

Chapter 4: The Practice of Loving Self-Discipline

Discipline is Freedom

Loving self-discipline is one of the greatest keys to everything we most want in life. It provides the foundation of our self-trust, our self-confidence, and our ability to get our physical needs met. It's the key to choosing up. It's the basis of our willingness to own our personal power and freedom. **And in the form of courage, loving self-discipline provides the primary antidote to fear.**

Like anger, fear is a gift for our physical survival. And as mature adults, it also tends to be one of our greatest challenges. For the challenge of fear is that its programming usually lives well beyond the point at which it was useful – and in doing so, it often brings us exactly the things we're afraid of. We may develop a fear of failure, and find that this fear is exactly what keeps us from success. We may develop a fear of our inner conflicts, and find that this fear is exactly what keeps us from inner peace. And we may develop a fear of unworthiness, and find that this fear is exactly what keeps us from remembering our natural divinity, as spiritual beings having a human experience.

Loving self-discipline involves having the courage and commitment to work through our fears. For, while we may think that courage is the absence of fear, this isn't accurate. Instead, **courage is the practice of doing exactly what it is that we're afraid of, while we're afraid of it.**

As we'll talk about in the next chapter, our fear is one of the key things that holds our shadow in place, and keeps us feeling separate from Love. And so as we learn to demonstrate ever larger levels of loving self-discipline, our fears lose their hold on us, we're

able to release our shadow, and we find ourselves with more love, joy, power, and freedom.

Ironically, because of childhood conditioning, most of us have discipline paired with pain and fear. We may associate discipline with being bad, wrong, guilty, shameful and unworthy. And this is not wrong.

As a natural part of developing a healthy conscience, we learn to feel bad when we judge that we've done wrong. We learn how to wield the "Cattle Prod of Guilt," and we learn how to fear it. It makes sense to think that discipline means pain, as long as we're holding to a punishment mentality. However, as we're able to move in to a Learning Orientation to Life, we discover that discipline is the way out of fear. When sourced from a place of love and learning, we discover that **discipline is freedom**.

For most of my twenties, I described myself as having attention deficit disorder, or ADD. While I was able to hyper-focus on things that interested me, I had no attention for the things that didn't.

"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear."

– Mark Twain

Like the Tasmanian Devil, I only had two speeds – tornado-on or totally-off. Because of late and missed homework, I graduated in the bottom half of my high school class. Because of a chronic difficulty in paying my bills on time, I would get rejected for credit cards and have my utilities cut off. Now, success was extremely important to me, and so I beat myself up constantly for my failures, telling myself that I shouldn't be failing at these simple tasks, that I wasn't living up to my potential, and that I should be doing better. I **punished** myself mercilessly for each infraction, and tried to use my guilt and fear as a cattle prod to push me in to action.

In fact, I actually got quite good at using the pain of guilt and procrastination to finally jolt me in to action, and that allowed my class rank to go up as I moved in to college, and then again as I went to grad school.

Here's how it would work. Let's say I had a 5-8 page paper due. I would sit down the night before it was due, and try to force myself to work on it. However, because I was trying to punish myself in to action (using pain as a motivator) my psychological defense mechanisms would kick in to protect me from my fear of this pain, and I would start procrastinating. I would pick up a good book, or turn on the TV – "*just for 15 minutes – I mean it!*" and when an hour had gone by, I would start feeling even worse about it. This would usually continue until around 3am, as I approached the "point of no return" – the last possible time I had to start by, if I was going to stay up all night and still get it done on time. Finally, the fear of failing yet again, combined with the night's guilt, flipped me in to a high-stress "on" mode, and I would furiously and frantically work until it was done. Sometimes I calculated the "point of no return" right, and finished on time, but more often I didn't.

Here is the key. Because I had the notion of discipline paired with pain, punishment, guilt, and failure, it became ridiculously hard for me to get certain things done – even little things, like pulling a bill out of an envelope and mailing it. The more I procrastinated, the more I punished myself; and the more I punished myself, the more I procrastinated. All of this continued ("*really, I have ADD!*" I would tell my friends, as they quizzically pointed to my ever-growing list of maniacal over-achievements) until July 2003, when I took a 28-day self-development seminar called Insight IV.

The program started off with David Allen's Getting Things Done program, which helped me see that I was being enslaved by my patterns of punishment and procrastination. I had spent my life avoiding detail management, because that felt "free" to me – but I didn't really have freedom – I was in a lot of pain, and I couldn't even pay my bills on time! Just like an obese person enslaved by food, or an alcoholic enslaved by booze, I was enslaved by this punishment-pain-procrastination loop around detail management. What I hadn't realized yet was that **procrastination is a natural result of using pain as a source of motivation**.

I decided then and there to rewire my association of discipline, from punishment to freedom, and I used the power of the Insight IV program to support me in replacing my old habits with new ones. I discovered how, when it's done from a place of choice and love, discipline is freedom. This change revolutionized my life. To my surprise, people now regularly comment on how exceptional they think my detail management skills are (“*really – are you sure you’re talking about me?*”) and I feel so much more empowered, peaceful and happy in my life.

“The quality of a person’s life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor.”
– Vince Lombardi

We all start out playing the Game of Life, with its win/lose view of the world. We all start out at the bottom of the triangle, with its urgent drives for survival and acceptance. We all start out primarily motivated by pain and pleasure, and during this phase, our “discipline equals punishment” associations can get burned pretty deeply into our mind.

Now, in western culture, physical pain is not usually the dominant issue any more. While there are still many problems with poverty and abuse, starvation and daily violence are no longer the norms. As one pundit proclaimed, “*America is where people drive to their protests.*” Instead, we’re more often driven by the Hunger for More, the Cattle Prod of Guilt, and our Addiction to Pain.

The Hunger for More

Our physical and social desires come with a strength and a challenge. They motivate us to get our basic needs met – to find food, shelter, sex, safety, success and social acceptance. However, they also come with a challenge – the Hunger for More.

In order to meet our needs, we develop habits that support us. But by their very nature, **habits are addictive**. As John Dryden said, “*We first make our habits, and then our habits make us.*” When our habits involve choosing up, as part of the Game of Love, they

can be an incredible force for growth and upliftment. However, most of our habits involve the Game of Life, and so are subject to the law of diminishing returns.

We want what we want, but as we get our desires met, we find ourselves wanting more. And over time, we find ourselves getting ever smaller emotional returns from each external achievement. We find that what we have no longer satisfies us, and we naturally start hungering for ever larger levels of pleasure and success, in order to get our next “fix.” We find ourselves addicted to our Hunger for More.

This is not a bad thing. Our physical desires are essential for our survival and success, and our addictions are a natural part of the process of spiritual growth. As John-Roger said, “*life is a process of continually uplevelling our addictions.*”¹

At the same time, our addictions can be quite the challenge. Our children are facing an epidemic of obesity, due to an addiction to unhealthy foods. Our addiction to consumerism drives our economy, but is destroying our planet. And our addiction to success can help us buy a larger house, but it often eats at the very love that makes that house a home.

It’s easy to judge the heroin addict as out of control, or as failing at the Game of Life. Yet our desire for success follows the same addictive pattern. It starts as a healthy goal (the problem with heroin isn’t the pleasure it brings, but the way we become addicted to that pleasure). Then after a point, we find ourselves searching for ever bigger fixes of our drug of choice.

For 15 years, I pursued achievement with an obsessive level of focus, as a way of finding success, addressing my teenage insecurities and running from my deeper wounds. At first, I found tremendous value and satisfaction in this path, and it taught me a great deal. However, after a point, my quest for success took on a life of its own, pushing me to run ever faster, ever harder – until as part of my second corporate buy-out (and burn-out) I left Silicon Valley, walked away from my external successes, and started on a new path.

As I spent months traveling around the world, my friends would sometimes make sarcastic comments like “*rough life you’ve got there!*” And my inner response was to clench my teeth and mutter “*you’ve got no freaking idea how hard this is.*” Leaving my high-profile career was the closest thing to heroin withdrawal I hope I ever have to experience. I remember being on a dive boat, exploring the awe-inspiring beauty of the Great Barrier Reef, and still feeling this incredible urge to show off my successes and seeming self-importance.

After a year or so without “a real job,” I called my sister Shauna in desperation, frustrated at how in my studies and inner work, I didn’t feel like I was accomplishing anything important. Her response: “*Brian, you are doing the most important work of your life.*” Her words rang true, but a part of me still yearned for another fix, another success, another win, another rush. Because like many, I’d become addicted to the hamster wheel of success.

Similarly, the NY Times recently ran a story of the challenges of “everyday millionaires,” who find themselves with millions of dollars in assets, yet are still working 60-70 hours a week climbing the ladder of success. As the saying goes, “*even if you win the rat race, you’re still a rat.*”

We often know this intellectually. Yet because of our addiction to success, it can be quite the challenge to stop chasing the stuffed rabbit, as it runs around the track.

Our desires are beautiful things, in their proper place. Again, the problem isn’t that we hunger, for hunger is a powerful tool. The problem is that all too often, our tools become our tyrants, and we become enslaved to the Game of Life. One way this happens is through our Hunger for More. Another is through our addiction to the Cattle Prod of Guilt.

The Cattle Prod of Guilt

As we’ll talk about throughout this book, our capacity for judgment is both one of our greatest gifts and our greatest challenges. In order to tame our baser instincts, the process of

socialization involves harnessing the power of judgment, guilt, and shame. As children, one of our most important developmental tasks is to learn right from wrong, and to create a healthy conscience that rewards us when we’re good and punishes us when we’re bad.

As we mature, we learn how to “should on ourselves” in order to get things done. “*I should finish this report on time.*” “*I should get better grades.*” “*I should go to the gym.*” “*I should go pick up the kids from school.*” Every time we should on ourselves, the Cattle Prod of Guilt comes out and gives us a little painful “zap” of energy. This can spur us into action, or keep us from doing harm. And it can create remorse, which can facilitate our learning and growth.

However, guilt comes with a price. Every time we use it, it creates a little scar in our consciousness, and over time, these wounds fester and grow. As Rhonda Byrne explains in The Secret, the spiritual law of attraction states that “*like attracts like.*”² Love attracts

“Punishment is an effective way to change behavior, but usually not in the desired direction.”

– Joan Borysenko

love, fear attracts fear, and the pain of guilt attracts ever more pain and guilt. Because of this, there’s only so far that pain can push us. **While guilt can keep us from doing something awful, it can’t inspire us to own our authentic greatness.** It can help us avoid threats to our survival, but it can’t teach us the meaning of life. And as I learned through my habits of procrastination, the more we rely on guilt and “shoulds” for our motivation, the more we become addicted to pain.

Addicted to Pain

Habits are addictive. And in our dependence on using judgment and guilt to motivate ourselves, **we become addicted to pain.** This is so prevalent that we don’t even call it pain. We call it “stress.” And it’s an epidemic. As summarized in The HeartMath

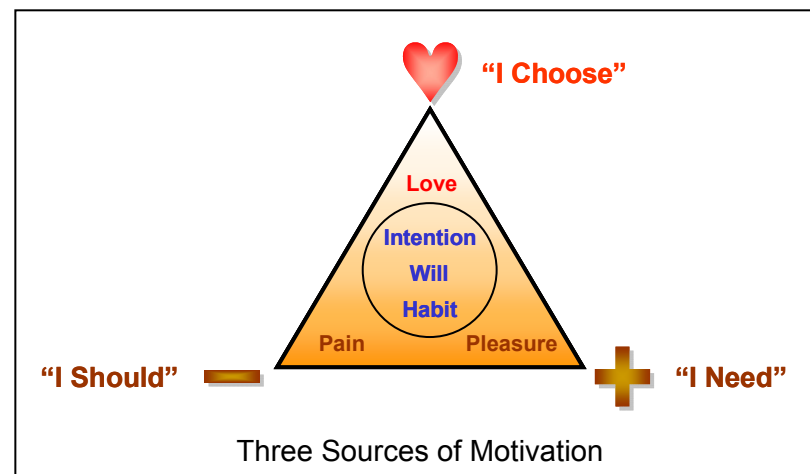
Solution, research shows that stress is one of the greatest killers on the planet.³

“According to the American Institute of Stress, as many as 70 to 90 percent of all visits to primary care-physicians result from stress related disorders.⁴ To cope with these complaints, Americans alone consume five billion tranquilizers, five billion barbiturates, three billion amphetamines, and sixteen thousand tons of aspirin (not including ibuprofen and acetaminophen) every year.”⁵

- *“In a ten-year study, people who were unable to effectively manage their stress had a 40 percent higher death rate than nonstressed individuals.”⁶*
- *“An international study of 2,829 people between the ages of fifty-five and eighty-five found that individuals who reported the highest level of personal ‘mastery’ – feelings of control over life events – had a nearly 60 percent lower risk of death compared with those who felt relatively helpless in the face of life’s challenges.”⁷*
- *“According to a Mayo Clinic study of individuals with heart disease, psychological stress was the strongest predictor of future cardiac events, including cardiac death, cardiac arrest, and heart attack.”⁸*

The Game of Life runs on stress, guilt, pain, and addiction. It’s a physical game of survival and success, rooted in our body’s desires to seek pleasure and avoid pain. To a greater or lesser degree, we’re addicted to this game. And remarkably, we’re not just addicted to avoiding pain. Because of our dependency on stress and guilt, we’re also addicted to pain.

In working with my coaching clients, often times the biggest challenge isn’t teaching them how to be happy – it’s helping them deal with their fears of letting go of their pain-based motivations. It can be terrifying to let go of the very patterns we’ve used to become



successful. Some common fears include “What would happen if I let go of my shoulds?” “How would I function in the world?” “How would I continue to be successful?” and “What horrible things might I do if I let go of my guilt?”

At first, it can be difficult to let go of our addiction to pain. (I have an image of a police officer walking up to an irate housewife and telling her to “Step away from the cattle prod, Ma’am. Just put it down, and no one will get hurt.”) It can be difficult to trust ourselves to consistently make self-honoring choices – to trust ourselves to choose up.

Loving self-discipline creates the self-trust and courage that allow us to push through these doubts and fears. And as one of the two sides of Love, loving self-discipline is essential to our practice of the Game of Love.

Three Sources of Motivation

The Game of Love runs on love. The motivation for this game comes from the simultaneous practice of acceptance and loving self-discipline. It moves from “I should” and “I need” to “I choose.” And in doing so, **discipline moves from being sourced out of punishment and pain, to being sourced out of choice, commitment, a Learning Orientation to Life, and 100% Personal Responsibility.** Loving self-discipline involves making

regular, consistent, wise choices that are in alignment with our highest good. It involves being committed to Love. It involves accepting that we're doing the best we know how, while also striving to continually learn how to do better. And as we'll explain in the upcoming chapter on honest self-awareness, it involves taking 100% Personal Responsibility for our emotional reactions.

As shown in the figure **Three Sources of Motivation**, there are not just two core sources of motivation: there are three. At the physical level, our motivations come down to two core sources: avoiding pain and seeking pleasure. However, at the spiritual level, there's a third source of motivation: Love. As such, our choices can be motivated out of a fear of punishment ("I should") a desire or craving ("I need") or a place of loving self-discipline ("I choose"). Our path begins with a primary focus on pain and pleasure, and on getting our basic needs met. Over time, we learn how to use our shoulds to tame our desires – we learn how to use the Cattle Prod of Guilt to tame our physical needs and our Hunger for More. And in doing so, we naturally tend to take on a punishment mentality. At first this serves us well, but over time, this causes more and more problems, as Love starts calling us to play at a higher game.

Loving self-discipline is one of the primary practices that allows us to shift our primary focus to the Game of Love. Through the power of intention, free will, and positive habits, it allows us to get what we want without having to be enslaved to our addictions to pain and pleasure. As such, **loving self-discipline is a primary key to living life from a place of freedom and choice, rather than from a place of punishment and pain.**

Moving from the pain of "I should" and "I need" to the freedom of "I choose" involves developing trust in our ability to make wise choices, and to accept and learn from our mistakes. It involves developing a practice of keeping our agreements, and of consistently making self-honoring choices. It involves learning to trust our

"Self-trust is the first secret of success."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

ability to choose up. And as we learn these skills, our life becomes ever more successful **and** peaceful.

Imagine that you have a job that requires you to show up precisely on time each day. You've chosen this job, and want to do well at it. To the extent that you trust yourself to be punctual, this can be a free and easy process. You do your best, and if for some reason you're late, you learn from your mistake, and correct it.

Now, imagine that for whatever reason, punctuality has been very hard for you in the past, and you don't trust yourself to show up on time. In this case, one of two things will likely happen. Either you'll rely on fear and guilt as painful motivators – or you'll lose your job.

Guilt naturally shows up in the areas where we're not lovingly self-disciplined. Guilt is painful. Loving self-discipline is not. Our addictions and fears keep us enslaved. Our loving choices set us free. And one of the most loving choices we can make is the decision to face our inner fears.

Facing Our Inner Fears

Fear is a primary block we must overcome in order to love and heal our shadow. And as Franklin D. Roosevelt declared, when he was inaugurated as the American President and given the task of dealing with the Great Depression, *"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."*

Our shadow is filled with the monsters that were too scary for us to deal with when we were young. Yet as adults, we no longer need to run from these fears. We're no longer helpless children who need to be frightened of what's under the bed. Our parents are no longer omnipotent gods upon whom we depend for our survival.

Yes, there's unhealed pain behind our fears, but it's not nearly as bad as we think. Yes, there are some deep, dark fears of unworthiness we need to face – **but they are not real.** For behind our fear is pain, and behind our pain is Love – infinite, unconditional, all-powerful Love. We do not need to fear about

whether or not we're worthy of Love, because underneath our shadow rests the Love that we Are, as divine beings having a human experience.

When we're dealing with real and present threats to our physical safety, fear is a gift. If you're walking down a dark alley in a dangerous neighborhood, and your fear tells you to be careful, listen to it! If a saber tooth tiger appears to threaten your family, fight or flight are great choices. However, as competent adults, the vast majority of our fears are just shadows from our past. They're protecting buried pain, and telling us to stay away from the very wounds we need to heal, in order to reconnect with the Love at our core. And so the path of love means facing into our fears, rather than giving them control.

When dealing with fears that aren't directly dealing with our physical safety, **the wisest path is usually to listen to our fears, acknowledge them – and then do the exact opposite of what they say.** If your fears tell you to avoid public speaking, enroll in Toastmasters. If they tell you that *“real men don't cry,”* get a box of Kleenex and rent some tear-jerkers. If they tell you that *“it's not okay to fail,”* push yourself until you're making and celebrating at least one “mistake” a week.

As Anthony Robbins says, *“If you can't, you must!”*

One of the deepest challenges of personal growth work is that the greater a healing opportunity is, the more our unconscious fears will try to have us avoid it. Perversely, our sense of unconscious resistance makes it so that the more value a program would offer us, the more often our fears come up with rationalizations such as *“I don't have enough time or money to do it.”*

If you're homeless or unable to feed your kids, then okay – listen to that fear. However, for most of us, when the voice of fear

“It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult.”
– Seneca

sneaks in, we're usually being told to do the exact opposite of what is in our highest good.

Now, it can take practice to develop awareness of when the voice of fear is talking, versus the voice of wisdom. As another example, our need to feel right about our beliefs may seem very reasonable and rational – at least until it's challenged. When we get defensive in our ideological conflicts, when we feel like we need to go into *“silence or violence”*⁹ in order to protect our position, we're being given an opportunity to heal.

Fight or flight, defense or attack, silence or violence – these are the voices of fear, and they are perfect pointers to the places inside of us that really just yearn to be loved. It takes faith to trust that this is so – at least until we've had the experience for ourselves, after which point it becomes progressively easier. And it takes courage to face our fears, as part of discovering a Love Beyond Belief.

Again, simple but not always easy. So here are five top power tools for increasing your self-discipline from a place of love, joy, grace and freedom.

Power Tool #6: Commitment to Love

Our free will is a very limited resource. Both within ourselves and in relationship to others, we live in a tightly coupled emotional ecosystem, and this system resists change. As such, we tend to drastically overestimate the power we have to change in any given moment. When we get upset, we often judge that *“I should always be able to control my emotions.”* And when we feel our desires taking over, we often judge that *“I should always be able to control my choices.”*

Neither of which is true.

And yet, all change starts with choice. For while we tend to drastically **overestimate** our power to change in a moment, we also tend to drastically **underestimate** our power to change over time. As demonstrated by the story of “The Tortoise and the Hare,” slow and steady wins the race. And in the journey of personal and

spiritual growth, one of our most powerful tools comes from harnessing our free will through our sense of **commitment**.

Our commitments both provide us with motivational energy, and also help determine where we choose to invest that energy. Without commitments, we're like a ship without a rudder – we're at the mercy of our environment. Without commitments, we **react** to the world, rather than **act** on it. And since Love is both the highest value, and the highest source of motivational energy, one of the most powerful choices we can make is to create a commitment to Love.

Like my father did, when faced with the challenges of raising two young children after our mother had died, we can choose to be committed to Love – and over time, to make that commitment stronger than our fears. When we use commitment to work with our fears, this is also known as courage – the process of doing exactly what it is that we're afraid of, while we're afraid of it. Not because we “should” do so, but because we have faith in the benefits that will come from doing so; and in this faith, we make a choice – we choose to grow in our awareness of the Light, by choosing up, by facing our fears, and by removing the clouds that hide our sun.

As aspects of our free will, courage and commitment are like two muscles, which we can develop over time. The practice of loving self-discipline is founded on these muscles, as well as on how we use them to harness the power of intention and positive habits.

When my mother Zina got married to a man she barely knew, and became the mother to two children she'd never met, she was demonstrating a remarkable commitment to Love. By participating so fully in the Mormon Church, my family demonstrates their courageous commitment to Love. When someone commits to go in to therapy or a 12-step program, they are demonstrating their commitment to Love.

And so can you.

We're at a place where you can choose to make or change your commitment to Love. Are you ready? If so, please feel free to revisit the commitment scale on page 28, and determine the level to which you are now choosing to be committed to Love as you move forward in your life. (“*I am choosing to bring my commitment to Love to a commitment level _____*”)

Commitment to Love is a choice that we make – and then keep making, over and over again through our lives. Over time this becomes a habit. And this brings us to our next power tool.

Power Tool #7: Baby Steps

We all have a certain amount of courage and commitment, and a certain amount of fear. Our courage and commitment muscles grow in strength as we exercise them. At the same time, in any given moment their strength is limited – otherwise we wouldn't have places where our fears still control us. However, **we can move through almost any fear by breaking it down in to smaller pieces**, just as we can walk almost any journey by breaking it down into a series of baby steps.

No matter how many times we go to the gym, it's unrealistic to expect ourselves to be able to lift 10,000 pounds at once. However, almost anyone can lift 10,000 pounds if we break it down into smaller pieces, and stretch it out over time. If you go to the gym every day, and each day lift a 10 pound weight 100 times, at the end of 10 days you will have lifted a total of 10,000 pounds. Remarkably, at the end of 100 days you will have lifted 100,000 pounds, and at the end of three years, you will have lifted over a million pounds!

Similarly, when we're confronted with a situation where our fear is greater than our courage, the way through is to break the fear into smaller pieces, and baby step our way to success.

Again, change is easier when we accept that in any given moment, our free will is remarkably limited. Our ingrained habits carry tremendous momentum, and in any moment our shadow has the power to emotionally “hijack” our consciousness. We can tell

“He turns not back who is bound to a star.”

– Leonardo da Vinci

ourselves all we want that we “should” be able to “just stop” our habit of over-eating, that we “should” have enough courage to face our deepest fears, or that we “shouldn’t” get angry – to no avail. Our choice point happens after our negative habits and shadow take control. At this point, we can choose to beat ourselves up for what’s happened (a punishment mentality) or embrace the opportunity to create new, more supportive habits (a Learning Orientation to Life).

When we’re able to practice a pattern of making small, incremental, consistent, courageous, loving choices, over long periods of time – when we build the habit of creating new habits – our capacity to change is literally larger than we can imagine.

The way we usually make our New Year’s resolutions provides a great example of this dynamic. In our enthusiasm to improve ourselves, we often set large goals for ourselves, such as “*I’m going to stop eating ice cream,*” or “*I’m going to lose 25 pounds in the next three months.*” We then assume that if we’re a good person, we “should” have enough willpower to make this happen. However, in our well-intentioned innocence, we often set ourselves up for failure. If we look at the first resolution, there’s basically no way to succeed at it, and a constant set of ways to fail.

Any time our will power slips and we go for that pint of Ben and Jerry’s, we’ve failed. And when have we succeeded? Only when we die! It’s only on our deathbed that we would finally get the chance to congratulate ourselves on our successful resolution – that is, if we don’t have anything more pressing on our minds at that point. Similarly, when we resolve to lose 25 pounds, we give ourselves the chance to beat ourselves up each time we step on the scale and notice that things haven’t gone as we expected them to, while only giving ourselves one brief moment to celebrate our success if we do pull it off.

In contrast, we can do almost anything if we break it into small “baby steps,” and use our small successes to build momentum

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

– Lao-tzu

towards the larger ones. As the old joke goes, “*How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time.*”

We can achieve incredible results when we develop **habits of successful change**. Now, it’s important to do this honestly, and not as an avoidance mechanism where we use superficial changes to bypass the process of deep change. For as we’ll talk about in the upcoming chapters, growing into our true potential involves developing **habits of facing and healing our shadow**.

While we tend to think that we “should” have enough courage to just stand and face our shadow, our unconscious fears are usually too large to be faced all in one go. Again, if they weren’t, we’d already have faced them. This is why the process of inner healing is often described as being similar to “peeling an onion.” To put it another way, “*growth is a process, not an event.*”¹⁰ And creating habits of healing is one of the key tools for developing the courage we need to face our shadow, and for connecting our shadow with the Love that can heal it.

Any time we find that our fear is keeping us from action, this is a signal to break our task down in to smaller pieces. If you want to start running 10 miles a day, and a voice inside says “*I could never do that!*” then break it down. Hold the stretch goal as an intention, **but don’t commit to it all at once**. Instead, make small, consistent baby step commitments towards it. You could start with 1 mile a day, and then go to 2. Keep stretching yourself to the point where you feel the fear and resistance, but it isn’t so much that it overwhelms you. The important thing is just to keep going! As Franklin Covey explains in their time management seminars, “*It takes 21 days to make or break a habit.*”

“A nail is driven out by another nail. Habit is overcome by habit.”

– Erasmus

If you think about your life, do you tend to go for “huge leaps” or “baby steps?” Most of us are taught to “think big” and “shoot for the stars” – and this is wonderful wisdom, so long as we focus on making our journey one step at a time. Hopefully, this point now

seems obvious. Yet, for many of us, we often find our lives dominated by patterns of over-commitment, huge leaps, and regular failures.

Why do we do this? It's not because we're stupid or bad. Rather, it's because of how we've developed habits of using pain to motivate ourselves. The fear of failing at our huge leaps can be a very stimulating force!

Again, one of the biggest challenges to change is that we often don't want to let go of our fears and self-judgments. We hold on to our cattle prod because we've become dependent on using its pain as one of our primary motivators. Guilt, fear, pain, and procrastination often become some of our deepest coping strategies. And there's nothing wrong with this – mastering these tools is a foundational step in our evolutionary path.

At the same time, connecting with a Love Beyond Belief involves being willing to upgrade our fuel source. It involves moving from being motivated by pain, fear, judgment, and anger, to being motivated by Love. It involves developing enough self-trust to move from the guilt of “I should” to the authentic empowerment of “I choose.” And one of the major steps in doing so involves learning how to move from habits of making huge, guilt-creating leaps, to habits of consistent, regular, baby step successes. It comes from learning how to harness the power of positive habits, and in particular, the power that comes from developing habits of positive change.

Our free will is like a fixed allowance we get each day. We can spend our allowance each day, or we can invest it in our habits. If we invest it, we can put it into negative habits, which act like credit card debt, or we can put it into positive habits, which act like high return mutual funds. Some habits, such as alcohol or drug addictions, are more dangerous than others – they carry a very high interest rate, so much so that the monthly payments can quickly get to the place where they exceed our allowance, and we start spiraling into ever greater psychological debt.

On the other hand, some positive habits carry particularly high rates of return, so much so that if practiced consistently over a period of years, we can become psychological and spiritual millionaires. Of these, some of the most valuable habits you can develop are the deep change practices in this book.

And in particular, one of the most powerful practices I know of is the habit of being impeccable with our word.

Power Tool #8: Be Impeccable with Your Word

Our lack of self-trust is the primary reason why we rely on painful motivators. We all have places where we don't trust ourselves fully, where our fear is greater than our courage, and our shadow is greater than our loving self-discipline. So we learn to use negative motivators to compensate for those gaps. However, the problem with this choice is that it increases our amount of buried pain and negativity, which creates a greater sense of insecurity and unworthiness, and this in turn causes us to feel even more dependent on using pain to keep us safe.

On the other hand, one of the primary ways for stepping into our commitment to Love is to increase our self-trust. And one of the most powerful ways to do this is through the practice of keeping our agreements. **Every agreement we make is ultimately with ourselves, and when we keep our agreements, the automatic reward for this is an increase in our self-trust.** Similarly, when we break an agreement, no matter how large or small, the automatic consequence is a decrease in our self-trust.

We may think that all those little agreements don't matter, such as being on time to meet our friends, or our agreement to exercise three times a week. However, the piece of us that's responsible for our self-trust is like a five year old child. To an adult, it may not seem like a big deal if we break our promise to a child to buy them an ice cream cone, or to read them a bed time story every night – but to a young child, it **matters**. When we develop a habit of making

lots of regular, baby step commitments, and then keep most if not all of them, our self-trust expands in remarkable ways.

In The Four Agreements, Don Miguel Ruiz presents us with some deep wisdom, which he summarized in four core principles.

*The first agreement is the most important one and also the most difficult one to honor. It is so important that with just this first agreement you will be able to transcend to the level of existence I call heaven on earth. The first agreement is to **be impeccable with your word**. It sounds very simple, but it is very, very powerful. Why your word? Your word is the power you have to create. Your word is the gift that comes directly from God. The Gospel of John in the Bible, speaking of the creation of the universe, says ‘in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word is God.’ Through the word you express your creative power. It is through the word that you manifest everything.”*

Being impeccable with our word has three major steps. The first step is to **be conscious in making our agreements**. Become aware of when you give your word, and only do so when you believe that you’ll be able to keep the agreement, and also that the agreement will be supportive of your commitment to Love. If you know, deep down, that an agreement is a huge, guilt-inducing leap, don’t make it. Instead, set it as an intention. When we make a commitment, we’re agreeing to do something – we’re giving our word. However, when we set an intention, we’re stating something we would like to happen, something we intend to do, but are not committing to. Wherever possible, keep your agreements to baby steps. When you do want to make a huge leap – and stretch goals can be wonderful things – instead of making a huge commitment, make it an intention, and then start moving towards this goal through baby steps.

The second step is to **be conscious in tracking our agreements**. We’re already tracking them at an unconscious level,

and we’re already receiving the consequences each time we either break or keep one of them. So our opportunity is to make this conscious. I used to be highly resistant to time management systems, because I thought that discipline was punishment. And when I was caught up in my dependency on pain-based motivators, this was accurate. However, when instead we practice loving self-discipline, we find that discipline is freedom – freedom from the pain of our more primitive, more stressful motivators, and freedom from the aching insecurity that comes with a lack of self-trust. I recommend a simple rule. **If an agreement’s not important enough to track, it’s not important enough to make.** As David Allen teaches in Getting Things Done, our conscious mind is very poorly designed for keeping track of agreements, and so there’s tremendous freedom when we get them “out of head, and onto paper.”¹¹ Create an agreement tracking system that you trust, and either record your agreements in it, or else set them as intentions instead.

Third, **be conscious in delivering on our agreements**. This does not mean that we have to deliver on every single agreement we make. Rather, it means that we either deliver on them, or else we renegotiate them in good faith. Sometimes things come up. Maybe we’ve promised to pick up the kids from school, and then an emergency erupts at work. The trick is, rather than calling our spouse an hour after we were supposed to be there, to call them as soon as realize we have a problem. As explained in Crucial Confrontations, a pivotal key for dealing with broken agreements is to create a shared understanding that “if something comes up, let me know as soon as you can”¹² – and then to lead by example.

When we realize we’re not going to be able to deliver on a commitment, our job is to take full responsibility for our breach of integrity, apologize sincerely, and then attempt to renegotiate our agreement in good faith. Our agreements are our responsibility, and if someone isn’t willing or able to renegotiate an agreement with us, it’s our problem, not theirs.

Now, while we often develop at least some of these skills in dealing with our agreements to others, it's equally important to learn how to practice them with our agreements to ourselves. Remember, when we promise ourselves that we're going to go to the gym today, there's a little five year old inside that may really be looking forward to the exercise! For each commitment we make with our self, we'll be very well served if we keep track of it, and then renegotiate it if necessary. As silly as it might sound, there's great value in pausing for a moment, taking a deep breath, going inside, and then asking if it's okay if we change an agreement we've made with ourselves.

People regularly object that it "*feels like cheating*" to turn commitments into intentions, or to renegotiate them if we can't keep them. It's only cheating if we don't do it in good faith – although it may **feel** like cheating, because we've gotten so addicted to motivating ourselves with pain.

For example, a common coaching intention is to support our clients in strengthening their agreement practices. Typically, my clients receive homework assignments for each week, some of which they set as intentions, and some of which become agreements. Then we help them learn that no matter what, if they do nothing else that week, they can at least send me a short email stating that they want to renegotiate their commitments. We do this to support them in creating new habits around their agreements, with the intention of helping them honor at least 95% of the commitments they make, whether large or small, with others, or with themselves.

While at first, we're often resistant to moving from pain-based motivators to a life lived in loving self-discipline; and while at first, we often have deep-seated habits which cause us to fail to deliver on our agreements; over time this new way of living can transform our lives. Coaching provides an external support structure for positive change – and this brings us to the next of our power tools for loving self-discipline.

Power Tool #9: Engage External Support Structures

Again, we tend to drastically over-estimate our power to change in each day. Similarly, we also tend to drastically over-estimate our power to change on our own. For example, a common misconception is that "*Ahah! Once I learn about my issues, I should be able to just get in there on my own, and fix them.*" And while the power tools in this book can help you do some of this, they are immeasurably amplified when we ask for help, and bring these tools into an external support structure designed to aid our deep change.

On our own, the power dynamic between our Light and our shadow, our courage and our fear, remains fairly stable and entrenched. We have good habits and bad habits, and

"The environment is stronger than the will."
– Paramhansa Yogananda

our free will retains only a limited ability to transform one into the other. Over long periods, this power is tremendous. However, **if you want to grow quickly, start committing to external support structures that are bigger than your fears.**

In our society, we tend to have negative associations around reaching out for help. For example, we tend to think that counseling is something that "broken people go to." Or we may spend \$50,000 on a wedding, but avoid investing anything on learning how to make the marriage work. We tend to assume that once we're adults, we're supposed to have it all together, particularly when it comes to our emotions and our relationship skills.

However, we're not here to pretend to "be perfect" – we're here to learn. We all have unhealed issues, and we all have strengths which have turned into challenges. We all have the need to learn and grow, and the fastest way to do that is to engage external support structures that aid this process. Whether we tap in to the power of coaching, therapy, personal development seminars, or any of the hundreds of other resources that can support us in building our loving self-discipline and healing our shadow, one of the most

courageously loving things we can do is ask for help – again, and again, and again, and again.

One of my mentors is a “super-coach” named Steve Hardison. When it comes to stepping into your authentic greatness, Steve is probably one of the best coaches in the country. He is independently wealthy, utterly committed to being of loving service, fabulously talented, and he carries an incredible spiritual presence. He is one of the most loving people I know. Yet he charges \$150,000 a year, paid in advance, to work with him. No refunds, no backing out. When someone steps up to work with Steve, they are **committed** – they’ve created a huge commitment that will support them in working through any fears or resistance they may have to owning their authentic greatness.

While I haven’t yet signed up to formally coach with him, I clearly remember a conversation we had about a year ago, when I was first considering it. I mentioned that I wasn’t yet in the place where it would be financially comfortable for me to make that type of commitment. He just about lost it. *“Comfortable! I don’t want you to be comfortable! I want you to feel like you have to cut two toes off to work with me. What if you had to pay for a heart valve replacement or you’d die? That’s how I want you to feel about our coaching!”*

Steve charges what he does because of how this helps create off-the-charts value for his clients. When people coach with Steve, he helps them step in to a whole new level of success and fulfillment. For when his loving presence is combined with their commitment, people **grow** – often to levels they couldn’t even imagine.

In the last six years, my life has transformed beyond my wildest dreams. I literally could not imagine my experience of life being as peaceful, fulfilling and joy-filled as it now is. And I attribute the vast majority of this priceless gift to the off-the-charts support structures I’ve been blessed with, such as Insight Seminars and the University of Santa Monica. If you too want to step into rapid growth and deep change, take a look at the people and structures you

are associating with. Who’s pulling you up, and who’s pulling you down? How can you build new relationships that will uplift and inspire you? How can you engage with external support structures that will support you in your process of deep change? How and where can you ask for help? How can you associate with coaches, teachers, therapists, ministers, or other supportive people who carry a loving presence that inspires you to grow and heal? How can you commit to support structures that are bigger than your fears? You don’t need to answer these questions. But if you do, be ready, for you just might find your life improving in ways that defy expectation, imagination – or belief.

“If you want to change your life, change your friends.”
– Anthony Robbins

For some suggestions on how to select effective support structures, please feel free to read through Appendix A or visit www.lovebeyondbelief.org.

Power Tool #10: The Power of Intention

Even with the support of external resources, the process of deep change can seem overwhelming. It can feel like we’re drowning in an ocean of emotion, and our negative self-talk may be shouting so loud that we can barely hear the voice of hope. Since our free will is such a limited resource, the idea of developing enough courage to overcome our fears can seem impossible. Put simply, the concept of using our own power to walk the Hero’s Journey often feels like a fairy tale, rather than reality.

Luckily, we don’t have to.

At every moment, we’re surrounded by grace. We can’t control it, we can’t understand it, and we can’t predict how it will show up – but without a doubt, we can utterly trust that it’s there. And while we can’t control grace, we can open ourselves to co-creation with it, through the power of intention.

When done consciously, **intention is a process of co-creation between our free will and Love.** When we set a conscious

intention, we're invoking our Authentic Self, notifying it of what we want, and asking for help.^{13-blue} As such, intention is both a decision and a prayer. It's as much an allowing as a doing. It's both a power tool for creating whatever it is we most want in life, and it's a Love offering that states "*not my will, but thy will be done.*"^{14-orange} As I understand it, the practice of intention involves five major components.

- ♥ **Alignment.** The first step in intention involves aligning our intentions with Love. Intention is a powerful force, exponentially more powerful than commitment alone. With power comes responsibility, for while we can choose our actions, we can't choose the consequences of those actions. And if we're going to co-create with Love, it's important to make our intentions loving. As Wayne Dyer says in The Power of Intention, "*You were intended out of love; you must be love in order to intend.*" One way to do this is through developing wisdom to guide our choices. An even more powerful way is to consecrate our intentions to Love. For example, the University of Santa Monica teaches students to attach the following master intention to all other intentions: "*This or something better for the highest good of all concerned.*"
- ♥ **Declaration.** Within this Loving context, the next step involves owning our co-creative power by declaring our intentions. We need to tell our universe what it is that we want. Intention works best when we hold our desires as **directions** rather than **destinations**. Instead of declaring "*I want to win \$1,000,000 in the lotto next week*" try "*I am experiencing financial abundance.*" This gets to the core experience we're seeking, and allows for much more flexibility in how it shows up. Intentions work best when we focus on the **what**, and leave the **how** to our Authentic Self. At the same time, there's nothing wrong with stating specific preferences – some people prefer chocolate over

vanilla, or roses over weeds. Within the context of your master intentions, have fun and ask for what you want!

- ♥ **Prayer.** Now comes the "please help" part. Whether you call it Love, God, Allah, Spirit, or Reality – ask for help. Where possible, ask with humility and a sense of surrender. Dedicate your intentions to the Highest Good. When we're able to get that Spirit is much better than we are at figuring out what we "should" want, then it becomes much easier to embrace the prayer of "*I ask for help, while also entreating that not my will, but thy will be done.*" Put another way, Reality is ultimately here to support us in advancing in the Game of Love, and our intentions are most effective when we align them with this flow. For example, you might state that "*my intention is to use everything for my learning, upliftment and growth*" and follow this with "*please help.*"
- ♥ **Willingness.** As strange as it may sound, often times the hardest part of intention is the process of allowing good things to come to us. To a greater or lesser extent, we're all addicted to our pain, self-judgment, and victim consciousness. Yet if we intend to have more love in our life, we have to be willing to receive it. Similarly, if we want a miracle, it really helps if we're willing to let one in. In The Secret, we learn that working with intentions involves the steps of "ask, believe, receive" – and that often the most challenge step is our willingness to receive.^{15-orange} This is because we hold both conscious and unconscious intentions, and they are often in conflict. We may consciously want to get married, but unconsciously be terrified of it. And so if we want to attract abundance in to our lives, not only is it important to set an intention for abundance, it's equally critical that we release the places in our shadow where we're not yet ready to let abundance in.^{16-green}

♥ **Mastery.** It's only in this last step that we come to what John-Roger calls "*handling our 10%*." Or as the Islamic saying goes, "*trust in Allah, but tie up your camel.*" While we've spent many pages talking about commitment, our personal will is much less powerful than we usually think. When sourced from a place of love, our intentions invoke the power of grace, our spiritual will, and our Authentic Self – three forces which eclipse the power of our personal will, and yet can be aided by it. In this step, it's our job to practice being fully involved in turning our intentions into reality. At the same time – and this is a critical difference between raw commitment and intention – our job is also to surrender our attachment to the outcome, realizing that we often don't know what is for the highest good. As we'll talk about in our discussion of Non-Attachment (Power Tool #25) we can define spiritual mastery as "*full involvement without attachment to the outcome.*" We practice mastery when we're committed to work for its own sake, rather than depending on any specific result for our happiness. It's not always easy – that's why it's called mastery. At the same time, as part of the power of intention, mastery produces miracles.

Then as described on page 25, intentions work best when they are stated in the present, use only positive language, are at least 50% believable, focus on "what" rather than "how," and include emotionally energizing words. They can be as general or as specific as you want them to be. Often times it works best to include a mix of both.

Bonus Tool: Your Hierarchy of Values

While it's beyond the scope of this book to truly cover the topic of integrity, let's close this chapter with a few thoughts on this crucial theme. Like non-attachment, integrity is a mastery level skill, which we can spend an entire lifetime on – so please, don't feel like you "should" have perfect integrity, that you "should"

already be perfectly impeccable with your word, or that you "should" have mastered this skill by now.

The most common definitions of integrity involve honesty, doing the right thing, and keeping our word. These are all very wise and important virtues. At the same time, there's another aspect to integrity that is very important, and much less widely understood: that of alignment and prioritization. The hardest choices in life are not between good and bad, but between "*the greater of two goods,*" or "*the lesser of two evils.*" Navigating these challenges is the essence of choosing up.

This challenge is so great and so pervasive that under the name of idolatry, it's listed as the first commandment. As described by Gerald May in Addiction and Grace,¹⁷

*"Whether we are conscious of it or not, for however long a particular addiction controls our attention, it has become a god for us. The major religious traditions of the world proclaim in unison that such false gods must fall away from us. We are called to grow toward that point at which nothing other than God will be our god. However short-lived or minor our concern for something other than God may be, when we give it more priority that we give our concern for God and God's will, we commit idolatry. Thus we all commit idolatry countless times each day."*¹⁸⁻
orange

When we look at it this way, integrity is the process of prioritizing our desires, of moving our focus from our more physical needs to our more spiritual, and of aligning our investments according to our highest priorities. At its heart, integrity is the process of putting the Game of Life in its proper place – often times as more urgent than Love, but never as more important.

In support of this, one of the most valuable tools I know of involves first getting in touch with what we most want – the virtues we most espouse, and the things we most desire – and then turning those intentions into a hierarchy of values. This hierarchy then

provides us with a compass heading that is rich enough both to help us choose the right, and even more importantly, to help us choose between two different rights.

For support in developing your hierarchy of values, please feel free to visit www.lovebeyondbelief.org and explore the computerized “What Do I Want?” exercise.

And with that, let’s move on to our next topic: our shadow, and how its repressed negativity creates the clouds that hide us from our sun.