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## About the Author

Inez Mallet had been working and worrying for years, but the rewards were never in line with the effort she put in.

Then, she realized you weren't rewarded for worrying - it was a cost that you paid over and over.

So, Inez started to look for better ways to handle the demands of her job and find more quality time to share with her family.

In a short while, she started to get better results in both areas!

Now, she shares the ideas and systems which took away most of her worries and gave her more time with her family.

They also appreciated the changes!

She explains how her interactions where she worked also improved.

Inez believes that many of these tips will help her readers improve their lives, whatever their current situation.

And, most of her ideas and strategies are low-cost or even free!

## Introduction

Many people are battling every day just to keep up with their jobs and family commitments.

The pressure of technology and reduced opportunities means we often have to give more and accept less for our efforts.

But, there are many benefits in our world that we undervalue.

We are overwhelmed by the bad news, the worse forecasts and the lack of a clear path forward.

The strong neighborhood networks which our parents grew up with are going.

Many people don't even know their neighbors' names.

When I left school, I dreamed of a career but they are not easy to achieve – we're lucky to just have a job!

Keeping our dreams alive and believable is becoming harder, but it can be done.

This book contains the methods that I and many others use to keep ourselves optimistic even with all the pressures around us.

The diseases which affect most people today are often related to our mental outlook as much as the physical conditions around us.

I will help you to find proven ways to help remove a lot of the worries which keep us from achieving the goals we've promised ourselves and those we love.

The way to start is to find the great things we have, which we may have overlooked in the crush of daily demands on us.

Then, we improve our defenses against worry and other aggravations.

We can start to build a better life for us and it's much easier than you may think right now.

We can make our lives better. I will help you find the time and tips to get more time to recharge and connect better with family and friends.

But, we have to learn how to relax again. That starts on the next page!

## **We’ve Forgotten How to Relax!**

Research shows that many employees take work home or stay back to do unpaid work.

When they have a coffee break, or even their lunch, many will still be doing some work. It just seems to be expected.

The effect of this is not greater production, higher quality and greater job satisfaction. There’s just more stress and anxiety. And we can add the effects of poor digestion from rushing their food.

I was one of those people. Last year, I felt I had to find a way to get a better balance in my life.

I wanted to find more time for my family and other interests and avoid the illnesses which some of my friends and colleagues were already suffering.

You can remove a lot of worries with these methods that thousands of people have used successfully.

Finding more time for proactive pursuits and relaxing is the theme of this book. I’ve tried to give clear simple suggestions and you can add your own twists to fix any issues you have.

I can’t say that I have all the answers for you because our situations are different. But, I’m sure there are some ideas here which you will use.

Some of these suggestions and approaches will lead you to other methods more suitable for your particular situation.

I’ll look at ways to reduce friction within your workplace and your home, how you can get more rest and time with your family. There are also a few ideas to improve your connections in the community.

Some you may have seen before and perhaps even tried.

If they didn’t work for you then, you may find my approach gives you the little twist which gets you further with it.

If you’ve have put aside some goals because of the demands of just getting along, we’ll look at ways that you might be able to put them back in play at low cost and with minimum impact on your other commitments.

## A Space of Your Own



One of the major causes of stress is the amount of stuff a lot of people have collected into their homes!

Their stuff is crowding the joy out of their lives!

We keep a lot of heirlooms, hobby equipment or other bargains which “might become useful some time”.

Some people even hire storage space. They continue to collect and pay for the space as well! Storage has been one of the growth industries of the last several years in the USA.

But, many people get the feeling they’re being squeezed out of their own homes. If you think you have or are getting near to a problem with clutter, start your remedial action soon.

But, don’t try to do it in a weekend unless there's no alternative. That will give you more stress and make the exercise more risky with people rushing around.

Make it a family project. Get all the family to decide what they want to keep. Then, everyone has a stake in making the new era work.

Then, arrange a time when as many people as possible can be available and willing to help with the manual work.

The first priority after the original survey is to sort out space to put the rejected stuff until it’s collected or you take it away. That should be as soon as possible.

You want to get done as much as possible in the time available without pushing the volunteers too hard.

All the rejects should be sorted for donation to charity or trash. Any items someone wants to keep which need fixing should be stored with their regular stuff.

Have your first-aid kit handy when the clearing is being done and get some fast food or easily prepared snacks to keep everyone going.

After the first couple of sweeps for stuff, you might want to have one for just an hour or two every month.



Those can be a lot easier because everyone will have taken their stuff into the area which they're responsible for. And you will all be more enthusiastic because you've got your home back!

## Cutting Your To-do List!

Do you have a to-do list where you list the must-do to nice-to-do tasks you have each day?

If, like most of the people I know, you never finish it so you keep pushing items onto the next day's list, you will find this section very helpful.

I will show you how to de-clutter your to-do list. And then, we'll start trimming it down.

Charles Schwab, a tycoon, paid an efficiency expert for advice that resulted in him having just a 1-item to-do list. You may not become that efficient, but 3 main items is an achievable target for most of us!

When you prepare your list, put the 3 main items at the top.

Group all the quick-fix items in one large box at the bottom of the page. When you start work, confirm that the three items in the top section are the main tasks for the day.

Then, give yourself no more than 30 minutes to clean up as many of the minor items from the bottom of the page as you can.

That stack of small victories will give you a bit of confidence and shorten the list a lot.

Now, set times when you can best handle each of the three main items.

If you can do all three right now, that's great. But, most days, you will need to connect with other people and so it's best to check with them first.

It's useful to set these three items in your schedule. But, don't try to do all three in one block.

Always give yourself about 5 or 10 minutes between the tasks so that you can rest and refocus. That way, you ensure that you have your full attention for the next big task.

Soon, you will have the system purring along. You have set times to deal with those major tasks, confirmed the availability of the other people who are needed for that and you can deal with them in a calm and efficient way.

## **What is Your Next Move?**

An exit strategy is part of the pre-planning for most new businesses these days.

They plan how they expect the business to develop and what they will do when they have reached their goals with the business.

If you adopt this idea, it will help you to notice opportunities which come up while you are already employed, and keep you looking at the wider business situation rather than focusing just on what you are currently doing.

The main benefit is that you have a long-term focus which reduces worry when you have some temporary setback.

With the turbulent and constantly evolving work situation, few can expect to stay in one job or even one industry for their working life.

Having another option and the resources for it planned, you can feel more in control of your own destiny - something that you want!

This is not being disloyal to your employer. You still are a loyal and more effective employee. With more resources behind you, you can apply yourself more confidently to the work you do for them.

And, he or she probably has an exit strategy themselves!

## Get a Check!

Most people don't have a regular annual medical check. That's like playing Russian Roulette with more than one chamber loaded.

A common reason for putting off the examination is that they worry what they might learn about their health if they have the check.

Another concern for many is the cost of the consultation.

I understand these feelings, but things won't improve unless they have a check.

The check will probably be good news. If it isn't, then they will have the truth about their condition and can get information about treatment options.

But, the sooner the check is done, the more chance of a good outcome.

If they stay uninformed, they will probably have some negative effects from the stress of not knowing what's going on.

Their worry about this is also likely to have a negative effect on the other members of the family and the interactions between them.

The others will realize something is worrying them and that could start their imaginations in overdrive as well.

They could start worrying whether you are keeping a secret from them.

## Be Ready for Failure



Some people get so worried about the possibility of their current project not working, they either keep tweaking it or give up without trying it.

Another thing which stops them proceeding is the concern they have about what other people will say or just

think if they do not succeed.

If you sometimes feel like that, don't worry – most people won't care a hoot whether you succeed or not.

More will be interested about what you do if you fail.

- ? Will you give up and dwell on what might have been?
- ? Or, will you look for points which will help you get better results with your next project and get on to that!

That's what every successful inventor and entrepreneur does. Most have several failures in their lives. As Thomas Edison is claimed to have said, that's how he found out what didn't work!

Every failure has clues to what might work better.

Even many products which are put on the market after lots of expensive testing, from cars to computers, get recalls for tweaking or more extensive changes after their release.

There are some problems that only the public will find because they may use the product differently to the way the manufacturer planned for them to.

And, the public mostly go right along buying the re-released product as if there had never been a problem.

I see a company or individual that is honest with me about a fault in their item as worth going back to when they have something new to offer.

## You Need some “You” Time!



We like to help people, but sometimes saying "yes" can become a drag on us which can cause stress and bad feelings down the track.

We start helping somebody or a group we are part of because of our good nature.

But, that quick agreement can sometimes be a problem when we get busier or collect more commitments in the future.

But, we might not want to let down the person or group. That can be very difficult if it's our boss or a close relative who originally asked us to help.

However, there's a point where we have to consider what's best for us.

If we get overloaded with commitments, we won't be giving our best efforts to any of them and our reputation will suffer along with our self-image.

Although it may be hard to resign from the commitment, you should get respectful acceptance after giving your best efforts previously.

A friend of mine was secretary of a couple of organizations and said it seemed she wasn't ever appreciated as much as in the few months after she resigned to have a baby.

You may have this problem with some other type of personal commitment. You can only do your best but, give yourself as much consideration as you gave those you agreed to help.

That is the only way to ensure that you and the people who you continue to help get the best possible outcomes.

## Fearing the Future



This is a common source of fear and frustration. We hear of some future event or problem, even one which may not actually happen, and we begin to invent possible outcomes in our minds.

That’s understandable when it may do serious harm to us or our future.

But, it’s only a mental image in our minds – we haven’t got enough facts to even make a good guess about what might actually happen!

Our minds are among the most powerful story embellishers on the planet. And, what appears on our mental screen can have powerful effects on us, for good or bad!

Perhaps conditioned by the negative stories which seem to headline the daily news, we may get very worried.

The only effect is to make us suffer more stress and make our ability to collect and process the factual information as it comes available, less efficient.

The best way to handle it is to review what we actually know and consider what effects might be caused?

- ? Would we be directly affected?
- ? What might be the worst which could happen?
- ? What could we do to prepare in the time available?

Our minds would be ready to start rational processing of available information.

The facts would cause a reduction of the level of fear and stress.

Depending on how closely we might be affected, some fear would remain. But, that’s natural. It primes our brain and muscles to be ready for action

when we have the facts.

As we handle more situations this way, our ability improves and so do the results. If we let our thinking continue to feed on guesswork, we will become more stressed and slower to respond.

Then, people look elsewhere when they want solutions, not excuses.



## Strengthen Important Connections

One result of the fast pace of our lives is that we give less time to our important relationships and focus on our work.

When did you last tell your partner or your kids how much you appreciate them?

Some will answer, "They already know that!"

That's probably true, but many of us don't actually spell it out very often. That works the other way as well, of course.

Many adults have regretted they didn't take opportunities to spend more time with their aged parents until the opportunity was gone.

For some parents, those chats can be like super medicine. And it also gives them a chance to share their thoughts and knowledge with their kids.

If your house gets a bit crowded with kids and friends, you are very lucky.

But, you also need to find some time to share just with your partner.

You might just take a walk together through the neighborhood. Those conversations can be as deep or light as you both want.

The exercise from doing the walk is a bonus!

Even in many families that feel they are pretty close, there can be unresolved issues which can make for problems later on if they aren't talked out.

## More Challenges Ahead!



### ***And that's the good news!***

Life has plenty of challenges for us almost from day one.

Most of us have caring parents who guide us through our early challenges.

Babies have a great attitude and the mental capacity to learn.

They need challenges to help fill the new pathways which are forming in their brains.

You may think that your pathways are all filled or fading.

That's because we have been told by researchers that we lose that ability to keep learning and growing mentally as some of our physical powers seem to fade later in life.

But, the latest research strongly suggests that, where there are not medical reasons for some deterioration. What we lose is due more to lack of use, lack of exercise or poor nutrition levels.

After they found that small animals have the ability to create new neural pathways through their lives, so do humans!

The brain in most older people that has not suffered damage in that area, is capable of adding, recalling and storing information, and can work with that information for more years than were previously considered possible.

There have always been examples of people who produced their best inventions, creative works or other projects in their later years.

They were mostly considered exceptions to the rules which governed what was possible for the rest of us.

But, we can all keep mentally active by welcoming challenges and sharing what we have learned with others.

The best way to prepare for a happy and active old age is to take the

challenges you get at each stage of your life.

Build as many neural pathways as you can and keep testing your limits.

There are more opportunities around than ever before. They work, but only if we have the confidence to try them!

You can look online for free or low-cost courses specially prepared for anyone with the will to try.

And there are more courses offered by special interest groups and community organizations in most countries. Governments and others support these projects because they see the value of keeping us mentally active.

That is a win-win for all of us!

## **Other People are not the Problem!**

When we are cut off by another driver or otherwise inconvenienced by people each day, we blame them for our upset feelings and carry the baggage of that short encounter through the rest of our day.

We don't realize that the real problem is our reaction, because there is usually no other effect from that short incident.

If we put it out of our mind as the other person surely has, we'd be able to enjoy the rest of the day much better, as carefree as the person who upset us has been all along.

Why do we react against our best interests?

Because we put ourselves up as the most important person around.

Over time, we develop a habit of stewing up a pot of useless rage over small slights. The long-term negative effects on us become so obvious that it impacts other situations and people which are important to us!

Instead of building up these incidents, we do better if we focus on changing what we can for the better and leave alone those things we can't change.

When we start looking at our daily encounters that way, we find that there's enough in our own selves we can focus on improving to keep us pretty busy.

When we start improving ourselves, we find more people listen to us and share their ideas with us!!

## **The Past is Behind Us!**

It's nice to remember the past events, people we knew and achievements that we had.

But, we lose a lot of value if we try to bring too much of it along with us.

Many people keep reviving old battles and disappointments which they had and lost years before.

Like the driver who cut you off yesterday in traffic, the other people probably forgot that incident soon afterward.

If we keep raking those cold coals, we'll just get more mental stress which will make it harder for us to deal with current challenges and make new achievements harder as well.

This habit becomes stronger as time goes on.

It affects our attitude and current interactions.

The way to break the hold it has is to realize the cost it is extracting from us.

Then, you will probably start doing a mental shift when those old wounds start releasing more poisonous thoughts. For some people, that is enough!

Other people need a bit more emphasis.

They might arrange a few minutes in private, where they can sit comfortably.

Write a brief description of the incident on some paper You don't need a lot of detail because it will be gone in a few minutes.

Now, tear up the paper and burn it in a safe container.

After it has burned, put the ashes in the rubbish and the memory will start to fade.

This will be the opportunity to start making more and better memories which are the only ones we really want to carry into the future.

## **Improve Your Communication**

Under the pressure of modern life, we may tend to become less effective at communicating with our family, friends and colleagues.

This can have serious consequences if people start to think that we don't care when it's just we don't think there is a problem.

Our personal and professional connections are an important part of our lives.

Follow these suggestions to keep them humming and we'll all be happier and more connected.

### ***Listening***

The most effective communicators are usually better than average listeners.

If you forget names as soon as you are introduced to someone, they get a poor impression as does the person who introduced that person to you.

If someone's name doesn't register clearly, ask them to spell it – they'll be pleased that you show you want to get it right.

Then, use their name a couple of times in that first conversation. That will help to start a strong mental record in your mind.

When someone else is talking, focus on listening rather than thinking about what you want to say next or searching the room for other people you might want to speak to.

Let other people say what they want to without interrupting. Although you may have something you think is more important for the group to hear, they will resent you cutting them short.

### ***Talking:***

Keep to subjects of common interest. Many people cannot resist bringing in stories about their families or others who are not in or even known to the whole group.

Those stories have their place but they make people who don't know those involved feel excluded and they will look for ways to politely go to other groups where they are appreciated.

If someone is not speaking, try to draw them out so they can make a better connection with the group. If they don't respond, let things be. You will find that they and others will appreciate you made an effort to connect with them.

Keep the conversation polite so that nobody is intentionally offended or excluded.

Avoid using jargon which may only be clear to a few of those present. It shows you are knowledgeable but doesn't help the whole group.

If someone tries to join the group, give them some room and attention. After all, we all go through that stage and appreciate a hand.

Don't give out your business card unless someone actually asks for it.

## Dust off those Dreams and Goals

We all have created goals and dreams as we go through life.

Many have to be put aside, possibly forever because of changing circumstances or life choices.

But, we can sometimes go back and dust one or more of them off for



further attention later on.

After all, we may not ever become a world champion golfer at 45 , but we can have a good time even later on.

We can adjust our targets and ambitions and still enjoy the activities which we put aside before.

Of course, we could watch the pros on TV but the benefits of participation at any level will do more for our health and satisfaction, so keep that in mind.

That can apply to almost any activity. If you wanted to be a photographer when you were younger, you can always take that up and the latest equipment makes it easier to get great pictures than ever before.

If you can't find the energy to start again with those dreams, there are plenty of others which you might find easier to get enthusiastic about!



## The Only Things They Regret



A palliative nurse, Bronnie Ware recorded the regrets of people she was nursing in their last days. That became a best-selling book called “The top 5 Regrets of the Dying”.

Consider these and perhaps make plans so that you fulfill your desires and don't leave any major regrets

when it is your time. You'll have a better life and be a great example for those around you with an attitude that can help them deal with the situation then.

1. I wish I'd lived a life true to myself instead of what others expected of me.
2. I wish I had not worked so hard.
3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.
4. I wish I'd stayed in touch with my friends.
5. I wish I had allowed myself to be happier.

All these regrets were expressed by many people of varied backgrounds. They reflect that for all our differences, we have a lot of common values and desires.

These 5 things are simple choices which could improve many lives.

Give yourself time to think about them and what others you might add or replace some of them with.

The choices are yours – after all, it is YOUR LIFE!

## Take Action for a Better Life



If you want to improve your life and your connections with those around you, the suggestions I've shared so far demonstrate it's probably easier than you think.

Some are easy to share and others you will probably not mention, just let the effects

of the changes become apparent.

One thing which is easy to do without realizing the damage it can cause is to put the blame for everything on someone ... other than yourself.

They may have made a mistake this time but I'm sure we've all had our share.

If we always react by finding someone to blame for any misstep or problem, people will generally avoid telling us about them and let us find out when the consequences surface.

The first thing to do when there's a problem is to check what the effects will be.

Some will be avoidable and some fixable.

How serious is it?

Who is the best person to fix the problem? Often, it's the person who made the error. But, be prepared to help if they simply don't have the knowledge or training to get it fixed when the pressure is on. That will make them more confident about asking for your help in future.

Give them the opportunity and it's in their interest to do the best they possibly can.

When you work through the problem proactively like this, you show leadership and confidence in the other people as well.

## **Give Your Kids Room to Grow**

I know kids are not indestructible – they just think they are.

Teenagers seem to KNOW they are!

We naturally try to protect the small kids from the consequences of their actions because they're small and fairly inexperienced.

But, that can work against their own best interests and ours.

If we don't give them room to experiment and spread their wings, they'll be poor flyers.

And they'll stay dependent on outside help far longer.

Keep them in view while you can, but let them explore and experiment.

They're surprisingly resilient if we just give them a chance to build their skills and self-image.

Of course, there are serious risks to their safety which were not so evident when we were their age.

So, we must be careful about stranger danger and other problems. But, even those problems were about all along.

Two things that changed were the level of reporting about them and the breakdown of neighborhood connections.

And, the villains had easier access to our kids in many areas.

We have to be alert and cautious but we need to find ways which we can let our kids have as much of the freedom our constitution promises as we can.

## Criticism

Everyone is a critic.

We love to give our opinion and do as often as possible.

That’s okay as long as we are fair with our words and respect the person who we criticize.

If somebody asks for your opinion of something they did, match your reply to their intentions and effort.

I would never lie about something, but I’d never feel I must tell them to give up an activity they have been trying hard to succeed in.

Remember that someday you will be the one being judged and you will hope that people are fair to you and what you put in to the work.

If you ask for criticism, you have to accept what is offered.

But, always take what’s useful and leave anything which is ill-intentioned there, or you will be starting another lot of mental anguish which will affect your ability to produce the best work much more than the unfair criticism did.

I don’t criticize children’s efforts in sport and other activities but I think the trend to make everyone a winner is going too far.

The real world is not like that, and even small kids know what the scores are in their games, even if the adults don’t have any “official” scores.

The kids accept the real result and it makes them try more next time just like the adults do!

## **Look at Others' Reality**

Before I started to break out of the cocoon of worry I'd spun around myself, I had a few months of volunteering help at a local charity.

That was a wonderful and very worthwhile experience.

The time I spent with people who had challenges far beyond my little problems gave me a reality check.

They were mostly upbeat and had not lost their spirit or hope.

Some had physical challenges but kept smiling.

Why?

Because they found things in their lives to smile about.

That's when the penny dropped.

If they had reason to smile, I must have as well. I just wasn't focused right.

## **Education for Everybody, Anytime!**

One of the greatest benefits of wide access to the Internet is the ease of access to all kinds of educational opportunities.

In the last few years, Universities and other educational establishments have started to offer online courses. Many are free to do.

The courses offered are known as M.O.O.C's or Massive Open Online Courses. They are available to almost everybody and most are free.

Some providers charge a fee for certificates or other services but these are optional in most cases.

The two organizations listed here are just prominent, established examples. There are many more in the U.S.A. and several other countries.

### **Coursera**

<https://www.coursera.org/>

Take free online classes from 80+ top universities and organizations. Coursera is a social entrepreneurship company partnering with Stanford University, Yale and other institutions.

Claiming 9.6 million users and 767 courses from their education partners.

It is a for-profit organization. The income comes from verified certificates for completing courses, tuition and other related services for its students when they want them.

### **Khan Academy**

<https://khanacademy.org/>

The Khan Academy is an online resource offering a wide range of video-based courses on subjects ranging from maths to biology at various levels. You could use the courses in full or brush up on particular sections which you need. Anyone of any age is welcome and the material is being translated when possible into a number of languages.

Khan Academy, like other providers, is constantly reviewing and adjusting the methods and systems in line with feedback and results obtained.

## **Improving Your Reading and Remembering**

After we have left school for a few years, we start to have great amounts of written material to consume and act on.

The paperless office is still only a dream!

Although our teachers tried to give us good reading habits, many struggle to keep up with the daily flood.

The addition of the Internet and entertainment media increases the load without always improving the quality.

These tips will help you to master the flood, reduce the rubbish inflicted on you and make better use of the rest.

The first thing is to review and cut the amount of material you get.

It's up to you what you watch, listen to or read. If you're struggling, cut back on what you are just getting because you used to be interested in it or it had value a while back.

Then, you decide whether you even need to see some of the material. Should someone else handle it or should it just be cancelled?

The next step is to think twice before you sign up for any new newsletters or other material.

Each day, ask yourself if the subscriptions you have are serving you or are the suppliers getting more value than you are?

When you have some reading to do, give it your full attention. If it doesn't deserve your focus, maybe you don't need to give it so much time? Put your phone on silent, close your door and read.

You will find that it's quicker and you retain more of the important information.

If you find unfamiliar words, look them up. Ensure that you understand their meaning and try to use them where appropriate in your writing so that they are stored firmly in your subconscious.

Don't worry about learning lots of facts which are not relevant to your main interests and activities.

As Henry Ford demonstrated, People with knowledge are worth no more

than the cost of a newspaper.

But, people with ideas about how to use that knowledge can be very successful!

When you read or view something which requires action, make a note and take the action as soon as possible.

When you read some material, try to write a short note, maybe a few hundred words which show you understand the material and note the most relevant points for you and your business or family.

When you meet someone that has a knowledge about an area which you don't know, instead of changing the subject, ask some relevant questions. You will learn about something which may at any time be useful in unexpected ways simply because you have the basic knowledge and probably a new friend.

If you want to improve your memory, the above paragraphs will help.

Basically, memorizing anything is a combination of focusing on the information and applying it in a practical way as soon as possible.



## It's Your Choice



If you have recognized a few challenges that are blocking you from goals and a better life while you were reading, the good news is that it's fairly easy to start changing things for the better.

Most of the problems covered here are caused from trying to move forward faster than you are able to at that point.

Or, you have been conditioned by your mentors or your own thinking to accept that you are less capable than you probably are.

To have the best and easiest transition to a better happier future, start small and plan each step.

You can't change a bad habit for a good one in less than four weeks.

If it takes you longer, that's okay because you are not just improving your ability in that area.

You will be getting a new method of handling other problems fixed in a solid track in your subconscious mind, overriding the older destructive one.

Rome wasn't built in a day and neither will the brighter you.

But, other people will see a difference before you do.

Your first realization of improvement may be from their reactions to you improving.

That day is closer than you may think.

So is a happier and more relaxed future.

***Inez Mallet***

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