



LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE NOW!



A GUIDED COURSE
FOR ACHIEVING SUCCESS!

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DREAMS AND GOALS

INTRODUCTION

Are you contemplating exciting goals? Dreaming dreams that are bigger than life itself? Well, that's just the way God made you to be. Think of it...when God created the world it began as just a thought. He thought about what he wanted..it was a goal, a dream. He visualized it, thought about it and contemplated it's existence. Then BANG, he spoke all he had thought and dreamed of and it came to be. You're made in His image and he fully intends for you to think like Him, talk like Him and call things that be not though they were. There is just as much power in your words as there were in the words that God used to create everything we see and enjoy in nature.

There is however, one difference between God and us and that is that God does not wrestle with a sinful nature as we do. Everything in Him is holy and good. All his thoughts are good, all his thoughts are pure and there is no doubt and fear in his thinking. When God contemplates something, He NEVER doubts it can be done. All His actions come from great faith, faith that can move mountains. God has no need to cast down imaginations, thoughts of despair and inadequacies. He also has no need to keep a watch over his lips and mouth because his words are always filled with life, light and love.

Am I starting to form an idea in your mind about how we need to proceed in order to achieve success? God was, is and always will be successful. His desire is for us to be just as successful. His plan for you is to achieve great things. He desires for us to live in His blessings and prosper in all we do. Is that possible? Absolutely!!!

This course is designed to walk you through a process that when applied, you will be able to achieve success in every area you use it.

I encourage you to continue through this course at a pace that you can fully absorb all that is offered. Make sure to engage in each exercise suggested. At the end of the course, each exercise is listed to better enable you to print them, if you so desire. To maximize your benefit, this course is designed to be taken over a 2-3 day period. This ensures that you are reading carefully each segment and fully participating in each activity as well as allowing time at the end of each segment to meditate on what you have just encountered. I pray that once finished, you will be energized and encouraged to pursue your most worthy goals and dreams.

YBLN 1.1 THOUGHT - LIFE

"OUR THOUGHTS BECOME OUR WORDS. OUR WORDS BECOME OUR ACTIONS. OUR ACTIONS BECOME OUR HABITS. OUR HABITS BECOME OUR CHARACTER. OUR CHARACTER DETERMINES OUR DESTINY". GANDHI

AS A MAN THINKS IN HIS HEART, SO IS HE. PROVERBS 23:7

Thinking the right way is vital to seeing your dreams/goals become reality. Thoughts are the beginning of destinies.

Thoughts...we have them all. day. long. Most of them are negative and we don't even realize it. But there's a power in you that is greater than your negative thoughts. Harnessing that power through discipline and motivated thought exercises can deliver success right at your feet. It's the first thing first. It's like putting your underwear on before your outer garments. Who would ever think to do the opposite, right?

Let me ask you this: if you just got out of the shower and a good friend calls you, can you dress yourself while speaking to them on speaker phone? Surely you said yes! Why are you able to do this? Because most of us have been doing this since we were three or four years old. You can talk on the phone and still remember to put your underwear on first...because you've always dressed that way. It's habit. It's a set routine; you wouldn't think of dressing any other way. Well that is how your thought life has to become. It has to be "set". It has to always flow in the right direction. It has to be exercised and disciplined daily. It has to be a systematic process that happens from the time you awake until you lay your head on your pillow at night. How many days would you have dressed yourself from the age of three to the age of 8? I'll tell you 2,190 days exactly. By age eight most children have dressed themselves over 2,000 times. At what point did this become an engrained habit? I'm not sure what day that happened in the course of those six years but for many it was a very short time before they knew "first things first" when it came to dressing themselves.

Our thought processes have to become "set" to the point that when a negative, doubtful, self sabotaging thought enters our head, we immediately take notice, address it, and replace it. It is like putting on your underwear first. It's how you always think. Monday through Sunday it's always the same...it doesn't deviate!

You are probably asking, “how in the world is that possible”? “Is that possible”? I’ll answer both those questions with an affirmative answer. Yes it is possible, and establishing a daily routine that specifically addresses your thought life is “how” it is possible.

Let me give you some alarming statistics to impact your opinion about how important your thought life is.

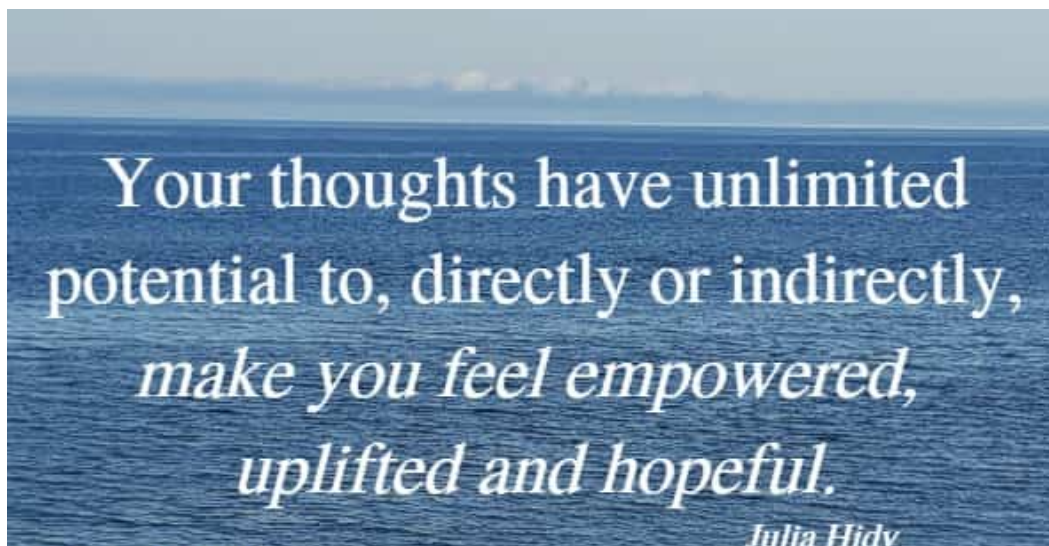
1. Average person has around 48 thoughts per minute. Approximately 50,000-70,000 thoughts per day!
2. Eighty percent of our thoughts are negative and 95% are the same repetitive thoughts as we had the day before. That would mean we have about 40,000 negative thoughts a day.
3. Thoughts are directly linked to how we feel and have a direct impact on emotional and physical health.
4. Most of our thoughts are directed at self. Example: “I need to go to the store”, “I feel nauseated”, “So and So hurt my feelings”.
5. We never speak to ANYONE as much as we speak to ourselves.
6. Our thoughts actually bring about chemical changes in our brains that influence our emotions and behavior...negative thoughts produce negative changes in the brain, whereas positive ones produce positive changes.

As you can see, thoughts are very powerful. Why? Because thoughts directly influence our speech and our speech directly influences our behavior. Thoughts actually dictate how we behave and how we make decisions. Neuroscientists have discovered that all thoughts are preceded by emotion. Now just think of that. If you began making major decisions or any decision of importance based on all the thoughts you have, including the negative, ones that have emotions attached to them, what kind of success do you think you would have in making good, sound decisions?

We know that emotions are not always reliable. The thoughts that stem from emotions are not always based in fact. They are not always stable and constant.

The reason for that is that emotions can be evoked by circumstances, people, health, fear, excitement, happiness, relationships and a myriad of other influences. Those things that influence our emotions are not always based in truth. This is why thoughts that stem from emotions cannot always be relied upon to make good, sound decisions.

Finding success in every area of your life can essentially be linked to your thought-life; not your finances, not your prominence or lack there of in society, not your health, not your associations, but your thoughts! Whatever gets in your mind and stays there, you will attract in your life. That's how the law of attraction works. This law works positively and negatively. So thinking is critical to the manifestation of your dreams.



EMOTIONS FIRST TOUCH OUR THOUGHTS, THEN WE BECOME AWARE OF THEM.

Who controls our thoughts? You do. I do. Can we control the fact that random thoughts come to mind? Not always. But much of them we can. Let me give you an example.

If you watch horror movies, movies that are filled with terror and fear, even just once, at some point afterwards you will encounter thoughts of fear and anxiety. Those images plant seeds in your mind that will eventually produce a harvest of thoughts that are directly related to what you have watched.

These are the kind of thoughts that can be prevented. You don't have to participate in activities that promote fear and negativity. If you want to be successful, you choose your activities wisely just for this reason. We have enough random thoughts that come from out of the blue that we don't have control of when they come. Don't participate in activities that invite thoughts that are not necessary and cause you to have to exercise even more discipline not only to rid the thoughts but have to battle for a period of time to eradicate it.

We have "sense gates" that we gladly open to things that will influence our emotions and thoughts. Those "sense gates" are the eyes, the ears, the mouth, touch/feel. Allow me to explain. What you allow your eyes to view can open the gate to thoughts that cause you pain and anxiety. Viewing movies, reading books, watching news can all evoke thoughts of anxiety, fear and doubt, depending on the material. What you allow your ears to hear will do the exact same thing. When we are stimulated by touch/feel, especially by another person that is inappropriate, we open the gate to thoughts that lead us down a path of possible destruction, if certain thoughts are allowed to remain and eventually encourage us to act on them. All these gates can allow good and positive thoughts to come, but depending on what these gates are opened to, our thoughts can become a source of pain and negativity that causes a raging battle inside.

When you are contemplating goals that are beyond your normal scope and dreaming dreams that seem impossible, you will have no choice but to put "first



WE HAVE THE POWER TO REFUSE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS!

things first"...control your thought-life.

A favorite preacher of mine, Kenneth E. Hagin, use to say about thoughts, "You can't keep birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from making a nest in your hair". The same is true of thoughts...you may not be able to control all the thoughts that come to mind, but you can keep them from staying there.

One way to begin to control your thought - life is to start controlling your self talk.

Self Talk can be defined as:

- 1. Internal use of speech and language**
- 2. Appears in the form of thoughts that you can "hear" in the auditory part of your brain.**
- 3. Can include speaking to yourself out loud**
- 4. Reading words and hearing them in your head**

******SELF TALK EXERCISE:**

- 1. Refuse to Catastrophize.** Look at your problem or think about the negative thought you are having. Is it really as bad as you think? Don't make a mountain out of a molehill. Often we make things appear worse than they are because we magnify the thought or the problem. See it for what it really is.
- 2. Don't make issues all about you.** Personalizing thoughts and circumstances will cause you to think mistakenly that everything automatically has something to do with you. Examine these circumstances in the light of truth, not your thoughts that have been sifted through your emotions.
- 3. No longer play the "blame game".** When something goes wrong or you encounter a situation that is less than pleasant that involves you, refuse to blame yourself or others. You may have actually done something that contributed to this situation or another person may have, but not every negative situation has a direct cause attributed to you or others. Stuff happens. Bad stuff happens. Not all of it, all the time, is directly related to a particular person.
- 4. Use an adequate filter.** A good filter does not only consider negative aspects of a given situation. It considers both good and bad, negative and positive. When approaching a problem or thoughts that are troubling, use a good filter and for every negative consideration there must be an equal positive.
- 5. Recognize that overgeneralization is a negative way of thinking.** Example: I've failed at this once; therefore, I'm always a failure. This is a self sabotaging thought process. Shine light on it. Failing at something once is not an indicator of future failure. Increase your color palette. Black and white thinking is a quick way to experience defeat. Everything is not always awesome as it is also not always terrible. Again, see things for what they are. Shine the light of truth on them.
- 6. Expand your color palette.** Black and white thinking...it's either all terrible or all terrific is a good way to hem yourself into a bad thinking habit. Look through the lens of grace, find the exceptional and break out of the box.

YBLN 1.2. VISION

Determining your goals is in part living deliberately. Defining where your strengths lie, desiring success and being willing to make sacrifices to achieve success is the other part to living deliberately.

Picture success...picture you having success. Write it down... keep it in front of you. Look at it every day...throughout the day. Begin renewing your mind to this success...guide your thoughts to this success...refuse to allow thoughts of defeat and negativity... take those thoughts captive! Spend time visualizing your success in pictures...purposefully "see" yourself succeeding. Allow yourself to experience "feeling" your success. It's coming...don't give up...wait for it!



Mark 9:23 and Philippians 4:13 says believing in our hearts makes things possible and we can do all things in the strength of Christ.

It's not your job to ask or contemplate how... just start at the beginning... believe that you can! The "how" will come.

We become what we behold...Corinthians 3:18

The writer, Jon Bloom says "We condition our minds to value whatever we watch and study and contemplate the most. What absorbs our interest, what we give our attention to most, shapes our thinking and trains our affections. We become what we behold.

In 1978 The New York Times published an article in which they quoted the English poet and painter, William Blake saying, "We are what we behold". The writer of the article believed this was so true that they were encouraging public television to be careful about their programming and to realize that what viewers were watching did influence their lives and behavior in impactful ways.

There's a story in the Bible about Jacob. He was working for his father in law Laben and had married both his daughters. Jacob and Laben struck a deal regarding what flocks and herds that Jacob could consider his and which one's would be Laben's. You see, Jacob tended to all the flocks and herds, and, as a result of his cleverness and skill, had increased the flocks and herds to a ridiculous number. Laben was considered to be wealthy and he knew he owed this to Jacob. So the agreement was that all the spotted, striped, mottled and black animals would be Jacob's and all the pure and white flocks would be Laben's. Laben tricked Jacob and immediately removed all the spotted, striped, mottled and black animals so that all Jacob was tending was pure and white and would therefore make it impossible for Jacob to acquire herds of his own. Jacob devised a plan of his own. He took branches and sticks from three different kinds of trees and striped part of the bark off them, leaving them to look varied in their color and texture. He placed these sticks in the watering troughs of all the flocks and herds. Remember, living in a wilderness/desert environment would probably encourage lots of drinking. Every time the herds came to water they were staring at these varied colored sticks the entire time. By the way, it was at the watering troughs that mating also took place. Within months these pure, white herds began delivering calves and all of them were....you guessed it..spotted, striped, mottled and some even black. He took all of these newly born spotted, striped, mottled and black calves after being weaned and placed them in an area adjacent to the pure, white flock, but separate from them. He continued to place the varied sticks in the watering trough of the pure, white flocks but in addition, faced the pure, white flocks toward the spotted, striped, mottled and black herds. At the end of each gestation period, the pure and white flocks continued to deliver spotted, striped, mottled and black calves. In a short time Jacob had become wealthy in flocks and herds. The point here is that we become what we behold. Keeping your goals in clear view all the time helps you to achieve them. It paints a picture in your mind of your success. These goals in your line of sight, keep you motivated to keep moving toward them.

Your beliefs are simply a reflection of the dominating thoughts in your mind. You actually become what you think about. The images you visualize in your mind become your reality. Neuroscientists have discovered through brain imaging that the brain actually makes changes depending on the kind of thoughts we have.

Happy, positive thoughts cause the brain to send signals to the body to release certain endorphines, and hormones such as serotonin, oxytocin and dopamine. These chemicals bring about healthy responses. They have also found that when negative, toxic thoughts are present, the brain signals the body to release chemicals and hormones such as cortisol, adrenaline, and norepinephrine that promote disease and discomfort.

******VISUALIZATION EXERCISES:**

1. Do I have a dream? Write it down. Do I have at least 3 life goals? Write them down. Are other people involved in these? List who they are.
2. Sit for 15-20 minutes and picture that dream come true. Picture your 3 goals achieved.
What does it feel like? Are you happy? Satisfied? Proud? Content?
3. Think and write down at least two things you can begin to do to move toward your dream/goals, this is your action plan. Who can help you?
4. Practice patience...it's a virtue and necessary while you wait for the manifestation of your dreams and goals.



WAIT ON IT...IT'S COMING!

YBLN 1.3. **Matters of The Heart**

No matter the circumstances... choose to be thankful...being grateful and thankful is key to achieving your success.

Ninety-five percent of depression is rooted in emotions such as anger, disappointment, insecurity, frustration and pain. When these emotions are suppressed and we allow them to bring oppressive thoughts for extended amounts of time, depression begins to creep in. In order to visualize our success daily, we have to choose not to tolerate the thoughts and emotions that can and will rob us of our success!

When we've been hurt it is a natural response to build a wall around our wounds. When we do that we keep the wound "alive" and open. Over time the wound continues to fester and actually get worse. Wall building cuts us off from others, experiences and from the ability even to feel emotion. Getting stuck in that isolated place is where depression enters and things begin to look hopeless. BUT, if we will allow ourselves fully to experience the pain and engage in emotional healing, we can work towards being whole. It takes small steps one at a time. And the first step is controlling oppressive thoughts. We purposefully remind ourselves of Gods promises. We purposefully look to the vision of our success. We purposefully speak gratefully and thankfully.

Gratefulness and thankfulness positions you to achieve success. It's a state of being that allows peace in every situation. It provokes positive thoughts. It stimulates creativity and opens our hearts for receiving.

When negative thoughts come or you lose sight of your vision...choose purposeful thoughts of gratefulness and thankfulness. Replace the negativity with the thoughts



of success. Go back to picturing your success; review your list of goals and how it feels to achieve them. See it in present tense not the future.

****REPLACEMENT THINKING EXERCISE:

When nagging, negative thought comes to mind...replace it with positive thoughts. When you have doubtful thoughts about your situation, your ability and or your goals, replace them with thoughts of your desired end results. Replace those thoughts with the vision you've been holding on to about your future. Literally speak out loud what you are believing and desiring to happen in your life. You can't think a negative thought while speaking a positive one.

Replacement Thinking simply takes negative, doubtful thoughts and replaces them with positive, affirming thoughts. Even if you doubt the positive things you are wanting to see manifest in your life, continue to speak them. The doubt will eventually leave. You can begin to change your circumstances by taking small steps such as Replacement Thinking.

The science of thought is called "Neuroplasticity". It has proved that the brain has the ability to change and alter itself through the thoughts we think. According to Dr. Caroline Leaf you can actually switch certain genes either on or off by the thoughts you think. Every thought we think has the capacity to trigger the brain to release chemicals in our body. These chemicals, depending on the thought, can produce negative or positive effects in our body. We can't always control the thoughts that come to our mind, but we can control how long they remain there.

Replacement Thinking goes hand in hand with rehearsing good thoughts that become what we speak. The more positive thoughts we think, the more positive words we speak.

****GRATEFUL HEART EXERCISE:

1. At the end of each day, sit and write at least three things you were thankful for that day. Think about what it would have been like had those things not existed.

2. When you're frustrated, tired, burning the candle at both ends, you tend to be more negative. Be purposeful during those times. Refuse to allow negativity a place in your mind...start by listing every single thing you are grateful for. Examples might be: Health, finances, a roof over your head, clothes to wear, transportation, a job, a family, beautiful scenery, a smile, a touch, etc.

3. Sing. Singing will allow no room for negativity. Grateful hearts sing.

YBLN 1.4 **PAST IN THE PAST**

To see the manifestation of your goals and dreams you can't continue to rehearse your past mistakes. Stop it. It's over. Refuse to live in the past. Forgive yourself... forgive others and move from the past to your future. Make a "Forgiveness List". List all those that have hurt and offended you...write out specifically what they did. Then write out a note of forgiveness to each person for each offense. Then destroy that paper....purpose in your heart and mind never to bring it up AGAIN!! If it comes to your mind, say to yourself, "that is forgiven and forgotten, no one owes me anything". As long as someone has a running account of offense in your mind, you will be the one incarcerated. The prison of your mind can rob you of peace and success. When you can come to the place of releasing someone that has "wronged" you, you are crossing a threshold that few ever experience. Live your life so that you "owe" no one (that is you purpose not to be offensive and hurtful) and that others "owe" you nothing.

Forgiveness is not for the person that caused offense; forgiveness is for the one offended. When you can forgive, even without being asked, you are giving yourself permission to live a life a freedom. Freedom resides where there is no debt. Forgiveness says "In spite of how you've hurt me, you owe me nothing". Refuse to hold a grudge...that's the environment where negativity grows and harmful side effects begin to emerge in the mind and body. You can't afford it if you want to achieve your goals and see your dreams manifest. It's just simply not worth it.

Think of this: Would you rather someone owe you an apology and you not get it, causing you to grieve over it, becoming bitter and loosing out on all you've imagined to do OR release all that toxic crud and be free to walk in the reality of your dreams? Which one will you choose? It's your choice. You get to choose!! You choose every single day.



Put your focus on the dream.
Renew your mind to the dream.
Take whatever was pain to you,
whatever was trauma to you and
whatever was discouragement to
you and leave it in the past. Walk
away from it like you would walk
away from a bad relationship.

Refuse to pack it up and drag it into your future. It doesn't belong there. And yes, you can do this. Does it take work? Yes it does...but you can do it!! It's totally possible.

Don't fraternize with fear. It's just another negative emotion that forms negative thoughts for us to talk about and act on. Tolerating fear, coping with it and reacting to it will keep you from walking out your dream. Fear is controlling, discouraging and bossy! It keeps you from doing what you love and long to do. It feeds your thoughts with lack and insecurity. It will also tell you what to do and what not to do. It will run your life!

People that operate in fear tend to be manipulative and selfish. We weren't created to live in fear. We were ultimately created to live in love. Love is unconditional, it's forgiving and selfless.

1 Corinthians 13:8 says love never fails. I believe that!! Love ALWAYS wins. We have to run a counter attack with fear. Use your Replacement Thinking, speak that dream out loud and refuse to allow fear to keep you from acting on ideas and impulses that can help bring your dream to fruition. There's a commonly used acronym for fear:

F: False E: Evidence A: Appearing R: Real. Fear is perverted. It distorts and lies about the thing you are concerned about, and 99% of the time the thing we fear never comes about.

****REPLACEMENT THINKING EXERCISES EXTENDED:

1. Instead of the doubtful thoughts I have about _____. What unexpected pleasant things have happened to me lately? Is it possible this thing I'm doubtful about could have a pleasant outcome?
2. What thoughts would I like for others to think about me? Start replacing the negative thoughts about yourself with the ones you wish others to think.
3. Instead of the things I'm discouraged about _____, _____, _____ I choose to be thankful and grateful for _____, _____, _____.
4. The things I fear most are _____. What is the likelihood these could be a reality for me? So, they happen...what is the worst thing about your new reality? Can you recover? Is it as bad as you expect?

5. Instead of rehearsing past offenses, make a forgiveness list. List the person, the actual offense. Write a letter of forgiveness.



SAY GOODBYE TO THE PAST...IT'S THE START OF A NEW BEGINNING

Detox your mind...clear out self-destructive mindsets and bad habits. It's easy to retain hurtful words people have spoken to and over us. We don't even realize just how much we do this. Remember people will always disappoint you...they will at some point and time. Your unmet expectations of another person can be very disappointing. But they also can be very unrealistic.

We sometimes rehearse in our minds a scenario of how we are expecting someone to behave or how they might speak with us about something and it totally be based on how "WE" would behave and speak. It's not realistic and it's not fair to the other person. But our own mind-sets contribute to this was of thinking and behaving.

Mind-sets can form, when we are young, from abusive relationships, trauma, experiencing loss, and from our own mistakes. But we don't have to allow mind-sets to become toxic and dictate the way we live our lives.

Again, use your Replacement Thinking. Use Re-Directed Thinking by channeling your thoughts to other productive activities. Speak out loud about your dreams and goals. Forgive people that have hurt you...say it out loud that they are forgiven and no longer owe you anything. Release them and release the injury. The more you contemplate it, the more you are allowing it to have control. Refuse to adopt a victim mentality. Be cautious using the word "always" and "never". They are toxic words. Our words are just as powerful as our thoughts. They set things into motion. Never and Always are strong words to set into motion.

****THOUGHT REDIRECTING EXERCISES:

1. Ask yourself: Do I have self-destructive mind-sets that I need to change in order to see my dreams/goals manifest? Mind-sets such as criticalness, fear of failure, perfectionism. If the answer is yes, redirect those thoughts. Instead of criticalness, think of one good thing that person you are critical of, does well. If it's yourself, think of one thing you know you do exceptionally well. When fear arises, immediately redirect that thought to "with fear now gone, what is the other possible outcome in this situation"? Take these thoughts captive and redirect them back to how they will aid in achieving your goals.
2. How did these Mind-sets develop? Abusive relationships? Childhood home environment? My past mistakes? Unmet expectations of others? Once answered, acknowledge your part in developing these mind-sets. You are at some point, a willing participant in the process, if only by not recognizing these mindsets and or being complacent in addressing them. Be determined to break the bonds they have on your mind. You can do this with redirected thoughts and realizing that allowing these toxic mind-sets will not only hinder your success but may prevent it altogether.
3. Does my toxic thinking negatively affect my relationships? If so, write down the relationships effected. Ask yourself if fear is a driving force in this instance; fear of rejection, fear of being taken advantage of, fear of relationships failing. If my toxic thinking is left unchecked, do I risk sabotaging this/these relationships?

If you answered yes to 1 and 3 list these mind-sets. Make a point to remind yourself daily of these mind-sets. At the end of the day reflect back on all activities. List instances where you remember these mind-sets influencing your behavior. Did the manifestation of these mind-sets cause you negative feelings? insecurity? jealousy? Were your feelings and thoughts surrounding these mind-sets justified? Were they based in truth? If no, could you use Replacement Thinking to address theses mind-sets?

Begin to notice these mind-sets as they present themselves. Stop and ask yourself, in this situation is this mind-set justified? Is it going to sabotage my relationships?

This can truly be difficult work. It will require great discipline. But the rewards are well worth it. Even if your relationships and goals were not at stake, the fact that you can actually change your toxic thoughts to healthy thoughts and maintain that position, will bring you more freedom than you've ever experienced. It will literally change your life. If you truly believe your destiny begins with your thoughts, you can't afford to not address toxicity of the mind.

YBLN 2.1 PROTECTION

Surround yourself with people that will speak encouragement and life into your dreams. If you don't have relationships with people that will do this, you need to find some. They will be like a fortified wall of protection for you in many ways. Their



words will not only encourage you, but will also embolden you to step out of your comfort zone. They will provide an environment of safety that will encourage your confidence.

The culture we live in is quite shocking these days. You hear and see things that trouble your soul, things; that cause you to worry. Things that unsettle you. So limit your exposure to news, to social media, to people that sensationalize these things. If you are going to see the manifestation of your dreams and goals, you can't be bombarded with negativity that you can't control or influence. The abstinence from these sources helps you have better control of your thought life, of the fear and doubt you so desperately need to obliterate, and helps keep your focus on what is most important.

Refuse to allow circumstances that don't line up with your dreams/goals to intimidate you. You've got the Greater One inside you and the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is already residing within you. Your thoughts and your words carry power.

See your answer, not your problem. Practice your visualization technique throughout the day. Stop focusing on "what if", and direct your attention to the dream/goal. Jesus NEVER spoke the problem...he ALWAYS spoke the answer, the intended outcome. Remember...it's not your job to ask how? Get focused on WHEN. When my dream/goal comes true_____.

When my dream/goal is manifest I will_____. When my dream/goal is an actuality, then_____.

You're in control here...not your circumstances. Circumstances, just like emotions and thoughts are subject to change. Your circumstances need not define you or your dreams/goals. Be bold in your proclamations. Think about your dreams/goals; talk about your dreams/goals; visualize your dreams/goals and make them apart of your daily routine.

If you really want to know what it's like to live out your dreams/goals you will not have a choice but to dispense with the negative chatter in your head. Your self talk, that talking you do all day long to yourself, is going to have to change. We are bombarded with negativity all day long. So this part of the plan is not easy but it's definitely doable. It will require you to be more disciplined than ever before. But I can assure you that as you walk through this process you will become a pro at detecting the negative thoughts almost as they begin. Once observed, you will know how to replace those thoughts and negate the negative impact.

No one but you can protect you from the onslaught of negative invaders. Keeping guard over your "sense gates" is so important. Achieving success will require you to be vigilant regarding these areas...they're your gates and only you can protect them.

Keeping company with people that encourage your goal setting and cheer your accomplishments is another way of protecting yourself. Acquaintances that will criticize or mock your plan for success are to be avoided. Their words are like arrows filled with poison. Once they penetrate your heart and mind, the battle is on. You will be forced to deal with thoughts of doubt and failure. We have enough of these thoughts due to our own insecurities. You need friends and family that will trust your promptings and plan for success. Surround yourself with the kind of people that inspire you, people that are successful, people that are big dreamers and filled with hope and drive. We tend to imitate what we see on a consistent basis, so connect with the kind of people you desire to be. Remember...don't share BIG dreams with small minds.

Protection is not just a physical thing, it's necessary mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Ever notice when you decide to make personal improvements, inevitably there will be people that come along and step up the negative chatter? They will tell you how hard this is going to be, how an acquaintance tried it and failed, how they

would never attempt such, etc. Most people that will discourage you do so because they feel threatened. Your plan for success will shine a light on their mediocrity and lack of motivation to improve their own circumstances.

Many times the harshness of life can cause us to get complacent and comfortable. Just trying to keep our heads above water drains us of our creativity and stamina required to do the great things. When you decide to step out of your comfort zone, don't be surprised if there are those that will try to discourage you. Recognize the "why". Some don't even realize why they are threatened and are blind to the fact they are influencing you negatively. We all struggle with self-esteem at times and with thoughts of "not being enough", "not valued", "unworthy", "unqualified". Don't allow another person's struggle to become your "why". Protect yourself. Continue to practice the exercises of "Redirected Thought" and "Replacement Thinking". You will always need to use these to keep the "sense gates" fortified.

I never fail to call on the power of the promises contained in Psalm 91. There are portions of this scripture I have memorized. The entire chapter is about protection, our protection. I recognize that as a child of God, I am entitled to His protection and the protection of angels He has assigned to me. The promises God makes in this Psalm are not only for my protection physically, but emotionally, mentally and spiritually. I also daily put on the armor that Paul refers to in Ephesians 6. Just as I buckle in my car for protection, I put on armor every morning to protect my mind and my spirit. Remember "first things first"? Well, this is one of my "first things first" every morning. It's a great way to start your day....fully protected.

The next page has a copy of Psalm 91. I love that it is written in first person. Print it off. Memorize portions of it. Put a reduced copy on your car visor, your bathroom or any place to remind you of the protection available to you.

Today, I dwell in the secret place of the most High,
and so I abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

Today I say of the LORD,
You are my refuge and my fortress:
my God; in You I trust.

Surely you deliver me from the snare of the fowler, and from the
noisome pestilence.

You cover me with Your feathers, and under Your wings I trust:
Your truth is my shield and buckler.

And so, I am not afraid for the terror by night;
nor for the arrow that flies by day;
Nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness;
nor for the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

A thousand shall fall at my side, and ten thousand at my right hand;
but it shall not come near me.

Only with my eyes do I look and see the reward of the wicked.

Because I have made the LORD my refuge, even the most High, my
habitation;

No evil befalls me, nor does any plague come nigh my dwelling.

For He gives his angels charge over me, to keep me in all my ways.
They bear me up in their hands, lest I dash my foot against a stone.

I tread upon the lion and the cobra:
the young lion and the serpent I trample under foot.

Because I have set my love upon Him, therefore He delivers me:
He sets me on high, because I have known His name.

I call upon Him, and He answers me:
He is with me in trouble;
He delivers me, and honours me.

With long life He satisfies me,
and shows me His salvation."

YBLN 2.2 **ASSESSMENT**

In the book "The Passion Plan", author Richard Chang describes the state that many of us find ourselves in these days. He states that "due to technology there are no limits to when work ends and personal time begins and self-knowledge has become virtually non-existent". Mr. Chang explains that "when we're not working or fulfilling obligations to others, we are so burned out that we watch t.v. or find other meaningless tasks instead of actively pursuing something that really moves us".



"The Passion Plan" explains how we are constantly bombarded with massive volumes of information. The outlets that provide this information come from the internet, tv, and radio among a few. Mr. Chang credits all this overload for the numbness we feel. He further asserts that "we exchange risk for

complacency and potential for mediocrity". "We start to make decisions based on what others will condone rather than on our passion. We take jobs based on how much money we will make rather than jobs that require our passion. We are convinced we need things that we really don't want. We think that once we obtain these things we will feel successful". It's a game of comparing ourselves to others and questioning if we are as happy or satisfied with life as they appear to be.

"Keeping up with the Joneses" used to be a popular catch phrase that people used when they were referring to a family or person that made decisions, especially regarding finances, in order to obtain the same status as another family or person. An example would be Family 1 purchases a new vehicle, maybe two, new furniture, takes expensive vacations, etc and their neighbors, Family 2, next door, observe this lavish lifestyle and desire the same for themselves. Unfortunately Family 2 really can't afford the same lifestyle as Family 1. But in order to "keep up" with the family next door, they go deeper and deeper in debt. In the end they find that they did actually "keep up" with the family next door. Family 1 was only able to afford their extravagant lifestyle because they too, used credit to pay for most of what they enjoyed. So Family 2 actually did "keep up" with Family 1 because they each are struggling silently to stay above water financially.

Many times we see others that “appear” to be content and enjoying life much more than ourselves. We assume that if we had what they had, did what they did, we would be just as content. In reality, all of us struggle to find real happiness and contentment. It’s not in the “things” or the “doing” that brings that kind of stability. It’s within us. It’s in our passion. It’s in our thought life. It’s in our core beliefs. It’s in our ability to discipline ourselves to visualize our dreams and pursue them until they manifest.

Our perception of our needs is very persuasive depending on the severity of that need and the reality of its actual existence. Sometimes we perceive we need something when in reality, we don’t.

There was a man that used to go to our church named Jobi. He has now gone on to heaven. He was mentally and emotionally challenged and functioned for the most part like an innocent young child. He lived on his own in a garage with no window panes and no air conditioning or heat. Once the men of our church learned of this, they promptly put in glass panes and wired the garage for heating and air. When the men were about to begin work, Jobi quickly told them “I don’t need heat, I have quilts. They questioned him about how much colder it got at night. Jobi replied “I’ve got a dog that lays next to me under the quilts”. When he showed up to go “Christmas Caroling” with us, he was asked where were his gloves. Jobi said “I don’t need gloves; I have pockets”.

Are you like Jobi, easily satisfied, only needing the essentials? Or do you perceive needs that you really don’t have? What is your need? Your pain point? At what point will you seek a solution or relief from the pain? What are you willing to do to alleviate that pain? What are you willing to contemplate? What habits are you willing to break? Will you alter your lifestyle to accomplish this? Change your preferences?

These are the kinds of questions you’ll have to answer if you’re serious about success, achieving your goals and having your dreams materialize. Take some time to analyze and answer the questions you just read. You may find that you’ve been living your life with a perception of needs that’s not valid; desiring things you actually can do without. Many times the finances, the energy, and the time it requires to have and maintain these perceived needs become a hinderance to achieving goals and having our dreams materialize.

It’s easy to walk out our life according to traditions we are accustomed to without realizing they just don’t fit every situation.

Giving ourselves permission to step outside our traditional norms can encourage creativity, new ideas, strategies that have been untapped and better solutions that lead to our success...our dreams ...our goals.

After analyzing the questions just mentioned and discovering “perceived needs” rather than actual needs, take that same analytical process and apply it to what methods you are using to achieve your goals. Are you doing it like it’s always been done? Like someone else did when they were attempting something similar? Is it an approach your grandparents or parents might have used or actually taught you?

I’m not knocking family traditions or values we’ve been handed over the years from people who played prominent roles in our lives. Those things and people are important and what they teach us has value. But the old saying “that’s the way we’ve always done it”, can many times be the source of why you’ve not yet reached your goals; why your dreams are just still in your head. You can’t do the same thing over and over and expect different results. Being willing to “step out of your box” and consider ideas that might not seem conventional to you is critical to your success.

When something isn’t working well, it’s time for assessment. Consider a different approach. Investigate other ways of working your plan. They may not be comfortable at first but they may be the very things that begin movement in the right direction.

Approach your cheerleaders. Brainstorm with people that are already experiencing success. Don’t be afraid to express your concern and things you’ve tried that failed. Quitting can’t be an option in your thought process. Assessing where you are and where you are headed and the methods you’re using to get there will help expose problems.

****ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Ask yourself:

1. Do my thoughts line up with my goals?
2. Do my actions reflect my desired results?
3. Is my action plan in sync with my timeline and expected outcomes?
4. Are my goals worthy of the time and effort I’m expending?

5. Do I have all the resources in place that I need to achieve my goals?
6. Are my goals/dreams God approved?

****NEEDS ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

1. List all the things you currently have and use on a daily basis that you can do without. Can be items, relationships, finances, places you go, KIND of vehicle you drive, KIND of meals you eat, habits you've developed, vices of any kind, etc.
2. List things that you consider a need, that after evaluating truthfully, you can now label as a want and not a need.
3. List what things you are willing to do without in order to have success.
4. List what things you absolutely cannot do without...things you MUST have.
5. List what you are left with as true needs.

The list under #5 shouldn't be very long. People that are committed to achieve great things are willing to live life with only the essentials for an allotted time in order that they may enjoy the things under #1, 2 and 3 for an indefinite time. There will always be a short time for enduring pain and discomfort in order to experience pleasure and the good things we desire. The pain may come from simply letting go of some things you are accustomed to enjoying. It may come when others are enjoying an activity and you chose to not participate, because your success depends on your time management. Pain may be experienced when others are driving expensive cars and you choose to drive a dependable used car, because your discipline in finances is a part of achieving ultimate success. But recognize this; "keeping up with the Joneses" can't be apart of your approach. The Joneses have their own problems. The Joneses may not be doing as well as you perceive. The Joneses aren't concerned about your goals and dreams and it's not their money and time that will bring you success...it's yours!

In the book "Essentialism The Disciplined Pursuit of Less", author Greg McKeown explains that freedom comes when we do only those things that are "essential". That cutting away all that is not essential frees us to pursue our dreams and enables us to make deliberate choices, not choices of happenstance. He calls this "living by design, not default". Living by design means we have to take responsibility for the places we find ourselves in and the decisions that led us there.

Mr. McKeown encourages his readers to use "The 90 Percent Rule" when making important decisions. It works like this, "when facing a dilemma, evaluate your options, thinking about the single most important criterion for that decision. Then give the option a score between 0 and 100. If you rate it any lower than 90 percent, then automatically change the rating to 0 and reject it". He further explains that this format helps you avoid indecision and or also making a decision that you regret. He calls this "forcing you to make decisions by design, rather than default. "If it isn't a clear yes, then it's a clear no".

An exercise for decision making is presented in his book as well. The first step is to write down the opportunity that has been presented to you. Second step is to list three "minimum criteria" for options you would consider. In other words the minimum criteria would have to be present in order for you to take that option. Third step is to list three "ideal criteria"...best case scenario that would need to be present in order to act on that option. Last step is to assess if the opportunity you're considering actually passes the first set of criteria. If not, the answer is no. If it doesn't pass the second set, it's still a no. If it passes the first set of criteria your answer could possibly be yes, but if it passes both sets of criteria, a "yes" decision would most likely be a sound decision.

Let's say you made the decision to go with the opportunity presented. You invest lots of energy, time and resources only to find some time down the road it was a bad decision. What do you do? Because of all you've invested you decided you just need to make the best of it and get what you can out of it. Or, do you admit to yourself this is bad for me and bail on it? The "Essentialist" described in "Essentialism" decides they are better off cutting their losses and freeing up their time and resources to pursue more worthy opportunities. They acknowledge they could be doing other things, better things if they "pulled the plug" on this activity. They don't fear they will be missing out on something. You're far wiser to ditch the plan no matter the investment than to continue to pour your resources into something that is getting you no where. We all make mistakes. It's part of life. So acknowledge it's a mistake...own it. Then, access what you could be doing instead. Remember, when you are pursuing worthy goals/dreams, everything must compliment that pursuit. Everything must be necessary and prudent. Every method we employ to achieve success must constantly come under the eye of scrutiny, especially if we are not seeing results.

Just because a situation sounds good, looks good and may be good, doesn't mean you need to participate. You need to evaluate that situation or opportunity and ask yourself some questions. Does this line up with my goals/dreams? Is this necessary for me to achieve my goals/dreams? Will this divert my attention and distract me?

Will this take more time than I have to give? Why would I consider this? Author Greg McKeown says “the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing”. With all the opportunities and requests that come our way, that’s not always easy to do. This requires much thought, much discipline and being willing to say no. Peter Drucker said that “people are effective because they say no”. In his book, McKeown addresses how many of us find it hard to say no, especially considering of who is asking. He advises, “separate the decision from the relationship”. You’re not saying no to the person, but rather to the request. It takes confidence and a strong belief in what you are trying to accomplish personally to recognize the importance of saying no and why you are doing so. When you think of the sacrifices you will have to make in order to say yes, it’s much easier to say no. Your time, your energy and your resources are valuable...they are worth something. Can you easily afford to give those away for something that possibly sidetracks you from your own goals/dreams; things that will eventually cause you regret, maybe even resentment? I’m not suggesting that you say “no” to everything someone asks of you. I know that if you have a family, you will have to say yes to a lot of things you may or may not want to do because you have commitments there. You also have friends that may be in need of your time and resources that no one else may be in position to give. Just remember that not everything that appears good, is good or good for you. In the “Essentialist”, McKeown suggests the following exercise:

****PRACTICE THE ART OF SAYING “NO” EXERCISE:

1. If approached in person with a proposal that requires yes/no. Don’t automatically give a response. Take a few seconds before answering. This pause prepares the other person for a possible no. If you feel the need to justify your answer, simply explain just one of the goals on your present agenda and follow up with “once that is over, I’d love to help you with this if you still need my help”.
2. Respond by email. This allows you the ability to draft a response that can be edited many times until you are satisfied that you have been kind and graceful in your response.
3. A response that everyone should relate to is “let me check my calendar and I’ll get back to you”.
4. Offer to help find someone else that can assist them.
5. Offer other possible solutions. Say something like “I’m sorry I’m not able to help, but let me think about this for a couple of days and see if I might can offer some alternative solutions”.

I know we can’t anticipate all the many requests that individuals may make but by reviewing the “NO” exercise, you will be familiar with several responses that you can quickly take advantage of in any circumstance.

YBLN 2.3. **THE CURVE BALL**

Setting goals, visualizing your dreams, getting your action plan in place, renewing your mind and thinking patterns, making good decisions, only doing those things that are essential, and practicing the art of “NO” has you primed for success with only one more thing to consider. You know that there will be bumps in the road, possible detours, some unwise decisions along the way. You can actually prepare for much of this by implementing a buffer system. If in order to obtain your goals/dreams it requires a regimented schedule, build in buffers that allow for time robbers.



PLAN FOR THE CURVE BALL

Refuse to believe that you can ALWAYS, 100% of the time follow a rigid schedule. There will be sickness, family obligations, things that don't go as planned, and a myriad of other things. If there is no buffer you will find yourself frustrated, tired and discouraged after the first few mishaps. Whatever time frame you allow for commuting, activities, family obligations, etc. add 20-30% to that time. This creates a buffer, allowing for the unexpected. If all goes as planned, you have some extra time on your hands. Time is valuable and when you end up with more than you planned, you've just added value to your day!

The system in which you daily operate, the system that has evolved out of your beliefs, core values, principles and convictions, will dictate how you handle the curve ball. The Type “A” person or “Perfectionist” finds it difficult to deal with the “curve ball” if they haven't put a buffer in place. Those that tend to be “happy go lucky” aren't as easily effected emotionally by the curve ball but are easily diverted and usually end up going to a plan “B”, which isn't nearly as effective, or giving up altogether.

Achieving great things and enjoying success will require you to consider “the curve ball” effect. Just as you will sit down and map out your goals and dreams, you will need to prepare for the unexpected and make a plan for it as well. Anything you can do to prevent discouragement, negative thinking and possible failure, is good planning. It’s like seeing into the future...you anticipate the possibilities.

In addition to adding time buffers to activities, add them to your action steps. When you devise a timeline for each of these to be accomplished, be realistic. Add a small percentage of time to what you have estimated it will require. Another possible buffer is to add additional action steps. You may need to create steps within your steps. In other words, if your plan is too rigid and allows for only certain actions to be taken, you may be limiting yourself and find that breaking those actions into smaller steps will allow for less frustration and more time to accomplish the task. It would be better to take a little longer to accomplish something, than to risk the negative side effects of frustration and disappointment due to limiting parameters.

**** **PLAN FOR THE CURVE BALL EXERCISE:**

1. Sit down and make a list of all the possible things that could thwart your efforts. Think of people that depend on you for various things...list them and when they typically occur. Think of things you yourself are prone to do under stress that would sabotage your plans.
2. What kind of financial obligations could interfere? Are you currently in good health or are you in a state that requires constant attention? Try and think of any circumstance that could hinder in any way. Make a list of these.
3. Out to the side of each, list possible solutions and ways to avoid these situations if at all possible.
4. List the worst case scenarios in each of the things listed. List any financial impacts as a result of these scenarios.
5. Lastly, assess what, if anything you could do to prevent the worst case scenarios.

YBLN 2.4 **MAPPING. VISUALIZING. STAYING THE COURSE.**
SUCCESS!!!!

TIME TO MAKE YOUR MOVE!!!



Whether you have one goal or three, a dream you've been dreaming forever or one that is recent, mapping the plan for them is the same. The following worksheets are designed to help you get clarity about what you desire, a realistic plan that can be measured in both time and achievement, and a process by which you experience success.

Don't hurry the process. Be thoughtful and mindful as you work through this. Remember whatever you decide, you must be willing to make the needed commitment and adjustments in order to see the manifestation of what you desire.

LET'S GO!!!

List your Goal/Dream. Be Specific. Example: Lose 20 pounds in three months.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

How Will You Measure Your Achievement? Example: At the end of 3 months I will evaluate my weight loss. The scales will indicate success or not.

1. _____

2. _____

Are My Goals Achievable? Are They Realistic?

Yes. No.

What is The Time Line for these Goals/Dreams. Achievement should not be expected to take longer than 12-18 months. Some time lines may be much shorter.

Goal #1. _____

Goal #2. _____

Goal #3. _____

Ok, so you've listed your goals, how you will measure success and put a time line in place. What's next?

1. List all the possible things that could sabotage your success. An example, if your goal is weight loss, might be things like a. Eating out, b. Attending parties, c. Having to cook different meals for yourself other than what the family is eating,
2. Now address those concerns. Write down what you can do to address these possible scenarios. What are some solutions to these dilemma's?

NEXT....

Who can you solicit to be an accountability partner? Why is this important? Ninety percent of people that engage in goal setting, are more apt to achieve their goals when they have an accountability partner. Now this isn't a person that nags or belittles you when you fall off the wagon. But rather, is a person that you know to be positive and encouraging, someone that you will inform of your goals, what your plan is and simply ask them to allow you to check in or ask them to do the same at least once a week. Knowing that there is someone who's aware of your goals and has a positive expectation for you to achieve them, is an incredible way of keeping yourself on task and motivated.

NOW IT'S TIME TO PUT A PLAN IN PLACE!!

Here is where you will map out an action plan that you will follow in order to achieve your success. In keeping with the weight loss example, the following are some possible courses of action. It is best to have at least 3 actions you will take to ensure success.

Example: weight loss action plan:

1. Action: Will join Weight Watcher's Online
2. Action: Will purge fridge and pantry of food not on plan
3. Action: Will speak to my family about my need for support
4. Action: Will ask a friend to do this with me

Once you've decided on the action you will take to move toward success, start to brainstorm about what other things you can do to ensure you achieve your goals. Let me list a few for you to get you started. Staying with the weight loss example, the following might be some considerations:

- Purchase inexpensive containers for taking lunch to work/school, etc.
- Asking my family to consider eating what I eat for dinner
- Making meal plans and grocery lists accordingly
- Spend time meditating on the benefits of my decision and getting a "vision" of the new me!
- Make a vision board with my goals listed and pictures that reflect my end results
- Post encouraging words on my bath mirror, car visor, etc to read daily
- Establish a "montra" that I will use throughout my time line to encourage me

You're Ready!

But WAIT....here is where you employ what you have learned in sections 1.1 and 1.2. If you don't, you may risk disappointment, frustration and even failure. Achieving success in any area of life will demand that you change your thinking and visualize your victory!! I want to encourage you to practice the exercises I've covered in this course. They are crucial for you achieving your goals and dreams.

You are worth the investment and so are your goals and dreams. If you've gone to the effort to plan for your success...take it one step further and implement mind renewal and visualization. I've listed all the exercises in the order we studied them and all are printable for ease of use.

Now go live YOUR BEST LIFE NOW!!!!

EXERCISES:

SELF TALK EXERCISE:

1. **Refuse to Catastrophize.** Look at your problem or think about the negative thought you are having. Is it really as bad as you think? Don't make a mountain out of a molehill. Often we make things appear worse than they are because we magnify the thought or the problem. See it for what it really is.
2. **Don't make issues all about you.** Personalizing thoughts and circumstances will cause you to mistakenly think that everything automatically has something to do with you. Examine these circumstances in the light of truth, not your thoughts that have been sifted through your emotions.
3. **No longer play the "blame game".** When something goes wrong or you encounter a situation that is less than pleasant that involves you, refuse to blame yourself or others. You may have actually done something that contributed to this situation or another person may have, but not every negative situation is a direct cause attributed to you or others. Stuff happens. Bad stuff happens. Not all of it, all the time is directly related to a particular person.
4. **Use an adequate filter.** A good filter does not only consider negative aspects of a given situation. It considers both good and bad, negative and positive. When approaching a problem or thoughts that are troubling, use a good filter and for every negative consideration there must be an equal positive.
5. **Recognize that overgeneralization is a negative way of thinking.** Example: I've failed at this once; therefore, I'm always a failure. This is a self sabotaging thought process. Shine light on it. Failing at something once is not an indicator of future failure. Increase your color palette. Black and white thinking is a quick way to experience defeat. Everything is not always awesome as it is also not always terrible. Again, see things for what they are. Shine the light of truth on them.
6. **Expand your color palette.** Black and white thinking...it's either all terrible or all terrific is a good way to hem yourself into a bad thinking habit. Look through the lens of grace, find the exceptional and break out of the box.

EXERCISES

VISUALIZATION EXERCISES:

1. Do I have a dream? Write it down. Do I have at least 3 life goals? Write them down. Are other people involved in these? List who they are.
2. Sit for 15-20 minutes and picture that dream having come true. Picture your 3 goals achieved.
What does it feel like? Are you happy? Satisfied? Proud? Content?
3. Think and write down at least two things you can begin to do to move toward your dream/goals; this is your action plan. Who can help you?
4. Practice patience...it's a virtue and is necessary while you wait for the manifestation of your dreams and goals.

****REPLACEMENT THINKING EXERCISE:

When nagging, negative thought comes to mind...replace it with positive thoughts. When you have doubtful thoughts about your situation, your ability and or your goals, replace them with thoughts of your desired end results. Replace those thoughts with the vision you've been holding on to about your future. Literally speak out loud what you are believing and desiring to happen in your life. You can't think a negative thought while speaking a positive one.

Replacement Thinking simply takes negative, doubtful thoughts and replaces them with positive, affirming thoughts. Even if you doubt the positive things you are wanting to see manifest in your life, continue to speak them. The doubt will eventually leave. You can begin to change your circumstances by taking small steps such as Replacement Thinking.

The science of thought is called "Neuroplasticity". It has proved that the brain has the ability to change and alter itself through the thoughts we think. According to Dr. Caroline Leaf you can actually switch certain genes either on or off by the thoughts you think. Every thought we think has the capacity to trigger the brain to release chemicals in our body. These chemicals, depending on the thought, can produce negative or positive effects in our body. We can't always control the thoughts that come to our mind, but we can control how long they remain there.

Replacement Thinking goes hand in hand with rehearsing good thoughts that become what we speak. The more positive thoughts we think, the more we speak positively.

EXERCISES

****GRATEFUL HEART EXERCISE:

1. At the end of each day, sit and write at least three things you were thankful for that day. Think about what it would have been like had those things not existed.
2. When you're frustrated, tired, burning the candle at both ends, you tend to be more negative. Be purposeful during those times. Refuse to allow negativity a place in your mind...start by listing every single thing you are grateful for. Examples might be: Health, finances, a roof over your head, clothes to wear, transportation, a job, a family, beautiful scenery, a smile, a touch, etc.
3. Sing. Singing will allow no room for negativity. Grateful hearts sing.

****REPLACEMENT THINKING EXERCISES EXTENDED:

1. Instead of the doubtful thoughts I have about _____. What unexpected pleasant things have happened to me lately? Is it possible this thing I'm doubtful about could have a pleasant outcome?
2. What thoughts would I like for others to think about me? Start replacing the negative thoughts about yourself with the ones you wish others to think.
3. Instead of the things I'm discouraged about_____,_____,_____ I choose to be thankful and grateful for _____,_____,_____.
4. The things I fear most are_____. What is the likelihood these could be a reality for me? So, they happen...what is the worst thing about your new reality? Can you recover? Is it as bad as you expect?

EXERCISES

****THOUGHT REDIRECTING EXERCISES:

1. Ask yourself: Do I have self-destructive mind-sets that I need to change in order to see my dreams/goals manifest? Mind-sets such as criticalness, fear of failure, perfectionism. If the answer is yes. Redirect those thoughts. Instead of criticalness, think of one good thing that person you are critical of, does well. If it's yourself, think of one thing you know you do exceptionally well. When fear arises, immediately redirect that thought to "with fear now gone, what is the other possible outcome in this situation"? Take these thoughts captive and redirect them back to how they will aid in achieving your goals.
2. How did these Mind-sets develop? Abusive relationships? Childhood home environment? My past mistakes? Unmet expectations of others? Once answered, acknowledge your part in developing these mind-sets. You are at some point, a willing participant in the process, if only by not recognizing these mindsets and or being complacent in addressing them. Be determined to break the bonds they have on your mind. You can do this with redirected thoughts and realizing that allowing these toxic mind-sets will not only hinder your success but may prevent it altogether.
3. Does my toxic thinking negatively affect my relationships? If so, write down the relationships effected. Ask yourself if fear is a driving force in this instance; Fear of rejection, fear of being taken advantage of, fear of relationship failing. If my toxic thinking is left unchecked, do I risk sabotaging this/these relationships?

If you answered yes to 1 and 3 list these mind-sets. Make a point to remind yourself daily of these mind-sets. At the end of the day reflect back on all activities. List instances where you remember these mind-sets influencing your behavior. Did the manifestation of these mind-sets cause you negative feelings? insecurity? jealousy? Were your feelings and thoughts surrounding these mind-sets justified? Were they based in truth? If no, could you use Replacement Thinking to address these mind-sets?

Begin to notice these mind-sets as they present themselves. Stop and ask yourself, in this situation is this mind-set justified? Is it going to sabotage my relationships?

EXERCISES:

****ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Ask yourself:

1. Do my thoughts line up with my goals?
2. Do my actions reflect my desired results?
3. Is my action plan in sync with my timeline and expected outcomes?
4. Are my goals worthy of the time and effort I'm expending?
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5. Do I have all the resources in place that I need to achieve my goals?
6. Are my goals/dreams God approved?

****NEEDS ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

1. List all the things you currently have and use on a daily basis that you can do without. It can be items, relationships, finances, places you go, KIND of vehicle you drive, KIND of meals you eat, habits you've developed, vices of any kind, etc.
2. List things that you consider a need that after evaluating truthfully, you can now label as a want and not a need.
3. List what things you are willing to do without in order to have success.
4. List what things you absolutely cannot do without...things you MUST have.
5. List what you are left with as true needs.

The list under #5 shouldn't be very long. People that are committed to achieve great things are willing to live life with only the essentials for an allotted time in order that they may enjoy the things under #1, 2 and 3 for an indefinite time.

EXERCISES:

****PRACTICE THE ARE OF SAYING "NO" EXERCISE:

1. If approached in person with a proposal that requires yes/no. Don't automatically give a response. Take a few seconds before answering. This pause prepares the other person for a possible no. If you feel the need to justify your answer, simply explain just one of the goals on your present agenda and follow up with "once that is over, I'd love to help you with this if you still need my help".
2. Respond by email. This allows you the ability to draft a response that can be edited many times until you are satisfied that you have been kind and graceful in your response.
3. A response that everyone should relate to is "let me check my calendar and I'll get back to you".
4. Offer to help find someone else that can assist them.
5. Offer other possible solutions. Say something like "I'm sorry I'm not able to help, but let me think about this for a couple of days and see if I might can offer some alternative solutions".

I know we can't anticipate all the many requests that individuals may make but by reviewing the "NO" exercise, you will be familiar with several responses that you can quickly take advantage of in any circumstance.

**** PLAN FOR THE CURVE BALL EXERCISE:

1. Sit down and make a list of all the possible things that could thwart your efforts. Think of people that depend on you for various things...list them and when they typically occur. Think of things you yourself are prone to do under stress that would sabotage your plans.
2. What kind of financial obligations could interfere? Are you currently in good health or are you in a state that requires constant attention? Try and think of any circumstance that could hinder in any way. Make a list of these.
3. Out to the side of each, list possible solutions and ways to avoid these situations if at all possible.
4. List the worst case scenarios in each of the things listed. List any financial impacts as a result of these scenarios.
5. Lastly, assess what, if anything you could do to to prevent the worst case scenarios.

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