

# **INTER RUPTION**

The Magic Key To Lasting Change



**John Morgan**

America's Best Known Hypnotherapist

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John Morgan.

# PREFACE

## **INTER RUPTION IS MAGIC**

It's more than a considered opinion that **INTER RUPTION** is the key to learning something new. It is also my personal and professional experience.

Having worked with hundreds of thousands of people over the years who wanted to make lasting changes in their life, I have found a foolproof way to get to the threshold of change: **INTER RUPTION**.

I will show you how to get to there and help you step through to something new.

Once you learn about the effectiveness of **INTER RUPTION**, you'll want to use it in all areas of your life. It's a simple concept that you will easily understand and the results are outstanding.

Can change really be this simple? It is, when you begin the process of **INTER RUPTING** yourself.

You are the one who does the **INTER RUPTING**. You interrupt the patterns that keep you stuck and, by your own actions, you will experience a change of "luck."

Years ago, a dear friend asked me what I wanted to contribute to the self-help arena and I answered, "I want to offer a method of change that works every time." **INTER RUPTION** is that method.

**INTER RUPTION: The Magic Key To Lasting Change:** You can read it in a day and make changes that will last a lifetime.



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

## WHO IS JOHN MORGAN?

John Morgan, pure and simple, is a people helper. He has been billed as “America’s Best Known Hypnotherapist” because he has helped hundreds of thousands of people to stop smoking and lose weight and outgrow many other unwanted habit patterns.

John has been doing hypnosis seminars for 35 years and also had a successful radio career that spanned over 30 years. Quoting John, *“My broadcasting career taught me to reach people I couldn’t see, and my people helping career taught me how to show people possibilities they couldn’t see. Both careers have rewarded me and one of those gifts is what I will offer you in this book – How to create lasting change, no matter what your age or station in life, through the Magic of **INTER RUPTION.**”*

In a nutshell, John shows you how to communicate with yourself and others so that you can more easily accomplish your goals.

This book, **INTER RUPTION: The Magic Key To Lasting Change**, is the result of his life’s work of helping people make lasting changes.

John loves witnessing the connections made when someone gets to that “Magic” moment. He creates that learning environment in **INTER RUPTION.**

John Morgan lives in coastal New England and has conducted his workshops, and seminars in 45 states plus Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean.

He invites you to read this book cover-to-cover and master the magic of lasting change caused by **INTER RUPTION.**



# FORWARD

I met John Morgan in 2007. A mutual friend recommended me for the position of Seminar Coordinator for John Morgan Seminars. John has a gift for putting you instantly at ease within the first two minutes of a conversation. We talked on the phone for over an hour. I didn't know if I was qualified for the job, but, after that call, I felt like I'd met an old friend for the first time.

I have never learned so much about people helping and business in such a short period of time. I had the pleasure of traveling with John to get a first-hand look at the seminars I would be coordinating. The way he communicated with a roomful of hundreds of people was masterful. His warmth, humor and intelligence connected with men and women, young and old, immediately.

Like anyone who is at the top of their field, he makes what he does look easy. What people don't see is the magic that goes on in the background – The magic of how to create **lasting change**.

In his seminars he says that we all have the ability to outgrow outdated and limiting habit patterns and grow into new productive ones that last. Over the course of two hours, I watched a packed room full of smokers become non-smokers. At the end of the seminar, they threw their cigarettes *en masse* to the front of the room, cheering. The weight-loss seminar was subtler, but the results, months later, were no less astonishing: people losing 40+ pounds, but also being able to go off medications related to their weight. It is the way that John communicates on so many levels that helps people get the results they want.

I have benefited from his wisdom over these past eleven years, and now you can, too. My mother was a HUGE fan of John Morgan's. She used to say, "If everyone would just read John's blog, the world would be a better place!" <http://grasshoppernotes.com/blog>

In this book, **INTER RUPTION: The Magic Key To Lasting Change**, you will learn how to communicate more effectively with yourself and others. The techniques are simple and easy to learn, and very powerful. They will help you to see new options and create new opportunities for yourself, ones that have eluded you in the past.

In conversations with John, I would often say, "I never noticed that" or "I never thought of it that way." He has a way of getting you to become aware that makes you want to change, not in a lightning bolt kind of way, but more like a gentle stretch. I think one thing we all want is to feel comfortable; this book will help you to feel more comfortable in your own skin.

I can honestly say that had I not met John Morgan, I would not be the person I am today. I didn't just find a new job; I found a new life. He has been my mentor and boss, but more importantly, he is a life-long friend. John often says, "leave people in a better place than you found them." I trust he, in this book, will do just that for you.

Warmly,

Hali Chambers

- Seminar Coordinator for John Morgan Seminars (2007-2018)
- Junk Journal and Traveler's Note Book Designer
- Creator of and vocal artist for **The Healing Labyrinth Path** and **Virtual Massage** – Self-Discovery Recordings available at <https://store.cdbaby.com/Artist/HaliChambers>



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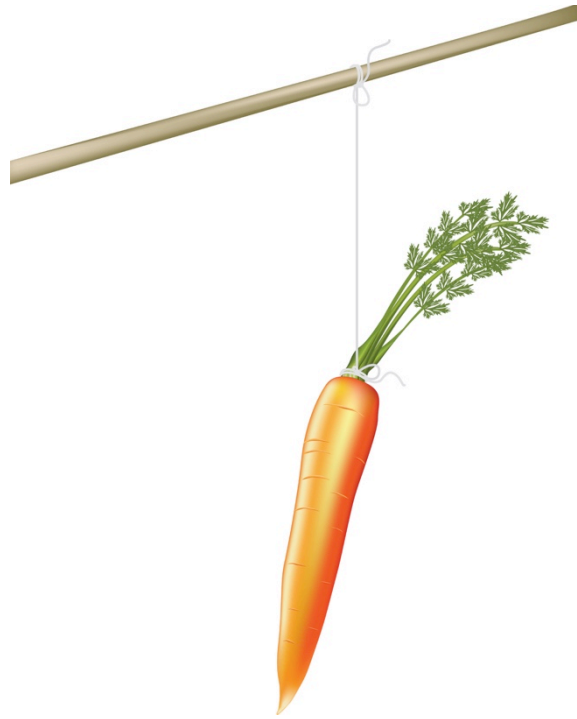
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## STIMULUS–RESPONSE | Chapter One



*“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”*

**Viktor E. Frankl**

Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist

### **A STIMULATING BEGINNING**

Before we begin to **INTER RUPT**, we need to know what needs interrupting.

Most folks are familiar with the term “stimulus-response.” I’d like to redefine one of the words: Response.

A response takes some mental consideration on your part. A reaction, however, happens without any thinking involved. It's the reaction that needs interrupting.

To get the most out of **INTER RUPTION**, start to think about stimulus-response in a new way: "*stimulus-reaction.*"

If someone calls you a derogatory name, your first reaction (conditioning) may be to call them an unflattering name in return. A response has you pause and give yourself a choice on whether to go forward with the conditioned reaction, or choose a response.

We are either reacting or responding to the ever-present stimulus known as Reality.

Think of reality as a carrot that's always dangling in front of us. Each day our life is filled with unforeseen and abundant realities, and how we answer them determines the quality of our life. We can have a very predictable, repeatable existence or we can create our lives each moment. The path we wind up on is directly caused by a reaction or a response.

Reactions have us "re-acting" the same way again and again. We are like the actor who can only play one role. **No creativity comes from a reaction, only predictability.** We have been conditioned to give the same reaction to the same stimulus and haven't noticed how stale we've become.

A reaction is a remedy we've used before – a remedy that may not be working now. We get so caught up in our reaction that we don't notice we're not being rewarded anymore.

If your life has you taken down a "dead-end, stale trail," you are a victim of your reactions. You have defaulted to one way of reacting. It seems like the only way, even though you know it's tired and worn out. You need a creative intervention.

Creativity (Freshness) is the result of a RESPONSE.

## **REACTION vs. RESPONSE**

When something happens, we react or respond to it. If you hear a loud noise that sounds like a gunshot, you may react and duck for cover. If you are a trained, law enforcement professional, you may supersede that initial, conditioned reaction and instead of taking cover, respond by looking for the source of the gunfire.

Reacting is automatic; responding takes some training. Ask anyone who has taken instruction in Aikido or other martial arts. The conditioned reaction we have is to attempt to block an opponent's attack. Aikido teaches you to blend with the attacker's force and neutralize it. I can tell you from experience that it takes some training to step in to someone's attack and blend because our natural reaction is to retreat. Aikido teaches us there is a response that is more effective than reacting.

But most of us are not trained law enforcement officials or martial arts masters, yet we are well served to master our ability to respond. It not only makes our lives fresher, but utilizes our most valuable asset: our ability to create.

If you are a religious person, you are probably familiar with the tenet that we are created in the image and likeness of God. I take that to mean we are Godlike. What is God's greatest skill? Creation is the answer I come up with. If you follow the logic, we were created to create. Even if you're an atheist or an agnostic, you recognize your ability to create, regardless of where it comes from. There is magic in a response because it allows you to cross the border into creativity and find solutions reactions never look for.

Reminds me of a story . . .

About 35 years ago I was conducting a seminar for a computer company in Augusta, Maine. I was discussing the difference between a reaction and a response. I asked a young, strapping lad of 28 what he would do if someone called him a derogatory name. He said, "I'd

whack them.” I then asked him if he knew who **Billy Martin** was. He said, “He’s the former manager of the New York Yankees.” I asked if he knew how old Billy was. He said, “Late 50s.” I further probed if he knew anything else about Billy. He said, “Yea, he gets in fights in bars.” I then asked him if he, himself, would be getting in fights in bars when he was 58. He said, “No way.” I then asked, “What magical metamorphosis is going to happen between now and then to keep you from whacking people who call you names?” I added, “What if when someone calls you a name, you pause and then reply with something like this: ‘If you knew me a little better, you may like me more.’” He smiled and he got it.

There is a stimulus (reality) and there is a conditioned reaction (what you normally do). When you take time to choose a response, you are making life easier and fresher. You acknowledge reality but you choose not to fight with it because you will always lose.

Before I knew about responding to reality, I felt locked in to some predestined plan, but that just didn’t feel right for me. I found that most people are under that locked-in delusion. Response is the universal remedy – a passport to a life of fresh creativity and **lasting change**.

The difference between a reaction and a response is like the disparity between a **Leonardo da Vinci** painting and a velvet **Elvis**. A response will come from a more creative place.

### **HOOKED BY THE HEADLINE**

Here’s something I wrote many years ago to illustrate how **we are conditioned to react** and how easily we are led. I called it **HEADLINE EVOLUTION**.

It used to be that headlines encapsulated the story. It seems that practice has fallen out of fashion and hyperbole has take over.

With the passing of actor Paul Newman recently, I could have easily used the new headline practice and issued the two following headlines:

***“I had lunch with Paul Newman.”***

***“My wife acted in the movie ‘Slapshot’ with Paul Newman.”***

Both of those headlines contain a modicum of truth. Perhaps a story would be helpful.

In the mid 1970s, I worked at a radio station in Syracuse, NY. Filming of the movie “Slapshot” was to take place in town for two days. Our station program director had been college friends with the casting director and got four of our staff members – including me – an audition for a bit part of a sportscaster in the movie. We were all invited to the set to witness the filming and we were invited for a meal in the lunchroom where cast and crew ate. While standing in the buffet line, **Paul Newman** came out of his trailer in his hockey gear and came up next to me in the lunch line. We exchanged smiles and nods and he returned to his trailer with his platter. That was it.

The newspaper had put out an ad for a casting call for people to be in the crowd scenes. My wife and some neighbors stood in line at the casting call and were selected to be in those scenes. She actually received a check for two days work but we could never find her in the crowd scenes, even when viewing the movie in slow motion.

The new types of headlines are designed to lead you away from the essence of the story and corral you into a dimly lit corner where the truth is hard to see.

We are stimulus-reaction creatures devoid of true free will, and the writers of these headlines know we have robotic reactions.

We are always in the political season and nowhere is this headline practice more evident than in campaign rhetoric. Candidates talk in sound bites because they know these words will be lifted for talk shows and the evening news. Depending on the political bias of the show you are viewing or listening to, the host or producer will determine the headline they select for you to see and hear. Research shows the majority of voters vote on the headlines they experienced.

**We own a clutch that we rarely use.** It's called presence of mind. Have the presence of mind to notice a hooking headline. When presented with a headline stimulus, have the presence of mind to stay awake and throw in the clutch so that you can avoid the automatic reaction you have been baited to return.

This practice of staying awake and choosing a response rather than having the response choose us is rarely used. This means that you will be a slave to the headlines as long as you remain asleep.

Personal choice begins when you recognize that there is room for a wedge between stimulus and reaction. It is from this space that actual free will is born.

**If you are asleep, choices are made for you.** Waking up is having the presence of mind to go past the headline.

Maybe the old adage was right: "Headlines are what you get when you fall asleep on a corduroy pillow."

**INTER RUPTION** is all about offering choices: to give you a choice rather than be a programmed robot. Outgrowing your programming puts you at the doorstep of **lasting change**.



## CHANGING TRACKS | Chapter Two



*“History repeats itself. So you might wanna pay attention.”*

**Quavo**

American rapper, singer, songwriter and record producer

### **AND THE HITS JUST KEEP ON COMIN’**

Our mind seems to be like recording device that plays back our “greatest hits” over and over again. The greatest hits being our repetitive thoughts.

When we’re hit with a stimulus, the same hits play back again and again.

When a CD skips, it's a bad thing, especially if we want to hear the song all the way through. Skipping is a good thing if we want to sing along to a different tune.

So how do we create an intentional skip? **INTER RUPTION!**

**INTER RUPTION** is activated when we *notice* – notice the thoughts that are running through our head. If you don't notice that you're playing the same song over and over again – and you are not happy with that tune – you won't have the foresight to change the playlist.

Observing a pattern of behavior while it's happening is what I call "noticing." In order to outgrow a pattern, we have to notice it while it's running. The next step is to interrupt the pattern in midstream. Just interrupt what you are doing while you are doing it.

If you truly want to change a behavior, you have to interrupt it each time you notice it **while it is running**. Each interruption paves a way towards a more useful pattern. The key is repetition of the interruption.

Notice, also, the physical reactions you have to a stimulus that cause you to react the same way time after time. If you ball up your fist when a specific stimulus hits, rather than acting on it, notice it. If you always grit your teeth after a stimulus, notice it.

Recognizing that your mind is running a pattern is one step closer to being successful with **INTER RUPTION**. The underlying patterns associated with unwanted thoughts or behaviors do not care if you react your way to an early grave. "Habit patterns," as I like to call them, are not logical, but they do serve a purpose and will run forever unless we start to recognize them, interrupt them, and ultimately update or outgrow them.

Noticing is the first step of **INTER RUPTION**.

The second step is to employ an interruption strategy. The following is one of the first I learned.

## I WONDER

The “**Wonder Exercise**” is a three-step process. The key to its effectiveness is doing it midstream, meaning that you do the exercise when you notice you are beginning to run an undesirable habit pattern.

First, you take a deep breath and sigh it out.

Second, ask yourself something like the following: “*I wonder what I could do or think right now that would be more productive than this?*” “This” being the unproductive pattern you are in the middle of.

Finally, slowly roll your eyes in a wide circular pattern and wait for a signal. To prime the pump, you may have to do the “Wonder Exercise” a few times to start getting signals. The signals may come in the form of a picture, a sensation, or a thought. **You will get a signal.** The key is to act on the signal you get.

By doing the “Wonder Exercise,” you have searched your memory banks for another way to go, rather than reacting in a way that has a history of failure. This will generate a fresh, productive direction. It all begins by interrupting the reactive pattern while it is happening and following through by wondering.

How can this exercise be effective? It has to do with how we are wired. There is brain tissue behind your eyes. When your eyes move to certain physical areas, you are accessing a certain portion of your brain. The work of **Richard Bandler and John Grinder**, pioneers of **NLP** (Neuro-linguistic programming), codifies for us where the eyes go to access pictures, sounds, and feelings. A short primer is in order.

According to Bandler and Grinder, when your eyes go up or defocus, you are accessing pictures (remembered or constructed). When your eyes move laterally to one side or the other, you are accessing sounds or words, (also remembered or constructed). When your eyes go down and right, you are tapping into your body’s physical

sensations. When the eyes go down and left, you are having an internal conversation with yourself.

These eye positions are accurate for right-handed people and most lefthanders. Some lefthanders are a mirror image of the eye positions, meaning they are opposite. It's easy to tell. Ask a left-handed person what their social security number is backwards. If their eyes go up and left, they are seeing the number. If their eyes go lateral left, they are hearing the number. If their eyes go down and left, they are saying the number to themselves. If their eyes go the opposite direction, there's a good chance they are left-handed.

Let's go back to the eye roll. When you roll your eyes slowly in a circular fashion, you access your storehouse of visual images, sounds, and stored feeling responses that are out of conscious awareness. When we get stuck on a problem, we usually go only to the usual places in our brain for solutions, coming up with the same ideas that didn't work the last time. Doing this exercise is like going through an old picture album. You see people and places that you haven't seen or even thought about in a long time, giving you new ideas and approaches. Our brain stores unlimited amounts of sensations, pictures, and words (sounds) that sit outside conscious awareness. The eye roll is a useful way to access them.

Think of your first kiss. Before I suggested that, it was sitting outside of consciousness. Now, it isn't. When we do the eye roll, we give ourselves access to information we wouldn't have thought of using our predictable reaction pattern. By doing the exercise, we cycle through pictures, sensations, and sounds. We unearth bits and pieces from each sensory database to produce a mosaic that we would not have come up with without doing the exercise.

That's why the wonder portion is so important. Wonder is a magical word that gets you wondering. What happens when I ask the following questions?

- I wonder how your favorite sports team is going to do next season?

- I wonder if the weather is going to cooperate for that special event you're planning to attend?
- I wonder if you will ever hit the lottery?

If you were paying careful attention, you probably noticed you were wondering right along with me as you read those questions. You are giving your brain some specific criteria to search for when you wonder about more constructive or adventurous things.

### **10 SECOND EXERCISE**

This "clean-up-your-thinking" exercise is one I learned by listening to a recording from **Jerry Stocking**. I met Jerry in 1988 at a seminar we were attending conducted by **Dr. Dave Dobson**. Jerry writes books and conducts seminars and is a world-class teacher on how your mind works. This 10-second exercise came from one of Jerry's students.

It seems like it could never work, but it does:

1. Move your eyes up and make a picture of something either a remembered or created picture. It can be of anyone or anything. It doesn't matter.
2. Move your eyes down and left and hear an external sound.
3. Move your eyes down and right and feel a sensation going on in your body. It could be as simple as your shoe pressure against your toe.

Then, close your eyes for about five seconds. That's it! You're done.

How is this exercise effective? By getting you out of your head. You may be inside your head making pictures that are giving you unwanted sensations in your body. You may have feelings or sensations that are producing less-than-elegant pictures in your head or bothersome internal conversations.

You are involved with grooved, reactive patterns when you are in your head. You are not paying attention to other events actually

going on. More pointedly, you are in a trance. Did you ever drive by your regular exit while you were lost in thought? That's commonly called "highway hypnosis."

This exercise is cumulative. That means you give your brain additional sensory data to access the next time you run the pattern. With practice, there will be new pictures, new sounds, and new sensations available, not just the same old stuff.

### **A NEW WAY TO VIEW INTERRUPTIONS**

Our lives contain countless interruptions; they're a part of life. Just about every phone call you receive is an interruption of what you were doing before the phone rang. Anytime someone unexpectedly walks into your cubicle, office or the room you're in and seeks your attention, it's an interruption. The same is true for countless emails and texts. And if you want to really know about interruptions, talk to a mother of small children.

Interruptions happen everywhere – in the supermarket, on a bus or train or plane. They even happen when a stranger says, "Good morning."

I believe I'm speaking for more than just myself when I say the word "Interruption" has had a negative connotation.

I wonder what would happen if we redefined the word "interruption" and made it a synonym for "opportunity." It would be an opportunity for us to experience life in a new way.

**INTER RUPTIONS** can be life's way of tapping us on the shoulder and alerting us to new opportunities. I realize this notion could be taken a bit far, especially if you decided to listen to the entire pitch of every telemarketer, even the recorded ones. But many interruptions can be opportunities to reset yourself to neutral and notice what the interruption has to offer.

Often we half listen to the interrupter as we attempt to continue doing what we were doing before they sought our attention. That scatters focus and waters down results.

I'm curious what would happen if we got in the practice of giving our full attention to an **INTER RUPTION**.

My experience is this: We would be staring opportunity in the face more often.

### **INTER RUPTION IS THE KEY TO GROWTH**

You get a pardon or reprieve from automatic behavior when you interrupt it while it's happening. It's an opportunity you offer yourself to go in another direction – one towards growth.

Repeating the same old pattern takes you down the same old roads; **INTER RUPTION** offers you a new map. Your programmed GPS can only take you to the programmed location; interruption opens you to new directions.

The break in the chain of events is **INTER RUPTION**. It is a catalyst for growth. Just about any behavior can be interrupted and each time you do so, you help yourself grow.

Growth is a process, not a one-time thing. That's why I'm not a fan of the term, "breaking patterns." The break is the initial step, not the complete solution. In order to grow, you must outgrow, and that takes repeated interruption. Each time you interrupt a pattern of behavior, you grow a little bit. String a series of **INTER RUPTIONS** together and they begin to take on a life of their own, heading you down new paths to **lasting change**.

It's easier to be pardoned for your behavior if it doesn't happen. The key to keep it from happening is **INTER RUPTION**.

If you're serious about growing, here's an easy mantra to remember: **Be abrupt and interrupt!** It lets us change from a reaction to a

response and makes us the stimulus rather than the reactor. We stimulate **lasting change** when we **INTER RUPT**.

### **WANT TO KNOW A SECRET?**

Life's "secret ingredient" is **INTER RUPTION**. It takes us out of programmed mode and opens us up to something new.

As mentioned, we tend to treat most interruptions as annoyances when, in fact, they can be portals to a new view and a new you.

Every now and again our dog Snuffy would interrupt my "busy and important" work by plopping a rope in my lap. I wanted him to go away but he wanted to play. He interrupted me. When I took the bait and played tug-of-war with him, it was always a fun experience and it always produced a laugh for me.

Would I schedule that interruption? No, but each time it happened, I ended up with a pleasurable break I wouldn't normally take.

### **INTER RUPTING OURSELVES IS THE AGENT OF CHANGE**

We run on programmed mode at least 95% of the time. I made that percentage up, but it feels right to me. That means we are on automatic pilot most of our lives and automatic pilot will only take us to the same place.

We are patterned creatures and our patterns are grooved. When these patterns don't serve us well, **INTER RUPTION** is our ticket out of hell.

I don't know how it works; I only know that it does. It takes discipline to notice and it takes commitment to constantly **INTER RUPT**.

If you are struggling with change, take the time to **notice and interrupt**. It works when you commit yourself to work at it.



## THERE ARE INFINITE RESPONSES TO GETTING UNSTUCK

**Jerry Stocking** suggests an exercise that proves this point. He asks you to pair up with another person and do this: Say any word and have your partner give their fifth response to that word.

For example, they allow their first four responses to that word to silently go by and offer the fifth response aloud to you. Then you offer your fifth response to their word back to them. Do this exercise for about five minutes with someone and you will expose yourself to choices that were hidden from consciousness.

Responses are like airplanes on a runway waiting for their chance to take off. If your first response is stuck in your mind, new ideas won't get a chance to fly.

The first response is a patterned, conditioned reaction. In short, we have a first reaction to every stimulus, whether we're aware of it or not. A stimulus comes along and our conditioned reaction is right there in a split second. The key to moving forward towards options is to notice that you also have a second response to the stimulus and a third, a fourth and a 25<sup>th</sup> response. It's the pursuit of those responses further down the list that produces options and new learning.

This is not a quick fix; it's a discipline – a way of doing things differently that produces different results. Your first response always produces the same result – Stuck!

You don't need a partner to do this exercise. You can do it on your own and generate responses that lead to **lasting change**.

**Here's what I notice:** I become more peaceful when I move further down my list of responses and choose one as my new response. I notice more. I become more observant. My field of vision becomes wider, almost panoramic and the thought process in my head calms down, making room for something new.

We can continue to react with our first response to a stimulus and we now know exactly what that will get us – a defense of our rigid positions that keeps us from growing.

It takes some effort to remember to move past our first response, but the more often we do, our position loses its glue and the prospect of **lasting change** comes into view.

If this process has opened your eyes to a new way, I will happily take credit for **INTER RUPTING** your day.

## OBSERVATION | Chapter Three



*"People's minds are changed through observation and not through argument."*

**Will Rogers**

Stage and motion picture actor, vaudeville performer, American cowboy, humorist, newspaper columnist, and social commentator

### **FIND AN OBSERVATION TOWER**

Before beginning the practice of **INTER RUPTING**, it's quite helpful to know your mind and how it works. Observing the mind at work is instructive and enlightening, and after you notice how it operates, interrupting its operation is life changing. Reminds me of a story . . .

Years ago, I was talking with one of my sons and was interrupted by this thought:

***“You’re a puzzle solver but you want to be a puzzle maker.”***

Are you constantly solving problems – shooting the snake closest to your foot? If so, that doesn’t leave a whole lot of time for creativity – a force that makes you feel alive. For creativity to come in, we have to get out of our heads. If our heads are constantly filled with problems, we stay trapped inside the border, and creativity is just past the edge of our puzzle.

When our troubles and woes take up most of our mental real estate, there is not much room for creativity to visit. After all, there is only so much room inside. (See Chapter 5).

**If you are unsure how to get outside of your head, notice what is going inside it.** This means catch yourself thinking. Then just observe, not judge, your thoughts.

Observation of your mind at work separates you from the notion that you are your thoughts. **You’re not!** Prove it to yourself by watching your mind work. After just a bit of noticing, you will discover that your mind has a mind of its own and does not need your participation. It will prattle on and challenge you to fight with it.

Observing your thoughts rather than doing battle with them creates space. It is in that space that you make room for creativity and **lasting change**.

We are all creative; we just have to get out of our head long enough for creativity to make an entrance.

Puzzled? Begin the habit of observing your mind at work. It’s a guaranteed way to find creativity, the missing piece.

Here is something I wrote that illustrates **INTER RUPTION** further by comparing it to the practice of improvisation, or Improv, for short.

## VIBRANT LIFE REQUIRES IMPROV

The common reaction that we have to real life (Reality) gets us the same thing we got before – a stale, stuck-in-the-mud and reactive existence. Want to improve your life? Apply Improv.

Vibrant life requires learning a lesson from the theatrical practice called Improv. Improv keeps us from going backwards. It's worth observing our habit of going backwards and **INTER RUPT** it so we can move forward.

The basic premise of Improv is that you take what is offered to you and run with it. Improv takes you in a new direction – one that you do not take when you protest. The vibrancy of life comes to a screeching halt when you refuse what reality has offered you.

"A Rabbi and a priest walk into a bar" is what the improvisational comedian is offered. He/she doesn't respond, "No, they shouldn't go into a bar"; they offer the next sequence of events – something that advances the story. Vibrancy requires forward movement.

The minute you refuse what life has offered, you are stuck in a stale routine. Notice I didn't say that you have to like what reality has offered, but for vibrancy to return, it is necessary to take what reality has dropped in your lap and offer a forward response. It seems obvious to say that moving backwards delays any forward movement, but that is exactly the direction we head when we do not embrace Improv.

We have become experts in justifying our predictable reactions. That practice won't deliver any laughs, only the sad reality that the joke's on us if we refuse to move forward.

This observation is not meant to trivialize or deny what has happened to you; it's to shine a light on a way forward – Improv.

You will stay right where you are, perhaps drowning your sorrows with the Rabbi and Priest, until you find life's vibrant salvation – Improv.

Did you happen to notice that **Improv** and **INTER RUPTION** begin with the same letter?

### **ANOTHER OBSERVATION ABOUT INTER RUPTION**

A long time ago my hypnosis teacher stated that we are our own best therapists. (See Chapter 8). Part of what he meant by that was that we have a part of us that “knows” the answer to our dilemma. The problem is, we don’t know we have that part of us, or we are cut off from it. Being cut off is what I’m calling “baffled.”

I always thought the definition of baffled was “perplexed” or some other word that meant perplexed.

It can also mean a dampening of sound or a diffusion of light or a diminishment of anything else that is attempting to get through in stronger measure.

The noise in our head is the most baffling substance we will ever encounter. It is thicker than mountain fog. It baffles our innate wisdom from coming through. What to do?

The first step is to **stop doing what you normally do**: going into think mode and staying there until we exhaust ourselves looking for an answer that remains elusive.

Did you ever notice that when you stop thinking about something, answers have a tendency to come through more often? Notice that your “ah-ha” moments don’t arrive as a result of your thinking. It’s the absence of thought that allows the “un-thought of” answer to cut through the fog.

The next step is to find something that interrupts your train of thought. Just noticing your thought machine in action is enough to stop the train. Think of noticing as a big cow on the tracks.

When we notice that we are thinking, we go from being a participant with our thoughts to becoming an **observer** of our thoughts. It’s from

the point of observation that our thoughts have spaces show up between them and this makes room for wisdom to fill the void.

If you're talking to yourself inside your head about your problem, you're baffled – you're cut off from your creativity. Could it be that the answer you're looking for is just an observation and **INTER RUPTION** away?

### **THE MORE MINDFUL YOU ARE, THE MORE LIFE YOU'LL FEEL COURSE THROUGH YOUR VEINS**

The amount of life we live without noticing is staggering and life-stunting. Mindfulness (**Observation**) is recognizing and feeling what we're doing while we're doing it. We just don't do this often enough and each time we go on mindless autopilot, we miss experiencing our life.

I'm not sure that perpetual mindfulness is attainable. Perhaps someone lying on a bed of nails in some remote corner of the globe has achieved it but I don't think it will happen for you or me. It's the *pursuit* of mindfulness, more often, that will pay dividends.

**To become more mindful is to become more aware of what we do.** That can be as simple as noticing the temperature of the water on your hands when you wash them. Mindful eating is an effective digestion and weight management technique, as well.

When we're having a conversation with someone, mindfulness is giving your whole attention to what they are saying. Going into your head and rehearsing what you want to say when they take a breath is about as unmindful as we can be, and it is a sure way to allow our life to flee.

**Note:** If you are "multi-tasking," your attention will be scattered and your aliveness will be on vacation.

I could be making all this up, so you will have to prove it to yourself: More life and **lasting change** are available to you just by paying attention to what you do.

## **THERE'S NO TURNING CORNERS IF YOU'RE GOING AROUND IN CIRCLES**

Patterns of behavior are circular. They keep coming around and they take us to the same place. Sometimes it feels like being stuck in a revolving door.

“Déjà vu! I've been here before.”

Patterns are like clockwork. They are such a consistent part of our existence and woven into the fabric of our life that we just don't notice them.

You can't turn the corner with circular patterns in place. It's just not possible.

## **IT'S TIME FOR AN INTERVENTION**

We need a crash course in observing and **INTER RUPTING** or the debris from our mishaps will keep piling up and keep us stuck on the highway.

Noticing means we have to **STOP** for a moment and become a witness to our patterned way of doing things. We need to pause and pay attention to what we automatically do or don't do.

In these moments of pause, we get to step out of our life and view it as though we were a stranger – someone who is not involved. Did you ever notice how much easier it is to solve someone else's problem? **That's the beauty of being an observer.**

When you stop and notice, you pause your automatic reactions. In that pause lies the strategy for turning the corner. That exit ramp has always been there; we just haven't stopped to notice.



## **YOUR MIND IS AN ADDICT**

My personal view on addiction is, after the addictive substance is removed, a mental pattern can be outgrown.

But we can be addicted to a thought for a lifetime if we don't stop and notice the addiction. Your mind is addicted to that thought. It doesn't matter how much logic you heap upon yourself to the contrary, that thought keeps coming back and hooking you.

You can try positive thinking to countermand that thought but that never has a long-term result. Positive thinking has the lasting effect of a pep rally – the verve is gone before you get home. Much like the line from **The Godfather: Part III**, *“Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in,”* we get pulled back in to argue with our own mind.

The real addiction is arguing with our mind. And, have you ever stopped to notice that you have **NEVER** won an argument with your mind?

## **YOU HAVE TO NOTICE AN ADDICTION BEFORE YOU CAN OUTGROW IT**

Notice the addictive thought without engaging with it. Just observe the argument that your mind presents and choose not to participate. The thought will go away because it can't get you to play. Oh, it may come back again in a “revealing outfit” attempting to lure you in, but if you remain in observation mode during each visit, the thought will eventually visit much less.

The thought may never completely go away but its frequency of temptation to get you to argue will dwindle.

We argue for our limiting habits when we argue with our mind. What addict do you know who doesn't argue for their limitations?

You can outgrow being addicted to your mind; you just have to start observing and **INTER RUPTING** it.

## DISCOVERING CHANGE

Most of us can cite change points in our lives. For me, it was the discovery of “I” and “Me.”

It dawned on me that there are two selves – I and Me.

Me only thought there was me. Me is the outer self, the one we talk to ourselves about inside our head. Me is a collection of life’s experiences. To quote Czech writer **Milan Kundera**, *“What is the self? It is the sum of everything we remember.”*

The outer self is our self-image. “Yep, that’s me.”

What I found out about being me is that there is built-in exclusion of other ways, especially ones different from mine. Me takes on the mantle of “the way me thinks is the way it is.”

“I” doesn’t think. “I” observes.

When I discovered there was a thinker and an observer, I began to think less and observe more. One of the things I began to observe was my thinking. It was eye-opening.

There is a part of me that thinks that the only thing there is are thoughts. When I found out I could observe the things I thought were the *only* things, I found my inner self – the observer.

The observer frees you from your thoughts. You begin to notice these tightly compacted thoughts that pretend they are the only way it is and, like magic, these thoughts begin to unravel. Old beliefs begin to fall apart because there isn’t the glue of thinking to hold them together.

“Me” takes on a life of its own, never noticing that “I” is there, until it does.

The way to “I” is to observe “Me.” It’s the observation of this ongoing train of thought that brings you to the whistle stop known as “I.” It’s there that you can hop off and observe rather than pretend to know how things are.

You’ll know you are ready to break out of the cocoon of “Me,” when you observe that there are other ways it can be.

Observing and **INTER RUPTING** our mind is a life-long practice that pays dividends every time we do it. Observing produces the space for **lasting change** to enter.

### **SMALL ADJUSTMENTS START BIG CHANGES**

“Our routines run us” is the foundation of what I have observed over the years. But when our routines don’t serve us well, we opt for wholesale change. That practice rarely works, and if it does, it is often short-lived.

Starting with too big of a piece is what I refer to as “eating a whole cow at once.” I’m saying more than start with “baby steps” here; I’m advocating for adjustment rather than lock, stock and barrel change.

Let’s pretend that you have no rhythm and are a “dreadful” dancer. You set out to change that. You take your two left feet and head to the **Johnny Castle Dance Studio**. No matter how many dance lessons you take, you are not going to wind up on “Dancing With The Stars.” Your wholesale change strategy is to be a top dancer rather than to enjoy dancing. If you are just focused on change, you miss the fun dance steps. That’s where adjustment comes in. Change needs a new angle of view.

We get boxed into one way of seeing things and we think the only way to get out of our predicament is to make a major change – to be someone different than who we are. That desire causes us untold pain. We don’t want to work with who we already are, but want totally to be someone else.

When you go for wholesale change, it's like being in the witness protection program. You are forever looking over your shoulder at the person you really are while pretending to be someone else. It causes lots of strain.

We rarely adjust or shift our position a few degrees to take another look. To adjust is to take time to look at yourself from another angle. Adjustment is a catalyst for big change.

**You don't need to change who you are; you just have to adjust your routines.** You're fine; it's your behavior that keeps you stuck.

Here's the best news: You don't have to adjust the behavior you want to change; you can **adjust any automatic behavior** you have and it will have a domino effect.

Start noticing things you automatically do and slightly adjust that behavior. It could be as simple as noticing that you say, "God bless you" when someone sneezes. Make a small adjustment and say something else or nothing at all. Then notice something else that you automatically do and adjust that too. What you are training yourself to do is to **notice your automatic pilot approach** and make slight adjustments. You are looking at you from a different point of view – **as an outside observer.**

When you notice any routine that you automatically run and make an adjustment, you are making an adjustment to your whole automatic system. After some practice, you'll start to notice other things changing, slowly at first, and eventually they'll reach a tipping point.

Routines hold our behavior together. Looking at these routines from another angle (as that of the observer) and then making a slight adjustment, causes these routines to come apart over time, making room for change.

It is a highly effective and indirect method of going after change that's different and much gentler than the way we pursue change now.

When you observe your behaviors from another angle and adjust what you do, you make change about the behaviors and not about you. These are big changes.

### **CHANGE YOUR THINKING?**

In the spirit of full disclosure, this will be a mini rant – my version of tilting at windmills. Somebody has to do it.

There is a pat phrase in self-improvement circles that goes like this: **Change your thinking; change your life.** I have no argument with that premise. If your thinking changes, your life WILL change.

My rant is against the people who put the directive out there without any direction. They never go any deeper than the bumper sticker. My guess is they have no idea how to assist someone with changing their thinking. When you hear, "Just think positive," you now have a clue that they have no clue how to help you.

To change your thinking, you first have to **notice what you're thinking while you're thinking it.** Judging your thinking as "negative," however, has no effect on changing your thinking. Evaluating your thinking after the fact also has no effect on changing your thinking. Telling yourself to "think positive" has no effect on changing your thinking.

Noticing your thoughts while you are having them is how you change your thinking. When you become an observer of your mind, you remove yourself from the automatic thinking process. When you take a moment to observe yourself thinking, you make a space for some fresh, new, unrehearsed thinking to emerge. Interrupting your automatic thinking machine with observation is the way to change your thoughts and, thus, change your life.

You will have to be diligent with this strategy. You can't do it once and expect instant results. Remember, you are dealing with a pattern of thinking that's been going on just about your entire life. You'll have to interrupt that pattern often to get the **lasting change** you seek.

Your thinking will not change on its own. That would be like expecting a train to decide to run off its tracks. As long as the tracks are properly in place, the train will run on them until it finally runs out of steam – in other words, for a lifetime.

To change tracks, you have to notice that you're on one. When you **observe your train of thought**, while it's running, you become the engineer rather than the passenger.

You can ride your current train 'til the end of the line or you can notice your thinking and change tracks now.

Develop the habit of **INTER RUPTING** your thinking and you will begin to think new things, and these new things will change your life.

You now have a directive with direction. Follow it and you'll be the little engine that *can* change their thinking.

### **YOU CAN'T HAVE A WAR IF ONLY ONE SIDE IS FIGHTING**

How many personal wars do we keep alive by our penchant to have the last word or throw the last punch? My guess is more than we imagine.

The cure for any war is always the same – Stop fighting!

When the accent is on the fight and who's right, there is less hope for peace. Reminds me of a story . . .

A couple of years ago I was at a golf driving range where I ran into an old acquaintance. After the hellos and handshake, we went into our song and dance act we had started years before. It was, for lack of a

better description, “Top this!” To the casual observer this may have appeared to be conversation, but make no mistake, this was war. Who was going to have the last potent “Ka-Pow”?

In the middle of this little sideshow, it dawned on me that this “conversation” was going nowhere and would end up like all the ones we had had in the past – a ramping up of egos with absolutely nothing being communicated. I stopped counter-punching and started asking questions. It turned into the most pleasant conversation I ever had with this fellow. Awareness is a gift you give to yourself and it’s the proverbial gift that keeps on giving.

Becoming aware is the ability to **throw in the clutch when you’re in the middle of something and observe yourself as though you are watching someone else.**

**Remember:** It’s easier to have an opinion about someone else’s actions than it is to have one about your own.

When you shift from participating to observing, you get a broader view. You’re like the General on the hill observing the whole battlefield vs. being the soldier in the middle of the fray. More useful decisions are made from this vantage point. This wider view is the gift of awareness.

### **THE CIRCLE EXERCISE**

Here’s something you can do to change your Angle of View.

The Egyptians, the Greeks and the Babylonians all contributed to the geometry that we work with today, namely that a circle has 360 degrees. Each one of those degrees gives you a different point of view.

Imagine a circle on the floor or on the ground and stand at any spot on the perimeter of the circle. Imagine that position represents your current point of view. Then just physically shift yourself a few

degrees in either direction and notice any change in feelings in your body.

You may feel subtle changes at first. After some practice, make bigger degree shifts in your position. Notice the feelings that go along with your new angle of view. Notice too that your mental point of view may shift too. It could easily be called the “Walk 360 Degrees in My Shoes” exercise, but the “Circle Exercise” is more concise.

It’s easy to do and it will expand your view.

As **Albert Einstein** said, *“You cannot solve a problem from the same consciousness that created it. You must learn to see the world anew.”*

### **PUTTING A WRAPPER ON THIS CHAPTER**

**The real you is the observer of behavior**, not a participant in it. Once you know there is a part of you that can create change just by observing and **INTER RUPTING**, you will finally get a firm handle on this: **The things that you do are not you.**



## THE WEDGE | Chapter Four



*“A determined soul will do more with a rusty monkey wrench than a loafer will accomplish with all the tools in a machine shop.”*

**Robert Hughes**  
art critic and writer

### **DESIRABLE WEDGIES**

The nuts and bolts behind **INTER RUPTION** boil down to this: **Get a wedge between stimulus and reaction** – a monkey wrench if you will.

When we notice that we are about to experience a limiting thought or action, or notice that we have already begun to react, that’s the time to insert the wedge, or reel in the thought or action.

We all react. Even a non-reaction is a reaction. So the question I pose is: "Are we slaves to our reactions?" The answer is "Yes" and "No."

Yes, because we will have automatic, lightning quick, conditioned behavior fire when we are met with a certain stimulus. No, we are not slaves to behavior if we notice it. That's our only chance to outgrow it.

As mentioned, a reaction is a programmed way of responding to a stimulus. If every time someone says, "You're an @%#&%", and your retort is, "You're an @%#&%", you have re-acted with some programmed behavior. When I notice my reaction, I have a choice.

I have found that it's best for me if I keep my instant reactions on a leash, otherwise they may run amok like a spirited dog. That means if I have a reaction that's going to take me down a path that goes deep into the forest, I notice it and pull back.

If my reaction is let loose, I have a brief opportunity to reel it back in. As an example, imagine the following back and forth between a married couple. Add to this scenario that one member of this duo has had a "trying" day.

*"Would you like to go see the new Meryl Streep movie tonight?"*

*"No, I don't want to go to a crowded theatre and sit with the great unwashed." (Now noticing the reaction) "But ya' know, that movie has gotten some great reviews; can we go see it tomorrow night because I've just 'had a day' and wouldn't be the best company tonight?"*

Staying with your initial reaction will get you what it got you last time. You're like a scripted actor in a predictable scene. Noticing your reaction and interrupting it before it becomes drama is your only chance for growth.

Start noticing that your reactions take you to the same place each time. If you are looking for new vistas, start saying "hasta la vista" to

your programmed reactions. Notice and **INTER RUPT** them and you will find yourself acting in fresh, unscripted scenes and on your way to **lasting change**.

### **CATCH YOURSELF RUNNING A REACTION**

I wrote the following a few years back and it further illustrates how to **INTER RUPT**: *“Criminals don’t get caught because they’re stupid; they get caught because they’re patterned.”*

It got me thinking about what patterns lock us up every time.

You can go a lifetime and not become aware of an arresting pattern.

Patterns are pieces of purposeful behavior that we learn without knowing how we learned them, and they often hang around long after their purpose has come and gone.

We become like an un-fragged hard drive in a computer with little pieces of behavior strewn about here and there, slowing us down and compromising our performance.

Patterned behavior is wonderful when it continues to serve a purpose that is serving us.

It becomes problematic when it handcuffs our abilities.

I was reminded of the tragic side of patterning the other day when listening to a song by **Karen Carpenter** on the radio. This young singer had a beautiful voice but learned a pattern of thinking that told her she didn’t have a beautiful body. As the story goes, early in her career, she and her brother Richard were performing at a small venue and were well received. The local newspaper ran a glowing review of their performance the next day. The reviewer, as an aside, referred to Karen as “chubby.” She ignored the rave review and got caught up in the personal characterization. She began a life of dangerous dieting and purging and died from heart failure attributed to anorexia nervosa at age 32.

The purpose of the original pattern was to get her not to be chubby. The pattern lived on well past the time any healthy weight had been achieved.

What pattern do you own that is confining you? It's a question worth asking because your exploration of an answer can serve as your "Get out of Jail for Free" card.

The purpose in finding a limiting pattern is to then employ a strategy to outgrow it. This new outgrowing begins when you **catch yourself running the pattern**.

All new learning begins when we become cognizant of a behavior while it is happening. The key to escape is to **INTER RUPT that behavior while you are in the middle of it**. Beating yourself up a half hour later won't do the trick. Sometimes it's quite evident what pattern you are running, and sometimes it's not. If you are really in the dark about what offending pattern you are running, ask someone close to you. They always know.

But knowing isn't enough to get paroled from this pattern. You have to catch yourself committing the crime.

**INTER RUPTING** the pattern while it's going on takes you to the prison gate. Continued recognition and interruption gives you the key to freedom.

### **DON'T APOLOGIZE FOR HAVING BLUE EYES**

I woke up with the above thought one morning and had to wipe the sleep out of my eyes before it started to make sense.

Chances are you resemble one of your parents or both. By and large, we are usually in denial about this for the first half of our life. The implication being, if I look like them, I must be like them.

In many instances, we are just like them. We learned from them. Some of their qualities (“good” or “bad”) stay with us for life, and others we outgrow.

As with any behavior, the key to outgrowing it is recognition. If you don’t know you have it, it’s difficult to do anything about it.

Looking like them is nothing you’ll ever have to apologize for. Short of plastic surgery, there’s nothing you can do about it; it happened without your permission.

**Your behavior is an eye of a different color.**

Yes, you may have unwittingly sucked in your parents’ preferences, prejudices and attitudes before you even knew what those words meant, but they are your behaviors now. That means that you can’t blame your parents any more. You own these behaviors now. They are yours to apologize for.

Once we get over the shock of being like our parents in ways we never dreamed of, it’s time for a look in the mirror.

What behaviors do you own that are just like your parents? If you said, “None,” you are in denial.

The physical resemblance, if it exists, dawns on most about midlife. The operative phrase that escapes from our mouth, without a thought, goes something like this: “Oh my God, I look just like my mother/father.”

That’s the point where you want to go deeper and discover the behaviors that correspond to the resemblance.

If you inherited their big heart and sense of fairness, celebrate it!

If you got something that gets you admonishment, it’s time to own it and outgrow it.

Recognition is the wedge that goes between stimulus and response. It's in that moment of suspension of your automatic behavior that you glimpse your free will – the will to be free of your unwanted inheritance.

### **ARE YOU IN YOUR HEAD?**

It's not only against the law for a high wire act to work without a net; it's extremely risky. If you are caught up in a risky pattern, take a tip from the pros: Work with the net of recognition and **INTER RUPTION**. You'll catch yourself every time.

The following is a conscious meditation that can be done anytime, anywhere. You can be driving in the car, washing the dishes, mowing the lawn or relaxing in your favorite position.

It's easy to do and the benefits are calming. Here is the meditation: When you catch yourself inside your head having a conversation or catch yourself in a thought loop, just unemotionally say the following to yourself, **"I'm in my head."**

When you notice yourself thinking and acknowledge that you're in your head, you create a pause in your thinking and some space in your mind where peace and new ideas can now enter.

This is a meditation that is beneficial to repeat anytime you catch yourself in your head. At first, you may notice the peace lasts only seconds. But with repeated application, you increase the time you experience serenity.

Our thinking goes on all day long and we rarely notice that it is happening. It goes on unchecked and is an insidious drain of energy.

Yes, some things have to be thought through or consciously assessed but that only takes a short amount of time compared to the amount of time we spend "in our head."

**“I’m in my head”** creates an interruption of your thinking. It is truly the pause that refreshes. It’s a meditation anyone can do and it removes you from your mental stew.

### **I GOT A SURPRISING AND REVEALING ANSWER WHEN I INTERRUPTED MY PAT ANSWER**

The first time I did this was by accident. It was some 30 years ago and I was pitching an employee communications program to the owner of a propane gas company. I did all the usual rapport building one would do and began my presentation.

There was a lot of back and forth, along with many questions about the content and expected results of the program. It was all pretty routine, until he asked me this question: *“How will I know I’ve enhanced my employees’ communication skills?”*

I had a ready-made answer for him but for some reason I didn’t bring it out. I just let the question hang in the air for what seemed like an eternity. It may have been no longer than 10 to 15 seconds but in a setting like this, that’s a long time for silence. I just sat quietly and then this question popped out of my mouth: *“Why do you think your employees hate you?”*

His eyes widened, he sat up straighter, and he looked at me as though I had visited his soul. He asked me, *“How do you know that?”* I don’t remember exactly what I said but it was along the lines of *“Just a hunch.”*

This piece of information may have never surfaced unless my patterned answer got **INTER RUPTED**. The good news for both of us was that we got what we wanted: He learned to communicate with his employees, and his employees learned some new, fun and useful stuff as well. Me, I got paid, and in the bargain I got a bigger payoff than money can buy, that is, how to find deeper, more meaningful answers by **INTER RUPTING** my patterned way.

Take the time to throw in the clutch once in a while and shift into a learning gear. This journey will take you into unfamiliar, un-mined territory loaded with precious ores that cannot be experienced by sticking with your pat answers.

**Remember this:** If you have **ALL** the answers, there are no more options.

### **MORE PAT ANSWERS**

How many stock answers do you carry around in your tote bag?

We all have them and we bring them out so often that others can finish our sentences with them. There is a need for stock answers in our world. For example, they work well with specific questions like, "Do you own a parrot?" Either you do or you don't, or you have a cockatoo. The answer is right there in stock.

What about other questions?

How often do you parcel out a pat answer to them?

Since we are creatures of patterns, the answer is, "quite often." There are two immediate difficulties that I see with our normal way of doing things:

1. We are not present with the questioner.
2. We may miss a treasure waiting to be discovered.

Think about the last time someone asked you a question to which you supplied a ready-made answer. It was a classic stimulus/reaction interaction that doesn't provide any depth to the communication. It's like a robot answered the question for you and you weren't present. You didn't give the questioner access to you – only to your gatekeeper.

When you become present with a questioner, you open the door to a deeper communication because others can feel your presence well



past the superficial level of most interactions. Presence provides a fuller experience for all involved. Presence, or paying attention, is the currency of communication.

Also, when you become present, you swim in a deeper ocean. You go well past getting your feet wet and collecting a few shells. You get on your scuba gear and plumb the immeasurable depths. This is where the pirate booty exists.

So, how do we become present with a questioner?

First, recognize you are about to give a prefabricated answer.

Second, sit with the question for a moment and allow other choices to bubble up to the surface.

Other answers are there, they just need you to create some space for them to pop in. Creating the space means **INTER RUPTING** your stock answer and just sitting with the question for a moment or two longer. You will notice different answers presenting themselves, offering you a choice. This is really exercising your free will that too often gets bypassed by your not being present.

After exploring the other possibilities, you may find that your off-the-shelf answer is the most appropriate. Even so, you have done two wonderful things by taking the time to be present:

1. You were part of a deeper connection with another human being.
2. You exercised your free will, which is a rare occurrence in a stimulus/reaction world.

You may want to test this out in low-risk situations at first, like at the drive-up window at McDonalds. The question, "Do you want fries with that?" will now take on a whole new meaning for you.

Once you get some practice with being present, you can expand your new-found skill to other areas of your life.

It's really a cool thing to experience because you discover that your interactions can have more life to them.

**Remember:** Prefabricated answers can be Googled®; **wisdom comes through you**. For that to happen, you have to pause what you know for wisdom to flow.

### **ONE MORE THOUGHT ON PAT ANSWERS**

I had a dream once about being in a beach community and wanting to take a run along the water. But as I looked down, I had on a shirt that didn't lend itself to running. It was too formal for what I wanted to do.

A number of questions arose after my dream:

*What façade prevents us from doing what we want to do?*

*What obstacle have we donned that puts us in our own way?*

*What conditioning that happened way back when is no longer useful today?*

*What's the most efficient way to get reconditioned?*

I won't pretend to have "the" answer, but here's one that kept coming up: **Notice your formality**.

Formality usually contains a pat answer – a hard and fast prescription for an affliction. That rarely, if ever, works.

I look at two branches of the entertainment industry for examples of outgrowing formality: Movies and broadcasting.

Movies, ("Films" for the formal reader), before **Marlon Brando** and **James Dean** had stilted (formal) actors. Once these two barrier breakers came along, less formal actors and actresses followed and movies became more real and relevant.

**Arthur Godfrey** was the father of the modern day disc jockey. Before him, all "I"s were dotted and "T"s verbally crossed and we had very formal announcers. Godfrey would offer greetings like,

"How aah ya, how aah ya, how aah ya?" People gravitated to his informality.

Do you have a formal façade? If you have to remember to be a different personality with different people, yes, you do. If you have to appear a certain way, you are getting in your own way. It's like the advice Mark Twain gave us: *"If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything."*

What mantle are we wearing that needs to be shed? It starts by noticing and **INTER RUPTING** our shroud.

There may be a valid reason how we got this way, but that's never a valid justification for standing pat. How we got this way is a history lesson, and as we learned in school, history is about the past.

**Noticing what happens in the present is the ticket to a different future.**

To remove the stick from the mud we have to notice it's in there. The key is to take notice every time we display our formalities and **INTER RUPT** them. With each notice, we weaken our formal selves and eventually become more comfortable in our own skin.

Was your favorite teacher in school a fuddy-duddy or more free form? My guess is most of us would gravitate to the more informal of the two.

Are you formal or informal? To go from one to the other, start noticing which category you fall into. And did you notice I informally ended the previous sentence with a preposition?

**Remember this:** There is nothing creative about a pat answer. It's like letting the guy at Home Depot® pick the color to paint your bathroom.

## WHAT IS THE HUMAN SPIRIT?

We all have it, and yet we all constrain it from doing its best.

The human spirit is what animates us and differentiates us from being dead. Yet, many of us are the walking dead.

How do we confine the spirit we all have? It's done through patterning.

We all learn patterns of behavior and thinking. Some of the learning is conscious; most of it is conditioned and without our permission. We learn most patterning by accident and then that accident becomes a way of life.

Are you rude? Do you know someone who is? Neither of you went to a formal class to learn it but, nonetheless, you were schooled. Think about it, who would *decide* to learn rudeness?

Taking the lesson one step further, you have channeled your human spirit into being rude, because, like water, spirit will go wherever there is a route.

So we channel our malleable human spirit through patterning, most of which is done outside of our awareness. This patterning keeps us stuck in place.

We have to begin to recognize where we are allowing human spirit to flow now. That's easy to determine, just look at your patterns. That's where your human spirit is flowing.

In order to redirect the flow, it is essential to **recognize and INTERRUPT a confining pattern while it is happening**, not during a guilt trip, or on the therapist's couch after the fact. That's just past exploration, not a plan of action.

When you begin to **recognize your patterns in action**, you create a space for the flow of human spirit to go somewhere new. Repeated

recognition, while the pattern is happening, creates a channel for your spirit to flow away from that which is holding you back, into something new that is more productive for you.

To save your spirit from stagnation, begin to recognize where it's pooling now and you will quietly create a channel for its escape.

The human spirit is remarkable; we just need to direct it where we want it to take us. We do this by using our gifts of recognition and **INTER RUPTION**. These are the catalysts for producing new channels for our human spirit to animate.

## **REMOVING THE GLUE**

There is no debate that repetitive thoughts are the glue that keeps us stuck. The question is, "Who has the glue remover?" The answer may surprise you.

Thoughts that continually roll around in our head want to stick around. This is a function of the mind. If our mind can convince us that suffering thoughts and guilt must stay in our head because they are our saviors, then it can stay in control. The patterned mind is like many politicians. Their main goal after getting elected is to get reelected.

The unvarnished reality is this: Thinking the same thoughts over and over will keep you glued right where you are. When the thoughts go away, so does your inertia. But how do they go away?

You cannot think yourself out of this gooey dilemma. Positive thinking is a grand idea that does not work. Thinking is the culprit – positive or negative. You cannot “will” yourself to replace a negative thought with a positive thought. Whoever is telling you that has no idea how the mind works. Keep your hand on your wallet when you are around these people. They are selling empty promises.

Thinking happens without any control from us. Thoughts pop into our mind and we have no control over the flavor. Notice that we

label the thought *after it arrives* as positive or negative. When you believe that you can recite a certain type of thought over and over again and expect it to take hold, you have fallen victim to the snake oil salesman. That's no different than watching a pre-recorded TV show over and over again and expecting the plotline to change because you are thinking positive thoughts.

Also, notice that your mind will beat you up about having certain thoughts so that it can impose guilt upon you. Let's say you have an "awful" thought about someone pop into your mind. The conditioned response is to feel guilty for having such an abominable thought. **STOP!** You had nothing to do with the thought popping in. Feeling guilty about something you had nothing to do with is an insurance policy that the thought will hang around.

Thoughts do go away when the mind latches on to another more compelling thought that pops in, but that is no guarantee that they won't come back for endless curtain calls in the future.

So who has the glue remover? You do. It's called **presence of mind**. Have the presence of mind to notice that you are in a thought loop. That means when you catch yourself thinking the same thing over and over again, have the presence of mind to step back and just notice.

Noticing is the glue remover. Don't judge the thought or admonish yourself for having a thought – just notice it. You may even unemotionally comment to yourself, "I'm having the thought about feeling guilty about (fill in the blank)."

When you observe your mind at work, you have presence of mind. When you employ presence of mind, these thoughts come around less and less until they eventually lose their stickiness.

It's pure entertainment to stand back and watch the show that your mind puts on 365 days a year. When you have the presence of mind to know it's only a show, that's when you become Teflon®-coated.

**Remember this:** An observed thought gathers no glue.

## **PUTTING A LEASH ON LABELS**

People who are judged “right or wrong,” “good or bad,” “saint or sinner” all come from the same family tree. The behavioral differences they display are determined by the conditioning they collect.

For over 35 years, my professional focus has been helping people recondition themselves, to update habits and patterns that are interfering with the quality of their life. The amazing thing I've discovered is how easy it is to explain how we got to be who we are. The most difficult piece is finding the internal resources to act on the information and put a solution in place.

Any parent can relate to how easy it is to see the solution. I raised three sons and a grandson. Having been a younger me once, it's easy to see the best doors for them to walk through. I also know the ones that will slam in their face. Parceling out that guidance is not enough.

Patterns don't pay attention to experienced, “sage” advice. You need to go deeper and get the person to go deeper.

Problems arise when we label someone as their behavior. It never works and it keeps you both on the surface level. When we evaluate another, we are appraising their patterns – their personal collection of ways of thinking, acting and behaving. This is not who they truly are, but if we don't have that awareness, we label them as their conditioning and we both stay stuck.

Patterns have exterior manifestations that are as varied as the sea's surface on any given day – stormy, calm, small waves, large waves, choppy. Deep beneath the surface is the essence of the sea – not

affected by surface shortcomings. This depth is the calm place where “who we really are” lives.

Labels are limiting whether you label yourself or someone else. Everyone can remember the axiom about first impressions being lasting. When we get a label in our head, it affixes itself with **Gorilla Glue®**. When we label ourselves as our patterns, or label the patterns of another as being who they are, we limit the amount of a connection we can have with that person or with our resourceful self. The labeling process keeps us isolated from our source with abundant, internal, judgemental chitchat, and as a result we impoverish our communication with others and ourselves.

Not only do sticky patterns keep us from finding personal solutions to our challenges, they prevent us from interacting with others due to the prejudice of conditioning.

This is not a suggestion to go looking for people with ne'er-do-well patterns and hang out. You will run into enough of those folks in the course of everyday life. This is a suggestion to get curious about what's beneath the surface when interacting with people who exhibit patterns you don't prefer. You may well find a treasure on the ocean floor – one that would never have been discovered unless you set your own prejudicial patterns aside.

The Persian poet **Rumi** had great insight on this practice when he wrote:

***"Out beyond ideas of right-doing and wrong-doing there is a field. I'll meet you there."***

One of life's greatest treasures is other people. They provide the sand that helps us produce our pearl. If you don't go deep enough with them, you'll never find the oyster bed of opportunity.



So whether you are struggling with your own collection of patterns or those of another, the answer is always the same. Make a visit to where all the answers are – the depth of your being – your quiet source, where labels come unglued and you find the resources to effectuate **lasting change**.

Change on the surface has the short life span of a fruit fly. All long-term change happens in the depth of who you are. Mind-made noise keeps you from getting there and keeps you stuck on the surface.

Develop the practice of noticing and **INTER RUPTING** your judgements of yourself or others. The more often you notice the labels, the less often they come around. This noticing practice helps quiet your mind and gives you access to your depth, and that spawns **lasting change**.

Notice and **INTER RUPT** and go deeper into the oyster rich ocean. Hmm, I wonder if that's how the entrance to heaven became known as the "Pearly Gates."

#### **FOR MORE AGREEMENT, ABANDON THE LABELS AND STICK WITH THE FACTS**

In the world of sports, one of the most hated labels by athletes is "choker." Its general meaning is they froze up when the pressure was on. It is not something anyone, including athletes, wants to be called. It's belittling and causes arguments between supporters and detractors of the person labeled that way. It is an argument without end.

What if you just cited the statistics? Johnny Basketball scores 15 fewer points in playoff games than he does during the regular season. Johnny, to date, hasn't scored his regular season average in playoff games.

No one can disagree with the facts. They may attempt to explain the numbers, but the stats are the stats.

If you want to start an argument and get people to line up for and against your characterization quickly, put a pejorative label on someone. *“He/She’s a cotton headed ninny muggins.”* Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines because there’s going to be a lot of crashing into each other ahead.

The discussion has now become about the label and less about any issue that could be factually discussed where the possibility of agreement is far greater. You may never agree on the label.

Avoiding name-calling is not only polite, it’s productive.

Of course, labeling may work for you if you don’t have the facts on your side. Ask any trial attorney and they will tell you, “If you don’t have the facts, argue the law.” Name-calling, quite often, is a strategy to get you to look away from the facts.

We increase the odds for agreement when we stop calling someone an “oddball.”

### **SACRED IDLENESS**

Another effective way to get between a stimulus and a reaction is go to a place where it does not exist. I stumbled upon a new favorite phrase when I read a quote from Scottish novelist and poet **George McDonald**:

***“Work is not always required. There is such a thing as sacred idleness.”***

You could certainly use the expression as a cover for being lazy, or you could explore the phenomenon it represents and see how productive you become.

My experience is that all inspiration and learning comes to us when we have spaces show up between our thoughts. It is from this space of sacred idleness that the font of creativity flows. The only work required is to find the best way for you to get idle and have more spaces show up. This idleness of thought is a sacred, silent sanctuary that provides the missing ingredients in our lives.

I can remember being in the work-a-day world and thinking how much more productive I could be if I closed my office door, took 20 minutes to close my eyes and allow my mind to calm down. It certainly would have been frowned upon then because of corporate conditioning alone. It would have never been considered an investment in increased productivity.

It seems that companies only invest in the *treatment* of poor performance. Some offer a hiatus to troubled employees and pay for alcohol and drug rehabilitation, which is noble. Others invest in team building training that is also quite helpful. My contention is they would pay out less and get more ROI (return on investment) if they offered a daily 20-minute mental health break. No coffee or donuts, just 20 minutes of silence during the day.

I would love to see the research on such an experiment.

I'm not looking to put corporate training out of business. They provide excellent services and job training, but companies are missing a giant opportunity by exclusively working from the outside in. My message is simply for them and us to get curious about working from the inside out. Creativity and productivity are born from the nothingness of silence, not from the sound of a cracking whip.

**Here is something to wonder about:** Is there a way for you to become sacredly idle on a daily basis? You could start slowly with just a few minutes a day. You can be your own research project. Find out how much more energy, creativity and productivity you bring to your life by engaging in the spiritual practice of "Sacred Idleness."

## **WHO AM I?**

"Who Am I?" is a question we have all asked and there is only one answer, and it is found in only one place: in the arc of a thought.

Thoughts are like breaths. They have a beginning and an end – an arc. Did you ever notice that there is a tiny little space between your

in breath and your out breath? Monitor your breathing for a few seconds and you will find that space. There is also a space between thoughts. It comes as the arc of one thought ends and another begins. It's in that space that you will find you.

First, you will have to discover that that space exists. Once you become aware, you will always know it is there. Then it becomes a matter of attention. Begin to give attention to that space. When you focus on the space, it elongates. That space is you.

When you discover that space and elongate it, you will instantly know the real you – the one that sits between your thoughts. You will finally discover that you are not the drivel that normally fills up your head; you are the space instead.

**The answer to “Who am I?” is the space between your thoughts.**

It's in this space that you will discover your own innate wisdom. The constant chatter in our mind crowds out that wisdom and we continue to play the role that our thoughts tell us we are. The real you cannot be put into a thought; it is separate and apart from who we think we are.

When you discover yourself in the arc of a thought, you will begin to think more clearly and have less clutter in your mind. You will also discover that you are not the character that you dress up and display for public consumption. Unlike your image of yourself, you will never have to defend the real you because it never takes a position. That's because it contains them all, and all in that tiny little space.

When you get tired of pretending that you are who you think you are, begin to notice the arc of a thought and find that refreshing space that feels like home. Spend some time there and rejuvenate yourself.

Build your own ark and escape the flood of your thoughts by finding yourself in the space between them.



*“Many women have asked me if it is possible to have a well-built wardrobe on a limited budget. 'Money,' I tell them, 'is no guarantee of taste, and an overstuffed wardrobe is often as bare as a skeleton when it comes to wearable apparel.”*

**Edith Head**

Academy Award winning costume designer

### **MAKING ROOM FOR SOMETHING NEW**

Have you ever had a closet so full that it seems you couldn't put one more thing in there?

That's the way most of our minds are – chock-full, with no room for something new. What is it filled with? Noise! And the noisiest offender is internal conversation.

Talking to yourself is a major part of the human condition. Most call it “thinking.” We occasionally emerge from this private fortress to interact with others or to give our attention to something, like the material in a book, the music being played, or the content of a movie or TV show. Then, we go right back inside this noisy nest.

When someone claims you are not paying attention, most likely you are retreating into your mind for some more internal conversation.

Your mind is like a walkie-talkie: You cannot receive messages when you push the “talk” button. Someone on the other end may be attempting to give you the secret to the universe, but you are too engrossed in what you have to say to release the button.

Research reveals that 200 million bits of awareness go back and forth every second between the left and right hemispheres of our brain. **We can only hold on to roughly seven of those bits at any moment in time.** This is known in psychology as “Miller’s Law.”

If you are busy occupying your available bits with internal conversation, you are not leaving any room for something new to enter your mind. It’s like philosopher **Alan Watts** said in his lectures, *“If I think all the time, I won’t have anything to think about except my own thoughts. Now, that would leave me high and dry, and I would become like a library to which the only books being added were books about the books that were already in it.”*

**This mind is something you have identified as you but it is not you.** It’s a cheap imitation – a cardboard cutout of the real you. You call it home but it is really a grass shack that is subject to the whimsy of the elements.

When reality presents you with a challenge, you often go into internal talk mode trying to “figure it out.” The result is often internal storms fueled by fierce ranting. Your mind, used in this way, will keep threatening clouds ever-present.

The calm before, during, and after the storm is always the same peaceful place: **the space that shows up between your thoughts.** This is where insight happens. This is where all the solutions come from. This is your peaceful place of transformation where the real you lives and where thoughts don’t visit.

Any meditation practice will take you there. Giving your attention to what is right in front of you now, without internally commenting on it, will also get you there. This safe port always has dock space. You can experience more peacefulness anytime. Simply notice you are talking to yourself in your head.

The part of you that notices that you are caught up in your thinking is the real you – **the observer**. The more often you become observant of your mind, the more often you get to visit your peaceful home that will shelter you from the storm.

### **SIMPLE GAMES AND SEVEN BITS**

Many years ago I wondered why **solitaire** was played so much on computers at home and at work. Yes, it was one of the first games installed on computers. I was looking for something a bit deeper.

Solitaire is not a hard game. In fact, most children pick it up very quickly after a few go-rounds. So how is it that it's still the main game of choice when someone is goofing off at the office or passing the time on the computer at home?

Here's one perspective. Solitaire has seven piles of cards to work with when you initially lay out the cards. You can keep track of seven piles with little effort. Solitaire doesn't really stretch you. In fact, there is no real benefit whatsoever – other than to pass time or to goof off. It's not a cerebral challenge. Checkers is more challenging than solitaire. Chess is even more of a challenge. So why aren't these games played with more frequency? Perhaps you will find an answer below.

### **SOLITAIRE IS A TREADMILL**

If you find yourself regularly playing solitaire at work, may I gently suggest you seek a new job?

If you continually play it at home, are you avoiding something that needs your attention?

Solitaire will never fill a need in you. It will keep you stuck with your tightly packed seven bits. And, if you thought this was a dissertation on computer game playing, consider this:

Excessive food consumption will never sate your emotional hunger. Abuse of alcohol and drugs will never take away the source of pain you are attempting to deaden. These behaviors are signals that you need something else in your life – an epiphany, an **INTER RUPTION**.

You need to notice that you are playing too small of a game – one that will have you repeat your experience and never stretch you or open you up to what life has to offer.

If you keep the same seven bits in your mind, you are playing way below your talent level. Observing your thoughts puts you on a rewarding path to self-discovery. But staying on this path requires that you practice getting out of your seven bits comfort zone by noticing and **INTER RUPTING** your thinking. The reward you will receive and how to achieve it is summed up by an observation from one of my teachers. He said, ***“The ripe fruit is out on the skinny branches.”***

The key to updating patterns of stuck thinking and behavior is a **three-step process**:

1. Recognize a pattern while it is running – not 15 minutes later.
2. **INTER RUPT** the pattern while it is running. Deliberately **stop what you are doing at that moment**.
3. Immediately begin to wonder what productive thing you could do that would be better than what you just interrupted.

These are steps to finding a deeper you. The consistent application of the above formula will cause new, constructive patterns of behavior to form automatically. When you free up more bits in your mind, you may even go out and buy a chess set.



## JOINING THE BLOG-O-SPHERE

In 2007, I began writing a blog I call "Grasshopper Notes." And I created this online persona called "**The Grasshopper**." I have labeled **The Grasshopper** as the part of you that lets something new through or, more specifically, the part of you that shows up with insights and answers when you get out of your head. (I have listed **50 Grasshopper Quotes To Get You Curious** in the back of this book). Below is one of those insights.

### **IF YOU HAVE NO THOUGHTS IN YOUR HEAD, YOU HAVE NO PROBLEMS - *Grasshopper***

That may be a foreign idea to many, but the simplicity of the message bears further investigation. Problems are interpretations of reality. Problems are mind-made manifestations. And problems get in the way of solutions.

Imagine you are walking in the woods getting caught up in the beauty of all that surrounds you to the point that you lose track of time and direction.

**OMG**, you're lost!

Where's the problem? The problem is in your mind. Why? Your mind presents a scenario of imagined possible futures – all "dreadful." You have a problem. Or do you have a situation?

Using the word "situation" is more than **Semantics 101**. How much emotional baggage goes along with the word "problem"? That math test you failed that was loaded with difficult *problems*? "Houston, we have a *problem*."

Notice the word "situation" is more fact-based and has less collected emotion attached to it. It doesn't take you down the dead-end path that problems lead to.

The real problems are the thoughts crammed in your head. Did you

ever notice that problems have lots of descriptive adjectives? “We have an *awful* problem.” “This is an *overwhelming* problem.” These adjectives have their attendant luggage as well. They compound the problem. They add another layer of insolvability to the situation.

Thinking about the problem keeps the problem alive. Each additional thought sets the problem in deeper cement.

I'm not suggesting that getting your mind clear makes the situation vanish. Cleansing your mind with some sort of thought observation or meditative practice provides a more spacious environment. This allows room for a solution to surface – more room than when your mind was stuffed with problematic thoughts.

So if problems are thoughts, and thoughts get in the way of solutions, the simple answer is to quiet our thoughts so that solutions can appear.

When you attempt to stuff ten pounds of (fill in the blank) into a five-pound bag, you have a problem. The real problem is there is no space for a solution.

To make this more than a philosophical discovery, take time to notice and **INTER RUPT** your “chatty” mind every day. The benefits are twofold:

1. Your problems weaken.
2. Your situations become more solvable.

## **MAKING ROOM IN YOUR MIND FOR CREATIVITY**

**The Grasshopper** has offered this shortcut to creativity: ***“Make room in your mind.”***

If your seven bits of awareness are occupied, there's no room at the inn for anything else.

Years ago, I discovered what being bored is. It's being tired of your thoughts. The same thoughts running around in your mind for the umpteenth time cause boredom, stagnation and being stuck.

We all own the experience of getting creativity from “out of the blue.” Perhaps you were taking a shower when it happened – just feeling the warmth of the water cascading over your body and your thoughts seemingly washing down the drain. Voila! In pops a creative idea into the vacancy in your mind.

Now that you know how it happens by happenstance, it’s time to discover how to create that vacancy on purpose. How? **Make room in your mind.**

There are lots of ways to go about this. One is to **declare an intention** to find a solution. Then go do something that occupies your full attention. A severe example would be rock climbing. It would be foolhardy to think about anything but your next move when you’re 100 feet off the ground. Simpler versions could be washing the car, doing a workout, grocery shopping, making your bed or a host of other things that need your attention. Just set the intention and go about your activity and let your creative self work on an answer.

Reminds me of a story . . . back in the 1980s, I read an article in the *Wall Street Journal* about a successful stockbroker who had sex with his wife before he picked his stocks for the week. He didn’t know how his good fortune worked; he only knew his stock picking skill increased directly afterwards. This brings new meaning to the saying, “kill two birds with one stone.”

Another way to set an intention is to **write down** what you need a solution to. Put that card or paper on your nightstand and look at it before you turn off the lights and head off to sleep. If you make this a regular practice, you will begin to notice more solutions showing up. Don’t believe me? Sleep on it and prove it to yourself.

There are countless meditation methods to choose from and, when practiced, they all **make room in your mind.**

**Solutions show up more often when your mind calms down. It’s that simple.**

You won't think yourself to a creative solution. Minds need room to create, not more debate.

**Bottom Line:** Making room in your mind increases your chances of creating a way out of a bind.

### **ANOTHER ANGLE ON CLEARING YOUR SEVEN BITS**

Making room in your mind results from **INTER RUPTING** your thoughts, no matter what the method. And now another story about getting out of your head . . .

**“Unwinding is simply unbinding yourself from your thoughts” –  
*Grasshopper***

How do you unwind? Is it with a glass of wine, a shower, a chat with a friend or spouse? Do you take a nap, read something, meditate, or do you take a walk or jog?

All of these are ways to escape your thoughts because your thoughts tie you up. If you share your thoughts with someone, they are no longer inside. They are now on an external speaker for someone else to hear. Sometimes, someone listening can provide a way to untie the knot; most often they can't. And incessantly talking to yourself about your thoughts makes them bind you even tighter.

Sometimes a glass of wine leads to more glasses of wine and your thought process and your body **do** slow down. Your internal and external speech may slow as well, as you "tie one on." The result is you deaden your mind and body. Deaden them to what? – Your thoughts, of course.

There are more productive ways of unwinding and the ones that work the best focus attention on your body.

If you are a person of great financial means, you can have your personal massage therapist do some bodywork on you on a whim. But most people have to find another way.

Here's a method that won't cost you any money. You won't need anyone's assistance and, once you practice it a few times, you will be able to unwind in less than two minutes.

Just close your eyes and do an inventory of your body. Start at your toes and move up to the crown of your head or vice-versa. Notice the feeling you have in each body part along the way. It will help if you keep your eyes down and to the right as you focus on the feelings in each body part.

This is a wonderful way to shift your focus from your mind to your body and the end result is a relaxed body and more spaces showing up in your thinking – allowing you to naturally unwind. And when you are unwound from your thoughts, you make space for new ideas that lead to **lasting change**.

If you're anything like the thousands of people who came to my seminars each year, you need less stress in your life! You are wound tighter than a drum, and one more hit will snare you.

Your nerves are frazzled raw, your head pounds with thoughts fighting for space, and you feel under constant attack. This sucks the life force out of your body, leaving you on edge and exhausted.

***"I just don't have time to relax"*** is the cry for help I hear most often. It's true, you're busier these days, and the demands keep coming at you from all angles. This puts your mind under siege, leaving no room for calming solutions.

Perhaps a story would be helpful . . .

#### **HOW ONE TINY OBSERVATION LED TO A MOB SCENE AT MY NEW YORK CITY SEMINAR**

The first time I did seminars in New York City, I did a lot of “people watching” on the city streets. **What I noticed was assaulting.** These folks were hot wired for **S-T-R-E-S-S.**

Everyone seemed lost inside their head, scurrying along the street like rats in a maze. I was watching a real life version of “**Night Of The Living Dead.**”

It got me wondering: If I could show these people how to relax and calm themselves, I know their lives would improve dramatically. But I knew most of them would not take the time for a 20-minute relaxation session. **They were too busy!**

Then it hit me. What if I could have them put their attention on one part of their body for just a few seconds and have them **witness first hand** how that body part automatically relaxes? Once I proved it to them, we could move on and relax another part of their body in seconds.

That small piece of insight caused me to create the amazingly effective technique called **RELAX IN 2 MINUTES.** What happened next was a sight I’ll never forget.

I came back to New York months later and did a mini-demonstration of **RELAX IN 2 MINUTES** at a seminar. The rapid relaxation method **instantly captured their hearts, minds and bodies.**

#### **DO YOU NEED PERSONAL PROOF?**

Do the mini exercise on the next page **s-l-o-w-l-y** right now.

*Sit in a chair, rest your hands on your thighs, take a nice deep breath, exhale slowly and close your eyes. After closing your eyes, please pay attention to what is happening with your toes. You don't have to do anything with your toes but notice the sensation in them. Once you get a sense of what is going on in your toes, gently move your attention to the balls of your feet and just notice the sensations there . . . and then glide your attention to your arches . . . and then to your heels . . . and then your ankles . . . and then on to the top of your feet.*

Once you've completed this little sequence, open your eyes and measure your relaxation. You will find that you are far more relaxed than you were just a moment before.

Imagine how relaxed you'll feel after giving attention to all the parts in your body, not just the few I have listed above.

After doing the **RELAX IN 2 MINUTES** exercise just a few times, you will easily be able to do it anytime, anywhere and feel relaxation in your body in less than two minutes. Not only that but your head is clear and your body recharged.

Think of **RELAX IN 2 MINUTES** like a rapid charger for your cell phone: It replenishes your energy in just a few moments.

Many people record their **RELAX IN 2 MINUTES** verbiage on their phone or digital listening device and take "instant relaxation" with them wherever they go.

How crowded is your mind? A crowded mind is an unreceptive mind. Relaxation is another way to **INTER RUPT** an overstuffed head so that new ideas for **lasting change** can come through.

### **ONE FINAL SEVEN BITS STORY**

I knew a guy who spent an entire week cleaning out areas of his home, like a crawl space, pantry, broom closet, an attic, his basement, a medicine cabinet, a kitchen junk drawer.

I wonder if you have ever gone through what I am affectionately calling a “kitchen junk drawer.” In my experience, you find stuff in there and wonder why you ever held on to it. You find things like a broken pencil, pepper flakes, a Post-it® note with a scribbled message that now makes no sense, a picture of a child that came in a Christmas card and you can’t figure out whose kid it is. You dump everything out, wipe out the drawer and only put back relevant items that now have a purpose.

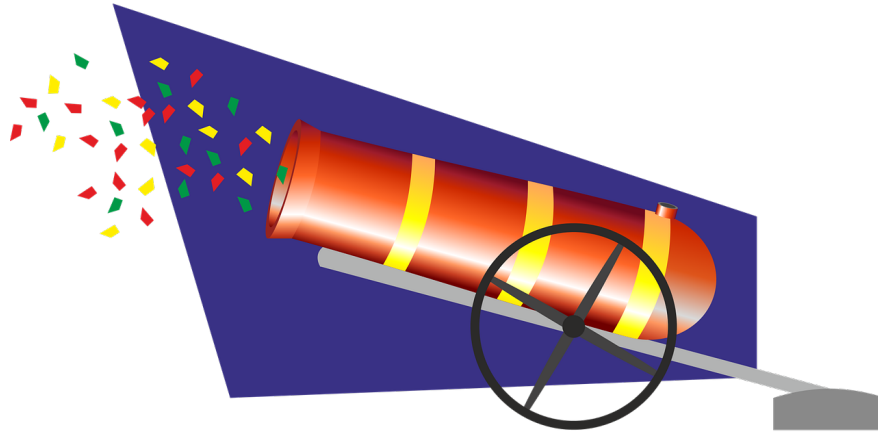
This friend did that in all the areas of his house. He painstakingly went through the clearing out process in all the spaces, getting rid of irrelevant items and only putting back what was useful.

There is a school of thought that when you clean out a closet and only put back what is relevant now, you attract more useful things for your closet. You may want to explore that theory on your own. Back to my friend. He had a yard sale for some of the extraneous items he cleared out. I’m sure you have heard the expression “someone’s trash is another person’s treasure.” He only made a few bucks during the sale but what happened soon afterward is worthy of note.

He was solicited for a new job with a hefty raise in salary. He found that he stopped having headaches that plagued him for years. After many years of being single by choice, he met the woman of his dreams and got married. They moved into a beautiful new home and here’s what I can tell you for sure: Their storage spaces are streamlined, only allowing room for what is useful now.



## SUBJECTIVE REVERSAL | Chapter Six



*“There's been a lot of role reversal going on in the band. The roles people have been playing for a long time will always be there, but everybody's willing to try on different outfits.”*

**Stone Gossard**

an American musician and guitarist for the American rock band  
**Pearl Jam**

### REVERSAL OF MISFORTUNE

If you pull the trigger on a loaded gun, you expect a bullet to come out. What if you could make confetti come out instead? You have that ability when you choose a response.

And what if you could make the same trigger automatically deliver a different response without you having to consciously choose? You can with something I learned called “**Subjective Reversal.**”

The name is a bit confusing but the strategy is crystal clear. Simply stated, Subjective Reversal has the stimulus (or trigger) reverse our automatic reactions and deliver more choices instead. Perhaps some examples would be helpful.

Is there something that can set you off – a word, a gesture, a sound, a sight or a smell? These are referred to as stimuli or triggers because they stimulate or trigger a reaction.

We've all had triggers fire off at the most inappropriate times, most often without any pre-thought; they just went off.

I wish I could tell you I had a foolproof way of that never happening again. I don't. I do know a way to get them to fire off different responses, so we don't shoot off our mouths or shoot ourselves in the foot as often.

Oftentimes, we don't know the trigger to our behavior. We could spend a lot of time looking for it or spend lots of money with a therapist to help us find it. The problem with that approach is that some behaviors have multiple triggers, and trying to find them all would take longer than a lifetime.

The more triggers a pattern of behavior has, the less likely you are to find them all, and it's more likely that pattern will stay in place. For example, there are infinite triggers for overeating and some appeal to each of the senses: Sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch. For some, the smell of bread baking can trigger the desire to eat a whole loaf. They weren't born with that reaction; it was conditioned.

So if we can't consciously find all the triggers, how do we get a trigger guard on them all?

I used **Subjective Reversal** when conducting Smoking Cessation and Weight Loss seminars. I guided people into a more relaxed frame of mind and offered them a "one-size-fits-all" suggestion. The suggestion was this: *"Whatever those things are that triggered you to (fill in the offending behavior) in the past, those very same things begin now to trigger feelings of being calm and collected. And when you are calm and collected, you make much better choices."*

Your subconscious mind stores all the triggers and all the reactions to them. When you non-specifically address them (*"whatever those*

*things are*”), your subconscious knows exactly what you are referring to. The next suggestion, *“those very same things begin now to trigger feelings of being calm and collected,”* throws a switch in your mind to have a different reaction to those triggers, namely to be calm and collected. The final suggestion, *“and when you are calm and collected, you make much better choices,”* alerts your mind not only to all the better choices, but also to the fact that you have a choice.

I am forever grateful to **Dr. Dave Dobson** for teaching me this technique. It’s a powerful exercise, but it’s only powerful if you use it.

Think of a behavior you would like to change; just don’t burden yourself with trying to find out why it happens. Then offer yourself this suggestion: *“Whatever those things are that triggered this behavior in the past, those very same things begin now to trigger feelings of being calm and collected.”* Then use any mind calming exercise you know to enter the place of peace and creation known as a quiet mind.

Like all developed skills it takes a bit of practice. Each time you do it, you apply mental calamine lotion to an itchy trigger finger.

## **BAD HYPNOSIS**

You can use **Subjective Reversal** to install a mental filter to prevent “Bad Hypnosis” in just a matter of seconds.

**Dave Dobson** also introduced me to the concept of “Bad Hypnosis.” Bad Hypnosis is something we are exposed to every day. Bad Hypnosis is a reinforcement of reactive behaviors we’ve been conditioned to. If we don’t notice the bad hypnosis, we will reinforce unproductive suggestions being offered to us or reinforce the ones we offer to others.

Many of these suggestions start in childhood and continue throughout our life if they go unchecked. For example, take the proverbial “Money doesn’t grow on trees” maxim as one of your

early experiences with bad hypnosis. Every time it gets reinforced, you will entertain a mindset of lack.

### **HERE ARE JUST A FEW MORE EXAMPLES OF BAD HYPNOSIS:**

*“Bundle up or you’ll catch a cold.”*

*“This is going to hurt”* – (a suggestion from a medical person about to inject you).

*“You’ll never be as successful as your brother/sister/mother/father/cousin/next door neighbor.”*

### **DON’T FENCE ME IN**

Many pieces of Bad Hypnosis begin with the word “Don’t.” This type of suggestion incorporates something else we’ll learn more about in (Chapter 9): A Polarity Response.

*“Don’t fall; it’s slippery outside.”*

*“Don’t spill the milk.”*

*“Don’t be late.”*

Reminds me of a story . . . I worked for a Rhode Island radio station in the 1990s. One of our clients was the Rhode Island Lottery. Their ad stated, *“Don’t forget to buy a ticket for tonight’s Powerball drawing. The jackpot is xxx million dollars.”* I explained a Polarity Response to the agency person who handled the account and said it would be more efficient to remind them of what you want them to do, not what you don’t want them to do. I suggested they replace the words “Don’t forget” with the word “Remember.”

When you incorporate “Don’t” into a statement, you invite the person to also consider doing what you don’t want them to do (the polar opposite). For example, “don’t think of a pink elephant.” In order not to think of a pink elephant, you first have to think about a

pink elephant. “Don’t fall” has you consider falling as an option. Better to say, “Walk carefully.”

### **HERE’S ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF BAD HYPNOSIS I WROTE ABOUT YEARS AGO**

Yesterday, I witnessed “Bad Hypnosis” to the level that it made me flinch, then laugh. Bad Hypnosis is reinforcing a negative in someone’s mind that won’t serve him or her in moving forward.

I had a doctor’s appointment with a new physician. When I got to the office, I had to fill out the requisite first time, patient paperwork. Sitting right there at the reception window was this giant, oversized pen. It was very colorful and resembled a child’s toy. It was **HUGE!**

Since the receptionist didn’t hand me a pen, that was the one I was expected to use. Here’s what caught my attention: It was a replica of a giant syringe.

Holy Cow, Batman, did anyone ever consider the message that sends? It’s a safe bet that most people don’t like needles, especially BIG needles. What the prop does is reinforce a negative in anyone’s mind that has even the slightest aversion to needles.

It was a gift from a medical supply company with their logo printed on it so that their name would be out in front of the public in doctors’ offices all across America.

The doctor’s office viewed it as a free pen; the people being treated got a whole different message – a reinforced fear.

If this were the only instance of Bad Hypnosis we encounter, it wouldn’t be so “bad.” The problem is that it’s everywhere. We use it on a daily basis and it rarely, if ever, gets productive results.

## THE REMEDY FOR BAD HYPNOSIS

What **Dr. Dave** had us do was take a nice deep breath, exhale slowly and close our eyes. He then suggested as we were in this less stimulated frame of mind to ask the part of our mind that recognizes Bad Hypnosis to alert us every time we experience it. The exercise took less than a minute and over 30 years later I see and hear Bad Hypnosis everywhere. **That's lasting change.**

I request that you ask the part of you that notices Bad Hypnosis to automatically alert you and **protect you from a conditioned reaction.** After doing this exercise a few times, something magical begins to happen. You start to notice the process happening on its own without any conscious request on your part. It becomes a new, automatic response.

It bears repeating, you are exposed to Bad Hypnosis everyday – suggestions that, if taken to heart, will lead you to an un-resourceful frame of mind. You also use Bad Hypnosis everyday and it doesn't serve the people you are offering it to.

**Become aware.** Is what you are about to say going to reinforce a negative in a person's mind? The way to know that in advance is to pretend the same thing was said to you. How would you feel? If it only puts you into a tailspin, don't offer it to another.

"Bad Hypnosis" contains suggestions that would lead you down a path that's not in your best interest. Bad hypnosis is also used to scare you into the arms of your conditioning so you'll do something again that has never worked before.

Start to notice that Bad Hypnosis is universal and not helpful. Calibrate your Bad Hypnosis radar. When you see or hear it coming your way, either laugh aloud or smile. That chuckle will act as a pattern **INTER RUPT** to a suggestion attempting to sneak in and activate your conditioning.

My mission is not to make Bad Hypnosis go away, only to get you to see how it impacts you every day.

## HERE'S ANOTHER EFFECTIVE EXERCISE IN SUBJECTIVE REVERSAL

I'm honing a technique I'm finding most helpful. See if you find it useful too. It employs **Subjective Reversal**.

I call it "Clear the Screen."

Imagine for a moment that there is a small screen inside your head where all your thoughts appear, whether as images or words. That thought just shows up on your screen. In most cases you don't invite the thought in, but there it is.

Now further imagine that you have access to a button or key (like on a keyboard) that reads: "Clear the Screen."

Once you notice the thought and decide that it's not a productive one to continue having, mentally press the "Clear the Screen" key.

This much I can tell you: the thought will go away from your screen, if only for a moment. The key is to press the "Clear the Screen" key each time the thought appears. After repeated clearings, the thought will automatically go away on its own when you're exposed to the trigger. This is a genius piece of magic that automatically **INTERRUPTS** your reaction and delivers a different response.

## HERE'S A REAL LIFE EXAMPLE

I came up with this idea in the swimming pool at the fitness center. I swim a certain number of lengths of the pool as my workout. I swim three sets of 20 lengths for a total of 60. It's just under a mile.

What I noticed was a running dialogue in my head as I began my first set. It went something like this: "Am I really going to swim 60 today? I was up late last night watching the debates and I may tire myself out too much by doing all 60. Maybe, just for today, I'll cut it back to 40." Then I answered my own thoughts with some counterthoughts: "You're just looking for a way to get out of your workout. Suck it up and swim the amount of laps in your routine." And so it went.

When I noticed the thoughts, I also noticed that the lane marker on the bottom of the pool was made out of small square tiles. They reminded me of keys on a keyboard. I see these tiles through my goggles about every 2 seconds when I'm face down in the water.

I set it up in my mind that every time I saw these tiles, they would represent a "Clear the Screen" command for unwanted thoughts floating across the screen of my mind. I set up an automatic trigger for a different response.

As mentioned before, I used **Subjective Reversal** when I conducted stop smoking seminars. The suggestion went like this: *"Anytime you see cigarettes, whether in a rack at a convenience store or when you see someone else smoking, or you see a cigarette ad in a magazine or on a billboard, that will immediately reinforce in your mind your desire to be smoke free."*

You have taken the subject – cigarettes – and reversed your thought process about them. In the past, the sight of cigarettes caused the desire to smoke. Now, with practice, the sight of cigarettes automatically reverses your thought pattern to that of being smoke free.

Uninvited thoughts are going to show up on your screen every day of your life. The key is to notice them and then mentally start pressing the "Clear the Screen" key. The more often you get in the habit of doing this, over time, a new response will happen automatically – resulting in less unwanted thoughts per day. After a time, I suspect you'll report that things are going swimmingly.

### **ANOTHER SUBJECTIVE REVERSAL EXERCISE TO OUTGROW A LIMITING REACTION**

The technique begins by rehearsing yourself in some calm and collected feelings. That means to go back to a time in your mind when you were totally calm and collected. It may have been 10 minutes ago or 30 years ago, it really doesn't matter. Just find a time you were calm and notice what that calm feels like in your body.



Rehearse this technique over and over again until you can feel calm feelings in your body on cue.

Next, bring to mind the stimulus that triggers unwanted feelings or behaviors. When you begin to feel those reactive feelings in your body, switch yourself to feeling calm and collected. **Remember:** This is your imagination; you can do anything you want with it. Do this exercise over and over again until you can switch from the reactive feelings to the calm and collected feelings in a second or two.

The natural offshoot of this repeated rehearsal is that you automatically begin to switch from the reactive feeling to the calm and collected feeling without having to consciously throw the switch. That means that the stimulus now automatically triggers calm and collected feelings. **And remember,** when you are calm and collected, you make much better choices.

**Subjective Reversal** is a powerful way to respond in a new way.





*“If I don't practice one day, I know it; two days, the critics know it; three days, the public knows it.”*

**Jascha Heifetz**

World-renowned Russian-American violinist

### **PRACTICE IS THE KEY**

I won't bore you with the old joke “How do you get to Carnegie Hall?” because we all know the answer.

**INTER RUPTION** takes consistent practice. You'll know you've gotten the hang of it when you feel old thoughts and behaviors begin to melt and fade away and new, productive ones arriving and taking their place.

We all have patterned thinking and patterned behavior. If you wear lipstick or lip gloss or use ChapStick®, what lip do you put it on first, top or bottom? That's a conditioned pattern that happens every time you apply it. Did the product come with an instruction sheet telling you which lip to start with? The answer is "No." You just started doing it that way and a pattern formed after multiple applications.

Men, which side of your face do you shave first, left or right? Or do you start somewhere else? Wherever you begin, that's a pattern you use every time you shave without consciously having to think about it. Any pattern of conditioned thinking or behavior is simply stimulus-reaction in action.

We are creatures of patterns and if we examine them closely, we find we only use a proverbial handful of them to move through our life. We don't push past the tried and true. That's not moving forward; that's "treadmilling."

Our patterns get us to do the same things over and over again whether we consciously want to or not. This patterning keeps us covering the same territory day after day. It's as though we are reading the same page of a book over and over again.

### **HOW DO WE TRAVEL PAST WHAT IS HOLDING US IN PLACE?**

Noticing!

Notice that you are the cause of your own inertia. Notice that you are no different than a rat running a maze to find the same old moldy cheese. The time to notice is when you are in the middle of the pattern you are about to execute for the zillionth time.

Noticing is an art and it's also a science.

The art is picking the precise time to notice, and the science is the measurable change that will take place.

Well before I formally knew about the magic of **INTER RUPTION**, I used the technique before I knew it was a technique. Reminds me of one of my favorite stories . . .

I grew up in Philadelphia, PA and like many people around the country Philadelphians have a unique pattern of speech. I was working in broadcasting at a radio station in St. Louis, MO and my program director noticed I had an interesting way of saying the word “water.” People in Philadelphia say “wooder.” I had no idea I was saying it any different than he was. He took me into one of the recording studios and had both of us record the word. After a few playbacks of the tapes, I got it that I had a pattern of speech that was different than his and, in this case, not working for me.

I became aware of the pattern. That was not enough. I practiced saying “water” the way he said it over and over but it wasn’t getting me any results. When I got into my unguarded conversational mode, the pronunciation of “wooder” would come out. I was frustrated. I wanted to sound more professional but my strategy was not working. Then, I accidentally discovered **INTER RUPTION** – a method for outgrowing an old pattern.

The change began when I became aware of the pattern **while it was happening**. I remember saying something like, “It’s a pretty hot day out there today. Make sure to drink plenty of ‘wood,’ uh drink plenty of water.” I caught myself running the pattern and interrupted it in midstream. From that point forward, every time I started to say “wooder,” I would interrupt myself and say “water.” It didn’t take too long for the complete change to take place. The only time I ever say “wooder” now is to tell this story.

When you notice that you’re running a pattern that’s keeping you in place, interrupt it in midstream. That’s the art. Continue to interrupt every time you notice the outdated pattern beginning to run. The science is working in the background. It seems like magic, but it’s science. You begin the process of updating an old pattern by interrupting it and allowing your mind to come up with a new pattern. In my case I knew what the desired new pattern was. It’s not

necessary to know the new pattern. Trust that your mind will create a beneficial, new one to take the old one's place. That's the science.

### **THE MOST REWARDING PRACTICE OF INTER RUPTION IS INTERRUPTING YOUR STORY**

Practice interrupting "your story." We all have a painful story, one that we've told countless times to anyone who would listen. People close to us know our story word for word. The practice of telling our story over and over again is problematic because it keeps us locked in place unable to move forward.

Everybody has a story and we all need to tell it to let it out in the big world rather than keeping it in little old me. But, at some point, it also needs to be retired or it will immobilize you.

The discovery I've made about bringing our story out too often is this: You block yourself from moving forward.

Why do we keep our story on the front page for so long? – To justify why we are the way we are. "I'm this way because my mother fed me from the wrong breast." It sounds silly to say that but it's no sillier than us citing and leaning on our reasons (our story) for why we are the way we are.

### **OUR STORY KEEPS US ARGUING FOR OUR LIMITATIONS**

Everyone's story is important and once we've told it a few times to our counselor, friends, clergy or family members, it's in our best interest to leave it where it does us the most good – in the past.

To make room for a new chapter in our life we have to purge old ones. (Remember Seven Bits).

Some people will elect to keep telling their story. They believe, at some level, if they tell it just one more time, they'll get the emotional relief they've been seeking. The reverse is actually the case. We cause ourselves more hurt with each successive telling. We revivify

the original experience. The words of **Dr. Dave Dobson** ring out in my head: *"You don't have to go to the landfill to remember what garbage smells like."*

Got a story to tell? We all do but I encourage you to explore the powerful question that author **Byron Katie** asks: "Who are you without your story?" One answer is this: Free to move forward without baggage.

Retiring stories is like the game of golf: simple but not easy. The simple instruction is to immediately **stop telling your story**. The challenging part is to realize that you are not discounting the importance of your personal history by no longer telling it.

No one can diminish the importance of your story and no one should try. But if you keep telling it, the only thing you'll insure is that you'll stay stuck until the day you die.

The only story worth continually telling is this: Once upon a time I was my story.

### **TELL ME A STORY**

Reminds me of a story that was in the media some years ago . . . News anchor **Katie Couric**, as the story goes, was slapping her news editor repeatedly on the arm for using a word she detested: "Sputum." "I sort of slapped him around," Couric said to New York Magazine. "I got mad at him and said, 'You can't do this to me. You have to tell me when you're going to use a word like that.'" She went on to say, "I was aggravated; there's no question about that."

She didn't come out of the womb with a reaction to the word "Sputum." It was conditioned along the way. It was also highly reported that she cared for her gravely ill husband until his death. One could easily hallucinate that her response to "Sputum" wasn't about the story on tuberculosis she was about to report on, but rather episodes she had with her severely ill husband.

Whatever caused her conditioned response may remain a mystery, but it wasn't the here and now story. Her response was about there and then.

What are you responding to as though it's happening now, but is really about there and then? More stuff than you think.

### **RETOUCH THAT OLD PICTURE**

Find something from your past that you reacted to as though it was going on in present time. Go back to that time in your mind, but go back as the person you are now. You have more insight now than you did then. It's a more mature you going back to visit a scared, confused you.

The objective of this mild fantasy is to reassure the younger you that everything will be all right. Let them know you have survived scary times and that you are going to help them forward. You are not painting over the picture; you are retouching their response to it by assuring your younger self that you are there for them every step of the way. Let them know they are not alone.

The result of this simple mental exercise is a more peaceful you, today. You can do the exercise a number of times and what you will find is that each time you do it "there and then" events release their hold on you so you don't respond as though they are going on "here and now."

You are not changing your past, just updating your response to it.

Retouching your life has a touching effect and this is a very effective thing to practice.

### **WE ARE NOT OUR STORIES**

**We are the pause between our explanations.**



I often think of the old advertising line from Coca-Cola® when making this case: “The pause that refreshes.”

It’s refreshing to find out we are not our history or our stories about it. There is freedom in that pause: freedom from being locked in by our labels.

Start peeling off any label that follows the phrase “I am.” “I am a parent, Christian, atheist, speaker of truth, lover, homemaker, provider, butcher, baker, candlestick maker or AARP member.”

As the labels start to disappear, you begin to see the space between the labels: the “You” between the words.

**You cannot be described by a label, only be limited by one.**

So, start letting the labels go and watch the unlabeled “You” begin to show through. It’s quite the discovery.

### **THE UPSIDE OF STORIES**

Stories are great teaching vehicles. Sages and mystics have been transforming lives with them for thousands of years, from the ancient **Chinese**, to the **Buddha**, to **Jesus**, to **Aesop** and **Steven Spielberg**.

These are not the kind of stories most of us are telling. Our story doesn’t transform anyone; it just keeps their eyes rolling around when we give our tale of woe another go-round.

### **WHO’S RESPONSIBLE?**

It bears repeating, we all have a story – one we have told thousands of times. One purpose of the story, best as I can tell, is to not make us responsible for our current lot in life.

You may say, “I’m the daughter of left-handed, abusive clowns who were emotionally unavailable,” That’s to absolve you of any

responsibility for where you are. Your story may also be used to justify a counterproductive behavior. “If you had the kind of day I had, you would be drowning your sorrows too.”

Those are some of the reasons we keep telling our story but the question remains: “Who are we without our story?”

A story has a beginning, middle and an end – just like our human existence. Who you are without your story is the animating force of creation that has no beginning, no middle or no end. This animating force keeps on ticking long after you and your story have been forgotten.

You, without your story, are the infuser, not the infused. Your story imposes limits; without it, you know no boundaries.

Freeing yourself from your story is the freedom we all seek. When we realize this freedom, we are not corralled by our circumstances, just creatively responsive to them.

Continuing to tell our story imposes the limits we seek to escape. The road to freedom begins with retiring our story and all the labels we’ve affixed to ourselves. Labels are mini-stories that keep us stuck.

You, without your story, are the creative force that animates everything. It’s a discovery we all desire to make but most of us are unwilling to pay the price. The price for this priceless gift is to leave our story behind.

“Who are you without your story?” Finding out is one less story away.

## **MY SAINTED MOTHER**

My mother used to have a saying when someone was upset. She said, ***“They’ll get glad again.”*** My prescription is this: ***“When you’re unhappy, your job is to find a way back to happiness.”***

It's no one's responsibility but ours.

I, like you, have had unhappy moments in life. I'm enough of a realist to know that I will have my share of them in the future. The key is to recognize that you're unhappy and not to assign that feeling to circumstances. "I'm unhappy because . . ." is a statement that will keep you unhappy. Noticing that you have unhappiness inside of you is more of a platform for discovering the way back to happiness.

"I'm unhappy because . . ." keeps our story alive. The story will never lead you back to happiness. Experiencing the feeling of unhappiness in your body is the quickest way back. The minute you jump to your mind to justify the feeling in your body, you keep unhappiness in place that much longer.

There are causative factors that have us respond with unhappiness. Staying focused on the factors does nothing to alleviate our internal painful state. Paying attention to the sensation that goes along with the unhappy story gives it the recognition that it desires and deserves. Once the feeling is acknowledged and felt, we begin the process of transmutation that leads us back to a happier state.

One of the biggest mistakes we can make when unhappy is to look outside ourselves for a solution. The solution always was and always will be inside. The outside remedies are short-term solutions and rarely deal with the condition; they just cover it up.

Your job is to allow yourself the opportunity to recognize, acknowledge and sit with your unhappy feeling. There is a part of you that knows how to process that feeling and return you to the happiness that's on the other side of it.

Chasing away the blues only works for a while. I've never met anyone who has pissed and moaned his or her way to happiness. I doubt I ever will. Your job is to recognize that you can find your way there by allowing your body to do its job.

## BE PRESENT TO YOUR CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES

I was going over some past writings and came across this reminder:

*“The Escape Hatch From Your Life’s Story Is Presence”*

What is presence and how does it help you escape?

Presence is noticing what’s going on right now. It’s the greatest **INTER RUPTER!** Your story is about what has happened or what could happen. By being present to only what’s here now, you escape the past masquerading as the present, and eliminate the illusion being thrown your way by an imagined future.

Presence can easily be discovered by this simple practice: **just stop to notice your breathing.** It was going on before you stopped to notice, but now it’s in your awareness and you are present to it. Quoting author **Eckhart Tolle**, *“Being aware of your breathing takes attention away from thinking and creates space.”*

When you are present to something, you are laser focused on that something. If you’re focused on something in your present, your past and future and your life story go out of focus. Presence is your escape hatch from a fable that’s defining your life.

You can become present to anything in your environment – sights, sounds and sensations. It just takes a conscious act of focus.

When focused, you become present to your present – which has no resemblance to the life story you’ve been living and telling.

The more often you become present to what’s actually going on, the more distance you create between you and your story.

Presence presents possibilities that the blinders of stories keep you from seeing.

If you're looking for a gift to move you forward, treat yourself to some presence in the present.

## **SAVE YOUR DRAMA FOR YOUR MAMA**

Here's a message for the theatre performer in all of us: "***Drama keeps trauma alive.***"

Most of us have experienced what the dictionary calls trauma: a deeply disturbing or distressing experience. It's what follows that determines our level of suffering.

If we go on and on about our trauma, it morphs into drama. The length of drama's stay is how often we choose to feed it.

Rest assured that the amount of drama we have in our life equals the amount of suffering we experience. Suffering is the result of keeping the story of the trauma alive so it can make us a little more dead each day.

There are dates on the calendar that can trigger past traumatic events in our mind. Think "9/11" as an example. If we go on a story telling binge each time a past, distressing thought enters our mind, we have entered the land of drama where suffering is free for the asking.

We believe, without evidence, that another telling of our story will help end or mitigate our suffering. The real world result is this: it only exacerbates and elongates it.

The drama of our story keeps our suffering in place with no place for it to go as long as we keep it as the main act in our show.

We keep our traumas alive by slipping into drama. Drama is the endless recounting of our story. Again, I quote author **Byron Katie** who asks: "Who are you without your story?"

You don't need to suffer by your own hand any more, just let your story walk out the door.

As mentioned, we all have a story that we've told too often. What we may not recognize is the drama that it creates doesn't serve us; it just continues our suffering.

If you truly want to end your suffering, a good place to start is to **stop telling your story**. Doing so will never change the fact that your trauma happened; it just will not feed the drama any more, and will keep your suffering from making multiple encores.

### **WHAT IS THE STORY OF YOUR LIFE?**

It's like a **Danielle Steele** Novel: You made it up!

We didn't make up the facts of our story, only how we present them.

It's the telling of our story that has us go into the world of illusion. And it's in there that our own narrative traps us.

We are held captive by our stories but we continue to tell them in hopes that one more iteration will be our salvation.

Practice "un-telling" your story and discover the life beneath your life story.

A telltale sign you are trapped by your story is when you say something like: "I'm this way because . . ."

As mentioned before, "because" is a story telling word that has you make up unlimited reasons why things are the way they are. Rather than get sidetracked by the why and wherefore, just notice how things are without assigning a cause. This **Sgt. Joe Friday**, "just the facts" approach keeps our focus on "what is" rather than taking us into the made up world of what isn't.

Every time you tell your problematic story, you go in the opposite direction of a solution.

How powerful is your story? – Powerful enough to hold you in place for an entire lifetime, unless you notice.

I have this notion that goes against the Hollywood version of deathbed confessions. My sense is people who are highly invested in their stories don't know they made them up and take them to their grave. They die not noticing they've been handcuffed to an illusion.

Perhaps, while we're still here, it's time for us to start noticing that we aren't our stories. The life we discover without our story is a lot more peaceful and a lot more open to seeing opportunities that story telling prevents us from noticing.

Dropping your story is like dropping a 50-pound backpack that you've been carrying around your whole life. The lightness alone is reason enough to retire your illusion.

If you're hell-bent on telling your story again and again, you're setting yourself up for a lot of unnecessary pain.

Practice giving up your story and give yourself the gift of life by giving up what you've made up.

Spiritual author **Marianne Williamson** writes, *"It takes real courage to endure the sharp pains of self discovery rather than choose to take the dull pain of unconsciousness that would last the rest of our lives."*

## **ONE FINAL SET OF STORIES**

I have a relative and a long-time friend intensely involved in their stories. For one it's been told for over 30 years; the other for over 50 years. The hardest part of getting people out of their stories is making them believe their stories are the cause of their long lasting angst.

Like I wrote before, it's like dealing with an addict. I will never know the pain they are attempting to alleviate; I only know that their story telling drug will never work.

### **AND NOW A STORY OF DENIAL FROM A DEARLY DEPARTED FRIEND**

I call it "Doubling Down on Dumb."

"Denial" and "Defensive" go hand-in-hand and they grab on to the lamest justifications one can imagine.

My boyhood friend who turned into a lifelong drunk was lamenting why he wasn't as successful as he could be as a musician. He was in his late 30s at the time. According to him, the reason he wasn't successful was because, when he was 18, his father wouldn't lend him the money to buy the organ he wanted to play in his band.

That's doubling down on dumb!

When we are focused on our stories of denial, we deny ourselves the opportunity to see a way forward. Our stories trap us in the dark past where light is at a premium. When we defend our stories, we just shine a light on our ignorance.

Sad to report that my friend has died and for decades was in and out of orange jumpsuits for DUI infractions too many times to count. I'm sure he was still telling the organ story 'til the day he died, albeit through slurred words and denying that he had any culpability for his lot in life.

Just examine your excuses and find out how dumb they are. What story have you been telling that keeps you in place? You need to **INTER RUPT** it. Examine how often you deny the logic that's been presented to you. If you're getting the same results (which are no results at all), it's time to gather up the dumb stuff and put it in a U-Haul®.



**The truth about denial is you know you're doing it, but deny you are.**

Denial is the thread that ties your story together. It becomes dissolving sutures when it's exposed to the light. If you stay in the dark and continue to tell yourself that everything will be okay, then tomorrow will be just like today.

If you want your fortunes to change, it's time for a trip to the dump to drop off your denial and find out, first hand, that dumb isn't forever.

Growing into a new story takes practice. Practice noticing your mind when it's dishing out opinions as facts. The next step is inserting a wedge between stimulus and reaction. This is the practice for **lasting change**.

Quoting **Jerry Stocking**, *"Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly at first."*



## OWN BEST THERAPIST | Chapter Eight



*"You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending."*

**C.S. Lewis**

British novelist and poet

### **IS THERAPY THERAPEUTIC?**

It depends. If it's a series of meetings to go over your past *ad nauseam* to find out why you are the way you are in the present, the sessions are a waste of time.

It's important for many people to know how they got to be a certain way, but knowing is not a relief strategy; it's a history lesson. And we've heard it too many times that history repeats itself, unless we **INTER RUPT** it.

I believe the best therapists get you to acknowledge your problem and then help you build a bridge from where you are now to where you want to be. You can't get to where you want to be from where you were, only from where you are.

My friend **Doug O'Brien**, a world-class hypnotist, was interviewing **William O'Hanlon**, author, practitioner and trainer of Ericksonian Hypnosis, which is based on the work of the legendary, hypnotic storyteller **Dr. Milton Erickson**. O'Hanlon stated he has two questions he asks a client:

1. What concerns you?
2. What do you long for?

He doesn't dwell on how they got to be this way; his focus is where they are now and where do they want to be.

### **DOES THE END JUSTIFY THE MEANS?**

Here's my answer: It depends on who's judging the means.

The therapy business is replete with ends/means debate. Papers are written, symposiums attended, and patients continue to suffer because their therapist is stuck with an antiquated model.

Reminds me of a story . . .

Many years ago, I worked with a client who was a stutterer. She was an interior designer who had trouble stringing three sentences together without going into an extremely noticeable stuttering pattern. She had spent \$10,000 to go to this renowned clinic that specialized in stuttering. It didn't help. She had sought help with a psychologist and a psychiatrist.

She attended my weight loss seminar and came up afterwards to speak to me. She didn't look in need for weight loss, so I asked her purpose in attending. It was obvious when she began to speak. She wanted to know if I could help her with her stuttering. I responded

with the phrase I learned from one of my teachers, “I don’t know what’s not possible.” We set up an appointment.

We had three sessions. After the first session, there was marked improvement. She attended a session with her psychiatrist in between our sessions and he emphatically cautioned her that what I was doing was not going to last and that it was giving her false hope. He called it a “placebo effect.”

Well, maybe the good doctor should have gone and heard her address the Chamber of Commerce flawlessly, or read the letter she sent to me months later that cited her new found ability to speak without stuttering for the first time in her life.

It seems we are a culture entranced with knowledge and politely dismissive about experience. We build altars to one and keep the other on the church steps.

If someone is getting results I’m not getting, I want to know their means. It may not match up with my idea of what works, but I am not going to oppose their methodology simply because it doesn’t agree with mine, especially if they’re getting results.

Quoting **The Grasshopper**, *“Regarding a therapeutic approach: It’s far more valuable if it’s useful verses whether it’s true.”*

My message is we are too quick to judge things in our head. I may raise an eyebrow when I hear something that seems “whacky,” but if it’s getting results, I want to be able to put my beliefs aside for a moment, and entertain the possibility.

I may ultimately decide that their means aren’t a fit for me, but it won’t be based on my ideology. I’ll take the time to **INTER RUPT** my beliefs and explore the new or novel means and then see where I end up.

## WHO'S THE BEST THERAPIST? YOU!

**Dr. Dave Dobson**, whom I've referenced many times, believed we are our own best therapists. After all, who knows us better than us? He didn't say this but I'm sure he would have readily agreed: The ancient Greek aphorism "Know Thyself" is the one of the best prescriptions ever written.

Being your own best therapist begins by noticing your counterproductive patterns and **INTER RUPTING** them. That's your self-administered therapy.

I do believe it's valuable for many people to go to formal therapy to get a handle on where they are and to find out they're not alone. An effective therapist has three things going for them:

1. They've seen your problem before.
2. They have no emotional investment in your problem, which makes them objective.
3. They can offer solutions that have worked several times in the past.

If you want to make the transition from outside therapy to inside therapy, start noticing and **INTER RUPTING** your offending thoughts and behaviors, and create the space to learn something new.

## GIVE UP YOUR GURU

Inspiration without perspiration is all wet.

Sitting at the feet of a learned leader can be a life-changing event or it can be an addictive drug that keeps you hooked.

I love great quotes and am inspired by them. The ancient Chinese gave us many to feed on and this one ranks right at the top: ***"Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish and he will eat for a lifetime."***

The difficulty is we can easily become the “quoter of quotes” rather than the “liver of life.”

We can find a guru in any field, yet the harvest will be weak if we don't pick up a hoe.

A true teacher will equip you with the tools to find your own crop. The ones that keep you dependent on them spell "crop" with an "a."

The burden of learning belongs to the student – not the teacher.

I'm sure some people walked away from **Jesus' Sermon on the Mount** and spat out quotes left and right, yet left the teaching behind.

To prove this universal principle, go to any place of worship on the Sabbath and stand outside afterwards and listen to the conversations. The behaviors of some will contradict that which was just taught. **A parrot can quote a sacred text; only a hypocrite can defile it.**

I've had the good fortune of having many great teachers and each one of them opened up a different place within me and I offer respect when I quote them and give them their due. I disrespect their teaching when I offer it to you and don't follow it myself.

A great teacher will lead you to your own teachings – the ones you can live and pass on. A great teacher will reach inside of you and pull out a mirror and show you your soul. It's from this place that your own teachings begin.

There is an axiom in business that's rarely followed: Groom your replacement.

What truly loving parent doesn't want their children to exceed them in every worthwhile area of life?

A great teacher wants you to add unexpected depth to their message and be the living, breathing embodiment of your own findings.

There comes a time in life when it's time to give up your guru and go to work on you. Just hanging on to the teachings won't free your hands to do the work that's necessary to find your own experience.

**It's as simple as this:** You can't hide behind a quote if your lack of effort to embody the teaching is transparent.

### **HERE'S A THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE THAT GOES BEYOND WORDS**

Words, short and simple, are representations of internal processing. That means anytime we use words, they have an internal reference that is specific to our conditioning to those words.

Other people have different references for the same words, which is why I highlighted the **Katie Couric** story in an earlier chapter. Words have their limitations in communication.

So how do we bypass the stimulus/reaction conditioning that people have to certain words? You have to go to the place that is beyond words.

The great inspirational writers do this all the time. They enter this place where there are no words and then write words that point us back to that place. It seems like a conundrum wrapped in an enigma but that would be attempting to explain the process in words.

Words are always a poor substitute for describing experience. The best use of words seems to be to use the ones that point to the experience. Is there a list? I don't think so. It's sort of like the old question, "How will I know when I'm in love?" "You won't know until you are there" is a poorly worded answer, although accurate.

Words always compete in your head for space, especially when you are of two minds about something. You go back and forth between the opposing, descriptive words. The argument never ceases. Even after you decide, you may continue to have second thoughts.

The answer to the dilemma will not be arrived at by endless debate. When you recognize you are in such a state, it's time to go beyond words.

There are people who pray religiously. They use a lot of words. I invite you to assess your own results with that method. The words of



a prayer certainly set the tone for what you are praying for, but they alone do not deliver the goods. It's only when you go "beyond words" that answers start appearing. I don't know where the following quote came from but I like it. "When most people pray, they talk. When you meditate, you listen."

Look at mantras. They are sounds or prayers that are repeated over and over again. Is it the repetitive sound that communicates what it is that you want? No, it's a transportation vehicle to get you to the place that is beyond words.

If you catch yourself in a thought loop (you'll have countless opportunities every day), that's an opportunity to go beyond words by **INTER RUPTING**.

By trade, I'm a hypnotist. My job is to guide people into a "beyond words" frame of mind. I don't have any magic words to get them there, just the experience of successfully doing it. At one time I thought I had a toolkit of magic words but found out they just don't exist. It's like **Gloria Estefan** sang in the 1980s, "Words Get In The Way."

I invite you to find the way that works best for you. It's truly important because if you can't get beyond words, you will remain beyond hope.

### **GOING TO THE EDGE WILL SHARPEN YOUR SKILLS**

If you listen to the conversations in the deli line, at a local bar or to the needs of a person in therapy, the common thread seems to be the goal of an unchallenged life. It's this quest for the middle that dulls our desires.

You can exist in the middle but you can't thrive until you visit the edge.

The edge is filled with challenges that keep you alert and alive and at the top of your game. The edge is not recommended as a place to call home, just a place to visit more often than you do.

The edge is just past your comfort zone where new learning is in abundant supply. You are required to get uncomfortable to learn something new.

The edge is putting yourself out there not knowing what to expect, but trusting that you'll know how to respond. The edge is not thrill-seeking but self-discovery.

Seeking thrills is a never-ending end game like drug or alcohol dependence. With those practices, you need to maintain a certain level of saturation to feel like you have an edge.

You won't discover anything new until you make a commitment to visit the edge. Again, it's more like an occasional weekend getaway, rather than getting a mortgage.

Our comfort zone is just our conditioned patterns on display. We learned from other non-learners that the safe zone is the only zone.

Life's valuable lessons are learned at the edge. We then get to bring them back to our normal base of operation to enhance our lives and aliveness.

Just like entering the stock market, there is a risk in going to the edge. You don't always win but you always get an education. And if life ceases to be educational, you have settled for being mired in the mundane.

If you desire is to discover more about you, you have to **INTER RUPT** staying in your safe zone and travel to the edge more often than you do. It's there you'll find **lasting change** and something new.

I'm reminded of a nonsensical phrase I learned a long time ago: "A noisy noise annoys an oyster most."

The reality is that an oyster has to be immersed in and irritated by sand to produce a pearl.

We, too, have to leave our comfort zone in order to find the edge of discovery.

### **THE TENSION CAUSED BY TENSE**

**The Grasshopper** offered me a phrase moon's ago: *"It's irrelevant how you felt then; it's only relevant how you feel now."*

"I felt so betrayed."

"I felt so helpless."

"I felt so angry."

Notice how all those phrases are in the past tense and notice how they drag you into the past.

Some therapists make their living by inviting these phrases. Is it any wonder that people who remain in therapy for years don't show any appreciable forward movement?

The past tense keeps you in the past.

Notice and **INTER RUPT** your use of past tense language and you'll get a handle on how to *move forward*.

For many, the past is kept alive even though it's dead and buried. Digging up the corpse again isn't going to breathe life into your life. It has never worked and never will work but that doesn't keep us from a steady diet of repasting on the past. **Here's the rub:** Even the memory of a wonderful dinner won't sate your appetite now.

What are your feelings now?

If you examine your situation closely, you're not "betrayed," "helpless" or "angry" now; you only get those feelings when you entertain how you felt then. I call that "feeling bad on purpose."

What's the purpose? It's certainly not going to project you forward.

I request that you start monitoring your language and see how much of it is in the past tense and **INTER RUPT** it. The more you start to focus on now, the more you begin to move on.

What's going on now is your life; what was going on then may be the death of you if you keep it alive. The key to feeling less tense is to change your past tense.

### **EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY**

I had the good fortune to attend a workshop conducted by famed headshot photographer **Peter Hurley** at his New York Studio. There were five accomplished photographers attending and then there was me – a photo enthusiast.

Peter gave some world-class instruction to our group and gave us plenty of hands-on experience as we got to photograph eight different actors/models over the course of 22 jam-packed, working hours.

These are people who are used to being in front of cameras and skilled in bringing different emotions into their expressions. The objective was to capture something real as well as something that would draw you in to their photograph.

What I found is that most of these people are just like the rest of us who "freeze" when they are in front of a camera. It got me curious as to what was really going on.

We want people to see who we think we are. Our self-image is what we want to convey. The difficulty is that self-image is one we made up and got comfortable with and is nothing like the real us.

You really have to dig to get peoples' depth. Peter is a master at this. He calls himself 90% therapist, 10% photographer. He intuitively knows that he has to get them off their game in order to capture their depth. In other words, he has to **INTER RUPT** them. He's made the process into an art form; and even though it takes lots of work and skill, the results are amazing when you see the final product.

People don't like to have their picture taken because the resultant photograph they usually get to see is their false self – someone they can see right through. They figure if they can see through it, so can everyone else.

People don't like their false selves even though they put that makeup on everyday. It's the conditioned social mask we wear and we present that facade to just about everyone we encounter. Quoting author **Robert Brault**, who is a master at bite-sized observations of life, *"Having perfected our disguise, we spend our lives searching for someone we don't fool."*

When I have a session with a person, I have to dig past their veneer to get to the real person and, more importantly, get them to discover that part of them as well. It's an eye-opening discovery to find out we are a lot deeper than the person we pretend to be.

I don't want to know peoples' facades; I want to know them at the level where all our differences disappear. That takes some recognition and work to accomplish.

The recognition part is noticing your own prejudices at work when interacting with another human. If you notice your bias and choose to set it aside, for just a brief time, you'll be able to connect with that person at a level where you are both the same. Let's call it a "Kodak®" moment.

Think back on a time when you had a "real" moment with someone. All judgements went out the window and all prejudices were suspended and there was nothing but connection.

To make those moments happen more often takes work. We have to become aware of our prejudices while they are happening in order to set them aside. If you are having a conversation in your head about someone while interacting with them, your attention is on your internal dialogue and not on them. Your chances of finding the real them are remote and the real you is blocked from surfacing.

Here's a piece of helpful self-therapy: The next time you find yourself freezing in front of a camera, let it serve as a reminder that you are deeper than your fear. This recognition alone will allow you to remove layers of makeup and let a more secure and natural you show through.

### **WHEN YOU GET THE ANSWER, YOU STOP WRESTLING WITH THE QUESTION**

How much clock time do we spend in our lives looking for answers? If thinking is the number one preoccupation of humans, then looking for answers has to be next.

Did you ever notice that people make and break resolutions around the New Year? They are looking for answers and resolving is the method of choice. It has a ghastly rate of success. The word resolve when broken into syllables is "re-solve." We attempt to re-solve our situations in the exact same way that didn't work before, namely thinking. That angle of approach has to change or the same brick wall gets another hunk of our flesh.

The common, accepted method of solving our situations is struggling with the problem. The notion seems to be that if we sweat enough bullets, we will come up with an answer. Here's the only clue needed to know that you are on a trail to nowhere: If the answer you come up with continues to pose questions, then you are still derriere deep in dilemma.

Real answers come when there is a spontaneous suspension of thinking where courses of action push all the questions aside. You experience a deep knowing accompanied by precious peace of mind.

There are no second thoughts and the internal debate and the interrogation cease.

Have you ever experienced a time when a course of action was crystal clear? It was a moment of clarity that caused you to take the necessary strides and you were guided every step of the way. Notice you had no afterthoughts about taking that path. Even more importantly, there were no thoughts at all when you received your answer.

Questioning is a valuable practice. But once asked, it's time to let it go and make room for an answer. You don't have to explain 2+2 to a math professor. That's exactly what we do when we continually question via plea, prayer or some other form of incessant questioning. God or the people you are asking are not deaf or stupid. They got it the first time.

### **ONCE YOU ASK YOUR QUESTION, BE PATIENT AND WAIT FOR AN ANSWER**

Have you ever answered an email with a detailed explanation and plan of action for the questioner and have it returned with a message that read, "So and so is not accepting email from your\_email\_address@answers.com."

The same thing happens when you put the emphasis on the wrong end of the equation – the question. Yes, the question needs to be asked to spark the creative process, but the repetition of it keeps the focus on the question when what you really want is an answer.

The answer is floating in cyber space just waiting for your inbox to accept it. Once asked, the answer is instantly available. The delay in receiving is always caused by us, and by our need to think that we have to think our way to an answer. It is the stubborn pride of the questioning mind that stands in the way of a solution.

Quieting of the questioner is always the avenue to an answer. Many of us rarely go down that path because the environment seems too

isolated and unpopulated based on our conditioning. This quiet cove in the woods is where all the treasures are. Once you cast costume jewelry aside and experience an original precious stone, you will never question its authenticity.

**INTER RUPTING** constant questioning is a pathway to quiet contemplation. Get curious about spending more time listening and you'll experience the peace and solitude that provides unquestioned answers.

**Bottom Line:** Is self-therapy effective? It is if you're listening for answers.





*“Any action is often better than no action, especially if you have been stuck in an unhappy situation for a long time. If it is a mistake, at least you learn something, in which case it's no longer a mistake. If you remain stuck, you learn nothing.”*

**Eckhart Tolle**  
spiritual teacher and writer

## OUTGROWING THE OLD WAY

This chapter recommends many things to consider outgrowing and strategies to use to get **lasting change**. Before we jump in, I want to tip my hat to the man who taught me the seminar business and so much more: **Barry Beder**. Barry, a master social worker and hypnotherapist, used to offer this suggestion to people attending his stop smoking and weight loss seminars: *“Outgrow the old way and grow into a new way.”*

**Outgrowing** is really “growing up” by outgrowing our stimulus-reaction patterns learned early on.

Many people are “bound and determined” to make changes in their life. That sounds a bit like constipation to me.

The change that is necessary for us to make **lasting changes** is to outgrow our reaction to the stimulus that causes us to react with undesired behavior.

## OWNERSHIP

**The Grasshopper** let this slip out one day: *“I once owned it; I’ve since outgrown it.”*

What mindsets do you own that just don’t cut it any more? - Too many to count in my case.

What are you holding on to that’s dragging you down? (Think of attempting to tread water while holding on to an anchor).

I’m reminded of how colonial Africans captured monkeys. They would put peanuts inside a hollowed out coconut shell. On one side of the shell was a knotted rope with the knot on the inside of the shell. The other side had a larger hole where the monkey could reach in and grab the peanuts. The problem was when they closed their hand around the peanuts, they couldn’t withdraw it from the shell. The natives would just pull on the rope and bring the monkey towards them and capture them. At any time, the monkeys could

have released their grip and let go of the peanuts and freed themselves. Most did not and left no heirs.

“Changing” a mindset is usually temporary. Think about dieting. The diet eventually has an end and in almost every case the person gains back the weight. They attempted to change their behavior rather than outgrow it.

I remember asking a divorced woman at a seminar if she would ever consider going back with her ex. Her answer was an emphatic “No!” I attempted to sweeten the pot. I asked if she would consider it if he won a major Powerball® jackpot. Her answer was just as emphatic – “No!”

She outgrew her husband. **Once you outgrow something you won’t go back to it.** Think about the “stylish” clothes you wore in high school. Most people wouldn’t be caught dead in those togs today, even on Halloween.

Outgrowing is the realization that something doesn’t fit or isn’t working anymore.

It’s acting on that realization that will take you out of that mindset and grow into one that works for you now.

Take inventory of your beliefs and have the courage to notice which ones are no longer working. It’s at that moment that you’ll begin to **outgrow the old way and grow into a new way.**

### **HAPPY NEW YEAR??**

For many, weight loss is the #1 New Year’s goal. The reason most people fail to keep off the weight they lose is because they never offered themselves the opportunity to outgrow their reaction to a stimulus.

Sometimes this outgrowing happens naturally and sometimes we have to give it a nudge. Here's the story I often tell about natural outgrowth . . .

My father's union had a Christmas Party each year for all the kids. We got to sit on Santa's lap and tell him what we wanted for Christmas, and each child received a gift that day. When I was in first grade, I was anxious to get on Santa's lap and make my requests. When I was in second grade, Santa began to resemble my father's friend Mr. Ferguson. I sat on his lap anyway because I didn't want to miss out on asking for what I wanted in case it really was Santa. When third grade rolled around, I knew it was Mr. Ferguson and there was no way I would sit on his lap.

What happened here? The stimulus, Mr. Ferguson, was the same each year; it was my response that had changed, and it happened quite naturally without any conscious effort on my part.

Sometimes you need a conscious nudge to outgrow the old way. That takes a bit of "doing" on your part.

### **DOING DIFFUSES FEAR**

Regarding outgrowing, we often don't take the first step forward because of fear. Having done public speaking workshops, I can attest the biggest fear I witnessed was the fear of speaking in front of a crowd.

The participants weren't born that way, just conditioned to react that way. After some **INTER RUPTION** training, they opened their mouth and let the first words dribble out. Then other words followed in quick succession like water from a fire hose. **Doing diffuses fear** and reinforces the neural pathway of the new habit.

Here are just a few, notable quotes about doing:

- **French writer Michel de Montaigne:** *"Saying is one thing and doing is another."*

- **Saint Francis of Assisi:** *“Preach the gospel at all times; use words if necessary.”*

- **Confucius:** *“I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.”*

- **Ralph Waldo Emerson:** *“Who you are speaks so loudly I can’t hear what you are saying.”*

## **I’M GONNA**

And now a musing from **The Grasshopper** regarding **DOING**:

If there are two bigger resolution killing words than “I’m gonna,” I haven’t heard them yet.

The boulevard of broken promises begins with “I’m gonna.”

Reflect for a moment on past failures that began with these two words.

- “I’m gonna be a millionaire by the time I’m 40.”
- “I’m gonna go to the gym 5 times a week.”
- “I’m gonna lose 30 pounds by Christmas.”

Don’t tell yourself or anyone else what you’re “gonna” do; it’s better to tell them what you’re doing.

“Doing” is active and in the present; “gonna” is future based and promised to no one.

Any list of resolutions is a list of wishes until actions take place. Action can only take place in the moment you are in.

Just a subtle shift in language from “gonna” to “doing” gives you a much better chance of fulfilling your wish.

**Side Note:** If you've added a start date to your "I'm gonna," it's doubly insured to fail.

"I'm going to start my diet on Monday" is a red flag that predicts a lot of bull will follow. **Here's a clue:** If it's not important enough to start now, it's not a high priority.

Please don't tell yourself or anyone else what you're going to do. Demonstrate what you're doing. It's a much more accurate predictor of success.

### **SET YOUR AIMS HIGH**

There is a prevalent deterrent that keeps us from outgrowing the old way and reaching the top of the totem pole – **Splinters**. My personal and professional experience is that we are looking for a smooth trip to the top – a "splinterless" shimmy, so to speak.

This is not to say there isn't an easier way, there usually is but we don't find it because we spend the bulk of our time looking for ways to get around the necessary work. We divert ourselves away from the fear of doing with the grandeur of magic that keeps us focused on the hocus-pocus rather than what's behind the curtain. Again, quoting **Robert Brault**, *"We are kept from our goal not by obstacles, but by a clear path to a lesser goal."*

Spending all your time avoiding splinters may keep your rear end splinter free but you'll continue looking at the top of the totem pole from the bottom. It makes your neck ache with more pain than any splinter would contain.

I'm not suggesting you become a glutton for pain. My invitation is simply to have you recognize and **INTER RUPT** the fear pattern that has you focused on splinters.

There is a martial arts philosophy that if you get to choose the weapon for the battle with your opponent, you will choose the weapon that scares you the most. The savvy martial artist will allow

his opponent to choose the weapon and use their opponent's fear to his/her advantage.

**We tend to focus on fear rather than what we want. That practice leaves us with a pregnant to-do list.**

I'm all for making life easier but for many, that quest is a diversion.

A wish will remain a wish until we recognize the fear that stands in the way of success. Fear is a pattern of thinking that produces some pretty scary feelings in our body. I'm wondering if you've ever taken the time to fully feel fear. Have you ever invited it in for a pow-wow? We rarely stare fear in the face and find out what's on its mind. We keep it in the shadows where we can't get a clear glimpse. That practice keeps our image of fear scarier than fear itself.

**When we refuse to feel our feelings, we turn a thunderstorm into a lifetime of rain.**

Splinters are fears. We want to go through life without encountering either. We dwell on life being splinter-free and fair, and as **The Grasshopper** reminded me long ago, "*Fair is a fairy tale.*"

Focusing on fear keeps more splinters than necessary coming our way.

How many ways can I divert myself? Let me count the ways. Rather than counting, notice. Notice when you divert your attention away from fear. Just by noticing, you begin to keep your eyes open more often and discover that many of the scary parts of life's movie aren't so scary. This gets your focus on your goal and off the pitfalls.

If you're afraid of heights, your downfall is looking down. Stay focused on the step you are on and the next step up will present itself at the opportune time.

Not noticing our diversions keeps us looking down and in lock step with unexamined fear. **It takes more effort to avoid fear than to confront it.**

**Practice Defusing Fear With Practice.** The key to “doing” is to notice the diversions. Once you recognize their many costumes, they can’t fool you anymore. You recognize them for what they are – splinter producing side roads.

There isn’t a splinter free path in life. Fear preys upon that reality and exaggerates the odds keeping us from starting our climb. Noticing diversions and allowing yourself to face and feel your fears will keep self-induced splinters to a minimum.

Which of these questions will get you into action quicker?

“How do I get to the next step?” **OR** “Who’s got the tweezers?”

If it’s the second one, no fun banister rides for you.

### **FEAR’S YOUNGER BROTHER**

We come down the birthing canal with fear. Fear’s younger brother, Anger, comes along later. It’s something worth noting and outgrowing.

Just as with fear, we have to embrace anger in order to let it dissipate. When you are aware enough to **INTER RUPT** your anger, you’ll find a deeper, peaceful part of you that’s always there.

Anger is an emotion (sensation) that has its uses. It may spur us on to do something that needs tending to that we wouldn’t have had the energy for unless we were angry. Those scenarios usually fall into the “blue moon” category.

Most anger is a conversation in our head that manifests uncomfortable sensations in our body. Anger is really a subset of fear. It fears that someone is going to harm us, and it walls us off



from that threat by having us display angry behavior. It's a learned reaction we use to keep attackers and everyone else away.

I find that people avoid people who display a lot of anger. Just being in their presence brings uninvited, uncomfortable feelings into your body. You find a way to excuse yourself and keep them at bay.

The attacks the anger-ridden person perceives, for the most part, are mind made projections – illusions. We have crafted this “under siege” story in our head and given the characters lines to speak. We have rehearsed long enough that the scene seems real. We truly are wonderful method actors.

**Anger is like a doting parent.** They mean well but stifle your growth. Anger is a useful emotion but its applications are limited.

Anger can be your ally but if you let it take advantage of your friendship, you will find yourself disconnected from life.

Anger won't allow you to connect with others and participate in life. It will give you perceived safety with an isolated existence and a gnawing, internal discomfort that insidiously wears down your body and your health.

Letting go of your anger begins by noticing that you are angry. Again, there are appropriate places for anger to materialize, but if it's your constant state of mind, you are missing the abundant life that is your birthright.

Notice the conversation in your head about being angry and notice the feelings it produces in your body. Then notice, no matter how "good" a person you are, that people back away from you or withdraw their attention from you when you are angry.

I've had occasion to meet with a number of big name celebrities over the years. One of the biggest was a Hollywood producer who is world

famous. His anger was transparent to me. He used his anger to build an empire but it got in the way of him enjoying life. I encouraged him to notice his anger and use this phrase: "I have anger within me."

People who are angry are angry "because." The minute you attribute anger to a cause, your anger swallows you up. Best to notice and acknowledge that you have anger within you and sit with that feeling. Doing so **INTER RUPTS** the pattern of attributing it to a cause and helps you move through the feeling

Just the simple act of becoming aware of your internal state allows an exit door to open. You are given an option to walk through and reconnect with life. If you keep the door locked and guns at the ready, it's true that no one will get to you but you figuratively will eat canned rations your entire life.

### **YOU ARE NOT YOUR EMOTIONS**

We all have emotions, and the worst part is not so much in having them, but identifying with them.

"I am sad," "I am angry," "I am frustrated," "I am unhappy" are phrases of identification. We identify ourselves as the sensations within us. That's like describing an airplane as its fuel.

I imagine if an airplane could speak, it would say, "I have fuel within me." It would not say, "I am jet fuel."

Your emotions are sensations that arise within you. They often produce thoughts that reinforce the sensation. When you identify with the sensation and the attendant thoughts, you stay stuck and remain separated from your creative self.

You are not your thoughts; you are not your emotions. You are the **observer** of them, not them.

When you feel an emotion arising within you, use your presence of mind to observe it. This **INTER RUPTION** will allow you to separate your sensations from your creative self. Then you can take the time to sit with those emotions and give them what they are looking for: Acknowledgement. When you acknowledge an emotion, you begin the process of transformation from that sensation.

Being human, you will experience emotions your entire life. They have a shelf life. How long they last will depend on whether you identify with them or not, and whether you acknowledge them or not.

The biggest discovery about emotions is that they are something within you, not you.

### **A PERSON FILLED WITH ANGER FOCUSES ON WHOSE FAULT IT IS RATHER THAN SEEKING A SOLUTION**

Blame is a universal dysfunction of the human mind. The underlying notion of blame is that a set of circumstances has to be someone's fault. The natural offshoot of that idea is that someone has to pay. One of the built-in protection mechanisms we have is that the person paying the tab **will not be me**.

That's when the anger creeps in and we go looking for a scapegoat. Even if we are the one who is clearly the cause of our own catastrophe, our first response is to see if we can get out of the jam unnoticed.

### **DING, DING, DING**

Pretend you are in a supermarket parking lot. You are not paying attention and you open your car door without looking. The result is a "ding" to the unoccupied car next to you. What is the reaction you have right after your initial shock? Most people immediately look around quickly to see if anyone saw them. It's a conditioned reaction based on fear that instantly sends us a message to escape.

This fear may then turn to anger. "Why did they park so close to the

line?” Or the rant may sound like this, “I am such an idiot for not looking.” The very next action you take will either be the jump-off point to fitful fury or the first step toward finding a remedy.

Sad to report that, most often, the next action is a finger pointing fit that fills the air quicker than a summer lightning storm. Whether the finger points inward or outward is immaterial. The result of either will be an exercise in anger that keeps you focused on fault. The search for a solution can never happen while we are cooking in this stew.

The solution is recognition and the quicker the better. The earlier you notice that you are in a thought loop that’s going nowhere, the faster you will dispel your diatribe and concentrate on a resolution.

The key to outgrowing counterproductive, automated behavior is to **get a wedge between stimulus and response** as early in the game as possible. Begin to train yourself to notice you are in a thought loop. Just this simple act of noticing is enough of a wedge to keep you from going over the edge.

The wedge is always recognition. Recognition and **INTER RUPTION** keep stimulus and reaction apart long enough so that another more productive response has an opportunity to show up and be acted upon.

### **ANGRY OLD MAN**

Old is always a relative term. I once heard it said that old is 10 years older than you are and rich is \$10,000 more than you make. Of course, dimes have changed since I first heard those expressions.

Lest you think this is just about men, I encourage you to read on. My experience is that angry old men are sick old men. It’s the same for women.

Just notice that the anger was there before the sickness arrived. Reminds me of a story . . .

I often said I never had a bad day on the golf course. I only play about 10 times a year, so the odds are in my favor.

My record was broken a few years ago when I played with the most miserable person I have ever encountered on the golf course or anywhere else. This guy was about 12 years older than me and had the foulest mouth I've ever heard – and I was in the U.S. Navy for 3 years, 5 months, 22 days and 8 hours. This man complained about everything and would spew his venom at anyone within earshot. I wasn't there to conduct an inquiry, only to play golf, but after about 4 holes of this aberrant behavior, the people helper in me rose to the surface and I began asking him questions. At least that way I could lead the discussion and head it in a more conducive direction for playing a round of golf.

I said to him, "You seem to be in pain." That was all I needed to say. He launched into every malady in the **Merck Manual** and told me the medications he was taking for each. He cursed doctors, nurses, medicine companies, hospitals, orderlies, candy strippers and his dead wife – all on the putting green of one hole. There was no getting this man to entertain the role he played in getting to this point, and there was no sense in pointing him in a direction to alleviate his anger and pain. Sad to say, this man will die an angry, old man because his reactive, angry mind will not allow him to be responsible for his own life.

I made an attempt to feel what it was like to be that miserable and my body began to ache. I quickly began thinking about something else.

Abundant anger is really a sign of sadness not dealt with. This person had so much sadness beneath the surface that fueled his anger, exacerbated his misery and caused his maladies. He will only get sicker no matter what health care practitioner he visits. Able physicians have a sense of who's going to get better and who isn't no matter what level of care they provide.

My golfing partner is beyond help unless he has a personal epiphany – an **INTER RUPTION**. Lucky for me he was only playing 9 holes.

There is help for the rest of us. If you are angry and have more going on with you physically than the others in your age group, you may want to investigate the sadness below your anger. Anger will eat you up and manifest itself as some label on your hospital chart. Notice the sadness beneath anger. Allow yourself to be with the emotion. Don't tell yourself stories about how you became sad; just notice the sensations in your body that you label as being sad.

There is a transmutational effect to exploring and sitting with your sadness. It allows it to dissipate and makes room for other sensations to enter your body – ones that are more supportive of your health.

## **HATRED**

Here's a view on the phrase "I hate you."

You're probably not human if you've never said or thought that phrase. I know I have and I meant it when I said it or thought it.

But who actually said or thought that phrase? The conditioned you, that's who.

The part of us that pretends to be us says some of the "darndest" things.

When something vile like that pops into our mind or out of our mouth, you can be sure it's our conditioning talking, not us. That, however, does not absolve us for spewing our hateful utterances. There are consequences for actions, no matter what part of us produced them.

If you need proof that my hatred assertion is true, find a toddler that hates. They haven't been conditioned yet.

Who do you hate? No one. Who does your conditioning hate? – All the people on your hate list.

Hatred is anger and it will burn you. Hanging on to hatred is hanging on to your justifications, which is another way of saying hanging on to your conditioning.

The next time you are about to utter your next bit of hate speech, pause for a moment and notice where it's coming from. It's coming from the part of you that you made up and got comfortable with – your public persona. That's not who you were born into; that's how you were molded.

There are two ways to outgrow the mold – noticing or dying. Dead people don't have any more conditioning. Noticing is the method to use while living. Notice your reactive conditioning about to speak and **INTER RUPT** it. Each time you do, a little more love comes through.

#### **GROUNDING YOURSELF IN REALITY**

A superb use of **INTER RUPTION** is noticing and outgrowing the “meaning” you add to your conditioning. Perhaps a story would shed some light on this practice . . .

I was buying a book for my oldest son. As I was standing in line, there was a mother with 2 young daughters under the age of 5 in front of me. The younger of the two girls appeared to be around 3 years old. She was running and jumping while her mother was paying for her books. Then the little girl sat down on a pile of magazines that was sitting on the floor. She spotted this one magazine with a caricature of a woman with straw looking hair and an ashen, sunken-in face that had cracks in the skull. It looked like a character from one of the many horror films.

The little girl looked down at the picture and very matter of fact said, “She has cracks in her face.”

There was no frightened response, just a recitation of what she was viewing. She repeated what she said. I was amused by her antics

before she sat down on the magazines, and then I was grateful for the lesson I had just been taught by a 3 year old.

She didn't add any meaning to what she was viewing. She just stated the reality of her moment. There were no computations of "this means that" and she didn't have any reference material in her mental files to be taken aback by what she saw.

The picture garnered the attention of a 3 year old and her response reminded me how adding meaning to a situation roils the waters and makes everything cloudy. She was making what **Jerry Stocking** calls a "grounded assessment" – something that 12 jurors could agree on. She didn't say, "Look at this weird, scary woman who is obviously on drugs and ready for the grim reaper." She simply stated the reality – "She has cracks in her face."

This is a very valuable thing to do with your thinking. It grounds you in reality and dispels illusions that adding meaning will always produce.

## **OUTGROWING UNGROUNDED ASSESSMENTS**

Take a peek or a listen to your own thinking and notice how full of ungrounded assessments it is. "Look at my disgusting, fat body. It's covered with unsightly globs of repulsive flab" is a statement filled with "meaning." That meaning keeps you focused on the illusion and separated from the solution. Let's translate that sentence into one with grounded assessments and notice how different it feels. "I notice that my body contains visible fat and I have fat deposits in several places."

That assessment is easier to go to work on because you are just stating reality, not adding to it. When you are working with a set of facts, a solution becomes more clear-cut. When you add the emotional judgements to the mix, you now have another layer to cut through in order to get to a solution. That's why a mediator is often helpful in getting to a solution. They plow through both sides of the dispute extracting all the emotional side roads so they can map out a



direct route to a solution.

Think of a dispute or grievance you are currently involved with. Write it out to the best of your ability. Now extract all the **ungrounded** assessments from the mix. My experience is that this practice turns down the thermostat on the red-hot emotional factors and provides an air-conditioned environment more conducive to reaching a solution.

When I find myself caught up in ungrounded assessments, I now have a new phrase to bring me back to earth – “She has cracks in her face.”

### **NON-JUDGEMENTAL RECOGNITION**

I read lots of marketing literature that is designed to walk you down a path with the ultimate goal of getting you to buy a product. Many times when you finally order the product there is some additional, fabulous offer that is paraded in front of you with some sort of “act now” lingo. The suggestion being, you’ll never get this bundle of greatness again at this price. It’s marketing. It’s the scientific art of how to attract someone’s conditioned mind to a product or service.

**But wait, there’s more!** Some do it better than others but the bottom line strategy is the same – **hook the mind**.

Marketers need a way in. For example, many real estate agents will tell you that a house with a great kitchen being shown to a married couple is the foot in the door for the wife. Is that sexist? No, it’s real estate reality – hooking the reactive mind.

Many products in the self-help arena are designed to get you something that you don’t have – confidence, power, control, wealth, health, etc. Some products are better than others but, again, they are marketed to your conditioning. The mind gets you excited about the benefits you’ll receive by purchasing the product.

My company has a product that’s not for your ego. It’s a product that goes against your conditioning. In fact, ***your mind doesn’t want you***

**to have this product.** That's because, if your mind allows this product into your awareness, it will begin to lose its hold on you. The product is self-acceptance. To use the marketing jargon, "it's a magic bullet!"

Self-acceptance is to recognize the reality of you. The minute that happens, your personal reality begins to change. It doesn't matter how you got to where you are. The fact is you are here – now. Accept yourself right now and a shift begins. The interesting aspect of this shift is that many things your conditioned mind wanted, but couldn't get in the past, start showing up – automatically – without wanton desire. It's the magic of self-acceptance.

When you accept that you are not who you think you are – someone you made up and got comfortable with – a new you emerges.

Self-acceptance begins by recognizing that you are so much deeper than your thoughts and emotions. When this awareness begins to take hold, your conditioning begins to lose its grip on you.

Your conditioned thoughts and patterned behaviors have a sole purpose: to keep you from finding out who you really are. It overloads you with a plethora of wants and desires that have the promise of a happy ending attached to them. The mind is a master of getting you to chase the horizon to get to the Promised Land that is always somewhere in the future. **The real you is the awareness that observes your mind at work.**

The foot in the door to the real you is noticing how the conditioned mind keeps you in place. If your conditioned beliefs have convinced you that you are not good enough, rich enough, skinny enough, smart enough, whatever enough, don't fight with the conditioning. That's what the mind wants you to do. Accept the reality of what the mind has presented, not the drama.

Let's, again, take being overweight as an example. The least productive thing you can do in that situation is to beat yourself up. Who's doing the whipping? - Your mind, of course. I had a lady tell me in a weight loss seminar one night, "*My ass has gotten so big it*

*has its own zip code.*” Who made that announcement? – Her conditioned belief. She made a judgement rather than sticking with the facts.

The fact was that she was “X” amount of pounds from her recommended weight. The demeaning language to her body will never be long-term helpful. Yes, she may get herself to go on a diet with this methodology but her results will be short-lived. Then she’ll berate herself some more and go on another diet with the same yo-yo results.

Self-acceptance is recognizing your situation without all the vitriol and histrionics. As I point out in my **I Love My Body** recording, accepting yourself where you are is the springboard towards change.

I am not suggesting that you say, “I’m a big, fat load and that’s that.” That would be resignation and more of your patterned, pejorative thinking. Self-acceptance is factual, not judgemental. Factual means 12 jurors could agree on it. 12 jurors couldn’t agree on “big fat load” but they could agree that a chart states you are “X” amount of pounds over the recommended weight for your height and body shape.

The next step after **non-judgemental recognition** is appreciation. Appreciate that you are where you are now. By the way, it’s the only place you can be. That’s appreciating reality. Also, have an appreciation that to get where you are going, it’s totally necessary to know where you are now.

Your appreciation of the facts helps you mentally triangulate. Jumping up and down and decrying “this shouldn’t be happening” will delay any movement in the desired direction. Denial, non-acceptance, and non-appreciation are tools of the reactive mind and it uses them to keep you cemented in place.

Choose to accept the reality in everything and you find the real you. The real you and reality are one. Self-acceptance happens when you finally discover that your thinking is the puppet show you’ve been

passing off as you. Self-acceptance is another way to outgrow the old way and move towards **lasting change**.

### **ARE YOU PASSING ON PREJUDICE?**

Another way to outgrow the old way is to notice that you may be passing along your conditioned prejudices to impressionable minds.

At first, “passing on prejudice” had parental implications for me, but the wisdom applies to all opinion shapers.

The message, more broadly, seems to be: If you are in a position of influence, be mindful of what you are filling impressionable minds with.

Impressionable minds are not necessarily young minds; they come in all genders, colors and age groups. For example, the politics of hate is alive and well and can be seen displayed everywhere. From the looks of TV and social media, it appears to affect people of all backgrounds from just about cradle to grave.

Some people are primed to be pandered to. Take the **O.J. SIMPSON** jury in the 1990s. It was “the” textbook example of “pandering to prejudice.” The defense team knew they couldn’t win on the facts, so they went right to the experience of mistreatment they knew many people of color on the jury had endured, and then proceeded to throw salt into those wounds.

It’s not that these jurors couldn’t make rational decisions, they certainly could, but in this case they were expertly played. Poll any juror, in any case, and they will tell you they voted on the facts when, in fact, exit interviews show most didn’t. They believe they are voting the facts, but the evidence often proves otherwise.

You’ll never get high-priced attorneys or political consultants to stop pandering but you can adopt one politician’s mantra: “The Buck Stops Here.”

You can stop passing on your prejudice. It can stop now if you choose to **INTER RUPT** it before it becomes like the passed down prejudice of the **Hatfields and McCoys**.

You have so much more to offer and share than prejudicial information that makes tempers flare.

**The only question left is:** Do you have enough discrimination to pass on more than your prejudice?

## **OUTGROW YOUR DEFENSES**

How solid is your defense? If you were a defendant in a courtroom, this question would have one meaning. It has an entirely different meaning if you want to learn something new and lasting.

What are you defending that's solid as a rock? Chances are it has a dense wall that lets in nothing new. That means you're stuck in your head with the same old solutions – the ones that have an abundant history of failure.

Solid defenses are forceful beliefs that are called assertions. Assertions are hard line positions often devoid of facts. They most often are just conditioned opinions: "All fat people are lazy."

When the defense of our position is hard lined, nothing new, no matter how logical, gets through.

To break down our walls, we just have to apply a little bit of science. The microscope shows us that nothing is solid. There is more space in solid things than we can see. The microscope bypasses our conditioning and shows us the porosity of our position. In other words, it shows us the holes in our argument.

## **TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES**

Two words that bother me to no end and keep people stuck in the old way are "My Truth." There is no limitation on the truth. "My" is a solid limitation. I've come to discover that **real truth has no opposite**. If you can find one obese person that's a "Go-getter," your truth begins to disintegrate.

Real truth is reality – that which happens. "The apple fell from the tree" is reality. If you ignore that reality and have a different opinion, that's "your truth."

Disguising your opinion as the truth makes you a resident in the world of illusion.

“I’m living my truth” is bogus. All that statement says is that you’re justifying your approach to life and calling it the truth.

“This is my way of doing things” is more representative of what you’re calling “your truth.”

There is a lot of “I’m right” contained in “my truth.” Like **The Grasshopper** said moons ago, *“Some people would rather be right than happy. And preferring to be right, they are left out.”*

I haven’t yet heard “my truth” as anything other than a defense of one’s position. My experience is that those who live in defensive mode have more than their share of unhappiness.

Want to be happier? **INTER RUPT** “your truth.” You’ll let your defenses down and be open to what’s right in front of you – reality without spin. This results in learning that truth is not relative; it’s revealing. It shows you what’s really happening.

When you discover there is a counterargument to your position, you find out there is room for something new to seep through.

**INTER RUPT** your defensive stance for just a moment and consider what others have to offer. It's the beginning of learning what was solidly true for you is actually small little pieces being held together with weak glue.

Just by noticing your solid truths, you step in the direction of dissolving that adhesive and put a microscope on what's true. And in the process you learn something lasting and new.

#### **PATIENCE IS THE ABILITY TO WAIT THE TIME IT TAKES**

Outgrowing the old way and growing into a new way takes **INTER RUPTION** and **Patience**. Impatience is a conscious effort to speed up the timetable of the Universe. This activity is folly and extreme hubris wrapped together and brandished as a weapon – one that even windmills aren't afraid of.

The term “Wu Wei” comes from the Ancient Chinese Taoists. It literally means, “Do not war.” Philosopher **Alan Watts** noted that within the context of the Taoist writings, it probably had a deeper meaning that he characterized as “do not force.” He likened it to putting a key into a resistant lock. Watts suggested that jiggling would be a better strategy than imposing your will on the lock, resulting in less broken keys.

TV legend **Jackie Gleason** unknowingly addressed Wu Wei. Paraphrasing his response to a question about being successful, he said something like the following:

*“Be going out when the tide is going out and be coming in when it’s coming in. Anytime I did it differently, I paid the price.”*

Forcing the action is not great strategy to live by. It’s like the famous biblical quote reminds us: *“Live by the sword, die by the sword.”*

### **FARWELL TO ARMS**

Being at war with reality is a losing battle. Forcing something to happen rarely works and oftentimes has negative, residual effects.

Patience leads to trusting. Trusting is a sensation you can feel in your body. It's an unmistakable knowing that acts like an internal compass keeping you on course.

Impatience is a conversation in your head that is tantamount to saying that God isn't working fast enough. This conversation, when left unchecked, will distribute feelings throughout your body that will keep you immobilized.

The mark of a truly great bench player in sports is to keep themselves at the ready so they can perform when their number is called. Trust is keeping yourself at the ready – ready to act when an opportunity presents itself.

Forcing a situation involves an internal grinding of the mind. It creates unnecessary noise that keeps you from hearing the answer when it is presented. Knowing when to act is the result of patience

and trust. Begin the practice of trusting yourself to recognize an opportune moment.

You don't have to start with the biggest thing on your list. Start small and build some successes with your patience and trust. Notice that there are two beneficial effects.

1. Less mind noise.
2. Faster fruition.

Reminds me of a story . . .

There was a young surgical resident assisting an experienced doctor in a heart operation. The older doctor explained to the aspiring surgeon that they only had 45 seconds in which to do one aspect of the procedure or the patient would most likely die. The young surgeon began to sweat. The wise old physician looked him in the eye and said, "We'll have plenty of time if we don't rush."

Patience will always get you there faster. Patience is the result of practicing Wu Wei. Once you train yourself to know what the feeling of forcing a situation feels like, you are in a better position to **INTER RUPT** it by being patient and letting it pass. After some practice in noticing your feelings, you'll also begin to recognize the feeling of trust and intuitively know when to act.

When patience and trust work together, the windows of opportunity open with ease, and breezes of fresh air enter your life.

### **EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF WAITING**

Waiting is an **INTER RUPTION** strategy.

"Take the bull by the horns" and "Seize the Day" are the strategies of yesterday. Yes, they have their successful moments but too often they are a misuse of energy.

Waiting means to recognize you're at a sticking point without using worn and prefabricated schemes to get unstuck. Once you notice your impasse, then it's time to **just wait for a solution to show up**.



In baseball they have an expression for fielders: “Let the ball come to you.” Yes, there are times to charge the ball but most often, waiting for it to come to you is the smart play.

Men have been conditioned since childhood that they must know and know now. That’s why we don’t stop and ask for directions. We just plow forward and expect results. Taking a breath (**INTER RUPTION**) and allowing yourself to seek help is waiting at work.

Try out waiting in low risk situations. Let’s pretend you’re doing a puzzle and you come to a section where no answers are forthcoming. That is the time to wait. Waiting, in this case, may mean going on to other sections of the puzzle that are less puzzling and come back to the seemingly unsolvable section later. Many times, out of the blue, answers start to come to you.

Here’s a very effective waiting strategy to use when taking a test. Read all the questions before you attempt answers. Your mind is then working on all the answers when you begin writing down yours.

The strategy that most of us use is to have nonstop chatter in our head when we come to a sticky wicket. When we fill our mind with noise, the answers stay quiet and illusive. They only surface when we go deeper than the surface of thinking. That’s where waiting will take you.

Trust that there is a part of your mind that knows the answer and give it room to work. It works best when it’s free of constant, threadbare thinking. It will then sew together answers from the magic cloth of waiting. Outgrow the old way by waiting for the new way.

### **STRESS BUSTING WHILE WAITING**

Copywriting extraordinaire **John Carlton** posted this on his Facebook page:

“Stress-busting tip: Life got you down? Sales tanking, creditors swarming, job going south, angst bubbling up in your gut?

Worse, is your brain locked in a hellish loop, obsessing and freaking out?

Time to intervene.

Write yourself a letter, outlining all your troubles & all your immediate plans.

Be specific and get it all out of your head (where it's causing trouble) & onto the written page (where you know it can be found, so you can forget about it).

Then take a break.

Hide the letter for 24 hrs.

Let your unconscious work on solutions.

When the internal loop starts, remind yourself that it's all safely written down, so you don't need to memorize details.

Your unconscious has a remarkable talent at organizing things and getting perspective on what's important and what's fluff.

But you gotta give it elbow room to maneuver.

So back off for a day. Or even a few hours, if deadlines are approaching.

You'll be stunned at how sensible and efficient your brain can be, when you stop fussing and awfullizing everything.

It works.”

### **AN UNPRODUCTIVE METHOD OF WAITING IS WAITING FOR WHAT YOU DON'T WANT**

If you're anything like me, you've waited a long time for something to happen that didn't. What you may not have experienced yet is the realization that you no longer want it. It's a bittersweet revelation.

It's bitter because you lament that you've wasted a lot of time and emotional energy on something that's now undesirable. It's sweet because you reclaim that energy to go for what you do want.

Reminds me of a story . . . I was a radio broadcaster for 30 plus years. Like a lot of DJs, I moved from city to city exploring new opportunities. But I never was able to work for the station in my hometown that was my ultimate goal. I made several attempts but, sadly, they were not interested in me.

The station was one of the most respected in the nation but like many AM stations of that time, they went the way of all good flesh and lost all their listeners. By the time I was good enough to work there, they were on their way to circling the drain. As I look back, I wasted a lot of time and caused myself lots of pain.

So how do you tell when something you say you want is no longer worthy of your desire? I don't have an exact answer but my short answer is "it's a feeling."

If you plug your desire into your feeling apparatus (your body), you'll get a "no" or "go" signal. Let me caution you that a "no" signal is not a rationalization in your mind like, "Why go for it if I can't get it?" That's just exasperation and justification.

A "no" signal is a "not OK" feeling. It's an actual sense registering somewhere in your body, usually along your midline – from your throat to your bowels. It pays dividends to pay attention to the signals your body sends. They're far more reliable than the mental musings we get locked into.

The words of the Persian Poet **Rumi** come to mind:

**Don't grieve for what doesn't come**

**Some things that don't happen**

**Keep disasters from happening**

My suggestion is to let your long-term goal roll around in your body from time to time. You may just discover it no longer makes sense.

## **SOMETHING ELSE WORTH OUTGROWING**

Notice When Too Many Sentences Begin With "I."

Notice the people you avoid the most. And then ask yourself how many times they use the word “I.”

My guess is quite often.

“I,” followed by referring to oneself in the third person, is just “I” on steroids.

“We” has been left by the wayside and “I” continues to be a stick in the eye.

I recommend that you monitor your use of “I.” Then notice how many people pay attention when it’s your turn to talk. Their attention is inversely proportional to your use of “I.”

“I” is not a bad thing, but when it’s overused, get used to people ignoring you.

Is there a cure for the abundant use of “I”? My guess is “Yes.” It begins with noticing and **INTER RUPTING** it, not so much in others, but in you.

“I” is a habit that if left unchecked, will keep your “I”s coming and lots of people going – in the opposite direction.

Pay attention to your use of “I.” It’s an eye opener to see how often we offend others when we get stuck on “I.”

The only productive use of many “I”s is when the “ayes” have it. Other than that, you may wind up on an “I”land alone.

### **MAKING PEOPLE DISAPPEAR**

Did you ever notice that you disappear when another person in a conversation goes on and on without paying attention? You no longer are visible to them when they’re in their talking trance. I euphemistically call this, “throwing up on people.” They are oblivious to your feedback, because when they’re in this trance, you are no longer there.

Perhaps this is you. If so, you know what to do. Notice you’re speaking without noticing and **INTER RUPT** yourself.

Years ago, I met a famous man who has written many best selling books on spirituality and makes people disappear when he speaks. He writes beautifully but when he lectures, his audience vanishes. This habit doesn't get in the way of his writing, but it's "abracadabra-ville" when he's speaking.

### **OUTGROWING STUCK**

It's close to being the national pastime: Staying Stuck. **The Grasshopper** chimed in on this observation saying, "*Arguing for your conditioning is arguing for your limitations; neither will move you forward.*"

Our conditioning cannot be denied nor can it be dismissed as a causative factor on how we act. We act in accordance with our conditioning . . . until we notice.

There is an appetite for defending our conditioning. Look no further than religion. Most people have the same religion as their parents. The question that's rarely asked is: "Did they ask your permission?" In most cases, you got your religious beliefs through conditioning by your early caregivers. Then you may argue vociferously that you have the one, true religion. Better to ask, "Is my religion working for me?" If not, you may need a new religion.

Your stuck conditioning will have you assert what has become my least favorite phrase: "That's the way I am." When you hear that phrase, you are in the presence of someone who is stuck. They may claim they want to evolve but can't because they are so invested in defending their limitations.

This quote from legendary satirist **Jonathan Swift** comes to mind: "*It is useless to attempt to reason a man out of a thing he was never reasoned into.*"

### **COMFORTABLY STUCK**

I was struck with a new definition for "Stuck." My old one was, "**STUCK**: *When your thoughts tell you the projectionist has gone*

*home, but your heart remains in the theatre.” It’s still apropos but the following one has caught my ear:*

***“STUCK: When you’re too comfortable with comfort.”***

Our comfort zone can become a prison, one that we’re too comfortable to break out of.

If you’re stuck in a ditch in your car, you usually make some sort of effort to get out. That doesn’t seem to be the case when we’re in a behavioral ditch of our own digging.

Once again, quoting **The Grasshopper** from years ago: *“Change your behavior or stay in your hole.”*

I’m reminded of the acid indigestion TV commercial where the guy has to take a couple of antacid pills so he can have his pizza. **That’s stuck!** Heaven forbid that he should go to work on the cause of his physical distress. We instead mask our distress and stay stuck in our comfort zone.

Just about everyone I know knows where they are stuck. They just won’t admit it out loud and they bury their “stuckness” with the dirt from the rut they’ve dug.

### **TO GET LASTING COMFORT, YOU HAVE TO GET UNCOMFORTABLE**

Outgrowing stuck behavior is not comfortable, but it results in a lot more comfort than you had before.

Getting unstuck is a two-step process:

1. Noticing and admitting you’re stuck. (That may entail being “wrong” about something you forever preached being “right” about).
2. Taking a step in the direction of discomfort.

The discomfort will eventually pass when you start putting one foot in front of the other (Baby Steps). It's productive to conquer the molehill before you take on the mountain.

**Here's the Sticky Wicket:** Getting past the denial that you're stuck. That's why Step 1 is so crucial to your progress.

Admit to yourself that you're stuck. After you get comfortable with that, admit it to others. Admission is what gets the ball rolling, and stepping towards discomfort completes the circuit.

Want real comfort? Get uncomfortable.

### **INTER RUPTING THE WAY I AM**

Here's a story about a pattern that I **INTER RUPTED** in my Dad . . .

My father was of the World War II generation – the straightforward, get-it-done, no nonsense era. Physical affection was almost non-existent.

How many people utter the regretful words, "I should have told them while they were living"?

What words or sentiments are you saving for when someone dies? Here's a novel idea: Let them know before they go.

My father was not a hugger – I am. Somewhere in my 30s, I took the initiative and began to hug my dad and give him a kiss on the cheek the few times a year we saw each other. Although it was his conditioning not to show that kind of affection, he truly enjoyed it and eventually initiated the embrace.

I remember driving to my uncle's funeral and having a couple of hours of alone time with my Dad. I got to hear many stories about things I never knew about him. They shed a lot of light on some of the behaviors and attitudes I had that were just like my father's. As I

was leaving to drive back home, my Dad walked me out to my car. It was there and then that I decided to tell him what he meant to me.

I told him lots of things that he did for me growing up that I would never forget and ended it with telling him that he was my hero. He dismissed the compliment and then gave me the best hug I ever got from him.

My Dad is gone now but I got to eulogize him while he was living. It was one of my favorite moments and, I suspect, one of his as well.

Special people come in and out of our lives and we don't think to fully remember them until they move on or are gone.

I'll admit, it takes a certain amount of courage to initiate this type of **INTER RUPTION** by giving a living eulogy, but the rewards last a lifetime.

### **GETTING CALLED OUT**

When someone calls you on your stuff, the conditioned response is twofold:

1. Get angry
2. Get defensive

Getting angry is understandable. No one likes to hear about their shortcomings, even if it's warranted to point them out. Getting defensive is the more destructive of the two. It's the glue that keeps us stuck.

Here comes one of my favorite words again: "Noticing."

When we notice our conditioning and **INTER RUPT** it while it's happening, we then have a choice. We may choose to remain the same or we may choose to move forward. You have no choice if you don't notice; you're a prisoner of your conditioning.



It may seem obvious but the best way to avoid moving forward is to stay stuck.

Here's a challenge that takes some courage: Notice and **INTER RUPT** your conditioned beliefs and offer yourself a choice – to stay put or move forward.

### **A PERSONAL OUTGROWING**

I was attending a **Jerry Stocking** workshop in 2012 and got a lasting gift from this gifted observer. He asked me, "*What is your purpose in speaking?*" It was a life-changing moment for me. Prior to reflecting on that question, I would often just open my mouth willy-nilly and regale whoever was listening with whatever was on my mind. Since then, I speak a lot less and listen quite a bit more.

I now have a purpose when I speak, whether it's in formal or casual conversation. Outgrowing the old pattern has me more focused on whom I'm talking with, rather than just letting words fall out of my mouth that have no purpose.

Ask yourself the same question: What is my purpose in speaking?

### **LEAVE YOUR ASSERTIONS AT THE DOOR**

If you want to leave heated arguments out of your interactions, leave your assertions at the door.

Notice how one assertion (the way things are according to you) opens the door to a barrage of counter-assertions that lead away from civility.

An assertion is most often an opinion stated as fact. Many of them start with the words "all, every or never." "All left-handed rodeo cowboys are cattle rustlers." "Every person who wears a red hat is looking for attention." "I never do that."

An assertion is a guaranteed argument starter. Did you just notice I made an assertion? Did you also notice how quickly you could come up with a counterexample?

I find that more men than women use assertions. I don't know if that's true; it just seems to be that way.

Assertions are like barbs and contain a fair amount of embedded anger. *"I won't buy a Japanese television because they're not made in America."* If you dare look, most parts of any TV brand are made somewhere in Asia. Some may be assembled in America but the parts are not made here, yet many vigorously refer to it as an American TV brand. That's an assertion.

Assertions are like rocks: Solid. Yet, as noted before, in the atomic structure, all solid things contain mostly space.

When I enter that space, I like me a lot more. When other people enter that space, I like them more.

Most people, men or women, rarely, if ever, enter that space. It's noticing that space that allows you to recognize that your solid positions are porous.

"All Mexicans are ambidextrous" is an absurd assertion but how many of us have equally absurd rocks that we throw at people.

To my fellow males, if you stop "telling it like it is" according to your self-written bible, you'll see the wisdom of the request that **Jesus** made millennia ago: *"He who is without sin, cast the first stone."* Notice he said "He."

Before **Jesus**, we heard from the **Buddha**: *"Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one who gets burned."* He could have easily changed the word "anger" to "assertion" and delivered the same message.

And let me quote **Mother Teresa**. *“One of the greatest diseases is to be a nobody to anybody.”* Want to remain a nobody? Just remain in the world of assertion. It’s a guaranteed way to keep people away.

### **GET IN THE HABIT OF ASKING QUESTIONS RATHER THAN MAKING ASSERTIONS**

If someone else makes an assertion, let it go without response or ask a curiosity question as to how they came to that conclusion. If you counter the assertion, plan on turning your conversation into a call-in talk show where you’ll both be using your outdoor voices indoors.

One way to avoid this type of interaction altogether is by saying something like, “You know, that’s a discussion we can have anytime; I’d rather hear about your (fill in the blank).” **Blank Fillers:** Your visit with your grandson or your girlfriend who came to visit or the yoga class you’re taking. There are many things you can inquire about that move you away from the avenue of argument.

You can help insure more pleasant interactions by **INTER RUPTING** yourself and leaving your assertions at the door.

### **WORDS ARE IMPORTANT**

Words are triggers for one's experience and, when processed, these words will access the sensations that go along with that experience. It is worthwhile to update your language with words that do not carry so much emotional baggage.

What I'm about to outline for you may sound inane on the surface, and if you follow along and experiment with this “new” language, you will no longer be held in place by certain words.

I learned the following prescription for “outgrowing” patterned reactions. Start by taking some specific everyday words that we learn early in life and replacing them permanently with ones we learned at the high school level. Two of these words are “Good” and “Bad.”

## **TOILET TRAINING**

Think about the environment in which most of us learned these words. Way back when, if you wet your pants, you may have been referred to as a “Bad” girl. If you made it to the toilet, you were a “Good” boy. These are words of judgement which still have those experiences and feelings attached.

These are parental approval or disapproval words that still have emotional value attached to them whether we're consciously aware of that or not. Children are most impressionable and the tone of voice with which a word is delivered has an almost indelible impact when reinforced in an emotional situation. Toilet training, as many parents will attest, most often has been an emotionally charged experience.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

Two similar words learned at the high school level are: “Beneficial” and “Counterproductive.” The emotional baggage that goes along with these type words is not as heavy as “Good” and “Bad.” The notion is every time you use the words “Good” and “Bad,” you are accessing, at the subconscious level, feelings that went along with these words. You can outgrow these feelings when you use updated references.

You may buy into this concept for the word “Bad” but certainly not for “Good.” I invite you to recall for a moment, the tone used with a child when saying “Good.” If you used that tone with an adult, they may accuse you of being condescending. Even though you are not using that tone with an adult, it is, at an “other-than-conscious” level, married to that word. It’s due to the bombardment they received when younger and most impressionable. I had a hard time buying into this idea until I heard the next story.

## **POLLUTING THE ENVIRONMENT**

Years ago, **Dr. Dave Dobson** was invited to speak before a group of women. While he was discussing this concept with one of the sponsors before the talk, she thought the idea was preposterous. To illustrate the point, Dave asked to be introduced as an environmental expert who would give a 10-minute talk on saving the environment. He told the sponsor that three times during the speech he would use the phrase “rape the environment.” He also told this person he could privately identify for her, after the talk, some women in the group that had some experience with “rape.” She declined. She immediately got the gift of awareness that some words are power packed even when used in an entirely unrelated context. This validated for her and for me how emotional some words can be.

### **LET’S GIVE IT A GO**

“Try” is another word that is productive to update. “Try” does not exist in nature. It is a totally “left-brained” label that does not match up with action. Deer don't try to stand up. A young, feeble deer making some sort of an effort to get to its feet is not trying. The fawn either gets up or it does not. A more accurate statement on its effort is that it is half standing up. The key is the effort expended.

“Try” is an excuse word because we've been conditioned to it that way. Let's refer back the toilet training period as an example. If you wet your pants and your parent was admonishing you for doing so, you may have uttered, “I tried to make it to the bathroom, mommy.” You didn't make any effort whatsoever, but you learned the word “Try” would absolve you from any responsibility.

Put it on an adult level. You run into an old acquaintance. You chat for a while and one of you says, “Let's try and get together.” Then you go your separate ways. What does that mean? Does it mean that each of you will check your appointment schedules and come up with a common date? Does it mean you will call the other person at noon tomorrow to let them know the time and place? Or does it

mean you don't want to get together at all and are using "Try" as the escape word?

The biggest difficulty with using "Try" is that no effort is actually made. The underlying idea is that if you come up with an acceptable enough reason, it will explain your behavior. Armed with that knowledge, we spend most of our life looking for reasons to defend our behavior rather than outgrow it. "Try" is a time-tested defense, and it keeps us in place. "Make an effort" is a phrase that suggests to your mind that you will do something. The word "Try" anchors you, through other-than-conscious references, to excuses and inactivity. The British have an action phrase that is a prescription for outgrowing "Try." They say, "Let's give it a go."

### **IN THE PAST**

Some other words needlessly hold **lasting change** at arm's length. Suppose you say you are "shy," "not artistic," "clumsy," or "not very smart." These are expressions that hold you in place. I am not suggesting that you say an affirmation like "I am artistic." I believe part of your mind knows that is not accurate. If you believe you are not artistic and want to change your belief, a place to start is "In the past."

"In the past" is a phrase that works soft magic when continuously applied. If it's your habit to say, "I'm not very artistic," say something like this instead. "In the past, I haven't been very artistic." The consistent referencing of the observation as "In the past," is a pattern **INTER RUPT**. "In the past" sets the stage for your mind to come up with additional options that will move you forward and have your new learning gush out.

Many people hold their state of health in place with words. A destructive label is the word "My." "My arthritis won't allow me to play tennis anymore." "My diabetes leaves me with little energy. Two things that will give you more power immediately are:

1. Drop the word “My” from any disease process.
2. Apply “In the past” to any limitation you ascribe to the disease.

For example: “In the past, arthritis has kept me from playing tennis.”  
“In the past, diabetes has caused me to feel less energetic.”

“My” is a word, to which we've been conditioned, that means ownership. There is nothing inappropriate about ownership, but who wants to own arthritis? I'm not suggesting this shift in language will make arthritis or diabetes disappear. What I'm suggesting is, if you refer to it “In the past” and remove the ownership, you may find your situation more palatable. Better yet, if there is a way your mind can help you ease or put this disease behind you, this new language will facilitate the process.

If you label yourself as “shy,” give this phrase a go: “In the past shyness has prevented me from showing my stuff.” Here's another example: “In the past, the fear of speaking in front of people has kept me and my helpful information away from public view.”

## **TWO MORE WORDS**

“Right” and “Wrong” as a way of thinking cause many unnecessary problems that can be avoided if we opt for the word “Preference” instead. Right and wrong are cultivated by culture and even within that culture there are disagreements about what is right and what is wrong. The world of right and wrong is a quagmire because there are so many versions of right and wrong.

The word “preference” personalizes something and suggests it's an opinion, not a fact. If you tell someone they are wrong about something, there is an immediate wall built between you and them. No one likes being wrong. When you say, “I'm right,” the immediate implication is the other person is wrong. Notice what happens if you say to someone, “I believe that information is inaccurate” vs. telling him or her they are wrong. You've done two things by saying that.

1. You have put the onus on the information, not them.

2. You have used a high school word (inaccurate) vs. a parental judgment word that has been carrying negative baggage for you since before you were five.

Get into the habit of saying you have a preference for something instead of taking a cultural position of right or wrong. It immediately tells people, you are not arguing the merits of right and wrong and it also personalizes the preference.

You may have a specific way of doing things that other people do much differently. Let's pretend you have a specific idea about how to raise children. You instinctively know other people have other ideas. If you declare you have the right way or the best way to bring up children, you are going to set up a polarity response with many people. Notice what happens if you say you have a preference for bringing up your children the way you do. This gives credence to other ways of doing things without you having to defend being right. Having a preference will give you more flexibility without having to abandon or defend your way of doing things. Being more flexible is a catalyst to getting your point recognized.

The words "accurate" and "inaccurate" fall on the ears much softer than the hard sounds of "right" and "wrong."

I encourage you to get curious about words that are more useful. Stimulus-reaction to words is active in your life every day. Substitute less confrontational words and outgrow getting in your own way. You can continue to react in the same way to trigger words, or you can **INTER RUPT** them and choose a new response and watch your conversations become more convivial.

### **ADULTHOOD: WHEN NO ONE IS LOOKING**

Seems to me that one of the marks of being an adult is to do the "right" thing when no one is looking.

By "right," I mean the thing you would do if eyes were on you



Reminds me of a story . . .

I was a road warrior for many years, traveling to many cities and having to eat at many different restaurants. I developed the skill to tell if the manager was on duty or not. It was immediately apparent to me often before being seated and handed the menus.

Something was off. The music wasn't suited to the patrons seated at the tables, the wait staff was inattentive, empty tables weren't cleared of used dishes, etc.

I would casually inquire if the manager was on duty and the answer was almost always, "No."

It didn't surprise me because having been a manager of people for many years, I got to see the "when the boss is away, the employees will play" dynamic at work.

But this isn't about my lame superpower; it's about growing up.

What is accomplished when you cheat at Solitaire? You cheat yourself out of your dignity, the same as you do when you don't do what you agreed to do.

Growing up is keeping your agreements. I never took the **EST** training so popular in the 1970s, but the founder of **EST, Werner Erhard** issued one of my favorite quotes: *"The reason life doesn't work is because people don't keep their agreements."*

Growing up requires integrity. Every time you give yours a pass, you water it down to the point that you no longer have it.

Who can you count on? My guess is that person's integrity is intact and is a card carrying adult. Who can't you count on? That's a person caught in adolescence who's always checking to see who's looking.

Both actions take effort. It's a matter of where you put your attention. Is yours on avoiding your agreements or is it focused on your integrity?

Our lack of integrity is transparent but we act as though no one can see it. The main person you cheat is yourself when you don't do what you say you'll do.

Who ever stated, up front, that they'll "over-promise and under-deliver"? But that's exactly what you do if you act differently when eyes aren't on you.

For me, it's really this basic: If you want a seat at the adult table, eat your vegetables when no one is looking.

### **GROWING UP**

This chapter about outgrowing the old way wouldn't be complete without noticing the **five signs of Immaturity** I find in an adult.

There are five behaviors that keep you immature – translation: **Stuck!**

You may never completely outgrow all five, but if you notice and **INTER RUPT** these behaviors, you'll get unstuck and finally earn your coveted seat at the grown-ups' table.

These are the five behaviors that keep you from gaining that right of passage:

1. A Polarity Response
2. Failure to take responsibility for your own actions
3. Failure to apologize
4. Upset with everyone
5. Lack of dependability

Following is a thumbnail sketch of each behavior:

**POLARITY RESPONSE** The easiest way to define it is, *“I say white and you say black.”* The word *“oppositional”* comes to mind. This person is quick to disagree. We all have polarity to something; these folks have it to almost everything. Their first inkling is to go the other way or to make you wrong. My experience is that, oftentimes, someone in their formative years made them wrong quite often.

**FAILURE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY** Nothing is ever their fault. Even if they believe it’s their fault, they can’t admit it because doing so would crack the image they want the world to see. For them, that’s a fate worse than death.

**FAILURE TO APOLOGIZE** The words *“I’m sorry”* may leave their lips but it’s immediately followed by a justification. The justification often takes the form of *“You made me do that”* or *“the reason I did that was because . . .”* Another justification is a mindset they may own that says, *“I do so much good that you ought to overlook this transgression.”* That would be like a philanthropist who donates millions of dollars to the hospital but exposes himself one time in the nurse’s lounge. He thinks no apology is necessary. A true apology would mean he was wrong, and wrong is a feeling he can’t tolerate.

**UPSET WITH EVERYONE** These folks cannot compartmentalize upset. That means that you’ll get the same snarly behavior from them that the offending party receives. They don’t recognize that you had nothing to do with their upset but you also pay the price. Not only is that person immature, they’re selfish.

**LACK OF DEPENDABILITY** If, more often than not, you agree to do something and you don’t follow through, you are undependable and locked in by another sign of immaturity. Yes, we all forget from time to time that we agreed to do something that just slipped our mind. That’s a far cry from the slippery slope of undependability, which is a hallmark of immaturity.

## **MATURITY BEGINS**

Each of the five signs contributes to your inability to move forward. Exploring them within yourself and **INTER RUPTING** loosens their

strangle hold on you, giving you clear passage to become an unshackled, productive grown-up.

### **THE GRAND DADDY OF ALL IMMATURITY**

The biggest sign of immaturity is the **Polarity Response** and the one most worthy of **INTER RUPTION**. Here is a detailed explanation.

The overarching, **LOUD** message coming from someone with a giant polarity response is: **I won't grow up.**

Let me begin with a story about polarity featuring the most oppositional person I've ever met. Sometimes you'll witness someone's polarity displayed when they paint themselves into a corner. They defend their actions rather than addressing their situation. This is one of those cases.

Back in my radio broadcasting days we had an engineer who was the poster child for polarity. His immature behavior was almost comical if you didn't have to deal with him on a daily basis. Anyone who had to interact with him found his or her job to be exponentially more difficult.

We were using reel-to-reel tape recorders back then and we had two of them in the studio where we recorded commercials. The sound that came out of one of them was crystal clear; the other recorder sounded "muddy." It sounded like the person who was being recorded had a sock in their mouth.

I went and got the engineer and told him the second recorder sounded muddy. His response was, "I set it to specs." That meant that he adjusted the machine to the manufacturer's specifications for the specific type of tape being used. To illustrate the problem, I played him a comparison of the same voice recorded on each machine and remarked that the second machine was muddy. He again said, "I set it to specs."

I was beside myself that he wasn't addressing the issue that was clear to anyone willing to listen. I said, "Humor me and set it again." He went off to get his tools and I went off to do another project.

The next day I went into that studio again and wanted to see if the problem had been fixed. The tape recorder was just as muddy as the day before. I went and got the engineer again and brought him into the studio and played him the same type of recorded examples I had played for him the day before. I incredulously asked, "Do you hear that?" He didn't answer my question but responded with, you guessed it, "I set it to specs" and left the studio.

### **SAVED BY THE BOSS**

I was so mad I almost couldn't breathe. This guy didn't report to me, otherwise I would have fired him on the spot. It just so happens that the corporate engineer from the home office, his boss, was paying us a visit that afternoon. As soon as he came into the building, I requested that he come listen to a tape recorder that we were having a problem with.

I recorded a voice track on both machines and played them back for him and asked what he heard. He said, "Machine two is muddy." I told him our engineer had looked into it and set it to specs to no avail. He went and got our engineer and played him the examples I had just recorded. He asked him what do you hear? He responded, "I set it to specs." He said, "That's not what I asked. I asked what do you hear? You do hear that this machine is muddy, don't you?" If I wasn't there myself, I wouldn't have believed that his answer was, "I set it to specs."

The corporate engineer then asked, "What tape are you using?" Our engineer named the brand. The head engineer said that the machine settings for newly manufactured reels of that brand of tape were different than they were for older reels. We were using the new reels with the old settings. He had him adjust the machine to the settings listed on the box rather than the settings he had memorized and, like

magic, the tape machine played clear as a bell. It took 5 minutes to fix.

## **THE BIRTH OF POLARITY**

I'm sure you have your own examples of people who are serially oppositional. They almost always go counter to what you say. Polarity is a pattern that develops in early childhood and in some people it doesn't mature as they age.

My hypnosis teacher **Dr. Dave Dobson** proffered that when the intellect starts to form in a child, they learn that being oppositional gains them a modicum of control over these scary creatures known as adults. Notice how the main vocabulary word of a two-year-old is "No."

As a child grows older, this polarity periodically reduces itself to a manageable percentage as we grow out of our teens into adulthood. In some people, this transition doesn't happen. They are difficult to deal with and incredibly immature. In essence, they're still digging in their heels and trying to control their parents.

## **POLARITY IS AN ATTEMPT TO CONTROL**

Polarity is a pattern of behavior that stems from fear – fear of what someone can do to us if we don't control them. People with high polarity are attempting to control others with opposition. It's what they learned but never unlearned.

We all have polarity; it's just a matter of percentages. Just think of five people you know and rank them according to their polarity (You say "up"; they say "down"). Notice the ones whom you deem to have the least polarity are easier to get along with. The ones with the most polarity give you more pauses, and will be the first ones to gum up any flow between the two of you with opposition.

People with high polarity can easily put people around them on edge. Hardly anyone is comfortable around them because they sense

the high polarity person's attempt to control them and it's not an OK feeling.

The person with high polarity feels out of control and attempts to use control to feel good about themselves. The irony is that control is an illusion. If you don't think so, control the next thought from popping into your head. **Seeking control is like chasing the horizon; you can never get there.**

Not all people seeking control have high polarity but all high polarity people I've met are seeking control or to not be controlled.

They hate being controlled even more than you. They'll do anything to avoid that feeling. That's why they're on the offensive, seemingly all the time, attempting to control you before you control them. Opposition is their weapon.

### **POLARITY ISN'T CHILDLIKE**

The telltale sign of high polarity in a person is that their response to just about anything you say or do, will have them go opposite to you. "Childish" is a word often used by people to describe them. A phrase they often use is, "It can't be done." They can be maddening to be around because they ignore logic and, quite often, don't directly answer questions. They fear being penned in and are quite edgy themselves. They often feel under siege. If you know someone who's never wrong, it's a safe bet they have high polarity. To them, being wrong is worse than facing a firing squad.

### **FUNDAMENTALISTS**

People on the fringe of issues oftentimes display extreme polarity. No fact alive will convince them that their position is dead in the water. They will argue 'til the cows come home if you shine a light of evidence on their sacred cow of conjecture.

## FAMILY TIES

Sometimes children and adolescents are overwhelmed by one parent's success or professed beliefs, and if they have more polarity than the common teen (which is pretty common), they may feel that they'll never measure up. To counter this "not OK" feeling, they may issue some ideological challenges to the work the parent does or the political, religious or social positions they take. They may even go into a profession that's night and day away from what the parent does because of polarity.

The popular 1980s TV Show "Family Ties," featuring **Michael J. Fox** as Alex P. Keaton, is emblematic of this polar position. The young teen adopts an ultra conservative persona compared to his "hippy-dippy," liberal parents.

## THE LAST WORD

Extremely polar people thrive on speaking last. That means they land the last blow and it prevents them from being hit again, at least for now.

A few more examples of this may prove helpful in recognizing polarity. Here are a few back-and-forth exchanges that may sound familiar:

*"Nice day!" – "Actually, it's a little cold and it may snow."*

*"That's a pretty color and it looks good on you." – "I hate this shirt!"*

And finally, here's an example of "Polarity Pete" opposing a global observation with a specific that doesn't give any credence to what was said:

**Person 1:** *"Looks like our team, as a whole, is getting older."*

**Polarity Pete:** *"Not necessarily, we just signed the youngest running back in the league."*



## PUT IT IN REVERSE

If you notice polarity in others, you can employ some subtle “reverse psychology.” If you want them to do something, you have to frame it in language that’s familiar to them. If you know they use some form of “It can’t be done,” say something like, “I doubt you’ll be able to fix this, but my computer is freezing up quite often.” You’re using their polarity to get the result you want. If you doubt they can do something, by god, they are going to prove they can.

## GET THROUGH MORE OFTEN

Years ago, I learned a great technique to get past the gatekeeper. It’s called the **Negative Reverse**. The technique engages a person’s polarity to get the outcome you want. **Remember:** We all have some polarity.

Let’s pretend that you want to call Bob but you have a history of the receptionist or Bob’s assistant telling you that Bob’s not in and asking, “Would you like to leave a message?” Let’s further suppose that you suspect that Bob is in. Here’s what to do:

When the receptionist or assistant answers, “Bob Smith’s House of Widgets,” you don’t ask a question; you make a statement. You say, “Bob’s not in” and wait for a response. More often than not, they’ll say some form of “Yes, he’s here.” They are not expecting a statement, and because you’ve **INTER RUPTED** their patterned way of reacting, you’ll get a genuine answer, not a prefabricated one. You can then say your version of, “Great, please put me through.”

## YOU HAVE POLARITY TOO

What do you do if you notice a lot of polarity in you? Chances are if you have a high percentage of polarity, you’ll deny that you do.

**Person One:** “You’re being oppositional.”

**Oppositional Oscar:** “No I’m not.”

That's par for the course because if everyone says it about you, in your mind, it can't possible be true.

### **BABY STEPS**

You can start small and practice in low risk situations by saying "Yes" when your natural response is "No" or vice-versa. "Do you want fries with that?" gets a nod instead of a side-to-side shake of the head.

But before you start **INTER RUPTING** your polarity response, you have to notice that you're having one.

### **START NOTICING**

Noticing is the universal precursor to change. When you notice a pattern of behavior about to kick in, or if you notice it while it's happening, that's the sign that you are at the threshold of change. Stepping through that doorway begins when we **INTER RUPT** the pattern before it happens or while it's happening.

Imagine this scene: You sense that someone is about to make a request of you that you know you have polarity to. Notice your polarity before it leaves your mouth and give yourself a choice to give a different response or not. That way you take your polarity off automatic pilot. If answering the opposite way of how you normally do isn't going to be the end of the world, **s-t-r-e-t-c-h yourself and do it**. It will help you become more aware of your polarity and stretching yourself increases your chances to open a door of opportunity that you wouldn't have seen had you not.

### **I'VE SAID IT BEFORE: BE ABRUPT AND INTER RUPT**

If you automatically give your polarity response and notice it, you can **INTER RUPT** the train of conversation you are on and switch tracks if you choose. *"No, I don't want to go to the movies on a crowded Saturday night. Who wants to be in a packed theatre? . . . well, wait a minute; that movie got two thumbs up and everyone says you'll leave the theatre laughing. Yeah, let's go."*

Even though you've let your conditioned reaction out of the bag, you'll have it on a leash. You can pull back when you notice your reaction while you're giving it, and you then have the option of reversing course and going polar on your polarity.

### **THE TWO MAGIC WORDS OF LASTING CHANGE**

**Noticing** and **INTER RUPTING** are the friends of someone who wants to reduce the percentages of their polarity. There is lots of middle ground between oppositional and doormat. Finding some new territory to operate from will help you mature in a hurry. Saying, "Yes," more often, leads to maturity and opportunity; "No," too often, takes you back to diaper clad disagreement.

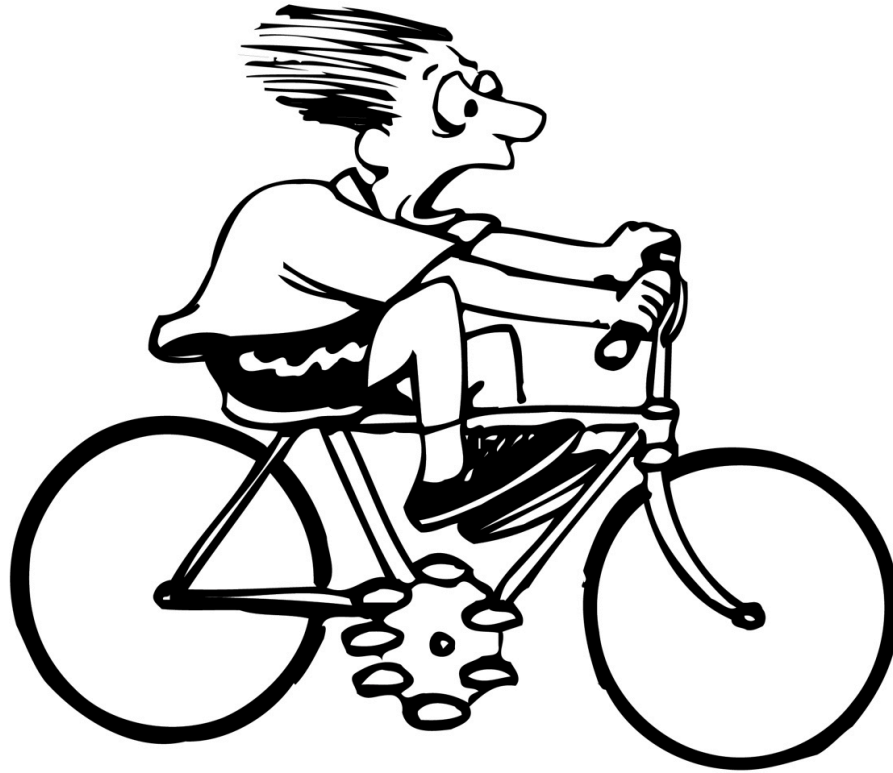
**Consider this:** If you had the natural ability to outgrow the goofy clothes you wore as a teenager, you can outgrow anything.

What do you want to outgrow? This chapter has listed some limiting behaviors you may want to outgrow and brings new meaning to "Reap what you sow."



# CONTROL IS A CONDITIONED CULPRIT |

## Chapter Ten



*“We cannot always control everything that happens to us in this life,  
but we can control how we respond.”*

**L. Lionel Kendrick**  
author and religious leader

### **CONTROL IS A CONDITIONED CULPRIT**

We learned in the last chapter that fear can keep us from taking the first step towards **lasting change**. A sneakier character standing in

the way is “Control.” We aren’t born with control. It’s an acquired illusion.

Did you ever notice you have no control of what pops up in your Facebook feed?

We are on a life-long quest for control. It’s my experience that we are left in the dust when we run after control.

Control is an illusion no one has ever seen. It’s a myth more pervasive than the **Jersey Devil**.

**I don’t have a problem believing in things I can’t see; my difficulty is wearing myself out chasing something that doesn’t exist.**

If you believe in control, you are in an overwhelming majority who has never tested their faith. You can easily make me a believer again. Just control your next thought from spontaneously popping into your head and I’ll readily join your house of worship.

It becomes quite apparent to anyone who’s paying attention that what we are attempting to control is reality. We inflict so much pain on ourselves and others by competing with “all that is” and trying to capture it in a jar. It’s a lifelong search that leaves your thirst unquenched.

This doesn’t mean that we don’t take action to adjust to a situation we find ourselves in. It simply means if that action comes out of the mindset of control, it will fail. I was talking to a friend and said, *“I’m all for riding the current wherever it takes me, but there must be a reason they put paddles in the boat.”*

**THE PADDLES ARE USED TO RESPOND TO REALITY, NOT TO CONTROL IT**

One of the greatest gifts in life is our ability to **INTER RUPT** and respond. Reality gives us countless opportunities to practice every

day. The more often you choose a response to reality, the less you are up “Control Creek” without a paddle.

The sooner you give up chasing control, the more time you have to enjoy the white water raft ride known as life. Reality will test you, scare you, invigorate you and throw you overboard from time to time. To pre-think (control) Reality’s every movement will burn all of your energy and you’ll have none left to respond.

Responding deftly, paddles you through the currents. Control leaves you with your oars out of the water.

Which ride do you want to be on?

### **CONTROL HAS US REFUSE TO LET THINGS UNFOLD NATURALLY**

*Are you living in the moment or attempting to control it?*

It immediately occurred to me that attempting to control a moment takes you out of the moment and into a mind based scenario where you are trying to “get one over” on reality.

Perhaps a parallel discussion about self-hypnosis will illustrate the point. Most people, including most hypnotists, think you get yourself into a hypnotic frame of mind and then give yourself some suggestions. The problem with that belief is the minute that you think to give yourself the suggestions, you will come out of the hypnotic frame of mind. That’s because a hypnotic frame of mind contains no thinking. When you’re in a hypnotic frame of mind, your mind is quiet.

It’s best to start your self-hypnosis session with the goal you have in mind and then do your progressive relaxation. In other words, set your intention before you go into your relaxed frame of mind, not after you’re there.

Back to controlling the moment . . . The minute that you think something has to be controlled in the moment, you're no longer in it. Perhaps an example would be helpful.

Let's pretend that you are having a conversation. If you begin to think about what you're going to say in response while another is still talking, you have come out of the connection and retreated inside your head. You have come out of the moment and the communication will suffer.

To be in the conversation, you can't come out of it. That means that your attention has to be given fully to what's happening in the moment for you to stay in it. The minute you retreat, you are no longer in that moment.

Retreating from the moment is what I'm calling "controlling the moment."

Moments don't need to be managed or controlled; they serve you best when they are experienced.

Being in the moment means to be with what's right there, not attempting to control what's on the horizon.

Being in the moment takes trust. You trust that you'll know how to respond to whatever the moment has to offer, rather than coming out of it to search for control.

Staying in the moment takes practice because we have been highly conditioned to control moments – meaning we are trying to control reality, which is always a losing strategy.

Quoting my friend **Jerry Stocking**, *"If we can't be present to what we don't want, then we aren't likely to be present at all. Fair weather presence isn't really presence at all; it is a dash of happiness on an absent canvas."*



## **BLOOMING IS THE JOB OF THE FLOWER**

The above paragraph heading sounded like a line from an old TV show: “Kung Fu” . . . until I let it germinate and sink in.

It seems we can plant seeds, cultivate them, give them water and nutrients but when it comes to blooming, we really have no control.

The flower or plant will bloom on its own or not.

Have you planted something, followed all the recommended protocols and still got no bloom for the buck? Stop fretting. You did all you could do – the blooming is not up to you.

I know the **Home and Garden Show** comes to my area in February, not a time of year for natural blooming around here. So the growers “force bloom” the flowers under artificial conditions so they’ll be attractive for the show.

Artificially blooming with people is a disservice. It doesn’t allow them to blossom on their own: to have their own trials, failures and successes. This causes them to seek out artificial methods – shortcuts – as the norm rather than as the exception.

Relying on shortcuts too often will cut your successes short. You may look good for the show but, afterwards, you go home and wilt.

If you’re into force blooming (attempting to control), let me borrow an **INTER RUPTION** phrase from my photography teacher **Peter Hurley** when he hears a photographer telling his client to smile, “**Stop it now!**”

Allow things to naturally bloom on their own. Get out of the way and let the process work. You’ve done the proper preparation; now **INTER RUPT** control and let things unfold.

## **OPTIONS ARE THE THINGS TO INVEST IN**

When you **INTER RUPT** control, you create an environment for options to appear. Here's a valuable lesson I've learned in life: The person with more options wins more often and is a happier camper.

Notice when you're attempting to control reality and then **INTER RUPT** that action and watch options appear from all directions.

Control makes us like a horse with blinders. We have a very narrow focus. Outgrowing control opens up our field of vision, and we get to see and choose more options.

The automatic reaction to control is stagnation. **INTER RUPTING** control gives us more access to a vivid imagination. And that mindset creates more options.

## **OPTIONS CREATE CHOICE**

Seems the most limiting thing I do is limit my options. I suspect I'm not alone.

"I have no choice" or "these are my only options" are the words that leave our lips, and they lock us in to the gross distortion that there aren't other ways.

The key is to catch yourself limiting yourself with your words. Start to notice that you are describing a few stars and referring to them as the entire universe.

The second step is to get curious about what other options there are. During this step, it's best to pretend that you're in a brainstorming session where there are no bad ideas. Let your imagination run wild and create as many options as you can, no matter how absurd some may seem.

The exercise's purpose is not to get you to "the" option; it's to get you in the habit of exploring options. This exercise will train you to

broaden your view as to the amount of options available to you.

Often the best ideas will come from offshoots of absurd ideas. You may never get to those ideas without exploring an expanded view of options.

When you add more options to your arsenal, you will have more choices available to you. And isn't that what we all want: more choices and the ability to choose?

Suppose someone asks you about your food preference. They may ask, "What would you like, Chinese, Mexican . . .?" If you immediately answer, you have not activated your options apparatus. In this situation, and in others that have more serious consequences, get in the habit of asking yourself or others, "What are my options?"

Getting curious about your options opens the window to a fresh breeze instead of letting the stifling air of stagnation limit you.

Want more choices? Expand your options! You do so by expanding your imagination, not by out-of-hand negation.

#### **WHAT IS RESISTANCE OTHER THAN AN ATTEMPT TO CONTROL?**

*"Nothing Grows in a Field That Won't Yield."* So said **The Grasshopper** while wearing his farmer jeans.

Resistance keeps you like hardened soil where nothing grows, making your crops barren and your fields overrun with tumbleweeds.

Most people steel themselves when faced with an oncoming assault. They get **rigid** in anticipation of a blow. It's a conditioned reaction. A toddler has less chance of harm experiencing the same accident that befalls a more conditioned adult. The child hasn't learned as much human resistance yet and its body isn't as tense and is more yielding to the circumstances.

Hardening of the body comes from a hardening of the mind.

Life's blows are not all physical. They come in all shapes and sizes and from all directions. Let's call them what they are – Reality. Your choice is most often one or the other – yield or resist?

When you resist, you're attempting control and you are always a victim. If you continue to resist, you develop a victim mindset and the calamities continue. "Why does this always happen to me?" is the often asked question. You **DO** have a black cloud over your head and you cause it every time when you continue to do your "pain dance."

Reminds me of a story . . . Some time ago I ran into an old acquaintance at the supermarket. I hadn't seen her for a while and asked how life was treating her. She launched into the two surgeries she had gone through and all the pain and suffering she had experienced. Then she went on to tell me about her husband who had been in and out of the hospital 16 times since the holidays and is on dialysis. I was empathetic to her situation and wouldn't wish it on anyone. I listened attentively and wished her well. We caught up again in the deli line and she continued her tale of grief.

Little does she realize how she keeps her dark cloud in place by the reiteration of her story. Every time she tells it, she hardens some more and leaves no fertile ground for something new to grow.

Pain, physical or emotional, continues when we own the following mindset – ***I'm in pain and I shouldn't be***. It's the "I shouldn't be" that is the resistance. As long as you own this belief system, you will have more than your share of suffering.

People who have developed the habit of resisting become constant victims of their conditioning. You can witness their mind harden to the point where it shuts people out. They resist and live perpetually with their misery.

It's interesting to note the diseases that occur in people who resist and harden by trying to control the universe: Arthritis, High Blood Pressure, Cancer, and Crohn's Disease just to name a few. They usually develop these conditions earlier in life than you may expect. My father had all of them. According to my aunt, his sister,

"he was always mad at somebody." He lived a life of resistance that took away much of his enjoyment.

Yield is the traffic sign we should pay most attention to. To some, a yield sign translates to "close your eyes and step on the gas." That usually has dire consequences. Yield means to notice the traffic that's around you and to do what's necessary to blend with the flow. Resisting is heading the wrong way down a one-way street and blaming someone else for your mishaps. You become bruised and battered and so do those who encounter you.

Yielding is acceptance of the current set of circumstances. You really have no other choice that works. Resisting always hardens you and causes more pain. Accepting softens your soil allowing a fertile idea to grow. Acceptance isn't resignation. Resignation is more mind-hardening, internal diatribe about you and your misfortune and the way it "should" be. Acceptance is recognizing reality and not denying it or mustering a war against its existence.

I like the expression "cooperating with reality." Reality is going to do what it does whether we like it or not. Resisting it is pure pain that has no gain. Cooperating with reality is yielding to oncoming traffic rather than cursing or bemoaning it. When you are observant of the traffic flow, you are more likely to see the opening where you can blend in. Honking your horn and ranting and raving will blind you to your natural opportunity and keep you and all the people around you stuck.

**INTER RUPT** your conditioning to control and enjoy more of your life. Resist or yield? Only one option grows a crop in the field.

### **CONTROL IS A NO-WIN SITUATION**

Attempting to control that which cannot be controlled is a harmful, losing strategy.

Quoting British Philosopher **Alan Watts**:

*“Anybody who lives under the dominance of a double bind is living in a state of chronic frustration. He is devoting his life to solving a problem that is meaningless and nonsensical precisely because it has no solution.”*

## **THE STOICISM OF CONTROL**

A few years ago **The Grasshopper** offered up this nip of nectar: ***“The purpose of being alive is to feel alive.”***

It immediately brought up the contrast between existing and living. I’ve done both and for me, living is the hands-down winner.

This goes past upside and downside; they are facts of life – yin and yang – push and pull. Like the poor, they will always be with us.

But both rich and poor have a choice to feel alive no matter what side of up or down they happen to be experiencing.

Feeling alive is **feeling**. Notice the period after the previous sentence.

We can feel when we are up and we can feel when we are down. Some people bypass their feelings whether up or down. They rarely celebrate even when the upside is present, and they do a lot of talking (complaining) when the downside has the floor. But in neither case do they feel. That’s why they feel dead.

Take time to notice what your body is feeling and you will tap into your aliveness. We’re alive when we exalt and we’re alive when we cry. We are in limbo when we dismiss or attempt to overpower those feelings with the stoicism of control or the escapism of denial.

You can’t think your way out of a feeling. It will always be there ready to let you know you are alive. You just have to give it some attention instead of pretending it’s not there.

**Remember this:** Thoughts are often illusions but feel is always real.

Take the time to feel. It has the **Lazarus Effect**; it brings you back from the dead.

## **MEN AND WOMAN – CONTROL AND DISSATISFACTION**

There is a cultural expectation of men that has them constantly seeking control, which doesn't exist. This mindset of control just adds to their frustration and often leads to anger. When the boss asks a man for an answer, his "in control" conditioning leaves no time for quiet reflection. An instant answer is expected and given – quite often the wrong answer.

Women are puzzled when they tell a man their problems and he goes into solution mode. It's his control conditioning. She may just want a sounding board but men are conditioned to have to know. Men think they should be in control. Did you ever wonder why many men won't stop and ask for directions?

Ask yourself, who attends more anger management classes, men or women? You now have an appreciation how it got to be that way – men attempting to have permanent control.

Women live with dissatisfaction. Many of them report that they can't move forward because something always seems to be standing in their way or holding them back. Conditioning is the culprit. Think of the attitudes that have been displayed in the past towards women. "Why should we send her to college? We'll just spend all that money and she'll wind up married and pregnant." There is not a lot of expectation for girls in many cultures and that attitude gets passed on. Women, as a result, do a lot of settling. They settle for this and they settle for that until it blossoms into full-blown dissatisfaction.

There comes a point in most women's lives where they ask some form of the question, "Is this all there is?" It's when women begin to fall apart. That means their patterns are coming unglued and things that had meaning for them in the past no longer contain the same meaning. This is a choice point – to go deeper or to go more superficial.

**Warning:** It gets tricky here.

When the old patterns begin to fall apart, the habits dig in their heels for one last stand (like **Tom Hanks** in “Saving Private Ryan”). Many women actually become more artificial during this time seeking a way to control their changing feelings. They do so many things out of character. Some will get into therapy and take dangerous, prescription drugs like Prozac® and the like. They’ll get a tattoo on their butt, get a wild new hairdo, or institute a drastic wardrobe change, have an affair, get a divorce, start smoking pot, yadda, yadda.

The good news is most women figure it out, well before men, that nothing on the outside is going to change their life and that control is an illusion. That’s when the superficiality ends and they put their lives back together and find satisfaction in discovering themselves vs. their role. They had been searching for satisfaction in a cultural role that was denied them. They find that satisfaction isn’t in the role; it’s in discovering that who you really are, which is much deeper than anything that culture has to offer.

Sorry to report that most men stay superficial and seek control until about 10 minutes before they die. It’s conditioning. The illusion of control has them hang on, for almost their entire life, to the idea that control is out there and they’re expected to find it . . . unless they **INTER RUPT** the fantasy of control.

I can tell you from experience that one of the most peaceful experiences you’ll witness is a dying man giving up control. The peacefulness that they enjoy in those fleeting moments could have been with them 50 or more years sooner by discovering, as **Eckhart Tolle** calls it, “*the life beneath your life’s situation.*”

If you find yourself in a continuous state of frustration or dissatisfaction or seeking control, you need to fall apart. I can tell you from personal experience it’s not pleasant, but a necessary step to find the deeper you. Trust that there is a more fulfilling answer than the one you’re looking for by chasing satisfaction or control. You’re



going to find that satisfying answer. The only question is: How soon can you **INTER RUPT** control and let go of the façade that you call you?

### **REAL ACCEPTANCE IS AN ANTIDOTE TO CONTROL**

The prevailing myth surrounding acceptance is that you can “will” it to happen. You can’t.

Acceptance has nothing to do with setting your mind and all to do with opening your heart.

I liken acceptance to the Christian concept of Grace. You can’t demand Grace to come to you, only open yourself up to it being possible. The same is true for acceptance.

You can certainly give lip service and say you accept something, but that act of will doesn’t deliver the feeling of acceptance.

What does acceptance feel like? The same question has been asked about love over the centuries. It’s different for everyone, but everyone who experiences it knows it instantly.

If you are wrestling with the concept of acceptance in your mind, you are not experiencing acceptance. “I know I should accept this but I just can’t.” As **The Grasshopper** said, *“Should’ is evidence that there is an argument going on in your mind.”* Arguing and acceptance both begin with the letter “A” but that’s their only similarity.

If you are arguing for acceptance, you are arguing for control and for your limitations. Truth be told, you don’t have the conscious ability to accept. Your conscious mind can set the process in motion by being willing to experience acceptance should you encounter it, but that’s all you can do with your will.

Acceptance will come when it comes and not a moment sooner, no matter how much you attempt to will it to happen. “Willingness” is

the softer side of will and when you employ it, you have a much better chance of acceptance responding to your invitation.

“I am willing to accept” is a more useful mantra than a declaration of will that states, “I will accept things as they come.” No you won’t; you’ll resist them, and anything you resist always takes longer to happen.

If you are struggling with acceptance, end the argument now. Just be willing to accept acceptance. Willingness is a lure; will is a cement wall.

Are you willing to give up arguing for something that can’t be argued for? When you are, you free yourself from the myth of control and open yourself up to acceptance.

### **A.M.O.K. – A FINAL THOUGHT ABOUT CONTROL**

Once, the word “Amok” popped into my mind and I looked it up in the dictionary to confirm my suspicions about its definition. It’s loosely defined as “out of control.”

But when it popped in, it was an acronym – **A.M.O.K.** That got me curious. What did these four letters have to teach me about control?

**A:** We almost **ALWAYS** seek control. It’s the elusive Holy Grail filled with the elixir that will take our fear away. It’s a lifelong pilgrimage fraught with frustration.

**M:** Control is a **MYTH**. Control will never be found because it is a concept we made up to deal with fearful sensations. The storyline goes something like this: If we get control, we will be free of our fear. **We created something that doesn’t exist to deal with something that does.** It’s a fantasy that can go on for a lifetime, if we don’t **INTER RUPT** it.

**O:** Control makes us **OVERBEARING**. If you are bossing people around for no other reason than you can, you have fallen prey to an

action that brings out the ugliest side of control. The underlying logic at play is this: If we can control others, we can force ourselves to control our fear.

**K:** Fear is **KINESTHETIC**. It's meant to be felt, not controlled. How often do we deny our fearful sensations instead of feeling them? This denial is control on steroids. Fear is a sensation that's alerting us to pay attention, not to duck our head in the sand.

We don't have any control over fear. As stated before, the best we can do is to recognize and feel it. Once it gets recognition and feeling, fear metabolizes itself into something more useful and less controlling.

There are not too many classes out there teaching us to feel our fear, but there are countless classes on control – a myth that never works because it doesn't exist.

If fear is running amok inside your mind, you've bought into the universal myth of control. The way for fear to stop controlling you is to recognize and feel it. Invite it in for tea and feel it out. The more familiar you become with your fear, the less control you'll seek.

You'll never think your way out of fear; it's out of your control. But the funny thing is that "feeling fear" will make the myth of control fade away along with the fear itself.

A fitting closing to this chapter is a paragraph from Eckhart Tolle's book **THE POWER OF NOW**:

*"If you cannot accept what is outside, then accept what is inside. If you cannot accept the external condition, accept the internal condition. This means: Do not resist the pain. Allow it to be there. Surrender to the grief, despair, fear, loneliness, or whatever form the suffering takes. Witness it without labeling it mentally. Embrace it. Then see how the miracle of surrender transmutes deep suffering into deep peace."*



## THE CAMPFIRE | Chapter Eleven



*"I think of myself ... as a troubadour, a village storyteller, the guy in the shadows of the campfire."*

**Louis L'Amour**

an American novelist and short-story writer

### **CAMPFIRE**

Pretend we're on an outdoor adventure for the weekend. We convene by a campfire at nightfall and review the happenings of the day.

As we sit around the campfire and feel the night air on our faces and see the glow of the flames and hear the sounds of nature around us, I'd like to recap what you were exposed to by reading **INTER RUPTION: The Magic Key To Lasting Change**.

You were introduced to **Stimulus-Reaction and Stimulus-Response**. A response is something you choose; a reaction chooses you.

Next up you were exposed to the act of **INTER RUPTION**. It's a strategy to keep the same old song from playing in your head and it keeps you from being a "One Tune Jukebox."

**Observing the mind at work** was detailed in Chapter 3. You may have believed you were your thoughts before reading this chapter but now you know more about your depth and how to get there.

Next you learned that you can **reel in your reactions** and change them to responses just by noticing and **INTER RUPTING**.

You learned you can only be aware of **seven bits of awareness** at any one moment in time. And do you remember that you can make room for new bits of information just by **observing your thoughts and behaviors**? And don't even give a second thought to the kitchen junk drawer.

What about **Subjective Reversal**? This exercise has the stimulus (or trigger) **reverse your automatic reaction** and delivers more choices and valuable responses instead.

Then you learned how to change automatic, robotic behavior into choice. It takes **practice**.

My favorite chapter is next: learning how to be **your own best therapist**.

Chapter 9 showed you how to **outgrow behaviors**. I offered you suggestions about which behaviors to consider outgrowing and successful strategies to do so.

Finally, we learned about the **myth of control** and how to **INTER RUPT** that culprit that wants to control you.

And now we're at the **campfire** wondering which one of these new and effective ideas we should implement first.

**INTER RUPTION: The Magic Key To Lasting Change** is about the wisdom and practice of getting a wedge between stimulus and reaction. It's in that space that all new learning begins.

My hope for you is that you begin noticing and **INTER RUPTING** yourself beginning now, and reap the rewards of creating options that lead to **lasting change**.

I request that you re-read each chapter in any order you choose, whenever you choose. My guess is you'll see, hear and feel things that you missed on a previous read. Each time you expose yourself to this material, you will get a fuller appreciation of how your mind works and have a deeper gratefulness and respect for the part of you that delivers options that lead to **lasting change**.

Like they say on the **ESPN®** show, "Pardon The Interruption."





# BONUS

## 50 GRASSHOPPER QUOTES TO GET YOU CURIOUS

Here are 50 quotes to reflect on. Each one will take you to different place inside you and expand your point of view. Read a few at a time and let the message sow, and then don't be too surprised when they help you grow.

1. It's flattering when someone asks for your advice; it's world-changing when you follow your own.
2. Alone is a fact; lonely is a state of mind.
3. A digital clock will display the date of your birth twice everyday. (Celebrate yourself and others when that memorable date shows up on your clock).
4. Being angry is like being drunk – Your personality changes.
5. A quality life is made up of quality moments. It's that basic.
6. Living in the past is like dancing with a corpse.
7. Resistance is holding on to what was; acceptance is seeing what is.
8. Luck is the short end of statistical probability.
9. Faith is comprised of trust, not hope.
10. That which we reach out for is glitter; that which we mine for is gold.
11. You are a conduit for creativity.

12. If you shoot the messenger, you can't get the message.
13. A hug doesn't talk.
14. Ask for what you want. Beating around the bush can get you poison ivy.
15. In the Communication Olympics, the silver tongue always takes 2<sup>nd</sup> place.
16. People are hiding jackasses when they send out scapegoats.
17. Justifications won't un-ring the bell.
18. You can easily tell what your future will be if you remain at the mercy of your reactions. It will just be what you have now; the only difference is you'll be older.
19. If you live in a world of right and wrong, you will always have enemies.
20. Sensations need no debate – They're either OK or not OK.
21. Be grateful for the gifts you already have and watch them multiply.
22. You came from nothing; you're returning to nothing; so while you're here, do something.
23. There is little room for flexibility once you marry a theory.
24. If you are uncomfortable at home, you live in a house.
25. Who recognizes the beauty in others? – The beauty in you!
26. The Past: Holding on to what you don't have.
27. Cerebral Sorbet: A way to cleanse your mental palate.

28. What you know pales in comparison to what you have access to.
29. Pretend there is no other time than the present and you won't be pretending.
30. The more rules you have, the less flexible you are.
31. You don't have to pay tuition to get intuition.
32. These are three words that delay happiness: If, when and then.
33. Find your excuse and you'll find your problem.
34. Ask anyone about their hopes, dreams and aspirations and you will make a new friend.
35. Your patterns of behavior are not enemies – Just parts of you that are outdated and not working anymore.
36. The more you keep hidden, the less intimacy you experience.
37. A dance, like life, has more than a beginning and an end. The middle part is where we spend most of our time. If we're not focused there, we miss synching with the rhythm of life.
38. A true apology comes without justification.
39. Crying is nature's way of washing away the thoughts that are stuck in your mind.
40. Every time you outgrow something, you peel away a layer of conditioning.
41. You owe a debt of gratitude to those brave enough to endure your wrath and show you, you.

42. You find the end of pretend when you stop chasing the horizon.
43. Focus will take you further than your talent.
44. The fear of failure boils down to this: It's the fear of what other people will think.
45. The only accurate barometer by which to measure yourself is your behavior.
46. You have to self-accept before you can self-improve.
47. If opposition is your first response, you worship at the altar of control.
48. You can't be a rock star with part-time passion.
49. I have to give up what I know about you to get to know you.
50. I worship a God even atheists can believe in: Creativity.

# PUT LASER FOCUS ON YOUR GOAL

Decide on a goal you wish to accomplish. It's a useful idea not to start with something as lofty as world peace. It's effective if it's a goal for you, not others.

Take 10 minutes to write down everything you want to accomplish in relationship to this **ONE** goal. Write without editing. **Keep writing!** Write everything you can think of until you can't think of another thing. This is not a time for critical thinking. Just write anything that comes into your mind.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Write down what you **DO** want to accomplish, not what you don't want. "I don't want to (fill in the blank)" is not a clear-cut goal and not one your mind can work with.

After you've written down every thing you can think of, look for all the "fluff" words in your writing and decide what specifically these words mean to you. (**Fluff words are words that aren't specific**). For example, "Good" is a fluff word. "I want a 'good' job" doesn't contain enough information for your mind to work with. What specifically do you mean by "good"?

If you wrote down "one that pays a 'lot' of money," you have just used another fluff word. What does a "lot" mean to you? Look for all the fluff words in your writing and give them a more concrete definition. **Hint:** You can't put a fluff word in a wheelbarrow. You can't put "respect" or "fulfillment" in a wheelbarrow. Write down what all your fluff words mean to you.

Next, reduce all you have written to a paragraph of 25 words or less.

Now, look over that 25-words or less statement and ***something magical will happen***. One of those words or a phrase will *visually* leap off the page at you, or you will *hear* that word or phrase in your mind, or you'll get a special *feeling* about one word or phrase in your paragraph. ***IT WILL HAPPEN!***

Finally, **WRITE THAT WORD OR PHRASE** on a piece of paper or an index card. This word or phrase has deep meaning for you, especially to the part of your mind that selected it from your written statement. This word or phrase is shorthand for everything you want to accomplish in relationship to this goal.

When you take time to relax or before going to bed, bring this word or phrase to mind. It's a **laser-focused suggestion**. Your mind will recognize all that word or phrase means to you and will reinforce that suggestion as you relax or drift off to sleep.

This suggestion just needs the environment a relaxed mind provides. It will take root and grow with frequent use of this exercise.

# LASTING CHANGE EXERCISES

Do these easy exercises and experience **lasting change**. I invite you to get curious about and begin using them right away and make changes that are here to stay.

## **CHAPTER 2: Changing Tracks**

- The WONDER Exercise
- The 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> Response

## **CHAPTER 3: Observation**

- The CIRCLE Exercise

## **CHAPTER 4: The Wedge**

- I'm IN MY HEAD Exercise

## **CHAPTER 5: Seven Bits**

- SET AN INTENTION Exercise
- RELAX in 2 Minutes

## **CHAPTER 6: Subjective Reversal**

- SUBJECTIVE REVERSAL
- BAD Hypnosis
- CLEAR the Screen
- Rehearse CALM & COLLECTED Feelings

## **CHAPTER 7: Practice is the Key**

- Counseling and Consoling a YOUNGER YOU

## **CHAPTER 8: Own Best Therapist**

- Therapy Questions:
  1. What CONCERNS You?
  2. What Do You LONG FOR?
  
- Grammar: Notice The Verb TENSE You Use

## **CHAPTER 9: Outgrowing The Old Way**

- Using HIGH SCHOOL WORDS



# PEOPLE, PLACES, THINGS, ETC.

## **CHAPTER 1: Stimulus-Response**

Leonardo di Vinci – renowned Italian painter  
Dave Dobson – American psychologist, hypnotist  
Victor Frankl – Austrian psychiatrist  
Billy Martin – one-time manager of the New York Yankees  
Paul Newman – American actor  
New York Yankees – major league baseball team  
Snapshot – hockey movie featuring Paul Newman  
Velvet Elvis – a painting of American rock ‘n’ roll icon Elvis Presley on velvet

## **CHAPTER 2: Changing Tracks**

Richard Bandler – American co-founder of NLP (Neuro-linguistic Programming)  
John Grinder – American co-founder of NLP (Neuro-linguistic Programming)  
Neuro-linguistic Programming – a behavior modeling approach used for rapid change  
Quavo – American rap music artist  
Jerry Stocking – a modern day Thoreau

## **CHAPTER 3: Observation**

Babylonians – people from an ancient civilization (modern day Iraq)  
Johnny Castle – lead character played by Patrick Swayze in the movie “Dirty Dancing”  
Dancing With The Stars – popular American TV show featuring dance competition  
Egyptians – people from an ancient civilization located in Africa  
Albert Einstein – developer of the theory of relativity

Greeks – people from an ancient civilization located in the Mediterranean  
The Godfather Part III – a movie about the American mafia  
Will Rogers – American humorist

#### **CHAPTER 4: The Wedge**

Marlon Brando – American method actor  
Karen Carpenter – American singer  
Richard Carpenter – American singer  
Cotton Headed Ninny Muggins – expression used in the movie “Elf”  
James Dean – American method actor  
Arthur Godfrey – American radio and TV personality  
Google® – internet search engine  
Gorilla Glue® – a brand of glue  
Robert Hughes – an Australian critic  
George McDonald – Scottish author  
Rumi – Persian poet  
Meryl Streep – American actress  
Teflon® – coating used in cookware  
Mark Twain – American humorist

#### **CHAPTER 5: Seven Bits**

Edith Head – American wardrobe designer  
Alan Watts – English philosopher  
Solitaire – card game  
Checkers – board game  
Chess – board game  
Grasshopper Notes – musings of John Morgan  
Miller’s Law – psychology principle  
Night Of The Living Dead – American horror movie  
Wall Street Journal – American financial newspaper  
JohnMorganSeminars.com – John Morgan’s website  
New York City – America’s most populated city  
Relax in 2 Minutes – hypnotic exercise  
Macy’s Basement – section of a New York City department store

## **CHAPTER 6: Subjective Reversal**

Stone Gossard – American musician  
Subjective Reversal – a lasting change technique  
Dr. Dave Dobson – American psychologist, hypnotist  
Bad Hypnosis – a concept taught by Dr. Dave Dobson  
Rhode Island Lottery – a State of Rhode Island agency  
Polarity Response – a principle of psychology  
Batman – comic book superhero

## **CHAPTER 7: Practice Is The Key**

Jascha Heifetz – Russian musician  
Carnegie Hall – performance venue in New York City  
ChapStick® – lip balm  
Philadelphia – Eastern city in America  
St. Louis – Midwestern city in America  
Dr. Dave Dobson – American psychologist, hypnotist  
Jesus – a spiritual teacher  
Katie Couric – American TV personality  
New York Magazine – a New York City publication  
Coca-Cola® – an American brand of soda  
AARP® – organization for older Americans  
Chinese – people from Asia  
The Buddha – spiritual teacher  
Aesop – Greek fabulist  
Steven Spielberg – moviemaker  
Eckhart Tolle – spiritual teacher  
Byron Katie – spiritual teacher  
Danielle Steele – an American novelist  
Sgt. Joe Friday – lead character on the American TV show “Dragnet”  
Jerry Stocking – a modern day Thoreau  
Marianne Williamson – spiritual teacher

## **CHAPTER 8: Own Best Therapist**

C.S. Lewis – British writer and theologian

Robert Brault – American author

Doug O'Brien – American Ericksonian hypnotist

William O'Hanlon – American Ericksonian hypnotist and author

Ericksonian Hypnosis – conversational hypnosis modeled after Dr.

Milton Erickson

Dr. Milton Erickson – American psychiatrist and hypnotist

Placebo Effect – a fake drug or treatment that gets suggested results

Chamber of Commerce – a business network

Dr. Dave Dobson – American psychologist, hypnotist

Jesus – a spiritual teacher

Sermon on the Mount – a homily given by Jesus Christ

Katie Couric – American TV personality

Gloria Estefan – American singer

“Words Get In The Way” – song by Gloria Estefan

The Grasshopper – internet persona created by John Morgan

Peter Hurley – American headshot photographer extraordinaire

Kodak – an American camera and film company

## **CHAPTER 9: Outgrowing The Old Way**

Barry Beder – American master social worker and hypnotist

Robert Brault – American author

Eckhart Tolle – spiritual teacher

Santa – guy in a red suit who lives at the North Pole

Mr. Ferguson – my father's friend

Michel de Montaigne – French philosopher

St. Francis of Assisi – an Italian, Catholic preacher

Confucius – Chinese philosopher

Ralph Waldo Emerson – American essayist

The Grasshopper – internet persona created by John Morgan

Merck Manual – medical information resource

Ungrounded Assessments – statements 12 jurors couldn't agree on

I Love My Body – a hypnotic recording of self-acceptance

John Carlton – American copywriter

O.J. Simpson – American football player and convicted felon  
World War II – a global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945  
Jerry Stocking – a modern day Thoreau  
Mexicans – people from Mexico  
Jesus – a spiritual teacher  
The Buddha – a spiritual teacher  
Mother Teresa – Catholic nun and missionary  
Hatfields and McCoys – two American families that feuded in the 1800s  
Wu Wei – a Chinese expression that means do not war  
Taoists – followers of an ancient Chinese philosophy  
Alan Watts – English philosopher  
Jackie Gleason – American comedian and actor  
“Live by the sword, die by the sword” – a biblical teaching  
Negative Reverse – a technique to reverse a person’s polarity  
Rumi – Persian poet  
Jonathan Swift – Anglo-Irish satirist  
EST – a philosophy taught by Werner Erhard  
Werner Erhard – American leader of a philosophy known as EST  
Dr. Dave Dobson – American psychologist, hypnotist  
Family Ties – 1980s American TV show  
Michael J. Fox – Canadian born television and movie actor  
Alex P. Keaton – character played by Michael J. Fox on “Family Ties”

#### **CHAPTER 10: Control Is A Conditioned Culprit**

Chinese – the people of China  
Facebook – social media outlet  
Tom Hanks – an American actor  
Peter Hurley – American headshot photographer extraordinaire  
Jersey Devil – legendary creature said to inhabit the Pine Barrens of Southern New Jersey.  
Kung Fu – a Chinese martial art and 1970s TV show  
L. Lionel Kendrick – American religious leader  
Lazarus Effect – a metaphor based on a Bible Story  
Mexican – person from Mexico  
Prozac® – an antidepressant drug

Saving Private Ryan – a movie starring Tom Hanks  
Jerry Stocking – a modern day Thoreau  
The Grasshopper – internet persona created by John Morgan  
Alan Watts – English philosopher

### **CHAPTER 11: Campfire**

7 Bits – the amount of data your mind can comprehend at one time  
ESPN® – American sports network  
Pardon The Interruption® – a show on ESPN®  
Subjective Reversal – a lasting change technique



