

*“In her book, *The Power of Inner Choice*, Mary Allen has compiled a wealth of tools and resources – both inner and outer – to support you in consciously directing your untapped potential and creating a life that you love.”*

— Debbie Ford, #1 New York Times best-selling author of *The Dark Side of the Light Chasers*, *The Right Questions* and *The Best Year of Your Life*

“Mary Allen magically draws you in and shines a light on what is possible for you. Don’t read her book... devour it!”

— Tom Wood, CEO/President, MasteryTV.com

*“In *The Power of Inner Choice*, Mary Allen not only enables readers to CREATE clear visions to strive for, she empowers them to ‘expand their ability to RECEIVE.’ Her approach is fresh and effective.”*

— Eva Gregory, Professional Coach, Speaker and Author of *The Feel Good Guide to Prosperity*

“The Power of Inner Choice is a host of practical steps I’ve never been exposed to. The content is meaty. Bravo.”

— Mark Petroff, Financial Trader

“The Power of Inner Choice is ‘coaching for the soul.’”

— Michelle Humphrey, Founding Partner and Master Mentor, Effortless Living Institute

“The Power of Inner Choice helps individuals first identify what is important to them personally and then develops necessary life skills. I recommend Mary’s book as an important part of a coaching PROCESS.”

— Laura Whitworth, Co-Founder, The Coaches Training Institute, Co-author, Co-Active Coaching

“The Power of Inner Choice has helped me improve my ability to stay present and have more clarity in defining my personal and career goals.

The richness deepens over time as I practice, review and revise my responses as a living and continual process.”

— Don Minor, Retired Education Consultant

*“Mary Allen’s new work, *The Power of Inner Choice: 12 Weeks to Living a Life YOU Love* is an essential guide to finding your own personal path of happiness. You are in incredibly capable and compassionate hands as Mary guides you to creating the life that you want. Don’t just dream about it; do it!”*

— Tim Ursiny, Ph.D., CBC, RCC, CEO, Advantage Coaching & Training and Author, *The Coward’s Guide to Conflict*

“The Power of Inner Choice: 12 Weeks to Living a Life YOU Love by Mary E. Allen offers an incredible course to bring you new levels of self-awareness. By honing in on your personal goals from the inside out, Mary will guide you through 12 weeks of new discoveries to unlock the authentic self within.”

— USA Book News

“I used the principles in The Power of Inner Choice to envision my dream business with clarity and feeling. As I’ve allowed myself to emotionally connect with my vision, synchronicity has worked miracles! The perfect investor showed up in my life, providing the necessary financial support. Last week, the perfect property in the perfect location appeared. I understand now just how powerful these principles are.”

— Wendy Terebesi, VP of Sales & Marketing, L’Occitane

“I like the Power of Inner Choice by Mary Allen. The book has many treasures inside, which all come from within and are true. One can benefit significantly from studying this book.”

— Bijan, Speaker and Author of Effortless Prosperity

“The Power of Inner Choice is the most straightforward and powerful experience I have had in learning new ways to see the world. It is pragmatic, powerful and has been a major contribution to my life. The course is packed full of ideas and new ways of approaching life. As a life coach, I will be asking each of my clients to get this book as a source of fundamental power and happiness. I’ve embraced new practices for having the joy and abundance I have been looking to create in my life.”

— Tom Loeswick, Professional Life Coach

“Before I began working with Mary and the principles in The Power of Inner Choice, I was already top earning broker nationally. In the past three years, my income has quadrupled while the level of fun and balance in every area of my life has grown stronger.”

— Reza Etedali, President, Reza Investment Group

“My life is different as a result of Mary’s work, The Power of Inner Choice. Each of the exercises throughout the book was phenomenal. If you’re considering this program for yourself—DO IT!”

**— Jeanna Gabellini, Business Coach, Principal,
Masterpeace Coaching & Training**

The Power of
I N N E R
C H O I C E

12 Weeks to
Living a Life
YOU Love

Mary E. Allen



Copyright © 2005 by Mary E. Allen

All rights reserved.

No portion of this book may be used or reproduced by any means except for brief quotes for educational or review purposes without the written permission of the Publisher.



Published by:

Personhood Press

“Books for All that You ARE!”

PO Box 370

Fawnskin, CA 92333

800- 429-1142

personhoodpress@att.net

www.personhoodpress.com

Grateful acknowledgment is given for permission to reprint Byron Katie's
“Judge Your Neighbor Worksheet.” Copyright © 2002 by Byron Katie, Inc.
Reprinted by permission of Byron Katie.

ISBN: 1-932181-16-4

The Power of Inner Choice: 12 Weeks to Living a Life YOU Love by Mary E. Allen.

Cover Design by Colleen McGunnigle | Artesian Design

Design and Layout by Colleen McGunnigle | Artesian Design

Editor: Susan Remkus

Photos of Mary Allen: Fima Gelman

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing: May, 2005

Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction

<i>Chapter 1 –</i>	Awakenings	15
<i>Chapter 2 –</i>	Getting the Most from this Book	27
<i>Chapter 3 –</i>	The Compounding Effect of Choice	41

PART I – GETTING CONNECTED

<i>Chapter 4 –</i>	Lesson #1– The Power of NOW: Living in Present vs. Past or Future	69
<i>Chapter 5 –</i>	Lesson #2– Good Vibrations: Feeling Good vs. Feeling Bad	85
<i>Chapter 6 –</i>	Lesson #3– Spirit vs. Ego	101

Part II – VISIONING FROM THE INSIDE OUT

<i>Chapter 7 –</i>	Lesson #4– Your Heart’s Desire: Clarity vs. Confusion	125
<i>Chapter 8 –</i>	Lesson #5– Taking Inspired Action: Surrender vs. Control	147

<i>Chapter 9</i> – Lesson #6– Eliminating Obstacles: Momentum vs. Stuck	161
--	-----

PART III – ALIGNING ENERGETICALLY

<i>Chapter 10</i> – Lesson #7– Expand Your Ability to Receive: Abundance vs. Scarcity	183
--	-----

<i>Chapter 11</i> – Lesson #8– Embracing Reality: Accepting vs. Resisting	201
--	-----

<i>Chapter 12</i> – Lesson #9– Releasing Stressful Thoughts: Peace vs. Stress	227
--	-----

PART IV – CONSCIOUS CHOICE

Chapter 13 – Lesson #10– Taking Responsibility: Powerful vs. Helpless	255
--	-----

<i>Chapter 14</i> – Lesson #11 – Being YOU: Freedom vs. Restriction	279
--	-----

<i>Chapter 15</i> – Lesson #12– The Path of Simplicity: Evolving vs. Stagnating	309
--	-----

<i>Chapter 16</i> – Final Words	341
---------------------------------	-----

Appendix 1 – Ideas for NOW Practices, Daily Rituals and Acts of Love	345
---	-----

Appendix 2– Sample Visions	353
----------------------------	-----

Resources	361
-----------	-----

About the Author	365
------------------	-----

The Power of
I N N E R
C H O I C E

Introduction

Imagine your life flowing like a sailboat breezing magically through the water. Your craft is perfectly aligned with the forces of nature. You have adjusted your sails for optimum use of the wind, and your hand on the rudder allows for fine attunements. You feel a sense of direction and purpose. In every cell of your being, you are enjoying the ride. There is something innately fulfilling about being in harmony with your boat, the wind, and the sea.

Our lives are a lot like sailing. There are fundamental forces we cannot change or influence. However, we can learn to align with these forces to guide us effortlessly through life with ease and grace. Optimal flow not only allows us to arrive at the next port of call more quickly, it also creates a sense of fulfillment that permeates every moment of the journey.

Just as there are other boats on the water that we must navigate around, there are obstacles in life that we must accommodate and negotiate. When we deny obstacles or resist the forces of nature, the result is pain, frustration, and suffering. In a physical journey, this resistance generally slows progress and takes away from the joy of the journey. Resistance in life, however, shows up in a subtler manner. Our resistance manifests in the form of arguing, complaining, apathy or rebellious behavior. Thoughts of judgment, confusion, worry, or regret are other strains of resistance. Feelings of frustration, fear, disappointment, stress, or depression are forms of resistance to life. And, like a boat attempting to sail into the wind, at best, you'll be

stopped; more likely, you'll be pushed backwards. No matter how hard an individual tries to oppose the wind in this manner, the navigator will remain unsuccessful. When we stop resisting the wind or whatever we are resisting in life, we will naturally be guided back on course.

Many sailboats these days have computers that automatically make tiny adjustments to maximize their flow through the water. So far, there isn't a computer system that provides this service for human beings. To live a life that flows with the natural forces around us requires being in tune with something else inside of us. It is a feeling generated in our bodies. While it's hard to describe, it is distinctly felt. It's not about finding it once and being 'done': It is a steady process of alignment and re-alignment. If we work at it, we can become masters of our own internal navigation system. We gain power when we choose to align with this force inside of ourselves.

This book is a resource that will enable you to fine-tune your own internal navigation system, to optimize the momentum, results, balance, fulfillment, and flow of your life. As you do so, you will naturally create a life **you** love. In each of the twelve lessons, you will be challenged to raise your awareness of the multitude of choices you make in your life. Your life is an unending stream of what I call "choice points." It is what you do in these moments of choice that creates the quality of your life.

Choice Points

Choice points are moments in time where we consciously or unconsciously make a choice that either accelerates or decelerates our lives. Some choices are monumental and radically shift our lives for better or for worse. Decisions to leave a company, start a business, commit to a health regime, marry, divorce, have children, or move across country are a few of the big choice points we may make in life.

INTRODUCTION

Other choices may seem insignificant in the moment, but they may alter our lives forever. Examples of these types of choices may include attending a seminar, befriending a stranger, having an intimate conversation, forgiving someone, making a decision to quit smoking, honoring your integrity, speaking the truth, or reading a life-altering book. Still other choices seem almost inconsequential, such as what to eat for breakfast, what to wear, what to watch on television, or what to do during your free time. It's the net accumulation of all your choices, both conscious and unconscious, that have shaped your life into what it is today.

As human beings, we have been designed to navigate through life efficiently, without requiring a conscious choice every second of the day. This is useful, as it frees our mind for other uses. We can walk across the room while thinking about the children's homework or what to make for dinner. While putting in a load of laundry, we can think about a problem at the office or about the argument we had with a friend or our spouse. While driving across town, we can contemplate our goals in life or listen to the radio.

Varying degrees of consciousness and awareness are involved with every choice and experience throughout the day. Habits and behaviors are formed to conserve energy. While the vast majority of these patterns serve us in many ways, it has also created a culture that is largely unconscious. The less conscious we are, the less power we have to co-create results in our lives. It also impedes our ability to grow and evolve, and diminishes our sense of inner fulfillment. To the extent we are living life unconsciously on auto-pilot, choices are born out of hidden beliefs and outside influences. In essence, we're not guiding the sailboat. When we choose unconsciously, we're more likely to choose out of habit, fear, or to please another.

Choices that align with our personal values, sense of integrity, or that are deliberately made with intention are conscious choices. When we choose consciously, we are more likely to find the “sweetspot” that sailors experience on the water. We feel a sense of purpose and direction. Again, there are varying degrees of consciousness involved with every choice we make.

The Power of Inner Choice explores twelve fundamental choices, and offers guidance for elevating your mastery of choice. As you investigate the contrasting impact of choices presented throughout the book, it should become apparent which one contributes to more pain and frustration, and which one supports maximum flow and joy. Your thoughts and feelings are like navigation instruments on a sailboat. By maintaining awareness and intimate familiarity with these gauges, you can develop mastery of choice. Reading this book and engaging in the exercises is meant to help you get started.

Consequences of Choice

As our awareness and consciousness expand, we notice that we either restrict the essence of who we are, or we become more authentically self-expressed. We either dwell on thoughts of regret about the past or fears of the future, or live in the present moment. We either allow ourselves to continue feeling bad in the moment, or we choose to feel good. We either succumb to the seductive influence of the ego or we heed our inner wisdom. We remain lost in a state of confusion or we gain clarity about what we would like to create. We either attempt to control the impossible or we surrender to inspired action. Some of us remain frustrated and immobile while others create momentum. We choose scarcity or abundance. We either resist or accept reality. We are caught in the illusion of thoughts that bring us stress or we choose thoughts of peace. We either remain helpless victims of life’s circumstances or we live from a place of power. We either choose to please someone else in an attempt to win their love and approval,

INTRODUCTION

or we progress toward a life that honors our values and brings us inner fulfillment. We can wish the world and people around us were different and remain frustrated, or accept them as they are.

Each one of these courses of action is a choice, whether we make the choices unconsciously or consciously. Each choice can contribute resistance and cause stress, pain, frustration and suffering, or it can create joy, momentum, progress, growth, and flow. There are no benign choices. Most of us do not live lives that are perfectly optimized. But, that is not a reason to condemn ourselves. Just as a sailboat does not always flow across the water in perfect balance and harmony, neither do we. When the tides change or an obstacle appears, the opportunity to change course becomes clear. We can either fight the current or allow ourselves to gracefully adjust. It's in these moments that we meet our greatest choice points. This is part of the joy and challenge of life. Without challenge, we remain bored or apathetic. Fortunately, life is full of challenges. We can choose frustration, or we can develop our skills in navigation.

Getting in Touch with the “Chooser”

Who is doing the choosing? This is a wonderful question to contemplate each time you make a choice. Ask yourself this question over and over again, and you may begin to connect with and strengthen your internal guiding system, the place of “inner choice.” Sometimes a choice will be clear. Other choices may be dictated or influenced by others.

When you decide to say “yes” to something, who is doing the choosing? When you choose chocolate over vanilla, who is choosing? When you decide to get up or go to bed at night, who is doing the choosing? What is the force inside human beings that guides and directs life choices?

Do you resist the wisdom of your guiding system, or do your choices happen seamlessly? Can you distinguish one clear voice, or are their numerous voices inside and outside of you that cause you to remain stuck or confused at times? In these moments of choice, do you choose out of integrity or fear? Do you choose to compromise your own values to please another? Do you choose the path of love or the path of least resistance? Do you choose out of defensiveness or protection? Do you choose from inspired guidance? And what is the relationship to your self in these moments of choice? Do you trust and honor your choice, or question and doubt yourself? As you develop a greater awareness of your influences, the power of inner choice reveals itself more and more clearly. Ultimately, your thoughts, feelings, and resulting action work harmoniously. When this happens, you can simply enjoy the journey as you create, accomplish, and experience life, sharing your gifts with the world.

What Is Inner Choice?

Inner choice is your purest internal guiding system. It knows when you are on or off course. It knows when to say yes or no, when to speak and when to remain silent. It senses your connection to or disconnection from others. It has a sense of right and wrong. When you are responding to this power of inner choice, your life can flow. You are on purpose, and loving your life. You are in complete alignment with both the external world and your inner world. There is no resistance to life.

There are numerous times you have personally experienced or witnessed perfect access to inner choice. When the connection is strongest, there is not a slow, deliberate, conscious choice in every moment, although this is often how the connection is strengthened initially. Body, mind, and spirit are working together in perfect harmony, creating excellence in performance, creativity, beauty, pleasure, and connection with others.

INTRODUCTION

Think about a world-class gymnast flowing through a routine with perfection. A musical performer radiating the sound of her voice in harmony with the words, instruments, the audience, and her soul. A mother instinctively responding to the needs of her baby with love and warmth, knowing exactly what is needed without instruction. An artist elegantly combining colors, textures, and images in a manner that touches the hearts of those who experience the work. A skier gliding down a mountain with grace and precision. Husband and wife making love together as one, maximizing their connection and pleasure. A poet allowing a set of words to flow onto the paper, bringing tears of joy to his readers. A CEO, presented with a host of challenging decisions to make, is intuitively guided to a clarity that propels the success of the business. Valentino, the infamous clothing designer, described what happens when he creates a new clothing line, “It just comes to me.”

Each of these examples carries a common set of characteristics. The persons experiencing or witnessing the moment is virtually one hundred percent present to the moment. They probably felt a sense of peace or calm along with pleasant emotions such as joy, love, excitement, openness, and a sense of fulfillment. Their bodies and minds were perfectly aligned with their external worlds. They were expressing their most creative selves. The power of inner choice was working through them harmoniously.

Sometimes, the sense of inner choice works in a less dramatic manner. Although outwardly less dramatic than the visual results of critical choices made in high-performance sports, works of art, or moments of connection, the power of inner choice plays a significant role in clearly guiding even simple decisions, in addition to directing you into a new phase of your life. Inner choice is at work when you “know” that it’s time to make a career change or move to a new city. It tells you when to call a loved one, and when to let go. It captures

your attention during a peak experience, allowing you to savor the moment. Sometimes it shows up as procrastination (resistance to taking action); at other times it inspires you to action.

Although each of us has access to this internal guiding system, the connection to this resource may be weak or strong. If your life is flowing well, your connection is strong. If your life is filled with stress, frustration, and suffering, your connection is weaker. The good news is that you do have an opportunity to strengthen the connection. Your internal guiding system may work well in some areas of your life, but may be less effective in other areas. The more you fine-tune the connection, the more your life will flow.

How Does Transformation Happen?

When I climb aboard a sailboat, I am amazed at how my friend knows exactly what to do to orchestrate this seemingly awkward configuration of fiberglass, wood, poles, lines, and sails that propels us across the water. How does he know what rope to use and when? How does he know how hard to pull or when to let go? How can he use the wind he can't see to move us through the water? How does he make those almost constant tiny adjustments with the rudder? And how is it that no matter which direction the wind is going or how rough or calm the waters, we're always able to get from point A to point B and safely back into the harbor?

There are so many things to keep track of simultaneously. If I were to attempt to get the boat out of the harbor at Santa Cruz and into the ocean, I'm certain it would be either hilarious to any casual observer—or disastrous. If I had to take over the craft in the ocean on a calm day, I would probably just drift in whatever direction the wind was going, or listen to the guidance of someone else. If I had to manage the boat in the middle of a storm, I wouldn't know what

INTRODUCTION

to do. Perhaps I would try to fight the wind, or attempt to protect myself, or maybe I'd just give up. Without proper training, getting from point A to B would be improbable. Even with expert instruction, until I could gain competency, sailing would remain frustrating. The sense of oneness master sailors thrive on would remain an elusive concept to me.

I imagine this is how a lot of people live their lives. They are attempting to operate their craft without ever really mastering the basic rules of alignment. We may live our lives in the safety of a harbor, never venturing into uncharted waters and attempting to sail to an exciting new destination. We may never get in tune with that exhilarating feeling of being one with nature, our craft, and ourselves.

The good news is anyone can learn to sail one's life. *The Power of Inner Choice* provides a concentrated guide to getting started.

Imagine you wanted to become a master sailor. As most people who develop this passion, you would find an instructor and methodically learn the basic components of sailing. You'd learn the language of sailing and you'd learn about the equipment. Ultimately, you would need experience to get a "feel" for it. Knowing the basics is not the same as navigating on the water under a variety of winds, weather, and water conditions. If you took a lesson once a year for twelve years, you'd likely improve a little over time. But with so much time between lessons, you would have to relearn many of the basics each time. If you went sailing once a month or once a week, your learning curve would accelerate. If you took a three-month sailing trip with another master sailor and immersed yourself in the art of sailing, your progress would exponentially advance. On the other hand, a variety of teachers, each with a slightly different area of expertise, might ultimately make you an incredible sailor, but until you were

able to integrate the wisdom, a variety of different teachers might serve to confuse and slow your progress.

Unlike sailing, living life doesn't require lessons. However, there are numerous resources available that can substantially improve the quality of your life, offering a wide array of distinctions, philosophies, suggestions, and ideas. As a life coach, one of the biggest challenges I have both witnessed and experienced personally is the challenge of integrating all the available wisdom about living fulfilling and purposeful lives.

Since stores are full of books on self-improvement, spirituality, personal growth, and self-development, it's likely that you've read one or more of these books. From practical "how to" strategies to more esoteric and philosophical ideas, there is an abundance of wisdom readily available to everyone. Thirty percent of the books on the top 100 Best-Selling lists are related to some type of self-improvement.

How this Book Differs

This is not simply a "how to" book, it's more like an interactive workbook. You'll receive a wealth of practical strategies, how-to's, suggestions, exercises, tips, and ideas. Perhaps more importantly, this book is about *affecting your being*. This means you'll be challenged to cultivate awareness of your inner thoughts, feelings, desires, values, and behaviors more consciously than you ever have before. Awareness combined with becoming present with your conscious choices allows you to evolve and grow from the inside out. It's more than simply taking new actions.

The real power of this book is unleashed through the exercises and expanding your awareness in your life. I encourage you to stop and do the exercises *as they come*, because each exercise builds upon the

INTRODUCTION

previous one. Some of the exercises challenge you to become more present in the moment, or to listen more closely to your internal guiding system. The more actively you engage in an exercise, the more you will strengthen your connection to inner choice. Avoid going through the motions or *only* taking in the book intellectually. Since your participation and mindset is key to maximizing the value of this book, a more detailed set of guidelines is offered in chapter two.

Refer to this book again and again to gain new distinctions, or any time you want to reinforce the connection with your internal navigation system. It may take years to master everything in this book and a lifetime to master your internal guiding system. However, once you get a *feel* for this connection, you'll always know it is available. Every lesson has the power to elicit the state that I'm describing. The more you experience that sense of flow, the more easily you'll access it. Just as the sailor savors those perfect moments of oneness on the sea, you will relish the seamless flow of your own life as your ability to live in harmony with your power of inner choice becomes an everyday way of being.

Who Can Benefit from this Book?

This book is a resource for anyone who would like to develop or optimize the internal guiding system we are referring to as “inner choice.” Perhaps you are someone who would like to create more results, more balance, or more fulfillment in your life. You want a life that flows. You may have experienced enormous success in achieving goals through determination, willpower, and hard work, yet find yourself exhausted with this approach. You know there must be an easier way. Maybe you just realized that you have been living your life quite unconsciously and disconnected from this powerful guiding system. Maybe your life doesn't seem to be working. It doesn't matter whether you have recently awakened to the possibility of taking more conscious control over your life, or if you are just

interested in adjusting how you engage your guiding instruments in certain areas of your life.

Maybe you've paid a lot of attention to your health, developing your business, or being a wonderful parent, yet certain relationships aren't flowing optimally. Maybe you are in tune with your finances, but you're not experiencing as much fun or joy as you'd like. Maybe your house is in order, but you have let your health suffer. Maybe you know how to experience love and joy, but haven't aligned with your purpose or maximized your business potential. And, maybe you've recently felt a tug to do something else with your life, but the "What's next?" hasn't become clear yet. This book can help you enhance such areas that aren't flowing as smoothly as you would like.

Perhaps you have been developing your connection to your internal guiding system for years or decades, and know the value in polishing and refining it. You want to grow, evolve, and strengthen your navigation system to allow your life to flow even more effortlessly, effectively, and joyously.

As depicted in the popular movie "The Matrix," Neo (played by Keanu Reeves) had the option of taking one of two pills that would guide his destiny. The blue pill would allow him to return to his everyday world and remain comfortably inside of the matrix of life without remembering another option was available for him. Alternatively, the red pill would allow him to become aware of the truth. He was forewarned that this option would be the more uncomfortable path of the two.

Whether it was today, last week, or ten years ago, somewhere inside of your being, you made a choice to take charge of your life in some new way, just like Neo did. And so your journey began. Or maybe you're thinking about taking the "red pill" right now. Just as the

INTRODUCTION

art of sailing is not mastered overnight, learning how to interpret, understand, and influence your thoughts, feelings, and actions comes with time. Life is a process that unfolds continuously. Optimizing life is not a destination that is ever reached once and for all.

This book can also provide information for coaches, therapists, healthcare practitioners, managers, and parents who enjoy helping others improve their productivity or satisfaction in their lives.

Hundreds of individuals have already participated in the Power of Inner Choice ecourse and teleseries programs. Whether you have been studying personal and spiritual growth principles for years, are just beginning to expand your awareness of such concepts, or are somewhere in between; you can strengthen your connection to this place of inner choice and experience more flow by studying this book and working the exercises. As you connect with the power of inner choice, you may be delighted to find yourself naturally aligning with your life's purpose and discovering a deeper sense of joy, inner fulfillment and peace in your life.

*By becoming a conscious choice-maker,
you begin to generate actions that are evolutionary for you.*

— **Deepak Chopra**



Awakenings

I didn't always have a concentrated interest in personal growth, expanding my consciousness or spirituality, mostly because I didn't know such a world existed. However, I have always loved learning and improving myself; and I admit to reading magazines like *Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan* in hopes of discovering a hidden secret to happiness, being irresistible to men, achieving perfect communication, and having an eternally sexy abdomen.

My career began as a recruiter for computer professionals. This company valued training, and one of those dimensions included personal development subjects. I remember one exercise in which I was required to draw a circle with four quadrants. Each quadrant represented an area of my life; career, health, relationships, spirituality. I was instructed to rate each area on a scale of 1 to 10 to describe how well it was working for me. I remember looking at "spirituality" and rating it a zero. It didn't even get a one or two. At that time, it was not an area of my life that I had deemed important. Although I was raised Catholic, I had lost interest in organized religion and had unconsciously eliminated spirituality as a category of life to develop. At the time, I was at peace with this zero rating, and relieved to focus on the three other areas. Despite that momentary satisfaction, the "zero" left an impression in my mind. Maybe it was the initial spark that allowed my journey to begin.

Life back then seemed pretty good. I was consistently a top producer for my company. I supervised three people and made a healthy living

for a woman in her mid-twenties. I had a boyfriend, good friends, a loyal dog, and a comfortable lifestyle. While the exterior of my life may have looked good to many people, there was a numbness inside. I was floating along life's path reasonably well, but not consciously in charge of it. My life was shallow. I was a product of the conditioning and expectations of society, school, family, and friends. While I experienced positive emotions, I didn't feel connected to my life.

Sometimes I think my life would have been simpler had I not awakened to the notion of living a conscious life. Without an awareness of another way to live and choose, I didn't know what I was missing. Back then, I didn't see anything wrong with floating through life in this manner.

Somehow in the midst of floating through life something clicked inside of me. Just as Neo chose the red pill, somewhere I must've chosen the road of consciousness, too. Despite the numerous ups and downs I have experienced since then, I wouldn't want to have missed this journey.

Taking Risks

One day, a friend of mine took me to a presentation for a network marketing company. The dream of a residual income in excess of my earnings from recruiting, and of not getting up to an alarm clock each day appealed to me. Someone told me that if I could be successful at recruiting, I could do anything. Being young, naive, and willing to work hard, I believed them. Surely I could succeed in network marketing and retire at age 27.

I gingerly proceeded to leave the recruiting business, certain I'd soon be earning \$20,000 per month. Anyone who has experience in network marketing knows it is not quite that easy.

Soon afterward, I decided to take my turn with a small business venture. Two other partners and I set out to transform the restaurant industry with our software. The idea of running a company seemed glamorous and I still thought I could do anything. I quickly realized the challenges associated with being a partner in a start-up company. Imagining a very bright future, I contributed larger amounts of my own money to meet payroll. However, we struggled to compete with companies that had deeper pockets, larger teams, more experience, and proven track records. My “set the world on fire” attitude and confidence diminished. How could I have been so successful as a recruiter, and now be struggling so much in business? Although I had been willing to be patient, I became discouraged after nearly two years of waning savings and trying to convince restaurant owners to automate.

My Awakening

In January 1994, I attend Tony Robbins’ “Date With Destiny” event in Aspen, Colorado. I remember sitting in the room on that first evening thinking to myself, “These people must be really messed up.” I mistakenly assumed what kind of people would be attracted to a personal growth seminar. I, of course, was there for my own reasons. I quickly realized the vast majority of the audience was actually quite successful and balanced. There were doctors, lawyers, CEO’s, business owners and professionals from nearly every line of work. Others were in transition. I admired their honesty as they revealed their humanity. It was easy to identify with a portion of everyone’s experiences, even those individuals with more challenging lives. Most of all, I respected their desire, willingness and commitment to discover another level of mastery within themselves.

That is where my initial awakening began. There is an endless variety of triggers that might spur an individual’s initial breakthrough to awareness. Seminars, highly emotional events, or even peak

experiences of joy, love, or fulfillment serve as the catalyst for many, as they gain a new level of awareness about themselves. For others, a significant emotional event such as the death of a loved one, divorce, a serious accident, getting fired or laid-off, a near-death experience, heart attack, or relationship break-up can trigger a shift in awareness. For still others, being the victim of a serious crime, being diagnosed with a life-threatening disease, or experiencing a near-miss disaster triggers the shift. Witnessing the tragedy of another human being or animal may stimulate the shift. The tragedy on 9/11 served as the catalyst for a friend of mine, as it may have done for numerous others. For some, the combination of reading a book or listening to a certain audio series after a tragic event prompts a life-altering change. An awakening of consciousness is often stimulated by a deep sense of fear, followed by a profound sense of love as one realizes they are okay.

For some, there is no tragedy, but instead their turning point is stimulated by a peak experience of joy, love, adventure, or fulfillment. The birth of a child, a profound love relationship, a graduation, a significant achievement in sports or business, sailing in the South Pacific for two years, doing a fire-walk, participating in a ropes course, spending time in nature, being in the presence of a wild animal, or simply a moment of silence on the hull of a ship at sea can mark a turning point. There are numerous potential triggers to spark consciousness in human beings. What is significant to one person may be frivolous to another.

Much like Neo in the movie “The Matrix,” at each significant juncture, an individual has the option to choose. They can continue their lives as they know it and possibly become more disenchanted by life’s follies, or they can choose to experience a shift in consciousness. After that initial awakening, going back to their previous life is not possible.

While the experience is distinctly different for every human being, there are several common themes in awakening experiences. Many people describe their hearts opening in a new ways, feeling a profound sense of connectedness to self, to another, or to the world in general. For others, there is a profound sense that “All is well.” Some suddenly become clear about their life purpose. Many people experience a deep sense of inner peace as they notice their previous anxieties disintegrate. Some realize how unconsciously they have been living. As people begin to understand the influences that have shaped their lives, a sense of freedom may develop. Some just realize their lives aren’t working and they become inspired to create a radical change.

As most people will confirm, the initial breakthrough doesn’t mean lives suddenly become perfect and full of happiness. How I wish it were that simple. If you take the red pill, whether by accident or deliberately, you can no longer depend on habits to make life smooth; you will forever be confronted by choices.

The Beginning

A whole new world opened up for me in January of 1994. Suddenly it wasn’t as flat and emotionless. I felt new emotions and more connected within myself. These experiences were exhilarating, much like the feeling of sailing harmoniously across the water, or hearing a perfect melody. I walked around for weeks constantly smiling ear to ear. Inside, I felt alive and free. But I was a slow learner.

Some people leave events and immediately apply everything, and experience instant results. It wasn’t so automatic for me. I had bursts of productivity and enthusiasm, followed by struggle and frustration. The new wisdom felt clumsy and awkward. I was torn between the new ways of being and my old ways, even though the old ways didn’t bring much satisfaction. I was having a hard time letting go of them, much like a favorite pair of pants that I had outgrown. Furthermore,

my friends and family who hadn't attended the seminar didn't understand my enthusiasm for a refreshing new way of embracing life, and I felt somewhat isolated. It would take me years before I had fully integrated this newfound wisdom.

Since I had lost interest in the software company, my recharged optimism about life led me to another network marketing company. Even though I had sworn off this type of business, I felt a resonance with the company's mission. It offered a 24-hour Success TV channel with programs to empower people's lives in the areas of business, health, relationships, parenting, and life success. As I had recently experienced the joy of transformation, I wanted others to experience the same.

Working from my home-based office, I boldly and enthusiastically contacted everyone I could. I supposed that everyone else would be interested in transforming their lives and in starting a home-based business. I worked hard and didn't understand why I experienced so much resistance, especially since I felt empowered with my new insights and skills.

I realized that my initial inclinations to take charge of my life were largely selfish in nature. After I left recruiting, I had focused on making money, so that I wouldn't have to work and contribute to the world. I don't believe now that I was a bad person for aspiring to financial independence, nor do I think others are wrong for their pursuits of wealth. But, there is more to life. For me, I know this discovery and these experiences that led to it were integral parts of my path. I believe my self-centered focus cut off some of the natural flow of abundance that I had experienced previously.

When the Success TV Network was sold, I suffered a major disappointment. Anyone who has given heart and soul for a

company or cause knows the grief that ensues when it ceases to exist. I genuinely loved the people I came to know and work with, and I was sad to part ways with this group. Also, meeting dozens of speakers and authors had allowed me to learn more than ever before. My customers who embraced the idea of personal growth television found their lives transformed in beautiful ways; witnessing their growth touched me tremendously.

The sale of the company was also a relief. The intrinsic benefits and friendships far outweighed the external financial rewards, but after four dedicated years, the accumulated net loss diminished my financial reserves by an embarrassingly large amount. My external world was now rather flat, yet my internal world had begun to thrive during these difficult times.

As synchronicity would have it, the week before the company was sold in 1998, I attended The International Coach Federation Conference. Wayne Dyer was the keynote speaker. Since I loved playing a role in people's transformations, coaching seemed the natural next step for me. But I had experienced two significant financial losses and several disappointments; now I was cautious. My energy was depleted. The idea of working hard again didn't seem like a possibility and my esteem had taken a hit. I jumped into coaching, but this time, my usual enthusiasm was muted.

The Challenge of Integration

Now, more than ever before, it was time for me to integrate the principles I had accumulated over the years. Although I knew a lot, I was learning more every day through training, other courses, and starting to coach. However, despite all that I knew intellectually, I was acting on only a fraction of it in my daily life. I had to admit to this condition because a nagging uneasy feeling told me each time I fell into my old ways.

The realities of my life brought pressure on me to find new ways. I was in my mid 30's and I was still single despite several relationships. That situation did not fulfill my desire to have a life partner and to raise a family. There was also a pressing need to earn a viable income and to rebuild my financial reserves. During this time I was experiencing significantly more emotional ups and downs than ever before. They interfered with my ability and motivation to develop a thriving coaching business and to manage my time effectively. I wanted to be consistent, but at times the weight of emotions got the best of me. Yet, ironically, I was supposed to be helping other people realize their dreams and handle their biggest challenges.

Although teachers and authors offered illuminating keys, I found myself constantly asking for the step-by-step *how's*. I didn't understand because I hadn't personally experienced what they were trying to describe. How could I embrace the feeling of abundance when my bank account was depleted? How could I let go of an ego reaction in the heat of an argument? What was my life purpose? How could I get inspired when I felt lethargic and disheartened?

My integration process parallels the ongoing experience I have with yoga. As instructors call out a certain position, I attempt to get my body to follow their directions. Sometimes the instructions are straightforward and I seem to follow along just fine. However, often my body just doesn't go where I think it should. My body may not be flexible enough yet. I may not be listening attentively to a part of the instructor's guidance. Then, one day, when I'm least expecting it, I find my body going in the position slightly differently—and I think, “Oh, *that's* what they've been describing.” I know it is right because I feel a sense of alignment and ease. There have been times I thought I was doing the posture correctly. Then, one tiny adjustment alerted me to that feeling of exhilaration, indicating that *NOW* I am doing it right. Until I *experience* a posture correctly for myself, there

always seems to be a little “disconnect” in understanding. Equally frustrating is experiencing perfect alignment one day, and being unable to experience it again the very next day. Such has been my internal journey.

Profound Learning

Our most difficult experiences can become our greatest teachers. A couple years ago, I found myself in an unusually challenging relationship. We reacted to each other like the sting of salt to an open wound. He seemed to misinterpret virtually everything I said, while I found myself taking everything personally. His comments seemed harsh, unkind, and unfair. My friends discouraged my continued involvement, but staying in the struggle seemed very important to me.

Over that two-year period, I shed more tears and experienced more frustration, anger, and internal turmoil than I could have imagined. From the beginning, I looked at this relationship as an opportunity to master myself. It required a new level of self-honesty, as I confronted my deepest insecurities and fears. I discovered how I “made up stories” and how I wasn’t *really* listening. I began to see how old habits were unconscious attempts to manipulate or control another. While I had always considered myself an honest person, I simply hadn’t realized how much I was distorting, denying, and embellishing the world around me as well as the world within me. Although my coaching practice was thriving, this aspect of my life remained a sharp thorn in my side.

At about the peak of this battle, my coach introduced me to the work of Byron Katie. I listened to her CD series and proceeded to follow her instructions for inquiring into every reactive thought I had about the man in my life.

A week later, I found myself in another confrontational experience with my beloved partner. This time, something radically different ensued. Instead of reacting to some harsh words, I remained calm and centered with my heart filled with love. It wasn't something I consciously orchestrated. It happened almost automatically. And it brought me a wave of relief and of joy.

For the next several weeks, I experienced a profound sense of inner bliss that is nearly indescribable. I felt connected to everything. I had experienced this state briefly before, but now it was virtually constant. Every morning I awoke asking, "Is that feeling still here?" And it was, again and again.

I was clearly drawn to the interconnection between the works that I had studied over the years. I began to see patterns between the various disciplines. I wasn't working at finding them; they were vividly jumping out at me. Every seminar or audiotape I listened to spoke more deeply to me. I "knew" what they were describing. I had finally experienced it.

As I casually picked up Eckhart Tolle's book, *The Power of Now Handbook*, what he described resonated with me in a new way, as I had now experienced similar states for myself. I later learned through various authors, that what I may have experienced during those several weeks was *satori*. While it's not an everyday occurrence, numerous others have shared in similar experiences of various length and intensity. While the state doesn't often become permanent, those who share in these experiences always remember the potency. You may refer to Dr. David Hawkins' book *The Eye of the I*, page 246, for an expanded description of *satori*.

Since the experience during those few weeks, life has not been totally smooth sailing. In some ways, it has been more frustrating

AWAKENINGS

and painful to experience this clear state and then to find myself caught in reactive states. Nevertheless, when caught in a reaction, I am generally able to navigate myself back to a state of inner peace relatively quickly, usually with new insights. Every day brings new opportunities for me to strengthen these processes.



The Compounding Effect of Choice

Most people are familiar with the compounding effect of money, as it is the key to long-term accumulation of wealth. As you will discover, the principles of compounding also apply to *every* area of life. I encourage you to internalize the simple principles in this chapter and apply them in your life. Doing so will allow you to more easily focus on what is important to you and take the necessary action steps to realize your desires over time.

The most powerful force in the universe is compound interest.

— **Albert Einstein**

It's easy to understand the compounding effect on money, because it is clearly measurable. Once you understand the basic elements, you will readily see how this applies to all of your other choices. Whether it is a choice to save money, meditate, read ten pages of a good book, go to the gym, do yoga, offer a simple act of kindness, say "I love you," or practice present moment awareness, the compounding effect creates an analogous result.

There are four important elements to consider, not only in the following examples with money, but in all of our accumulated choices in life.

- 1) **Compounding Effect**
- 2) **Choice**
- 3) **Interest**
- 4) **Time**

Note: Some people glaze over when numbers appear. If you're one of those people, it's probably even *more* important for you to absorb the next few pages. While this isn't a book about wealth accumulation, understanding the basic principles of compounding will serve you for a lifetime. The examples I've included are rudimentary and easy to understand with a little attention.

*Great things are not done by impulse,
but by a series of small things brought together.*

—**Vincent Van Gogh**

Compounding Effect

Compounding simply means “to add something to another.” When interest compounds on money, it means that interest is added onto the amount that has already accumulated thus far. For example, if you have \$1,000 earning compounded interest at 10% per year, in the first year you earn $(\$1,000 + (\$1,000 \times 10\%) = \$1,100)$, for a profit of \$100. In year two, you would have $(\$1,100 + (\$1,100 \times 10\%) = \$2,210)$, for a profit of \$210. In year three, the interest would now be calculated on the sum of \$2,210. By year ten, your original \$1,000 would be worth \$2,707.04. In year 20, it would be worth \$7,328.07. That is \$6,328.07 in profit.

There are two key points to understand about the compounding effect.

1. Total accumulation. When something is compounded, it is “added to” the *entire amount accumulated* thus far. In monetary terms,

this means your accumulated interest also earns interest. As human beings, EVERYTHING we choose is compounded upon all of our previous choices. Whatever your choice, each builds upon or takes away from the accumulated sum.

Let's contrast this to "simple" interest. Simple interest means that you earn interest only on the principle amount and NOT the *accumulated interest*. In this example, you have \$1,000, so with simple interest you would only earn \$100 of interest each year. It would never be more. In 20 years, you would have accumulated \$3,000; $\$100 \times 20 \text{ years} = \$2,000$ in profit. The difference between compounding interest and simple interest is \$4,328.07! Choosing a compounded savings program over a simple interest program is the better option long-term.

Fortunately for human beings, there is not an analogy to simple interest growth. *Every choice for human beings is compounded.* We will explore this further below.

2. It starts small and grows over time. The second key point to recognize about compounding is the role time plays in the end result. In economics, this is called the "time value of money." In the first few years, the amount of interest being earned each year seems relatively insignificant. This is one of the reasons many people find it challenging to save money in the beginning. In three years, leaving \$1,000 in the bank at 10% only grows to \$1,348.18. There may be a temptation to pull it out of the bank and spend it on something you can more immediately benefit from. But leaving \$1,000 alone for 20 years is worth \$7,328.07! Spending \$1,348.18 in year three would've **cost** you almost \$6,000!

Comparing compounded interest to simple interest also helps in understanding the importance of time in choice. In the first several

years, compounding interest does not look much different from the simple interest example. In year one, the interest is exactly the same. In year two, the difference is only \$10 and in year three, only \$21. In year five, the difference is \$145.30, which is still not substantial. The real difference is apparent in year 20. Simple interest earned \$2,000 and compounded interest was \$4,328.07, more than twice as much. When interest is calculated on accumulated interest, the return in the long run is substantial.

For human beings EVERYTHING is subject to the compounding effect. Education is an excellent example. Everything we have learned throughout our life is built upon everything else we have accumulatively learned thus far. The learning from elementary school, high school, and college all build upon the others. You cannot delete learning once it has happened.

Let's say you want to learn something new, like piano. The first several piano lessons may seem rather insignificant in your progress. However, the accumulation of piano lessons and practice would, over time, enable you to develop your skills. The potency of a lesson in year one may not seem that significant to you, as you desire to play more complex pieces. But it lays the foundation, just as your initial financial investments do. A lesson in year ten would build upon the cumulative knowledge and experience over the years. It's all worthwhile.

The Negative Effect of Compounding in Money

Unfortunately, the power of compounding works in both a positive and negative manner. In the world of economics, accumulating credit card debt is the best way to understand the negative power of compounding. As interest accumulates on savings, the compounding effect works in the same manner with debt. If you are unable to meet all of your expenses each month, you are contributing a little more

debt to your financial picture each month. It's like savings in reverse. Saving \$100 a month with a compounded interest rate of 12% is only \$1,268.25 in one year; after 5 years, the sum is \$8,166.96. We love the compounding effect of saving! However, going into debt by just \$100 per month at a credit card rate of 12% is \$1,268.25 in year one. This may not seem like a big deal in the first year, but in five years the accumulated debt grows to \$8,166.96! Yikes! In five years you have all the initial debt **and** you are being *charged interest on the interest* from all the previous months, too.

Example of the Negative Effect of Compounding in Life

Health is a great example to see both the positive and negative effects of compounding as it applies to life. Everything you have eaten and every choice to exercise or not has created a cumulative compounded effect, in the same way your financial choices have created a cumulative compounded effect.

Here is a hypothetical scenario to illustrate this point. Let's say, *in addition to* your regular eating habits, you decided to eat a cheeseburger, a large bag of Doritos and a tub of ice cream and you don't work out that day. While most would agree this is not a great thing to do for your health, it's not a big deal for one day. If you continued to repeat this regimen for one month, it's likely that you would have accumulated a few extra pounds, but your overall health would still be relatively unaffected. However, in just one year, the compounded effect of this program would become quite noticeable with accumulating weight gain. With each day, month, and year this regimen continues, the negative impact on your health would begin to be greater and greater. With additional weight, there would be added demands placed on your organs. As one organ became stressed, it would place additional strain on the others. Your ability to participate in physical activities may become impaired. Your sense of self-esteem may also be affected. Twenty years of this regimen

may result in a heart attack. If you were still alive, it is likely you would be considerably obese. You may be bedridden as more and more of your body's organs would struggle. You may even die as a result of this compounding effect. One of the most common reasons for death among the obese is organ failure.

In actuality, I don't know how quickly the negative compounding effect would result in such negative health consequences. It may be earlier or later. In any case, I don't recommend the regimen above. Numerous factors, such as metabolism and your other food intake may either accelerate or slow down the negative impact. The main purpose of this example is to see how the compounding effect can work in our lives.

Example of the Positive Effect of Compounding in Life

Health can also demonstrate a positive compounding effect. Let's say you eat three 100% healthy, well-balanced, nutritious meals and spend one hour working out in one day. Most people wouldn't notice a difference in their life with this one-day program, and neither would you. Let's say you continue this regimen of eating healthfully and you worked out five days a week. After 30 days, you may begin to see some noticeable differences in your body, but your overall health would not seem considerably different than it did day one. After six months of this regimen, the compounding effect of this healthy practice would likely have more evident results. In three years, the compounded effect of these health habits would be even more significant. Not only would others likely notice an improvement in your physical appearance, your internal organs and overall health would be favorably enhanced. This may result in a host of other benefits. Your self-esteem, success in business, and sense of fulfillment may have improved from this compounding effect. If you continued to exercise five times a week and continued to eat healthfully for *20 years*, it's likely you would be considerably healthier than when you began. If we compared you with someone who had the same eating

patterns for 20 years and did not work out at all, your overall health would clearly demonstrate the impact of the compounding effect.

Most people vary their eating and exercise patterns enough that the compounding effect isn't as obvious as it is with money. It may be difficult to determine if a single day contributes positively or negatively to your overall health, since there are numerous factors that influence our health. If every time someone ate a cheeseburger they immediately suffered a heart attack, people would not eat cheeseburgers at all! But our food and exercise choices accumulate slowly over time, creating either positive or detrimental consequences in our lives.

Choice

There are three significant choices related to the compounding effect in saving money and in every area of life.

1. Are you in the game? The initial choice is whether to invest *some* amount of money or *not* to invest at all. *If you invest nothing, the return is always zero.* This is always the first component with regard to any area of your life. You must start if you want to make progress. You cannot begin to accumulate wealth if you do not save money. You cannot reap the benefits of yoga or meditation if you never begin.

2. How much? How much are you investing in the activity? In finances, you may choose to save \$50, \$200, \$500 or \$2,000 per month. Each amount, compounded with the same interest rate, will contribute a different result under the same period of time. The more you choose to invest, the more exponential your return will be over time. In life, the “how much” translates to EFFORT.

If you spend one hour working out each day, you get to choose how much effort you will invest in that workout. An effort level of 20%,

50%, or 85% of your maximum capacity will give you significantly different results in your body over the same period of time.

In the table below you can see what it takes for someone to reach a million dollars over time. The table illustrates the radical difference between saving \$50, \$200, \$500, and \$2,000 per month. The more you invest, the larger your return and the more quickly you can become a millionaire.

Years To Reach One Million Dollars

Monthly Savings	2%	4%	6%	8%	10%	12%	14%	16%
\$ 50	177	105	77	61	51	44	39	35
\$ 100	144	88	66	53	44	39	34	31
\$ 150	125	79	59	48	40	35	31	28
\$ 200	112	72	54	44	38	33	29	26
\$ 250	102	67	51	42	35	31	28	25
\$ 300	94	62	48	39	34	30	26	24
\$ 400	82	56	43	36	31	27	24	22
\$ 500	73	51	40	33	29	25	23	21
\$ 750	58	42	34	29	25	22	20	18
\$1,000	49	37	30	25	22	20	18	17
\$1,250	42	32	27	23	20	18	17	15
\$1,500	37	29	24	21	19	17	16	14
\$2,000	30	25	21	18	16	15	14	13
\$2,500	26	21	18	16	15	13	12	12
\$3,000	22	19	16	15	13	12	11	11
\$4,000	17	15	14	12	11	10	10	9
\$5,000	14	13	12	11	10	9	9	8

3. Frequency. How often are you investing? Let's compare the frequency factors in saving \$1,200 per year. You invest \$100 per month; John invests \$300 per quarter; and I invest \$1,200 once a year. In 20 years, we have all contributed exactly \$24,000. However, due to the difference in the frequency of our contributions and the compounding effect, our accumulated savings vary. You now have

the largest savings account, because you invested more frequently. Because you invested monthly, you have \$529 more than John and \$3,418 more than me! Frequency matters.

- \$100 Monthly - \$75,937
- \$300 Quarterly - \$75,308
- \$1200 Annual - \$72,519
- No compounded interest - \$24,000 ($\$1,200 \times 10$ years).
Interest matters!

Health and Frequency

In our health example, with all other factors remaining equal, the number of times one works out per week makes a considerable difference. The difference in working out two or three days a week consistently is significant. With each incremental increase of just ONE workout, the impact to your overall health is apparent, especially over time. The differences between working out four, five, or six times per week create a unique net effect on your health.

Is it more effective to work out one day a week for two hours, or four days a week for 30 minutes each time? As you may guess, any trainer would encourage the higher frequency given the same amount of workout time.

Quality Time

Another example that illustrates the impact of time is quality time spent with a child. A mother or father who deliberately spends one hour a day with their child over ten years will have a notably different relationship compared to an aunt, uncle, or grandparent who spends an hour with the child once a month over the same ten-year period of time.

Interest

As you have already seen in the “How To Reach a Million Dollars” table, the *percentage rate* of compounding interest helps determine the number of years it takes to become a millionaire. If you save \$100 per year, the difference between an 8% rate and 10% interest is substantial, saving you 9 years when receiving the higher interest. With smaller investments, you can see the interest rate makes a bigger difference.

Interest rate reflects the *demand* for money. It’s a measure of how *valuable* money is at any given point in time. When the demand is high, money is worth more; thus interest rates are higher. Interest rates also reflect how quickly your money will *grow* and how much you will *benefit* from your money accumulating in a savings account.

Interest in Life

In life, the analogy parallels our financial example in a slightly different manner. The interest rate equates to your level of *interest* in any given activity, or how much you *value* it. The more important health is to you, the more an incremental improvement in health will *mean* to you. Essentially, the more you value a particular “choice,” the *greater the sense of fulfillment* you experience when it grows exponentially.

Let’s take another example. I enroll in violin and piano lessons. I discover that I enjoy or *value* playing piano more than violin. I have a higher *interest* in piano. I may become equally adept at playing both instruments. However, I experience greater inner benefits and fulfillment as a result of playing piano. If I split my time equally between violin and piano, I will receive the accumulated value I place on each activity. However, if I were to focus 100% of my time on the piano, my inner benefits and fulfillment would be substantially

higher. The lower level of interest in violin wouldn't be pulling my "fulfillment quotient" down.

Your level of *interest* makes a difference in the level of fulfillment you experience in life. Another way of identifying *interests* is by looking at what you *value most in life*. By investing our time and energy in the activities we value most, we will maximize the benefits or fulfillment.

No profit grows where is no pleasure taken.

– **Shakespeare**

Note: What I've described above is a greatly simplified analogy to interest rates. There are numerous variables that contribute to how an interest rate is determined. This is true for business, and is also true in life.

Time

In compounding, it's probably already clear that the element of time always plays a role in the net result. In the first few saving contributions or the first few workouts, the return seems relatively insignificant initially. Over time, the activity is compounded and the results become more and more apparent. In 20 years, at 10%, an investment of \$1,000 grows to \$7,328.07. In 30 years—only 10 additional years—it grows to \$19,837.39. At 50 years, that initial \$1,000 grows to \$145,369.92! Time matters.

Meditation

Time also plays an important role in virtually every activity in life. Let's use the example of meditation. Through a sophisticated measurement, we'll also assume we have a baseline measurement of your consciousness (see Ken Wilber's CD, *Kosmic Consciousness* for more information). If you meditate one time for 20 minutes, it is very likely

there *won't* be a considerable difference in your level of consciousness. If you continue this practice for 90 days, you may begin to experience a greater sense of peace and balance in your life, but the measurements in consciousness would not reflect much growth.

If you continued to meditate for 20 minutes a day for an entire year, the measurements may begin to detect some changes, but again, overall, it would still appear rather insignificant. However, if you continued this practice for 20 years, it is likely the measurement of your brain waves would reflect a significant leap in consciousness. Studies reveal that people who meditate consistently for 20+ years experience these results. Thus far, it is also the only practice that correlates a specific repeated activity with the evolution of consciousness.

Whether we are mastering a musical instrument, sports activity, or business skill, the element of time is always reflected in the compounding effect. The *longer* one invests in any activity, the greater the impact of the compounding effect. The accumulated effect grows with time. This is true in nurturing relationships, learning about philosophy, or taking care of your health.

Instant Gratification

You place an order at your favorite restaurant. Ten minutes later your entrée appears. It is your mother's birthday and she lives 2,500 miles from you. You pick up the phone and are connected. Your tooth aches. You visit your dentist and receive treatment. You want a new look. These days, a visit to a skillful plastic surgeon can transform almost any part of your body.

Products and services add convenience and enjoyment to our lives. They allow us to address pain, improve appearance, connect with others, travel across country, and be more productive. Products even

think for us, such as calculators, computers, and software programs. More than any time in history, we expect immediate results for virtually everything we need or desire.

As we've seen above, not all results come quite as instantaneously. Building a profitable business requires *attention* and *action*. Raising children takes *patience*, *compassion*, and *time*. Completing a work of art requires *inspiration* and *creativity*. Training for a marathon takes *commitment*, *practice*, and *stamina*. Losing weight takes *exercise*, proper *nutrition*, and *consistency*. Accumulating wealth takes *discipline* and *wisdom*.

Mastering the power of inner choice comes through *willingness and experience*, and every one of the qualities I just mentioned.

Anything that requires mastery comes through the combination of these qualities, action, and time. While extraordinary levels of intelligence, natural talents, skills, or physical strength may enhance one's ability to master some things in life, fortunately, these are not the most essential ingredients in mastering your internal navigation system.

Two Essential Ingredients

Willingness and discipline are two essential ingredients to embrace as you engage in the lessons that follow. Willingness and discipline allow you to take advantage of the compounding effect of choice, whether saving money, getting fit, or growing personally.

The man who goes farthest is generally the one who is willing to do and dare.

The sure-thing boat never gets far from shore.

—Dale Carnegie

Willingness

Willingness is a powerful resource to access. Willingness is associated with one of the higher energy levels described in Dr. David Hawkins' book *Power vs. Force*, and may be viewed as the gateway to higher energy levels. Growth occurs rapidly when willingness is present, as one has predominantly overcome inner resistance to life. One is committed to actively engaging in life. The willing are resourceful, more readily face their inner issues and have fewer learning blocks. The willing are positive contributors to society, and naturally experience social and economic success and achievement. I encourage you to visit pages 86-87 of *Power vs. Force*, for a more elaborate description of the characteristics of someone who embraces a high degree of willingness in their life, and the other energy levels. Because you are reading this book, it is likely that you are living at, or above, this energy level. Dr. Hawkins' book provides a more complete and comprehensive explanation of this subject. Lesson #2 also addresses this notion of energy in greater detail.

*What we call the secret of happiness is no more a secret
than our willingness to choose life.*

— **Leo Buscaglia**

Without a sense of willingness, people are more likely to be closed to ideas that can significantly make a difference in their lives; they remain trapped in a set way of being. We have all experienced people with this limiting attitude and witnessed the effect. Many of the creations and results we value most began initially with the seed of willingness. With willingness there is an openness to learn, take action, and create or experience something new. Where has this already been true in your own life?

*Strength does not come from physical capacity.
It comes from an indomitable will.*

— **Mahatma Gandhi**

Discipline

For many, the word *discipline* has both negative and positive associations. The negative side of discipline is militaristic, which implies force and rigidity. There may be false perceptions of boot-camp trainees being turned into mindless automatons. It may appear that discipline requires one to close their self off to “free-thinking” and self-expression. That is simply not true. Look at the history of any talented performer and you’ll see the important role discipline has played in expressing their greatest gifts. Discipline is an *essential* self-improvement tool to cherish.

Discipline is a cousin to willingness: Discipline is simply *willingness in action*. Willingness often provides both the opening and the inspiration to act. Action doesn’t necessarily require discipline; however, discipline always requires willingness to some degree.

Applying the Compounding Effect of Choice to *Your* Life

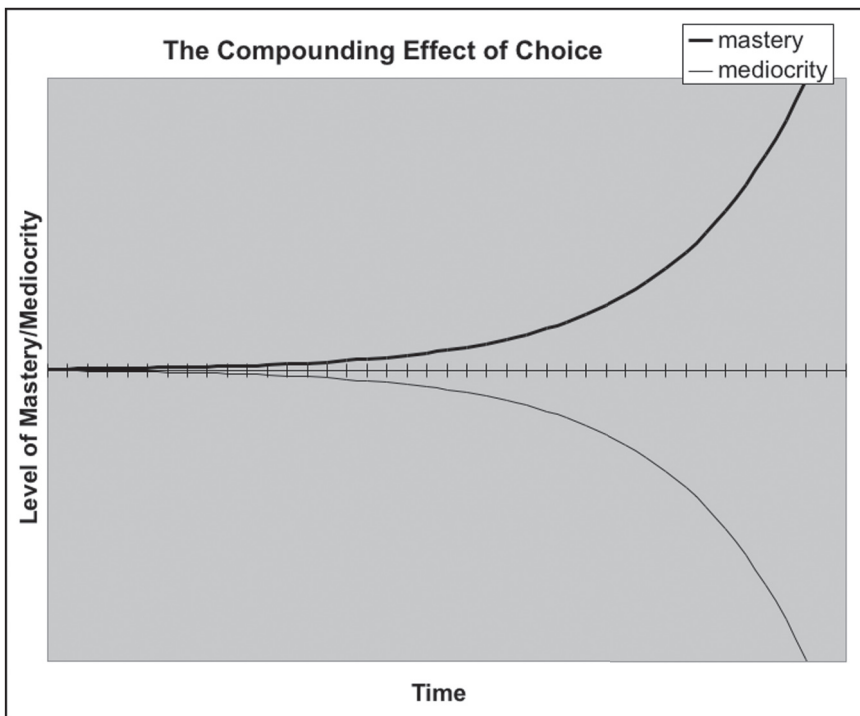
The following two paragraphs capture the essence of everything I have discussed in this chapter. *I encourage you to adopt these simple principles for a lifetime*. You may want to memorize them so you may readily access these principals at your choice points. The Mastery and Mediocrity graph on the next page illustrates the compounded effect of choice over time.

Principle #1:

It is the **simple disciplines (choices)** that don't seem to make any difference at all in the moment; however, **repeated over time**, the compounded effect makes all the difference in the world.

Principle #2:

It is the **simple errors in judgment** that don't seem to make any difference at all in the moment; however, **repeated over time**, the compounded effect makes all the difference in the world.



Principle #1 in Action – “Simple Disciplines”

Focus on the upper side of the graph to the left. The x-axis depicts the role of *time*, while the y-axis represents the *growth in mastery or success* in something important to you. This could represent growth in your profession, leadership skills, relationships, health, mothering, creative expression, or cultivating a sense of inner peace. It could also represent any one of the principles explored in this book, such as your ability to “be present,” your Daily Rituals, distinguishing the voices of Spirit vs. Ego, or expanding your ability to receive.

Each tick mark represents one action, which is “one simple discipline” or “one simple choice.” As we remember from the financial examples, choices in the earlier stages don’t reflect much growth for quite a while. Without referencing this graph, it may feel that no progress is being made at all. In fact, there is very little difference between someone who is taking a positive action versus no action. You may become discouraged and choose to quit. However, if you were to continue repeating ***“It’s the simple disciplines (choices) that don’t seem to make any difference at all,”*** but continued to take simple actions, the compounding effect would eventually kick in. You would ultimately experience the growth and success you desire. It would simply be a matter of time. How often do people quit when they are nearing the finish line?

In essence, if we want to direct our lives, we must take control of our consistent actions. It’s not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives, but what we do consistently.

— **Anthony Robbins**

Remember these elements in the compounding effect of choice.

- 1. Compounding Effect** – Your actions will ADD upon the others.
- 2. Choice** – ACTING or NOT ACTING is always a choice. Choose consciously. Frequency and your level of *effort* make a difference.
- 3. Interest** – The greater you personally VALUE an activity, the greater inner fulfillment will be realized in the process.
- 4. Time** – Actions taken over time GROW.

Keep this visual representation in mind. It has proven useful to me throughout the last decade. I first learned about these principles from Jeff Olson in 1995. They continue to support me to stay on track with the objectives I find most important to me. This is one of the ways I used this principle to support my goal of fitness years ago.

Personal Story – *When I lived in Dallas, I frequented the gym. There were many days that I did NOT feel like going. Once there, oftentimes I didn't feel like being there. However, I simply repeated the following words in my head, over and over again. "It's the simple disciplines that don't seem to make any difference at all, in the moment, but the compounded effect makes all the difference in the world." Clearly, my one little workout wasn't transforming my body into a Cindy Crawford that day. I could see that each time I looked in the mirror. It WAS discouraging in the moment. However, I had faith in the process and these simple words of wisdom. I trusted the compounded effect of many workouts over time, combined with a matching nutrition regime, WOULD create the desired result. My current level of fitness is a clear reflection that the compounding effect of choice works!*

*Discipline yourself to do the things you need to do when you need to do them,
and the day will come when you will be able to do the things you want to do
when you want to do them!*

— **Zig Ziglar**

Ultimately, the habit of working out became second-nature, and as long as I remain open and willing, it is easy to maintain my health regimen. I rarely need to repeat, ***“It’s the simple disciplines that don’t seem to make any difference at all, in the moment, but the compounded effect makes all the difference in the world.”*** However, in the early days, I used it almost every day!

Brand this principle into your being, and use it any time you feel discouraged or uninspired to act upon something important to you. It’s a great reminder of the bigger picture. Learn to love the simple disciplines. They create the path to everything you desire.

Note: In the example above, one could falsely assume that going to the gym consistently is sufficient to become fit. There is numerous variables influencing one’s overall level of health, as in life or business. Nutrition, meal portion and frequency, inner beliefs, attitudes, genetic make-up, metabolism and others all contribute a compounding effect. It is always the cumulative choices that creates the final result.

Simple Disciplines – Simple Choices

Reflect upon the compounding effect for each of the following simple disciplines. The principle applies well in health, relationships, business success, money, self-care, self-esteem, and in evolving one’s consciousness. The principle also applies well in cultivating internal emotions and states of being, such as love, joy, and inner peace. Anything repeated over time ultimately creates a compounded result. What results in your life would you like to compound? What other simple disciplines would you add to this list?

THE POWER OF INNER CHOICE

- Reading 10 pages of a good book
- Eating healthfully
- Spending quality time with your children
- Working out
- A simple act of kindness
- Saying, “I love you” to a loved one
- Yoga or stretching
- Meditating
- Writing “appreciations”
- Avoiding sugar or caffeine
- Drinking a gallon of water
- Saving money
- Attending seminars
- Listening to educational CD’s
- Getting up early
- Being present with a loved one
- Cleaning off your desk each day
- Volunteering
- Listening closely to others
- One extra hour of work
- Asking for what you want
- Being honest
- *NOW* Practices (more about these in Lesson #1)
- Daily Rituals (more about these in Lesson #2)
- Listening to Spirit (more about this in Lesson #3)
- Loving yourself
- Practicing Inquiry (more about this in Lesson #9)
- Being on time
- Pursuing a dream
- Living your values

Principle #2 in Action – “Simple Errors in Judgment”

If you want to successfully boil a frog, it's best to turn the heat up over time or the frog will jump out and escape. I wish no ill will to frogs; I'm making a point about “simple errors in judgment.” Such little actions or non-actions seem relatively harmless initially and for a period of time. However, the compounding effect leads us to less pleasant results in our lives. This is the model of mediocrity.

*It is the **SIMPLE ERRORS in judgment** that don't seem to make any difference at all in the moment; however, **repeated over time**, the compounded effect makes all the difference in the world.*

This principle is clearly illustrated in the lower portion of the graph on page 56. Again, the x-axis depicts the role of *time*, the y-axis represents the *negative accumulated impact or atrophy* resulting from specific habits. The results range from mediocrity to disaster. This graph may depict the negative compounding effect of actions or non-action in any of the categories named above. I find it most useful to apply this principle to the habits I would like to change.

Each tick mark represents one “**simple error in judgment.**” As is the case in accumulating credit card debt, a little each month doesn't seem like a big deal. The negative consequences don't reflect much impact for quite a while. Without referencing this graph, it may seem that watching two hours of mindless television each night isn't hurting you in any way. You may simply continue watching every day, while complaining about needing more time to pursue an important dream. Independently, two hours of television is relatively harmless. However, the compounded effect of this “simple error in judgment” translates to 728 hours of television per year! That is over 30 full 24-hour days in a year! This is like investing in a 1% savings

bond. The level of fulfillment returned is small. How else could you have invested your time?

Remember these elements in the negative compounding effect of choice.

1. **Compounding Effect** – Negative actions and non-actions ADD upon the others and create a cumulative effect.
2. **Choice** – ACTING or NOT ACTING is always a choice. Choose consciously. Frequency and lack of effort make a difference.
3. **Interest** – The more you avoid something you VALUE greatly, the greater the cost of inner fulfillment to you in the long run.
4. **Time** – “Simple errors in judgment” create ATROPHY and MEDIOCRITY over time.

*We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.*

— **Aristotle**

Examples of “Simple Errors in Judgment”

Reflect upon the impact of the various choices I’ve included in the list on page 63. Some of these may initially appear harmless. What consequences could result over time in compounding these “simple errors in judgment”? What other “simple errors of judgment” would you add? This list is not intended to elicit feelings of guilt or remorse, but merely to give you a variety of illustrations to reflect upon. We have all exercised “simple errors in judgment.” Use this list to stimulate **awareness**. In later chapters, you may or may not consciously decide to address something from this list.

THE COMPOUNDING EFFECT OF CHOICE

- Watching mindless television
- Not saving money
- Spending more than you earn
- Being late
- Complaining
- Gossiping
- Eating a cheeseburger or french fries
- Overeating
- Spending time with negative people
- Dwelling on negative thoughts
- Interrupting others
- Not being fully present when listening
- Speeding
- Smoking or using drugs
- Disorganization
- Unprotected sex
- Listening to loud, abrasive music
- Sleeping in or staying up late excessively
- Excessive time on the internet
- Laziness, performing below your capacity
- Not working out
- Not being friendly to others
- Criticizing yourself or others
- Daydreaming
- Procrastination
- Not appreciating your partner
- Maintaining a stressful lifestyle
- Not taking personal time for yourself
- Too many desserts or candy
- Time in a dead-end job
- Arguing

It is the **simple errors in judgment** that don't seem to make any difference at all in the moment; however, repeated over time, the compounded effect makes all the difference in the world.

“There is little difference in people but that little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude.

The big difference is whether it is positive or negative.”

—**W. Clement Stone.**

Contrast and Compare

Another way to use this model is to compare a “simple discipline” or “simple error in judgment” with another.

- If you read 10 pages of a good book today, and I don't, the difference between you and me on that day is pretty negligible. In fact, after a month, the difference is still not that significant. However, if you continue to read 10 pages of a good book each day for the next ten years, the difference between you and me will be considerable. If you focused your attention in a specific area of focus over that ten-year period, it's likely that you would be an expert in your field!
- If I eat one ice cream bar today, and you don't, the difference in our level of health is not very significant. However, if I eat an ice cream bar every day for one year, or five years—and you don't—*all things being equal*, there will likely be a considerable difference in our health.

I hope these varied examples have left a lasting impression in your mind. The application of these principles is endless.

Awareness as a Discipline

Perhaps the most challenging, yet simple, discipline to consistently repeat over time is “awareness.” However, it comes with some of the highest rewards. I notice how frequently I catch myself “checking out” for a moment here and there. Sometimes I am not present for long periods of time. Think about the negative compounding effect of “non-awareness” over time. What would your life be like if you were only consciously aware of yourself sporadically throughout your life? Awareness allows us to learn, grow, enjoy life, and to make conscious choices.

The compounding effect of awareness may be the single most important “simple discipline” to repeat over time. Observe yourself, your thoughts, your feelings, your reactions and the connection to yourself. Awareness creates the opportunity to choose.

The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather in a lack of will.

— **Vincent Lombardi**

Cumulative Discipline

It’s not just about ONE single discipline or ONE simple error in judgment. Some of our choices support our growth, and some don’t. Becoming aware of these choices is the first step. Seeing a visual representation of their respective impact is also useful in fine-tuning our choice points. There will be numerous simple disciplines you’ll apply over and over again on your path of growth.

Let’s begin now.



Part One
Getting Connected



Lesson #1

The Power of the NOW

Living in Present vs. Past or Future

Welcome to Lesson #1...

In this lesson you will:

- Learn the extreme importance of “living in the present moment”
- Learn simple ways to get “present” at any time
- Build the essential foundation to thrive with Spirit
- Tap into the power and aliveness of the moment
- Begin to reduce your mental noise

The Power of the *NOW*

There are numerous paths to fulfillment and enlightenment. Some require years of meditation, contemplation, and study. Most involve a host of variables lining up perfectly (people, events, circumstances happening “just so”). However, the quickest and most potent path to enlightenment, freedom, and fulfillment is “being **HERE**, present in the *NOW*.” It really is that simple.

The practice of being present is absolutely essential to create enlightenment, freedom, and fulfillment, and you are encouraged to

PART ONE: GETTING CONNECTED

cultivate this practice throughout the course of this book. You may even adopt this practice for the rest of your life.

First off, we are all living in the present moment already—sort of. Our bodies are always physically in the moment, but **the degree of “presence” or “consciousness”** we bring to each moment varies throughout the day. It also varies based on the activities we’re engaged in.

Activities we do repeatedly often become opportunities to daydream, worry, plan, question, or criticize ourselves, or to focus on pain or suffering. Have you ever “checked out” mentally when you’re driving the car, only to realize you’ve arrived at your destination without memory of the route? Have you ever “gone unconscious” doing the dishes or daily chores? How automatic are showering and grooming? Did you taste your meal or just consume it? Have you ever had to ask a significant other or co-worker to repeat themselves because you weren’t “there” to listen? Have you ever found yourself checking your “to do list” while making love? How conscious are you when exercising?

*The secret of health for both mind and body is
not to mourn for the past,
not to worry about the future,
or not to anticipate troubles,
but to live the present moment wisely and earnestly.*

— **Buddha**

Leaving the present moment and going “unconscious”

There are some activities where we are “more present” than not. However, we may fluctuate back and forth—between the *NOW* and mental noise or chatter. Have you found yourself engaged and sharply present in a business meeting or seminar, hanging on every word, then suddenly you’re in Hawaii or worrying about dinner? In yoga, I find myself fluctuating back and forth, focused on my breath and the intense stretch in my body—then problem-solving.

We naturally become more present in activities that are *new* or *unique*, where there is *learning* involved, vacation or traveling, something with a high degree of *FEAR* or something we *ENJOY* (time with children, animals, nature, or loved ones). Challenge yourself to become more conscious and present.

Where do you leave the present moment and go “unconscious”?

Engaged in the moment, then “checking out” temporarily

A few activities require our full attention, because if you’re NOT present—you could die. Extreme sports such as mountain climbing, sky-diving, racing cars, or scuba are examples. The activity forces someone to be present, very intensely present. This “presence” contributes to the sense of joy and exhilaration people feel as a result of engaging in the activity. However, **one CAN feel the same level of joy, peace, freedom, and exhilaration simply by learning how to engage FULLY in the moment.** We can tap into the moment at *ANY* time we choose.

***Where do you find yourself engaged in the moment,
then “checking out” temporarily?***

Why focus on the “present moment”?

Life happens in the present moment. That’s all there really is. When our attention is not on the present moment, we are either caught up in JUDGMENTS about the *past*, or caught up in FEAR, worry or anxiety about the *future*. When we focus on the past, *REGRET* grows, the “would’ve, could’ve, should’ve” conversation comes alive, and we ask questions we can’t answer, such as, *WHY?* We also get caught in the *thinking mind*: problem-solving, arguing with reality, complaining, or otherwise resisting reality. If we aren’t *HERE NOW*, we miss it and aren’t available to consciously live, create, and choose. Most importantly, connection to our Divine Guidance happens in the *NOW*. When you’re connected to Divine Guidance, you tap into a place of power, peace, joy, creativity, and freedom. This is where the magic of life happens.

“... the only time you ever have in which to learn anything or see anything or feel anything, or express any feeling or emotion, or respond to an event, or grow, or heal, is this moment, because this is the only moment any of us ever gets. You’re only here now; you’re only alive in this moment.”

—Jon Kabat-Zinn

We all resist being present, whether consciously or unconsciously. But the value in learning to “be present” is extraordinary. We can either fight the present moment, or surrender to it.

One of my clients is a stay-at-home mom who took the assignment to “be present.” Just a few weeks later she was thanking me profusely, sharing that this “one single concept” had made her time with me worth it all. She realized how much enjoyment she had been missing with her three children. Being present radically

altered the dynamic with her children. Now, she's really "with" them, when she's with them.

One of my friends was serious about "getting present" and concentrated on this with her coach for three months. She understood (or her coach did) the importance of accessing the *NOW*. It *is* vital to our ultimate peace and joy in life. And it doesn't have to take three months to get. All it takes is surrendering to the process, and *PRACTICE*.

Developing the Practice of "Being Present"

Anything we want to master takes practice. From athletics, to job skills, to cooking, to being a great friend... it all takes "practice." Practice is simply doing the same thing over and over again with the intention of "mastering" the activity. Practice allows you to deepen your experience of something. A doctor or medical professional "practices" medicine and thus gets more and more adept at helping patients.

You're going to create a "practice in being present" or simply, a "*NOW* Practice" by selecting an activity that you *AREN'T* already doing with "presence." These may include showering, driving, cooking, or working out. These new "practices" aren't about mastering the activity. You likely have the activity mastered, and thus consciously "check out" from time to time. Our practices are about bringing more presence and consciousness to those activities, so that you can be *HERE* more—*NOW*. A "practice" in "being present." A *NOW* Practice.

You'll identify your current "unconscious practices" or "partially conscious practices"; then you'll select *TWO NOW* Practices to cultivate *CONSCIOUSLY* over the next 90 days.

How to Cultivate Presence or “Being Present”

Okay, so you’re up for cultivating “being present.” You may be asking, “How do I do that if my mind is racing with thoughts and my tendency is to focus on the future or past?” Here are **5 Keys to Being Present**. You’ll want to practice these throughout the next 90 days as often as possible.

“Getting present” is about letting go of the extraneous chatter in your mind, having you *FEEL GOOD* (enjoying the moment), and connecting to Spirit.

1. Engage the Senses

What do you SEE, right now?

Color, shape, texture, distance, size, movement, and details. What objects are you present to? Children playing. A glass of water. The computer. Cars passing in the street. People smiling.

What do you HEAR, right now?

Sounds, tone, vibration. The hum of the air conditioner. The wind. Voices. The silence between the words. Children laughing. Music. The clock ticking. The buzz of the TV. Quiet. Stillness.

What do you FEEL, right now?

Touch. Soft or hard. Smooth or rough. Objects. Water on your skin. Your pet’s fur. The breath inside your lungs. Your partner’s skin. A cuddly blanket. The sun on your face.

What do you SMELL, right now?

Scent. Fresh or stale. A bouquet of flowers. Freshly cut grass. Trees. Bread baking. Barbecue. A dirty diaper. What scents and smells are in your environment?

What do you TASTE, right now?

Flavor. Moisture. Texture. Salty. Sweet. Spicy. Bland. Savory. A decadent chocolate soufflé. A ripe pear. A perfect glass of wine. Cold water. A tasty sauce. Focusing on the variety of tastes are especially fun when eating a meal.

There are a thousand details to capture your attention. Let the details capture you, pulling you deeper into the “present moment.” How do you feel when you get present to your senses?

Personal Story— *Fulfilling moments are one of my favorite places to practice engaging and expanding my senses. I distinctly remember an outdoor concert at “The Taste of Newport Beach” in California. I started noticing everything I could see. I saw the band playing, the shiny instruments, the stage, and smiling faces. I noticed the clear sky and brightness of the moon. I noticed the shapes and sizes of the various people in the audience, everyone moving in their own unique way to the beat. I took in the music and felt the vibration run through my body. I listened for the sounds radiating from of the guitar, drums or saxophone. I heard laughter and voices and cars driving by in the distance. I smelled the fresh evening air, aromas of foods and a variety of indistinguishable scents. I tasted cool water on my tongue, and the moisture in my mouth. I imagined how each performer felt, as they expressed their talents for everyone’s enjoyment. I felt the excitement and energy of the crowd, while others seemed complacent. I noticed how expanding each one of my senses generated a different array of emotions inside of me. A typical evening had now become a spectacular and memorable event. Engaging the senses expands any fulfilling moment into something even more extraordinary.*

What basic objective I had, for many years, was to grasp every opportunity to live and experience life as deeply, as fully, and as widely as I possibly could.

— **Eleanor Roosevelt**

2. Feeling Gratitude and Appreciation

One of the quickest ways to “get present” is to get associated with what you are grateful for, RIGHT NOW. Having a computer to type on. People reading my work. Participants in my teleseries. My clients. A beautiful day. My health. The bracelet on my wrist. Friends that I love. A warm bed to sleep in. Peace of mind.

What do you appreciate right here, right now?

Personal Story— When I find myself in situations that can be considered boring by many, I challenge myself to become present and focus on appreciating everything around me. One of my favorite places to do this is at the grocery store while waiting in line. I reflect upon all of the individuals that were involved in filling the store full of products and food; the farmers growing fruits, vegetables and grains, the field workers, the truck-drivers, and the buyers. I think about the teams that created, developed and packaged each of the hundreds of items within the store. Gratitude and appreciation grows and expands. The creative energy, the number of people involved and the convenience this store provides me is overwhelming. I appreciate each of the people who share in my experience of the grocery store line. I may even start taking inventory of all that I am grateful for in line. A few minutes focusing on appreciation has transformed an ordinary experience once again.

3. Connect to the Body and Self

Instead of an outward focus, this focus is internal. Connecting with your breath is a great place to start. Breathe in. Breathe out. Feel your lungs expanding and contracting. Are you sitting, standing, or lying down? Feel the insides of your entire body—your toes, calves, knees, legs, butt, abdomen, chest, arms, fingers, neck and head. *BE* in your body. Feel your heart beating. Touch your skin. Stretch and move while consciously staying connected to your body. Yoga

is one of the best practices for “being in your body” because each stretch “wakes up” a different part of your body, parts you didn’t know existed. Connecting with your body is a great way to feel more grounded and centered.

4. Connect to Something OUTSIDE Yourself.

Again, it’s about engaging your senses... listening intently to another or watching a sunset. Feeling connected to everyone at the gym for sharing a commitment to health, right now. Feeling love and affinity for another person or animal. Becoming one with your down comforter. Watching children at play or people walking by. Whatever you focus on— feel a “connection.” Try it.

5. Embrace Reality.

Embracing reality means “being in life” or “with someone” or “with something” *WITHOUT RESISTANCE* to it. That means accepting it “as is” without change or need for improvement. Life is the way it is. People are the way they are. Events happen the way they happen. See things for what they are, not greater or less than. Let go of the desire for it to be different. Notice the imperfections and brilliance of reality. Just be present with reality, whatever is happening, right now. All *IS* well, isn’t it?

“Being with” means accepting “what is,” accepting reality, and not mentally arguing with it. If we’re *FIGHTING* reality, I guarantee there is a conversation shouting inside your head—and you aren’t present. Just embrace reality, and let those thoughts and reactions melt away. Embracing reality allows us to be in the present moment. The present moment is always perfect—because it is.

What is happening in REALITY, right now? The temperature in the room— “be with” the heat or chilliness. The children’s messy room— “be with” the mess. Your husband is late— “be with” his

absence. The milk spilled— “be with” the spill and clean it up. You have a flat tire— “be with” the flat tire, and replace it with a new one. When we’re simply “with reality,” we respond accordingly, without a multitude of energy-draining thoughts to stress us out. “Being with” something doesn’t take energy if we’re simply “present.”

That’s your first lesson. Your challenge is to practice bringing “presence” using the **5 Keys to Being Present** outlined in this chapter.

Try the following exercises. ENJOY the MOMENT!

Where ever you go in the midst of movement and activity, carry your stillness within you. Then the chaotic movement around you will never overshadow your access to the reservoir of creativity, the field of pure potentiality.

— **Deepak Chopra**

Exercise of CHOICE: #1

Identify 20 of your current “unconscious,” “partially conscious,” or “conscious” practices.

Example: My practices include yoga, running, writing emails, coaching, reading, cooking, sleeping, sex, friendships, traveling, being present, creating magic moments, lighting candles, driving, paying bills, TV-movies, cleaning, making my bed, breathing, vitamins, figuring things out, to-do lists, showering, grooming, and grocery shopping. Next to each of your practices, write “unconscious”, “partially conscious”, or “conscious” to note the current level of awareness you have been bringing to each practice.

THE POWER OF THE NOW

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____
- 11. _____
- 12. _____
- 13. _____
- 14. _____
- 15. _____
- 16. _____
- 17. _____
- 18. _____
- 19. _____
- 20. _____

Exercise of CHOICE: #2

NOW Practices

Select two *NOW* Practices to cultivate more *CONSCIOUSLY* over the next 90 days or more. Select activities that you do *DAILY*, or almost daily, and are willing to commit to consciously practicing. The activity should be something that takes at least 5 minutes to do, although something like 90 minutes of yoga or exercise is also a great practice. Review the list of tips above and brainstorm how you will “practice” being more present. Visit the Appendix 1 on page 345 to see what others have selected as *NOW* Practices.

Example #1: Showering as a Practice. Really “feel” the water on your skin, the temperature, the sensations it creates in your body, the smells of the soaps. What can you appreciate in this moment? Connect to your body. Be at one with the shampoo and water and wash cloth. Accept reality—the water temperature, the fact that you’re in the shower right now. Be with the suds in your hair, how it feels when you rinse it. Notice the thoughts that come and go.

Example #2: Driving as a Practice. Notice how you feel in the driver’s seat; connect to your body. Engage the senses. Notice all the colors, sounds, and smells. What details have you missed before? Connect with what you see. Connect with your comrades driving on the road, right now. Connect to the trees along the way. What can you appreciate? Practice accepting reality—the traffic, red lights, rude drivers, and open parking spaces. Notice the thoughts that come and go.

Example #3: Yoga as a Practice. Connect with your body. Stay with your breath. Feel each stretch within your body. Feel connected to the instructor, other class participants, and the entire universe while you're doing yoga. Appreciate the flexibility of your body. Accept its limitations with grace. Let go of thought. Feel your feet on the mat. See yourself in the mirror. Be with yourself without judgment. Appreciate yourself. Notice the thoughts that come and go.

Example #4: Listening as a Practice. You may practice being present by listening intently with just one person or everyone you come in contact with. Take in every word they say, the tonality and quality of their voice. Hear what they say literally without adding your own interpretation or meaning. If something is unclear, or you catch yourself going “unconscious,” ask them to repeat themselves. Notice what you appreciate about their message. Notice their facial expressions, body gestures or any emotion. What is the impact of eye contact on your ability to be present? Notice if your mind wanders. Notice yourself refocusing on listening. Notice how you feel while listening intently.

So when you are listening to somebody, completely, attentively, then you are listening not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed, to the whole of it, not part of it.

—Jiddu Krishnamurti

1. PRACTICE #1_____

Brainstorm 5-10 ideas for bringing more “presence” or “consciousness” to this activity.

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

1. PRACTICE #2_____

Brainstorm 5-10 ideas for bringing more “presence” or “consciousness” to this activity.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

THE POWER OF THE NOW

4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

NOW! Life is NOW! Your life is being defined by how you're feeling right NOW! Identify what you want right NOW. Speak your appreciation NOW.

Flow your gratitude NOW. Extend your love NOW.

Spend your time deliberately creating positive energy flow NOW.

And notice how your future becomes a series of extraordinary NOW's

– **Eva Gregory**

Inquiry

Am I present now?

