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*By Rick Madden*

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## **About the Author**

Rick Madden always thought that there was more to life but that he would never be an achiever because of circumstances or the actions of other people which always seemed to work against him.

Just over two years ago, Rick started to look for ways to lift him self and his family out of the rut which he had believed for so long was his lot in life.

Rick took the courses and read the books. He bought and listened to the tapes, and, he started to make real progress.

Rick has written this book to help others that are struggling to find the way to reach the better life which we all aspire to and deserve.

Ricks says that he made a few mistakes and took a few wrong turns but he has put what he has learned here to save you time and stress.

Rick had to put what he learned into simple language before he could start to apply it to his own situation. "Some of the problems people have are made worse because the academic language many writers use gets in the way of the valuable messages they have. That can make problem dissolving much harder than it sometimes needs to be."

His suggestions do not require any special equipment or training and can be done without interfering with your current business and personal commitments.

Rick has covered a lot of important topics. Not everything in this book will apply or be equally valuable to every reader.

But, he hopes and expects that you will find some answers and inspiration for putting your life right among these suggestions.

## **Introduction**

Thank you for getting my book.

I hope that the information and opinions which I developed after two years of studying the books and courses, watching the videos, and trying to relax under the influence of the tapes will help to smooth your own journey to the better life you seek.

This book is focused on helping you to find better ways to get your goals and improve many aspects of your personal and business experiences.

I suggest that you read the whole book through to give you an overall understanding of the tips and techniques which I explain.

Then, I expect that you will read the book again, concentrating on those parts which are most relevant to your current situation.

Some people might apply their best efforts to a particular suggestion without getting the results that they hope to. It may be that the suggestion is not suitable for them or that they may not be at a point in their life when they are ready to apply it successfully. Please try something else. Then, when you have success with a couple of the tips in this ebook, you will probably be able to better evaluate whether that technique is one you might want to try right now; and the actual potential benefit you might get from successfully doing it.

Then, you will need to think about how you might need to adjust my technique to fit your particular circumstances.

Some of the suggestions might require some time and effort before you can fit them in. But, I believe that the results which might be achieved will make that effort well worthwhile.

I wish you a great life with fewer disappointments than before and the ability to handle those which inevitably occur more easily than you ever thought that you could.

***Rick Madden***

## The Quest Never Ends

When I started to write this ebook, I worked out that it took me about four weeks to start to make progress with the first adjustments I made.

That was about two and a half years ago.

The specific details are not that important though they were to me at that time, of course.

I had chosen to try to adapt two techniques from different sources.

I felt that was probably going to be more effective for me.

Looking back, I realize that this was one of the first mistakes I made on my journey of change and improvement.

Although my combined method was not very good, I got some results after four weeks.



The enthusiasm which that produced helped when I had some unintended consequences from that experiment.

I then tried the first technique as it had been written, with a few adjustments to better suit me and put the second technique aside for a later time.

That produced a better outcome but it took longer because I had to do some work to undo the effects of my two-in-one method.

I can say that you may get some positive results within four weeks but it will depend on:

- 1)** Your own situation
- 2)** How well you focus on the process and the intended outcome
- 3)** The consistency of your approach
- 4)** How deeply the method you are trying to replace is embedded in your mind

Some people will find it more comfortable to use their previous routine at times. Unfortunately, this will mean you will have to use the new technique

several more times to get it implanted in your subconscious, because re-using the previous method, even just occasionally, makes your mind focus more strongly on that way of doing things.

I don't recommend that you try more than one small but personally significant change for your first challenge.

Although multi-tasking is highly rated by some people, there is a growing amount of research which indicates that it does not often produce the results which are much better than those produced by someone of equal experience who applies themselves to doing one task at a time to the best of their ability.

When you start to achieve some progress with your improvements, you will become aware of more options and opportunities which your enhanced abilities will bring within your reach.

So, the process of your personal development is ongoing throughout your life.

The only limits are usually those we impose on ourselves.

Keep this observation in mind as you progress.

*"Success is a journey not a destination"*

It will help you as it has helped so many others when they find and meet increasing challenges.

Taking effective action is most important.

You cannot expect to always be victorious.

Nobody can be number one all the time, but you will improve your average by taking action.

Enjoy the journey and the inevitable rewards.



## Does Your Past Rule You?

Many people that I meet are dragging the mental equivalent of a cart full of bricks along with them all day and every day.

They have rules, habits, and regrets which hold them back. They have a negative influence on their dealings with other people and limit their ability to make the most of their often considerable potential.

We never can completely escape from the influences which shaped us in our early years.



We will probably never completely forget any bad incidents and disappointments or times when we may have had ourselves. Or things we either did which we now feel badly about or avoided doing things which we feel we should have done.

It may be very hard to remove the effects of some experiences from your life. If they are particularly traumatic, you should seek professional advice.

The suggestions I give you are things that have helped me to deal with the effects of minor, but personally important, events in my own past.

The first thing is to decide whether or not you can do anything to change the outcome of those past events.

If you feel it will be of help, try to contact the other people that were involved. That may be stressful and you need to be as sure as you can that the contact has potential for helping all involved before you take that step.

If they are willing, discuss the matter and try to settle any lingering hurt.

This is likely to be hard for all of you but it may also sometimes be the best way to move toward closure.

Then, you can mentally focus more fully on your present situation and how you can put the extra time and energy you now have to achieving your dreams.

## Regrets, I Have a Few ..... Thousand

Everybody has disappointments. Some are major but most of them are fairly minor.



But, many people cannot let go of them. They remember them and even mentally re-enact them without realizing the damage they are doing to themselves.

Any time that you focus on past disappointments is not just wasted; it has a measurable negative value for you.

You are not able through that time to plan anything or enjoy any positive emotions and you fill your subconscious with negative expectations that you will continue to experience similar disappointments in the future.

This focus on negative thoughts can actually impact on your health and well being. It could even lead to the development of physical symptoms.

The other point to remember is that you are no longer able to do anything about these matters. So, all that time and energy is totally wasted!

The first thing you need to do is to realize that you cannot do anything as far after the event to change what happened.

But, you can choose to learn from it and then forget it rather than regret it.

Then, you can turn the outcome into a positive. Fix in your mind that you are mature enough to deal with disappointments which we all have from time to time in this positive way.

This last step is very beneficial and one which most of the books and courses I bought and read did not mention.

## **Lose the Crutches!**

If you have ever had to use crutches while recovering from a leg injury, you know that it's a very uncomfortable experience.

You probably were anxious to test your leg without the crutches before the doctor gave you permission.

After having limited mobility for that period you were very glad to get rid of those crutches even though you were glad to have had their help when you were recovering.

You put them aside because you would have had problems if you kept using the crutches; you would never have been able to use your legs to their full potential.

This is a simple illustration of a problem which affects many people. They cannot let go of the "crutches" or "training wheels" which we all need when we are learning to interact with other people or in the early stages of developing our business or job skills.

Many people deliberately limit their own progress to a relatively safe and sure point which they feel that they can handle and are not putting too much at risk.

They are like a fishing boat which stays close to shore where there are less fish and less risk. They stick with the safe things.

I don't advise being reckless but I believe that almost everybody is capable of achieving greater levels of success (however they define it) than they ever reach.

I also know from my own experience and research that people that impose tight limits on their potential for success get what they want; a safe but low-paying job or business with little prospect of improvement in their situation.

Some of these people were among the thousands who were badly affected by the recent international financial crisis. Unfortunately, their ability to handle severe downturns is almost zero.



The people who have tested themselves by trying to achieve greater success have probably fared better because the struggles which they endured helped to prepare them for other struggles like that crisis which very few were able to completely avoid.

I suggest that you accept challenges which come your way when the potential reward is, in your opinion, sufficient to balance the potential loss if you do not succeed.

Then, develop your plan and give the project your best effort.

Only by doing that will you ever discover what wonderful abilities and potential you have within you.

## Negative Influences

It seems that modern life may contain more negative influences than were common in earlier generations.

The regrets which I showed you one way to deal with in the previous section are a type of "internal negativity".

### Negative People

There are also many types of external negativity which assault us every day.

One of the biggest and most influential is the great number of negative people that we work with, live with or even choose to spend our leisure time with.



The old cliché, "Misery loves company" has

a bitter core of truth. There are many people that find comfort associating with people that have little good to say about anything and nothing constructive to contribute.

Of course, the last group is probably the first one that we should do something about.

I suggest that you start doing that as soon as possible before their negativity digs any deeper into you.

I did not say that it would be easy.

But, when you realize that these people contribute nothing to you except for ever greater loads of useless negativity, you will realize that you need to act.

Part of the remedy is to analyze what you get from the association? When you find someone or a group that are only reinforcing any negative feelings you have, you have two possible choices.

If the association is important to, you might be able to influence them by feeding them some of your positive beliefs and expectations.

This can work, but it is very hard emotionally and you might want to concentrate on using this approach with the people who are close to you that suffer the same sort of negativity you have had.

That is where you are likely to have the most impact and it will also help you to reinforce the positive thoughts and actions which you are learning or being reminded of as you read this book.

When you try to help someone become more positive about themselves and their life, you may find, at first, that they become more negative toward you.

This is most likely if you tell them that you feel they are being negative or that you want to help them become more positive.

People may resent the fact that you have this impression of them.

The only effective way to help negative people that have not realized the damage which that focus will have on their future is to be positive about your own situation and your prospects.

If you have to discuss their disappointments, do it without adding to their store of negativity.

Let them know when something good happens in your personal or business life.

It might work and be a positive result for each of you in different ways.

But, at some stage, you might have to reduce your contact time or stop seeing them at all for a while because their attitude and comments can make your own progress so much harder.

## **The News**

Most people I know absorb a daily quota of news and information from television, radio and the internet.

Unfortunately, a lot of what we feed into our minds is what a friend calls, "3D News". Those reports are full of death, disaster and destruction.

Even many of the less dramatic reports have little positive content.

Some of it may be false as well as negative.

There is also some research which reports that watching television has negative effects on our mental processes.

Because the advertisers have to make an impact in a very short time, the number and volume of the messages is much higher than our brains were designed for. Many of them verge on aural and visual assault. This is easier for younger people to absorb and even interact with.

But, the messages from the news and many documentaries is massaged and packaged for maximum impact.

This can have negative effects for your emotional well being and our physical health.

The effects are from watching so much processed views and impressions parading as reality grow over time, making a cure that much harder.

But, it's never impossible!

Here are some ways to reduce the impact which this can have on you:

### ***Switch Off***

Many people are switching off the negative programs or even going further and not watching TV at all!

After all, our families got on really well without it for a very long time!

### ***Filter It***

I am not talking about electronic or government restrictions. They're probably a good thing for protecting children until their own critical faculties and knowledge about the world has developed.

I believe that the most important filter is our own brain.

I eliminated most of my "TV time" when I looked at the pluses and minuses for me from watching the different type of programs.

They will vary for each reader. You could be surprised just how much of your week is invested in entertainment from TV.

If you see value in watching some program, then choose to watch it. Make a conscious choice of your viewing and other entertainment rather than letting the advertisers choose what you watch and absorb.



I watch a big amount of sports and a few movies with my wife; and even the occasional western by myself because they're her least favorite type of feature.

But, we both find our time together much better with the television switched off for large parts of each day.

We like to talk with each other and we think that meals are healthier and more enjoyable if we don't share them with a blaring radio.

But, I have to admit that we didn't follow this practice when the kids were young. They turned out fine anyway.



## **Change what you say to yourself!**

Do you talk to yourself?

If you replied, "No!", I'll have to respectfully disagree. I'll show you why in a moment.

If you replied, "Yes.", the good news is that you don't have to be embarrassed about that any longer. But, you might want to modify what you say.

I'll show you why in a moment too.

It is commonly accepted that everyone talks to themselves.

### ***If You Talk to Yourself***

Some people do this loud enough to be heard and move their lips at the same time. Some people discount the people who do this as their mental inferiors.

That's not often correct. They may just be trying to handle too many problems than they can handle without using audible speech.

Or, they might be vocalizing their daydreams.

Whatever the reason, it's not a good look.

These people might think about using the suggestions for modifying habits in this ebook to switch off the animation and sounds involved.

It is not a dangerous habit but it is guaranteed to turn off some people who see them do it.

That will take time. Changing a habit is not an overnight process.

Most people don't talk to themselves in that way. They keep their lips still and the sound off.

But, research has confirmed that almost everybody, including those in the above group, have a constant stream of silent communication flowing between their conscious mind and the powerful sponge which is their subconscious.



Problems occur because:

- ✗ The subconscious accepts whatever we feed into it.
- ✗ Many people fill this internal conversation with negative statements such as, "I always get web addresses wrong!" or "Girls always turn me down!" The subconscious accepts those inputs as fact

without any sort of rational checking procedure.

Some people actually make these sort of negative comments about themselves in general conversation. That can make some of their friends and colleagues start to believe the comments as well as further diminishing their own self confidence every time they say them.

Most people would not use this sort of comment about a friend because they are untrue and hurtful, but they make them about themselves to their own subconscious and also to anyone else that might listen!

This is one of the easiest of the problems discussed in this ebook to turn off. You can probably start to get better results in less than two weeks!

As soon as you recognize that you are using this type of self-destructive comment in your internal conversation, you can start filling your mind with positive messages instead.

There are several ways to counter previous negative conditioning such as you may have got from your previous self talk.

The first one is to catch yourself whenever you start to verbally or mentally start devaluing your own abilities or accomplishments.



Immediately change the message in your own mind with a more positive alternative. If possible, start thinking about a successful outcome you achieved, no matter how small, in a related area.

You can also use proven techniques such as the affirmations and visualizations which I explain in the following sections.

Even if you think that this sort of technique is a little weird, I suggest that you try them in private and text for yourself whether you can get the sort of positive results which I and many thousands of other people have.

## Affirmations

You can use **affirmations**. These are short, positive messages which confirm the qualities which you have and display in your daily activities or that you have the ability to develop those qualities and achieve your goals.

Some people have much greater success than others.

It is possible that people who are not comfortable with the process of putting their aspirations in writing and then speaking them aloud, even if it is done in private, have trouble because they subconsciously expect the process not to work. They might increase their potential to get a better result from affirmations if they made their first affirmation focus on a fairly modest improvement and give themselves a little more time to see progress.

Then, they could use the good feeling from their small success to empower their efforts with bigger goals.



There is no trick to it. You need to give it an honest effort.

I just clearly write or print the message I want to embed in my subconscious on a small card.

I say the positive message, something like "I am improving every day", when I get up and at any time during the day when I want to reinforce it.

I don't repeat it many times or give it any special emphasis.

All my affirmations have been based on my beliefs about what I could achieve at the time I was using them. If I tried to implant an idea that I did not have some reasonable basis for confidence about, I think it would not stick.

These steps are very simple but can help you to put you feet back on the track to success if you give them some time and honest effort.

## Visualizations

You can use **mental images** of the successes which you have already enjoyed to help fill your subconscious with positive resources.

Everyone has a powerful multimedia projector within their heads.

It provides visual images for our dreams and can help us to improve many parts of our lives.



You can use it to add three dimensional images to your affirmations which can make them more effective for some people.

Another popular use is to make a mind movie of you doing a procedure, such as a golf stroke which you are having difficulty with, as well as the golf pro at your local course. This is easy to do by just writing down the pro's instructions and using them to construct the moving mental image of yourself doing it well.

You need to already have the basic knowledge of the stroke so that your brain can understand the instructions and produce the movie without errors.

When you are ready, settle down in a quiet, private area and run the movie several times through your mind.

Don't rush it. You will find that you can vary the speed, zoom in and out to focus on particular points and adjust other aspects of the presentation.

You are in charge of what you put in or leave out of your movie.

Many professional athletes use mind movies of them performing their moves perfectly. They repeat the movie as many times as they need.

This practice will often give you more proficiency in that technique in a fairly short time.

### *Removing Negative Programs*

I read of an interesting method used by some people to remove or reduce the on going negative effects of old disappointments and fears which had accumulated in their minds.

They take one matter which has a strong enough hold on them to be affecting their work or their relationships.

They write the details of the fear or regret which has a hold on them on to a piece of paper which they visualize in their minds.

Then, they crumple the paper into a shapeless lump and burn it.

They say that this simple process can help them reduce the hold which the old problem has on them.

## What if “They” Don’t Approve?

One of the biggest fears which hobble many people from expressing their views, abilities or desires is the possibility of negative feedback from other people.

That will often lead to poor self image, lack of confidence, frustration and dislike. Or worse, toward the other people who may not even know or care about what you feel they are blocking you from doing.

The negative effects can do more emotional damage to us than we might have got if the person or group had actually displayed their disapproval.



But, we block our own progress by assuming a reaction that is negative and also delivered in a way that will cause us some unhappiness or worse.

I was told that this was due to letting our personal feeling of self worth become dependent on other people’s reactions.

Some of this is perhaps due to transferring our learned deference to authority figures like parents, teachers etc (which has some good aspects) to other people that may have authority over some part of our lives, have a position in society which gives the impression of knowledge or whose friendship we crave.

I suggest that you consider the points I’ve listed below. They could help you to completely eliminate “fear of failure” from your life.

### **How important is the action which you are undertaking to you?**

If it is of prime importance to you, where your life would be negatively affected if you did not do it, you probably have little choice except to do it.

Then, you need to consider the next point.

### **What could be the worst effect if others disapprove?**

It’s important to focus on what the worst effect could really be.

It is very common for people to fear reactions which won’t happen.

If you will not be able to do business or have a deeper relationship with the person who might disapprove of your action, you can assess the importance of that negative outcome to you against the importance to you of taking that action.

The next step might be to discuss the action with them further before committing to it.

If you cannot do that, you will have to make the decision you feel is right.



## How Important are Your Possessions?



Have you noticed that some people seem to value themselves according to what they own, who they mix with or how much they earn?

This may have been influenced by their childish view of the struggles which their parents had while trying to raise a family and keep a roof over their heads.

Or, they may have read too many junk articles about people which promote that attitude I referred to in the first paragraph.

Like me, you probably like your home, your car and other bits and pieces.

But, you realize that they are just things. The really valuable possessions are mostly less expensive while giving us more pleasure.

I place the greatest value on things like my health, my family, my friends (because of their personal qualities and ability to put up with me, not their qualifications or social position) and my reputation.

I protect my physical possessions with insurance and alarms.

I protect those in the second list by trying never to take them for granted, giving the best value I can and being ready to assist them in whatever way I can if needed.

The items on the second list are harder to take away but I never take them



for granted. If I lost one of them, I feel that I would feel that I had lost more than if I had lost everything on the first list.

What about you? Do you value your possessions above other treasures you have?

## Fear of Failure

Everybody knows the term, "fear of failure".

Many people limit their opportunities and the levels of success which they can achieve because they have this fear.

The sad truth is that it is almost entirely a product of our own imaginations and helps to produce a lack of confidence in our own abilities which will lower our expectations and our results.



This is likely to affect our relationships with other people. Like attracts like and we will find ourselves spending more time with people that also suffer this condition. Instead of providing positive support to us, they will feed our low self-esteem while we do the same for them.

Here are my top four tips for dealing with this:

- 1)** I confirmed that I had the qualities to do the task and that my abilities would earn me other rewards even if I did not get this.
- 2)** I asked myself what could be the worst that would happen if I did not get the result I wanted from this?

Many people are held back from even starting something because they feel the consequences of not succeeding at it.

There are many examples of people, like Thomas Edison and Abraham Lincoln, who did not let failures limit their ambitions or their efforts. They only achieved their personal goals after repeated disappointments.

It has been said that each failure has the seeds of future success in it. We must learn any lessons from the unsuccessful venture so that we can improve the possibility of success next time.

- 3)** I always got better results if I kept the time between a failure and starting on my next project as short as I reasonably could.

You need time for review of the previous project and the planning and preparation of your new project. Keeping the time before starting again short stopped the review sprouting regret and blame so you could focus better on your future.

- 4)** I came to understand that most people are good natured and, most importantly, don't examine everything I do as intently as I thought they did.

Some people may make unkind comments about our previous effort but there's really no value for us to give them any consideration unless the comments have constructive content which can help us to improve our future efforts.

Most people are aware of their own failures and accept that nobody wins all the time.

Another important benefit from handling your failures like this is that your continued, well planned effort and positive attitude will make a good impression on people.

That may not bring immediate benefits but is likely to improve your chances of making more of your future projects successful.

## Dealing with Disappointment and Other Negative Events

Disappointments are inevitable in our lives.



They can range in importance from losing the three legged race at a school picnic, to being fired from a job, or the death of someone we love.

Dealing with them is an important step to keeping or taking control of our lives.

If we let them continue to occupy our thoughts, we are likely to make ourselves assume that we are victims and lack the qualities needed to control our lives. That will also reduce our ability to get positive outcomes from future experiences because we'll start to think that would be too hard without the intervention of other people.

To handle disappointments, start by accepting that we all will have disappointments and that many of them will be despite our best efforts.

Some people will use each disappointment to reinforce their belief that they are unlucky and the good things in their lives are also accidents. When you start thinking like this, you influence your subconscious to expect more "bad luck".

But, the most powerful downside to this sort of focus is that you start to believe and act as if you cannot have any positive effect on what happens in your life.



Many people immediately look for someone to blame. That can affect your ability to make positive connections with people and damage any close relationships which you already have.

Some, of course, find some way to blame themselves; that can cause or increase depression and other negative conditions; it

can also, over time limit your ability to achieve positive outcomes in your personal and professional life.

Instead of letting the outcome you have suffered be the main focus of your thoughts and actions, look for positive steps which you can make to ensure that you minimize any negative aspects from what has occurred.

A good first step is to take some action. It does not have to be related to the setback you have had.

When you take action, you feed positive thoughts to your subconscious and shift your focus to the task you are doing.

The benefits of this over just continuing to focus mentally on your disappointment are obvious but it is not always easy the first time. Many people are conditioned to expect success every time and any sort of failure, however small, affects their feeling of self-worth.

It is worthwhile to persevere with this approach until it becomes second nature to respond to any setback by:

- 1)** Taking any lessons you can find from the experience which will help you in the future.
- 2)** Realizing that dwelling on the setback will only damage you and not affect the outcome for anyone else.
- 3)** Starting some positive action toward your next goal.

## Thoughts have Power!

The most important thoughts are those we have about ourselves.

They can actually improve or damage our self-esteem and even affect our health over time.

Every thought which you have affects your well being at that moment and can help or hinder your progress for the rest of your life!



So, you can affect your well being at that moment and can help or hinder your progress for the rest of your life by deciding to focus on the positive with all the thoughts which you produce, and being very selective about the thoughts which others push at you.

Simply by deciding that you will allow yourself to be positive and forward-looking, you will increase the amount of positive energy which you produce.

It is your choice how you deal with disappointment.

That will also help you to attract more positive people into your personal and business circles.

I know that opposites attract when we're just talking about lumps of magnetic metal, but positive people attract positive people.

There is no way to ensure that you never have any negative thoughts but changing the ratio to favor the positive will help you.

Sometimes, someone suggests that I don't recognize the reality that there are problems and that many bad things happen.

I know and accept those statements.

I think some people cause problems for themselves when they let the possibility of disappointment block them from taking action on their dreams.

**There is no greater disappointment in life than,  
"I wish I had done ..... when I had the chance."**

## Victor Frankell

You can't always choose the outcome to an experience.

The important thing is that **you can choose how you respond to it.**

One of the greatest examples of the power of a positive attitude was the late Victor Frankell, who was put in a concentration camp with his parents and siblings during World War II.

His wife and father died during their internment.

His mother and brother were also killed.

The book which Victor had worked on for years and sewn into the lining of his clothes was discovered and destroyed.

Like some of the others, he shared his meager rations with other prisoners.

He did not give up.

He tried to mentally recreate his book and, over time, started to record it on stolen scraps of paper.

After his release, he discovered his wife had also died.

His book was published to enormous acclaim. On the strength of that book, he gained the position of director of a major medical facility in Vienna.

He dictated another book which sold several million copies.

**Victor Frankell gave us much, including this quote,  
"The last of human freedoms - the ability to chose  
one's attitude in a given set of circumstances".**

## **How to Change Almost Any Habit!**

This chapter will help you to identify and deal with any habits that are having a negative effect on you.

A habit is an established series of actions or "pattern of behavior" which always do the same way to achieve some outcome or as a response to certain inputs from other people.

The important word here is "established" because you have trained yourself to act in the same way every time. Some people call this a "learned response".

This helps you to store the basic steps of doing something like sewing or tennis in your unconscious mind and enjoy the confidence which comes with knowledge that you will always do it to a certain standard without having to focus on each part of the process.

Then, you can use your conscious mind and repetition to tweak each step which will lead to significant improvements in the standard of your performance over time.

But, this makes it a great deal harder to change your response if you develop a bad habit, of course. A bad habit is one that is likely to produce a bad outcome for you or those around you. Or, it might stop you from achieving the best outcomes from your efforts.

That might be surfing the internet and checking your personal email account when you get to work, instead of diving into the paperwork that is piled in your in tray or having a quick, fatty snack at lunch instead of something healthier which won't reduce your effectiveness during the afternoon.

These examples are minor ones but the suggestions which I make below can be used to control or change any habits. Professional advice and support is required if you want to start to deal with any form of addiction.

This type of habit delivers short term enjoyment, but can have long term effects on your prospects of promotion and your general health.



If you decide to reduce how often you do these things, adopt some more productive actions or try to eliminate the habit altogether, you need to understand that it will take time, conscious effort and, most important of all, persistence.

There is no magic trick to this. But, the steps are simple and the pay off can be very rewarding. You will:

- ✓ Boost your own self-confidence because you prove that you have a stronger will than you or others may have believed.
- ✓ Eliminate the increasing negative effects you got from the bad habit.
- ✓ Start to enjoy the benefits of your new good habits.

This process will involve a few steps that might take some time. Don't try to rush the process.

- 1.** You have done the first step when you recognize that you have a habit which is holding you back or perhaps damaging some of your personal or professional relationships.
- 2.** The second step is to closely examine the actions you are doing so that you bring the whole thing into your conscious mind. You are like a surgeon bringing a diseased organ into the light so that you can deal effectively with it.
- 3.** Look at the benefit which is encouraging you to keep doing these actions? That might be the buzz from the sugar in the donuts you gulp down at lunch time or boost to your ego when you yell at the other driver that cut you off on the highway.

You may already have realized that this habit does not produce any benefit for you which is worth the negative effects on you and other people that are involved.

You may have tried to change before and, over time, slipped back into your old negative habit even though you tried as hard as you could to change it or reduce its influence.

That does not mean you cannot overcome the bad habit, it just demonstrates the power of your subconscious to hold onto a learned response.

But, that set back gave you an excuse to return to your previous way of doing things.

**4.** This is a key step. Focus on what you are losing now and likely to lose in the future if you do not change this habit or eliminate it.

Watching that junk TV program regularly is taking time which you could use to develop a better golf swing, enjoy and improve your relationship with your family or take a walk in the fresh air.

That extra cigarette is taking time out of your day, days off your life, staining your fingers and spoiling your breath.

When you go through this process, it's easy to see that the benefits of changing your pattern of behavior far exceed the short term benefits it has brought you.

Why is it that so many people who try to replace or remove bad habits fail in their attempts?

It is usually because we start to miss the quick benefits which we got from the habit. Spending our loose cash or charging something to our credit card gives us an immediate buzz. Any possible negative outcome is far away.

The benefits of not increasing our debt or frittering away our cash are obvious but don't give us the same immediate buzz.

That sort of buzz is powerful and addictive.

Reducing our need for immediate gratification is very hard. Few people can eliminate it entirely.

The good news is that we don't have to.

**5.** We can deal with this problem, in part, by focusing on the longer term benefits we get from our new way of doing things.

That's real and worthy but does nothing to excite most people.

We have to recognize that our society, through television and other advertising constantly reinforces the "joy" which instant gratification brings. There is also a tendency in much of the publicity given to people with expensive possessions and fabulous lifestyles that these were obtained more quickly and with much less effort and perseverance than was actually required.



It can also help if we ask for support from our partner.

That can be powerful and there are usually benefits for them as well in our new attitude and actions.

We can improve the probability of sticking with our new behavior by giving ourselves smaller rewards as we progress toward our goals.

This will help to soothe any remaining need for instant gratification without harming our progress toward our goals of a happier and more successful life.

## What is Limiting Your Progress?

Even if you are constrained by circumstance, family or society pressure, finances or any other external reason, you may want to test the boundaries which you believe are holding you in your present situation from time to time.

Or, do you prefer to accept the boundaries like the fleas in the bottle?

I read some years ago a wonderful article (though I am not sure if it was true) about the method a scientist used to keep a bottle full of fleas from escaping.

The writer claimed that the scientist had to be able to get the fleas quickly when he required them and his bulky protective clothing made it difficult to open the lid of the bottle.

So, this resourceful chap poured the fleas into the bottle and then screwed the lid on tightly.

The fleas started to explore the jar, looking for a way to escape. They found a barrier in every direction. When they tried to fly out of the jar, they hit the metal lid.

After a couple of days, the scientist removed the lid from the jar and started his experiment.

The fleas stayed in the jar until he needed them because they "knew that there was a barrier there – the lid which had been removed.

The fleas, scientist and bottle may be mythical but the story fairly represents the mental state which blocks some people from obtaining their desires.

These people have encountered some disappointment in earlier years and let that experience limit their ability to try for a better result in some similar venture later on.

This was not a barrier which Thomas Edison acknowledged. His many experiments on light bulbs that didn't work were not failures in his eyes. They were possibilities to be tried and discarded on the road to eventual success and riches.

Many salespeople know from their records their ratio of rejections to sales. If they make a sale from every ten attempts, they think of each person who rejects the offer they make as helping them get 10% closer to their next sale.

I know that's not scientifically accurate but I much prefer the positive attitude it encourages over the likely reaction of a more negative person.

Producing and maintaining a positive attitude is not being a "Pollyanna" who ignores the realities of modern living.

It is a way to avoid the impact on your health of constant negative thoughts. Your positive outlook is likely to attract more people with a similar attitude and encourage them to buy what you offer, whether it is a business deal or a date!

## Are You Adaptable?

I will now ask you to do a couple of simple exercises to let you demonstrate the next point to yourself. That is often the best way to learn something and remember the point.

**1]** Please stand up with your feet slightly apart and your arms hanging loosely at your sides.

Raise your forearms so that they are parallel with the ground and clasp your hands together with the fingers interwoven.

Remember which thumb is at the top of the heap.

Now, please unlink your fingers and drop your hands to your sides for a moment.

This time, I want you to do the same thing but with the other thumb at the top.

That will probably feel a little strange.

Unlink your fingers and drop your hands to your sides again.

**2]** This time, please fold your arms.

Most people will unconsciously fold their arms with the arm they use the most on top.

Almost everybody will fold their arms the same way every time they do so.

Please just unfold your arms and let them hang loosely at your sides again.

Now, I just want you to fold your arms again but consciously put the other arm on the top.

Many readers will find that a bit uncomfortable.

There's no pain or pressure but we all feel a little strange when required to accept a different way of doing something.

The degree of resistance will vary between individuals.



The degree of resistance to change which you show in these simple exercises are likely to be reflected in your willingness to accept change in most areas of your life.

But, the good news is that this does not mean you cannot adapt to changed circumstances and requirements.

Probably the most important factor in making such changes, if required by your work or other circumstances, is your personal view of the importance and desirability of making those changes.

Many people have to make dramatic changes of this type every day when they are involved in accidents or from the effects of medical conditions such as a stroke.

I had an aunt that had a stroke about twenty years ago. The stroke left her partly paralyzed down the right side of her body.

She was determined to keep up as many of her usual activities as she could, including driving a car.

Although she had always been right handed, she learned to write her signature with her left hand.

Learning to drive was, of course, more difficult. She had several disappointments including the instructor who told her she would not be able to pass the driving test and she should not even try, for safety reasons.

She had to change to an automatic car and have some other adaptations made and then inspected by the transport department.

All we could see of those was a small knob on the steering wheel which she used to turn the wheel with her left hand. I think there might have been a change to other fittings but I did not take much notice at the time.

Her eventual success in passing the driving test at her first attempt demonstrated to me that we are more adaptable and capable than we might think when there is a need and a goal which inspires us.

I also decided that it would be a good idea to be able to do things with either hand.

I was not concerned that I might have a stroke or similar misfortune like my aunt.

I could see advantages in sports and other areas if I consciously trained my right hand (I was a natural lefty) so that I could use either hand for many tasks.

I feel the effort has been worthwhile for me. I can do many things almost as well with my right hand and the extra exercise has meant that I am probably better able to do many tasks which require me to use both hands.

It probably took more effort than I thought would be needed. That's what often happens when we decide to learn something new.

I was enthusiastic and optimistic. I did not realize just how many attempts and the number of failures I would have before the new tracks were set in my brain and my right arm became as reliable and almost as strong as my left.

I started when I was much younger than my aunt was when she had her stroke. But, it took her less time to adapt than it did me.

That was because her need and her desire were much stronger than mine.

Our example shows that your age is often no barrier to developing your own subordinate arm so that it is more useful for you.

When you do it, you will prove to yourself that you have determination and can focus more strongly than you may have thought you could.

That will be another positive benefit of the exercise which will help when you start to learn other skills and techniques.



## Factors in Your Success

The level of success, however you define it, which you are capable of achieving is probably far greater than you currently can even dream of.

The level which you actually reach depends in large part on:

- ✓ The choices you make
- ✓ The focus which you apply to your goals
- ✓ The action you take
- ✓ The level of belief which you have in yourself and your abilities.



One often overlooked but very valuable reason for striving to reach a higher level of success is that it will offer freedom and a greater ability make choices for yourself.

I believe that freedom to choose and control my own destiny is more valuable to me than money. But, you need to get some financial resources before you are likely to have a high level of personal freedom and control.

### Choices

Every stage of your life and the progress which you make is governed in a large part by choices that are made about you or ones that you make yourself.

In most countries we have some ability to make choices for ourselves about what we spend our time and other resources on.

These valuable assets are often taken for granted.

Many people make choices about matters that will affect their entire life very casually.

Some important choices which can have important and lasting consequences include:

**What you eat:** It may seem harmless and more enjoyable to watch television while you eat your meals. But, the effects of the high sound levels

and often upsetting vision can interfere with your digestion so that you don't get all the benefits from the food you eat.

The effect on children whose bodies and minds are still developing can be even more serious.

**Who you associate with:** When you choose to spend your time with people that are negative and uncommitted, you limit your ability to achieve anything like your true potential.

You also begin to adopt some of their values and outlook. If you decide at some point to try to improve your skills and your level of success, these people can start to attack you and your aspirations.

They usually do this because they resent your improving self-image.

### **Focus**

The intensity of focus which you apply to achieving your goals is central to your level of achievement. Think "laser" when you adjust your personal settings.

When you apply yourself and demand high standards in everything you do, you will find that you are noticed by people that have achieved great success in your field and many become a lot more supportive when they see that you have applied yourself so that any help they offer will not be wasted.

### **Action**

Without taking action, you will achieve nothing. Without carefully planning the action you will take and putting as much effort into it as you can, your results will be disappointing or, at least, much less than you could achieve.

### **Self Belief**

Unless you accept any faults you have and also the almost unlimited potential you are born with, you will not obtain the level of satisfaction you are capable of.



Even when you have earned and assembled a strong supportive personal and professional network, there will be times and crises where the quality of your self-belief will be tested to its limits.

I hope that you will be ready and this ebook has helped in some small way.

## **“Everybody Knows .....**”

One source of problems for many people is the great number of things they know which aren't necessarily true.

We cannot learn everything we need to know by personal research and testing.

So, we have to accept a lot of information and guidance from other people. We might sometimes get some wrong information this way and this can cause problems in our personal and professional activities.

So, we need to test our views from time to time.

If someone is taught that all red-headed people are bad tempered or that people like them are naturally superior to everyone else, you can see that problems will arise when they express these views in words or action.

When presented with a different view to our own about any subject, we can:

- Accept it.
- Reject it.
- Consider it.
- Disagree politely while accept the other person's right to it.

These are all valid responses. We'll have a much better chance of having our views respected if we respect other people's views.

If we are too forceful in pushing our views on other people, it may cause them to become defensive about their own opinions and beliefs.

If we persist, they may start to avoid us or argue for their view.

The best quote I've heard about the value of argument is,

**“When 2 people argue, 0 people are listening”.**

## Take-aways

I hope this book is helping you and given you some inspiration that will improve your outlook and results.

After the hard work of the previous Chapters, these links are intended to provide little more than inspiration, relaxation and some lighter moments during your self-improvement quest.

All of these links are provided without warranty or endorsement of any kind. They might stop working or the content may change for better or worse at any time. **Be careful.** Your use of these links is entirely at your own risk.

**Ashleigh Brilliant** <http://www.ashleighbrilliant.com/> "The personal website of artist and writer *Ashleigh Brilliant*, creator of pot-shots syndicated humorous, philosophical, inspirational cartoons". The books of these cartoons are among my personal favorites. You are sure to find some Brilliant Thoughts that strike a chord and either re-enforce or improve your mood in "17 or less words".



<http://www.left-handersday.com> The activities at <http://www.left-handersday.com/tour3/> try to demonstrate that even people that favor using their right-hand can have some "leftish" tendencies.

The site includes a catalog of real products for real lefties like me.

**Free Printable Posters** <http://www.print-a-poster.com/>

This company offers free, printable 5" by



7" versions of many of the designs which they also sell. You can choose from motivational, educational, inspirational or just plain fun topics.

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