

**BEST
SELF**

**BE YOU, ONLY
BETTER**

MIKE BAYER

The information in this book has been carefully researched by the author and is intended to be a source of information only. While the methods contained herein can and do work, readers are urged to consult with their physicians or other professional advisors to address specific medical or other issues that may be preventing readers from becoming their best selves. The author and the publisher assume no responsibility for any injuries suffered or damages or losses incurred during or as a result of the use or application of the information contained herein.

Names and identifying characteristics of some individuals have been changed to preserve their privacy.

BEST SELF. Copyright © 2019 by Michael Bayer. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, address HarperCollins Publishers, 195 Broadway, New York, NY 10007.

HarperCollins books may be purchased for educational, business, or sales promotional use. For information, please email the Special Markets Department at SPsales@harpercollins.com.

FIRST EDITION

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data has been applied for.

ISBN 978-0-06291173-5

19 20 21 22 23 LSC 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Here is a list of positive traits to consider. You can circle ones that apply to you or add them to your own list.

| | | | |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| able | charming | disciplined | functional |
| abundant | cheerful | discreet | gallant |
| accomplished | cheery | directed | generous |
| achiever | clean | dutiful | gentle |
| active | clear-headed | demonstrative | genuine |
| adept | clever | dynamic | good-natured |
| admirable | colorful | ecstatic | giving |
| affectionate | comfortable | efficient | gracious |
| affluent | companionable | elegant | gorgeous |
| agreeable | compassionate | eloquent | graceful |
| alert | complete | empathetic | grateful |
| altruistic | conciliatory | energetic | great |
| amiable | confident | enthusiastic | hardworking |
| approachable | constructive | ethical | happy |
| appreciative | content | exciting | healthy |
| articulate | conventional | expert | hearty |
| attractive | cool | empowered | heroic |
| amicable | cooperative | fair | helpful |
| at ease | considerate | faithful | honest |
| attentive | contemplative | fearless | honorable |
| autonomous | courageous | firm | humble |
| beneficial | courteous | flexible | hospitable |
| blissful | cordial | free | humane |
| brilliant | creative | forgiving | humorous |
| benevolent | daring | friendly | idealistic |
| balanced | decent | focused | imaginative |
| calm | decisive | forthright | incorruptible |
| capable | dedicated | fun-loving | independent |
| captivating | deep | fruitful | innovative |
| careful | dignified | full | inoffensive |

| | | | |
|------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| intuitive | perceptive | responsible | sweet |
| ingenious | personable | responsive | sympathetic |
| inspired | persuasive | reverential | teacherly |
| inspiring | playful | romantic | tender |
| intelligent | philanthropic | sage | thorough |
| inventive | perceptive | sane | thoughtful |
| kind to others | polished | satisfied | tidy |
| kind inner voice | positive | scholarly | tolerant |
| knowledgeable | powerful | secure | trusting |
| leader | practical | selfless | trustworthy |
| liberated | precise | self-sufficient | unassuming |
| lively | popular | sensible | understanding |
| logical | principled | sensitive | uncomplaining |
| lovable | profound | shameless | undogmatic |
| loyal | protective | serious | urbane |
| loving | prudent | skillful | undivided |
| magnanimous | punctual | smart | useful |
| mature | purposeful | sober | valuable |
| methodical | private | sociable | venturesome |
| meticulous | productive | sophisticated | vigorous |
| modest | proficient | spontaneous | warm |
| moral | prolific | sporting | warmhearted |
| neat | prosperous | spiritual | watchful |
| nurturing | proud | stable | welcoming |
| open | quick | steadfast | whole |
| optimistic | rational | steady | wise |
| orderly | realistic | stoic | worthwhile |
| organized | reflective | strong | zany |
| objective | reasonable | studious | zealous |
| passionate | relaxed | suave | |
| patient | reliable | subtle | |
| patriotic | resourceful | stylish | |
| peaceful | respectful | supportive | |

Anything about yourself that you find to be a positive attribute, that you don't see above, write down below:

My Best Self Traits _____

It can be tough to write down our best traits because we don't exactly sit around thinking about how great we are constantly. That's not human nature. We're far more prone to pick ourselves apart. But hopefully by the end of this book, you will be truly embracing and acknowledging all your best traits—it is a far more productive and proactive activity!

Soon you're going to be looking at yourself objectively, as if you're on the outside looking in, and really *seeing* yourself, maybe even for the first time. This requires a heightened self-awareness, so it might take some time. You may even want to ask a trusted confidant, if you have one, for some help in getting started. If you do, just make sure that person has no agenda, and only wants you to be at your best.

Exercise: Create Your Best Self

Refer back to the list of traits you just wrote down, the ones you like most about yourself. These will help you give shape to your Best Self character. I want to take a moment here to remind you that this should be fun; you can infuse this exercise with humor or you can be serious. Whatever you feel.

These questions can help you get started:

Is your Best Self:

- A particular gender?
- An animal?
- A mystical creature? Or a wise voice inside yourself?
- A character inspired by a book or movie?

Does your Best Self have a motto or tagline?

Does your Best Self behave in a particular way when someone is being kind to you?

Does your Best Self behave in a particular way when you're feeling threatened?

What does your Best Self believe about you?

Does your Best Self move/walk/dance in a specific way?

What is your Best Self's #1 superpower?

Now, write a full description of your Best Self here:

Draw your Best Self here:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for drawing. It occupies most of the page below the instruction.

How Are You Coaching Yourself?

Folks typically hire me as a life coach because they want to improve an area of their life; they're usually stuck in place and need help getting unstuck or finding a new perspective. The role of a life coach varies—but any good one will not only help you identify your goals, but also coach you on how to get them. They should also hold you accountable to what you want to create in their life.

As you will see throughout this book, I will also coach you toward identifying your blind spots and booby traps because they can be problematic. I like to ask folks if they have clear goggles. What I mean by that is if they are looking out with clear focus, or their vision is being blurred by their ego. We all have behaviors or thought patterns that are negatively impacting our lives and preventing us from evolving and growing. Some examples are when we lack humility or have an insatiable need to be right. Now is the time to confront them and, if they are not serving you in a positive way, release them and replace them with positive ones. Or, if you have a tendency to set yourself up for failure in certain areas of your life, we'll also put a stop to that. Since I won't be by your side to talk through every decision you need to make, make sure you give some "life coach" qualities to your Best Self character so that he or she can step up in my place for the rest of your life.

Here are some questions to get you thinking like a Life Coach:

- How will your Best Self help you remain fearless?
- How will your Best Self help you to feel no shame about who you are in this life?
- How will your Best Self help you remain honest with yourself and others?
- How will your Best Self help you maintain that kind, compassionate inner voice at all times?

- How will your Best Self help you feel empowered in all situations?
- How will your Best Self help you remain grateful?
- How will your Best Self help you feel free to be who you truly are?

Write out the “life coach” characteristics of your Best Self here:

_____ 's Gratitude List

I am grateful for . . .

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Here is a list of common Anti-Self traits to consider. You can circle ones that apply to you or add them to your own list.

| | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| abrasive | conformist | dull | inert |
| abrupt | confused | egotistical | inhibited |
| agonizing | contemptible | egocentric | insincere |
| aimless | cowardly | erratic | insulting |
| anxious | crass | escapist | irrational |
| angry | criminal | faithless | irresponsible |
| apathetic | critical | false | irritable |
| arbitrary | crude | fatalistic | jealous |
| argumentative | cynical | fickle | lazy |
| arrogant | cheater | fixed | lethargic |
| artificial | clingy | foolish | loud |
| asocial | conceited | follower | malicious |
| awkward | confusing | gloomy | mannerless |
| bland | deceitful | greedy | mean |
| bitter | demanding | graceless | miserable |
| boring | destructive | gullible | misguided |
| brutal | depressed | grim | money-minded |
| calculating | disagreeable | hateful | monstrous |
| callous | devious | haughty | moody |
| cantankerous | dishonest | hostile | messy |
| careless | dirty | ignorant | narcissistic |
| charmless | discouraging | impatient | needy |
| childish | disloyal | inconsiderate | narrow |
| clumsy | disobedient | indiscreet | neglectful |
| coarse | disorderly | inferior | negative |
| cold | disrespectful | insecure | obnoxious |
| colorless | disruptive | insensitive | obsessive |
| complacent | dissonant | intolerant | one-dimensional |
| complaintive | distractible | indulgent | one-sided |
| compulsive | dogmatic | incurious | overly |
| condemnatory | domineering | impulsive | opinionated |

| | | | |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| oppressive | rigid | thoughtless | unpleasant |
| passive | reactionary | tense | unpolished |
| paranoid | scheming | troubled | unrealistic |
| pedantic | self-centered | unappreciative | unsupportive |
| perverse | sedentary | uncaring | unwelcoming |
| petty | secretive | undisciplined | uptight |
| perfectionist | shortsighted | unhealthy | unstable |
| pessimistic | self-indulgent | ungrateful | unreliable |
| pompous | selfish | unreliable | vacuous |
| possessive | sly | unlovable | vague |
| questionable | small-thinking | unfriendly | venomous |
| rude | stiff | unable | vindictive |
| regretful | stingy | unaffectionate | vulnerable |
| repressed | stoic | unethical | vain |
| resentful | tactless | unexciting | weak |
| ritualistic | treacherous | unintelligent | |

Anything about yourself that you find to be a negative attribute, and that you don't see above, write down below:

Anti-Self Traits _____

Create Your Anti-Self

Referring to the negative traits you wrote about above, let's now begin to give shape to your Anti-Self. As you dip into your imagination for this exercise, remember that this is meant to be an exag-

generation of this version of yourself. I believe it's healthy to be able to laugh at ourselves, if only a little. If we're so tightly wound that we can't poke fun at ourselves at times, then we're just taking ourselves too seriously. Also, the overexaggeration of our traits helps us remember them. Thus, when we think or behave in a certain way, we can stop and assess: "Am I acting out of my Best Self, or my Anti-Self?" And we have powerful imagery attached to both.

One of my Anti-Self characters is "Angelos." He loves to provoke people, he's impatient, and he really rears his ugly head whenever he feels like people are being dishonest. He lacks compassion and refuses to accept that some folks will tell white lies out of their own fear. He's impulsive. He can't stand news, weather, and sports conversations. He is untrusting. My friends know about this character and they have pointed him out to me in the past, but I can honestly say that Angelos's volume is low to non-existent these days.

As you work on fleshing out your Anti-Self, keep in mind that it's perfectly fine if you need to create several different characters that are various versions of your Anti-Self. You can give each of them their own set of qualities and appearances.

In the same way that a screenwriter fully fleshes out his or her characters before writing a word of dialogue in a movie script, I want you to have a full, complete picture and understanding of who your Anti-Self character is. The clearer the image is in your mind, the easier it will be for you to predict what might trigger him or her to react or influence your behavior. And it will also help your Best Self in keeping him or her at bay.

Here are some questions to get you started on creating your Anti-Self:

Is your Anti-Self:

- A particular gender?
- An animal?
- A mystical creature?
- A character inspired by a book or movie?

Does your Anti-Self have a tagline?

Does your Anti-Self move/walk/dance in a specific way?

Does your Anti-Self behave in a particular way when someone is being kind to you?

Does your Anti-Self behave in a particular way when you're feeling threatened?

What does your Anti-Self believe about you?

What does your Anti-Self wear?

Write a full description of your Anti-Self here: _____

Name five recent events or situations when you know your Anti-Self was taking charge of the situation.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Now, grab a pen or pencil, marker, or paintbrush; it's time to sketch out your Anti-Self. Get as detailed as you can!

Draw your Anti-Self character here:



Before we go on, take a moment to assign a name to your Anti-Self and write it at the top of the image you created.

Now ask yourself how you would handle those five situations if you were acting as your Best Self. In other words, what would your Best Self tell you differently if he or she were in charge instead?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What Charges Your Authenticity Battery?

What were you doing the last time that you felt truly alive, like you were firing on all cylinders? When you felt like you were fully plugged in to your life?

The answers to those questions may pop right into your mind, allowing you to relive those moments. Alternatively, you might still be scratching your head and wondering if you've ever *really* felt that way. But having those moments of ultimate rejuvenation, feeling fully charged, is what I like to call charging your authenticity battery. These moments are key in your life, and necessary.

Let's explore together and discover what it is that charges your authenticity battery.

- Right now, take a moment to think about what makes you feel truly alive and write it here: _____

- When was the last time you did that activity? _____

- Based on the type of activity that you've identified as charging your authenticity battery, what does this tell you about your Best Self? _____

- What areas of your life match up with your Best Self? _____

- What areas of your life do not match up with your Best Self?

When you look at the information you wrote down above, does it seem as though what you do in your life mostly matches up with who you are authentically? If so, that's exciting because it means our work together will be focused on fine-tuning and/or working problems in specific areas.

On the other hand, does it seem more like you've buried your core self under piles of the messy stuff in life? That's okay too, because we're about to start digging!

Now, Rate Your Readiness for Change

It's time to start your journey. Are you really ready? I'd like for you to rate yourself, on a scale of 1–10, on the five factors we've been discussing: curiosity, honesty, openness, willingness, and focus.

1=Not at all 5=Getting there 10=100%, I'm all in!

1. How curious are you to learn about who you really are, even if you might find that person to be different from who you are right now?

CIRCLE ONE: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. How honest are you going to be with yourself as you do the exercises in this book? Will you shine a bright light on every corner of your life and mind?

CIRCLE ONE: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. How open are you to making changes necessary in order to improve your life?

CIRCLE ONE: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. How willing are you to go to whatever lengths are necessary to improve your life and create a consistent connection with your Best Self?

CIRCLE ONE: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. How focused are you on the tasks at hand within the pages and exercises in this book?

CIRCLE ONE: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

If you did not circle 10 on all of these questions, ask yourself this: what do you need to do right now in order to reach a 10? Write it down here: _____

Fear Inventory Quiz

All too often in our lives, we succumb to fears. We may not realize that fear is at the heart of something that we're allowing to stand in our way, so an imperative step is to examine what's holding us back and find out whether fear is at the heart of it. Franklin D. Roosevelt famously said in his inaugural address, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." Why is that? Fear is a liar. It would have you believe that you are not good enough, that you are not capable enough, that everyone is judging you, and then you act accordingly. Most of the time, the things we are afraid of never even occur. Imagine that—we are spending time and energy worrying about something that never plays out. What if we were able to use that brainpower on positive action, on something that helps us move forward in our life, instead of making us stand still, stuck right where we are? We can. It's possible. It begins by getting honest with ourselves about our fears so that they can't become entrenched in our minds.

I don't want any fears standing between you and your Best Self, so let's take the time to identify them and then tackle them, one by one.

Part 1: What are you afraid of?

We're going to start this process off with a little free association. I'm going to ask you a question, and I want you to start writing down all the words that come to mind immediately after you read it. Don't hesitate for even a moment—just start writing. And don't stop until you run out of words or start repeating them.

Looking at what we are afraid of is a vital step in this process, though it's a very powerful and often emotional exercise. It's tough shining a light on your fears, but it's so worth it in the end. All of us, at some point in our lives, have allowed fear to have power

over us in some way. Once you've mastered the ability to recognize what triggers your fear as well as, crucially, when it starts, you can keep fear from taking root and actually shaping your life. *You* call the shots in your life, not fear. So, let's clear out the fear!

Ready? Good. Now, here's the question:

What are some of the fears that have held you back from making changes in your life?

Part 2: Fear Pattern

You may not have realized that some of those fears were prowling around in your mind, or maybe you've just been avoiding them. What I want you to know right now is that you are not alone. Other people have overcome these same fears. You can, too. By being bold and brave enough to bring those fears to the forefront, you've just taken the first step in facing them down. Now, let's take the next step.

Looking at your list, do you notice any patterns? Can you easily group several of your fears into broader categories such as humiliation, worthlessness, or lack of approval? Maybe most of your fears boil down to the notion of you not being lovable or valuable to others? When you look at the list, does one overall theme seem to be present? For instance, does the through-line seem to be that you're afraid you can't stick with the plan required for your life to change? Or are you petrified of failure? Of what other people think? That you don't deserve better? Take a close look and then write down what you see.

The overarching reason I've been afraid to change is:

Part 3: Put Your Fear to the Test

You're doing great—look how much you've just learned about yourself in a matter of minutes! When we really start asking these questions, we begin to understand ourselves and our motivations on a whole new level. Now, let's build on the great work you've done so far.

Think of your brain as a muscle. In the same way you can go to the gym and strengthen your biceps through training, you can train your brain. In fact, whether you're doing it purposely or not, you're constantly training your brain to think in certain ways. Taking that concept a step further, it could be that you've inadvertently trained your brain to be afraid of things that you don't need to fear. That's right; you might be operating every single day and making decisions around a fear of something that isn't *real*.

For the sake of clarity, I'll give you a simple example. Let's say you are preparing for a presentation at work. You've prepared your talking points, you've done your research, and you know just what you want to say. But every time you go to practice the talk, you freeze up, paralyzed with fear. You're imagining all of your coworkers laughing out loud as you stand at the head of the conference table. You see yourself showing up to the meeting naked. You fixate on a certain point you want to make and get tongue-tied every time you try to utter it. The reality is—it's a two-minute presentation that is well within your abilities and experience, but

your mind is caught up in a sticky spiderweb of fears run amok. If you believe the lies that your fear is telling you, it can have real-life consequences.

In your everyday life, are you spending valuable time and energy being afraid of something that isn't real and poses no actual threat to you? Are you letting it drive your decision making on a big scale? Has your imagination gotten the best of you?

Refer to your answer in Part 2—the reason you've been afraid to change. Now, let's test that fear:

1. Is it factually true?
2. Does it serve your best interests?
3. Does it generate progress toward healthy goals?

These questions can help you determine if your fear is rational or not.

For example, if you're miserable in your job and you want to start your own business, have you been afraid that you won't be able to make ends meet or you'll lose everything? That could be a very rational fear, but there is a way to address it. What is going to help you overcome that fear and start that business? The answer is a financial safety net. In this case, you've identified a fear of financial ruin, so the way to prevent that fear from becoming a reality is to save up enough money that you can survive for _____ number of months (you fill in the blank with what makes you comfortable) before you quit your current job. In so doing, you've mitigated the risk and effectively abolished that fear. Now that you've moved that fear obstacle out of the way, you can confidently continue on your journey toward being your own boss.

So, now I want you to write down your rational, legitimate fear, what it's stopping you from doing in your life, and then create a plan that you can put into place to prevent the fear from becoming a reality.

My fear is: _____

It is keeping me from: _____

My plan for preventing my fear from becoming a reality is:

Here's an example:

My fear is: *Being rejected*

It is keeping me from: *Trying new things, meeting new people, and allowing life to work itself out. It causes anxiety when I have to meet new people, it makes me feel like I'm not myself when I'm around coworkers because I'm wanting them to like me, and I feel the need to try to control everything.*

My plan for preventing my fear from becoming a reality is: *To remind myself when I feel rejected that life is trying to deliver something new and better, and to find happiness in that belief.*

Do this as many times as you need for as many fears as are standing in your way. Once you've got a plan in place for each one, you have taken the power away from the fear and therefore rendered it powerless.

Part 4: Faith Beats Fear Every Time

I believe the opposite of fear is faith. There's an old English proverb that I had inscribed on a key chain years ago. It says, "Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered. No one was there." If you have faith that things are going to work out and faith in yourself that you are capable of doing what's required, then you take all power away from your fears, and in fact, your fears cease to exist. For many people, getting past our fears is a matter of letting go of them and replacing them with faith.

The next time you recognize that fear has crept in and is keeping you from positive change, try this visualization technique:

1. Close your eyes and imagine the fear. Gather up all the visual images in your mind that accompany the fear, as well as the negative feelings it produces within you.
2. Now put all of those items inside a big, cardboard box in your mind.
3. Then, make the box smaller, and smaller, and smaller until it fits right into the palm of your hand.
4. Now imagine yourself standing at the edge of a giant canyon, so deep that you can't see the bottom.
5. Throw the box in and watch it fall until it's out of sight.
6. Imagine yourself turning around, and when you do, there's an outdoor shower.
7. Turn on the water, and let a warm, loving sensation wash over your entire body.
8. Open your eyes and embrace the feeling of being refreshed and renewed by your faith.

You can return to this visualization anytime you need to, as it can strengthen you and help you have freedom over your fears.

Exercise: Self-Affirmations

- Look in a mirror or your phone. Typically, when we look in the mirror, we are purely looking at our aesthetics: the outfit we're wearing, our hair, or maybe we even zero in on a mole we should have checked. But for our purposes, you're looking beyond aesthetics. When was the last time you looked, and I mean really looked, into your own eyes?
- What do you see? Who are you? What are some things that you truly love about yourself? Do you see someone who is strong? Kind? Generous? Loyal? Loving? Funny? Outgoing? Quiet? Think about words that describe not how the world sees you, but how you see yourself, **positive** words that are *true* about you, on every level.
- The ego inside of you may make this difficult in that it might make you drift away from your positive attributes and toward negative aspects. You might even think something **positive** like "I'm a loving person," but then that ego voice pops up and says, "Yeah, but if people really got to know you, they'd discover you're not *that* lovable." Be aware of that voice.
- Write down 5–10 truths about yourself, starting with the phrase "I am _____ ..." Fill them in here:

1. I am _____
2. I am _____
3. I am _____
4. I am _____
5. I am _____
6. I am _____
7. I am _____

8. I am _____
9. I am _____
10. I am _____

Now, say these sentences out loud to yourself, while looking in the mirror.

The first time people try out self-affirmations, they can be a little intimidating or even make you feel foolish, but I promise it gets easier with time. They are a cornerstone of the work we'll be doing together because they get to the heart of who you are inside, and they help you stay connected to your Best Self.

Social Skills Inventory

The following inventory exercise can help you take a step back and look at how you interact with others in an objective manner. As you go through, make sure you fully understand each statement before you answer, and then answer as honestly as you can.

PART 1: Sending Clear Messages

USUALLY SOMETIMES SELDOM

1. Is it difficult for you to talk to other people?

2. When you are trying to explain something, do others tend to put words in your mouth, or finish your sentences for you?

3. In conversation, do your words usually come out the way you would like?

4. Do you find it difficult to express your ideas when they differ from the ideas of people around you?

5. Do you assume that the other person knows what you are trying to say, and leave it to him/her to ask you questions?

6. Do others seem interested and attentive when you are talking to them?

7. When speaking, is it easy for you to recognize how others are reacting to what you are saying?

8. Do you ask the other person to tell you how she/he feels about the point you are trying to make?

9. Are you aware of how your tone of voice may affect others?

10. In conversation, do you look to talk about things of interest to both you and the other person?

PART 2: Listening

USUALLY SOMETIMES SELDOM

11. In conversation, do you tend to do more talking than the other person does?

12. In conversation, do you ask the other person questions when you don't understand what they've said?

13. In conversation, do you often try to figure out what the other person is going to say before they've finished talking?

14. Do you find yourself not paying attention while in conversation with others?

15. In conversation, can you easily tell the difference between what the person is saying and how he/she may be feeling?

16. After the other person is done speaking, do you clarify what you heard them say before you offer a response?

17. In conversation, do you tend to finish sentences or supply words for the other person?

18. In conversation, do you find yourself paying the most attention to facts and details, and frequently missing the emotional tone of the speakers' voice?

19. In conversation, do you let the other person finish talking before reacting to what she/he says?

20. Is it difficult for you to see things from the other person's point of view?

PART 3: Giving and Receiving Feedback

| | USUALLY | SOMETIMES | SELDOM |
|--|---------|-----------|--------|
| 21. Is it difficult to hear or accept constructive criticism from the other person? | | | |
| 22. Do you refrain from saying something that you think will upset someone or make matters worse? | | | |
| 23. When someone hurts your feelings, do you discuss this with him/her? | | | |
| 24. In conversation, do you try to put yourself in the other person's shoes? | | | |
| 25. Do you become uneasy when someone pays you a compliment? | | | |
| 26. Do you find it difficult to disagree with others because you are afraid they will get angry? | | | |
| 27. Do you find it difficult to compliment or praise others? | | | |
| 28. Do others remark that you always seem to think you are right? | | | |
| 29. Do you find that others seem to get defensive when you disagree with their point of view? | | | |
| 30. Do you help others to understand you by saying how you feel? | | | |

PART 4: Handling Emotional Interactions

| | USUALLY | SOMETIMES | SELDOM |
|---|---------|-----------|--------|
| 31. Do you have a tendency to change the subject when the other person's feelings enter into the discussion? | | | |
| 32. Does it upset you a great deal when someone disagrees with you? | | | |
| 33. Do you find it difficult to think clearly when you are angry with someone? | | | |
| 34. When a problem arises between you and another person, can you discuss it without getting angry? | | | |
| 35. Are you satisfied with the way you handle differences with others? | | | |
| 36. Do you sulk for a long time when someone upsets you? | | | |
| 37. Do you apologize to someone whose feelings you may have hurt? | | | |
| 38. Do you admit when you're wrong? | | | |
| 39. Do you avoid or change the topic if someone is expressing his or her feelings in a conversation? | | | |
| 40. When someone becomes upset, do you find it difficult to continue the conversation? | | | |

* Adapted from *Learning Resources*, 2002.

Scoring Key

Good work completing the inventory! I hope you can already see how it is useful to look at how clearly you currently communicate with others. Now go back and look over all of your answers and in front of each question, write the appropriate score using this table.

For example, if you answered “usually” for Question 1, you would write down 0 in front of Question 1 on the inventory. If you answered “seldom” for Question 2, write down a 3 in front of Question 2.

Each part of the inventory has ten total questions. After you’ve scored them all, add them up and then write them below. Repeat the process for all four parts.

Part 1 (Sending Clear Messages) Total Score: _____

Part 2 (Listening) Total Score: _____

Part 3 (Giving and Receiving Feedback) Total Score: _____

Part 4 (Handling Emotional Interactions) Total Score: _____

SCORING KEY

| QUESTION | USUALLY | SOMETIMES | SELDOM | QUESTION | USUALLY | SOMETIMES | SELDOM |
|----------|---------|-----------|--------|----------|---------|-----------|--------|
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 21 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 22 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 23 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 24 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| 5 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 25 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 6 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 26 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 7 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 27 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 8 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 28 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 9 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 29 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 10 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 30 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| 11 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 31 | 0 | 1 | 3 |

| QUESTION | USUALLY | SOMETIMES | SELDOM | QUESTION | USUALLY | SOMETIMES | SELDOM |
|----------|---------|-----------|--------|----------|---------|-----------|--------|
| 12 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 32 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 13 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 33 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 14 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 34 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| 15 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 35 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| 16 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 36 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 17 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 37 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| 18 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 38 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| 19 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 39 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| 20 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 40 | 0 | 1 | 3 |

Your Social Skills Profile

Now let's interpret your scores for each part.

- Scores in the 1–15 range indicate areas that need improvement.
- Scores in the 16–21 range indicate areas that need more consistent attention.
- Scores in the 22–30 range indicate areas of strength.

Write down your areas of strength and areas that could use some more attention or improvement.

Area(s) of Strength: _____

Area(s) that need more consistent attention: _____

Area(s) that need improvement: _____

Your Social Life SPHERE Quiz

PART 1: Rate your social life on a scale of 1–10. A “1” would mean that you feel your social life is in dire straits and in need of your immediate attention. A “10” would mean you feel that your social life is in fantastic shape and requires little or no improvement. Aspects of your social life to consider when assigning your rating include:

- Your communication skills, such as how you listen to others and how you accept and give feedback
- The quality and quantity of your social interactions
- Your social media life
- And most important, if your Best Self is who shows up in all of your social settings

Social Life Rating: _____ as of _____ (date)

PART 2: Now, list out some behaviors that are working in your social life and why they’re working.

Examples:

- I feel confident and authentic when I’m socializing.
- I make time for a robust social life.

Behaviors that are working in my social life are:

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

PART 3: What are some behaviors that you know are keeping you from what you want in your social life?

Examples:

- I don't believe I'm good in social situations, so I make every effort to avoid them.
- I am not authentic in my interactions with others in social settings and/or on my social media.

Behaviors that are not working for me in the area of my personal life are:

_____ Why? _____
_____ Why? _____
_____ Why? _____

PART 4: Based on everything you just wrote down, I want you to think about what you need to do in order to go from your current rating to a rating of 10 in this SPHERE of your life.

The way you'll do this is to look at behaviors you need to *continue* doing because they're working for you, behaviors you need to *stop* doing because they're keeping you from what you want, and behaviors you need to *start* doing.

In order for my social life to feel like it's at a 10,

I need to continue: _____

I need to stop: _____

I need to start: _____

At the end of the seven SPHERES chapters, you will find a chapter devoted to how to create and acquire new goals for each area of your life. You'll refer back to the exciting exploration you've done within your social life and use the valuable information you've uncovered to further your journey and improve your life on a whole.

Next, we'll venture together into your personal life, and discover new information about your most important relationship—the one with yourself.

Exercise 1: What do you say to yourself on a normal day?

How often do you really stop and listen to what you are saying to yourself? Most people rarely or never analyze their internal dialogue, but there's real value in this and here's why: our thoughts create our emotions. These emotions then dictate more thoughts, and depending upon the circumstances, they can turn into negative ones unless we are able to recognize that it's happening, hit the brakes, and redirect ourselves.

Your harshest critic lives between your two ears, but you know what? Your best, most encouraging friend can live between your two ears, too. Right now, I want you to get very familiar with what you are saying to yourself throughout the day. You can write those thoughts in this book, a journal, or your phone or tablet. You can do this exercise for a day or a week—it's up to you. It is a wonderful way of tuning in and recognizing the messages you are sending to yourself.

Starting now, every two hours, you will stop and spend just a couple of minutes checking in with yourself and answering the following questions.

Write down what you've been telling yourself about:

- What you've been doing for the past two hours:

- Your intelligence.

- Your competence.

- Your skills and abilities.

- Your worth—both self-worth and your value to other people.

- Your appearance.

If you prefer to write things down as you hear yourself saying them instead of every two hours, then by all means, do so. The point here is to develop a really clear understanding of one day's internal dialogue, but without disrupting your daily schedule.

Exercise 2: What do you say to yourself when the pressure is on?

Imagine now that you will be giving an important presentation at work tomorrow. Several key customers or clients, several of your coworkers, and your boss will all be present and watching you. It's the night before. You're lying in bed, in the dark, thinking about the presentation. What are you saying to yourself?

Take the time to honestly and thoroughly consider the kinds of messages that would be going through your head. You'd be having a conversation with yourself, so what would you be saying? Write down as much of this conversation as you can. Dig deep and really imagine this situation as if it were actually happening.

Exercise 3: What are some common themes in your internal dialogue?

Look back at what you wrote down for both Exercises 1 and 2. Do you see common themes or threads running through both sets of information? If so, what are they? Describe them here:

Exercise 4: What's the tone of your internal dialogue?

When you look back over what you wrote in Exercises 1 and 2, how would you describe the overall tone or mood of your internal dialogue?

- Is it generally positive, upbeat?
- If it is positive, is it rational? In other words, are the positive messages you're sending yourself realistic?
- Is it pessimistic or defeatist?
- Are there particular areas where your internal dialogue sounds particularly harsh or critical?
- Does your internal dialogue sound extremely optimistic or complimentary in some specific areas, but not others?
- Circle anything you wrote that illustrates especially positive or especially negative internal dialogue.

Exercise 5: What's your locus of control?

Glance back over your writing for Exercises 1 and 2 and ask yourself this question: what does your writing tell you about your locus of control, or the degree to which you believe you have control over what occurs in your life?

- Does it appear that you're telling yourself that **you** are in control of your life (**internal locus of control**), or that your life is dictated by **outside forces or individuals (external locus of control)**, or that everything is basically up to **chance**—it's the luck of the draw as to whether you have a good or bad day?
- Write down your answer:

Exercise 6: What kind of coach are you to yourself?

There is only one last thing I want you to do with this valuable data you collected about your internal dialogue. Since the goal is for you to develop your own internal life coach, as I won't be by your side every day, we want to build the skills of that coach within you and listen to what he or she has to say. Is your inner life coach a mean one who beats you up when you get off track? Or is your inner life coach encouraging? As you look at what you wrote, answer this question:

What kind of a coach are you to yourself throughout the day? Looking at the messages you recorded in Exercises 1 and 2, notice if you are the kind of coach you can count on to lift you up and encourage you? Or does your inner coach tear you down and reinforce your worst fears about yourself? *You're* the one who talks to you, all day, every day. Are you actively creating an unhealthy internal environment for yourself, and negatively influencing your experience of the world? Or are the messages that you tell yourself characterized by a rational and productive optimism? For example, if you were to decide to eat some pizza and ice cream late at night, do you say to yourself—"look at you, at it again, eating all the stuff you're not supposed to—you have no willpower, you loser!" or do you think, "Hey, don't beat yourself up. It tasted good, and you don't eat pizza or ice cream that often. It's not like you're going to wake up five pounds heavier tomorrow." Or, do you say, "Well, you already fell off the wagon; you might as well order another pizza! Round two!" Another thought you may have is, "Next time let's make it a pizza and ice cream party and have some people over!" You get the point—you can choose to talk to yourself about any given activity or decision in one of numerous

ways. That voice is your inner life coach, and the goal is for your coach to lovingly help you align with your Best Self.

What kind of coach are you to yourself? Be specific:

Stress Quiz

1. How often do you feel that you are not coping with the demands put on you?
 All the time Most of the time Rarely
2. Do you have problems going to sleep and/or staying asleep?
 All the time Most of the time Rarely
3. Do you find yourself spending less time with friends, family, and colleagues, even canceling plans or ignoring their phone calls because they just feel like something else you have to “deal with”?
 All the time Most of the time Rarely
4. Do you feel you are working harder than ever before, but somehow getting less done?
 All the time Most of the time Rarely
5. Do you find yourself afraid to make decisions?
 All the time Most of the time Rarely
6. Are you feeling anxious? Is your heart beating fast, your palms sweating?
 All the time Most of the time Rarely
7. Are you feeling tense? For instance, are your muscles tensed up, your shoulders up around your ears, and your neck and back muscles tight?
 All the time Most of the time Rarely

8. Are you feeling nervous?

- All the time Most of the time Rarely

9. Are you jumpy and unable to relax? Do you feel like if you sit down for a moment and take a deep breath, something bad might happen because you aren't worrying about it?

- All the time Most of the time Rarely

10. Do you become hostile and angry about minor things?

- All the time Most of the time Rarely

11. Do you blame others when things go wrong?

- All the time Most of the time Rarely

12. Are you critical of others' efforts?

- All the time Most of the time Rarely

13. When other family members are having stress problems, do you think you are responsible for them?

- All the time Most of the time Rarely

14. Are you avoiding having conversations about potentially stressful issues with family and friends?

- All the time Most of the time Rarely

15. Are you having fights about "everything and nothing" with loved ones such as a spouse or immediate family members?

- All the time Most of the time Rarely

16. Are you sharing fewer satisfactions with family and friends?

- All the time Most of the time Rarely

17. Are you aware that you're experiencing stress, and that it is affecting your life?
- All the time Most of the time Rarely
18. Are you having physical signs of stress, such as high blood pressure, tense muscles, and fatigue?
- All the time Most of the time Rarely
19. Are you not taking the time to restore your mind and body after stress? For instance, after a stressful event, are you neglecting self-care activities such as exercise, meditation, restorative sleep, and hydration?
- All the time Most of the time Rarely
20. Are you sad and depressed for no reason?
- All the time Most of the time Rarely

Stress Quiz Scoring

If you marked “All the time” or “Most of the time” to at least one of these questions, you may not currently have a good system in place for managing stress. It’s important to take steps toward changing that now, because stress only snowballs into more serious issues if left unchecked.

If you marked “All the time” or “Most of the time” to **more than five** of these questions, there is an even higher urgency for you to build a strategy around stress management in your life. You don’t have to live this way, but if you start to prioritize self-care and realize that it’s not “selfish” to put yourself first, you can take control over the stress. It’s never too late!

Your Personal Life Inventory

PART 1: Rate your personal life on a scale of 1–10. A “1” would mean that you feel your personal life is in dire straits and in need of your immediate attention. A “10” would mean you feel that your personal life is in fantastic shape, and requires little or no improvement. Aspects of your personal life to consider when assigning your rating include:

- Internal dialogue—what messages you’re sending yourself each day
- Self-care—your stress management system, how you treat your body and your mind
- Passions—your hobbies, playtime

Personal Life Rating: _____ as of _____ (date)

PART 2: Now, list out some behaviors that are working in your personal life and why they’re working.

Examples:

- I am actively modifying my internal dialogue so that it is positive and realistic.
- I prioritize self-care activities day to day.
- I make time to have fun and enjoy my life.

Behaviors that are working in my personal life are:

PART 3: What are some behaviors that you know are keeping you from what you want in your personal life?

Examples:

- I spend too many hours numbing out in front of the TV or doing other activities about which I'm not passionate.
- I allow my internal dialogue to reinforce negative beliefs about myself and my abilities.

Behaviors that are not working for me in the area of my personal life are:

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

PART 4: Based on everything you just wrote down, I want you to think about what you need to do in order to go from your current rating to a rating of 10 in this area of your life.

The way you'll do this is to look at behaviors you need to *continue* doing because they're working for you, behaviors you need to *stop* doing because they're keeping you from what you want, and behaviors you need to *start* doing.

In order for my social life to feel like it's at a 10,

I need to continue: _____

I need to stop: _____

I need to start: _____

How Do You Feel?

Now, I'd like to do something with you called a body scan. We're often not connected to our bodies—we don't take the time to really check in with how we feel. Close your eyes and take an inventory of your physical body. Start with the top of your head down to your toes and check in with yourself. Do you feel fullness in the gut, tightness in the neck, a headache? We become conditioned to accept small degrees or even larger degrees of pain, but that pain is our body telling us there's an underlying issue. In a lot of ways, we can treat our bodies like a house—and wait until our structure practically collapses before we address the underlying issue.

Body Scan Results:

My head feels . . . _____

My back feels . . . _____

My legs feel . . . _____

My hands feel . . . _____

My stomach/digestive system feels . . . _____

My breathing feels . . . _____

Overall, I feel . . . _____

Many of our health issues are just part of who we are. But some are a result of our habits. Let's take an inventory of some of the behaviors that may affect our health. Circle the ones from the list below that apply to you and add any that may be unique to you but aren't listed here.

Behaviors That Affect Your Health:

Smoking

Lack of sleep

Abusing alcohol

Stress

Recreational drugs

Food and Beverages That Affect Your Health:

Sugary drinks

Processed foods

Overeating

Not enough fruit and vegetables

Eating late at night

Eating out too often

Salty foods

Too little water

Fried foods

Physical Health Issues

Chronic pain

Organ issues (such as

Prone to illness

cardiovascular disease/

Bad allergies

pulmonary disease/breathing

Muscle pain

issues/kidney or gallbladder

Joint pain

problems, etc.)

Fitness

Not working out or exercising in any way

Doing workouts that could hurt you

Doing workouts that are not rigorous enough

If you are dealing with an issue with your physical health that is not listed above, write it here:

Health Inventory

Now it's time to determine what you'd like to accomplish in the area of your physical health. These questions will help you.

PART 1: First, rate your physical health on a scale of 1–10. A “1” would mean that you recognize that your health SPHERE needs your immediate attention because you are facing health challenges, and a “10” would mean that you are already taking excellent care of your overall health and you have little to no room for improvement in this SPHERE. Aspects of your health SPHERE to consider when assigning your rating include:

- how you feel physically,
- which behaviors you feel you need to change because they are negatively impacting your health,
- how your body is helping you align with your Best Self.

Physical Health Rating: _____ as of _____ (date)

PART 2: Now, list out some of your behaviors that are working well for your health and why they're working.

Examples:

- I regularly exercise in a way that feels good for my body.
- I eat foods that I know are supporting and preserving my physical health.
- I go in for checkups on a routine basis.

Behaviors that are working to protect, promote, and preserve my health are:

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

PART 3: What are some behaviors that are not working for your health, and why?

Examples:

- I am abusing some substance that is harmful to my health.
- I am neglecting some aspect of my physical health out of fear or denial.
- I am avoiding exercise because I feel that I have too far to go to achieve any degree of health.

Behaviors that are not working in the area of my health are:

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

PART 4: Based on everything you just wrote down, I want you to think about what you need to do in order to go from your current rating to a rating of 10 in this area of your life.

The way you'll do this is to look at behaviors you need to *continue* doing because they're working for you, behaviors you need to *stop* doing because they're keeping you from what you want, and behaviors you need to *start* doing.

In order for my physical health to feel like it's at a 10,

I need to continue: _____

I need to stop: _____

I need to start: _____

Exercise: Your Current Education Picture

Part 1: What do you want to learn?

Right now, I want you to write down three things that you'd love to learn about, or that you've always said you wanted to learn one day. These can be any topic that's ever been of interest to you, so reach deep inside yourself for this one. What topics is your Best Self interested in?

If you always thought you'd like to speak another language but you just haven't taken the time, put that on the list. Maybe you've wondered if taking a pottery class would be a fun way of expressing yourself creatively. Add it to the list. Perhaps you've daydreamed about getting your motorcycle license, but just never took the plunge. Maybe you saw a documentary on a specific topic, person, or point in history that really fascinated you—take that as a cue to learn more through research, books, podcasts, and more.

Whatever it is that sounds intriguing and can give you a new skill or set of information—those are the items that you should include on this list.

I would like to learn

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Part 2: Why aren't you learning these things?

Now, why *aren't* you currently spending time learning new things? Maybe you think you're too old to learn a new language. Perhaps you believe you can't create time in your life, or that you've never been smart enough to grasp new information.

Write your reasons for not learning more about the topics you wrote down in the first part of this exercise here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Part 3: Are your reasons valid or true?

Let's test your reasoning. Go through your list of reasons for why you are not currently committing time to learning more about your areas of interest, and test if those reasons are true.

For instance, if one of your reasons is that you're too old to learn something new, ask yourself if anyone your age or older has ever learned a new skill. The answer to that question is yes, of course they have! Consider Priscilla Sitienei, a midwife from a rural area of Kenya. She received no education growing up, and thus did not know how to read or write. But she had a desire to record some family history to pass down to future generations, so she began going to school with her six great-great-grandchildren . . . at the age of ninety!¹ Vera Wang didn't become a fashion designer until she was forty years old. Joy Behar was an English teacher until she started her career in showbiz when she was in her forties. Harland Sanders, whom you know as Colonel Sanders, opened his first Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant when he was sixty-five

¹ <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20170828-the-amazing-fertility-of-the-older-mind>.

years old. If these people learned and put into practice brand-new skills at an older age, so can you. Therefore, your “I’m too old” reason is neither true nor valid.

If one of your reasons is that you cannot create time in your schedule for learning about one of these items, look for thirty minutes per week to devote to your new skill. If you can find half an hour, and everyone owes themselves half an hour, then your reason is not true, and you would circle “Invalid.”

Rewrite your reasons for not learning more about topics that interest you here, and then circle Valid or Invalid after each one:

| <i>Reason</i> | <i>Circle one:</i> |
|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. _____ | Valid or Invalid |
| 2. _____ | Valid or Invalid |
| 3. _____ | Valid or Invalid |

Part 4: Commit to Learning

This exercise can be very enlightening, if you allow it to be so. The point is for you to realize that the only thing stopping you from learning something is your own excuses.

Remember, you don’t have to enroll in a formal class to continue to be educated. There are endless options for learning out there. If you like the structure of a curriculum, you can do online classes at your own pace. Or, if you want a more casual process, you can listen to podcasts, watch videos online, and read books or articles. Or perhaps you know someone who is an expert in something—you could ask them to help you in learning more about that topic or skill.

There is a lot of research backing the idea that seeking new information, building new skills, and using your brain in new ways

on a regular basis is one of the best ways to preserve the long-term health of your brain. It can slow aging, reduce your risk of dementia, and keep your brain nimble and clear for the future, but also for now.* The more you use the brain, the more you *can* use your brain. It's interesting how that works, right?

2 Matthew Solan, "Back to School: Learning a New Skill Can Slow Cognitive Aging," <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/learning-new-skill-can-slow-cognitive-aging-201604279502>.

The Most Important Lessons Are about Yourself

Education is the driver behind your evolution as your Best Self, and a very important part of that is learning more about yourself. Self-awareness is key. By remaining curious, you can always find out more about what makes you tick. You'll also uncover certain triggers that might lead to your Anti-Self stepping in, and as you do, you will gain control over those triggers.

Right now, ask yourself these three questions so that you can continue to learn about who you are and who you want to become:

How have you evolved in the last year?

How are you choosing to evolve today?

What do you want to evolve into a year from now?

If you were going to teach a room full of fifteen-year-olds a course called "Life," and the students were totally motivated to learn—like total sponges—what would you teach them? Write it here:

The point of that exercise was for you to discover your most fundamental beliefs about life. Those beliefs are going to change over time, and they might already be shifting simply because of the work you've been doing in this book. This is very telling about your own story up until the current moment.

PART 1: First, rate your educational life on a scale of 1–10, where “1” means that you need to prioritize this SPHERE and give it some immediate attention because it is severely lacking, and a “10” means that you have little to no room for improvement in the SPHERE of education. Aspects of your education SPHERE to consider when assigning your rating include:

- Your evolution in terms of learning aligns with the interests of your Best Self.
- Do you learn more about yourself every day?
- Do you go to bed each night feeling more knowledgeable than when you woke up that morning?

Work/Education Rating: _____ as of _____(date)

PART 2: Now, list out some behaviors that are working well in your educational life, and why.

Examples:

- I push myself to learn a lot, while keeping my life in balance.
- I feel passionate about what I’m learning every day.

Behaviors that are working in my educational life are:

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

PART 3: What are some behaviors that you know are keeping you from what you want in your educational life?

Examples:

- I work all week, and I just want to shut my brain off on the weekends!
- I am untrusting of new information.
- I end up watching the news and believe that is a way of educating myself when in reality, it is simply a distraction.

Behaviors that are not working for me in the area of my work/educational life are:

_____ Why? _____
_____ Why? _____
_____ Why? _____

PART 4: Based on everything you just wrote down, I want you to think about what you need to do in order to go from your current rating to a rating of 10 in this area of your life.

The way you'll do this is to look at behaviors you need to *continue* doing because they're working for you, behaviors you need to *stop* doing because they're keeping you from what you want, and behaviors you need to *start* doing.

In order for my work/educational life to feel like it's at a 10,

I need to continue: _____

I need to stop: _____

I need to start: _____

Values Exercise Part 1:

Here is a list of core values. Circle the ones that resonate with you.

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Authenticity | Kindness | Self-Regulation | Lethargy |
| Achievement | Knowledge | Intelligence | Sadness |
| Adventure | Leadership | Teamwork | Cynicism |
| Authority | Learning | Humility | Frustration |
| Autonomy | Love | Perspective | Loneliness |
| Balance | Loyalty | Social | Self-Doubt |
| Beauty | Meaningful Work | Intelligence | Depression |
| Boldness | Openness | Prudence | Futility |
| Compassion | Optimism | Appreciation | Misery |
| Challenge | Peace | Forgiveness | Sorrow |
| Citizenship | Pleasure | Perseverance | Despair |
| Community | Poise | Anger | Gloom |
| Competency | Popularity | Discouragement | Ostracism |
| Contribution | Recognition | Hostility | Suspicion |
| Creativity | Religion | Regret | Despondency |
| Curiosity | Reputation | Anxiety | Greed |
| Determination | Respect | Disinterest | Pessimism |
| Fairness | Responsibility | Humiliation | Withdrawal |
| Faith | Security | Rejection | Disappointment |
| Fame | Self-Respect | Bitterness | Guilt |
| Friendships | Service | Embarrassment | Poverty |
| Fun | Spirituality | Jealousy | Worry |
| Growth | Stability | Resignation | |
| Generosity | Success | Condemnation | |
| Honesty | Status | Failure | |
| Humor | Trustworthiness | Judgment | |
| Influence | Wealth | Rigidity | |
| Inner Harmony | Wisdom | Criticism | |
| Justice | Zest | Fear of [specify] | |

Now that you have circled all the values that apply to you, rank your top seven values from most important to least.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

All of the positive values on the list you just created above represent your character strengths. These are behaviors that should energize you and what you offer to others in relationships. However, if there are some negative values on your list, realize that those are coming from your Anti-Self, and your goal is to move away from values like that and embrace the positive values you listed.

Values Exercise Part 2:

Next, in another color circle the values that were your family of origin's. These may differ from your values, and that's okay! The idea here is to see the overlap, and the differences.

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Authenticity | Inner Harmony | Trustworthiness | Failure |
| Achievement | Justice | Wealth | Judgment |
| Adventure | Kindness | Wisdom | Rigidity |
| Authority | Knowledge | Zest | Criticism |
| Autonomy | Leadership | Self-Regulation | Fear of [specify] |
| Balance | Learning | Intelligence | Lethargy |
| Beauty | Love | Teamwork | Sadness |
| Boldness | Loyalty | Humility | Cynicism |
| Compassion | Meaningful Work | Perspective | Frustration |
| Challenge | Openness | Social Intelligence | Loneliness |
| Citizenship | Optimism | Prudence | Self-Doubt |
| Community | Peace | Appreciation | Depression |
| Competency | Pleasure | Forgiveness | Futility |
| Contribution | Poise | Perseverance | Misery |
| Creativity | Popularity | Anger | Sorrow |
| Curiosity | Recognition | Discouragement | Despair |
| Determination | Religion | Hostility | Gloom |
| Fairness | Reputation | Regret | Ostracism |
| Faith | Respect | Anxiety | Suspicion |
| Fame | Responsibility | Disinterest | Despondency |
| Friendships | Security | Humiliation | Greed |
| Fun | Self-Respect | Rejection | Pessimism |
| Growth | Service | Bitterness | Withdrawal |
| Generosity | Spirituality | Embarrassment | Disappointment |
| Honesty | Stability | Jealousy | Guilt |
| Humor | Success | Resignation | Poverty |
| Influence | Status | Condemnation | Worry |

Now, rank the top seven values that you grew up with as a child.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____

Values Exercise Part 3:

In order to see the differences between your current values and those of your family, let's compare them side by side.

| MY CORE VALUES | MY FAMILY'S VALUES |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |
| 4. | 4. |
| 5. | 5. |
| 6. | 6. |
| 7. | 7. |

SECTION 2: Intimate Relationships

Let's begin our discussion about your intimate relationships with revisiting your values and comparing them to people with whom you are intimate. That could be your partner, spouse, someone you're interested in dating, and so on.

Intimate Relationships Values Exercise Part 1:

Circle the values that apply to your partner. Again, there are both positive and negative values in this list. Your partner may hold some negative values, and if he or she does, then you'll need to decide if that works for you or not.

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Autonomy | Fun | Peace | Wealth |
| Balance | Growth | Pleasure | Wisdom |
| Beauty | Happiness | Poise | Zest |
| Boldness | Honesty | Popularity | Self-Regulation |
| Compassion | Humor | Recognition | Intelligence |
| Challenge | Influence | Religion | Teamwork |
| Citizenship | Inner Harmony | Reputation | Humility |
| Community | Justice | Respect | Perspective |
| Competency | Kindness | Responsibility | Social Intelligence |
| Contribution | Knowledge | Security | Prudence |
| Creativity | Leadership | Self-Respect | Appreciation |
| Curiosity | Learning | Service | Forgiveness |
| Determination | Love | Spirituality | Perseverance |
| Fairness | Loyalty | Stability | Anger |
| Faith | Meaningful Work | Success | Discouragement |
| Fame | Openness | Status | Hostility |
| Friendships | Optimism | Trustworthiness | |

| | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|------------|----------------|
| Regret | Failure | Loneliness | Despondency |
| Anxiety | Judgment | Self-Doubt | Greed |
| Disinterest | Rigidity | Depression | Pessimism |
| Humiliation | Criticism | Futility | Withdrawal |
| Rejection | Fear of [specify] | Misery | Disappointment |
| Bitterness | Lethargy | Sorrow | Guilt |
| Embarrassment | Sadness | Despair | Poverty |
| Jealousy | Cynicism | Gloom | Worry |
| Resignation | Frustration | Ostracism | |
| Condemnation | | Suspicion | |

Relationships Inventory

Now it's time to rate your relationships, which I've separated into three categories.

YOUR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS: First, rate on a scale of 1–10. A “1” would mean that your family relationships are seriously troubled, affecting you negatively in your daily life, and require your immediate attention. A “10” would mean that your family relationships are supporting you living as your Best Self and require little or no improvement.

What are some behaviors that are working for you in this arena, and why? Examples:

- I set boundaries with relatives who take advantage of me.
- I am honest with my relatives, but respectful in my delivery.

What are some behaviors that you know are keeping you from what you want?

- I give in to the demands of relatives even when doing so does not serve me.
- I allow relatives' comments to cut to the quick of my feelings and I harbor guilt and resentment toward family members.

YOUR INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS: First, rate on a scale of 1–10. A “1” would mean that your intimate relationship(s) are not functional for you and do not support you living as your Best Self. A “10” would mean that your intimate relationship(s) feel healthy and rewarding to you and do not have much room for improvement.

What are some behaviors that are working in this area, and why? Examples:

- I listen to the needs of my partner and communicate my needs.
- I am honest with my partner.

What are some behaviors that you know are keeping you from what you want? Examples:

- I cheat on someone whom I really want to honor with faithfulness and honesty.
- I have a hair-trigger response pattern, and often lose my temper with my partner.

(If this applies to you):

YOUR PARENTING LIFE: First, rate on a scale of 1–10. A “1” would mean that your parenting life is suffering, and you know it needs your immediate attention. A “10” would mean that you feel truly great about your parenting life, and you are parenting as your Best Self the majority of the time.

What are some behaviors that are working in this area, and why? Examples:

- I create positive family traditions or rituals.
- No matter how stressed out, tired, or frustrated we are, I make sure to tell my kid(s) I love them every night.

What are some behaviors that you know are keeping you from what you want? Examples:

- I raise my voice and/or argue in front of my kids.
- I demean my kids when they disrespect me.

Ready to Make a Change?

You may currently be in a job that you don't like for a variety of reasons. I think it's smart to first take a look at the truth of why you are unhappy. Here is a little assessment I've used many times to help you gain some insight into whether it's time for a job/career change, or time to somehow show up differently at the job you currently have. In other words, does the job need to change, or does your approach to it need to change?

- What do you not like about your job?
- Do you think your life is going to be far better and most all of your problems will be solved if you can quit your job and find a new one? YES NO
- Have you had similar problems in past jobs? YES NO
- Does this job, more so than ones you've had in the past, make you feel like you aren't able to be your Best Self?
 YES NO
- Do you feel worse about yourself and your life while you are at work than you do when you're doing other activities in your life? YES NO
- What, if anything, did you like about the job when you first started it?
- What does your Best Self think you should do about the job? (i.e., **quit ASAP, make adjustments within it, have a discussion with your supervisors about your concerns, etc.**)
- Is it really the job that's the problem? YES NO

If you answered “yes” to that last question, do you think it's possible that the issue lies with you, rather than in the jobs you've had?

Employment SPHERE Quiz

The time has arrived for you to take inventory of your Employment SPHERE. Now that we've done some thinking together and hopefully you have a fresh perspective, answer these questions honestly.

PART 1: First, rate your employment life on a scale of 1–10. A “1” would mean that you realize your employment SPHERE is in poor shape and requires your immediate attention. A “10” would mean that you are quite pleased with your current employment SPHERE and status, and it has little to no room for improvement. Aspects of your work/education sphere to consider when assigning your rating include:

- Your enjoyment/rewarding nature of your job or school experience,
- how well your job provides financially for your lifestyle,
- your work relationships,
- how balanced your work schedule is compared to other aspects of your life.

Employment Rating: _____ as of _____ (date)

PART 2: Now, list out some behaviors that are working well in your work life and why they're working.

Examples:

- I push myself to do well at work, but while keeping my life in balance.
- I feel rewarded by my work.
- I encourage others in my workplace and have built positive relationships there.

Behaviors that are working in my employment are:

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

PART 3: What are some behaviors that you know are keeping you from what you want in your employment life?

Examples:

- I am lazy with my work assignments and always wait until the last minute to finish them.
- I am a “workaholic”—I work myself to death and have no balance between my work and personal life.
- I have formed some toxic relationships with colleagues due to my competitiveness or jealousy.

Behaviors that are not working for me in the area of my employment life are:

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

PART 4: Based on everything you just wrote down, I want you to think about what you need to do in order to go from your current rating to a rating of 10 in this area of your life.

The way you’ll do this is to look at behaviors you need to *continue* doing because they’re working for you, behaviors you need to *stop* doing because they’re keeping you from what you want, and behaviors you need to *start* doing.

In order for my employment life to feel like it's at a 10,

I need to continue: _____

I need to stop: _____

I need to start: _____

Defining Your Spiritual Life

Now that we've digested some ideas around spirituality, let's pause so that you can reflect on the current status of your spiritual life. This will help you understand where you are—and determine if there are any adjustments you'd like to make.

- What would a healthy spiritual life look like to you?
- Do you have reason to believe that life is working in your favor?
 - If yes, why? And when did you first start having this belief?
 - If no, why not? And what are your earliest memories of feeling this way?
- Are there aspects of your spiritual life that fulfill you and you wish were more prevalent in your daily life? If so, what are they?
- Who are your spiritual mentors and people you trust within your spiritual world?
- Do you believe that the way you were raised affects your approach to spiritual development?
 - What elements do you choose to keep?
 - Which elements do you choose to reject?
 - If you were lacking something in your spiritual life growing up, what can you do to bring it in now if you wish?
- What are your Best Self's tenets for living a spiritual life? Mine are patience, understanding for others, lack of worry, being inspired, feeling clever and creative, and feeling that the possibilities for my life are endless.

Spiritual Development Inventory

Now it's time to determine what you'd like to accomplish in the area of your spiritual development. These questions will help you.

PART 1: First, rate your spiritual life on a scale of 1–10. A “1” would mean that you recognize that your spiritual life is suffering and requires your attention. A “10” would mean that you believe your spiritual life is functioning well and has little or no room for improvement. Aspects of your spiritual sphere to consider when assigning your rating include:

- How developed you are in your spiritual life,
- how you're using your spirituality to bolster/support your pursuit of your Best Self,
- how rewarding your spiritual life feels for you.

Spiritual Life Rating: _____ as of _____(date)

PART 2: Now, list out some of your behaviors that are working well in your spiritual life and why they're working.

Examples:

- I regularly meditate, and I find the meditation helps me stay aligned with my authenticity.
- I practice religion or spirituality that is a source of fulfillment for me.

Behaviors that are working in my spiritual life are:

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

PART 3: What are some behaviors that are not working in your spiritual life, and why?

Examples:

- I'm going through the motions of a certain religion, but none of it feels real to me/it doesn't fulfill me.
- I am too angry from past hurts to engage in any type of spirituality.

Behaviors that are not working in the area of my spiritual life are:

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

_____ Why? _____

PART 4: Based on everything above, I want you to think about what you need to do in order to go from your current rating to a rating of 10 in this area of your life.

The way you'll do this is to look at behaviors you need to *continue* doing because they're working for you, behaviors you need to *stop* doing because they're keeping you from what you want, and behaviors you need to *start* doing.

In order for my spiritual life to feel like it's at a 10,

I need to continue: _____

I need to stop: _____

I need to start: _____

My Team by SPHERES

SOCIAL

RATING:

PERSONAL

RATING:

HEALTH

RATING:

EMPLOYMENT

RATING:

RELATIONSHIP

RATING:

EDUCATION

RATING:

SPIRITUAL

RATING:

Rate Your Team within Your SPHERES

Next, I want you to rate your team within each of your SPHERES. You will rate them from 1–10 with 1 being an absolutely dismal team, one that doesn't fulfill you or give you what you need, and 10 being a team that is top-notch, so tight that you feel you don't need anyone else in that category. There is a line for the Rating at the bottom of each SPHERE. Fill that in now.

By looking at your Team SPHERES ratings, you can easily spot what might be out of balance in your life. If you feel that your team is lacking in some areas, that's great news because now you've identified a need. Now, you can focus on filling that need. If there's a category where you have no one listed, or the person you currently rely on for that type of support isn't providing enough value, begin to think about who might be better suited. This may require some research and soul-searching, but it will be well worth the effort.

It's unlikely that you rated your team as a perfect 10 in every SPHERE of your life, so, now I want you to ask your Best Self what a 10 rating for your team in each category would look like. How would it function? Who would be your go-to in each category? What would make you feel as if you have the most possible support in each of the SPHERES?

My Perfect 10 Team Looks Like:

1. **Social:** _____

2. **Personal:** _____

3. **Health:** _____

4. **Education:** _____

5. **Relationships:** _____

6. **Employment:** _____

7. **Spiritual:** _____

Drilling Down

Now that you have identified and categorized your current team, let's drill down and ask ourselves some questions about them.

- Who can you rely upon to be an objective thinking partner/s when you're facing a new challenge? I define a thinking partner as someone who helps you think through things based on who you are—they don't tell you what you need to do; instead, they help you think it through, so you can find the answer for yourself.
- Are there any commonalities between the people you've allowed onto your team? What do those similarities tell you about yourself?
 - Who in your life encourages you to operate as your Best Self? Are there teammates around which you never have to alter any part of your personality? Is there someone in your life you find it particularly hard to be your Best Self around? Or, who in your life triggers your Anti-Self to appear? Is there a teammate with whom you have to censor yourself and withhold your true opinions?
- Who has your best interests at heart, rather than advancing their own agenda?
- Is there someone on your team who could be manipulating you or using you in some way?
- Alternatively, are you attempting to control or manipulate someone, so you can get what you want?
- Are any of your teammates holding you back or sabotaging you?
- Do your teammates fire you up, get you excited about life, and inspire you to think creatively?

Trust and Expectations

Like most people, you have a handful of folks that you feel you can trust implicitly. There may be others you trust in some ways, but not in all ways. And you likely have some in your life for specific reasons, but you purposely keep them at arm's length. Others are in the outer rings of your universe, and you keep a watchful eye on them. Finally, there are probably some folks you hope to never see or hear from—people you can't trust and that you know will be hurtful.

Do you trust every person who is currently on your team? Remember, just because someone is familiar to you doesn't necessarily mean they have *earned* your trust. Dr. Phil often says that we should never give anyone the benefit of the doubt. If you've allowed someone into your immediate nucleus because someone else vouched for them, or they're a friend of a friend, but they haven't actually demonstrated their trustworthiness to you, then I implore you to remain on high alert. Do not blindly trust anyone. This is not about being suspicious or paranoid—it's simply about how, just as you wouldn't expect the absolute worst of someone right off the bat, you also should not expect the very *best* of them that quick. Let them show you who they are through their actions instead of setting up unrealistic expectations. The truth is, your expectations of other people can often be resentments waiting to happen because if someone hasn't shown you who they are, how can you know what to expect from them? For example, I use car service apps a lot. I find myself expecting them to have a clean car, that they wouldn't blast the music at top volume, and that they would be helpful to me with my luggage. But that's a false expectation and I am often disappointed. Since lowering my expectations, I've actually been much happier with my car service experiences.

Now I'm usually pleasantly surprised rather than annoyed. Expecting people to do what you deem appropriate by your standards just doesn't work because they could be operating with a different framework.

To help you evaluate the trustworthiness and your own expectations of your team, here are some simple questions to ask yourself about each person so you can consider them objectively.

The Expectations Test:

1. Can you usually rely on this person to show up at an agreed-upon time without any flakiness or excuses?
 YES **NO**
2. If this person tells you that something is going to happen, does it usually play out that way?
 YES **NO**
3. When this person describes a conversation or an event, does it generally match up with information you get from others about that same conversation or event?
 YES **NO**
4. To your knowledge, has this person ever lied to someone else or assumed you would lie on their behalf—do they choose lying over honesty?
 YES **NO**
5. To your knowledge, has this person ever withheld important information in an effort to avoid conflict with someone else?
 YES **NO**

6. Have you ever noticed any hypocritical behavior in this person—for instance, engaging in behavior that he or she would judge others for engaging in?
- YES NO
7. Does this person make excuses for their behaviors instead of owning them?
- YES NO
8. Has this person demonstrated consistent loyalty?
- YES NO

Look at Your SPHERES:

Refer back to the assessments you did for each of your SPHERES, and below, write down your current rating for each, as well as the first thing you would like to focus on for each. If, for instance, you know there's a specific relationship you need to work on, write that in Relationships. If you need to make your health more of a priority by exercising regularly, write that under Health.

Next, think about your Team within each SPHERE. You will need to create goals around improving your teams in each SPHERE as well.

The chart below will help you organize your thoughts.

| SPHERES | SPHERES RATING | TEAM RATING |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Social Life | | |
| Personal Life | | |
| Health | | |
| Education | | |
| Relationships | | |
| Employment | | |
| Spiritual Development | | |

Next, we will take the data you collected about where you want to make improvements and then turn that information into actual goals using the seven steps to goal acquisition. This process is about transforming your hopes, dreams, and desires into reality. You and you alone hold the power to create the life you've always wanted—to make it real. I encourage you to grab hold of this and follow it through, because your new life is waiting for you on the other side of these seven steps.

| SPHERES | TEAMS FOCUS POINTS | SPHERES FOCUS POINTS |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Social Life | | |
| Personal Life | | |
| Health | | |
| Education | | |
| Relationships | | |
| Employment | | |
| Spiritual Development | | |

Step 1: Define Your Goal in Terms of Specific Events or Behaviors

This may seem obvious, but understanding what you want, what you *really* want, is the first step to getting it. Here's what I mean: you must be able to define the goal you're trying to achieve in a specific way. For instance, you can't just desire an emotion. Setting the goal of feeling happy, for instance, is too vague. If you state your goals in terms of specific events or behaviors, you are closer to accomplishing them. If you want more happiness in your life, you must first define what's going to make you happier. Let's say you derive joy from traveling with friends, and you know it will make you happy if you have a trip to look forward to. Then you would define your goal in terms of specific events or behaviors by stating, "My goal is to plan, organize, and save for a trip with my friends." That's how you take a vague notion like becoming happier to a specific goal that is an event or behavior.

This first step in the process of acquiring your goal can be an absolute game changer. If you've ever felt that you don't have enough strength or follow-through to reach a goal, the real issue might have been that you weren't defining it properly. Anyone who has ever achieved something great was able to *claim* that victory because they first *named* that victory.

So, drop a destination pin on the map of your life and get started.

Now it's your turn. Write down your goal in terms of specific events or behaviors.

My goal is: _____

Step 2: Express Your Goal in Terms That Can Be Measured

The second step toward acquiring your goal is to express it in a quantifiable way. This way, you'll be able to determine your level of progress along the way and know when you've successfully arrived where you wanted to be. For example, if your goal is to clear out the clutter in your home so that you can be more productive and peaceful, then which rooms or closets do you intend to clean up? You'd list them out, one by one—for instance, you might say you want to clean and organize your closet, your master bedroom, and your garage. Now your goal is measurable—you have three spaces to clean up. You'll know when you've achieved your goal because those spaces will be neat and organized.

My goal, in terms that can be measured, is: _____

Step 3: Choose a Goal You Can Control

There are things in life that are within our control, like X and X. And then there are things that are outside our control, like Y and Y. In goal creation, it does not serve you to craft goals that are connected to things beyond your control. Chasing a goal beyond our control is a fool's errand, will only make you feel hopeless, and sets you up for failure. At the end of the day we truly can only control ourselves.

The only person's actions/behaviors that you have control over

are your own—so that means your goal cannot rely upon someone else taking a specific action. You’re in the driver’s seat of your life, so your goals can’t be dependent upon any outside people or forces.

Is your goal controllable?

- YES
- NO

If not, think about your goal and pivot toward one that you can control, then write it down:

My *controllable* goal is: _____

Step 4: Plan and Program a Strategy That Will Get You to Your Goal

Creating a specific strategy for achieving your goal is exciting because there are infinite possibilities available and you get to see what works for you. You also need to consider any obstacles that may stand in your way and create strategies for overcoming them. Your environment, schedule, and accountability all need to be part of the equation when you are programming a strategy for achieving your goal.

One pitfall I’ve seen with clients in the goal acquisition process is that they get so excited about what they’re looking to achieve that they get swept up in an emotional high that they believe willpower will carry them along to success. That’s faulty thinking. It’s easy to feel excited about a new undertaking, but what happens when the excitement starts to wane? We can easily get blown

off course. I don't want that to happen to you, so planning your strategy is imperative.

The more clearly you lay out your strategy, the less tempted you will be to deviate from it. Programming your days to include whatever is necessary to achieve your goal will create a positive momentum. Let's say you're planning to run a half marathon in six months. You can now find all kinds of very detailed training programs online for how to prepare your mind and body to run 13.1 miles. Find one that makes sense for your lifestyle, and then chart your course. Choose which days each week you are going to run, stretch, do strength training, meditate, and any other requirements. You can program your environment by purchasing the right clothes and shoes for where you'll be running. If you have a weeklong vacation booked for right in the middle of your training program, determine how you're going to continue the program while you're away so that you don't get derailed. Down to every last detail, program precisely what is required of you in order to achieve that goal, and then get busy.

My strategy for attaining my goal is: _____

Step 5: Define Your Goal in Terms of Steps

Major life changes happen one step at a time. Let's make sure you know all of the steps are between here and your goal line. You don't want to get halfway there and have no clue as to what to do

next. Before you get started, write out each step you'll need to take along the way.

As an example, weight loss is a common goal, and we all know it doesn't happen overnight, no matter how much we wish it did. There are steps we must take over time in order to lose weight. We have to clearly define what those steps are from the outset so that we can refer to them at any time, know where we are in the process, and what else we need to do. So, continuing the weight loss example, let's say hypothetically that you've chosen to follow a Paleo diet and you're committing to exercise for forty-five minutes four days a week as your weight loss plan, then your specific steps would be: Program my kitchen for success by removing all foods and beverages that don't support my goal of weight loss, grocery shop, and fill my kitchen with foods that I believe do support me in losing weight, create a weekly meal plan and prep meals each weekend so I'm not scrambling for food during the week, and set appointments in my calendar for gym time so I have no excuse for skipping my exercise.

The specific steps I will need to carry out in order to achieve my goal are: _____

Step 6: Assign a Timeline for Your Goal

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to leave things undone if there's no pressure to complete them? Some people let their houses get a little messy and disorderly until they know company is coming over, for example. I've known plenty of people who procrasti-

nate until the last moment to study for an exam they're about to take. The power of the ticking clock is undeniable—if a deadline looms, we are more likely to get the work done than if there's no clear date by which it needs to be complete. It's human nature.

Since we know we're more likely to finish something if we have a deadline, then it makes perfect sense to create one for our goals. It will foster a sense of urgency and purpose. It will motivate us to stay on track.

This step goes even further than just setting a deadline by which we will have reached our goal. It requires us to assign a timeline for all the steps necessary for reaching it. Let's say, for instance, your goal is to obtain a certification of some kind. Perhaps it requires twenty hours of hands-on training. If you know that you can free up four hours a week to do the training, then you can set a date on the calendar five weeks from now when you should be finished. If today is August 10, then you'll have completed the hands-on training by September 14.

Even more specifically, if you know that you can do the training on Fridays, then you can designate a four-hour chunk of time each Friday between August 10 and September 14 on your calendar for this work. In so doing, you've locked in your timeline. Below you'll fill in the key dates by which you'll complete portions of your own goal. This will help you keep accountable.

Think about how amazing it is that you can literally look at a calendar and circle the date by which you will have reached your goal. That's powerful! And once you've reached it, you can look back at that same calendar and see the evidence of your hard work and how it paid off, exactly when you said it would.

Timeline for My Goal

Deadline: _____

Other key dates: _____

Step 7: Create Accountability for Progress Toward Your Goal

The final step in this time-tested formula for achieving your goal is to create accountability. In the last chapter, we fine-tuned your team, and this is the perfect opportunity to put that team into action. Choose someone who you know will be a trustworthy accountability partner in whatever your specific goal is, tell them all the details of how you plan to achieve it, and then ask them to help keep you accountable. Agree to make periodic reports to that person (or people, in case you feel you need more than one) along the way, with real consequences if you don't. You can mitigate your risk of slacking off, procrastinating, or giving up by building in this type of accountability.

My accountability partner(s) as I work toward achieving this goal is/are: _____

No More Somedays

I believe there are dreams and desires tucked away in the deep recesses of all of our minds. When they bubble up to the surface of our consciousness, we reflexively push them back down, shove them out of view, ignore them—why?—because it's easier than acknowledging them or adding them to our ever-growing to-do list of life. We think, *Oh, I'll get to that . . . someday*. Someday. When is your someday, exactly? When are you going to finally give credo to the inner yearnings of your heart? It's time to make

your dreams a reality. Don't wait. Life is short, and your role in this world is bigger than you think.

I told you this was going to be an action-packed chapter, and that action will be coming from *you*. The time has arrived for alchemy—you are going to transform your somedays into days of the week. Right now, you are going to breathe life into your dreams.

You are going to do this because you already took the important step of focusing on yourself enough to read this book. You took the time to shine a light on your Best Self, and you've examined every corner, nook, and cranny of your life with that lens. Anyone who takes the time and puts the effort in to do that is someone who is ready to make a change. For the better and forever.

Goals within Your SPHERES

Now that you understand the process for creating and achieving goals, it's time to create your most urgent, controllable, and realistic goals within all seven of your SPHERES.

Even if they feel lofty or unattainable in this moment, write them down. No matter how intimidating they've felt in the past, or how many times you've tried and failed to achieve them, write them down. No matter whether or not you fully believe you deserve to own these goals, write them down. Even if they're not completely formed; even if they are just quiet whispers between your inner self and your heart, write them down.

This is about reaching within yourself, being vulnerable, and telling yourself the truth about the wishes, hopes, and longings you discover there. Remember, naming them is the imperative first step to claiming them.

| SPHERES | GOAL |
|----------------|-------------|
| Social Life | |
| Personal Life | |
| Health | |
| Education | |
| Relationships | |
| Employment | |
| Spiritual | |

Your 7-Step Goal Acquisition Worksheet

I suggest you choose the goal within your lowest-rated SPHERE as your first goal you're going to work toward, as that is the most urgent area requiring your attention. Use the worksheet below to plan out how you're going to achieve that goal, and all of your other goals going forward. It's a very useful tool, so put it to good use!

STEP 1: Define Your Goal in Terms of Specific Events or Behaviors

My goal is: _____

STEP 2: Express Your Goal in Terms That Can Be Measured

My goal, in terms that can be measured, is: _____

STEP 3: Choose a Goal You Can Control

Is your goal controllable?

YES NO

If not, pivot your goal toward one that is controllable, and write it here:

My *controllable* goal is: _____

STEP 4: Plan and Program a Strategy That Will Get You to Your Goal

My specific strategy for attaining my goal is: _____

STEP 5: Define Your Goal in Terms of Steps

The steps I will need to take in order to achieve my goal are: _____

STEP 6: Assign a Timeline for Your Goal

Timeline for my goal

Deadline: _____

Other key dates: _____

STEP 7: Create Accountability for Progress Toward Your Goal

My accountability partner(s) as I work toward achieving this goal is/are: _____

The dates that I'm going to check in with my accountability partner are:

| | |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

The consequences for my not checking in with my accountability partner are: _____

The Nonrenewable Commodity: Time

There are *so* many ways that you can fill your calendar, right? You can feel like the busiest person in the world just trying to stay ahead of the day-in and day-out requirements of keeping your life and your household running. Or maybe you tend to fill up your calendar with social obligations, and plans without any thought about whether all you're committing to or trying to accomplish even makes you feel fulfilled. There's a danger in becoming mechanical about how you spend your time—very quickly, you can lose yourself, lose that connection to who you are authentically, and instead become enslaved to the schedule instead of being in the moment of the events. Now, I'm not suggesting you stop doing your laundry, going into work, or grocery shopping—of course there are certain activities you must do in order to stay healthy, hygienic, and fed. I'm simply trying to wake you up to the fact that without some purposeful introspection now and then, you might one day realize you've been spending all of your time on things that don't really matter in the big picture of your life. And worse, you're not excited by any of it. You aren't feeling fueled, energized, impassioned, or actively fulfilling your life's purpose—ever. You're just going through the motions. That is not why you were put on this earth, my friend, and if you even slightly relate to that dismal picture, read on, because we're about to put that runaway train in reverse.

Let's take a close look at your daily schedule. This exercise is about mirroring back to you how and where you spend the majority of your time. Seeing in writing exactly where you are committing your precious time can be powerful. I want you to write out how you spend a typical weekday. Write down everything you're usually doing, hour by hour. Feel free to adjust the times according to your sleep/wake schedule. The more details you include,

the better. Also, if your weekdays differ dramatically because you work part-time and have other responsibilities on nonworking days, then feel free to write out several days' worth of entries.

All of the details of your day matter, because later we are going to work together to craft your days in a purposeful manner. I want you to be thoughtful and honest about this exercise, so here are some basic parameters:

1. Write down “wake up” next to the time you usually open your eyes, but then include the first thing you do after you wake up. Do you barrel out of bed and race to the shower? Do you spend fifteen minutes catching up on social media? Do you hit snooze five times? Do you go wake up your kids? Head straight to the kitchen for coffee? These “how you greet the day” details matter.
2. Be honest with yourself. This exercise, and all of the exercises in the book, are for *you*. You gain nothing by cheating! For example, if you spend time on something you aren't exactly proud of—anything from gorging on ice cream at 10 p.m. to indulging in an inappropriate relationship of some kind—write it down. This is for your eyes only!

5AM: _____

6AM: _____

7AM: _____

8AM: _____

9AM: _____

10AM: _____

11AM: _____

12PM: _____

1PM: _____

2PM: _____
3PM: _____
4PM: _____
5PM: _____
6PM: _____
7PM: _____
8PM: _____
9PM: _____
10PM: _____
11PM: _____
12AM: _____

Now let's turn our attention to your weekends. (If your work schedule includes working on the weekends, choose a day that you have off work and fill it out accordingly.) What does your typical weekend day look like? Do you sleep in? Attend religious services of some kind? Go to the movies? Have dinner with friends? Write it all down here.

5AM: _____
6AM: _____
7AM: _____
8AM: _____
9AM: _____
10AM: _____
11AM: _____
12PM: _____
1PM: _____
2PM: _____
3PM: _____
4PM: _____

5PM: _____

6PM: _____

7PM: _____

8PM: _____

9PM: _____

10PM: _____

11PM: _____

12AM: _____

Take a moment and look over your schedules. Understand that this is your “before” picture. This is how you spend your time now. Since you can only expect outcomes based on the time you’re putting in, then it’s easier to see the types of outcomes you might expect from your current schedule. I’ll use learning a new language just as an example—if you’re spending time binging on the latest hot TV series, or perusing your social media feeds, that’s time you could’ve been spending on studying. Alternatively, if you’re spending time listening to audio books in that language or immersing yourself with others who speak it, you will get that much closer to becoming fluent. Remember this formula: time + effort = results.

If you want to change your life, you have to change how you’re spending your time. Let’s get a little more specific with these questions:

What are you spending the majority of your time doing? _____

How do you feel about that activity that you are spending much of your precious time doing? _____

Was that feeling that you wrote down a positive or negative feeling, overall? Circle one:

POSITIVE NEGATIVE

ACTION:

If you circled negative, you must discover a way to *replace* that activity with one that gives you a positive feeling. In other words, how would your Best Self handle it?

For instance, suppose that you've come to realize through the work you've done in this book that it's time for you to end a relationship that has become toxic over time. Maybe you've noticed, as you've investigated your daily schedule, that time you spend with this person usually results in an argument or you just not feeling great about yourself or your life. So, your first order of business is to use time that you'd usually be hanging out with that person to have a conversation with him or her about your relationship. Choose a time when you are both calm and choose a neutral location for the discussion. Depending upon your specific circumstances, you might know for sure this relationship needs to end, or you might be willing to discuss the issues and see if resolution is possible. Whatever the case may be, the idea is to first commit the time in your schedule to having the talk with this person. Then, use the time you would have been spending together that resulted in negative outcomes for something positive that encourages you, inspires you, from which you can learn, and so on. It would even be wise to use some of that time for meditation or just being still, quiet, and in solitude. You'll need to give yourself space and time to heal from the toxicity you were experiencing within that relationship.

In some cases, you might have a negative feeling about how you're spending your time not because of the thing you're spend-

ing your time on, but because of a fear you have around it. If that's the case, we're going to talk about how to tackle that fear and overcome it. I find that sometimes what we need is a new pair of glasses, not an entirely new environment. In other words, we might need a shift in perception, and that can occur if we decide to let go of the fear.

Now, think about something that you wish you had more time to do, but is barely in your schedule if at all. Perhaps you wish you spent more time walking outside to improve your health, or more time reading books that inspire you, or learning a new language. Maybe you've always said you wanted to volunteer. Think about what you say to other people all the time—like, "I'd love to keep a journal, but I just don't have the time," or "I wish I was the kind of mom who cooks healthy meals, but I'm always ordering takeout because of my hectic schedule." It could even be that you know you need more sleep because you're constantly running on empty, yet you stay up until midnight every night surfing the Web or scrolling through your social media feeds.

If there's something you wish you could spend more time doing, write it here: _____

Referring back to your current schedules, do you feel it's at all possible that you could, in fact, create time for that thing you wish you were doing more of? Look closely and see if there's anywhere you could make a swap before you answer this question. For instance, are you watching three hours of TV at night when two hours could be spent pursuing that thing you're passionate about? Or do you feel you could stand to wake up a half hour to an hour earlier?

Now, write down where you think you could create time in your schedule to do something that's currently missing: _____

ACTION:

Today, add into your upcoming calendar a chunk of time to do something new that you've been longing to make time for, even if it's just fifteen minutes. This will prove that you can make time for what you love. Also, delete something that is not serving you. If there is something you spend time on that you think could be put to better use, resolve to reduce it.

If you really dug deep into your life and did this entire exercise, congratulate yourself. This is a significant first step toward creating the life of your dreams.

Dr. Phil stresses the idea of putting verbs in his sentences. I couldn't agree with that more. Verbs are action words, and in order to change, we must take action. When I'm coaching a client and it becomes obvious that they are not willing to take action, I might try a few different tactics, but if they just dig in their heels I will suggest they find someone else to work with. It's not that I don't want to help them, but I just know that they'll never effect real change in their lives if they're not taking action.

One of the points of this exercise was to help you learn how to shift your priorities and start behaving (behaviors = actions) your way to success. The way to really know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, where your priorities lie, is to look at where you are spending your most valuable asset—your time. Now that you've come face-to-face with that reality, you will know if something requires change. Time is our only nonrenewable resource in this life. Think about that. When people say, "I wish I could have

those thirty minutes of my life back,” they’re kidding, of course, but there’s truth in that statement, right? When we waste time, we really have lost something valuable. Despite how busy all of our lives are, we need to create time to live the life we truly want.

Time spent discovering truths about yourself and designing the life you want is time well spent. You will not look back at the end of your life and say, “I sure wish I’d spent more time looking at other people’s photos on my social media feeds,” or, “I wish I’d worked more,” or, “I wish I’d gone out to more bars.” When our life’s hourglass is down to its final few grains of sand, the things we’ll be wishing we’d done more of have a lot more to do with our passion and purpose. Prioritize what’s important *now* so you don’t have regrets *later*.

Constantly Acquiring New Goals

Goal acquisition should become a way of life for you going forward. The Best Self Model isn’t about evolving to a certain point and then just stopping. My hope is that the discoveries you’ve made while working through this book show you that your Best Self is in a constant state of evolution, which means you will continue to evaluate your SPHERES and find new areas where you need to create and achieve goals.

Perhaps some of your goals are small and simple. You don’t feel you need a worksheet or lots of exercises to get to them. Or maybe you have a few big goals that you’re going to work on simultaneously, and you absolutely need to plan them out to the last detail so that you stay on track. Whatever your situation may be, my hope is that you never say, “I need to work on that,” and instead you can point to exactly where you are in the timeline of achieving that goal, and an end date by which you will have done so. No more somedays . . . only today!