

MY HANDBOOK

(THE SYNOPSIS)

Survive first and then thrive



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DISCLAIMER

"My Handbook" (Synopsis) is based on my life journey and experiences and is not provided as a scientific text but as a storybook with lessons that can be very useful in anyone else's journey. It is intended to present ideas that excite and incite your imagination as a work of art that would allow anyone to develop their life skills.

My goal is to provide mentorship and this book is not a substitute for medical, psychological or psychiatric treatment or counselling.

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FOREWORD

If I had to fill a swimming pool with a bucket I could debate the fairness of it or realize my options:

- 1) Whine about it
- 2) Shut up and fill the swimming pool with a bucket
- 3) Fill the swimming pool with a bucket while I whine about it

My adaptation to Canadian life involved choosing option 3. Although it is important to fight unfair situations, it is more important for me to do so in a manner that allows me to survive and then thrive.

Many times, I found myself unable to fully grasp or understand what was going on in my new environment, I remember sometimes feeling completely overwhelmed, angry, frustrated or just giving up. What I discuss in "My Handbook" influenced my life. Looking back I can see that I did not lack desire, drive or ability but the right tactics.

I adapted because I had to and not always because I wanted to. It was necessary to do this if I wanted to **survive first and then thrive**. I learned that what I had to do always took precedence over what I wanted to do and I became skilled at understanding what was relevant and what was important.

I grew up in an African culture that exposed me to the art of story telling as a form of therapy and the use of proverbs and analogies to illustrate and stimulate the imagination. I have used this as an effective tactic in my medical practice. I was often surprised by how unfamiliar my "North American" patients were with this method, but very gratified by how quickly they responded to it. The feedback from these many patients, friends and strangers whom I have shared these experiences with convinced me that a book like this is worth writing.

PROLOGUE

WINNERS & LOSERS

I am told that there are about one billion sperm cells in every ejaculation, each one of those guys hoping to be the one that wins the favour of a little egg, sitting at the end of what can only be described as a precarious journey, through a very hostile birth canal, designed to separate the strong sperm from the weak. Only less than a hundred make it to the end and then the timing had to be just perfect because fertilization is never guaranteed.

You have been taking care of yourself since you were a 2 celled organism, something told you to leave the fallopian tube and start to implant in the uterus, the same mechanism had you start to replicate cells and create the complex structure you now inhabit. Your very ability to survive and make survival decisions definitely pre-dated your brain.

Possibly 50% of pregnancies are lost with the mother never knowing she was pregnant. The trimesters (every 3 months of pregnancy) all present their unique challenges, each of which you manage to scale some before you even had a brain. With every breath, with every metabolism cycle, you fought to be here realizing that the only thing guaranteed without much effort is death.

Everywhere you turned there was always something trying to kill, you even your mother's immune system could turn against you if you made the mistake of getting close and yet like a cellular ninja you negotiated your way through this battle of survival.

You spent nine months in an aquatic environment, instinctively drawing food from your maternal source before you even had awareness of self. You accomplished one of many critical events by successfully transitioning from an aquatic environment and taking

your first breath at birth. All these amazing things, accomplished without your awareness of any thoughts or conscious sense of your existence.

You negotiate your way through the early hours, mostly blind and deaf and yet you instinctively know to reach for the nourishment of your mother's milk. While in the womb, you have developed unique systems designed to help you survive the rocky road on the outside.

There are so many things out of your control, like what environment you end up in, whether you are surrounded by factors that will enhance your survival and yet you do not focus on this, but simply focus on surviving the next sixty seconds to the next minute, the next sixty minutes to the next hour, the next twenty four hours to the next day, the next seven days to the next week and the next fifty two weeks to the next year and as you maintain your focus you continue to grow, you continue to adapt and you continue to learn. You continue to live and to survive.

You had survived some of the biggest threats to your very existence long before you even knew you were here, all around you, at every stage, countless perils on your way. The lottery of life is the biggest lottery you ever played, with the odds constantly stacked against you and your unique abilities constantly making lemonade out of lemons and finding a way to hang around.

You stand before me now, you have a brain and conscious awareness of what you have always been unconsciously aware of, that nothing was ever guaranteed but death, you call yourself a loser and tell me that you are helpless. Look around you my friend for in this moment and every moment that exists for you, does so because you won. So my winning loser who continues to win even though you perceive you lose, continue to enjoy the gifts you are giving to yourself, because your sense of losing, is your fruit of winning, but remember all the eggs and sperm cells that didn't make it here.

CHANGE

Nothing ever stays the same and everything is different all the time, change is constant and ongoing, sometimes almost imperceptible and at other times completely inescapable.

Change is an abstract concept. Do we create change or are we simply adapting to it? My experiences have convinced me that change can only bring two outcomes:

- 1) The results that you want
- 2) The results that you don't want

Either way you are an integral part of the process and define the relationship that you have with change. You become aware of change through the wanted or unwanted results that occur from it.

Change can be scary when it challenges our sense of control, and yet this sense of control is an illusionary framework that allows us to act in a manner that increases our chances of success.

If you think about it for a moment, we live on a planet with a precarious ecosystem, hurtling through space at an amazing speed with a chance of being hit by a meteorite and all life obliterated, the middle of it is molten lava and yet we talk about control? Once you realize that our sense of control was an illusionary framework, you will find ways to recreate that sense of control anytime you want.

When you feel frustrated, it is because you are trying to control a potentially uncontrollable situation. To counteract this feeling, focus on areas where you have control.

You can influence change by focusing on your choices, realizing that, the results of change that you want are a natural consequence of the

choices you make.

No matter how terrible your previous choices may have turned out, or how uncertain you may feel about your ability to choose in the future, the truth is, you are still the one in the best position to invariably understand which choices are the best for you.

It is important to own your choices and take responsibility for them, be willing to reinforce your chosen direction through repetition of the appropriate action, until you finally get the results that you want.

The ability to define anything is an integral part of the ability to perceive it, in turn, the ability to perceive something is an integral part of the ability to adapt to it. Defining something allows it to be remembered, giving it a name increases the ability to recognize it when it is encountered again.

Even when you have defined things wrongly and your perception of them are wrong, this erroneous definition still impacts your reality and affects the way you perceive whatever is going on. Your perception of things creates your reality. What you are perceiving is what you think is going on and so it is what you then consciously experience,

For example if you are afraid of snakes because you perceive them to be dangerous, when you encounter a non-poisonous snake, you would treat it as dangerous until you gather more information that alters that perception.

When change is implemented properly there is a good chance of getting the results that are wanted. The need for change often arises because there is dissatisfaction with the situation or status quo (you do not have the results that you want), things may happen that force a change of view or present a need to do things differently.

When you are required to change, it is easy to become resistant because of your fear of the unknown and tendency to be more

comfortable with what is familiar (even when it is not working well). When trying to create change in others it is important to remember that it is hard to influence another person's behaviour but it is much easier to influence yours.

The only thing you can change is yourself, by doing this, everything around you changes. Your reluctance to change will often impede the change in others. The motivation to change is often low when you are being compelled to change but the motivation is stronger when change is something you want or have initiated.

Generally when the motivation for change is low it is often because a need to do this is not well appreciated by the person in whom the change is requested. When a person is compelled to change this change may only occur if the unwanted results outweigh the benefits of not complying. This can sometimes be used as a motivator when change is necessary and the individual is reluctant to do so.

Points to remember:

Change is constant and ongoing producing results that you want and results that you don't want

To be functional adapt to change in a manner that allows you to get more of the results you want and less of the results that you don't want.

DIRECTION

Survive first and then thrive for we aspire through desire but succeed through actions, our desires are the stimulus for action but our actions are the architects of our success.

You are more likely to get to where you want to go when you are constantly headed in that direction and although that does not guarantee that you would get it makes it more likely to occur.

"Take a set of complex variables that has been called the problem and replace it with another set of complex variables that is now called the solution, in this manner it is clear to that throughout your life you are always resolving complex variables, sometimes we already have the right answers we are just asking the wrong questions".

Where you are coming from is always relevant but never as important as where you are going. No matter how good or bad things may be always ask yourself the question " where do I go from here?"

In order to get the result you want it is essential for you to perform the actions that are consistent with that result. It would be frustrating if you were trying to go up north but kept taking steps that took you down south but however the lack of success in reaching your destination would be both expected and anticipated.

Most dictionaries define survival as the state of continuing to live or exist, in spite of difficult circumstances. To survive you need to have the ability to identify your needs and develop an appropriate decision to action interval. In other words identify the essential thing or action required, make a decision quickly and act accordingly.

The desired outcome from surviving is an opportunity to continue to exist and then thrive.

The same dictionaries define thrive as to grow or develop well, to prosper, and to flourish.

To thrive you must have the ability to identify and achieve your wants.

The desired outcome of thriving is "self actualization" i.e. the realization or fulfillment of my talents and potentialities.

You can survive without thriving but you cannot thrive without surviving. Developing a balance between the surviving and thriving mindset is a key to optimal function. Thriving is the reward of surviving and can only occur after survival goals have been met.

Survival mode: Plan for the worst

Thrive mode: Plan for the best

Survive & Thrive mode: Plan for the worst and hope for the best

Survival mode: What are your needs?

Thrive mode: What are your wants?

Survive & Thrive mode: What is the balance between your needs & wants?

When your direction is unclear despite your best efforts simplify it by remembering to survive first and the

Setting direction involves aligning:

1) Thoughts: Form a realistic mental image of the results that you want and use your imagination to develop this image until it is tangible enough that you could literally touch it, You can see it clearly and know precisely what it is anytime you think about it.

2) Words: Say things in a manner that is consistent with the results that you want. Put it out there, express what you want to take place. Rather than say you don't want to fail, say that you want to succeed, rather than say you are afraid, say that you want to be more confident.

3) Deeds: Perform actions intentionally and consciously consistent with the results that you want.

"If you wake up in a burning building does it matter how you got there?" Although how you got there is relevant, if you want to survive it is only important if it will show me the way out, otherwise what was most important to your survival was, "where do you go from there?"

Points to remember:

Survive first and then thrive

Make sure that your thoughts, words and actions are always in the direction of the results that you want.

THE RULES

Often times when people are confused it is not because they lack the ability to know but it is virtually impossible to figure things out properly if you are not truly aware of what game is being played.

Rule One: Identify what is going on. What is the game being played? Be aware of the system, think and reflect.

Rule Two: Know the rules of what is going on (whether or not you agree). Gather information, do some work, research, find out how to be involved.

Rule Three: Know your choices under these rules (whether or not you agree). Make a detailed list of your choices consistent with the rules, take control and be empowered.

Rule Four: Choose and move on. Pick a choice from rule three that is in the direction you want and take responsibility for your own destiny.

Life as a game made up of many games within it and each one of these games have their own set of rules, it is important to know what game is being played so you can find out what the rules are.

Rule One starts awareness and challenges thoughts and reflection on what is going on. In Rule one you determine what you think is going on (what you think that the system is). It is possible to be wrong when determining the system but the more you do this step, the more accurate you get at recognizing what system you are in. I

Rule Two challenges you to seek information and become well informed on what is going on, irrespective of what your opinion may be, it asks you to suspend judgement and realize that although your opinion is relevant, ultimately what is more important and would help you adapt to the system is your knowledge of the rules of the system, how they apply to you and your situation.

Rule Three empowers you and challenges you to take control by clarifying your choices under the rules. It provides you with an understanding that in order to adapt to the system, you need to spend your energy on the choice or choices that you have under the rules and pick the one that is most in line with your goals. Although your opinion of your choices is relevant, understanding these choices and making a list of them is more important if you want to succeed.

Rule Four - once you have arrived at rule three procrastinating is a waste of my time. You have to make a decision and choose the best of all the choices that you have. No matter how bad your options are you should choose the one that is most aligned with the direction you want to go. Even a bad choice is still better than no choice at all. When you refuse to choose all you are doing is asking the system to choose for you and you lose control of your direction.

Choosing puts you in charge and makes you responsible for your own destiny, it does not guarantee success but it makes it more likely to occur.

A system is any situation that involves interaction with a defined set of rules that determine this interaction. Although you may be a part of a system the system's priority is to maintain the integrity of that system and your individual needs are secondary to that system.

It is your responsibility to adapt to the system and not vice versa. Functional adaptation is required for success within the system although this is not a requirement to belong to the system.

Rule One: Identify What Is Going On.

This involves forming an accurate impression or what is going on. To play the "game" you need a starting point and that starting point is naming the game. Do not be afraid to define it wrongly as more information becomes available you can always come back to this step

and through your re-evaluation you would be able to correct yourself.

The purpose of this step is simply to recognize what is going on, all other details are addressed in the next steps. In fact the most important aspect of this step is the realization that you need to recognize what is going on.

Life is like a game made up of so many other games that you are required to be proficient in. In order to live a functional existence you have to be able to identify which game you are in at any point in time. That would be a fundamental first step in being able to play the game properly, after all if the game is Monopoly® there is not much point trying to play it with Poker rules.

Identifying the game could be difficult or easy but it should never be an extensive process, once you recognize what is going on you should be able to describe it with a word or sentence nothing more. It is important to first of all make some assumption about what game is being played. It is also important to realize that sometimes the game changes shortly after you have identified it, so this step needs to be reviewed often to determine if you are still in the game that you think you are.

We have a finite amount of energy at any given time and knowing how to utilize it wisely and efficiently is to being able to survive and then thrive.

Imagine that people were playing a game of Scrabble® and you thought it was Monopoly® how frustrating would that be? What are the chances of you being productive? What are the chances of you bonding with the other players? This sounds like an over simplification but more often than not it is the simple things that are overlooked, they are so simple that we often ignore them or no longer see them as worthy of our attention.

Often times when people are confused it is not because they lack the

ability to know, it is virtually impossible to figure things out properly if you are not truly aware of what game is being played.

It is important to note that "Rule 1" is the same irrespective of how simple or complex the system is, the first rule is not an attempt to analyze the system (the other rules clarify that) just to simply identify it.

Some systems (games) are quite easy to identify and others are a little more difficult, sometimes because the system is made up of two or more systems, each with its own set of rules. For example appropriate interactions between the opposite sex has its set of rules that may be different when interacting with the opposite in a workplace, and even more different when they happen to be your supervisor. A certain behaviour that may be appropriate in a particular setting (eg. socially) may be totally inappropriate in another circumstance with the same person e.g. at work.

A functional individual would be able to identify these different systems and adapt to them however this could prove very difficult for someone who has difficulty recognizing subtle changes.

The ability of anyone to function appropriately is very closely related to their ability to identify what game is being played and society as a whole is very invested in helping us develop this ability. As we are provided with more and more complex information that we need to sort through, categorize, master, we often forget or ignore the simple underlying principles that allow us to be able to make use of the complex information in a functional manner.

Rule Two: Know The Rules Of The System (whether or not you agree with them).

Every game has its own set of rules most of us understand this concept and would not show up at a poker game complaining that no one is playing by Monopoly rules. We would not expect to be accommodated under those circumstances and yet I often see people become frustrated and don't recognize that they are not following the rules of that system.

Frustration is something that we experience when we try to control a potentially uncontrollable event or situation and it is understandable why people trying to succeed in a system where they are oblivious to the rules seldom succeed and often get frustrated.

Educating yourself on the rules is your responsibility, the system does not owe you anything and is seldom concerned with your individual needs. Within any system, how well you do is determined by many factors, some you have control over and some that you don't. The goal is to focus more on the areas where you do have control and be aware of the important areas where you don't have control but not spend time dwelling on them.

Gather as much information as possible in an unbiased manner. How you feel about the information though relevant is not important to your success within the system. The more informed you are about the system, the intricacies, the traditions, the regulations and how it operates, the more empowered you are to choose a direction that will help you succeed.

Gather information from as many sources as possible within a reasonable period of time and verify the information making sure that it is valid and factual.

When gathering information from the internet remember that the information you obtain from it is only as good as the site, so take time

to determine the credibility of the site and verify the information prior to adopting it.

Gather and review information objectively withholding your opinions about it (judgement) until you have gathered all the information you need. If you do not do this, your opinions would often affect the way that you gather and review information.

Although your opinions about the rules are relevant, knowing and understanding the rules is more important and this is what determines how functional you will be within that system.

I have often been surprised about how uninformed individuals would be about a system they complain very bitterly about and how they would sometimes try and pass on unreliable second-hand information as facts. It was little wonder that they were often not successful within these systems and end up being very frustrated and angry.

The process and time taken to gather information on the rules of the system would often vary depending on the complexity of that system, sometimes it could take a few moments to determine all the rules, while at other times extensive research may be required. It is important to constantly check "Rule one" to make sure that the system is still the same one that you started with and it has not shifted or evolved as a result of the information that you gathered on it.

Rule Three: Know Your Choices Under The Rules (whether or not you agree with them) Make a detailed list of all the choices that exist under the rules.

Construct a detailed list of all your choices that exist under the rules and do this without any attempt to determine whether these choices are desirable, acceptable or not. The goal is to be as objective as possible when listing your choices so as to not overlook anything. It is important that you only consider the choices that exist under the rules.

You may not always like the choices you have but being aware of them and having a list of them allows you to proceed to rule four.

Rule Four: Choose And Move On

Pick a choice from "Rule Three" that gives you the best chance of getting the results that you want. What is worse than you making a bad decision is you making no decision at all. When you don't choose what you are doing is asking the system to choose for you and this greatly reduces your chances of getting the results that you want. Making a choice can be overwhelming but there is a thin line between being thorough and procrastinating, it is very easy to procrastinate when you are feeling overwhelmed.

As you go over these rules in your head always check to make sure the system has not changed because sometimes simply by successfully resolving "Rule Two" or "Rule Three" you may now be actually encountering a whole new system with a different set of rules and choices that you have to acquaint yourself with.

If you do not observe "Rule Four" you may fail to stabilize a bad situation at that level resulting in things deteriorating to the point where the choices you were dissatisfied previously would look pretty good if you could get them back.

Points to remember:

Rule One: Identify what is going on. What is the game being played?
Be aware of the system, think and reflect.

Rule Two: Know the rules of what is going on (whether or not you agree). Gather information, do some work, research, find out how to be involved.

Rule Three: Know your choices under these rules (Whether or not you agree) Make a detailed list of choices consistent with the rules, take control, be empowered

Rule Four: Choose and move on. Pick a choice from rule three that is in the direction you want, take responsibility for your own destiny.

FEAR

Be fearful but don't be ruled by fear.

Caution is a careful forethought to avoid danger or harm and paying close attention or vigilance to minimize risk.

Take time to properly define danger, harm or risk otherwise your cautious nature or instinct will work against you and prevent you from experiencing some of the most beautiful things that life has to offer.

Fear is a very unpleasant or disturbing feeling caused by the presence or imminence of danger. Fear is an early warning system that alerts you of possible danger and the need to take action. So when properly utilized it is the best friend you have but when not it can be your worst enemy.

Fear is the price of being human, and it is normal to be frightened when you encounter something unfamiliar or unsettling. Fear is a spectrum of emotions that ranges from being mildly uneasy and apprehensive to intense overpowering feeling of terror. It is important to remember that fear is a mental state that arises spontaneously rather than through conscious effort, then accompanied by physiological changes that are recognizable.

It may occur in contrast to reason or even when there is no apparent reason for it. In other words we don't ask to be fearful, it happens as a response to real or imagined danger, conscious or unconscious.

It is okay to be afraid, in fact you would be an idiot not to be afraid considering the fact that being alive means you are always in imminent danger. It is not fear that handicaps us it is what we do with the fear. The more you try to understand fear the more entangled your imagination is with fear producing the opposite effect of what you want (to be less fearful).

If you try to conquer it by denying its existence or doing daredevil things to convince yourself that you are not afraid it is time consuming and potentially dangerous.

As an adolescent and young adult I suffered from crippling panic attacks that simply appeared out of nowhere and stayed with me until I learned how to adapt. When these attacks occurred, things would suddenly seem like I was in a tunnel, sound was muffled and nothing seemed real. I felt like I was losing my mind, my thoughts would race until a full blown panic frenzy developed.

There was a tingling around my lips and I would feel that I could not breathe as I was engulfed with sheer terror and my legs turned to lead, I felt rooted to the spot, fully convinced that I was about to die. My fingers and toes would start to curl in spasm as though they had a mind of their own and on some occasions my body would shut down resulting in a fainting spell, with things returning to normal when I awoke.

These attacks grew more frequent and unpredictable holding me complete hostage and making it almost impossible to do anything socially, I was always wondering when I would make a complete fool of myself.

I decided to make a list of what I experienced during the attacks and these were:

- 1) A fear of losing my mind,
- 2) A feeling of depersonalization or disconnection from everything around me
- 3) Noise and light sensitivity
- 4) Lip tingling and limb cramping
- 5) Profound fatigue after the attack was over

I found that by detailing and reviewing my experience it made the next attack somewhat familiar and not as scary. Rather than trying to control these attacks, I started adapting to them. In my mind, I

visualized I was on a beach, the waves were coming in and it was impossible to control the surf so I climbed on my surfboard and rode the waves.

I figured out that if I was losing my mind I would be unlikely to know it. So if I could even think that I was losing my mind there was a good chance that I was not because I still had insight. So from then on when I experienced that feeling I reminded myself that I was having a panic attack.

I also determined that any form of thought when I was having a panic attack acted as an accelerant in the same manner that pouring gasoline on a camp fire is always a recipe for disaster. However since it is virtually impossible to empty my mind of all thoughts to make my mind still, I would have to distract myself by focusing on just one thing, repeatedly and to the exclusion of everything else.

It could be a phrase or number but I had to be able to repeat it continuously without the need to think about it. I soon realized that it was important to say it aloud while breathing into my hands, firstly, it reminded me that I was alive, that I was breathing and to remember to pace my breathing as slow as possible. I repeated the phrase over and over again (I chose 99) without any attempt to think or interact with anybody around me even when they asked me questions.

The first few times I tried this technique I failed quite woefully but I was not discouraged. I realized I had to practice it before I was actually in an attack, so I did it over and over again until it came very naturally.

I will never forget the moment I first successfully took control of a panic attack and felt the wave receding without making a fool of myself, I had to ride six waves in that one attack but I had successfully adapted, I have not had a panic attack in many years.

There are two types of fear that I experience, "productive fear" and "unproductive fear". Productive fear is one of my best friends and is created when I "process" my fear properly, it reminds me of my mortality and allows me to continuously monitor my environment and make survival decisions some of which I do unconsciously without even being aware until much later. Unproductive fear however occurs when I do not process my fear and it overwhelms me decreasing my ability to make appropriate decisions.

The important steps in processing fear and making it productive are:

- 1) Recognition: become aware of the psychological and physiological effects of fear and recognize them when they occur
- 2) Acceptance: do not spend energy trying to understand fear or trying to control it but simply accept the fact that you are afraid and move on to action.
- 3) Action: allow your imagination to engage in non fearful imagery and in this manner create the actions that move you in the direction of the results that you want. So rather than focus on trying to be less fearful (and have your imagination engaged in fear), focus on what you have to do get the results you want.

Note that taking action with fear is different from trying to control it. Being with fear is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength. By recognizing how fearful you are and being comfortable with it makes you less vulnerable to fear mongers and people who profit from fear. Not trying to control it brings about a realization that there are a lot of things that you have no control over and so focus on where you have control.

Trying to understand or control fear would often result in the imagination being focused on it with the development of "unproductive fear". Unproductive fear is characterized by energy wastage, dysfunctional movement (non-directional, non-movement, excessive movement) and dysfunctional action (overcompensation and bravado, terror, inactivity and complete de-compensation).

Points to remember:

Fear is an important early detection system

By properly processing fear you create a "productive fear" that has significant survival value

Processing fear to make it productive involves:

- 1) Recognition: Being aware of the psychological and physiological effects of my fear and recognizing them when they occur
- 2) Acceptance: Not spending energy trying to understand it or try to control it but simply accept the fact that I am afraid and move on to action.
- 3) Action: Allow my imagination to engage a manner that creates the actions that move me in the direction of the results I want even though I still remain fearful.

Trying to understand or control fear can often be counter-productive when quick action response is required.

HOPE

Hope is the state that promotes the belief in good outcomes related to events and circumstances in one's life.

Hope is free. By being hopeful you increase your chances of getting the results that you want.

I grew up in Nigeria and was very influenced by the "Yoruba" cultural belief in fate and destiny. The belief was that every individual was predestined to accomplish certain things or achieve certain things in life and whether this happened or not was very dependent on, the choices we made (things we had control over) and fate (things we have no control over).

In Yoruba culture of storytelling and analogies are useful in gaining or regaining perspective and making good choices especially in difficult situations. Any challenge provides an opportunity for growth if you allow yourself to perceive it in that manner. When things do not go as planned you have a choice, to perceive the outcome either as a work in progress or a total failure. How you perceive anything is just as important or sometimes more important than what is really happening.

Life is like a journey where nothing is ever easy or hard but relative to how you choose to see (perceive) it. How you choose to see things is a remarkable tool that can work for you or against you. You are always influenced by how you see things and this in turn is directly related to how you have defined them in your mind therefore to do it differently you have to be willing to define it differently in your mind.

To be functional you have to be able to adjust your perception as you are provided new information that challenges your previous knowledge and indicates clearly that there is a need for change. Dysfunction arises if you fail to recognize this information or simply ignore or deny it.

Every experience in life is an opportunity for learning and you are the one who defines an experience as good or bad. You should try to discover the lesson in every experience. Every complex situation is made up of multiple simple blocks and the way to deal with a complex challenge is to break it down to its simplest form while still maintaining a keen sense of its complexity.

The most important relationship is the one that an individual has with themselves.

Hope is a state of mind. The decision to be hopeful is a personal choice, it does not guarantee the results that you want but it makes it more likely to occur.

Remember hope is free. Being hopeful is a habit that is formed over time through repetition and reinforcement and although getting the results that you want is a strong motivator you should learn to be hopeful even when results you want seem unlikely to occur.

A good analogy would be wishing to win the lottery but not buying a ticket. Although the odds of winning are quite slim there always is a chance but the odds become zero if you do not buy a lottery ticket. Life is a gamble and being hopeful in life is like buying a lottery ticket, there is no guarantee that you will win but at least you are one step closer to making it happen.

Being hopeful is not the same thing as wishing or fantasizing, it is a very active process that involves a willingness to convince yourself over and over again about the possibility of what you want occurring. It is important to be cognizant of how things are while allowing yourself to imagine how you would like them to be. Being hopeful is not about trying to will yourself to succeed, it is about simply imagining yourself succeeding, a form of "self programming",

To be hopeful you have to:

1) Allow yourself to believe in the possibility of what you hope for. To believe, you have to allow yourself to imagine it, use your imagination to see it in your mind.

Using your imagination involves a willingness to put yourself in an "awake trance state" such that you are fully aware of the present reality (based on probabilities) while allowing yourself to experience an alternate reality (based on possibilities).

2) Verbalize your expectation (say it out loud) consistent with the direction of you chose.

I do a ten and ten routine i.e. I say it ten times to make a unit and then say ten units a day. I say it out loud so that my unconscious mind and brain hear it. It is important that I say it convincingly without necessarily reflecting on what I am saying but simply repeating it in a manner that when my brain hears it, it sounds like I mean it. I think of it as "self programming".

3) Repeat the above process often. Reinforcing the results that you want through repetition of the process. You become what you do most often. Being hopeful is a habit that can be formed through repetition.

How you define a situation is integral to how you respond to it therefore always strive to define things properly, in a manner that will take you in the direction that you want to go.

Visualize where you want to be and permit yourself to believe in the certainty of it even though everything else around you may indicate otherwise. It is normal to experience a sense of frustration when trying to control events that you have no control over. You can recreate a sense of control by focusing your attention on things you can control (even if it was just breathing) and then build things up from there.

When I encourage someone to be hopeful I am actually asking them to be cautiously optimistic and not to willingly ignore the reality of the situation they are in, especially if it is bleak, but simply to entertain the

notion or possibility of a more favourable outcome despite it all. Intuitively the concept of balance makes sense to me, sometimes things are very good and sometimes they are very bad but the goal is to find that area, the sweet spot where things are just right and try to get everything to oscillate around it on a regular basis. I refer to it as being centred and I think different people have different ways of describing it but seem to recognize it when they find it.

Being hopeful is a choice you make and it is sometimes a very difficult one in a world that is high on facts and short on faith. It involves a willingness to accept and accommodate your vulnerability, to be accepting of things the way they are but stubborn enough to imagine a more desirable outcome and a willingness to make it happen.

Hope gives meaning to our existence, reinforces purpose and the notion that there is a reason why we exist, that it is worthwhile to be here and worthwhile to contribute to the existence and propagation of our species. The absence of hope is felt as despair, it is a natural consequence of not being able to fill the void and reinforce our purpose. When hope is absent or lacking our perception of reality is often undesirable to us.

I have witnessed fortunate and unfortunate outcomes within or outside the control of the individual. Although the individual often had a role in the outcome, it was not always determined by this role i.e. just because you try hard does not mean that you will succeed (although it does increase your chances of succeeding). I have also observed people who don't try at all and continue to succeed in spite of themselves. In this regard, I feel that life is only as fair as we believe it to be and does not guarantee or promise us anything. We make things happen through our actions and being hopeful.

I found that people when very sick often presented with an intense feeling of vulnerability that made the notion that there are things out there greater than us more acceptable to them. The thought that something or someone cares for us is very appealing and the concept

that our existence matters and is of value seems to be an important part of being human and remaining hopeful.

People who buy into this concept of value seem to attach importance and relevance to their existence and the existence of those around them, they thrive and their perception of wellbeing is heightened, their experience of life reported as very positive. When this concept is not reinforced the person does not do as well and the journey to find oneself could be more difficult.

Points to remember:

Being hopeful is not the same thing as wishing or fantasizing but it is a very active process that involves a willingness to convince yourself over and over again about the possibility of what you want occurring.

To be hopeful you have to:

- 1) Allow yourself to believe in the possibility of what you hope for.
- 2) Verbalize your expectation consistent with the direction of the results that you want. A form of "self programming".
- 3) Repeat the above process often to reinforce the results.

FEELINGS & ACTIONS

Feelings occur to remind us of the need to take action.

How you feel and how you act are two independent processes. The relationship between them is one that you have created.

"Feelings are like the paint of an artist, they colour existence and fill it with awareness, creating a sense of purpose and endless potential, in the same manner that actions are like the brush strokes of the artist, repeatedly dipping in the paint and painting the picture on the canvas of life".

My intent here is to explain how I view the relationship that I have formed between my feelings and my actions and how this relationship can be modified and changed. Once the relationship is understood you will be able to successfully apply the "Best friend tactic".

In psychology feelings refer to the conscious subjective experience of emotions. Emotions are subjective conscious experiences characterized by psycho-physiological expressions, biological reactions and mental states.

A feeling is something that is experienced consciously and you are aware of as emotions. These emotions create changes in our mental state and body physiology that makes the feelings recognizable. The first time you experienced these feelings you gave meaning to them and the more intense the experience the more likely you are to remember the feelings you had and the actions that you have associated with them. Pairing the feelings that we experience with the actions that we have taken is a survival tactic that allows us to react very quickly when we encounter the same or similar situations again.

Feelings experienced are relative to personal perspectives and so how they are interpreted is relative to how the individual sees or perceives things. In other words how you recognize what you are feeling is

related to your past interpretation of the same or similar situation. When you experience something for the first time you have consciously or unconsciously classified it as something you want or not.

The relationship between feelings and actions is one that has been created by you and not a cause and effect as most people imagine. It is quite possible to feel strongly about something and yet act differently from how you feel. An example is a tired parent who feels angry because of the incessant all night crying of the little baby but yet is still able to take appropriate action (cuddle the baby) rather than inappropriate action (smother or shake the baby).

Often times people do not allow themselves to feel because of a conscious or unconscious fear of the actions that these feelings may produce and so they simply suppress these feelings while they choose what they consider to be an appropriate action. The problem with this approach (denial) is that these feelings are never truly processed and it becomes harder and harder for them to know who they are and how they really feel.

To process your feelings you have to allow yourself to become fully aware of these feelings and embrace them even as you make a choice to act in accordance with or separate from what you are feeling. The goal is to allow yourself to feel completely (and not make an attempt to pretend as though you do not feel that way) and then to choose an action that is in keeping with "being your best friend".

When people feel and act they will often act in a manner that is consistent with previous conditioning and this may not always be the best or most appropriate action. On the other hand when they choose an action they are allowing themselves to be consciously aware of their choice.

The tactic of "being your own best friend" allows you the option of unlimited feelings and the singular action of acting in a manner that

you would for a best friend. Being your own best friend is a process of self-acceptance without judgment, understanding your assets and liabilities, taking responsibility for your actions and shortcomings but never throwing yourself under the bus. Anything you would do for your best friend you should do for yourself first, before taking any action you should always ask the question "am I being my own best friend by this action".

It is simply impossible to truly give to others what you don't have or will not give to yourself. If you don't love yourself, you cannot truly love anyone else, if you don't respect yourself, you cannot truly respect anyone else, you would simply be pretending or trying to make it up. Getting in touch with and being intimate with yourself allows you to get in touch and be more intimate with those around you.

In any good relationship effective communication will lead to trust and trust will lead to intimacy. These principles also apply to the relationship that you have with yourself.

How we feel about ourselves is integral to our "self identity". You cannot control how people feel about or think of you and although this is relevant, what is more important is how you feel about or think of yourself. That is what impacts your "self identity" the most. It is okay to feel ashamed but it is not okay to be ashamed.

Feeling ashamed of myself is okay but being ashamed of myself is not. It sounds like I am saying the same thing but there is a profound difference. Feeling ashamed is intangible but gives me a sense of awareness of my state of affairs and the consequence of this feeling relates to the action I take. Being ashamed however is a tangible action that will result in me becoming ashamed of myself.

Points to remember:

Feelings occur to remind us of the need to take action.

How we feel and how we act are two independent processes. The relationship between them is one that we have created.

No matter how we feel about ourselves we should always take an action that is in keeping with being our best friend.

PROCESS & OUTCOMES

"Life is a process, outcomes are the products of this process. When you focus on process you will always get the outcomes you need even if it is not the outcomes you expected".

Think of an outcome as the result you want and the process the manner in which you get there.

When you focus solely on outcomes may spend so much time worrying about how things were going to turn out, often times forgetting to focus on and enjoy what was happening in each moment and the series of actions that bring about the results you want.

You could worry about how next year is going to turn out and how you can get a good outcome or simply realize that sixty good seconds give one good minute, sixty good minutes give me one good hour, twenty-four good hours give me one good day, seven good days give me one good week and fifty-two good weeks give me one good year. It is important to choose to be more focused on what you are doing in each unit of time.

When you put the outcome ahead of the process you run the risk of a process / outcome conflict in which the process you are involved with is not consistent with the outcome you want.

A process / outcome conflict uses up a lot of energy and will affect your direction in life so be very motivated to avoid them.

Every complicated puzzle is made up of individual more simple pieces in the same manner that every complicated process is made up of less complicated pieces, being able to process these pieces provides a better chance of a desirable result.

Take bite sizes i.e. small baby steps and reflect on what you feel, be more present in the moment and experience the steps as you move

towards the outcome that you want.

Process is a series of steps that lead to an outcome, in a process directed approach the steps are as important (or sometimes even more important than the outcome) and there is inherent value in experiencing each step, ultimately the goal is the experience and becoming skillful.

The process steps are a form of progressive planning that allows you to focus on the next stage within a series of stages, thereby allowing your imagination to fully engage in the direction you want. If you want to succeed naturally you are worried about failing and quite possibly your imagination can lock on to the idea of trying not to fail rather than trying to succeed.

In an outcome based approach, the steps are only important if they achieve the outcome and ultimately the goal is the outcome. By focusing on the process (steps to get there) rather than the final outcome you will be able to counteract this tendency. Although it is important to focus on the results we want it is more important to be aware of the steps that get us there.

If you are looking for the answers you should also be creating a set of circumstances where the answers can find you. Routines are helpful processes because they help you form the habits you require and create familiar patterns consistent with results that you want. It is important that you engage in processes that are consistent with your desired results.

When someone is consistently not getting the results they want they need to recognize that they are becoming skillful at not getting the results they want and a change of tactics is required. Skill is developed through repeated action and this action involves repeating the processes that will get us the results that we want.

There something else I do that I have called substitution of processes,

if I have a problem and I can't figure out the solution I keep it in the back of my mind while I rearrange the furniture in my living room, surprisingly when I find a very desirable arrangement I usually get a solution to my problem within a short period of time. I initially considered this a coincidence but the frequency at which it works had convinced those around me that it was authentic, the only downside of course was my sitting room kept changing and my kids grew up not realizing that most people leave the furniture in the same spot for years, but luckily I now have fewer problems.

Points to remember:

Process is a series of steps that lead to an outcome.

In a process directed approach the steps are as important (or sometimes even more important than the outcome).

There is value in experiencing each step as the ultimate goal is to become more skillful through this experience.

VALIDATION - BEST FRIEND

The most important relationship is the one that you have with yourself.

Love is an expression of value and the more you value yourself the more you love yourself and the more opportunity you have to value others.

You are worth what you perceive your worth to be and not what it actually is and this ultimately determines how you value yourself.

You have no control over what others do to you but you always have control over what you do to yourself and so choose to validate yourself even when others do not.

"Remember that what belongs to the heart can never be taken from you, can never be stolen or bought but is given freely by those you love and who love you and this love is a precious substance from which we all derive our existence. Find time to enjoy the beauty of your existence, to revel in and maximize the opportunities you have, to love and be loved in return. Let your eyes be open so that you can capture forever the images that are dear to you that they may forever remain with you even after they may have left you and like distant stars continue to glimmer in the night of your existence light years after they have gone".

We are hardwired for validation (information that makes us feel valid) and this need is there whether we like it or not.

We need to be reminded that our existence matters and that we are worthwhile. This validation can only be generated by you (internal validation) and whatever is provided to you by others (external validation) works because it reminds you to provide it to yourself. When the internal validation is weak the individual is dependent on external validation to feel good about themselves.

You can validate yourself even when others do not. So every time you feel put down or less valid just remind yourself of two or three things that make you feel valid (say it out loud so that your brain can hear it) and over a period of time you will feel much better about yourself.

It is worthwhile to get ahead of the game and not wait until you feel bad but remind yourself of things that make you feel valid as often as possible. It is like putting a deposit in a bank for when you need to make a withdrawal.

Stop thinking of things as positive or negative but simply as results you want and results that you do not want. It is not the "bad" thoughts and expressions that are causing your problems but the lack of "good" thoughts and expressions.

Use a "ratio" approach to counteract the bad thoughts and expressions. You can start with two good things or thoughts for any bad thing or thought and gradually increase that ratio as you see necessary. The worse things are the higher the ratio that you apply.

Self worth is determined by your internal validation which is a form of self-talk consistent with the results you want (feeling good about yourself). Self-affirmation statements are very effective in increasing internal validation when you repeat them often and aloud so that you can hear what you are saying.

The most important relationship is the one that you have with yourself. I am not talking about being narcissistic and self absorbed but I am referring to being self reflective and "being your own best friend", doing unto yourself as you would like others to do unto you and through this process really discover how to do unto others.

You should always be truly responsible for your own choices. Although the need to be liked and valued by others is strong what is more important is if you like and value yourself.

Self-awareness means that you would always know everything about yourself, that you will have conversations with yourself acknowledging the things you like and those you don't, the things you are proud of and those that you are not. In other words your "Assets and liabilities portfolio". Nobody would be able to tell you anything that you do not already know about yourself.

Self-acceptance means that this is who you are and it is okay. It does not absolve you of responsibility, in fact it encourages you to take responsibility but without judgment.

Self Awareness + Self Acceptance = Self Love

The bank, the banker and the value of balance

I use this analogy to explain the concept of value and to emphasize how easy it is to increase your chances of getting the results that you want. When you have deposits in the bank you can cash the emotional and psychological cheques that we have to write.

The currency is validation, the bank is where your sense of value resides, You are the banker and the only one who can make deposits but you are also the client and the only one who can make withdrawals.

You have the most to gain if your bank is prosperous and the most to lose if it does not succeed. The balance of value within the bank indicates the state of your account or how you feel about yourself. You are also the only one who has access to the bank and external validation works by reminding you to make deposits.

Self-affirmation (internal validation) = Deposit

External-affirmation (external validation) = reminder note to deposit

Anything else = Withdrawal

Every time you appreciate yourself and acknowledge your ability and effort to get the results that you want you affirm yourself and put a deposit in the bank, although it is effective just to think of it, you have a greater deposit when you say it out loud, in a convincing manner, so that your brain can hear it (in the same manner a chant is more effective when said aloud). Any process that you are involved with that is not making a deposit is making a withdrawal and as far as the bank is concerned there are no neutral processes.

A good portfolio is one where you make more deposits than withdrawals at any given time on any given day. Any forms of validation no matter how trivial are deposits and any other interactions (including problem solving i.e. rectifying a potential or actual adverse outcomes) are withdrawals.

When you initiate the reason for a withdrawal you are writing a cheque, when something else other than yourself initiates the reason for a withdrawal they are cashing a cheque. The more money in the bank the better you are able to cope with withdrawals and the more cheques you can write or cash. The importance of continuous self-affirmation is that:

- 1) it is free,
- 2) it is within my control,
- 3) it is easy to administer,
- 4) it is always in line with the results that I want,
- 5) it ensures a continuous deposit in my bank

It is important that you maintain balance in everything that you do.

I will be my own best friend

When I do not feel like hearing myself
I will find a way to listen

When I do not feel like seeing myself
I will find a way to look

When I do not feel I love myself
I will find a way to care

When I do not feel I deserve anything
I will find a way to give

When I feel that no one is there
I will be my own best friend

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Remember self love = self awareness + self acceptance

Self awareness = I will know everything about myself, the assets and liabilities so that no one will be able to tell me anything that I do not already know. I will have conversations with myself no matter how difficult they may be. I will know everything even though there may be things I would never discuss with anybody else I will discuss it with myself and I will not hide.

Self acceptance = I will fully accept my liabilities and assets as a confirmation of who I am and so I will learn to market my assets and manage my liabilities depending on the circumstances I encounter. I will take responsibility for and ownership of these assets and liabilities and continue to be the best me that I can be. I will not entertain shame nor will I apologize for who I am but simply continue to understand and be aware of how to be functional in any circumstance that I find

myself in. I will not judge myself but simply understand how to manage myself better so that I can survive and then thrive.

Being my own best friend does not mean that I love myself or that I am satisfied with how things are, it simply means that no matter how I feel about myself (and there may be a million feelings), there is only one action option open and that is the action of being a best friend. How to use this tactic would be better understood by reviewing the sections on "feelings and actions" and "validation".

The method of "being your own best friend" allows you the option of unlimited feelings and this singular action. In other words it is okay to feel sad, angry, disillusioned, ashamed or any "positive" or "negative" feelings but the only action available is that of being your own best friend. Being your own best friend is a process of self-acceptance without judgment, understanding your assets and liabilities, taking responsibility for your actions and shortcomings but never throwing yourself under the bus. Anything we would do for our best friend we should do for ourselves first, before taking any action always ask the question, "am I being my own best friend by this action?"

I wrote a poem to explain how I define "self love"

I need to know myself
Know how I define me
The good and the bad
The ugly and the lovely

When every bone is counted
Behind every cupboard door
Nothing that is recanted
Would make me hit the floor

Nothing there to hide
No more fear to harness
I can now enjoy the ride
For I have self-awareness

When all the parts of me
My body and my soul
Have found a home to be
I have achieved my goal

For all the things I am
The assets and the "Asses"
Make me who I am
So I give no excuses

My mind is the only place
To find full repentance
I can now keep the pace
Because of self-acceptance
The self that is now aware
The self that is accepted
No more harbours fear
Self-love is now created

The most important relationship is the one that you have with yourself. The triad of a successful relationship is:

- 1) Communication leading to
- 2) Trust and trust leading to
- 3) Intimacy

When we learn how to communicate with ourselves properly we develop trust in ourselves and we can be more intimate with ourselves and others.

Points to remember:

Self Awareness + Self Acceptance = Self Love

The bank, the banker and the value of balance

Self-affirmation (internal validation) = Deposit

External-affirmation (external validation) = reminder note to deposit

Anything else = Withdrawal

Being your own best friend does not mean that you love yourself or that you are satisfied with how things are it simply means that no matter how you feel about yourself (and there may be a million feelings) there is only one action option open to you and that is the action of being a best friend.

VISUALIZE - CAN DO

To succeed have a healthy imagination and a stubborn will.

Use your imagination to find your direction and use your will to focus on reinforcing this direction through the repetition of the required action.

The life that you experience is always directly related to the choices that you make and the actions that you reinforce through repetition.

Negative imagery is not always deliberate but it always makes it difficult to obtain the results that I want. Often times it is because you do not fully understand the power of your imagination. When there is a contest between the will and the imagination the imagination always wins. The purpose of the imagination is imagery, to provide direction, it allows a person to appreciate what they want, to see where they are going and where they want to go. The "will" is the machine that gets the person there, it lacks imagery, as this would distract it from its task of making you do the same things over and over again until you achieve the result that you want.

The imagination and the will should always be working as a team, together and not against each other and so it is important to be aware of the things that stimulate the imagination. It is almost impossible to will yourself to imagine anything, as the act of imagining itself is a form of letting go of reality and visualize what you want reality to be. Verbalizing the intended direction is a very important tactic for stimulating the imagination.

There are times when you may be hoping for something but saying the exact opposite of what you want thereby decreasing your chances of ever getting it. For example, hoping not to fail is not the same thing as trying to succeed. When you are hoping not to fail your imagination is engaged with failure because you trying to avoid it and inadvertently thinking of all the many ways that you could possibly fail. Most of

your energy is focused on avoiding failure with very little left to try and succeed therefore lowering the probability of success.

When you are trying to succeed you are focused on success and all the things you have to do to get there, although you are aware failure is a possibility, you are not consumed by it and if at first you don't succeed you keep finding ways to get the results that you want.

If you are trying to prevent someone from dropping an expensive vase, "hold on to it" is more likely to produce a positive result than, "don't drop it". In the first case the person imagines holding on to it while in the second case the person imagines dropping it. Action words are a very important stimulus for the imagination so how you define things and verbalize your actions are an important step in taking control of your imagination.

Practice makes perfect, the more you visualize a situation the more familiar it becomes. The will is responsible for making you imagine the same situation repeatedly. Imagination hates boredom and repetition is boring but necessary to achieve results through action. The will on the other hand thrives on repetition and in fact the more able you are to repeat and stick with an action the more willful you are.

The following steps are useful in helping the imagination and the will work as a team:

- 1) Self-affirmation statements
- 2) Appropriate verbalization
- 3) Appropriate action

Whatnot say influences your imagination, which in turn influences what your actions. Verbalizing the words out loud and saying it like you mean it (even if you don't fully understand what they mean) surprisingly is more effective than when you just think about it and don't say it out loud.

Émile Coué de la Châtaigneraie (February 26, 1857 – July 2, 1926)

who was a French Psychologist and Pharmacist who developed a method of psychotherapy and self improvement based on optimistic autosuggestion.

He used the phrase in French, "Tous les jours à tous points de vue je vais de mieux en mieux" that translates in English to every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better. It was a form of conscious autosuggestion repeated as much as twenty times a day usually at the beginning and end of each day. Coué maintained that curing some of our troubles requires a change in our unconscious thought that can be achieved only by using our imagination and this in turn creates physiological changes through autosuggestion.

I modified it slightly:

Every day
 In every way
 Getting better and better
 More capable, more able

The expression of the idea or intent engages and excites the imagination the most. Each line presents a particular idea that the unconscious mind can connect with the above saying in any way it deems fit but the end results would be consistent with the idea presented by the words.

Every day: Visualize time
 In every way: Visualize all actions possible
 Getting better and better: Visualize direction of getting better
 More capable, more able: Visualize ability

Visualize is a form of purposeful fantasizing where we may indulge in grandiose ideas but don't distort reality. It is a form of "self-programming" with expectations that are consistent with reality, even though the probability may be low, the likelihood of occurrence of the results that you want is possible as opposed to "self-delusion" when the

expectations are not consistent with any form of reality and the likelihood of occurrence of the the results that you want is impossible.

It is important to verbalize statements and to say things in a manner consistent with what you want, for example rather than say you hope you don't fail, say you hope that you succeed or instead of you don't know if you are good enough, say you hope that you are good enough.

You are not pretending to be something that you are not, you are simply hoping to become something you know that you can be. In the same manner saying you are in your happy place in an attempt to make yourself happier is not as effective as visualizing going from sadness to happiness. "Visualize" is not about denying reality, it is the 'mind process' of transforming reality from one state to another following a natural progression.

There are times when you may feel helpless or out of control, in order to regain a sense of control imagine yourself in situations where you had experienced a sense of control and hold on to those images in your mind. There is enough medical research to support the fact that neurophysiology is influenced by our minds and our imagination so we can make use of this process even if we don't fully understand why it works.

When you are trying to stop or change a habit you consider undesirable, you should make sure that your imagination is engaged with the change you desire and not the habit that you are trying to change. Visualizing does not guarantee that you will get the result that you want but it makes it more likely to occur.

It is a good assumption that the reason why you are not getting the results that you want is because you are not doing the right things. Although this assumption is accurate it does not clarify for you what the right thing are.

Trying not to fail is not the same thing as trying to succeed. In the first instance you spend all your energy trying to figure out the different things that could make you fail and how to prevent or avert them and your imagination, words and actions are engaged with failure.

On the other hand when you are trying to succeed your energy is focused on what you need to do to succeed and your imagination, words and action are aligned in this direction.

If you were trying to prevent someone from dropping an expensive vase "hold on to it" is more likely to produce a positive result than "don't drop it".

The action word stimulates the imagination and in the first case the person imagines holding on while in the second case the person imagines dropping it. Action words are very important stimulus for the imagination, so how you define things and verbalize action are important steps in taking control of your imagination.

If your plan is to go up north, it makes perfect sense to make sure that your steps are headed in that direction rather than down south. If circumstances beyond your control force you to go in a direction we don't want to rather than spend energy trying to stop it spend the energy focusing more on the direction you want.

When trying to succeed make sure that your words express this desire on a regular basis, engage your imagination in all the different ways you can succeed. It is important that you do not lose sight of the things that could jeopardize your success but make sure that when you consider these things that you also considered an exponentially more number of things that would help you succeed.

In other words when you review the things you "can't do" also make sure you look at the things you "can do" so as not to lose your perspective. Maintain a ratio of "can do" to "can't do" and the more difficult the task the higher the ratio i.e. the harder the challenge the

more reinforcement you need to stop you from panicking and losing your focus for success.

You can only make withdrawals where you have deposits so if you don't put any deposits in the bank of "goodwill" why are you trying to make withdrawals from there? The life that you experience is always directly related to the things that you reinforce through repetition. Although this "can do" tactic does not guarantee success it makes it more likely to occur and so it is very useful.

Do not to forget the importance of balance. You can cool hot water either by waiting for it to cool down (this takes a lot of time) or (speeding up the process) by adding cold water until you reach the desired temperature.

Another example would be stress, I always hear talk about stress reduction and the need to live a less stressful existence but for someone like myself who is stress dependent trying to reduce stress is stressful. I realize that it is the lack of balance with non stressful activities that was creating a problem. So I now like to use the term balance stress as opposed to stress reduction. A balance philosophy encourages you to spend your energy incorporating stress free activities without any conscious attempt to reduce the number of stressful activities (although more often than not a reduction in the number of stressful activities occurs as a result of introducing the stress free activities).

What I am trying to say is that you should learn to accept the things you can't change or do anything about and focus your energy where you have the best chance of getting the results that you want. You can achieve this by consciously reinforcing the things that you "can do" in a manner that far exceeds the things that you "can't" and maintain a ratio that increases proportionately with the complexity of the task ahead. I want to emphasize that you do not practice denial or avoidance but allow yourself to be completely aware and acknowledge your "can't" and then remind yourself of your "can" in such a manner

that say a 3:1 ratio you review three "Can" for every one "Can't" that you become aware of.

The "can do" method encourages you to remember to reinforce what you can do while encountering what you can't in such a manner that the final results are in the direction of the results that you want.

It is important to verbalize "can do" statements more often than "can't do" and to say things in a manner consistent with what you want. For example rather than say I hope I don't fail, say I hope that I succeed or instead of I don't know if I am good enough, say I hope that I am good enough. Avoid false statements like I know I will succeed or I know I am good enough because your unconscious mind is aware that you are unsure. In other words, do not pretend to be something that you are not, instead hope to become something you know that you can be. In the same manner saying "I am in my happy place" in an attempt to make yourself happier is not as effective as visualizing going from sadness to happiness.

Points to remember:

Make sure that your imagination (thoughts), your words (verbal expressions) and your actions (deeds) are consistent with the results that you want.

Repeat the above process as often as possible in order to get the results that you want.

The tactic of Can Do is best achieved using the concept Visualize. Consciously reinforce the things that you "Can Do" in a manner that far exceeds the things that you "can't".

Maintain a ratio that increases proportionately with the complexity of the task ahead.

Do not practice denial or avoidance but allow yourself to be aware of your "can't" but remind yourself of your "can" in a ratio that allows you to get the results that you want.

MIND ENCLOSURE

Thoughts are the conversations that we are having with ourselves.

The "mind enclosure" is the centre of your reality where everything makes sense or nonsense.

There are many sides of me and I constantly have conversations with myself that are often intriguing and enlightening. These personalities within me make up who I am and there appears to be an aspect that I was born with (nature) and an aspect that I acquired over a period of time (nurture). The dominant traits show up on a regular basis defining who I am and while the others reside in background.

I have spent a lot of time wondering about who I am, I have come to realize that I am like a group of individuals (or residents as I call them) residing within this that dwelling I refer to as myself. These residents have developed rules or patterns of communication that are either functional (when it helps me get the results that I want) or dysfunctional (when it does the opposite).

I found that I was able to clearly identify these individual (about 7 of them) residents of my mind enclosure (ME) that I now refer to as my house. What I observe as my thoughts or me talking to myself, could now be more accurately described as me observing these residents (that are me) discussing their different points of view, from the perspective of the personalities that they are.

It is fascinating how I can describe each one of them by the feelings that they generate and convey. I am not describing a multiple personality scenario where the dominant personality could constantly change and the individual describes a dissociative state. Within my house the individual personalities are always present and interacting, each one offering opinions but there is a dominant personality that takes all these points of view into consideration and then speaks for everyone and so speaks for the house..

I liked the idea of the house because it fit comfortably with my Yoruba cultural background. I was always told that a house divided could not stand and I realized the importance of peace and harmony. In the Yoruba culture peace and harmony meant people getting along well even if they did not really like each other.

There are individuals that reside in my house that I don't care very much for but it is important to realize that they are in fact me and have a right to be there even though it is best that they do not speak for the house, their opinions are still important and need to be heard. In that manner when I find myself confronted with a somewhat "shady" situation I depend heavily on the opinions of "conniving Toye" (who can be very destructive if let loose and allowed to speak for the house) and luckily these opinions are then expressed by "responsible Toye" who speaks for the house.

It is important to point out that there is nothing scientific about this it is simply a process I created to understand myself better and learn how to resolve conflicts within myself. There are times when these parts of these residents would merge to form a new resident who is a combination of the personalities that merged in the same manner that red, yellow and blue are primary colours and mixing yellow and blue produce green.

My house has developed over time and the hierarchy of the residents has occurred through my reinforced experiences over the years. "Little Toye (the child in me)" does not talk very much but his presence can always be felt at every meeting.

I have spent many hours speculating on why I am who I am and if I was born with all these traits? Do I develop new traits or simply reinforce the ones I have? In other words can I adopt new residents and evict the ones that I don't like? I now believe that that once a resident exists within the house it is impossible to evict them and the focus should be on how best to manage the house so there is peace and

harmony.

There are residents within my house that I am not particularly proud of and some that are downright embarrassing in the same manner there are residents that I think are okay but people around me seem unable to stand. There is always a dominant personality that speaks for my house and this is the one that people around me recognize as myself. This dominant resident or leader happens through reinforcement of the attributes associated with this particular individual within me.

I do have a say on who speaks for the house (the dominant personality or leader). This leader is determined through reinforcement of that trait so for example when I suffered from panic attacks and generalized anxiety disorder "fearful Toye" spoke for the house and although he still resides within me, through reinforcing the traits that I wanted, he no longer speaks for the house and "confident Toye" is the dominant leader.

What I realized was focusing on a trait I did not want was a form of reinforcement even though my intent was to make it less dominant the focus actually reinforced it and so I was inadvertently voting for it, so now I simply focus on the trait I want to reinforce and ignore the one that I don't.

Through careful observation I have gained a better understanding of my house rules.

- 1) Every resident has a place and has a right to be respected. It is important to accept them as they are (self-acceptance) while still choosing appropriate action that is likely to provide the results that I want.
- 2) Every resident will be heard (self-awareness). This means that I will be aware of all the residents in the house irrespective of how I feel about them. Denial and avoidance of self may provide short-term relief but do not give me the long-term stability of self-love that I crave. I believe that self-awareness and self-acceptance equals self-

love.

3) I recognize the residents by the feelings they generate and these feelings in turn influence my actions.

4) The dominant resident/residents in the house is/are the one/ones whose attributes I have most often repeated through expressions or attempts at suppression i.e. the one in whom most of my time and efforts are invested becomes the leader.

5) The dominant resident/residents speaks for the house and therefore interacts with my external environment and are most recognizable as who I am.

Points to remember:

Thoughts are the conversations that you are having with yourself.

How you have these conversations is important.

Recognizing and being accepting of the different parts of you (the residents in your mind enclosure) is important.

BIOGRAPHY

I was born in Montreal Canada to Nigerian parents. I grew up in Nigeria where I attended the College of Medicine University of Ibadan and obtained a medical degree graduating in June 1985. I left Nigeria on October 16 1987 and came to Canada at a time when Canada was convinced that it had too many physicians.

I was on social welfare assistance for two months and then worked as a security guard and later in a chemical factory in Toronto. I attended but did not pass "cab school" in Toronto.

I passed the medical evaluation examination and was accepted to the medical officer training program (MOTP) with the Canadian armed forces. I completed a medical internship program at the Saskatoon City hospital from 1989 to 1991.

In 1991, after my medical internship, I started with the Canadian armed forces as a full time regular force officer and my first posting was to an infantry unit called 1st Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry (1PPCLI) from July 1991 to August 1993.

I was deputy base surgeon, base hospital, Canadian armed forces base, Calgary, Alberta. From September 1993 to November 1994 and during my time with the Canadian Armed Forces I also qualified to be a "Flight Surgeon" this involved attending a course in aeronautic medicine.

I retired as a Lieutenant (Navy) from the military in 1994 and I moved to a small town in southern Alberta called Milk River from November 1994 to May 1997. I was also the Medical Examiner (Coroner), representing the Alberta Ministry of Justice in this area.

I moved to Spruce Grove, Alberta in May 1997 and worked as a family physician and emergency room physician. I also started a career

in "disability medicine" working as a medical advisor with the Workers' Compensation Board, Edmonton, Alberta from April 1998 to April 1999, and a medical consultant with the minor traumatic brain injury program and the complex psychosocial pain program at Millard Health, Edmonton from July 2001 to November 2003. My interest in "Wellness Medicine" started during this period and I completed a medical acupuncture certificate program at the University of Alberta, Edmonton.

I moved back to Calgary, Alberta in January 2004 where I worked as a travel medicine consultant, from March 2005 to July 2009, a medical consultant, with Orion Health Calgary Alberta from October 2006 to July 2010, an urgent care physician with Calgary Health Region (Okotoks Urgent Care Centre), Calgary Alberta from October 2006 – 2009, a disability medicine consultant for Lifemark Health Calgary Alberta & Kelowna, BC from March 2007 – 2009, a pain medicine physician at Canmore pain clinic, Canmore, Alberta from October 2008 – June 2010.

I was also a certified independent medical examiner (CIME), American Board of Certified Medical Examiners, from October 2006 – June 2011 and a medical review officer (MRO – drug & alcohol) from March 2005 to June 2011.

In August 2009 I moved to Kelowna, British Columbia and I have a family practice at the Westside Medical Associates in West Kelowna. I have a fellowship in family medicine and volunteered as a coordinator at the Canadian College of Family Medicine (CCFP) qualifying examination for many years; I was a clinical instructor at the southern medical program – University of British Columbia Okanagan and I worked at the Health and Wellness Students' clinic at the UBCO campus in Kelowna.