

YOUR WORKBOOK

(FEELINGS & ACTIONS)

Survive first and then thrive



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DISCLAIMER

"Your Workbook" (Feelings & Actions)) 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 forty million to 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.

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 is formed between feelings and 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. I call this the "**Fundamental Triad of Relationships.**" 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.

DAILY EXERCISE

EVERYDAY

IN EVERY WAY

GETTING BETTER

AND BETTER

MORE CAPABLE

MORE ABLE

Repeat the above phrase aloud (quietly) 10 (ten) times (one after the other) = 1 (one) set

Do 1 (one) set every hour for 10 (ten) hours - 10 (ten) sets a day

Record the time whenever you do a set

Keep a daily journal of anything you consider important that happened on that day.

QUESTIONS

WHY DO FEELINGS OCCUR?

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FEELINGS AND
ACTIONS?

HOW SHOULD YOU PROCESS FEELINGS?

WHAT IS THE FUNDAMENTAL TRIAD OF
RELATIONSHIPS?

ANSWERS