had been utterly self-absorbed for the past few days.

“Yes,” I said, although it wasn’t really honest, “that has been weighing on my mind, too.”

Several minutes passed before Ayame said anything.

“It’s almost eight in the morning, by the way,” she said. Then she added, “Perhaps you would like this opportunity to rest.”

The train, in pleasant contrast to the plane, was quiet. There was only the

muted hum of voices somewhere in the far distance. I closed my eyes and relaxed into the gentle vibration. Before I knew it, I was asleep.

I DON'T THINK I LOOKED once at Ayame as we traveled down the Kyoto streets in a taxi. Arriving at the Kyoto train station had been like stepping into sleek, urban Japan—what I imagine Tokyo to be like. High-vaulted ceilings, sweeping arches of glass and metal, everything gleaming and pristine, bright and spare. And the Kyoto cityscape looked like almost any other modern city—against rolling hills on the horizon, glass-paneled skyscrapers mixed with nondescript buildings and towers of various sizes. There was even one of those disk-topped towers—like the Space Needle in Seattle. But now that we were threading through the streets themselves, everything looked different. Squeezed between modern brick buildings were small wooden houses, some with curled tiled roofs, many with wooden peaks and ornate trim. A number had lush planters out front with vines and bonsai trees. I noticed several women walking down the street in kimonos.

“There is much history, much to see in Kyoto,” said Ayame. “It was once the capital of all Japan. And it escaped the bombing and destruction of the Second World War. Many, many temples here.”

“Is that so?” I said, still staring out the window.

“Maybe tomorrow, I can take you to see one.”

“Yes, that would be great, if there's time.”

“And tonight,” said Ayame, “my parents would like you to join us for dinner. A traditional *kaiseki* meal.”

I hesitated before I replied.

“I would enjoy that,” I said, “but I have to warn you in advance. I know that you do things differently from where I come from, that the etiquette is complicated.” I was having trouble saying what I meant. I was thinking about the airport scene. “I'm afraid that I may insult people.”

“Please don't worry,” Ayame replied. “I understand that, my parents understand that. But I'll explain things as we go along, if you'd like.”

I nodded. Just then, the taxi pulled over to the side of the road.

“We have to get out here,” said Ayame. “The inn is down that street.” She pointed just ahead of us to what looked like an alley. “It is a very old street. Too narrow for cars.”

We stepped out of the cab and turned down the lane. The stones that paved it were a little slick, and the air was warm and damp—as if it had just rained. The street was filled with modest shops and cramped doorways in an unbroken line. We walked for only a short distance before we got to what looked like a small wooden house sandwiched between the other buildings. Its curved roof was lined with dark brown cylindrical tiles, its windows latticed in dark wood. Low stone walls curved on either side of a carved wooden double door; leafy branches spilled over their tops.

“This is one of the oldest *ryokan* in the city,” said Ayame. “It’s been run by members of my family for many generations. But it is small. Just eleven rooms and my parents’ apartment.”

She pulled at one of the doors and ushered me in.

We entered a modest slate-tiled hallway. Several pairs of shoes were lined up along the wall. Just beyond, a low step led into a lobby area. An assortment of cream-colored slippers were lined up at one side of the step.

“Please,” said Ayame. “Place your shoes here and find a pair of slippers your size.”

We both took off our shoes, put on slippers and then stepped into the lobby. As we did, a man and a woman came around the corner. “My parents,” announced Ayame.

There was much bowing and smiling during the introductions, with Ayame translating as we attempted to say hello to one another. Eventually Ayame’s father turned to her and said something to her in a grave tone of voice.

“Oh yes,” said Ayame. “My father is reminding me that you’ve had a very long journey and a difficult morning and that you must need to rest. I will take you to your room.”

AS I STRETCHED OUT on the low futon, I couldn’t believe how much more

relaxed I felt than I had just an hour before. Ayame had shown me my room and then led me to a men's *ofuro*, or bath, down the hall.

"There will be a robe for you inside, and towels and toiletries on a small shelf beside the door," she said. "Shower first, and then soak in the tub for as long as you like. I will place a note on the door to say that the room is occupied."

The room I entered was small—a floor of tiny white tiles, wooden walls lined with three hand-held shower faucets. In front of each shower stood a small wooden stool and a bucket. In the corner farthest away from the door was a square wooden hot tub. The walls of the tub rose about a foot above the floor, but it was clear that the bottom of the bath was sunken far below ground level. The room was warm and humid and filled with a lovely lemony scent I later discovered was *hinoki*, Japanese cypress. The oil in the wood is said to be very therapeutic.

A few minutes later I lowered myself into the bath. The water reached almost to my chin. I leaned back against the wooden side and breathed deeply. Fragrant steam rose from the hot water. The heat stung my skin slightly, but I could feel it melting away the knots in my shoulders and back.

THERE WAS NO DOUBT about it—this was a strange trip. It was confusing and tiring, but it was also making me struggle in less obvious ways. These notes that accompanied the talismans—I knew they were not written for me specifically, that Julian had composed them for his own purposes. But he had suggested I read them and had given me a journal for my thoughts. He must have anticipated how the notes would affect me.

That first talisman: authenticity. Being true to yourself. That idea had really got under my skin, and I was beginning to suspect why. There was something about my life that wasn't quite right. It was more than the fact that I had disappointed Annisha and Adam. To fix this problem would take more than saying sorry to Annisha, making it home for dinner more often, attending a few more soccer practices with Adam. I was beginning to realize that my shortcomings as a parent or as a husband were being buttressed by a deep unhappiness. But it wasn't an unhappiness with Annisha or Adam. It was an unhappiness with the texture of my life. It was as if I had taken all my

ambition and drive and focused it on a race I had no real interest in winning. I was moving ahead, but I wasn't going where I wanted to go. I love engineering. I love circuitry. I love mathematical challenges. I love technical design. And I'm good at these things. When I was in the design lab, I felt my work had purpose and my life made sense. There was nothing wrong with sales, but I just didn't feel the same passion in that world.

Now, lying here in the tranquil *ryokan* room, I knew I was getting closer to what my authentic life might be. I could see that I had to make some serious changes. It was a scary thought, but I felt surprisingly peaceful about it. As if it were all in the distant future.

AYAME HAD LEFT a small pile of clothes on the end of the futon while I had been having my bath. There was a note: "I borrowed these from a friend. I hope they fit."

I got up off the bed and took off my robe. Then I pulled on the soft cotton golf shirt, a pair of loose-fitting khakis. There was also a pair of white sport socks still in their package. I put those on as well, before placing my feet back in the slippers. Then I picked up my journal and a pen from the nightstand and shuffled over to the far side of the room.

The guest room was small but airy. Tatami mats covered the floor. The white walls were set off with a dark wood framework that made them look a little like the paper screens that lined the lobby area. Near the foot of the bed was a small low table. On two sides of it were legless chairs—seat and back cushions that sat directly on the floor. Beyond were mullioned floor-to-ceiling windows, with a sliding door that led out onto a green area. I opened the door and stepped out onto a little wooden veranda. Although I could see the greenery of a garden through the window while resting on the futon, I wasn't prepared for what greeted me outside.

The veranda ran around three sides of a deep and lush garden. Clearly all the rooms were centered around this quiet courtyard. In the middle of the garden was a tall stone statue of a many-storied pagoda. Smaller statues were sprinkled throughout the greenery—several cranes, a Buddha, a rather threatening-looking toad. And at the far end of the garden, I could see a tiny waterfall cascading over a stone ledge. The burbling sound suggested that a

pool was beneath it, hidden from my view by leaves and branches. The leaves and branches, in fact, hid all parts of the ground from view. The base of each delicate tree was surrounded by bright green ferns; arching branches with tiny flowers graced the carefully sculpted bushes.

There was a wooden folding chair next to where I stood. I moved over and sat down. I dropped the journal onto my lap and stared into the green space as the minutes slipped by.

The toad sculpture appeared to have a sinister smile and reminded me of the little grinning skull I had received from Antoine. *Embrace your fears*, the accompanying note had said. Well, I had already done a number of things I feared—including leaving my family and my job behind for this scavenger hunt. I had jumped off the edge of a cliff in a way. But I had been whining and complaining about it the whole time. I suppose by “embrace your fear,” Julian meant that a person should embrace it in a positive fashion, move out of one’s safe harbor; that a person should be exhilarated by the unknown, not become hysterical. Not long ago, I had taken a ride in an elevator for the first time in twenty years. But what else should I be doing?

Well, my biggest fears—losing my family, losing Annisha, losing Adam—were not things I wanted to embrace. And I don’t think that was what Julian’s note meant. But I couldn’t help seeing the irony. The things I feared most were happening in my life despite all my caution. And they were being realized precisely because I had been passive. Maybe if I had made some of the changes Annisha suggested—turned down a promotion or two, or switched positions, or just said no once in a while, things I was too frightened to do—I wouldn’t be facing this crisis. And what if I went really deep? What did I really want to do that I was afraid of? I was beginning to see that doing things you are frightened of may just make life less scary in the long run.

Just as I was finished writing these thoughts in the journal, I heard a gentle knock coming from my room. It was Ayame, coming to tell me that she had my luggage.

“By the way,” she added, “have you checked your phone? I just noticed that Julian copied me on a note he sent to you with your itinerary for the next few days. Your most unusual trip will definitely continue. Lucky you.”

DINNER TURNED OUT TO BE a long, elaborate event. I was ushered into the Satos' private reception room, where Ayame's parents were waiting. After we greeted one another with smiles and bows, they gestured toward the table. It was low, like the one in my room, and on each of the four sides was a large white cotton cushion. I noticed a little alcove at the side of the room, backed with a beautiful scroll-like ink drawing of cranes and water reeds. Small sculptures and a simple flower arrangement were positioned in front of the drawing. I started to head toward the pillow opposite the alcove—I thought it would provide a pleasant view—but Ayame shook her head gently and led me to the side of the table that faced the other way.

“It is considered immodest to seat guests across from one's *tokonoma*. It would be like bragging—like saying, ‘Look what lovely things we have.’”

“I see,” I said. I must have sounded disappointed because Ayame added, “I would let you sit there, but it would make my parents very uncomfortable. I hope you understand.”

After we were seated, a young woman came in with a tray of hot, damp towels.

“*Oshibori*,” Ayame said. “For cleaning your hands. But do not use it like a Western napkin. You shouldn't wipe your mouth or your face with it.”

When the first course was brought out and served, Ayame and her parents said, in unison, “*Itadakimasu*.”

“It means ‘I humbly receive,’” Ayame explained. “We start that way and end the meal with *gochisosama-deshita*, which means ‘thank you for a good meal.’”

Dinner lasted long into the evening. There was soup and sushi and sashimi; tempura and steamed fish; and broiled beef and pickled vegetables. The final course was a second type of light, clear soup.

During the meal, Ayame gave me further lessons in Japanese dining etiquette. She showed me how to hold chopsticks and explained that I should never stick them into my rice so they stood up. “That reminds people of how incense is placed in sand during a funeral.” She also explained why passing morsels of food from one person's chopsticks to another's is considered to be in very bad taste: this was how the bones of the dead were handled after cremation. And there was more: never pick up anything with the thick ends of

the chopsticks if you can help it; never put your chopsticks down so they are pointing at someone; and finally, never stab food through with a chopstick. This last rule disappointed me. In the past, it was the only way I could guarantee any food would make it from the plate to my mouth.

I also found out that my habit of dunking pieces of *nigiri* sushi rice-side down in the bowl of soya sauce was considered bad manners. Ayame explained that rice would suck up too much sauce this way—it was thought to be a bit greedy—and also might let grains of rice drop into the soya sauce.

But perhaps the rule that fascinated me the most was about pouring drinks for one another. When the saki bottle was brought to the table, Ayame poured some for me, and then some for her parents. She did not fill her glass, so I assumed she was not going to drink. But then her father took the little bottle and poured some into the small ceramic glass in front of his daughter. A little later, Ayame's mother refilled everyone's cup, but not her own. This time Ayame took the bottle and gave her mother some more saki. By the third time the drinks were being replenished in this way, I looked over at Ayame and raised my eyebrows.

"Ah, so you've noticed," she said. "The Japanese consider it an important part of hospitality to keep their guests' glasses full, but it is thought to be impolite to fill your own. Instead, you must wait for others to notice that your glass is empty so they can fill it for you." I thought of Annisha and Adam and the dinners we used to share. Annisha would have become very parched if she had to wait for me to notice her empty glass.

After dinner, Ayame suggested we take a stroll through the neighborhood. The streets were dry, but a sultry humidity hung in the air.

"Thanks for explaining the dining etiquette," I said as we walked down the cobbled street. "If I had more time here, I might eventually get the knack." Julian's itinerary noted that I would be flying out the day after tomorrow, for Mexico. I had thought at first about seeing if I could book an earlier flight, but with all of Ayame's kind attention, a request like that now seemed a little rude.

"I was happy to do it. I'm quite fascinated, actually, about these little codes of behavior. As Julian may have told you, I have traveled quite extensively, and I always pay attention, in every place I go, to all the unspoken customs, the shared understanding of how things should be done."

“You are clearly more observant than I am,” I said. “The only thing I noticed in Istanbul was that Ahmet never touched anything with his left hand.”

“In many countries, one particular hand is used only for any kind of dirty work. So you would not touch food or another person with that hand.”

That was probably it, I thought.

“The interesting thing,” said Ayame, “is that the rules we have been raised with seem natural, obvious, logical even. It is not until we start seeing our behavior through the eyes of another culture that we begin to question it or to wonder.

“For example,” she continued, “I have read that the tradition of shaking hands originated as a way of showing someone that you were holding no weapons, and so intended no harm or injury to the one you greeted. So why today do I walk into a conference in New York and put out my hand? Do I really mean to show that I’m not carrying a dagger?”

That made me laugh.

“But how some customs start is really not so important. The importance of etiquette, manners, rules, is to make it easier for us to interact with one another. Our shared behaviors make us comfortable; they are ways to show respect to one another. They are all about how we make one another feel. Our daily behaviors broadcast our deepest beliefs.”

“But sometimes it gets confusing,” I said. “Take opening the door for a woman. There was a time when no gentleman would walk through a door in front of a woman. You had to hold the door open for her and pass through only after she had gone. But I’m not so sure I’m supposed to do that now.”

“Yes, that is one of the rules that are changing in the West,” said Ayame. “It was meant as a sign of respect, was it not? But then some women began to feel that this habit was patronizing, that it suggested they were weak, that they needed help with something as simple as a door. Suddenly, it is unclear whether this custom is polite or not.”

“I usually just try to hold doors open for everyone now,” I said. “So I don’t single women out.”

“That is one solution,” said Ayame. “Actually, the last time I was in Los

Angeles, I noticed that sometimes men held doors for women and sometimes women held doors for men, or other women. It seems as if many people have rethought the etiquette of door-holding.”

We had circled around the neighborhood now for a half an hour. The streets looked pretty in the dark—lights shining through rice-paper screens on the windows of some houses, golden lanterns hanging outside others, the moon glittering off the glazed tiled roofs of a few buildings.

We turned down a small lane, and I realized that we had entered the far end of Ayame’s street. I was exhausted, but not entirely sure that I would be able to sleep. Nevertheless, I was looking forward to returning to my peaceful room.

As we entered the *ryokan* lobby, Ayame said, “Let me give you Julian’s parcel tonight.” She led me through the lobby to a door at the far end. I followed her and found myself once again on the wooden veranda, overlooking the garden. A few lamps hung under the eaves, and a small spotlight shone on the bubbling fountain; a few more lights cast bright beams on the statuary. The garden looked otherworldly, magical.

“Please sit,” Ayame said, pointing to a small teak bench. “I will be back shortly.” Then she disappeared into the inn.

She returned a minute later, holding a small parcel in two hands. It was wrapped in what looked like thick handmade paper and tied with silk cord. She held it out for me, and I carefully took it from her with both hands. Then she looked at me and grinned.

“You know what this letter says, don’t you?” I asked.

“Of course,” said Ayame, laughing.

When I got back to my room, I untied the package and unfolded the thick mottled paper. Inside was a note, along with a tiny golden crane. I stood the crane up in the palm of my hand and looked at it. The long, gentle curve of its back, its tilted head, its delicate beak. I closed my hand around it and then took the leather sack from around my neck. After I dropped the crane inside, I unfolded the note and read it.

Live with Kindness

It is important to remember that just as our words are our thoughts verbalized, so our deeds are our beliefs actualized. No action, no matter how small, is insignificant—how we treat someone defines how we treat everyone, including ourselves. If we disrespect another, we disrespect ourselves. If we are mistrustful of others, we are distrustful of ourselves. If we are cruel to another, we will be cruel to ourselves. If we can't appreciate those around us, we won't appreciate ourselves. With every person we engage, in everything we do, we must be kinder than expected, more generous than anticipated, more positive than we thought possible. Every moment in front of another human being is an opportunity to express our highest values and to influence someone with our humanity. We can make the world better, one person at a time.

There was no doubt why Julian had made Ayame the safekeeper of this talisman. Yes, I thought to myself, smiling.

The past twenty-four hours had been a roller coaster for me. The day had started badly in Paris—or at least I had started badly. Whining, sulking, fussing. I had continued on that track right through my arrival in Osaka, my train ride to Kyoto. But all the complaining had not made me feel one bit better. Taking out my frustrations on others hadn't eased my burden one bit. Instead, it was the kindness of others that had helped me. Their decency and gentleness had softened me. And somehow, that had made me easier on myself as well. Julian had written some wise words. But Ayame—Ayame seemed to be living them.



CHAPTER SIX

THE “ITINERARY” THAT JULIAN had sent me didn’t cover the full trip, and it gave no indication of when my travels would end. Instead, it simply listed the next two destinations. As I looked at the dates, I inhaled sharply. Julian didn’t seem to be moving me from safekeeper to safekeeper with particular speed.

“Don’t worry,” said Ayame gently. “To go too quickly on a journey like this would not be good for your health. You need to be able to get a little sleep, a little exercise at each place you stop. I am sure that Julian has arranged the trip like this thinking of your needs, not his.”

Once again, Ayame was making me look at things differently. She seemed to move through the world with great gentleness. It was how she responded and how she expected other people to respond—to everyone and everything. She was probably right. Julian was thinking of me. But I wasn’t thinking of him. I was impatient to get back because of my own needs. I wasn’t worrying about why, or how urgently, he needed these talismans. If Julian felt he could take the time that this itinerary suggested, then I could, too.

THE NEXT DAY Ayame took me to the Kiyomizu Shrine and the Ryoanji Temple, and in the evening we strolled through the Gion district, where geishas still step through the streets on their way to appointments. By the time I crawled into my futon that night, I was feeling a great deal of gratitude to Julian and his itinerary. Tomorrow I would be heading to Oaxkutzcab, Mexico, to meet a fellow named Chava Ucan. I had been to Mexico once before—to Acapulco with Annisha—but never to Mérida, where I would be landing, or anywhere else on the Yucatán Peninsula. It occurred to me that this would be a hot time of year to visit Mexico.

“See?” Ayame said the following morning, as she shook my hand in Osaka’s Itami airport. “No dagger!” Then we bowed to each other. When Ayame straightened up, a look of concern creased her face.

“Jonathan,” she said. “Please try to remember Julian’s note. The way you relate to others reveals the way you relate to yourself. You are a good man, but I think you do not always treat yourself that way.”

CHAVA UCAN’S WIFE, Sikina, had said she would let me sleep for as long as I could. I wasn’t hopeful, but now here I was, opening my eyes to the Mexican sun blaring full force through the bedroom window, the heat sitting on my chest so heavily that I knew morning was long gone.

In our two days together, I hadn’t told Ayame much about my life. But she seemed to intuit many things. Now, lying on my bed in Chava’s house, the heat rising from the terra cotta floor and radiating from the walls, I was thinking about the way I had treated others in my life. I wasn’t proud of my outburst at the Osaka airport. Or about the times I had been shorttempered with a bank teller or a grocery store clerk. And then there were my impatient moments with Adam, and my angry words with Annisha. They were much more frequent than my lack of civility to strangers. Why is it that often we allow ourselves to treat family in ways we wouldn’t treat friends—or even those we don’t know? Probably because we assume they will forgive us. But that’s no excuse. I was making resolutions to change the way I behaved to everyone in my life. But there were some things that I just wouldn’t be able to make up for. Like the way I treated Juan.

THE FIRST SUGGESTION I got that things might not be going well for Juan at work was the lunch meeting I had with David and his boss, Sven, shortly after I had left the lab.

Sven asked me what I thought of my former supervisor. I started to praise his leadership, when Sven held up his hand.

“No, no, not as a boss. I know he’s a nice guy. I mean his vision. His technical knowledge. Is he on his game? Is he cutting edge? Are we being as

progressive, as aggressive, in development as we could be?”

It was an awkward conversation. Every time I said something positive about Juan, David and Sven frowned, as if I'd given the wrong answer. Eventually I just stopped speaking.

“Listen,” said David, “I'm not saying Juan isn't a bright guy. And I'm sure that at one point he was a leader in his field. But I'm just thinking that there are younger minds out there, a whole new generation of engineers and hardware designers who may be thinking outside the box. Who may have a fresh approach.”

Younger, right. I suspected that what David was really saying was “cheaper.” David was always looking for a way to make the bottom line look a little better.

When the waitress came by to clear the table, my plate was still full. And I was feeling queasy. I knew that Juan had the most brilliant, innovative engineering mind I had ever encountered. What's more, he was a genius at getting his people to look at things in new ways, to be creative both in problem-solving and in technical advances. But Sven and David were having none of that. They seemed to have made up their minds, and everything I said to contradict them was taking me down a notch in their estimation. It was clear that if I wanted to secure my own career, I would have to back off protecting Juan's. Now, thousands of miles away from my office, I could see that in one moment at lunch, I had made a cowardly decision which ended up costing both of us in the gravest way possible.

I HAD WOKEN UP in Mexico thinking of that lunch scene. The truth was, however, that it had first entered my mind when I read the “kindness” note—and I was pushing it out of my thoughts during the whole of my long trip from Osaka to Mérida. The journey had taken more than twenty-four hours, with connections in Tokyo, Los Angeles and Mexico City. During all of that, I had tried to embrace Ayame's peacefulness and ease. And I'd forced myself to stop worrying about time. I napped here and there, and gave myself over to jet lag and disorientation. I looked at my phone as little as possible. Landing in Mérida at the close of what was, according to the calendar, the same day that I had left Japan, I was overcome with a peculiar sense of nonchalance. So

when a middle-aged woman reached for my elbow as I exited the airport doors, I didn't start.

Sikina Ucan apologized for her husband's absence.

"He has to wake up very early tomorrow to get to work. I told him I would get you. We both thought that you would need to sleep for a while tomorrow morning, so Chava will get a ride to the site from a friend, and then I will bring you there in the afternoon to say hello."

On the long, dark ride from Mérida to Oxkutzcab, Sikina told me that Chava was a field technician working with a team that was excavating Mayan ruins outside of Oxkutzcab.

"He is very excited about giving you a tour of the archaeological dig and telling you a bit about his work. Sikina talked a little more about Chava, herself and her children. She told me that she and Chava had met Julian several years ago when he was touring through the Yucatán, visiting various Mayan ruins and studying the culture.

"What a wonderful man," Sikina said, tucking a piece of her long dark hair behind her ear. "So wise ... and so fun." But she said nothing about the talisman or the reason for my visit.

I was beginning to appreciate that Julian had chosen each safekeeper carefully. Each seemed to have a certain relationship with the talisman and its wisdom. According to Sikina, Chava wanted to share some of his life with me. And while I might have asked for the talisman right away, I decided to see if I could figure out what the note would say, what lesson I might learn from Chava. By the time we got to Oxkutzcab, it was around one in the morning. Sikina pulled the truck up in front of a small pale pink stuccoed house. Inside she pointed to a door to one side of the kitchen-living area.

The bedroom was tiny, but neat. I dropped my luggage onto the floor and collapsed on the bed. I was asleep before I even got my clothes off.

IT WAS PROBABLY THE HEAT that woke me up, but it was the smell of something rich and savory that drew me out of the bedroom and into the kitchen.

“Oh, good,” said Sikina, wiping her hands on her apron. “I was hoping that lunch might get you up. We should head out soon.”

Sikina motioned for me to sit down at the small table tucked into a corner of her cramped kitchen. The table was painted bright yellow, and each of the four chairs was a different color. Annisha would love this, I thought. I pulled the turquoise chair out and sat down, as Sikina placed a steaming plate in front of me.

“*Codzitos*,” she said. “Little tacos, with meat and tomato sauce. And guava juice,” she added, pointing to a tall blue glass in front of me.

The food was delicious, and I was regretting how much I had put away as I climbed into Sikina’s truck an hour later. I had washed up and changed my clothes, but I was still feeling distressingly full.

The truck lurched forward as Sikina put it into gear. She looked over at my ashen face and smiled.

“Okay,” she said. “I will give you a short tour of our town so your stomach can rest before we get out on the highway.”

Sikina drove slowly through the streets of Oxkutzcab. We moved through neighborhoods of low square houses, some white-washed, others painted in fanciful shades, and still others built of unadorned cement blocks. The flat roofs were of tin or tile, but there were also a number of small brightly painted oval-shaped houses with peaked thatched roofs.

“That is a traditional Mayan hut,” said Sikina, pointing to one.

The residential streets had a wonderfully irregular look to them. Low stone or concrete walls bordered front yards that were sometimes dry, empty-looking spaces—sometimes overgrown riots of palm trees, hibiscus, and all sorts of plants and bushes I didn’t recognize. Fancy cast-iron railings and gates alternated with lines of laundry flapping in the breeze. In the village center were several churches, small restaurants and hotels, and other buildings painted in bright shades of terra cotta or blue or yellow. The streets were dusty and relatively quiet: few cars, but a number of bikes, motorcycles, pedestrians and food carts making their way slowly through the heat.

As we drove along the narrow asphalt road, the houses and buildings gave way to more and more trees and shrubs until the town was behind us and low

rolling hills stretched across the horizon. “Puuc Hills,” Sikina told me. “They are full of Mayan ruins, big and small. Tomorrow Chava wants to take you to Uxmal. That was once a city of more than 20,000. But today we go to a smaller, more forgotten place.”

Half an hour after we had set off, we turned down a rough dirt road that seemed to follow a small valley. We bounced down it for some way, the thick forest rising up on either side of us until we passed under a wooden arch with a name carved across it. Eventually we pulled up in an open space. There were many people buzzing about, including what appeared to be a school group heading into a low, modern-looking building. I could see an assortment of thatched Mayan huts, but even they looked relatively new and very much in use. This is not what I had expected from an archaeological site.

“Oh, there is a lot more going on here,” said Sikina when I commented. “This is also a nature preserve and a research facility. It is over four thousand acres.”

We had not been out of the truck for more than a few minutes when a short, squarish man in a ball cap, shorts and heavy boots came loping toward us.

“*Hola, Jonathan!*” he said.

I smiled and extended my hand. Chava pumped it vigorously.

“*Bix a beel?* How are you?”

You only had to talk with Chava for a minute to realize that his passion was history. He did ask about my trip, about Julian, about whether Sikina had fed me sufficiently. But his voice did not become fully alive until he started to talk about the place where he was working. Sikina stayed back at one of the offices, visiting friends who worked at the nature preserve. As Chava led me past the open area and through the forested hillside, he explained the current focus of the excavations at this location. I wondered what, if anything, this had to do with the talisman, and whether I really needed a tour, but I was beginning to see that this trip was going to have a rhythm of its own that I could do very little to change.

“Archaeologists have worked here off and on for decades,” Chava told me as we pushed our way through the foliage, “but it’s only in past few years or so that we’ve begun to realize that this site may offer us some new clues about the collapse of the Mayan Empire.”

It was as if my father had been reborn in this middle-aged Mayan archaeologist. I found myself smiling as Chava continued his running commentary.

The people speaking the Mayan language had, he said, appeared in the Yucatán well over four thousand years ago. For the next three thousand years, sophisticated, very densely populated cities sprang up throughout the Mayan world. At the height of the Mayan period, most of the land between these city-states was covered with farms and villages. And all the major centers were connected with white limestone roads.

The city-states not only operated under elaborate political systems but were marvels of architecture as well: stepped pyramids and temples, multiple-story dwellings, ornate courtyards and public squares. The Maya, Chava said, also created breathtaking art works and developed one of the world's earliest writing systems. And their sophisticated math skills allowed them to make great advances in astronomy, which led to perhaps their most famous achievement: the Mayan calendar. Chava's thoughts were spilling out like a finely crafted lecture, but they also seemed threaded with personal pride, as if he were talking about people he knew and loved.

But then somewhere between 900 and 1000 ad, Chava explained, six hundred years before the arrival of the Spanish, the civilization began to crumble. Over the next two hundred years or so, he told me, a sadness edging his words, 90 percent of the population disappeared, the cities were abandoned, and the greatness of the Mayan world became a memory. It took only a century or two for the forests to take over the cities, for green growth to mask the monuments and roadways, for the remaining population to scatter across the countryside, clinging to tiny villages and subsistence agriculture. These survivors, Chava noted, were his ancestors.

As he talked, Chava led me through the forest, over tree roots and crumbling stones. Along the way, I spotted the occasional fieldworker moving along the paths, but the place was hardly quiet or empty. Birds squawked and sang out as they swooped through the trees. I heard branches rustling and scurrying sounds all around us. I tried to concentrate on the birds and not think of spiders, scorpions or pumas. Chava stopped now and then to point out barely revealed formations of stones or freshly excavated sites. He had walked me around a small pyramid. It was stepped, like the pictures I had

seen of the famous pyramid at Chichen Itza but was only about thirtyfive feet high. And then we arrived in front of what looked to be the remains of buildings laid out around two sides of large raised stone. The bottoms of the walls were composed of stone squares, and the tops were covered with what looked like a stone-column motif. “A half-finished palace here,” said Chava. “Around a plaza, a public space.”

I walked around the base of the ruins and peered at the stone building blocks.

“You said they didn’t have metal tools?”

“That’s right,” said Chava. “Just granite, flint, obsidian. There aren’t materials to make metal in these parts.”

I ran my hand across the foundation. “Incredible.”

“Shall we take a short rest?” Chava asked, moving to the edge of the raised stone plaza and sitting down. He pulled a water bottle from the pack he had been carrying and handed it to me. I walked over and took it from him gratefully. The trees provided shade, but the heat seemed to rise from the forest floor as well as pounding down from above the treetops. My shirt was clinging to my back; my pants were glued to my legs.

“That’s what I like about this work, you know,” Chava said. “The mysteries. We know that some of the abandoned cities we see were simply left by people moving about. But the population didn’t just move—it disappeared. And even the remaining populations did not stay on in the big cities.”

Chava went on to explain that scientists who studied Mayan skeletons had said that the bones, even the bones of the royalty, suggested that in the later years of the civilization, food was scarce. That might have been the result of overhunting. Another possibility was a plague of pests or some sort of agricultural disaster, perhaps caused by deforestation. But the most likely cause of the food shortage was an extended drought. “There isn’t much water in Yucatán at the best of times,” he laughed. And of course, disease, wars or other violence could have decimated the population as well.

Chava stood up and put the water bottle back in his pack.

“But here, at this site,” he said, “we see something we don’t often see at the

excavations. Come.” Chava led me to one side of the ruins. The main exterior featured square archways supported by short, round columns. But Chava was looking at the ground in front of the building.

“Now,” said Chava, pointing at an assembly of stones laid out on the ground. It wasn’t a neat formation, but it didn’t look haphazard either. “What would you guess that was?”

“I don’t know,” I said, moving closer. There were small tufts of grass between the stones. A lizard scurried across one corner and disappeared down the side of the pile. “Is it the beginning of a building? Or something that fell down?”

“That, my friend,” said Chava, “is a wall. Not a wall that has fallen down, but one that was assembled ahead of time and laid here, waiting to be moved up there to make a second story. It was all ready to go, but the work was not finished. This is something you don’t see in a site that was abandoned because of long drought or disease. This work wasn’t stopped—it was *interrupted*.”

When we had started this little tour, it all felt a bit random— taking a crash course in archaeology, becoming immersed in the working world of someone I just met. But I was beginning to see why Chava might want to show all this to everyone he encountered, why he might want to share his work with a stranger, why a job like his might hook a person. There were so many questions to be answered.

“What do you think it was?” I asked. “Were they attacked or something?”

“War or violence seems likely here, doesn’t it?” said Chava. “We have found a quantity of spearheads. But no burned buildings or walls or barricades for defense. And if it was an unexpected attack, well ... you need to see another thing.” Chava gestured for me to come away from the wall. “Can you take just a bit more climbing?”

Chava led the way, up a winding, twisting path. Here and there were the remains of crumbling stairs, which we scrambled over. Chava stopped climbing near the top of the hill and headed over to a flat area of stakes and stones. It was obvious that an excavation was under way. Cleared from the undergrowth were the stone bases of walls surrounding dry dirt pits. In one, a young blond woman squatted in a corner, carefully sweeping dirt away from a

buried object with a small brush. In another corner of the pit were various bits of rock and broken pottery with numbered flags and labels on them.

“Jonathan,” said Chava as the woman stood up. “This is Ellen. Ellen, this is Jonathan.”

Ellen was another field technician, working with a team from an American university.

“I was just explaining to Jonathan about the recent discoveries. Maybe you could tell him about these hilltop homes,” said Chava. Ellen nodded and wiped her brow with a scarf she took from the pocket of her pants. Like Chava, she seemed to need no encouragement to talk about her work.

She explained that what I was looking at were the remains of meal preparation. The grinding stone for the corn had been rested against the doorframe, but not put away. The neatly laidout pots suggested that work had started but then stopped midway through. Everything had been left the way people would leave things if they thought they would be returning shortly. They left quickly, but they did not appear to have run off in terror. Everything was orderly, and there were no signs of chaos or attack.

“Ah,” sighed Chava. “We have a lot of work to do before we solve these mysteries.”

“Speaking of which,” said Ellen. “I hope you’ll excuse me while I get back to it. I want to get a bit more done before I leave for the day.”

Chava and I stood on the hilltop for a few minutes more, gazing over the canopy of trees. I looked back at Ellen crouched in the dirt. There was less shade up here, and although the sun was not as high in the sky as it had been when I first arrived, it was still hot.

“That’s one thing I don’t get,” I said to Chava.

Chava cocked his head.

“The work,” I said. “The digging. It seems to move so slowly. I thought electrical engineering and technical design were painstaking, but this...” I waved my hand in Ellen’s direction. “This moves by fractions of inches. How do you manage?”

“Ah yes, I know,” said Chava, smiling. “You can work all day, and at the end of it, what have you done? Moved a few pounds of sand, right?”

I shrugged my shoulders.

“It’s easy to make light of the work we do. The American fieldworkers sometimes refer to themselves as ‘shovelbums.’ But we all have to keep reminding ourselves that we can’t rush our work, that we must be patient. And above all, we must work carefully, accurately, with the greatest professionalism, even if we are feeling bored or restless. It’s so easy to destroy important artifacts or miss things altogether.”

Chava began to head back toward the rough stairs. He looked over his shoulder at me.

“Each carefully excavated square may seem small, Jonathan, but together, all these little plots can add up to an important historical discovery, a real advance in knowledge. I like to think that if we ‘shovelbums’ do our work well, our small contributions can add up to something really important. We can actually solve great mysteries.”

On the way home, Sikina insisted that I sit next to the window in the truck while she squeezed herself between Chava and me. I kept the window rolled all the way down, and occasionally stuck my head out like a goofy golden retriever. The dry rushing air felt wonderful. Once we were winding our way through the house-lined streets of Oxnard, there was another reason to keep my head leaning out the window—the seductive smell of cooking. I realized how ravenous I was, but it also dawned on me that, since we had all been out all day, it was unlikely supper would be waiting on the stove when we got back.

“I’m just thinking,” I said to Chava and Sikina, “why don’t I take you two out for dinner in town? You’ve spent so much of your day entertaining me.”

“Oh no,” said Sikina. “We can’t do that. Zama is waiting for us.”

It turned out that we were heading to the home of Chava and Sikina’s married daughter. She and her husband had prepared a big dinner for us.

It was a crowded, noisy evening. As well as Zama and her husband and their three small children, various neighbors dropped in to say hi. Music played, my glass was filled and refilled, and my plate was piled high. As the children chased one another around the backyard, my eyes followed Zama’s six-year-old son, Eme. He was a bit smaller than Adam, but with his bubbly laugh and the way his body was constantly in motion, even when he sat down,

Eme reminded me of my son. After I'd finished eating, I walked through the house and out onto the dirt street, where it was a little more quiet. I tried to phone home, but my cell reception had been spotty since I landed in Mexico, and I couldn't get through. I composed a message to Adam.

Hey buddy, I wrote. I am seeing the most amazing things here. When I have more time I will tell you all about them. But right now, I just wanted to say that I love you.

The message would get sent out whenever my phone got reception. In the meantime, I would go back to the party, but my heart was no longer in it.

Chava seemed to notice how quiet I had become after my return, and about thirty minutes later he suggested we depart. By the time I was lying in my bed later that night, having written in my journal about watching Chava's happy family, my chest was tight from longing. I wanted nothing more than to have my son sprawled next to me. How had I not treasured those moments when they were so easily in reach?

THE NEXT MORNING, Chava and I picked our way through the car park in the predawn darkness. I had toyed with the thought of asking Sikina to take me back to the airport in Mérida instead, to see if I could get an earlier flight out of Mexico, but Ayame's words returned to me. Julian seemed to be pacing this trip with a reason. What's more, Chava seemed intent on continuing my Mayan education, and I would have felt bad suggesting that we cut it short. He had insisted that we come out here, to Uxmal, before daybreak.

"When the sun comes up," he had said, "the people appear. You want to see this alone, or almost alone."

Chava had many connections with the people who ran the site, so a security guard had been instructed to meet us at the entrance to the building that acted as the gateway to the temples and the ruins. We could see his uniformed figure silhouetted against the museum's front door.

When we approached, he and Chava exchanged a few words in Maya, and the guard opened the door for us. Then he pointed across the lobby and said something else.

"I know the way," said Chava. "Just follow me."

Ten minutes later we were standing outside. In the dim light, a magnificent pyramid rose before us over a hundred feet high and at least two hundred feet wide. Unlike the small pyramid I had seen yesterday, or the pictures I had seen of other Mayan pyramids, this one seemed to have an oval base. “Temple of the Magician,” said Chava.

While we stood, the sun climbed behind us. As it did, its light hit the stones of the temple, making them glow golden, as if an enormous fire had been lit inside the pyramid.

Chava leaned sideways toward me and said in a low voice, “Amazing, no? To think that men built this. Ordinary men like you and me, capable of such accomplishments, such excellence.” I nodded, dumbstruck by what was before me.

We watched the pyramid as the sky lightened around it. Then Chava started walking. He was heading toward the structure.

“Tourists are no longer allowed to walk up the steps, but we have special permission.” Instead of starting up the steps directly in front of us, Chava walked around the base. The thought of scaling the pyramid excited me. I was suddenly glad that Chava was taking my education so seriously.

“The other side is better for climbing,” he explained as he led me around to the opposite face of the pyramid.

As I stood at the bottom of the pyramid, the stone rising high above me, the staggering height became clear. It would be a tough climb. Chava started up, and I followed. We made our way slowly up the smooth, hard steps. They were steep and narrow, and the sensation of moving up an enormous open staircase was disorienting. Chava told me that many of the pyramids have metal chains to hang on to as you climb. I could see why. By the time we reached the very top, I was sweating like I’d just finished a marathon.

“This is the best view of Uxmal,” said Chava. “Sit, rest, look.”

Chava dropped his small canvas backpack to the ground and squatted down onto his heels. I did the same.

The Uxmal site stretched around us for hundreds of acres. Much of the remains of the ancient city were still covered in vegetation. The only

suggestion of many of the streets and buildings were flat stretches broken by squarish mounds. Directly below us, however, was a series of vast stone ruins.

Chava told me that when Uxmal was inhabited, the houses would have stretched out for many more acres than what I now saw before me. He pointed out another pyramid, half-covered with vegetation, that was called the Great Pyramid, and he told me about the other ruined buildings that we could see all around us.

“Have you ever heard the legend of this pyramid?” Chava asked me after describing the city at our feet. I shook my head.

“There are many different versions of the tale,” said Chava. The legend that Chava recounted described how, long ago, the king of Uxmal was warned that when a certain gong in the city was struck, his empire would fall to a man not born of woman. One day, indeed, the gong sounded, and the king was dismayed to discover that the person who had struck it was a dwarf boy hatched from an egg by an old, childless woman. The king summoned the dwarf to his palace and was going to execute him, when he had a change of heart. Instead of killing the boy on the spot, he decided to set the dwarf an impossible task. If the dwarf could build the king a magnificent temple, taller than any other building in the city and could do this in one single night, his life would be saved.

When the king awoke the next morning, he was astonished to see towering before him a majestic pyramid. The dwarf’s life was spared, and the pyramid became known as the Temple of the Magician.

“In some versions of the story, the dwarf himself is created by the old woman overnight. In others, he is set many feats of strength and tests, including the building of the pyramid. But what each version has in common,” said Chava, “is the idea that this extraordinary structure was created in the space of just one night.”

Chava took two water bottles out of his pack. He passed one to me and took a swig out of the other, then wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

“Perhaps it’s because of the work I do,” he continued, “but that story delights me. It tells us so much about our dreams, our desires. What does the king wish for? No, it’s not so much that he wants a great temple. He could

have had his subjects build him that at any time. What he wants is for this remarkable creation to happen overnight!”

“I guess nothing changes,” I said with a laugh. “Everyone wants everything in a hurry.”

“Yes, exactly,” said Chava. “But that is just not possible, is it? After all, the accomplishment of the king’s task proves that the dwarf is, in fact, a magician. It is not in the power of a mere human to make something truly marvelous in an instant. People need patience. People need to build things slowly, one brick at a time. As much as we would love to achieve great things quickly, it is not the way our world works. Genius is a process.”

Chava had placed his canvas knapsack on his lap and was digging around inside. After a few seconds, he pulled out a small cloth bag and handed it to me.

“Shall I open this now?” I asked. Chava nodded.

The top of the red woven bag was tied with a bit of string. I worked at the knot until it fell open, and then lifted the bag and emptied its contents onto my lap. There was a note and a tiny red clay object. I picked it up and looked at it. It appeared to be a miniature model of a pyramid.

I unfolded the piece of paper and read the words on it.

Make Small Daily Progress

The way we do small things determines the way that we do everything. If we execute our minor tasks well, we will also excel at our larger efforts. Mastery then becomes our way of being. But more than this—each tiny effort builds on the next, so that brick by brick, magnificent things can be created, great confidence grows and uncommon dreams are realized. The truly wise recognize that small daily improvements always lead to exceptional results over time.

The sun was considerably higher in the sky than it had been at the start of our climb. Its heat was beginning to press down on me. I lifted the corner of my shirt and wiped some perspiration from my brow.

Chava looked over and immediately began to stand up.

“I’m sorry for keeping you so long up here,” he said. “I know you are not used to the temperatures. Let’s head out. On the way down, I want to show you one more thing.”

We began our descent, which I found more difficult than the climb up. Walking down the steep, narrow steps, facing out across the plaza, made me realize the heights I’d scaled and the absence of anything that might prevent me from slipping and crashing down these smooth stone steps. I was relieved when Chava signaled me to stop lowering myself and instead move along sideways. Chava was ahead of me, but eventually he stopped in front of a large arched doorway that opened along one side of the pyramid.

“This,” Chava said, with a flourish of his hand toward the doorway, “is the irony of that legend, as far as I’m concerned.”

“Really?” I said.

“This pyramid was supposed to have been built overnight, but nothing could be further from the truth,” said Chava. “Instead, it was built over hundreds of years. In fact, it was rebuilt again and again. Five times! And each time the new pyramid was constructed on top of the old. My ancestors thought this imbued the temple with all the accumulated power and greatness of its predecessor. This doorway is just a remnant of one of the earlier pyramids that was here. What you see around it was added on later.”

“Wow,” I said. I was looking up at the carvings of mystical creatures, or perhaps Mayan gods, that ran along the door frame. It was intricate, detailed artistry. It would indeed have been magic if anything like this happened in months, never mind overnight.

“Yesterday I was telling you that I hope my work will uncover clues about the end of the Mayan Empire,” said Chava. “But the beginnings are what really interest me—how all this came to be. You talk about an archaeological dig being painstaking work, but the creation of a civilization, the building of vast cities, these pyramids here—*that* is slow, painstaking work.”

I nodded, and we were both quiet for a minute.

“It is good to remember that,” Chava said quietly. “That every big dream starts small.”

IT WAS CHAVA who took me to the airport in Mérida the next day. The drive was almost two hours long, and after chatting amiably for the first half-hour we fell silent. I took out my phone, but I still couldn't get a signal. I started to scroll through some of my pictures. I paused over a shot of Adam in his soccer uniform, his foot resting uncertainly on a ball.

Chava glanced over. "You are feeling a bit homesick," he said.

"Yeah," I said.

"You are on your way home, Jonathan," he replied after a moment. "You are on your way home."

We had passed through the small town of Ticul, past scruffy farmland and rocky pastures. We sat without talking for a little longer before I pulled my journal from my backpack and took out the most recent note. I had been writing my reflections about the journey, the talismans and the letters in the journal, as Julian had asked. I wasn't entirely sure what I thought of this most recent message.

Eventually Chava looked toward the notebook on my lap and said, "Jonathan, did Sikina tell you about our son, Avali?"

"Just that he lives in Mexico City, and she misses him," I replied.

That made Chava laugh loudly. I looked at him quizzically.

"Sorry," said Chava, "I can't believe she stopped there. Avali is a doctor. Sikina is very proud of him. Usually, that's one of the first things she tells people."

"I can understand," I said, "why she would be proud."

There was a beat of silence and then Chava continued.

"When Avali was eight years old he came to me and said, 'Papa, I want to become a doctor and help sick people. How do I do it?' Now, Jonathan, what could I say? Sikina and I, neither one of us went to university. Most of my family hadn't got past elementary school. And not just that. None of us had ever left Yucatán. I had no idea how someone would become a doctor. But there was little Avali, with all the hope of a child, and I realized that I did

know one thing. I pulled him on my lap, and I said, ‘Son, this is how you begin. Tomorrow, you go to school, and you listen to everything the teacher says. And you work harder than you have ever worked. And then you come home and tell me what you’ve learned.’”

Chava was smiling softly, as if he could see his young son in front of him. He nodded his head slightly, and then continued.

“So he began. Each test, each assignment, I told him, ‘Do well on this, and you are on your way to becoming a doctor.’ None of us knew the road ahead, so we just concentrated on the step before us. As he got older, we talked to everyone we knew—the archaeologists and researchers at the sites I was working on, the nurses and doctors at the hospital, even tourists we met at the ruins or in town. Slowly but surely, Avali, Sikina and I figured out the next steps. Before we knew it, Avali was graduating from university in Mexico City.”

“Small daily improvements can lead to great things, right?” I said.

“The tiniest of actions is always better than the boldest of intentions,” said Chava. “And results always speak louder than words.”

Like the other safekeepers, Chava clearly understood, and *lived*, the wisdom of the talisman he had guarded. He saw it in his job, he saw it with his son. But how would it look in my life? I wasn’t sure what precious achievement I should be striving for, what accomplishments—and dreams—I should be taking my small steps toward. I used to think it was that CEO job, or the enormous house, or even a Ferrari, like Julian had. But now, I wasn’t sure. It was not until we reached the airport that I scribbled something in the journal. *Push-ups*, I wrote. I would start the day tomorrow with twenty push-ups. I would go from there.

I FOUND IT SURPRISINGLY hard to say good-bye to Chava. He and Sikina had reminded me so much of my parents. And I found myself wanting to spend more time with his family. Perhaps if I had been going home, I wouldn’t have felt that way. But I was heading again into the unknown—Barcelona this time. In the airport, I managed to get a signal. I phoned Annisha, but I got her voicemail. I decided to write Adam and Annisha another note, telling them

about my Mexican stay, but when I opened my inbox, I noticed a message from Tessa. That was odd. We weren't working on anything together.

Hi Jonathan, it started.

I was talking to Nawang today, asking when you'd be back. She said she didn't know. She thinks that you may not return at all. I couldn't believe how much that upset me. And that got me thinking. I don't know quite how to say this, so I'm just going to plunge right in. The rumor around the office is that you are in the process of getting a divorce. Maybe it's too soon for you, but I have always felt there was something between us. If you don't come back to work here, I wouldn't want to think that we'd missed an opportunity to get together. I think that we might be good for each other. Anyhow, I'm babbling. Just wanted to let you know that I'm thinking about you.

Tessa



CHAPTER SEVEN

WHEN I WAS FIVE, my father took me to my first basketball game. It wasn't the NBA, but it was the most exciting game I have ever seen.

It was the elementary school semifinals, held at Parkview Public School, where my father taught sixth grade. I had been there the previous summer, when my dad set up his classroom for the first day of school. My sister and I colored on scrap paper while Dad put up posters of animals and strange people. The posters all had writing on them, and I had no idea what they were about. But it was clear to me that my father must be truly brilliant to teach math, and reading, and everything else to boys and girls of the advanced age of eleven.

This basketball game, however, was the first indication that my father had skills and responsibilities which transcended his classroom gifts. I sat on the end of a long wooden bench in an enormous gym. Boys who looked old and big enough to be adults—in my eyes, at least—stretched down the length of the seat. My father was talking to them, giving instructions. And each of those boys had his eyes on my father—absorbing every word he said as if he were sharing with them the secrets of the universe.

I don't remember any of the game. The only thing that has stuck with me is the way my chest swelled each time my dad talked to his team, and each time he looked over at me and smiled.

By fourth grade, however, that game was in the distant past, and my pride had been replaced by worry. My teacher that year was Mrs. Higginbottom—a woman who sometimes came to work with a forgotten curler sticking in the back of her hair. She wore such outrageously mismatched clothes that even nine-year-old boys took notice. Mrs. Higginbottom managed to keep control of the class only with the help of Mrs. Dorman, from the classroom next door, and frequent visits from the principal. But even the constant threat of

detentions and extra homework couldn't keep us from congregating in the school yard at recess to come up with rude nicknames for her. Mrs. Higginbottom was making it clear to me that teachers were not necessarily figures of respect; that teachers could often be the butt of the joke.

I was pretty certain my father was nothing like Mrs. Higginbottom—that kids didn't copy from each other's tests the moment his back was turned, or try to fool him into thinking he had lost whole assignments that they had never bothered to hand in. But I couldn't stop asking the question: if they let Mrs. Higginbottom be a teacher, what did that say about Dad?

By seventh grade, my kindergarten view of Dad's godlike status had vanished. Now all I could think of was that my father had chosen to spend his life hanging out with *little kids*. My friends' fathers were doctors and lawyers, forklift operators and businessmen. They drove home at the end of the day with expensive briefcases stuffed with files, or white hardhats in the back windows of their trucks. My dad came home with piles of clumsily put together booklets on "Ainshint Egypt" and stacks of worksheets on fractions and decimals.

By high school, I was certain. The reason Dad was an elementary school teacher, the reason he clung to this position, was that he had no ambition—a deficit so marked that he failed to comprehend or acknowledge the embarrassment of his career. I discovered that he had been approached many times to become a vice principal or a principal but had turned down each offer. His line was that he loved the classroom—and if he couldn't teach, he would rather do something else altogether. But *I* knew the truth: Dad was some kind of lazy nut.

By the time I was working full-time myself, I had come to recognize that, of course, Dad was nothing like Mrs. Higginbottom. I could see that he truly loved what he was doing, and that he was good at it. But the question of ambition continued to nag at me.

That's what I was thinking about as Lluís Costa told me his story.

LLUIS HAD MET ME at the Barcelona airport. Like Ahmet, he was holding up a little sign with my name on it. He was probably in his early thirties, but he had a boyish look about him, his dark brown curls cropped close to his head.

He was wearing a crisp navy blazer and dark gray slacks. His bright red tie flashed against the whiteness of his shirt.

“*Hola, hola. Welcome Jonathan,*” he said. “Lluis Costa at your service. It is a great pleasure to meet a member of Julian’s family.”

Before I could even respond, Lluis placed his hands on my upper arms, leaned forward and kissed me on both cheeks.

“Now,” he said, putting his arm around my shoulders, “let us get to know each other better over a nice dinner and a good bottle of wine.”

Lluis’s familiarity made me a bit uncomfortable. I had enjoyed the time I spent with Ahmet, Ayame, Chava and Sikina, but I wasn’t on a mission to make new friends. I really just wanted to get the talismans. And get home.

Lluis led me out of the terminal and to the taxi stand outside the doors. Instead of heading to the first cab in line, he made a beeline to the last car. Lluis opened the back door with a flourish, sweeping his hand toward the empty seat as if to say, “after you.” I didn’t move, however. It was clear that the cab was empty. Completely empty.

“Lluis,” I said, “There’s no driver. The taxi driver isn’t in the car.”

“No, of course not,” said Lluis. “He was meeting you inside. I’m the driver, Jonathan. This is my taxi.”

It seemed odd to sit in the backseat when my companion, taxi driver or not, was in the front seat, but Lluis was persistently directing me into the car. Once I was seated, he popped the trunk and put my luggage inside. I could see him waving and calling out to some of the other drivers as he made his way around to the driver’s side. Lluis had a joyfulness that you don’t often see in cab drivers, or at least not the ones in my town. After he climbed behind the wheel, he turned to me.

“So, Jonathan. Have you been to Barcelona before?”

When I shook my head, Lluis nodded. “Ah, then, you are in luck. You’ve got the right driver to show you around. But first—you must be tired. I’ve booked you into a superb hotel in the Eixample district. I will get you there so you can freshen up and rest. And then I’ll pick you back up about nine p.m., so we can have dinner on the waterfront. Is that agreeable?”

I had to admit that Lluis was a good driver. He seemed to move in and out

of the traffic with ease. The air in the taxi was cool, but not cold. Classical music played softly. I noticed a small caddy over the back of the driver's seat. In it was a box of tissues, a bottle of hand sanitizer and some packages of towelettes. A hanging folder over the back of the passenger seat contained two stacks of colorful flyers. I pulled a flyer out from each stack—a tourist map of Barcelona and a gallery guide. I wondered if all taxis in Barcelona were this well supplied.

As we got into the city center, Lluís began to weave through the narrow streets.

“This may not be the most direct way, but it is the most scenic. I thought you might like to take a look at some of the nineteenth-century architecture in this part of town. It is quite stunning.”

Lluís was right. Many of the buildings reminded me of the art nouveau structures of Paris and New York, with their embellished stone facades, cast-iron balconies and long, mullioned windows.

“Wow,” I gasped as we passed by an ornate church—all dripping spires and soft crenellation.

“Ah, yes, Antoni Gaudí's Sagrada Família. Barcelona's most renowned architect. Tomorrow, if you are interested, we will come back here. No one should leave Barcelona before getting up close to Gaudí's work.”

We continued past the church, turned a corner and then stopped at a red light. When it changed to green, Lluís stepped gently on the gas. We hadn't even reached the center of the intersection when the roar of an accelerating engine made me snap my head around. Another taxi on the cross street was barreling through the red light. It showed no signs of slowing as it raced toward us. I was sure it was about to strike the door right next to my seat. My heart jumped as I dove to the other side and covered my head with my arms. Then I heard squealing tires and the sickening screech of metal against metal. But miraculously *our* car was still moving smoothly, although more slowly now. I raised my head and looked up. Lluís was carefully pulling our taxi over to the side of the street on the other side of the intersection. He had narrowly managed to fly ahead of the speeding car to avoid being hit. After stopping, Lluís put his hazard lights on and then turned to me.

“Are you okay, Jonathan?” he asked.

I nodded. We both looked out the rearview window. The other cab was crushed up into the grill of a car on the opposite side of the cross street. There were skid marks snaking through the center of the intersection where the taxi had obviously slid and twisted after the driver had slammed on the brakes.

Before I could gather my wits about me, Lluís had jumped out of the car and was dashing toward the accident. By the time I reached the scene, he had helped a stunned-looking woman and a small frightened girl out of the backseat of the other cab. The woman was holding her head, and Lluís was bending down to talk to the child. The driver of the car that the taxi had hit had managed to get his door open and was standing unsteadily on the street. He looked shaken but unharmed.

I leaned into the front passenger window of the stranded cab. The driver was slumped forward, his face resting against the steering wheel. Blood was dripping from his forehead.

The police and an ambulance arrived a few minutes later. By that time, the cab driver had regained consciousness and was trying to tell Lluís what had happened. He seemed very young and very upset. Eventually the paramedics approached and started to check the cabbie's injuries. Lluís and I moved over to the squad car to give our statements to the police. Lluís translated for me, and then we waited for the taxi passenger to explain what she had seen. The paramedics offered to send another ambulance to take the mother to the hospital, to be checked out, but she said she and her daughter felt fine. Once the ambulance had pulled away and all the officials were gone, Lluís approached the woman again, talking softly. Eventually she nodded her head and Lluís turned to me.

"I've convinced her to let me take her to the hospital, just to be on the safe side. I hope you don't mind one more short delay, Jonathan," said Lluís.

"Of course not," I answered.

LLUIS RETURNED TO THE CAB after escorting the woman and her daughter into the emergency ward.

"I'm so sorry you had to start your visit to Barcelona that way, Jonathan," he said.

“Please don’t worry about me,” I said. I had to admit that the accident had unnerved me, but if Lluís hadn’t been my driver it could have been so much worse. I was feeling fortunate, not hard done by.

Twenty minutes later we pulled up to a white stone building with arched windows and cast-iron planters. A liveried bellman was positioned outside a large brass revolving door. Lluís parked his car in the spot designated for taxis and waved at the bellman before hopping out of the car. I saw him hurry over to open my door but got out of the car first. Lluís pulled my luggage from the trunk. As we approached the hotel, the bellman greeted him by name and they exchanged a few words as the bellman opened a heavy glass door next to the revolving one. Once inside the lobby, Lluís waved at a porter who was heading toward us and went straight for the concierge desk. A tall, thin man stood behind the desk, reading something. When he looked up and saw Lluís walking toward him, he threw up his hands and called out, “*Bon dia, Lluís!*”

He came out from behind the desk to embrace Lluís before turning to me.

“This is the honored guest I was telling you about. Jonathan Landry, a relative of Julian’s,” said Lluís.

The concierge was effusive. “I have a wonderful room for you,” he said. “But if there is anything else we can do for you, you must let me know.”

He handed me a room key and waved at the porter. I said my good-byes to Lluís and then followed the porter to the elevators. My room was on the eighth floor. I took a deep breath when the doors opened and walked in quickly before I changed my mind.

When we arrived upstairs, the porter opened the door, settled my bags and then left. It was an elegant room: large and airy, with big windows that looked over the street and a park in the distance. An enormous vase of white tulips sat on a table by the window, and a basket of fruit and chocolate was on the dresser. I kicked off my shoes, flopped onto the king-sized bed and pulled out my phone.

When I had received Tessa’s message, I’d written back immediately. Not to Tessa but to Nawang. What was she telling everyone? *Of course I’m coming back*, I wrote. *I don’t always have good cell phone reception, but I am checking my inbox as often as I can. Please keep me informed of any problems or developments. I will do my best to respond as quickly as possible.*

During the flight from Mexico I had frequently returned to Tessa's message. It had snapped me out of my homesickness. First, it had made me worried again about my job. Was Nawang using my absence to maneuver herself into my position? I always felt I could trust her, but had I been naive? Or was this David's way of getting back at me for inconveniencing him? Was he suggesting to my clients that Nawang was now in charge?

While my mind was besieged with all sorts of paranoid thoughts, I could still hear the faint echo of Julian's words: *If we are mistrustful of others, we are distrustful of ourselves.* Perhaps I had to be on my toes, but this crazy worry would do no good at all. And I sure didn't like the way it was making me feel.

More discomfiting than my career concerns, however, was Tessa's personal message. Of course, there had been something between Tessa and me over the past few months. It was one of the things that perked me up when times were rough. After an argument with Annisha or a lonely night in the apartment, I would walk into the office and see Tessa's smiling face. But it was always an abstract kind of thing. Now, however, Tessa had made it concrete, real.

WHEN I ARRIVED BACK in the lobby at nine, I immediately spotted Lluís's dapper frame. He was standing next to one side of the doors, his hands behind his back, rocking back and forth slightly on his heels. He was obviously waiting for me, but the gentle smile on his face suggested that he didn't mind.

His cab was parked on the street outside the doors of the hotel. This time, he let me sit in the front seat with him. As we drove, Lluís chatted amiably.

"Too bad that you have so little time in this fantastic city," he said. "There is so much to see. I always say that this is a city of artistic brilliance."

We were clearly heading into a much older part of the city. The streets were becoming increasingly narrow and dark.

"Really?" I said.

"Oh, I know, when people think of exceptional artists they think of Florence, Rome, Paris. They think of the Uffizi or the Sistine Chapel or the Louvre. But Barcelona—Barcelona is the home of so many great artists of the

last century. Joan Miró, Salvador Dalí, Pablo Picasso. And, of course, the brilliant architect Antoni Gaudí. Geniuses all.”

I could sense that Lluís was on a roll. We were now in what must have been the Old City area; the patina of centuries clung to each building and cobbled alley. Some of the streets were so tight that I did not think the car would fit down them, but Lluís, talking all the while, his left hand gesturing in the air, maneuvered through them with ease. Our near-accident clearly hadn’t rattled him.

“Yes, there are so many places in the world where you can see the magnificent works of Picasso. There are about fifty thousand of them after all. But where else in the world can you see the very beginnings of his specialness? Our Picasso museum has his earliest works—the sketches and paintings from his childhood in Spain. You can see the figure studies he did under his father’s guidance. You can see what a brilliant eye he had, even then. It is really something to enjoy those early seeds of his later masterpieces.”

We passed churches and a cathedral, low-rise buildings with ornate iron balconies above and arched doorways below. There were shops shuttered with corrugated steel doors, festooned with graffiti. But eventually we left the cramped streets and were again on major roadways. The ocean came into view. I could see yachts docked in the harbor, their lights twinkling on the black water. Palm trees lined the street, and the invigorating saltiness of the sea hung in the air.

“Barceloneta up ahead,” Lluís said, as we moved past the port area. We turned up a side street away from the water. Lluís wove in and out of the tiny streets and eventually pulled into an alley. “We must walk from here,” he said.

THE SMALL, INTIMATE RESTAURANT appeared to be full of locals. “Too far away from the water for tourists,” said Lluís.

I looked at the menu. It was written in two languages, in what Lluís explained was Spanish and Catalan. I could make out a few things, but not enough to figure out what I wanted. I looked up from the menu, and Lluís was smiling at me. “Do you like fish and shellfish?” he asked.

I nodded.

“Good,” he said. “It is really a shame to eat in a Catalan restaurant and not sample the fruits of the sea. Can I order for us?”

Our meal started with a smooth fish bisque, then a platter of grilled vegetables, followed by garlicky prawns, crispy squid and steamed grouper. Lluís ordered wine and filled my glass whenever it dipped low.

Before the food started to arrive, he reached into his pocket.

“I might as well give this to you now. I worry about losing it.” Lluís handed me a brown leather box. It was about four inches long and two inches wide, with a hinged lid. I lifted the brass clasp and opened the top. Lying on top of a piece of folded parchment was a thin, delicate paintbrush. The handle was of smooth dark wood topped with a tuft of fine bristles. I picked up the paintbrush and twirled it gently between my thumb and forefinger. Then I placed it carefully on the table and pulled out the note.

The note was written in black ink. Its neat writing read:

To Lead Your Best Life, Do Your Best Work

There is no insignificant work in the world. All labor is a chance to express personal talents, to create our art and to realize the genius we are built to be. We must work like Picasso painted: with devotion, passion, energy and excellence. In this way, our productivity will not only become a source of inspiration to others, but it will have an impact—making a difference in the lives around us. One of the greatest secrets to a life beautifully lived is to do work that matters. And to ascend to such a state of mastery in it that people can't take their eyes off of you.

I put the paintbrush back in the box and slipped it into my pocket. I would transfer the paintbrush to my pouch and the note into my journal when I got back to my hotel room.

“An interesting sentiment, isn't it?” said Lluís.

“Yes,” I said. “Picasso. Genius-level work. I suppose that is why you are the safekeeper of this particular talisman. Your interest in all of those creative

masters, right?”

Lluis laughed.

“Perhaps,” he said. “But I think there’s more to it than that.”

Lluis explained to me that he had met Julian years ago when, by chance, Julian was one of his fares from the airport. Lluis was then driving a cab to pay his way through college. Julian was on a stopover, so he wasn’t going to have much time in Barcelona. He had asked Lluis what he should do, what he should see if he had only one day in the city. Lluis had so much to say, so many ideas and so much information to exchange that they talked for a considerable time after they reached the hotel. Eventually Julian asked Lluis if he would like to join him for dinner.

“I brought Julian to this same restaurant,” said Lluis. “And we have stayed in touch since then. I think it is everything that has happened to me since that first meeting that made Julian think of me when he was looking for safekeepers for the talismans.”

As we moved from course to course, Lluis told me his story. He had spent his childhood in a tiny village south of Barcelona, along the Mediterranean coast. When he was fourteen, his family moved to the city.

“That was such an adventure for me. From a sleepy little village to this.” Lluis swept his hand in front of him. “I know that it is not such a common thing for a young boy, but I loved the galleries. And the history. But most of all, I loved the streets. To be able to walk down La Rambla and see a Miró mosaic, right there, on the ground in front of you. Or to come across a Picasso sculpture, or some medieval church or bit of Roman wall as you wandered through the Barri Gòtic. I would take my bike and spend my spare time crisscrossing the city, to see what I could see.”

When Lluis finished high school, there was much debate in the family about the direction he should take. His father, a businessman, wanted him to become a lawyer. His mother, whose family, like Chava’s, had never attended university, didn’t care as long as he went to school.

Eventually it was an aunt who suggested that he should channel his knowledge and love of the city into a college program in tourism and the hospitality industry.

“My father was disappointed. ‘No ambition,’ he said. He really wanted me to be an attorney, or at least some kind of professional. A neurosurgeon, maybe. Or an orthodontist.”

“An electrical engineer?” I said.

“That would do. But a hotel manager? To my dad, that didn’t quite cut it. Owning the hotel, yes. Working for it, no.”

Lluis tried to ignore his dad. He enrolled, went to classes and drove a cab to pay for it all. When he was done, he got a position in the hotel I was now staying at. He worked as assistant desk manager. Then assistant concierge. Then head concierge.

“It wasn’t long after that I moved into upper management. I was the youngest hotel manager in the city.”

But then, at the end of a very long day, Lluis walked out of the hotel and saw an old friend from his taxi-driving days opening the door of his cab for a hotel guest. He smiled at Lluis and waved, then hopped in the cab and drove off. Lluis watched with a heavy heart as the tail-lights disappeared down the street. Lluis had got to work that morning before the sun was up. He was leaving just as the sun slipped down the horizon. He had barely left his office all day; he hadn’t once stepped outside. It felt as if he had spent his work hours in some sort of suspended animation. And all the time, the world was spinning. Clouds were moving across the sky, birds were calling, people were moving back and forth through the city. The whole place was alive, while he had been without a pulse.

“I had never felt that way when I drove that cab. I always felt energetic, alive, a part of the world. At that moment, on that sidewalk, standing in my expensive suit and freshly polished shoes, I made a decision. I would resign from the hotel. I would go back to the only job I had ever really loved. I would drive a cab.”

Lluis paused and took a sip of his wine.

“And you are happy? Was it the right decision?” I asked.

“Absolutely.”

“Is your father still disappointed?” I asked.

“Oh yes,” said Lluis. “We don’t speak of it anymore, but he treats me as if

I'm doing a stint in prison. And you know what the irony is, Jonathan? What really saddens me? This is a man who hates what he does. His own father forced him into the family business, made him take over when my grandfather retired. And every day that my father has run that business has been an agony to him. He swore he'd never make any of his children join the company. He's just counting the days till he can retire and sell the place."

Lluis was staring at the tabletop, shaking his head. Just then the waiter came by and put our desserts in front of us. When he left, I looked back at Lluis.

"Why doesn't your father walk away right now?" I asked.

"Well," said Lluis, "as you might imagine, because he hates it so much, he isn't very good at it. It's like a joke one of my customers told me: How do you make a small fortune in a bad economy?"

I shook my head.

"Start with a *large* one," said Lluis. We both laughed. Then Lluis's smile faded.

"The company isn't worth much anymore, but my father slogs along each day, hoping he can rebuild it and retire a wealthy man. But at this point, I have more chance of riches than he does."

We were quiet for a moment. Lluis picked a strawberry out of his fruit salad but then let it drop back into his bowl.

"So Julian gave you this talisman because you chose to do something you love?" I asked. It didn't seem like a perfect fit: is doing what you love necessarily the same thing as doing "your best work"?

"No, I don't think that's exactly why I was given this particular talisman," said Lluis. "I think Julian gave me this one because of a promise I made to myself that day on the side walk. I knew that my friends and family would question my decision. And I decided that I never wanted to feel apologetic about my work. I always wanted to feel proud of myself. And the only way to do that would be to do the very best job I could."

Lluis looked across at me and smiled.

"That young cabbie who almost hit us today—he doesn't understand how to drive well. He thinks that to get your passengers where they are going as

quickly as possible you have to speed, take foolish chances. He doesn't realize that the fastest way to move between point A and point B is to know the city—to choose the best route and to avoid the problem areas. That's what I do. There isn't a street or alleyway I don't know. But being the best cabbie I can be is more than just driving efficiently. When I am taking visitors around Barcelona, I can answer any question they put to me—what restaurant serves the best *fideuà*, what are the hours of the Museum of Contemporary Art, where is the finest place to shop for antiques? And if a customer gets off a plane at twelve at night, craving an American-style hotdog, I know where to take him.

“Julian gave the talisman to me because I believe with all my heart that a job is just a job only if you see it as just a job. Some may say I'm ‘just a taxi driver.’ But to me, I help visitors create memories that enrich their lives. I have the chance to show people some decency in a world where so many among us long for more human connections. I get to put smiles on the faces of my customers—and leave them better than I found them. In my mind, work is a vehicle for discovering more of our gifts, displaying more of our potential and being of use to other human beings.”

Our coffee had arrived now, and we both fell silent as we took our first sips. I don't know what Lluís was thinking about, but my thoughts were with my dad, back in the classroom so many years ago.

Before we parted for the night, Lluís offered to share more of his genius. He would pick me up in the morning and give me a tour of his city. We agreed to meet at eight o'clock.

When the alarm went off at six a.m. the next morning, I almost rolled over and went back to sleep. But I thought of that word I had written in my journal: *push-ups*. I lumbered out of bed and staggered to my luggage. I had packed a set of workout clothes. Whenever I traveled for business I did this—the shorts, T-shirt, gym shoes and socks invariably remaining in their state of readiness until I unpacked them again back at home. But this morning, instead of lying in bed and thinking up reasons not to go to the hotel gym, I got up and pulled on the clothes before my body had the opportunity to object. I was more than my limitations, I was learning. And it seemed to me that all the excuses I used to make were nothing more than lies that my fears had been trying to sell me. I shuffled into the bathroom, brushed my teeth, splashed

some cold water on my face and then grabbed my hotel key and headed out the door. It wasn't until twenty minutes later—jogging on the treadmill, my eyes firmly glued on a TV newscast I couldn't understand—that my brain woke up and I became fully aware of what I was doing. The first thing my functioning brain did was congratulate myself.

After my run, I did the push-ups I'd promised in the journal and a few sit-ups on the incline board. Then I headed back to my room to get ready.

After an indulgently long shower, I got dressed and headed to the lobby. The head concierge was not on duty yet, but the assistant concierge directed me to a café on the corner that was supposed to have the best coffee around.

While I ate my breakfast, I went through my messages. There was a conciliatory note from Nawang assuring me that she was keeping me in the loop and saying how much she was looking forward to my return. There were a host of other forwarded and cc-ed notes, making me wonder if Nawang had belatedly realized that she had dropped me from the correspondence thread. I responded to most, if only to let everyone know I was still kicking. And then I returned to Tessa's note.

I read it and reread it, but no amount of reviewing it was going to help. I just didn't know how to respond. Instead, I pulled out the journal Julian had given me. Maybe writing out my thoughts would help clarify things. The truth was that Tessa had been on my mind—a lot. But it was also true that the idea of encouraging her—the thought of starting a new relationship—terrified me and filled me with guilt. I was still married, after all. But how long would that last? Certainly in the months after Annisha had asked me to leave, I thought of the separation as only a temporary arrangement. I knew that Annisha was trying to force me to reconsider my priorities, but I had assumed the separation would force *her* to accept that what we had together was better than life apart. Now I wasn't so sure that Annisha would ever see that. Her frustration and anger had softened, but it seemed to be replaced with sadness and resignation—not regret. Did that mean she had moved on? Was it over?

And if it was, what could be so wrong about seeing Tessa? Maybe it was the workplace romance thing. No one ever *recommends* that. Or was it just the fear of something new, of change or the unknown? What had Julian said in that note he wrote about the grinning-skull talisman—embrace your fears? Maybe that was what I should do here—face the nerve-racking agony of

asking someone out. After all, it had worked for me before. I closed the journal and put my pen back in my pocket, suddenly lost in an onslaught of memory.

I FIRST NOTICED ANNISHA in my elective ancient history course. I had taken it because it was the only half-credit course I could find that fit into my engineering schedule. It was not an uninteresting class, but what kept me coming to the lectures was the girl who sat near the front of the room, on the right side. I tried to sit as close to her as possible while still far enough away that I could get a good look at her profile if she turned her head. She had almond-shaped eyes and long, glossy-black hair. And even when she wasn't smiling, her face had a cheerful expression. She didn't say much in class, but when she did, she was always worth listening to. I spent the whole year wondering how I might strike up a conversation with her, with no success. By the time the final exam rolled around, I realized I had blown my chance. Since she was in arts and I was in engineering, the odds that we would have another class together again, or even cross paths, were negligible. I spent my summer in an orgy of recrimination and self-loathing.

Third year unfolded with no Annisha sightings. I had a couple of unsuccessful relationships and another lonely summer. Then, in my senior year, the gods smiled on me.

During the first week back at school, my roommates and I headed to the campus bar on Friday night. It was something of a ritual—checking out the new waitresses. To our disappointment, we ended up at a table with a male server. There were a few familiar faces among the wait staff, a few new girls, but it wasn't until I headed for the bathroom that I noticed the woman serving in the back corner. It was Annisha. When I got back to my table, I leaned over to Evan and asked him to look at the girl serving near the bar. He raised himself from his seat and peered across the room just as Annisha turned in our direction.

“Hmm,” he said, “what ... do ... I ... think?” He settled back into his chair. “What I think is ... she's *waaay* out of your league.”

It wasn't the response I was looking for. I was hoping he might say something so glowing that I would be propelled past my fear, or something that made it clear that I would have to move before he did. But he slumped in

front of his beer and smirked at me. “Honestly, Jonathan. Forget it,” he said unhelpfully.

I spent the evening nursing my beer and summoning my courage. As my roommates stood to leave, I told them that I had to go to the bathroom and they should head home without me. Evan looked over at me and raised an eyebrow.

“Yeah, good luck with that,” he said as he hauled on his jacket. His tone suggested luck had little to do with it—I needed nothing less than divine intervention.

I could see Annisha sitting at a table near the bar. Her section was empty. She appeared to be counting her tips. I walked over and hovered near the table, but she didn’t seem to notice I was there.

“Hi,” I said eventually.

“Oh, hi.” She smiled when she looked up, and kept smiling when she saw it was me. Either she was very nice or it was a good sign. Maybe both.

“Sorry to bug you,” I said. “Umm. I think you were in my ancient history class in second year?”

Annisha tilted her head to one side and paused, as if in thought. After a moment she said, “The engineer, right?” She said it slowly, as if she was still searching her memory as she spoke.

“Right, right,” I said. “It was my elective.”

I realized that I had started to shift my weight from foot to foot. I forced myself to stand still. Then I blurted it out.

“I was just wondering if you wanted to go out for coffee sometime?”

She was still smiling, but she didn’t respond right away. She was clearly weighing the idea.

“This is kind of a busy week,” she said. “I’m catching up with a lot of friends I haven’t seen since last year.”

I started nodding my head, composing my response, trying to think of something to say that would make it sound as if I really didn’t care that she didn’t want to see me.

“But next week I should have time.” She was ripping a small piece of paper from the receipts piled in front of her. She wrote a phone number on it and handed it to me.

“My name is Annisha, by the way,” she said. “I’m sorry. I’ve forgotten yours.”

LLUIS SHOWED UP in front of the hotel right at eight a.m. He wasn’t in his taxi.

“I thought we could start by walking,” he said. “I love to drive, but walking is the best way to see the city.”

Lluis had convinced me the previous night that I should spend what little time I had in Barcelona looking at the architecture. He claimed it was one of Barcelona’s major contributions to the world of art.

“We have nine buildings that are UNESCO heritage sites. And there is Gaudí and all that wonderful Catalan modernism architecture you saw yesterday afternoon. But architecture isn’t some artifact of the past in Barcelona. We care deeply about our buildings still today.”

Lluis explained that the city was home to more than five thousand working architects. “I challenge you to find more architects per capita anywhere else in the world,” he said. I didn’t take him up on that. He told me about buildings by Jean Nouvel, Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry, Richard Rogers. Gehry’s was the only name I recognized, but I didn’t like to admit that.

With just a short break for an early lunch, we spent the morning and afternoon walking and walking. Occasionally we hopped on a bus, but most of the time we strolled along, our necks craned up, our heads moving back and forth to take in the buildings around us.

We saw Gaudí’s La Pedrera apartments. With their wavy walls, look of water-worn stone, and seaweedy iron balconies, it made me think of the lost city of Atlantis. Surely a city at the bottom of the ocean would look like this. We wandered through Parc Güell with the mushroom-topped gatehouse, the mosaic lizard sculpture, the circular tile-adorned esplanade. And we ended our day back where we had been last evening, in front of Sagrada Família, Gaudí’s unfinished testament to his vision and his faith, according to Lluis.

“I love this place,” said Lluís thoughtfully, gazing up at the four soaring spires. “Did I tell you that my great-grandfather worked on it?”

“Really?” I said. “Was he a stone mason?”

“No,” said Lluís. “Just a laborer, I believe. I suspect he spent a lot of time pushing wheelbarrows and hauling bricks. But you know, like Julian’s note says, there is no insignificant work. I like to think of him sweating and dirty, looking up at the end of a long day, seeing this magnificent church rising above him and knowing that without his muscle and his time, something like this would simply not happen.”

IT WAS LATE AFTERNOON when Lluís walked me back to the hotel. He had some errands to run, and we both wanted to make it an early evening. My flight left at eight the next morning, and Lluís insisted on picking me up at five to get me there.

Once in my suite, I ordered dinner from room service. I wrote a couple of notes in my journal, and then pulled out my phone and composed a short message to Adam. The longing I had felt for him in Mexico lingered. I wondered how I could have gone so many days without phoning or visiting him when I was home. I started the note with a plaintive “I miss you so much, buddy.” But then I thought of Adam’s sad eyes when I had kissed him goodbye before flying to Istanbul. I erased the sentence. I wanted to be there for him, even if only with a note, rather than underlining my absence. Instead I wrote about the Temple of the Magician and about the Mayan ruins I had seen. I wrote about the sounds of the birds in the trees and the pumas that roam the forests of the Yucatán—and how I was mighty glad I didn’t meet any. And then I told him I had just spent the day in Barcelona. *Remember last summer when we made castles on the beach and we dribbled wet sand to make the tops tall and pointy? That’s what the church I saw yesterday looked like. It was covered with spiky towers. It was designed by a guy named Antoni Gaudí, and I bet that when he was a boy, he made sand castles just like you.*

I paused for a second, thinking about my next sentence. Then I wrote, *When I get back, I will take you to the beach for a weekend.* I knew the dangers of making promises, but I was determined to keep this one. It would break my heart, as well as Adam’s, if I didn’t.

THE EARLY MORNING LIGHT was still breaking across the horizon when Lluís

let me out of the taxi at the terminal the next day. He was bright and cheerful as usual, but he obviously noticed that I was still engulfed in my early morning fog. As he pulled my suitcase from the trunk, he looked at me with concern. “Are you sure you have everything, Jonathan?” he said. I patted my pocket to check for my wallet and passport, and then I had a momentary rush of panic. The talismans. Was the pouch around my neck? I couldn’t feel it. I opened my jacket and patted my shirt front, and sure enough, there it was—a lumpy little bag lying next to my skin. How could I have missed it? I was surprised that while it was heavier than it ever had been, the leather string did not seem to be cutting into my neck anymore. I took the pouch out from under my shirt and shoved it in my pocket. I would have to stick it in one of the plastic tubs at security.

ONCE I HAD CHECKED IN and reached the departures lounge, I found a quiet corner and dialed Annisha. It would be late—midnight, I guessed—but I was longing to talk with her, to hear some news of Adam.

When Annisha answered the phone, I apologized about the hour, but she sounded relieved to hear from me. “I’m so glad you called,” she said. “There was a little incident at school today that I wanted to talk about with you. Apparently—”

Annisha stopped. I could hear a tiny voice in the background.

“Mommy,” Adam was saying, “I can’t sleep.”

“Oh dear,” I could hear Annisha reply. “Come here and sit with Mommy. Do you want to talk to Daddy about what’s keeping you up?”

When Adam got on the phone, I asked him how he was.

“Fine,” he said in a quiet voice.

“What’s new?” I tried again.

“Nothing,” he said. Then I heard Annisha in the background.

“You wanted to tell Daddy what happened at school today, remember?”

With a little coaxing on my part, and a little prompting on Annisha’s, Adam told me that one of the second-grade students had tripped him, pushed him down and taken his granola bar at lunch.

“What did you do?” I asked. Adam said he’d told his teacher, Ms.

Vanderwees, who was on yard duty. Ms. Vanderwees sent the older boy to the office.

“Did that ever happen to you?” asked Adam. “When you were little, were other kids ever bullies?”

I told Adam all about Phil Stefak, who stole all my baseball cards and teased me about my glasses. I told him how Phil used to follow me home from school and shout strings of insults. I explained that I had been afraid to tell anyone, but finally when Phil actually grabbed my glasses from my face and stepped on them, I told my teacher. I never really found out what happened. But after that, Phil only glared at me. He never touched me again. We talked for a long time before Annisha took the phone back from Adam. I looked at my watch.

“Sorry,” I said to Annisha. “You must both be exhausted.”

“That’s okay,” said Annisha. “He really needed to talk to you. But I should try to get him back to sleep now.”

“Sure,” I said. “Just one more thing—do you know what the school is doing about this kid?”

Annisha told Adam to head back to his room, and she would join him there in a minute. Then she told me that Ms. Vanderwees had phoned her after lunch. This wasn’t the first time the boy had bullied other students. The principal called his parents and asked them to come in for a talk. Ms. Vanderwees also said she would go out for yard duty as much as she could in the coming week so she could keep an eye on things. And she had talked to the whole class about being helpful bystanders when they saw another child being hurt in the school yard.

“She is taking it really seriously,” said Annisha. “I felt a lot better after I talked with her.”

Annisha and I chatted a little bit more about Adam and school and then I said goodnight.

THE DEPARTURE LOUNGE was quite crowded now. Most of the seats were full. Men and women with briefcases and laptops. A few parents with small children. And across from me, a teenage girl, earphones on her head, slumped in her seat, glaring at her mother who was offering her a piece of gum.

I thought of my surly teenage self. My parents' patience with me. I felt a familiar ache beneath my ribs. I missed my father.

Sitting there in the Barcelona airport, thinking about my son being watched over by Ms. Vanderwees, remembering my dad and my own childhood, it struck me that my five-year-old self had got it right. My dad was a classroom genius, working in a truly noble profession. He had achieved the greatness Lluís aspired to. I had a lot of work to do if I wanted to come close to being the man he became.



CHAPTER EIGHT

WHILE I WAN IN SPAIN, Julian had sent me some information about my next two destinations. The first one would land me back in North America, sending me to Cape Breton Island, on the east coast of Canada.

So, with a connection in London and one in Halifax, and more than sixteen hours after Lluís had left me at the airport in Barcelona, I landed in Sydney, in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. It was early evening. As Julian had promised, a rental car was waiting for me. I was relieved to find it had a GPS. I realized that I had no real idea about how to get from Sydney to St. Ann's.

"It'll take you about an hour," said the fellow at the rental agency. The safekeeper here was a woman named Mary McNeil. I sent her a message to tell her I was on my way.

As I pulled out of Sydney and hit the highway, I was reminded of what I had seen of the Yucatán Peninsula. Not the weather, or the houses, or the vegetation. No, here the air was crisp and cool; the firs and balsams and birches, thick and deep green. And water. There was water everywhere. The road twisted and turned—I could see from the GPS that my route was almost circuitous, but after every few miles of trees and woods, an expanse of water—some bay or lake—would flicker into view. What reminded me of the Yucatán was the sparseness of the population on Cape Breton. Like leaving Mérida, as soon as I exited Sydney I felt as if I had left people behind. I drove past vast stretches where hardly anyone lived. A house or two might pop up on the roadside only to slide into the rearview mirror, vanishing into a sea of trees. There was something, however, about traveling through this remote place to meet someone, even if that someone was a stranger, that was comforting. At the end of this journey, I thought, a person is waiting for me.

Mary McNeil and Angus Macdonald lived just off a scenic highway called the Cabot Trail, across the road from St. Ann's Bay. In a message, Mary had

said I would see a mailbox at the side of the road, and a post with a number, but I wouldn't be able to see the house until I'd driven some distance down the lane. Luckily, the GPS did the work for me, and before long I was climbing up a gravel road, thick bush on either side, the pitch of a roof peeking above the trees ahead of me. She must have been looking out the window because as soon I pulled the car behind the two trucks at the side of the house, a tall woman with salt-and-pepper hair was on the front steps waving at me. That had to be Mary, I thought.

By the time I had stepped out of the car, Mary was by my side, as was a man who I assumed was her husband, Angus. He was slightly shorter than Mary, definitely rounder, and with a warm smile that matched her own. Neither grabbed me like Lluís had, but Angus patted me on the shoulder and Mary held my hand in both of hers as she introduced herself. They seemed happy to see me, but Mary's eyes were pinched, as if with concern. "You must be so tired," she said. "Angus, Angus," she continued with some alarm, gesturing at the backseat of the car. In the next moment, Angus and I were wrestling over my baggage in what must have looked like a cartoon dust-up. I finally relented and let him carry everything into the house for me.

"I understand from Julian that you've been on quite a journey," Mary said. "So we've got a little supper ready for you, and then you can disappear to bed if you'd like. I imagine it's almost midnight Spain time."

Mary and Angus led me into the living room. It was eclectically furnished, and there were a couple of enormous canvases on the wall. One looked like a vaguely aquatic scene—brilliant turquoise and green with dark shadows dancing across the color. The other was a pastiche of colored blocks that seemed to rearrange themselves before my eyes. Mary pointed me to a deep chair that faced a bank of windows. When I sat down, I immediately noticed the most spectacular thing in the room. A great wave of green swept before me and at its end a thin strip of dark blue—St. Ann's Bay, and the waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

"Sit, sit," said Angus. "I'll just get things on the table and then call you both."

Mary brought me a beer and then sat down next to me. She asked a few questions about my travels.

"It sounds as if you've been very busy. You may just want to rest

tomorrow, but Angus and I were thinking of doing a few things with you.”

I was not surprised. Antoine in Paris was, so far, the only safekeeper who left me to my own devices. I had mixed feelings. After sitting on so many long flights, it was probably good to be busy. But I wasn't sure if I felt like a lot of planned activity.

Mary said that if I was up to it, she was hoping to have a small dinner party in my honor the next night.

“Nothing fancy,” she assured me. “Just a few friends and relatives. And lobsters. It's lobster season, so I thought you might enjoy that.”

I smiled and said that sounded delightful, but in my heart, I wasn't so sure. Mary also said she was planning to spend the day getting ready for the party, while Angus drove me around the Cabot Trail—a loop of roadway that circled the mountains of the Cape Breton Highlands on the northern end of the island.

“It's beautiful,” Mary said. “I've lived here almost my whole life, and I never tire of it.”

I said I hadn't done that before and would love to see this part of the world. “I've heard it reminds people of the green hills of Ireland,” I said.

Mary nodded. “Yes, but somehow wilder. At least that's how it strikes me.”

I had been traveling now for about two weeks, but in truth I had lost any real sense of time. I was tired and homesick, but my anxiety about work and all the urgency I felt about getting back to it were becoming strangely muted. I knew I should be worried, but it was as if I no longer had the energy. I might have insisted that I fly back out the next day, I might have tried to hurry the trip along, but I no longer wanted to do that. A long drive might be just the thing.

It was only a few minutes later when Angus's voice came from the kitchen.

“Time to chow down,” he called out. Mary picked up my glass and led the way.

The kitchen was huge, but not fancy. A pine harvest table stretched out on one side of the room—circled by eight high-back chairs. An old-fashioned sideboard was crammed with bits of antique china and bright, hand-blown glass bowls. There were some colorful prints on the walls around the table.

Angus placed a steaming pan of lasagna on a trivet in the center of the table. There was already a green salad there, and a basket of bread.

“I don’t know how hungry you are, Jonathan, so I’ll just let you help yourself,” he said.

I was not in the mood to talk about myself, and I knew the best way to deflect any demand for that was by asking the questions. Angus, I learned, was a dentist with a practice in Bad-deck. He had grown up in Glace Bay, the son of a coal miner. In fact, all the men in his family had worked the mines, until his dad’s youngest brother headed out to Moncton in New Brunswick, where he eventually became an accountant. Angus had met Mary when the two of them were in university, but they hadn’t dated until they were in their thirties. Mary was an artist and worked in a studio up the hill, behind the house.

“It has the most beautiful light,” said Mary.

I asked them how they came to know Julian. Mary told me she had met him many, many years ago, when she was a young artist working in New York City.

“Julian bought a number of my pieces,” she said. “This was when he was a litigation lawyer and was spending money like a drunken sailor.” Mary laughed at that. “We lost touch for a while, and then after I’d moved back here, he found me.”

“He must have been a big fan of your work to track you here,” I said.

“No,” said Mary. “This was after he had returned from Sivana. He got in touch with me just to talk.”

I thought about my old high school friends, my college roommates, all the people I had inadvertently lost touch with over the years. And then there were the people I had deliberately ignored. I felt a twinge in my chest. Juan fell into that second category. After my lunch with David and Sven, Juan had come to see me a few times. He was confused. David and Sven had accosted him with an avalanche of demands. Set up nearly impossible goals with completely unrealistic deadlines. They asked for reports and accounting so frequently that it was almost a joke. Except Juan was not laughing. He became worried, anxious and stressed. Each time he talked with me, I claimed complete ignorance. When he asked me to intervene, to act as an unofficial liaison

between the design department and upper management, I waffled. Eventually I began to avoid him.

Juan was not a stupid man. He could see that I had no desire to get involved. He stopped coming by my office. But I would see him in the hallways, looking troubled and gaunt, deep lines carved down his face, his eyes pouchy and sad. One of the last times I spoke with him, he had caught me by surprise in the company parking lot.

“Ah, Jonathan, I know you know what’s going on,” he said sadly. “And I know there is nothing anyone can do to help. But I’m a fifty-five-year-old man. I can’t afford to retire yet, but if I quit... Well, who is going to hire an old guy like me?” Then he climbed into his car and pulled out of the lot.

It was only a month later when the news buzzed through the office. Juan’s car had flown off the road the previous evening on his way home from work. He was dead by the time the ambulance arrived.

THE LASAGNA WAS DELICIOUS, but the combination of the rich food and the time difference was making my eyes heavy. Angus cleared the dishes from the table, but Mary stayed sitting.

“I know you need to get to bed now,” she said. “But I’d like to give you the talisman tonight. Actually, I was going to give it to you tomorrow just before the party. I decided to have the party because of the talisman. I thought it would be appropriate—the right kind of way to celebrate the hand-off. But I know me. I’ll be flying in all directions at once tomorrow, getting dinner ready, so now might be a better time.”

Mary took a small padded envelope from her pocket and put it in the center of the table. But she kept her hand over it.

“Before you open this,” said Mary, “may I see the other talismans?”

I was so used to the feel of the soft suede on my skin, the gentle weight against my chest. I was surprised by how reluctant I was to lose the comfort of the pouch, to take it off. But I drew it out from under my shirt and lifted it from my neck. I opened the top and very gently slid the talismans onto the table.

Mary looked carefully at the small assortment.

“Julian must think very highly of you, must care about you deeply, to

entrust you with this task,” she said.

“Well, I don’t know,” I said. “He and my mother are close. But I don’t really know him.”

“But he clearly knows *you*,” said Mary. She was smiling softly. She reached toward the center of the table and picked up the grinning skull.

“Embrace your fears,” she said. I nodded.

She put the skull down and reached for the crane. “Kindness.” She placed the crane in front of her, next to the skull.

“Small daily improvements.” She was running her fingers over the little pyramid.

She put the red clay piece on the table and picked up the paintbrush. Like I had done when I first got it, she twirled the dark wood between her fingers.

“All work can be a means of creative self-expression,” she said.

“How do you know all this?” I asked her.

Mary looked up at me and tilted her head, as if trying to decide something.

“These talismans,” she eventually said, waving her hand over the small pile on the table, “there is only one of each of these things. But they are symbols, after all. Julian has talked about their wisdom for years. And I’ve been listening.”

Finally, Mary picked up the sun and moon amulet.

“Ah,” she said. “Live your authentic life. This is a very good one. This one is so important, but few people make use of this truth.”

She put the piece down on the table, and looked at me.

“Can I ask you something, Jonathan? Something personal?” I didn’t really feel I could say no.

“Do you think you are being true to yourself? Do you think you are leading the life you are meant to live—the one that most honors the real you, celebrates your deepest values and respects your highest dreams?”

I blanched, lifted my tea mug to my mouth to stall a little. Mary was looking at me intently. I couldn’t fathom why she would be so interested in

me or the answer to that question. I took a sip of tea, and then put my cup back down.

“I ... I don’t know,” I stammered. “I’ve been trying to figure that out during this trip.”

“I understand,” said Mary. “It’s a tough one.”

“I mean, I think maybe I’m not,” I offered. “But I’m just not sure what my authentic life would look like. I am beginning to rethink my work, but I’m not sure about the rest of it.”

Mary nodded.

“Since I’ve been prying into your life, maybe I should tell you a bit more about mine.”

“Sure,” I said. Anything not to have to talk more about myself.

Mary had told me earlier that she was a painter, but she said that her story wasn’t one about rebellion. She hadn’t become an artist because her family had wanted her to become an accountant. Nor had she had an epiphany one day while working at a nine-to-five job that her real passion was art. She had always known she wanted to be an artist, even as a child. It’s what made her happy. Drawing, painting, sculpting, making things, it’s all she ever wanted to do.

“Like Picasso,” I said. I was remembering what Lluís had told me about his childhood. But Picasso’s father was an artist, too. He encouraged the young Picasso. I asked Mary if her parents were artists.

“Good grief no. My dad had a fishing boat; my mom worked part-time at a grocery store,” Mary said. “But they are amazing people, and they thought it was a great gift that I had something I loved so much. They just wanted me to keep doing it.”

“And they weren’t concerned about how you would make a living?” I asked.

Mary laughed. “My dad used to always say, ‘Well, you’d be hard-pressed to make less money than your mother or me— but go ahead and try!’”

Her family was never affluent, but they were joyful. The prospect of being a starving artist didn’t scare Mary. She won a scholarship to study fine arts in

university in Halifax. Then she graduated and moved to Manhattan. She waited tables, and she painted. She worked her way into the art scene there. She started to exhibit. Eventually she was able to quit waitressing and paint full-time. She worked hard at making her living by painting and printmaking, but she was lucky, too.

“Right place, right time, I guess,” Mary said.

“So you were living your authentic life, being true to yourself and all of that,” I said.

Mary looked into her mug for a few seconds before she spoke. “Well, that’s the interesting thing. I really thought I was, all those years in Manhattan. I was young, successful. I had friends, an active social life. It was exciting.”

“So what wasn’t real about it? What was wrong?” I said. Now she had me curious.

“What a lot of people don’t realize is that the art scene can be pretty competitive. You know, who gets into what galleries, who gets attention from the critics, who’s got the buzz and who doesn’t. There can be a lot of shuffling for position, a lot of infighting and backbiting.”

I must have looked surprised because Mary nodded her head and said, “Really.”

Mary explained that another young artist, whose style and approach was similar to hers, arrived in Manhattan from Los Angeles. Suddenly he was at every gallery opening, every party, every artistic event. And wherever he was, he would make a beeline to Henri, the man who ran the galleries that were displaying and selling Mary’s work. Mary knew Henri wouldn’t take on the new artist while he represented her because his style was too similar to Mary’s. But that didn’t mean he might not drop Mary and take on the fresh face.

“That just sent me into a tailspin,” Mary said.

Henri had made it possible for her to stop waiting on tables. And with his help, she had become the darling of the art critics for a while. But she could easily slip back into obscurity. Mary realized then that while she owed Henri a great deal, she didn’t trust him. He was a canny businessman, never bogged down by loyalty or guilt. She could see she was slipping from his favor. And

she could see that Henri wasn't the only one who thought Mary's star was fading. Some of Mary's friends stopped calling so often. There were dinner parties that she was not invited to. She dropped off the A-list for some gallery openings. One night at a film premiere, Mary found herself sharing a piece of gossip she'd heard about the Los Angeles painter with a writer for a local arts magazine.

"It was something about his time in California, something that reflected badly on his artistic integrity. I told the writer because I thought it might make him look like a flash in the pan. A poseur who wasn't going to be in the art world for long. I thought it would make me look like a more serious talent by comparison."

Mary went home that night disgusted with herself. She had never bad-mouthed anyone, and her behavior made her feel small, petty, desperate.

"I kept asking myself why I had done it. What had got me to that place," Mary said. "And that led me to take a long, hard look at the people in my life."

She realized that the people fell into two categories, more or less. The people whom she trusted and loved, who were true friends, who made her feel secure and happy, who always brought out the best in her. And then there was another group. People who might interest or entertain her—who she might be attracted to for all sorts of reasons but were also negative in some way. Some of them were funny but mean-spirited. (I thought of my old roommate Evan, and his "good luck with that.") Some of them interesting but angry. Some clearly saw everything as a competition—and because they were always comparing themselves with her, she compared herself with them. And then there were some who, through no fault of their own, really, just had an overall bad effect on her. Whenever she went out with one woman she always drank too much. Another guy was such a pessimist that she felt dispirited for days after she talked with him. Another was so laid-back that she would find herself sleeping in until noon if she spent too much time with him.

"You know," Mary said a little sadly, "Julian was part of that second group back then."

Mary decided that she needed to spend more time with the first group and less with the latter. But then she realized something else. There were a lot of people missing from both lists.

“My family was so important to me, but I hardly ever got to see them.”

She knew that when she was with her mother and father, her brothers and sisters, her aunts and uncles, she felt most herself. They brought out the best in her.

“I realized that my authentic life was in art, but it was also with my family. Living life in a way that is right for you is sometimes about finding all the different elements you need.”

Mary decided to go back to Cape Breton but not to Mabou, the small town where her parents lived. Instead she settled outside Baddeck, in St. Ann’s, because at a SoHo art show she had met and befriended Christine, a wonderful sculptor who lived there. The town was home to the Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts, and Christine had told her that the small community featured a number of accomplished artists and artisans.

“I knew it was also important for me to be surrounded by people who shared my passion, and who would inspire my own creativity, maybe push me a little. And that is why Julian asked me to take care of this particular talisman.”

Mary pushed the padded envelope toward me. I tore open the top and pulled out a leaf of paper. With it came a small piece of carved wood. It was only an inch wide and half an inch high. And it was two hands, holding on to each other.

I unfolded the creamy parchment.

Choose Your Influences Well

We do not move through our days alone or apart from the world around us. And so we must always be aware of the things and the people we allow into our lives. It’s a mark of wisdom to choose to spend time in those places that inspire and energize you and associate with those people who elevate and uplift you. Whether in our work or within our personal lives, these most positive friends and peers will inspire us to be our greatest selves and to lead our largest lives.

I folded the paper and slipped it into my pocket.

“I suppose tomorrow night I’m going to meet some of the positive people in your life,” I said.

“Exactly,” said Mary. She was slipping the talismans gently into the pouch. “Julian is one of them now. I just wish he could be here.”

It was only ten o’clock, but it was three in the morning Barcelona time. Mary handed me the pouch and then showed me to a bedroom on the second floor.

“The bathroom is just down the hall, and I’ve put towels at the foot of your bed,” she said. “Sleep well, and I’ll see you tomorrow.”

WHEN I WOKE UP the next morning, I felt as if I were crawling back to the world. I lay in bed for several minutes trying to figure out where I was. The smell of coffee and cinnamon wafted through the bedroom door. That’s when I remembered—Cape Breton.

When I got into the kitchen, Angus and Mary were both busy at the counters. “Please help yourself to coffee,” said Mary. “The pancakes are almost ready—buttermilk apple.”

There were blue pottery mugs beside the coffeepot. I took one and filled it up. The coffee was rich and strong and just what I needed. That’s one of the things I had missed at the hotel in Barcelona and the inn in Kyoto. The warm aroma of break- fast drifting through a house.

Just as Mary placed a heaping platter of pancakes in the middle of the table, the phone rang. Angus picked it up, and almost immediately his brow creased.

“How many? Okay. Any other injuries? You’re sure? All right, then. Keep the ice pack on his mouth, and I’ll meet you at the office in half an hour.”

Angus put the phone down and looked over at Mary. “Connor Ashton. Fell off his bike and broke his front teeth.”

Then Angus turned to me. “I’m so sorry, Jonathan. It’s an emergency—I have to rush.”

I told him I understood completely, but my words trailed him as he disappeared out the door.

As Mary and I listened to his truck send gravel flying, Mary lifted some pancakes onto my plate.

“Oh dear,” she sighed. “Now I don’t know what to do. I should take you out, but I’m not sure how to do that and get ready for the dinner.”

It occurred to me that this turn of events, as unfortunate as it was for little Connor Ashton, might just work quite nicely for me. I had a rental car; I could do the drive around the Cabot Trail on my own while Mary did what she had to do. Mary nodded at my suggestion.

“As long as you aren’t afraid of heights, and you like driving, you’ll be fine,” said Mary. “You can’t really get lost. It’s a circle route and only about two hundred miles long. Just stay on the main road, and eventually you’ll end up back here. But you’ll want to stop often—at the lookouts and in some of the towns along the way.”

After breakfast, Mary found a road map, and we sat down together. She circled places on the map, and on a separate piece of paper wrote down names of spots to visit and things to see. It turned into a very long list.

“Oh, I know, you can’t do all this in one day. Pick and choose. And call me if you have any questions.” Mary was filling a water bottle for me and putting some fruit and a sandwich in a bag. I told her not to worry about a lunch. I would stop in somewhere.

“Well,” she said, “once you get into the highlands, you can drive for quite a while without finding any place to get food. You don’t have to eat this, but it’s there if you need it.”

IT WAS STILL EARLY MORNING as my car carved through the Margaree Valley. Mary had suggested that I follow the Cabot Trail clockwise so that I would be on the inside lane when I started driving up and down the outside of the mountains. Right now, I was being enveloped by deep green hills on either side of me. I had driven for twenty minutes and had seen only a couple of cars. A hawk swooped down across the road, and out of the corner of my eye, I caught an occasional movement in the trees. Probably just a squirrel or a bird, but I wondered if I might come across a fox or a deer.

I started to think about Julian’s note about influences and people. And about Mary’s decision about those she wanted to keep in her life. Her stories had made me think about friendships I would like to renew. And I would like to see more of my sister, Kira, and my mom. Kira especially always brought out the best in me. It was as if, in her presence, I remembered how to be someone a younger sister might look up to. And my mother—I took her for granted, I knew that. Her habit of telling me to put on a sweater or to finish

my peas—even once I was grown and a father myself—sometimes had me racing out the door after Sunday dinner as if I were escaping a torture cell. But I also saw what a blessing it was to have been raised in her home. I was beginning to feel grateful for that. When I came through the door after a baseball game, she always asked, “Did you have fun?” instead of “Did you win?” And she managed to find something good to say about everybody—including Uncle Teddy, which was a feat of creativity to rival anything Picasso had pulled off. And when my father died, she showed a strength and bravery I couldn’t have imagined in her before. Even in the early days after his passing, she showed more concern about the loss Kira and I had suffered than about her own. Her influence was certainly one I should return to, I thought.

But were there people who were dragging me down? People who were not positive elements in some way? David and Sven immediately sprang to mind, but I couldn’t think of anyone in my personal life. Even when Annisha and I were fighting ... I might not have behaved well, but was that her influence? Or was I just doing my best to win an argument? Annisha is one of the most optimistic people I know—which is probably why she stuck it out so long while I resisted her wishes at every turn. What about Tessa? She was lively and funny and beautiful. She actually reminded me of Annisha in many ways. I would like to keep her in my life, but in what fashion? I decided that when I next stopped the car, I would belatedly reply to her message. I would tell her the truth: I was in a state of transition; I was trying to figure out my life on many fronts. I appreciated her note, her thoughts, but I would have to talk to her about her proposal when I got back. I needed some time to sort myself out.

IT WAS BEFORE NOON when I entered Cape Breton Highlands National Park. For the next sixty miles the road would wind its way through the edge of the park as it circled the coast. Mary had suggested a short hike I might take at this end of the park. I was looking forward to getting out of the car, stretching my legs and eating my lunch.

I followed the signs for Le Chemin du Buttereau and eventually pulled into a small gravel parking lot. The sign at the foot of the trail said that the walk would take about ninety minutes. I looked around. It was a warm spring day, the sun high in an almost cloudless sky, but the parking lot was empty and there were no signs of anyone else about. Mary had warned me to be careful

of coyotes. They usually didn't come near people, but there had been a recent attack on a hiker. I decided that I would eat my lunch in the car after my hike. Mary had given me a heavy walking stick, just to be on the safe side. I brought only it and the water bottle with me.

The dirt path was narrow and twisted, and it started to climb almost immediately. At some points, as I stepped up to the next tree root or boulder, I felt like I was mounting shallow stairs. The pine trees on either side of me were dense and left the spicy scent of sap lingering in the damp air. Birds called all around me, but other than that, the woods were silent.

Mary had told me that I would climb about two hundred feet over the course of a mile and a quarter before hitting a loop that ran around the top of the hill. "The view is spectacular from there," she said.

What she didn't tell me was that I would come across history as well. About twenty minutes into my climb, a sign appeared at the side of the trail. It announced that on my left I would see the remains of one of the last five homes of Le Buttereau—a French-Canadian farming settlement. I peered down the side of the hill, and sure enough, there among the trees and thick vegetation was a rough stone square—the foundations of a tiny house.

I knew I was in French-Canadian territory—Mary had also suggested I stop in the small Acadian fishing village of Chéticamp before I entered the park to see it firsthand.

So an hour before I started this hike, I had pulled off the high-way and parked my car next to a restaurant on the water side of the road. A few shops and other buildings were wedged within the narrow strip of land between the road and Chéticamp Bay. Mary thought I might want to check out the hooked rugs, which were an area specialty, or to sample some *tchaude*, the local fish stew, but I didn't feel like being indoors. And I wasn't hungry enough to want to stop for a meal. Instead, I walked down the wooden stairs that ran between the shops and followed a boardwalk to a series of small docks. Modest commercial fishing boats, not unlike the one that Ahmet owned, lined the jetty. One dock had a large sign announcing whale-watching cruises. Another small fishing vessel was secured below the sign, near a Zodiac boat. Mary had suggested I might take a whale-watching tour in one of the old boats—the Zodiacs made noise and vibrations that disturbed the marine life. But I had decided that I would spend my time later on a hike instead.

Before I returned to my car, I walked back along the highway, until the restaurants and stores gave way to a line of modest wood-frame houses. A small stretch of sidewalk ran in front of them as the highway traffic sped by on the other side—almost on their doorsteps. Behind them I could see a narrow ribbon of green grass and then the water of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

The Cabot Trail had once been a dirt road. It would have been a good deal narrower than it now was, and these homes would have perched precariously on its edge, the icy salt water lapping at their back doors. Mary had said that Chéticamp and the surrounding area was still French-speaking. The people were descendants of the Acadians who, in the mid-1700s, had been expelled by the British from the Annapolis Valley of mainland Nova Scotia. After the British seized the French settlement of Acadia in 1710, they demanded that the Acadians swear an oath of allegiance to Britain. Most of the Acadians, who had a thriving farming settlement, were not political—more than anything, they wanted to stay apart from the struggles between the French and British empires in North America. A few, however, helped supply the French military fortresses in present-day Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. So, although the vast majority of Acadians had lived peacefully under English rule for decades, the British decided that their presence posed a serious threat and began deporting the Acadians to Europe and to other British colonies. Many of the Acadians who were sent back to France later immigrated to French colonies in North America. The most sizable portion went to Louisiana, their descendants becoming known as Cajuns. I knew that, but Mary also told me that a small number made their way to Cape Breton Island and settled along its northwestern shore. Walking along in front of these small houses, I was struck by how isolated the Acadian settlers of Chéticamp must have been—probably just a few hundred souls clinging to the sea and the rocky expanses of this mountainous island. What would that have been like? Coming from a rural community of thousands, this handful of families would have depended on each other for everything. But if Chéticamp was isolated, what would Le Buttereau have been like?

AS I WALKED around the foundations of Le Buttereau, so crumbled and deteriorated that they looked like stone outcroppings, I tried to picture how the large families survived in such tiny structures. Below the houses were open areas—the remains of farm fields—that stretched down toward the Chéticamp River. It was hard to imagine farming in such a rugged terrain,

spending days on the water in flimsy fishing boats, the way the men of these families did. The signs along the path told me that when the waters were open, the men spent Sunday at home in Le Buttereau but returned to fishing shacks in Chéticamp or La Bloque during the week. In winter, the families might cross the frozen river to reach the town in order to buy supplies or, in later years, to go to school. In the warmer months, they would follow a cart path, the remains of which I had been walking, to get to town.

There could never have been many families on this tip of land. In 1936, there were two families named LeBlanc, along with the Chiassons, the LeBrunns and the Deveaus. Each had between nine and eleven children. Fifty people then.

How different my world was. Hundreds of coworkers, hundreds of friends, a neighborhood that stretched unbroken for miles and miles. There were eighty first-grade students at Adam's school. So many people. I thought of Julian's note: Choose the people in your life well. I *could* choose. So many people in the past wouldn't have had that luxury. No real choice, yet so much would have depended on that handful of people they lived among.

The view from the top of Le Chemin du Buttereau was indeed beautiful—the beach and shores curving down below, the blue waters stretching into the distance. But the stunning scenery was only beginning.

An hour later, as I climbed into the highlands in my rental car, the hairpin turns, the plummeting descents and the harrowing rises made me wonder how anyone without a modern six-cylinder vehicle could have made their way around this terrain. It was clear why this part of the world had stayed so sparsely populated. I stopped at numerous lookouts, gazing out across the ocean or looking back at the deep green mountains. I passed the whale museum in Pleasant Bay, making a mental note that I should come back to this place with Adam. I stopped to take a look at Alexander Graham Bell's summer house near Ingonish Centre. I sat for a long time on the beach at Wreck Cove, watching the waves crash against the pebbly shore. It was late afternoon by the time I pulled into Mary and Angus's driveway.

MARY'S DINNER PARTY PROVED TO BE an extraordinary evening. There were mountains of fresh lobster, and after the table had been cleared, the air filled with the sounds of fiddles and harmonicas. Mary and Angus's friends were energetic, engaged, funny, passionate. They talked about everything from

politics to art, from world affairs to music. But perhaps my favorite conversation was a quiet one I had with Angus's father before all the guests arrived.

I had offered to help Mary and Angus in the kitchen, but Mary shuffled me out into the living room. "Have a beer with Don," she said. "Angus and I work faster if it's just the two of us." Don was not a tall man, but he had the solid burliness of someone who spent his life doing physical labor. His hands were veined and calloused, his shoulders slightly stooped, but there was still a sparkle in his green eyes.

I got us each a bottle of beer from the kitchen. (Don's only word was "tch" when I asked him if he wanted a glass.) Then we both retired to the deep living-room chairs and gazed out at the trees before us. Angus had already told me that his father had been a miner, but I was curious to know what that life had been like.

Don seemed delighted to provide the details.

He had gone down into the mines at thirteen.

"My dad, my uncles, those fellas went down when they was ten. By the time I come along they'd raised the age to four-teen. But we needed the money, eh? I wasn't after waiting. I lied about my age, and my dad and his buddies backed me up."

The boys weren't allowed to dig coal. Instead, young Don sat for twelve hours a day, in the pitch black, waiting for a knock on the huge wooden doors that separated the digging areas from the shafts. "I let the miners in. Let them back out with their full carts."

Don said that once you were old enough to dig and haul coal, the days weren't so lonely. Together the men found ways to make the time pass more quickly. They told jokes and stories. They sang together, folk songs and ballads. But the days were still long. In the winter, the miners went down in the dark and came up in the dark.

"Saw the sun only on Sundays, for months and months," Don said with a laugh.

And then there were the "bumps."

"I came through sixteen of them," said Don, running his hand across his

forehead. The explosions of coal dust and gases trapped in the mines had taken the lives of many, many of his friends and relatives.

“How did you do it?” I was shaking my head, baffled by the horror of working in the mines.

“Don’t get me wrong, b’ye,” said Don. Traces of his Gaelic heritage textured his voice. “It was hard work. But it was a good life.”

“What do you mean?” I asked. “How can you say that?”

Don was silent for a few seconds. Then he tapped his other hand on the arm of the chair and said, “I don’t know that you’d be able to understand it. There’s just something about working with a group of fellas, fellas who hold your life in their hands every day. You come through that first explosion, you bring your buddies to the top, you bury others. Someone digs through the coal to find you, to pull you out. Or you sit trapped down there for hours. Maybe ten of you huddled together. When you go back down after the bump, you never look at these guys the same again. You know you have a bond that will never break. You feel lucky. Blessed.”

“Wow,” I said, still in disbelief. “Even so, I think I’d rather have been a fisherman.”

“Blessed Mary and Joseph!” Don burst out. “You wouldn’t get me on one of those boats for love or money. You wanna talk about dangerous work. You talk to Joe, Mary’s dad.”

Don was shaking his head. “Now that’s a brave bunch of fellas, I’ll tell you that.”

ALL DAY I HAD DRIVEN through tiny fishing villages. Mining and fishing—those were essentially the only career choices for generations of men in this corner of the world. And they were communal activities, risky work undertaken by small clusters of souls. In Japan, on one of the most crowded islands in the world, I had been reminded about the importance of treating others well. Here I could see the preciousness of human relationships. Here the people you lived and worked with mattered. Here it could mean life and death.

At first blush, this seemed very different from my life. Other than Adam, who depended on me the way Don had depended on the men in the mines?

But then I thought of Juan. Maybe my world wasn't so different after all. There was a moment, maybe more than one, when I had held Juan's life in my hands. And I had not brought him up to the surface.



CHAPTER NINE

AFTER MY TIME with Mary and Angus, I flew from Sydney to Halifax, where I spent the night in a hotel. I needed to be at the airport early in the morning for the flight to my next destination—Shanghai. It looked, from the note that Julian had sent, like I would have less than a full day there. My pre-trip self would have thought it an extravagant waste of airfare—flying halfway around the world only to turn around and come back—but I was becoming positively nonchalant about this business of international travel. From my connection in Newark to Shanghai I was able to sleep for a while. I arrived in Shanghai at two in the afternoon (three in the morning Halifax time) and was met by Yu Feng, an earnest young man who announced that he would be my interpreter and guide. He took my bags and hustled me outside the terminal, where a shiny black Bentley was waiting for us. After stowing my luggage, Yu Feng got in the backseat with me.

“Mr. Gao sends his sincerest apologies, but he is in a meeting he could not reschedule. He is hoping that you will meet him at his office at six p.m. He will then take you to his home for dinner. In the meantime, I can show you whatever you would like to see of Shanghai.”

I looked at my watch. It had taken me a while to get my luggage and work my way through customs and immigration. I had a few hours I could use to see the city, but the thought of a hot shower and short nap was the most appealing thing I could think of. I thanked Yu Feng for his offer and asked if I could just check into my hotel.

Yu Feng exchanged a few words with our driver, and before I knew it we were speeding into the dense urban landscape of Shanghai.

“Would you care for drink?” Yu Feng asked, pulling on a small door at the

back of the seat in front of him. It swung out to reveal a compartment kitted out with a small bar. He then pulled down a tiny table from the leather seat between us.

“Just water,” I said. “Thanks.” It seemed a pity not to take advantage of this luxury, but I wasn’t in the mood for a mixed drink.

We climbed a bridge that stretched across an expanse of dark water. “Huangpu River,” said Yu Feng. Then he said, “Mr. Gao’s office is downtown, but we have booked you a hotel just a few blocks from the Bund.”

I looked at Yu Feng blankly.

Yu Feng explained that the Bund was a broad avenue that ran along the western bank of the Huangpu River. It was an area where European ex-pats had built many grand buildings during the twenties and thirties.

“Very popular with American and European tourists. Very beautiful at night also,” Mr. Yu concluded.

I nodded but didn’t say anything. I was thinking about that cascade of hot water and sudsy shampoo.

WHEN I WALKED THROUGH the door of my room, I stopped short and wondered if there had been some sort of mistake. As soon as we had pulled up at the hotel, I knew this would be the most splendid of my accommodations. The lobby, its roof three or four stories high, had black marble floors that gleamed like glass, elegant furnishings and towering palm trees. But hotel lobbies can be a bit deceptive. I’ve been to places where the lobby looks like a five-star resort, while the rooms remind me of those roadside motels my parents used to pull into on family car trips. So I was expecting a nice room but really wasn’t sure.

But this! This was so far beyond “nice” that it left me gasping. I turned to look at Yu Feng, who had insisted on escorting me up. He was frowning and speaking in rapid and angry Mandarin to the bellhop.

“Please accept my humblest apologies,” he said to me after he had finished with the unfortunate fellow. “I was just letting him know that there was supposed to be fruit, champagne, a small buffet set out for you in the room. He promises it will all be sent up immediately.”

I stood in the foyer of my room, gazing at a space that was substantially

bigger than my apartment. I was faced with floor-to-ceiling windows that ran the length of the room. As I moved in, I could see that I not only had a spacious living room, but also a formal dining room. I wandered down the hall to a bedroom that was as big as any hotel room I had ever stayed in. It had its own seating area as well as a study alcove with a desk. The bathroom was a bright, marble-clad wonderland. I walked back into the living room in a daze. Feng looked at me curiously.

“You want to rest. I will leave you now,” he said with a little bow of his head. “I shall return at five-thirty to take you to Mr. Gao.”

AFTER YU FENG LEFT, I began to explore the suite a little more. In the bathroom, I found a cabinet directly across from the tub. I slid the mahogany door to the side, revealing an enormous television screen. I immediately moved to the bath, turned on the taps and then retreated to the dining room, which had now been set up with the buffet. There I filled a plate with Venezuelan chocolate, Brie cheese, crackers and grapes. Then I uncorked a small bottle of cabernet sauvignon and poured myself a glass. I brought everything into the bathroom on a tray and set the whole business down on the marble ledge that surrounded the huge tub. I located the remote in a small drawer beneath the TV cabinet. I flipped through the movie selections and found one of my favorite action thrillers.

With the Jacuzzi jets pulsing against my body, fine wine and good food filling me with warmth, I soon lost interest in the movie. I used the remote to turn off the television and turn on the sound system. An hour later, I emerged from the tub relaxed, refreshed and marveling at my good fortune. I slipped into a plush cotton robe. As music drifted through the suite, I retrieved my journal and headed into the living room. I stretched out on the deep, soft sectional sofa and opened the journal to a fresh page. *What a great way to live*, I wrote. *I could get used to this!* Then I snapped the book shut.

YU FENG AND THE DRIVER picked me up in the Bentley, this time whisking me to Mr. Gao’s glittering office tower. After the driver dropped us off, Yu Feng led me through a glass- and fountain-filled lobby, up to the penthouse office.

Yu Feng pushed through the glass doors, and a lovely young woman sitting at reception immediately stood up behind the desk.

“Mr. Yu, Mr. Landry,” she said. “I am so sorry. Mr. Gao was certain the meeting would be over by six, but they are still here. I’ve let Mr. Gao know you have arrived.”

Just then a door down the hallway burst open and men began filing out. The sound of loud voices and laughter engulfed them like a wave. As they began to spill into the lobby area, I noticed a familiar face. I thought I was seeing things. And then the voice.

“Mr. Gao, I’m glad you agree with us. I mean, this really is one of the best scripts that’s ever been sent to me.” It was an actor— a movie star. I’d seen him in dozens of thrillers, the occasional romantic comedy. And he was walking toward me. Beside him was another man I thought I recognized. I couldn’t come up with a name, but I had seen him interviewed, or accepting an award or something. A director, maybe; or perhaps a famous producer. And beside them, a tall Asian man who was staring directly at me. He put his hand on the shoulder of the actor, and said something quietly to him. Then he parted from the group and walked over to me.

“Jonathan Landry,” the man said, warmly extending his hand. “Gao Li. So sorry to have made you wait. Let me introduce you to some new business partners of mine.”

It turned out that Gao Li was a venture capitalist. One of his most recent investments was in a new Hollywood production company started by a group that included the actor and the other man—a director, I learned. They had been signing the final papers in that day’s meeting.

“You’re in for a real treat,” the actor said to me. He was smiling and thumping Mr. Gao on the back.

People say that when you meet famous people, they are smaller than you’d expect. But this guy was every bit as tall and muscled as he looked on the big screen. His clothes were casual, but they didn’t look like anything I owned. I wondered if that was what designer clothes looked like, if truly expensive shirts and jeans just had a certain flash to them. Sunglasses were perched on his forehead. It looked as if they had been there all day, clinging to his temples, ready to slide down over his eyes in case he needed to go incognito in a hurry.

“Get Mr. Gao to take you to his yacht,” the actor was saying to me. He

gestured toward Gao Li. “What a party we had there last night. Crazy. Seriously, Mr. Gao, she is one beautiful boat. And you throw one hell of a bash. Thanks. Thanks for everything.” As Gao Li and the actor shook hands, a serious-looking young man leaned toward Mr. Gao, speaking quietly.

Gao Li then said, “Gentlemen, the helicopter is here. Shall we head up?” Then he turned to me.

“Jonathan, would you like to join me to see my friends off?”

I had never before been to a helipad. We headed through a door on the other side of the penthouse and took an elevator just one floor up. The doors opened onto the wide, flat roof. There, some distance away, was a helicopter, its blades spinning. It was a surreal feeling—to stand on top of a building, over a hundred stories off the ground, the air rushing above our heads, a strangely open sky stretching into the distance. The rooftops of other skyscrapers looked like floating platforms dotting the concrete canyon that surrounded us.

The actor, the director and another couple of men bent over and started a slow run to the helicopter. They looked as if they did this sort of thing every day. Once they climbed on board and settled themselves, the chopper began to lift away slowly from the building. Gao Li and I waved. I could see the actor at the window waving back. Then Mr. Gao and I headed down to the office.

“I am sorry that I couldn’t send the helicopter to bring you from the airport, but I’m afraid we needed to do another safety check for this flight today, so the timing did not work.”

I didn’t know what to say. It hadn’t occurred to me that I might have the benefit of this sort of transportation.

As we rode the elevator and made our way to Mr. Gao’s office, my thoughts raced. Gao Li’s life was rewriting all my standards of luxury. I had never ridden in a Bentley before, but it was now something I might long for. And a driver. Then there was the suite at the hotel, this swanky office, the helicopter. And the actor. How glamorous was that? It all reminded me of the grand plan I had formulated after high school.

LIKE SO MANY KIDS, I found high school and the teen years something of a trial. It wasn’t because I was unpopular, or struggled in school, or was plagued by some deep insecurity. Instead, my adolescent self existed in a

relentless state of dissatisfaction. While I knew there were plenty of kids who had things worse than I did, all I could really see were those who seemed to have it better. When spring break or the summer holidays came around, I made a mental list of the kids who were setting off on fabulous holidays—the Caribbean or ski trips in March, a cottage or Europe in July. I noticed who had the best bike, the newest ice skates, the most spending money. I made note of the houses they lived in and the cars their parents drove. And the kids who had their own cars—their good fortune was like a flashing neon sign above a shop I couldn't enter. I decided during those covetous years that I wasn't going to accept my parents' life of coupon-cutting, second-hand vehicles and low-rent vacations. I was going to make big money when I finished college. And I was going to live in style.

Of course, there's nothing like a little reality to make you recalibrate your expectations. But while I hadn't managed to buy a Bentley, I had acquired a house considerably bigger than the one I grew up in, and I had been working my way up the corporate ladder toward a more luxurious life. During this trip for Julian, however, I had been loosening my grip on that goal. I was beginning to question some of my priorities and to look at the "good life" in a whole new light. This visit was reminding me of why I had set myself those targets in the first place. Gao Li's life looked pretty great. There was just no getting around it. Unlike Julian, I had no Ferrari to sell. But was I ready to sell my *dream* of a Ferrari?

Gao Li led me into his office. It was, of course, an enormous corner suite with wraparound windows. Antique lacquered furniture punctuated the room. In one corner was what appeared to be a silk brocade couch and chairs; in another, an extravagant ebony desk. A bottle of champagne sat in an ice bucket on the coffee table in front of us.

"Left over from the meeting," Gao Li said, looking at it. "Would you care for a glass or shall we head to my home for a drink before dinner?"

As much as I would have liked to linger in that elegant place, sipping champagne and gazing at the Shanghai skyline, I was even more curious to see where—and how—Gao Li lived.

"I'd be happy to head out," I said.

"Very good," Gao Li replied. "I am a little anxious to get home myself. I've been busy the last few days entertaining the production company people, and

I am missing my home and my wife and daughter.”

“Ah yes, I heard about the yacht,” I said.

“Yes, I hope you don’t mind that I can’t take you on a ride this trip,” said Gao Li. “Julian tells me your time is limited, and the crew is still cleaning up from last night.”

“No worries,” I said, perhaps with too much insistence. I *was* a little disappointed not to see a trophy that had impressed a Hollywood giant who no doubt had been on his share of good- sized yachts.

Gao Li walked over to his desk and pressed a button on his phone.

“Yang Jing-we,” he said into the speaker, “can you have Sung Hao bring my car around? Jonathan and I are ready to leave.” Then he turned to me.

“I brought my own car this morning since I wanted to keep the company car and driver free to take you around today.”

As we headed down the elevator to the lobby, I found myself wondering what kind of car a fellow like Gao Li would choose. Would he go for a sedan like a Mercedes, or would he have a sportier vehicle? Maybe a Maserati or a Porsche? Perhaps a Lamborghini. Or even a Ferrari.

As we pushed out the glass lobby doors I scanned the cars lined up along the sidewalk. There was a Lexus, an Alfa Romeo, a BMW and an Aston Martin. My money was on the Aston Mar- tin. I almost began walking in that direction when I heard Gao Li say, “Over here, Jonathan.” He was walking in the opposite direction, toward a man in a livery uniform who was holding a set of keys. The man was standing beside a Volvo station wagon.

“Thank you, Sung Hao,” Gao Li said, taking the keys and walking around to the driver’s side of the Volvo.

I realized that I had been standing on the sidewalk, watching Gao Li, my mouth slightly open, my feet frozen in place. I snapped my jaw closed and stepped quickly toward the passenger side. I opened the door and was about to sit down, but a magazine was on the seat.

“Sorry about that,” said Gao Li, picking up the magazine and tossing it in the backseat. “My daughter’s.”

I was so surprised by the car that I didn’t say anything as Gao Li pulled out

into traffic. This was, after all, the kind of car my neighbors drove, the type that lined the parking lot at Adam's soccer games. There was nothing wrong with it, but it wasn't the sort of vehicle that I thought a man with Mr. Gao's obvious resources would drive.

We were moving on and off major roads, through seas of high rise offices and apartment buildings. At every turn, I expected a break, a move into low-rise suburbia or even a stretch of green space, but the line of dense buildings went on and on and on. Gao Li and I chatted amiably. He told me about some of his big ventures, including the production company and a new enterprise he was funding in Brazil. I told him about my work in the auto industry. Eventually I asked how he knew Julian.

"We met in court. While he was suing me," Gao Li said with a chuckle. "Actually, his client was suing me," Mr. Gao continued. "Unsuccessfully, I might add."

"I thought Julian never lost," I said. I had heard the stories.

"His client didn't have a case, but for Julian that usually didn't matter. I was just lucky that the suit was at the end of Julian's legal career—when he wasn't exactly at the top of his game."

"Let me guess," I said. "He got in touch with you again after his return from the Himalayas."

"You are not mistaken," said Gao Li, who was slowing down before pulling into a rare parking space along the side of the street.

"Please excuse me," said Gao Li. "I just want to stop in at the coffee shop right there. I'll only be a minute."

I watched as Gao Li got out of the car, ran down the sidewalk, and disappeared into a small, brightly lit café. It was now at least eight in the evening, and the place looked packed. I could see dozens of people clustered tightly around small tables, stretching back into the narrow shop.

As he promised, Gao Li came out just a minute later. When he got into the car, he looked pleased.

"Another one of my investments," he said. "Mr. Chang is from my hometown. He started here in Shanghai with a little cart in the corridor of a shopping mall. I paid for half the cart. And now his café is one of the most

popular spots in this part of the city. We are talking about opening a second location.”

“It seems to be doing pretty well,” I said.

“Well, certainly in the evenings it is. That’s when people go out for coffee here—afternoons and evenings. Coffee isn’t a morning thing in China yet. But Chang Ning is working on that. He has a few morning regulars. And he’s trying to reach out to the older crowd. Right now, his clients are mostly young. Some business- people, but most people my age still see coffee as a Western fad.”

Gao Li turned his attention to the road, while I watched the little shop disappear behind us in the rearview mirror. It seemed like an awfully small enterprise for a man who was playing at Gao Li’s level.

Another twenty minutes passed before we were turning off the busy street into an underground parking garage. The change in direction had startled me. We were surrounded by non- descript high-rise apartment buildings. I hadn’t seen anything that looked liked luxury condos or a wealthy urban enclave.

Gao Li pulled into a parking spot. The cars on either side of him were modest. Gao Li got out and opened the back door to retrieve the magazine and his briefcase. I followed him as he headed to a bank of elevators.

MR. GAO’S APARTMENT, like the car, was in striking contrast to everything I had seen earlier in the day. It was considerably bigger than my apartment to be sure, and the furnishings were certainly elegant and tasteful. It was on the fiftieth floor, so the view of the Shanghai skyline at night was breathtaking. But everything else about the place was simple. His wife, Gao Ling, a pretty middle-aged woman, was dressed in dark jeans and a white shirt—something Annisha might wear—with bright turquoise jewelry. There were no diamonds weighing down her fingers or dripping from her ears.

Their daughter, Gao Mei, was out with friends, so it was just the three of us for dinner. Mr. Gao and I had a glass of wine, while Mrs. Gao brought various things to the table.

“May I help?” I asked, moving into the dining room.

“No, no,” said Gao Ling. “Thank you.”

The table was filling with covered dishes. The smell was heavenly.

“Did you cook all this yourself?” I asked in amazement.

Mr. Gao started to speak in Mandarin to his wife. My host was so fluent in English that it hadn’t occurred to me that Gao Ling might not be as well.

“My wife likes to cook,” said Gao Li. “If we have a big party, we will hire caterers, but when it is just the three of us, or a few friends for dinner, she prefers to prepare everything. Sometimes she even lets me help.” Mr. Gao laughed, and Gao Ling shot him a questioning look. He repeated his comment in Mandarin, and she smiled.

I ATE FAR MORE than I should have. When the meal was done, Gao Li and I helped clear the table and then he suggested that we drink our tea in his study.

“I have something to give you,” he said, leading the way.

We moved into a small room lined with bookshelves. A desk was moved up against the window, the seat facing out toward the brightly lit city. Two deep upholstered chairs and a round coffee table filled the rest of the space.

I sat in one of the chairs while Gao Li went to the desk. He opened a drawer and pulled out something. When he turned back toward me he was holding a small, red, silk-covered box.

“Julian’s talisman,” he said proudly, placing the box carefully in my hand.

I lifted the lid and peered inside. The box held a small cylindrical shell—about two inches long and half an inch wide. I tipped it out of the box into my hand. A plain, ordinary seashell. It really didn’t look like an amulet or any kind of special treasure. A small piece of folded paper was wedged into the bottom of the box. I worked it out and unfolded it.

The note read:

Life’s simplest pleasures are life’s greatest joys.

Most people don’t discover what’s most important in life until they are too old to do anything about it. They spend many of their best years pursuing things that matter little in the end. While society invites us to fill our lives with material objects, the best part of us knows that the more basic pleasures are the ones that enrich and sustain us. No matter how easy or hard our current conditions, we all have a wealth of simple blessings around us—waiting to be counted. As we do, our happiness grows. Our gratitude expands. And each day becomes a breathtaking gift.

I looked up at Gao Li. All the trappings of wealth I had seen this afternoon, and then the simple apartment, the unassuming car.

“I imagine that you have more to say about this,” I said, holding up the shell.

“Yes, I have some thoughts about this talisman and Julian’s note. But first, I think you have some questions for me.”

I cocked my head. I wasn’t sure what Gao Li was getting at.

“I noticed your expression when you saw my car and the apartment. And I think you may be wondering about that coffee shop, too. You were just too polite to ask. But don’t worry about offending me. Ask your questions.”

I was clearly not fooling Mr. Gao—he already knew what perplexed me. But he wanted me to put it into words, so I would have to try.

“It’s just the yacht, the Bentley, the helicopter. I mean, it looks like your business is doing extremely well, but...” Now I was in trouble. I couldn’t think of any good way to put this. “I’m not trying to be rude, but your car, your apartment. I mean they’re nice, they’re perfectly nice, but...”

“But they are not the car and the home of a truly wealthy man,” said Gao Li, smiling. “You are wondering if I am trying to create the illusion of success for my business. You are wondering if I am struggling financially.”

I didn’t say anything. This was awkward.

“No, Jonathan. I am not struggling. The signs of wealth you saw today are all very real. I am an extremely rich man. But my car, my home, it all goes back to that little piece of paper you are holding.” I looked down at Julian’s note.

“The Volvo is a simple pleasure?” I asked.

Gao Li laughed. “Maybe for someone else, but I don’t really care about cars,” said Mr. Gao. “No,” he continued, “I guess the connection takes a bit of explaining. You see, Jonathan, I was not born into wealth. My family wasn’t even middle-class. Not by North American standards, in any case. My father and mother both worked in a garment factory in Xintang. The tiny apartment we lived in would make this one look like a mansion.”

I could feel my face growing red. I began to realize that I had applied to

Gao Li all sorts of assumptions and drawn conclusions formulated during my middle-class life.

“I am not trying to make you feel embarrassed, Jonathan. I am trying to gently explain all the contradictions you have seen today.”

I nodded.

“To tell you the story of how I got from the Xintang factories to here would take all evening, so I’ll just say that I managed to get out of there and start a small business here in Shanghai. I worked hard, I was lucky, and eventually I sold that business for what seemed like a king’s ransom to me. With that money, I began to invest in other companies, large and small. There has been no shortage of opportunities in this country over the past few decades.”

Gao Li explained that when his business began to take off, he did what I would have assumed any newly wealthy man would do. He bought expensive clothes, fancy cars and a yacht. He spent lavishly on dining out, vacations and gifts.

“The only thing I didn’t do was buy a glitzy penthouse apartment or a huge house. My wife wouldn’t hear of it. We got this place before our daughter was born. To Gao Ling, it was home. She never wanted to move.”

Mr. Gao went on to say that one day his wife had asked him to take her and their daughter for an afternoon stroll through the park. He told her that he didn’t have time—he was off to a car dealership to check out a sports car he was interested in buying. Gao Ling looked at him with disappointment and asked, “You would rather shop than live?”

“She wasn’t angry, just sad. All afternoon, I could hear the echo of her words. And I kept hearing it for days, weeks.”

Gao Li didn’t buy the new car. He realized that he didn’t care at all about cars. And he didn’t care about having a fashionable place to live. In fact, he didn’t enjoy most of the objects he was spending so much of his time acquiring.

“I was buying them just because that is what I thought I should do. So I stopped shopping. And I didn’t miss the things one bit. What I did regret was missing out on that walk.”

Gao Li said he kept the Bentley and the helicopter for business purposes.

The helicopter saved him a lot of time—time that he could spend with his family. And the yacht was a good place to entertain because his home was too small for that.

“That’s where the wisdom of the talisman comes in,” said Gao Li. “I realized that by living a certain way, I was missing out on simple pleasures, life’s *greatest* ones.”

“Money can’t buy happiness, right?” I said. That was one of my mother’s favorite chestnuts.

“Don’t get me wrong,” said Gao Li now, leaning forward earnestly. “I’ve been poor, so I would never say that money is not important. You have been enjoying Shanghai’s opulence today. But what you haven’t had a chance to see is the considerable poverty that exists in this country. The poor here—the poor everywhere—have fewer choices. They can’t always enjoy the simple things because they are working so hard to stave off hunger and suffering. They are too exhausted from the difficult work of feeding and clothing and sheltering themselves and their families. My parents had very little time for pleasure—simple or otherwise.”

Gao Li sat back again. Then he bent forward to refill his tea-cup. He offered to fill mine, but I shook my head.

“You know, Jonathan,” Gao Li said slowly, “it seems to me that most of us who are lucky enough to escape poverty forget what having a little money does. It frees us to make choices about our careers, where we live, things like that. It frees us to spend time with friends and family. It allows us to enjoy the simple things. But people think that money is only about what can be bought, what is consumed. So they become distracted by the next shiny toy, just like I did. And if they start buying too much stuff, spending too much, they can get trapped. Almost more trapped than the truly poor. They become beholden to mortgages and credit card debt and loans. Or just trapped by having to make the big money their lifestyle depends on. After all, as Julian always says, the more addicted you are to *having*, the less devoted you will be to *becoming*. And what I’ve discovered is that real happiness doesn’t come from accumulating things. No, lasting happiness comes from learning how to savor common pleasures like a cool breeze on a hot day, or a star-filled sky after a day of hard work. Or laughter with loved ones over a three-hour-long home-cooked meal.”

“The shell,” I said, lifting it back out of the box. “Collecting shells on a beach?”

“Exactly,” he said. “One of the best times I have ever had was building sand castles with my wife and daughter at the beach in Qingdao. The shell that Julian gave me has served beautifully to remind me of the perfect moments of that perfect day. And those memories are a form of wealth.”

We were both quiet for a moment. I was thinking of another beach, another woman, another child. But something was still nagging at me.

Finally I said, “But Gao Li, if you are now a wealthy man, why not just quit? Spend all your time on the simple pleasures.” He laughed. “Good question,” he said. “My wife asks me that all the time.”

He took a sip of tea and then placed his cup back down on the table in front of us.

“Work is also a pleasure for me, Jonathan. But it’s more than that. Remember that coffee shop we stopped at?”

I nodded.

“That’s not the only small business I have invested in. For every large venture I undertake, I try to find at least two small businesses to support. I look for people who think they can change their own lives as well as the lives of others. Small businesses in country villages and crowded cities; family enterprises and individual college students; entrepreneurs with ideas and a heart. And I follow these little businesses like traders follow the market swings. The men and women I give money to turn my dollars into new lives—they extend my help farther than I would be able to do on my own. And they help me build a better world in the process. Making a difference has now become more important to me than making money. This realization has made my life so much more joyful, Jonathan.”

“That’s amazing,” I said. Mr. Gao’s story made me feel humble.

Gao Li shook his head. Then he looked over at the window, at the brilliant lights of Shanghai spread out before us. I didn’t say anything. He seemed to be thinking about something.

Eventually Gao Li started again.

“A few months after Julian had his heart attack, he wrote me a letter,” he

said. “I have to tell you, I wasn’t sure I wanted to open it. I was afraid that it might be another lawsuit. But it wasn’t. It was a handwritten note. Julian said he had quit his practice, had sold all his belongings. He had traveled. He had learned things. And he said that he was very glad he had lost the suit against me. He said I was a man he would like to get to know better.”

Gao Li was smiling at the memory. “I will never forget the closing lines of that letter,” he continued. “‘Lasting happiness,’ Julian wrote, ‘comes from the size of our impact, not the extent of our income. Real fulfillment is a product of the value we create and the contribution we make, not of the car we drive or the house we buy. And I’ve learned that self-worth is more important than net worth. But I think you know that already, Gao Li.’”

“And you did,” I agreed.

“And I did,” said Gao Li.

LATER THAT NIGHT, back at my hotel, I stood at the living-room windows and gazed out at the skyline across the river. The view was marvelous during the day, but after sunset the skyline took on the look of some fantastic futuristic amusement park or an elaborate display of abstract sculpture—spectacularly colored spheres, columns, spires, cylinders, gleaming and sparkling like electrified crystal. Even driving back to my hotel from Gao Li’s place had been a wonder. The city skyline crowded with jewel-toned light. I had never seen anything like it.

But I thought of what Mr. Gao had said to me that evening. All this glitter was seductive. I would have loved to spend more time here to explore the city, but the feelings Gao Li’s office, the Bentley, the helicopter, the actor, even this hotel suite had evoked in me were more about pleasure than real happiness. Maybe that was the key distinction Gao Li had been trying to make. How could I expect these kinds of riches to make me happy when I had been finding it impossible to enjoy even the simple joys of my life? It seemed to me that both Julian and Gao Li had found something that most very rich people will never have: a feeling that they have enough.

The truth was, right now, here alone in my hotel room, thousands of miles from home, if I could have any one thing, it wouldn’t be a yacht or a fancy car or a sprawling mansion. It would be an answer.

I DREAMED THAT NIGHT of the curving Cape Breton roads I had driven earlier

that week. They had made me think of Juan, made me think of his last moments. He lived outside the city, and he was driving home in the evening, the rush hour long over. It was a spring night; the roads were dry. He was on a stretch of highway that ran through wooded areas near his home. It was a route he drove every day, yet somehow he had crashed through a steel barrier and plummeted into a ravine. The medical investigator said that he had suffered multiple life-threatening injuries, but that the cause of death was a massive heart attack. Emily, his wife, said that work stress had led to his death. I had no doubt about that. By the time he climbed into his car that night, Juan was a gray specter of the man I once knew. The last few years at work—the pressure, the isolation, the abandonment by friends and colleagues—that had destroyed him. But there was one question that no one was asking. One question that haunted me. One question I desperately wanted answered. But it was a puzzle for which I might never find the solution.



CHAPTER TEN

NOTHING COULD HAVE BEEN more in contrast with Shanghai's glitzy, frenetic cityscape than the quiet, dusty expanses that spread out around me as I traveled the highway between Phoenix and Sedona, Arizona. After being in the air for the better part of the day, I had arrived in Phoenix in the early afternoon, picked up a rental car and headed out. Despite the fact that I had been moving back and forth between time zones like an airline pilot, I felt remarkably good. I didn't think jetlag was something you were supposed to get used to, but I now seemed able to fall asleep when I needed to and to get up with the sun, wherever I was.

In a suburb on the northern edge of Phoenix, I pulled into a restaurant that was part of those ubiquitous chains that offer quantity over quality. I was hungry, and this would be fast and easy. As I walked inside, I noticed a display of tourist pamphlets against the wall of the doorway. I plucked a few out of the rack before I headed to the hostess desk.

The hostess showed me to a table, and a young man, no older than seventeen I would guess, materialized at my side. I ordered a club sandwich and some juice, and the waiter disappeared again. I looked over at the small pile of pamphlets I'd dropped on the table. One in particular had caught my eye. It was about "vortex tours" you could do in and around Sedona. According to the pamphlet, the Sedona area is thought to be the location of at least four energy vortices—places in the landscape where the Earth's invisible lines of energy intersect to create a concentration of power that could have extraordinary therapeutic properties. There seemed to be quite the cottage industry associated with these vortices: one pamphlet listed dozens of massage specialists, tarot readers, personal magnetic-field re-balancers, even

past-life regression therapists. *Oh brother*, I thought. I was having enough challenges with *this* life without diving into another.

I wondered why Julian had sent the talisman out this way. Did the talisman have something to do with crystals or auras or energy fields?

By the time I had finished my sandwich, my young server was at my side, offering coffee and dessert. I declined but couldn't help thinking about how much this young man reminded me of Lluis. He might not spend the rest of his days waiting tables, but I had a feeling that whatever he ended up doing, he'd do with enthusiasm and success.

I paid my bill, left the restaurant and crossed the parking lot to the rental car. It was time to head out to meet Ronnie Begay. According to Julian's directions, she lived about a hundred miles north of Phoenix.

After a few minutes on the highway, I rolled down the windows. The dry desert air felt good against my skin—a welcome change from the steaminess of Shanghai. I heard my phone beep but didn't pick it up. I had to pay attention to the road.

The number of messages from the office had dwindled steadily. I hadn't really expected to hear any more from Tessa, but Nawang had been quiet, too. Yesterday, she acknowledged this absence with an apology: *Sorry I haven't been keeping you up to date on everything, but it's been crazy around here. For the past few days, Luke, Katherine and Sven have been holed up in the conference room with a group of men and women I don't recognize. Rumor is that there will be an announcement by the end of the day, maybe tomorrow. No doubt a merger is under way, but everyone is trying to figure out if they are buying us or we are buying them. David is freaking out. He seems fairly convinced that he is going to be given his walking papers either way.*

I tried not to feel happy about that. Ayame would not be impressed by my mean-spirited reaction.

I don't know what to think about my position—or yours, Nawang wrote.

I realized that the uncertainty didn't worry me at all.

The inevitable reorganization at work would not be a threat to me. It would be an opportunity. If I got a severance package, I would use the freedom to talk with companies that might be able to offer me a position that suited me

better. If the reconfigured company wanted to keep me on, I would see if there might be other places in the firm for me. Since Juan's death, there had been a vacancy in the design department. Maybe I would see about that. Either way, I could use the shifting business to my advantage. I felt excited about the prospect of change.

That was something new: looking at change without fear; or maybe not completely without fear, but with an acceptance of the fear that always came with any sort of significant upheaval in my life. Maybe I was becoming more like my sister, Kira.

While I always chose the safe, obvious path, Kira had struck out on her own route again and again. After high school, she worked for half a year and then joined a youth exchange program, doing volunteer work at a number of orphanages. After college, she traveled the world, visiting marvelous destinations— from Malaysia, Bali and New Zealand to Sweden, Estonia and Russia—working here and there to support herself. During one of her journeys she visited a women's cooperative in Guatemala. She was impressed with the things the women made—elaborately embroidered and decorated cushions and linens—and with the industry, hope and courage of the women themselves. When she came back home, Kira announced that she was going to find a market for the women's products and help them sell their wares. Just a few years later, she was running a hugely successful fair-trade importing business and had storefronts in half a dozen major North American cities. When her twins were born, Kira decided to sell her business to one of her partners. She would take a few years at home and plan out her next career venture. When I expressed surprise that she could give up the enterprise she had worked so hard for, she just laughed. "I'm not going to live the same day over and over again, and call it a life," she said.

JULIAN'S DRIVING INSTRUCTIONS were simple enough. I turned off the highway, onto a small road about an hour and a half after I had set off. The road wound around until I came to a smattering of houses strung out along either side. Most were mobile homes, decked out with porches and awnings and other not-so-mobile additions. Interspersed among them were a few small, low bungalows. A number were set off by chain-link fences. Small patches of brown grass surrounded the houses, but the desert crawled right up to the edge of the struggling turf and stretched back away for miles. Eventually I spotted the street number on a mailbox that stood in front of a

neat brown home. I pulled into the gravel drive, alongside a gray pickup truck parked in front of a small garage. As I climbed out of the car into the midday heat, I noticed that the front yard was festooned with various bits of brightly colored extruded plastic— children’s toys. No doubt the sound of the crunching gravel alerted Ronnie, who had swung the front door open just as I was stepping up to it.

“Jonathan!” she said, as if we were long-lost friends.

Ronnie was probably about sixty—her hair, which had some dark streaks, was mostly a silvery gray. Her bronzed face was lined, but not at all drawn. When she laughed, it looked almost as if the creases around her eyes and mouth were dancing.

She ushered me into the living room, cautioning me to watch my step around the toys and games that were scattered across the floor.

“Can you believe I cleaned this up once already this morning?” she laughed.

“I have a six-year-old,” I said. “I know how it goes.”

Ronnie moved into the kitchen and peered out the window. I followed her gaze. In the backyard were a half-dozen children of various sizes playing some sort of game with a large inflatable ball. Ronnie told me they were her grandkids and her grandnephews.

The grandchildren were visiting for the afternoon, but the grandnephews were permanent residents.

“My niece,” said Ronnie matter-of-factly, “has been in and out of trouble since I can remember. Her father isn’t in the picture; her mother isn’t well and has never been able to help out. A few years back, things reached a crisis point. It looked like her kids were going to be taken away.”

Ronnie was now opening the kitchen window, calling out.

“Rose, make sure that Sammy gets a turn, okay?”

Then she turned back to me.

“José and I were the only ones in the family with the room and the resources to take the kids in.” Ronnie put her hand on her chest, as if she were pressing her heart back in.

“Best decision I made in my life,” she said with a smile.

Ronnie went to the fridge and took out a large jug.

“Iced tea?” she asked. When I nodded, she filled two glasses that were sitting on the counter and handed one to me. She left the other on the counter and moved toward the back door.

“Sorry,” she said, “but I promised the kids a snack, and I’d better get to it before I ruin their appetites for dinner.” Ronnie went out the door. I watched her through the screen as she headed into the garage. She came back a few minutes later with an enormous watermelon. When the children spotted it, they followed her into the kitchen, whooping and hollering. “Watermelon, watermelon, watermelon,” they chanted, as if calling for an encore at a rock concert.

“First of the season,” Ronnie said to me. “I know you can get it now at the grocery store any time of the year, but I never buy it until the hot weather really hits. It just tastes so much better in the heat.”

She told the children to go outside to the picnic bench, and she would bring them their snack when it was ready. The kids filed out the door.

Ronnie placed the watermelon on a large wooden cutting board on the kitchen counter, took an enormous knife from a drawer and plunged it into the center of the melon. It made a satisfying *thwack*. Ronnie pulled the knife down through the wet fruit, cutting it in half and in half again. Then she began to slice each quarter as if she were slicing a dense loaf of bread. When she had cut up the first quarter, she picked up a middle slice and held it out to me.

I couldn’t remember the last time I had watermelon, but when I bit into the cool, sweet flesh I felt a rush of memory sweep over me. Another backyard, so many decades ago. My mother, her hair tied back in a bright scarf, a tray proffered in her outstretched arms.

This was the kind of thing Gao Li had been talking about. Here, at Ronnie’s house, the first watermelon of the season was still an event, a cause for celebration.

After Ronnie had taken a huge plate outside and then made a second trip to gather up the rinds and wipe a few faces, she returned and finally took a long pull from her iced tea.

“Hope you don’t mind,” she said, “but now I’ve got to start dinner.”

I sat in Ronnie’s air-conditioned kitchen as she set about preparing the family meal. Her daughter Rose would probably stay with the kids, she said. Ronnie’s husband, José, would be home soon. He might bring his sister with him. They worked together.

“My house is never empty,” said Ronnie. “It can be exhausting, but I like it this way.”

She went to the fridge and pulled out a large bag of red peppers. As she washed them, she looked back over her shoulder at me.

“But I have something to give you, and it would be nice to have someplace quiet to talk. I thought that after supper we could drive out to the Red Rocks so you can see the sunset. You can’t come all this way without seeing it.”

SEVERAL HOURS LATER Ronnie and I were sitting on the edge of a massive boulder, staring at the striking red sandstone pillars that rose majestically out of the desert. As the sun dipped, the rocks seemed to take on its fading fire. They were glowing bright orange like embers. The scene reminded me a bit of the Temple of the Magician in the morning sun.

“I feel like I’ve seen this before,” I said.

“The movies,” said Ronnie. “Westerns.”

Yeah, I thought, that was probably it. But it felt special here somehow. As if I had a more personal connection to the place. I wondered if that had anything to do with what I had seen in the pamphlets.

“I was reading a little bit about those vortices,” I said to Ronnie. She winced.

“We call them ‘vortexes’ around here,” she said.

“Vortexes. Right. Are we close to them? Are any around here?” I asked.

“There’s one a couple of miles that way.” Ronnie waved her hand to the right, but didn’t offer any other details.

“You don’t sound as if you put much stock in that stuff,” I said to her.

Ronnie smiled and dug at the hard-packed earth with the toe of her shoe.

“Well,” she said slowly, “Native people in these parts never considered

those spots particularly sacred—or at least they don't think of them as any *more* sacred than the rest of the land.”

Ronnie bent down to brush the dirt from her shoe. “But that’s not to say this place isn’t special. My people have always had a connection to the land, and I believe in the healing powers of the earth. Of being one with nature.”

“But...” I said. There was clearly a “but” on its way.

“But,” said Ronnie. She was gazing back at the rocks now. The light was getting a little weaker. The rocks were glowing softly. “I really believe that the most powerful healing is any- where people are. It isn’t confined to a place or a time or a circumstance.”

A small gray lizard scurried across the ground in front of us. I watched it disappear behind some brush.

“Did Julian ever tell you how we met?” Ronnie asked.

“No,” I said, “but I bet there’s a story.”

And there was. Ronnie told me that she had met Julian many years ago, when he was a high-flying lawyer. “Well, I didn’t know what he did then,” she admitted. “He told me later.”

Julian was driving down the highway one late afternoon, on his way to see these very rocks that Ronnie and I were gazing at now. He was on a golfing junket in Phoenix, and he had rented a sleek sports car for his stay. He and a beautiful female friend had headed out with a loaf of bread, some cheese and an enormous thermos of martinis. They were going to have a picnic by the rocks as the sun went down. But before they had even reached the town of Sedona, their car broke down. Ronnie saw the bright yellow sports car parked at the side of the road, steam pouring out from under its hood. She pulled over and offered to give Julian and his companion a ride. Ronnie drove the two of them back to her place, where they called the rental company. It would send a tow truck and try to deliver another vehicle to her house.

“That, I don’t mind telling you, was a long afternoon,” said Ronnie.

“My house was full as usual—my teenage children, my nieces and nephews. It was noisy. José was playing his guitar; the kids were laughing and shouting—jumping on the tram- poline we had out back.”

Julian and his friend had chatted a little with Ronnie and her husband, but

they were clearly annoyed that their plans had been so thoroughly derailed. And the busyness of the household, Ronnie could tell, was wearing on their nerves.

“The young woman, whose name I can’t remember, couldn’t stop tapping her foot. And Julian kept sneaking gulps from the thermos while he peered out the front window every two seconds. Since the two of them didn’t really want to talk, José, the kids and I just continued on with our day.”

When the new rental car showed up several hours later, Ronnie had to insist that Julian’s friend drive it back to the city since Julian was in no condition.

“And that was the last I thought of either of them for a long, long while,” said Ronnie.

Then, several years later, she received a call from Julian. He had to remind her who he was. He took her by surprise by asking if he could come for a visit. He said he wanted to see the Red Rocks finally. Mostly, however, he wanted to talk with Ronnie.

“When he got here, well, I tell you, I wouldn’t have recognized him,” Ronnie said. “He looked younger, somehow. Even taller, too, if that’s possible. And he seemed peaceful. So peaceful and happy. That wasn’t the man I remembered.”

Julian told Ronnie that he had just come back from the Himalayas, where he had spent time with a group of monks. The lessons they shared had turned his life around. But what he learned also made him look at people differently. And he came to realize that many people he crossed paths with over the years had much to teach him, much to share.

Ronnie and Julian had gone to see the Red Rocks in the setting sun, just as she and I had done. The two of them had walked for a while, the rocks glowing in the distance. The quiet and tranquillity seemed such a stark contrast to the noise and energy of Ronnie’s household. To her, this contrast only made both places seem more special.

As they took one last look at the rocks and the sun slipped from the sky, Julian turned to Ronnie.

“You,” he said, “I think you know the secret of life. If I asked you, what is the purpose of it all, what would you say?”

Ronnie stopped telling her story for a moment. I looked over at her.

“Do you know the secret of life?” I asked in wonder.

“It was so odd that Julian asked me that question,” said Ronnie, shaking her head. “You know my mother belonged to the Hopi tribe, my father was a Navajo. Their peoples share many beliefs, but there are differences. I was raised with those traditional Native beliefs. But my husband is Catholic. We have friends who are Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim. I have tried to learn a little about all these faiths. In my youth, I spent a lot of time studying, talking to people.”

The sky was getting dark now; the rocks that loomed on the horizon had darkened to a deep red. Ronnie looked out in the distance, but she seemed lost in thought. I waited for her to start talking again.

“I spent a lot of time looking for answers. But in the end I decided that, while there were many truths, it all came down to one simple thing.”

I looked at Ronnie expectantly. I realized that I was holding my breath.

“The purpose of life, Jonathan, is *love*. It’s that simple.”

I was quiet a moment, letting that sink in.

“If you’re not loved, nothing else matters?” I asked.

“Not quite,” said Ronnie. “The purpose of life is *to love*. Love is a verb. And it has to be at the center of your universe. It should drive everything you do. I don’t think you can be truly alive if you do not love.”

That is what Ronnie had told Julian. Julian had replied that the monks agreed with her.

“In fact,” Julian told her, “they said pretty much the same thing to me, but I traveled all the way to the Himalayas to hear that message, when I could have just heard it from you all those years ago.”

“You weren’t ready to hear,” Ronnie told Julian. “I could have said it a thousand ways, and you wouldn’t have heard it.”

Ronnie had finished her story. She was digging in her pocket now, pulling out a small woven bag.

“The talisman,” she said, handing it to me.

I opened the small braided drawstring and tipped the contents into my hand. The talisman was a tiny silver heart. It looked handmade, its polished surfaces round and smooth. I rolled the heart in my fingers. I had been holding the little bag upside down, and now a small slip of paper I hadn't seen fell from it. Ronnie bent down and picked it up.

She handed it to me.

The Purpose of Life Is to Love

How well you live comes down to how much you love. The heart is wiser than the head. Honor it. Trust it. Follow it.

Ronnie and I walked slowly back to where we'd parked. There was a crispness in the air now, and a fragrant desert wind blew softly. We climbed into Ronnie's truck without saying a word and began moving down the road, the sound of the tires echoing around us.

Ronnie and I were silent on the drive back to her house. She seemed to recognize that I needed some time to reflect. I was realizing that I had been focusing most of my thoughts about my "authentic life" on my job. I was in the wrong job. That had been clear almost since the beginning of the trip. But Ayame, Mary, and now Ronnie had helped me to see that I'd betrayed myself within my personal life as well. I had not been true to myself in my friendships, with my family, or in my love life. If I had been the kind of friend I valued, I wouldn't have turned my back on Juan. If I had focused on being the parent I wanted to be, I wouldn't have skimped on time with Adam. And if I had been true to my heart, I wouldn't have been thinking about Tessa for a second. I didn't love Tessa. But I did love Annisha. Desperately.

I stayed at Ronnie's house that night. Before I crawled into bed, I sent three messages. One to Annisha and Adam. One to Annisha alone. And a final one to Tessa: *Sorry*, it said.

I WOKE UP THE NEXT MORNING, just as the sun peeked through the bedroom curtains. The house was quiet, so I pulled on my clothes, grabbed my journal and tiptoed down the hall, out the door, into the backyard. Like their neighbors, Ronnie and her husband had planted a perimeter of grass around the yard. But it had gone dormant in the heat, and the dry wide blades felt rough against my bare feet. I sat down at the picnic table and gazed across the desert that stretched for miles in front of me. I could see sagebrush and

boulders dotting the dry, hard earth; and here and there, a dusty juniper tree or a clump of grass.

I had one last, long leg of the trip in front of me. Julian had sent me a message saying that I would leave the Phoenix air- port later that morning and head to Delhi, India. *India*. I wondered if he was going to send me to visit the monks of Sivana myself, but he had written back: *No, Jonathan, you have been on the road long enough. Just a couple of days more and you will be home.*

I opened my notebook and began to write. This journey had been to collect some mystical artifacts for my cousin. That part of it wasn't over, I knew. I had one more to pick up. But for me, the personal journey that I realized I'd undertaken felt done. I knew what I had to do. To be true to myself, I had to face my fears and ask for a transfer back to the lab or find another position. I would have to get back to the place where I could do my very best, my "genius level" work. But that was only one small aspect of the change I needed to make. I had to rebuild my world with Annisha, find a way to make up for my past neglect and renew our relationship. I had to devote myself to being the best parent I could be to Adam, and I had to stop robbing myself of the joys of spending time with my son. In fact, I had to stop robbing myself of the happiness and the positive influences of all the people dear to me—my mother, my sister, my old friends, my new ones. Ayame's talisman letter was so right—the way I had been treating others was the way I had been treating myself. By neglecting them, I had turned my back on my own happiness. I had not been kind to anyone. I would have to choose my influences better in the future. I would have to celebrate all the simple pleasures available to me. None of this would happen overnight. But I would work on it each day, live each day as if it were my whole life in miniature. Small daily improvements. No excuses.

I felt as if I had all the tools I needed to move into the future. The talisman letters had given these to me. What could be left, I wondered? What other wisdom could that last talisman impart?



CHAPTER ELEVEN

I WAS STANDING OUTSIDE the most magnificent building I had ever seen—the Taj Mahal. It was dusk, and the visitors and tourists were emptying from the place. It seemed like an odd time to meet someone here, but nothing about this trip had been expected.

Before I had left the Phoenix airport, Julian had sent me a message with detailed instructions. I would stay overnight in Delhi, checking into a hotel. The next day, I would take a flight to Agra, where I would meet the final safekeeper outside the Taj Mahal at seven-thirty p.m. The thought of navigating around Delhi and Agra on my own, on such short notice, would have unnerved me just a few weeks ago. But I had been to so many places, experienced so many different things lately, that I felt a new confidence in facing the challenges that came my way. And now, all thoughts of the past and the future were being swept away as I stood on the Taj Mahal plaza looking up at the mausoleum.

I had come here a little early, thinking I might go inside and look around on my own before the Taj Mahal closed for the day. But once I arrived, I realized how foolish I was to think I could properly see anything so spectacular in such a short period of time. Julian had not yet told me when I would be leaving Agra. I was hoping there would be time to come back to explore this breathtaking architectural masterwork more fully. In the meantime I wandered around the exterior of the monument, my head back and my mouth agape.

I was simply overwhelmed by the size of the place. Nothing in any of the photos I had seen had managed to convey the enormity of the building, the sinuous dome, the elegant symmetry, the extraordinary expanses. Now I could see why Julian had set up this meeting for the evening. The setting sun made the color of these luminescent walls of marble and sandstone shift and dance. As I moved closer I could see that the outside surfaces were covered in

intricate stone carvings and delicate calligraphy that reached a hundred feet skyward. Precious gems and stones embroidered the lacy stone: I could see bits of turquoise, lapis lazuli, emerald, red coral. I walked back and forth in front the building, moving close to examine the exquisite details and then stepping back to take in the incredible grandeur.

I had been walking around the Taj Mahal, deeply immersed in the moment, completely forgetting why I was there, when a flash of crimson caught my eye. I turned around. In front of me was a tall figure. Even though the person was facing away from me, I could tell it was a man. He stood motionless, the robe that adorned his slender frame flapping slightly in the breeze. He then spun around. And flashed a smile. It was Julian.

“What?” I sputtered. None of this made sense. What was Julian doing here? Why hadn’t he told me that he was coming to India? And if he was here to pick up the talismans himself, why did he have me fly all this way?

“I’m here to take those talismans off your hands,” Julian said with a wink.

My jaw was working, trying to form the words to all the questions that were racing through my head.

“I know,” said Julian. “This is a long way for you to come when I am already here. But I’m on my way to the Himalayas for a while. This was really the best place to meet.”

I nodded, still in a fog of shock and confusion.

“Let’s head down there,” said Julian, pointing to the long flower-and-tree-lined avenues that banked the reflecting pool. “Find a place to sit, perhaps ... in the evening air.”

We left the archways of the Taj Mahal and headed down the stone steps. The water in the pools was getting dark, the sun dipping below the horizon, the sky a soft shade of indigo.

As we walked, Julian slipped his hand into a pocket of his robe.

“Would you like to see the last talisman?” he asked.

“You have it with you?” I said.

Julian nodded and then pulled out a small brown bag. I held out my hand, and he emptied the bag into my palm. I was holding a tiny marble replica of

the Taj Mahal. There was no parchment or note of any sort. I cocked my head.

“Let me explain what this means,” said Julian. “This last talisman is all about legacy,” he said. “The monks say that the best way to evaluate someone’s greatness is to look at the strength of that person’s influence on the generation that will follow. So if we are truly interested in rising into rare air as human beings, instead of ‘what’s in it for me?’ we should be asking ‘what’s in it for the world?’ That is why the Taj Mahal is the perfect symbol for legacy.”

I looked back at the ethereal structure. It was shimmering pink, radiating as if it were itself a glittering star.

“Yes, I can see that,” I said. “This building has inspired and influenced so many dreamers from so many places. For hundreds of years. I can’t quite believe it is the work of one man. That it was built in one lifetime.”

“There’s no doubt about it,” said Julian. “This is a remarkable work of art, or architecture. Few people leave something of such beauty and significance behind. But when I think of the legacy of the Taj Mahal’s creator, it is not really architecture I think of.”

I looked at Julian, uncertain about what he was trying to say.

“Let me tell you the story of the Taj Mahal,” said Julian.

Shah Jahan was the emperor of the Moghul Empire in the early 1600s, Julian explained. His wife was a woman he called Mumtaz Mahal, or Jewel of the Palace. He adored her, and she him. Tragically, Mumtaz Mahal died while giving birth to her fourteenth child. According to the legend, Mumtaz’s last words to her husband spoke of their everlasting love.

Shah Jahan was devastated by her death. After a year of mourning in seclusion and rejecting earthly pleasures, Jahan decided to spend his life honoring his beloved by building her a resting place that would be a heaven on earth. And every year, between two and four million people come to see what Shah Jahan constructed for the love of his life.

“Not many of us will leave the world something on the scale of the Taj Mahal,” Julian said. “But even more modest contributions are still precious contributions.”

Julian began digging around in the pocket of his robe. He pulled out a small

piece of parchment and handed it to me. It read:

Stand for Something Bigger than Yourself

There are no extra people alive today. Every single one of us is here for a reason, a special purpose—a mission. Yes, build a beautiful life for yourself and those you love. Yes, be happy and have a lot of fun. And yes, become successful, on your own terms rather than on those suggested to you by society. But—above all else—be significant. Make your life matter. Be of use. And be of service to as many people as possible. This is how each of us can shift from the realm of the ordinary into the heights of the extraordinary. And walk among the best who have ever lived.

“It made a big difference that Mumtaz Mahal lived,” Julian said quietly. “Her shadow is even longer than her husband’s. It was her love that led to all this.” Julian’s hand swept in front of him.

“Sometimes, Jonathan,” Julian continued, “our contributions are clearly visible to the world—an advancement in science, a work of art, the creation of a successful company, the building of a house or a city. But sometimes our contributions are less tangible, less measurable. What is important is that we *do* contribute. That we make a difference. That we leave a legacy.”

I could see now that I had been wrong in Sedona. There had been a piece of missing wisdom in that collection of talismans. Legacy. It was not about making money or receiving applause. It was, it seemed, about influence and impact, about making the world a better place. Li Gao understood that. My sister, Kira, understood that. My father and mother understood that. And sitting here in front of this inspiring memorial to love, I knew it was something I would think about for days and years to come. What would my legacy be? What difference would I make?

“Now,” said Julian after a few moments of silence. “Do you have the talismans?”

“Oh,” I said. “I almost forgot.”

That wasn’t quite true. The fact was that I found myself curiously reluctant to part with them.

As I lifted my shirt and slowly untied the pouch from my belt loop, Julian smiled.

“You’ve become a little attached to them,” said Julian kindly. “You’ve discovered their power.”

“Well, I don’t know,” I said.

“I think you must have. How are you feeling?” Julian asked.

“Good,” I said. “Surprisingly good.”

“No jetlag? No fatigue? Lots of energy?”

“Yeah,” I said slowly. “Do you think ... ?”

“The wisdom of these talismans, if you embrace it, if you commit yourself to it, can change your life. As I told you earlier, it can be *lifesaving*.”

“About that,” I said, remembering my mother’s tearful voice so many weeks ago, “who is in danger? Whose life are you trying to save with these things?”

Julian looked at me with raised eyebrows but said nothing. There was a moment of silence as the truth washed over me.

“Oh come on,” I said, my face growing hot. “I’m not in danger. My life doesn’t need saving.”

Julian didn’t say anything. But he continued to look at me as if waiting for something. The talismans were still in my hand.

“I’m a healthy guy with a great kid, and, okay, a marriage that needs a bit of work but...”

“Jonathan, you know as well as I do that your life was in trouble. Your mother could see that, and she was sick with worry. She had lost your father, and she felt she was losing you, too. She could see that you were never going to find the happiness and contentment that she and your dad had if you continued the way you were going. You were working in a job you hated; you squandered your marriage; and you were missing the childhood of your son.”

“So all this talisman stuff was just nonsense? There was no magic cure?”

“The real magic was in those letters, Jonathan, in those letters and in your journal. The talismans provided a way to get you to pay attention. The journey was the way to give you time to absorb the lessons that the letters—and my friends—shared with you.

“Jonathan, you were willing to work hard, to face your fears, to take risks to save someone else’s life. But when you started out, you weren’t willing to do those things to save your own. I think, however, that now you are.”

“But what about all the safekeepers?” I asked. “Do they know that there isn’t any magic to these things—even if you have all of them in one place?”

Julian smiled. “That was my only real dishonesty, Jonathan. I collected these little amulets after I spoke with your mother a few months ago, and then I mailed them off to my friends. They understood what was going on, and they were happy to help. Each one of those people is wise in their own way—to me they epitomize the knowledge that was in each of those letters. I have learned so much from each of them, and I wanted you to meet them and learn from them, too. And this was the only way I could think to do it. You never would have gone otherwise.”

I had enjoyed meeting these friends of Julian’s, and I had to confess that I would have liked to spend more time with each of them. That made me think of the people I couldn’t spend more time with—my father. And Juan.

Julian pointed to a little stone bench ahead of us. As we sat down, he put his hand gently on my shoulder.

“I think that many things are clear to you now, but something is still bothering you,” he said gently.

I had been brooding about all this for so long it was hard to know where to start the story. So I started at the beginning. I told Julian all about working with Juan in the lab, about my decision to leave. I explained how Sven and David had been trying to force Juan to quit, how I had neither defended him nor even provided friendship or sympathy. Then I told him about Juan’s car crash.

“An accident,” said Julian. He said it matter-of-factly, but there was the hint of a question in his voice.

When I didn’t say anything, he continued. “But you are doubtful.”

“Yes,” I said finally. “Juan had a heart attack. That much is certain. But when did he have it? Before or after he crashed through the guardrail?”

Julian looked at me sadly, as if he knew my story hadn’t reached its conclusion.

I looked down at the stones in front of me, the great dome in the distance.

“Two days before he died,” I continued, “I walked past Juan’s office. He was coming out the door. He was looking at his feet, clearly lost in thought. He almost bumped into me. When he saw me, his expression didn’t change. He spoke as if he wasn’t really addressing me, was just continuing his private thoughts out loud.

“‘There hardly seems any point in going on’ is what Juan said. At the time, I thought he was talking about quitting. And as shameful as it is to admit, I was relieved. At least I wouldn’t have to see his harrowed face each day. At least I could pre- tend that things would turn out for the best. I didn’t say anything to Juan, and he continued past me, down the hall, his head lowered and his steps heavy. But after ... Juan’s words ate away at me like acid. Had those words foretold the fatal crash? Was Juan deciding to end his life, not his career? And if I had stopped him, talked with him, offered my help or my sympathy, might he still be alive today?”

Julian and I were both quiet for a while. There were only a few people in sight. The emptiness of the place seemed surreal after the noisy, crowded streets of Delhi and Agra.

Julian clasped his hands and stretched his legs in front of him. His brown leather sandals peeked out from under his crimson robe.

“Jonathan,” he began. “I like to say that what we all need to do is look ahead five years and predict what things in our current life we will most regret. Then we must take actions *today* to prevent those regrets from being realized.”

Julian reached out and put his hand over mine.

“I think, during this trip, you have probably started that process. I think your future is going to look very different from how it would have turned out if you hadn’t undergone this journey. But that is the future. What you are talking about now is the past. You know as well as I do that no one will ever be able to answer those questions you are asking. And you must be brave enough to accept that.”

I sighed deeply. I was hoping that Julian’s answer would be different, but I knew it wouldn’t be.

“You can’t move forward while looking back, Jonathan,” said Julian firmly. “And there is nothing you can do to change the past.”

“But I feel as if I should do something to make amends, to show how sorry I am,” I said.

“There are two things you can do,” said Julian. I looked up at him, feeling for the first time hopeful about this.

“Two things you *must* do,” Julian continued. “First is make sure that you never neglect a friend that way again; that you don’t bear silent witness to the cruelty and bad behavior of others.”

I nodded. I had already made that resolution to myself months ago.

“And second,” Julian continued, “you must forgive yourself.” Julian was looking at me intently.

“Do you remember the crane talisman, Jonathan?”

“Yes,” I said, thinking fondly of Ayame.

“Do you remember what that letter said about the importance of treating others kindly, and treating yourself the same way? It is important that you forgive others. It is *essential* that you forgive yourself.”

I ran my hands down my legs. I knew Julian was right. It might be the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do, but I had to stop wallowing in regret. I had to let it go. And move on.

“And speaking of forgiveness,” said Julian. He was standing up. “There is someone else who would like to see you.”

The sun had now disappeared completely, leaving only a faint glow along the horizon. The moon was bright in the sky, hanging like a golden coin against a deep bank of velvet. I looked around. Light was sparkling off the water in the reflecting pool, but the garden was dark and empty. Then I noticed a small figure at the edge of the stone avenue ... walking toward me. I looked over at Julian, but he was gone. When I turned back, the moonlight revealed the figure of a woman: petite and slender; long, dark hair disappearing behind her shoulders. She was close enough now that I could see the smile spreading across her face. Annisha! My heart leaped and I sprang to my feet.

Then, as I moved toward her, I saw something else. The tiny figure of my son appeared just behind his mother. Adam put his head down and pumped his arms as he raced past Annisha. I stooped down with my arms open to receive him. All I could manage to say was his name before tears choked my voice.

ANNISHA, ADAM AND I stayed in Agra for three days before heading back home. The time we spent together in India felt like the most important thing I had ever done.

Julian told me to keep the talismans—and the letters. “Perhaps someday,” he said, “you will want to give the talismans to Adam and teach him everything you have learned from them.” The thought of that made me smile.

WHEN I RETURNED TO WORK after my long absence, it was to a sea of new faces, and to an office without David, or Sven for that matter. I spent a long time talking with various managers and the new CEO. A lot of people, including my clients, tried to talk me into staying in sales. But I knew where I would do my best work. Eventually they agreed, and after several months as acting technical director, they gave me the post permanently.

Of course, before all of that unfolded, I got rid of the apartment and moved back in with Annisha and Adam. Adam immediately started a campaign to get me to be an assistant coach for his soccer team. He seemed surprised at how quickly I agreed. And Annisha and I started on the slow, careful work of rebuilding our marriage.

One of the first things we did was institute a new tradition— a once-a-month Sunday dinner with my mother, my sister and her family, and Annisha’s parents. And we started to plan our next vacation.

“Where shall we go?” asked Annisha, as she sat looking at some of the travel books my mother had lent us. “Who should we see?”

“Let’s start at the beginning,” I suggested, thinking fondly of my new life and my new friends. “Let’s start with Istanbul.”

THE TALISM AN LETTERS

The Power of Authenticity

The most important gift we can give ourselves is the commitment to living

our authentic life. To be true to ourselves, however, is not an easy task. We must break free of the seductions of society and live life on our own terms, under our own values and aligned with our original dreams. We must tap our hidden selves; explore the deep-seated, unseen hopes, desires, strengths and weaknesses that make us who we are. We have to understand where we have been and know where we are going. Every decision we make, every step we take, must be informed by our commitment to living a life that is true and honest and authentic to ourselves and ourselves alone. And as we proceed, we are certain to experience fortune well beyond our highest imagination.

Embrace Your Fears

What holds us back in life is the invisible architecture of fear. It keeps us in our comfort zones, which are, in truth, the least safe places in which to live. Indeed, the greatest risk in life is taking no risks. But every time we do that which we fear, we take back the power that fear has stolen from us—for on the other side of our fears lives our strength. Every time we step into the discomfort of growth and progress, we become more free. The more fears we walk through, the more power we reclaim. In this way, we grow both fearless and powerful, and thus are able to live the lives of our dreams.

Live with Kindness

It is important to remember that just as our words are our thoughts verbalized, so our deeds are our beliefs actualized. No action, no matter how small, is insignificant—how we treat someone defines how we treat everyone, including ourselves. If we disrespect another, we disrespect ourselves. If we are mistrustful of others, we are distrustful of ourselves. If we are cruel to another, we will be cruel to ourselves. If we can't appreciate those around us, we won't appreciate ourselves. With every person we engage, in everything we do, we must be kinder than expected, more generous than anticipated, more positive than we thought possible. Every moment in front of another human being is an opportunity to express our highest values and to influence

someone with our humanity. We can make the world better, one person at a time.

Make Small Daily Progress

The way we do small things determines the way that we do everything. If we execute our minor tasks well, we will also excel at our larger efforts. Mastery then becomes our way of being. But more than this—each tiny effort builds on the next, so that brick by brick, magnificent things can be created, great confidence grows and uncommon dreams are realized. The truly wise recognize that small daily improvements always lead to exceptional results over time.

To Lead Your Best Life, Do Your Best Work

There is no insignificant work in the world. All labor is a chance to express personal talents, to create our art and to realize the genius we are built to be. We must work like Picasso painted: with devotion, passion, energy and excellence. In this way, our productivity will not only become a source of inspiration to others, but it will have an impact—making a difference in the lives around us. One of the greatest secrets to a life beautifully lived is to do work that matters. And to ascend to such a state of mastery in it that people can't take their eyes off of you.

Choose Your Influences Well

We do not move through our days alone or apart from the world around us. And so we must always be aware of the things and the people we allow into our lives. It's a mark of wisdom to choose to spend time in those places that inspire and energize you and associate with those people who elevate and uplift you. Whether in our work or within our personal lives, these most positive friends and peers will inspire us to be our greatest selves and to lead our largest lives.

Life's Simplest Pleasures Are Life's Greatest Joys.

Most people don't discover what's most important in life until they are too old to do anything about it. They spend many of their best years pursuing things that matter little in the end. While society invites us to fill our lives with material objects, the best part of us knows that the more basic pleasures are the ones that enrich and sustain us. No matter how easy or hard our current conditions, we all have a wealth of simple blessings around us—waiting to be counted. As we do, our happiness grows. Our gratitude expands. And each day becomes a breath-taking gift.

The Purpose of Life Is to Love

How well you live comes down to how much you love. The heart is wiser than the head. Honor it. Trust it. Follow it.

Stand for Something Bigger than Yourself

There are no extra people alive today. Every single one of us is here for a reason, a special purpose—a mission. Yes, build a beautiful life for yourself and those you love. Yes, be happy and have a lot of fun. And yes, become successful, on your own terms rather than on those suggested to you by society. But—above all else—be significant. Make your life matter—be of use. And be of service to as many people as possible. This is how each of us can shift from the realm of the ordinary into the heights of the extraordinary. And walk among the best who have ever lived.

A B O U T T H E A U T H O R

Robin Sharma is one of the most widely read authors in the world. His eleven #1 international bestsellers include the inspirational classic *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, *Who Will Cry When You Die?*, *The Greatness Guide* and *The Leader Who Had No Title*, a book that has generated a global movement of individuals who are making an impact through their leadership behavior. Robin's books have sold over five million copies in over sixty-five countries and seventy-five languages. His legion of fans—who he loves connecting with on Facebook and Twitter—include movie stars, book icons, royalty and people from every imaginable walk of life. Robin is a much sought-after speaker who travels the world working with clients such as Nike, GE, FedEx, IBM, the Coca-Cola Company, Yale University and the Young Presidents' Organization. For details on bringing Robin to speak to your organization, visit robinsharma.com. Connect with Robin:



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