

THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO A

Happier Life

FOUR STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR INNER SELF

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THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO A HAPPIER LIFE

4 Steps to Improving Your Inner Self



PREFACE

I wrote this three years ago at the beginning of 2017. Since then, I've continued to progress and move forward with the steps and beliefs outlined in this book. As I came across it again, I decided to make a few tweaks based on what I've learned since then. As I was doing so, I realized how much this information has helped me grow and believe now is the time to share it.

Since writing this book and practicing the steps, I've found myself changing in unexpected ways. One such way is beginning to focus on diet and exercise. I've recently started juicing while at the same time focusing on eating more fruits and vegetables. I've also made it a point to get my body moving daily, even if that means taking a short walk or hike. Since I began eating healthier and making sure to move, the steps listed in this book have become easier to implement with success. In turn, I've found it easier to change my negative thoughts and habits by working on my mind, body, and spirit simultaneously.

I hope you're able to take aspects of this book and apply it in your own life. In doing so, I hope it helps you feel better with yourself regardless of your external environmental situation.

INTRODUCTION

Since you're reading this, I think it's safe to say you feel something is missing in your life. Maybe you know what it is, maybe you don't. Personally, I was utterly lost. I had a great job with awesome friends and a supportive family, yet for some reason, I was feeling numb and unhappy with it all. The worst part, it took me years to realize something was off. When I finally gave credence to the way I felt it got worse, mainly because I was scared I wouldn't be able to find myself again.

That's when I decided to ask a question.

What do we need in life to be happy and fulfilled?

The answer to this question is one hundred percent dependent on us as individuals. What I need to understand to reach my bliss is likely different than yours. The same goes for your family and friends. This being the case, it can make it much more challenging to speak with those closest to you about how you're feeling. This is part of the problem, because, as with anything in life it's important to have a support system in place.

In my specific case, I began to realize I no longer had the enthusiasm or drive that once defined me. At the same time, I found myself losing all desire to be better than I was. It was as if I'd finally conceded life had beaten me, and I'd given up. After many years of feeling this way, something inside me clicked, and with the support of my wife Katie, I made a change.

I've come to believe the answer to what we need isn't gained by someone telling us, but rather by learning how we can find it from within. We all have the inner strength to find our true bliss and happiness, but it takes the determination to grab back control and keep it.

In the world we live in, there are endless distractions to take our minds off of the most important aspect in life, ourselves. These distractions not only take our minds off ourselves, but they also guide us into feeling a certain way about our wants and desires. We have to know who we are as individuals to create the lives we wish to have.

I just mentioned the most important aspect of life is ourselves, which I believe to be true. But that's not to say other people *aren't* important as well, they are extremely important. Having a support system of people that will talk honestly with you and listen can help to change the way you feel about and approach difficulties. The same can be true of you helping your support system by being there for the ones who are there for you. I've always believed helping others is one of our main purposes in life, but I also feel it can be difficult to extend a helping hand when we find ourselves struggling from within.

The important thing is we take the first step toward figuring ourselves out, because once we've done that we'll be better suited to help others around us who may be feeling the same way.

While I can't tell you precisely what you need to understand to reach your ultimate destination, I'll explain the steps I've taken over the past year and share them with you.

I've seen a dramatic improvement in my quality of life since I started practicing the steps in this book. I don't claim to have all the answers as I'm still learning and will be for the rest of my life. Some of the steps I mention may not feel right to you, and that's ok, the most important aspect I've discovered for finding oneself is to continuously probe and ask questions.

If we're able to act on the truth that we steer our own ship, then we can take any struggle in our life and make it a strength.

I believe these steps will provide you with the tools you can use daily that'll help change how the outside world affects your state of being and how you view yourself. I know you're capable of finding more joy and happiness in every moment, while also eliminating the negative emotions that come with the complications of life.

I also believe you can push through tough circumstances you find yourself in to become the person you know you can be.

CHAPTER 1

Backstory

It's Friday night in 2015 a little past 9 pm, and I find myself sitting on a weather grounded Southwest flight. I'm not heading out to visit friends or family but am heading home for the first time in six days. I have my headphones plugged in, trying to avoid any and all eye contact that may come my way. While dodging human interaction, my life's problems run through my head and my stomach tenses. In three hours I'll be home, though that brings no relief because these thoughts and feelings never leave. At least once I'm home I can feel the way I do in a familiar setting.

You see, I had a great corporate job, the people were awesome, and I could stand behind the products and services offered. But, for some reason, I felt unhappy, empty, and lost.

I couldn't quite put my finger on the cause of the numbness I felt all the time. I thought maybe it was due to the fact I was only home about eight days a month, but I found, even when home, I felt numb. It was a feeling I couldn't shake. Something inside me had shifted dramatically in the wrong direction. I'd traveled so far away from the energetic, enthusiastic, take on the world person I'd once been at a younger age.

One of my biggest problems or saving graces depending on how you look at it was my wife Katie had noticed as well. She felt I had become distant and lacked the drive and ambition I once had.

The reason I mentioned it as a problem/saving grace was that my wife and I were able to talk about it and take steps forward to help the situation. This is where having a solid support system helped me. I've always been good at putting on a smile no matter what was eating at me, and I'm pretty sure without Katie there I would have spent the rest of my life living through the unnecessary agony of feeling lost.

One day when I was on the road in Mississippi, I called Katie to tell her it was time to make a change, I couldn't handle the person I'd become. It was time to try something new to find myself again. As the call went on, we decided the best move for me was to give my two weeks notice and begin helping with the website, mountainmodernlife.com, full-time.

Katie and I had been saving up for a while and knew we would eventually make this transition, though at this point, it was much earlier than anticipated. On the phone call that day, we decided the best way for us to get in full alignment was to take this step now, so we did.

I understand not everyone can quit their jobs, nor do you have to. The steps I've taken below have allowed me to see one can be happy in any circumstance by understanding who they are. I also believe as you progress in figuring out yourself, you will find the direction in which you're being pulled. Then it's up to you to decide to take action in that direction.

In the following chapters, we will discuss the steps taken that finally got me out of the funk I was in.

After I left my job, I began working fulltime on the website with Katie. It was great, but my concerns

with myself and who I had become didn't change. Though I was working from home and was able to spend more time with my wife, the haze of doubt and feeling of uneasiness never left. My younger self that was filled with passion and ready to face the world was still completely lost to me.

But it's important to understand:

Leaving my job is NOT what changed everything for me!

During the first four months, I still felt lost with seemingly no direction. I was failing as a husband, as a partner, and as a person. At least that's the way I felt. Sure, I was able to hide it around other people, but inside I felt numb.

As the year was coming to an end, I reflected on those months working from home and realized something had to change. Leaving my job and all the travel associated with it did not fix the way I was feeling. While looking back, I realized the changes I made to the outside world around me did not affect the way my world was feeling inside. It was time to dig deep and find answers.

I've always had the belief that our minds are much more powerful than we give them credit for. Not only did I understand this truth, but I also witnessed it as Katie took control of her CRPS (Chronic Regional Pain Syndrome).

CRPS is an auto-immune disease that affects the nervous system. It created chronic pain and extreme temperature changes in Katie's right hand and made it difficult for her to complete simple, everyday tasks like getting dressed or washing her hair. The doctors told us there was no "cure" or time-frame for her hand to start functioning again, and that it could spread to the rest of her body. However, Katie chose to believe she could heal herself with positive thoughts and emotions. Within a month, she was able to go into remission and use her hand again. It felt like a miracle.

Somehow, even after watching her do this, I still didn't take the steps necessary to act on this truth I believed, that is until the beginning of the New Year.

We were on our way home from a New Year's Eve party when it hit me if I wanted to change the way I felt I would need to do it from within.

From that moment forward, I decided I would learn as much as possible about other's experiences with the mind and the different beliefs that were out there.

That is when I discovered my first step in getting back to the person I wanted to be and an even better version of the person I was.

CHAPTER 2

Acknowledging The Voice in Your Head

This is the first step I took on my way to gaining a better understanding of who I am and who I want to become. Acknowledging the voice in your head isn't about hearing voices that aren't your own, but more about realizing why you do what you do. Why do you feel happy, angry, sad, depressed? Why do you respond to certain situations the way you do?

We all have this voice in our heads. You may have heard it referred to as the Ego or the subconscious. What you call it is irrelevant, the important thing is we realize it's there. I look at the voice as being two-fold; one part is the literal voice we hear i.e., our thoughts, and the other is a hidden voice that guides the way we're feeling and acting toward certain situations.

The best place to start in finding it is by answering the question, what is the voice in your head? It has been difficult for me to pinpoint one definition because of the complex nature of our minds and how they work. Below is my belief in a nutshell.

The voice in my head is a combination of my conscious and subconscious thoughts. It's a systematic response to outside stimuli my mind has created based on past experiences. This also includes my thought processes on different topics and my emotional response to said topics.

The average person will have anywhere between 60,000-80,000 thoughts on a given day, and 90% of those are repetitive from the day before. Meaning 90% of the thoughts we think on a given day are repeat thoughts from the day before.

A lot of the thoughts we have we'll be aware of, some may not, though they can still lead to the corresponding negative emotions. An example could be if someone cuts you off on the way to work. When this happens, you may feel the emotion of anger screeching through your body before you think of what a jerk they were. In this case, you may already be angry before you've thought about what's made you angry.

You see, over time, we develop systematic responses to daily decisions or interactions we encounter. Meaning we make decisions without conscious thought, mainly because we've dealt with certain scenarios so many times throughout our lives, we've developed an automatic trigger. Not only that, but our minds can recognize similarities within different circumstances and guide us to feelings and decisions we have no part in making.

Acknowledging your inner voice can help you control the emotional reactions rather than continuing forward on autopilot.

If you're having a hard time recognizing the voice, you may want to listen closely when you're lying down to sleep, taking a shower, or even driving down the road. You'll notice your thoughts going crazy. That's your subconscious voice talking to you. When I first began searching for my voice, I found it easiest to find when I sat quietly with my eyes closed.

A quote from Andrew J. Bernstein, a modern-day philosopher, helps me put the hidden voice in perspective. While I don't necessarily agree with all of his views, the quote below speaks true to me.

“Negative thoughts stick around because we believe them, not because we want them or choose them.” - Andrew J Bernstein

This quote works well for me because it brings to reference the truth behind the silent voice. I'm going to give a bit more backstory to help better explain what I mean.

When I first began finding the voice in my head, I looked back over the years, trying to pinpoint when my inner voice began to change. What I found was my thought patterns began to change soon after I graduated from college in 2007. The main culprit was how I viewed my student loans. I graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Film and Video Production but also a lot of debt. I was extremely excited to take on the world, but after about six months, my student loans began calling me.

This was expected because I did borrow the money, the only problem, I wasn't making enough money to pay them. That's when the stressing and worrying began. Sure there were plenty of difficulties involved, such as graduating during the middle of a Hollywood writer's strike, not to mention the economy was starting to dive into a recession. But to me, it was all about not being able to pay. How am I going to pay? What happens to my co-signers if I don't pay? All of these questions flooded my mind.

Over the years I was able to hold off the student loan companies but not without calls every day, and not while living the life I wanted. This path continued, in turn, bringing into my mind the thought of I can't pay because I don't have the money. After years of having these thoughts, my mind on its own decided it should become a default so to speak. So then I began having these thoughts and feeling the emotions associated with them even when not directly confronted by the outside circumstances that caused them in the first place.

The scary part about how my mind had developed this preset mode was the emotions those thoughts triggered would play into how I viewed other things in my life. Normally amazing experiences didn't have quite the same zest, mainly because I had the subconscious emotion of fear always in my mind. By not paying attention to my inner voice, I let my mind take over the decision making. It, in turn, let one negative in my life take such control that I began to feel the same way about many other aspects of my life.

Over the years, I had opportunities that would get me out from under the weight of my debt. You see, my silent voice had been so trained that I could not pay based on the internal energy I put toward those thoughts. Deep down, fear was so ingrained that what I thought aloud was not tied to my true emotion. So, even though I would say at times, I can pay these loans, I didn't truly feel it due to the fact my mind had developed a pattern based on my past experiences. Even when paying the monthly loan bills, I felt the lingering fear and stress from not being able to pay.

Hopefully, at this point, you have an understanding of what I mean by voice in your head. So, how do we interact with them?

Best Practices to Acknowledging the Voice in our Head

The best way for me to acknowledge the voice in my head is to get quiet and listen. Take ten minutes in the morning to listen to your voice, don't try to control it, just sit there in silence and observe the

thoughts. You'll notice your mind will have little problem filling your head with thoughts. The thoughts that come to you will be of all sorts, both good and bad, listen to them.

As you listen to your mind, you may find you disagree with some of its ideas. That's ok too. For now, the important thing is to notice your mind is always active, always pulling in information and trying to create patterns.

After you've sat and heard your inner voice, it will be easier to spot it working while you're going about normal daily activities. Things started to get interesting for me at this point because I slowly began to realize how much time my mind was spending on the problems in my life. It's not a bad thing to be aware of your problems, but my mind was doing it unconsciously. The problem with my subconscious spending time on my issues was it created emotions within me I didn't want.

Why was I fearful, why was I sad, why did I feel trapped?

I felt all of those things because my inner voice had become accustomed to me feeling these ways when confronted by problems for which I had no solutions. So, even when I wasn't consciously thinking of the problems, my mind had them hidden in the back, which in turn created a non-stop subconscious awareness of perceived fears.

Understanding the Inner Voice

The trick to finding your inner voice is to look back, look back on times when an emotion was apparent. Such as an argument with a spouse or loved one, or a time when you laughed uncontrollably. Once you have found the moment to look back on, examine it from all angles.

Look at that moment from your perspective, from the perspective of all the other parties involved, and from the perspective of the fly on the wall. After you feel you've seen all sides of the moment, think about how it made you feel. Think about the other ways you could have reacted; think about the way you did react. Then ask yourself, if in that situation again, understanding what you do now, would you react in the same way?

The answer to this question may very well be yes, which is completely fine. What we're getting to here is a better understanding of why we react the way we do. If we're better able to understand why we react to various situations, we will be better equipped to react in the ways we want in the future.

I should say acknowledging the voice in your head is one of the hardest parts. It has a lot to do with it being the first step to changing your lifelong patterns. When you complete this step and begin to pay attention to your inner voice, you will start to understand you can be whoever you want to be. You'll see how much the voice in your head runs your life by noticing what thoughts occur in various situations.

Once I began acknowledging the voice in my head, I realized most of my daily repetitive thoughts (the 90% from day to day I mentioned earlier) were the ones leading to the emotions I didn't want to feel; the fear, sadness, anger and so on. Without conscious thought, I was creating my own emotional prison cell. From that point forward, I knew I had to create different daily repetitive thoughts.

As we continue forward, I'll explain the steps I've taken to guide both my conscious and unconscious thought patterns to break out of the prison I'd created.

Chapter 2 - Actionable Step:

Starting today, keep a notebook on hand and jot down any recurring thought patterns you begin to recognize, both positive and negative. I practiced this step daily until I understood the patterns happening in my head.

CHAPTER 3

No Value

At this stage, we've developed a basic understanding of the voice in our head. We can hear our thoughts and see their effects on us, but how do we change them to what we want so we become the person we strive to be? For me, that question had multiple answers which we'll discuss. The first step was becoming aware of the voice inside our heads. But for now, let's talk about the second action step I took to change my thinking. Let's call it the 'no-value' step.

After recognizing my voice and paying attention to what I was thinking, I found many of my thoughts were driving me in the wrong direction. They were those of student loans, hating my job, not being happy with my social life, and the list could go on. Did I feel that way? Did I hate my job and my social life? Looking back, the answer is absolutely not. But at the time, my mind was seeing my life through the hazy negative viewpoint I had taught it. Now it was time to reverse it.

This is where the no value step comes in. I found myself actively listening to the voice in my head and realized I didn't like many of the thoughts that were presenting themselves, so I started to throw them away. Granted, this was after some time becoming familiar with the thoughts that were in my mind.

Every time I caught a thought in my mind that didn't align with the person I wanted to become, I would acknowledge it, then tell my mind those thoughts no longer hold value to me. When I did this, I noticed the thoughts would immediately disappear. They would eventually resurface, but the more I told them to leave, the less frequently they returned.

Now, before you start thinking this is going to be an easy step, I want to let you know, not all thoughts will disappear immediately. Sometimes I have to repeat no value multiple times to the same thought because it doesn't want to leave. You may find that the thought leaves, but you can still feel the negative feeling in your gut. Later on, I'll dive into the next step that'll help combat this, but for now, focus on sending the thoughts away.

Oftentimes when I do this, I'm otherwise distracted. In other words, I've caught the thought I want gone but am not fully focused on removing it. I've noticed it's impossible to trick your mind. You have to truly believe and be conscious at the moment to teach it to give back control. If you find yourself not entirely focused, your mind will know you're not serious and will revert to old patterns.

As an example, let's pretend you're walking down the street, all around you leaves blow in the crisp Fall air. Up ahead of you, a car pulls out of the parking lot to the local gas station. At first, you pay it no mind, but as it drives past you realize it's the dream car you've always wanted. A smile tinges your mouth then fades as the voice in your head reminds you it's way out of your budget, you would never be able to afford it. At that moment, you should consciously finish the smile that had begun and tell your mind that thought no longer has value to you.

Maybe at this specific moment in time, you couldn't go to the car dealership down the street and purchase the car. That's fine, but that little seedling of a thought will line itself up with the other

thoughts you have in a day and begin developing patterns. The key here is we want to eliminate any thoughts that tell us we can't be what we want to be or have what we want to have.

Now we've identified the negative thoughts in our heads and are kicking them out whenever we catch them. So, what's next?

Replace Negative with Positive:

The next step I put in place was to replace the negative thoughts with positive ones I could stand behind.

Before you dive into the practice of replacing negative thoughts with positive ones, it's important to spend a few days trying to identify the negative thoughts you're having. Once you feel comfortable with identifying these thoughts, you should move on to replacing them with better ones.

I generally do a 180-degree turn on the negative thought my mind has supplied. For instance, if I think I can never pay back my student loans, I replace it with, I have paid back my student loans, or I can pay back my student loans.

Sounds easy enough right, and it is. The tricky part is putting the emotion behind it. You see, when your brain has a thought, it generally connects an emotion to it, so your body understands the result of the thought. When you have a negative thought, a negative emotion corresponds, the same with positive thoughts, they're followed with positive emotions.

You see, the negative thoughts you're trying to replace were put in your head based on past experiences. The reason the thought stays with you so long is that when it first appeared, there was an extreme emotion tied to it, such as anger, sadness, fear, etc. So, to override the negative thought and emotion, we need to train our mind and body to accept the new thought and new emotion presented to be the truth.

As you go through this process of replacing the negative thoughts with the positive ones, you want to start to feel the emotion of the new thought you're putting in place. This is easier said than done, but with practice, belief will follow, and with belief comes the ability to add emotion.

Let's go back to the car you've always wanted that just drove by. At first, your mind told you it wasn't going to happen, but you told your mind that thought has no value to you. At which point you proceed to tell your mind you already have the car. When you tell your mind you already have the car, your body still feels that you can't have it because of how it was trained. To combat this, you can visualize having it.

Let's say you close your eyes and feel the breeze flying through your hair and the damp salty air coming in through your nose as you cruise down the 101 Freeway on the California coast. Then try to feel the happiness and joy that will be present when you're enjoying that exact moment in real life. The main point being, you want your mind and body to grasp the intention of your changing the thought and emotion.

What you're telling your mind with the positive thought and emotion that comes along with it, is you no longer wish to have the negative thought with the negative emotion but want instead to bring forward positive thoughts with the corresponding positive emotion.

I'll admit the ability to visualize and feel the emotions of the positive thoughts I'm putting into place has been difficult to achieve. Though I haven't perfected it, like in many things, I am consistently trying, learning, and moving forward with it. Though I'm having difficulty conveying the emotion with my positive thought replacement, I've seen a significant decrease in the negative thoughts and emotions I need to replace.

The 'no-value' step has had the most direct impact on my emotional state. By removing and replacing my negative thoughts, I've noticed my energy and enthusiasm returning. In all honesty, it's not where it once was, but it's come a long way. The important thing is I'm still working on it and will continue to do so for the rest of my life.

Chapter 3 - Actionable Step:

Review the thoughts you previously jotted down in your notebook and pick out the negative ones you'd rather not have. Then write down the positive replacement thoughts you'd like to have instead. After you've written down the new positive thoughts, take some time, maybe 5 minutes for each new positive thought, and visualize it. As you visualize, try to feel the emotion of the new experience you're creating.

CHAPTER 4

Want to Do Things

Up to this point, we have discussed acknowledging the voice in our heads, kicking out thoughts we don't want, and replacing those thoughts with ones we do want. This next step has helped me gain more appreciation and happiness from the things I do in life.

We all have things in our lives we don't want to do. A couple of examples I can think of are homework, dishes, taking our car to get serviced, and many more. I'm not sure about you, but when I generally do such tasks, I say I "have to" do this, or I "need to" do that. What I've found throughout my life, is the words "have," "should," and "need" have developed into words associated with activities I would rather not do. The thing is, they have to get done, so why should we needlessly feel the emotions of worry and stress when we could choose to enjoy the little things.

Like I mentioned in the last chapter, one of the most important things we're focusing on is removing and replacing any negative thoughts. Since I've created a negative connotation with the words "have," "should," and "need," it's important I remove those, and considering how often they're used, it's a pretty big step. Catching these words is very much like catching your negative thoughts. It's hard to catch them all, so we need to focus on getting them when we can.

Since you've found your inner voice and started to remove your negative thoughts, it should be easier to catch these words. When I began this step, it took a few days to train myself to grab the words before I moved onto replacing them.

Once you feel comfortable recognizing these words, you can take the next step.

What is the next step?

The next step is to remove "have," "should," or "need" and replace them with "want" or "could." This step may take a while. It's difficult to immediately feel the "want" when over time you've become accustomed to not liking certain activities.

With that said, it's essential to give this step some time. Think of it as a professional athlete, for them to be the best and on top of their game they must relentlessly train. They'll have hard days where things don't go their way, but they persist, the same is true for wanting to do something.

For a quick example, let's say you're on the way home from work later than expected. As you're making the drive, the thought of cooking dinner pops into your head. When it does, maybe a thought comes to mind like, "I'm too tired to have to make dinner, I'll just swing by a fast food joint." You just thought you **have** to make dinner because you're thinking of the time and effort it will take. But, what if instead you say I **want** to make dinner because of the nourishment and strength it'll provide compared to that fast food joint.

In an instance, like above, it has served me best to switch my thinking of I **have** to make dinner to I **want** to make dinner. Meaning, now I don't **have** to make dinner and waste the little energy I have left, but instead, I **want** to make dinner so I can fill my body with nutrients.

I've found it helpful to think of all of the positives associated with the task I'm taking on. Let's say you want to do the dishes. You can want to do them because of how clean the kitchen looks afterward, or because no fruit flies will spawn from the old crusted food, or maybe it's been a while, and the best thing about doing them is you'll have a clean bowl for your ice cream.

No matter what task we chose to take on, there will always be positives we can associate with it.

For instance, let's go back to the making dinner example. I'd always hated making dinner because I'd have to figure out what we have on hand and then take the time to prep and cook. It was much easier to run out and grab something. But then I began changing my thought process from "**have to**" to "**want to**" and started to notice the advantages of making dinner. Some of the advantages included spending time with my food during the prep process, gaining a greater appreciation of where my food came from, my body feeling better from eating better food, and the fact that I'm a pretty good cook, at least Katie thinks so. Before I made these changes, I focused on three things, how long it was going to take, the stress of deciding what to make, and how much easier other options were.

Now with this dinner example, it's more about progress rather than perfection. I still, on occasion, eat out rather than make a home-cooked meal, and that's ok. The point with this example is to show you; you can look at something differently and, in turn, make gradual changes over time. We want to make choices consciously in each situation, rather than letting past experiences guide our future decisions.

Similar to replacing negative thoughts with positive ones, you will want to do your best to feel the positives of the task. You need to truly focus on why it's a good thing to do.

What tasks in your life do you **have** to do?

Now, why do you **want** to do them?

The important change we're making by adopting this thought process is looking at everything in life as a gift. With that being the case, we can find joy in everything we do. This ultimately helps you get to a mental state that allows you to feel the way you want to feel all the time.

Some may call this being present, which means being aware in every moment. But again, it is irrelevant what you call it. The main point is to find happiness in every moment, even in those you have become accustomed to hating. By changing our **have to want**, we choose where our joy comes from versus letting our unconscious decide for us based on past experiences. Our mind remembers whether we do or do not like a task. By taking this approach, we train our mind that every task can bring joy.

Chapter 4 - Actionable Step:

Jot down limiting words you frequently use, such as have, must, should, need, etc. Then write down words you can replace them with, such as can, could, want, will, etc.

After you have them written down, try to switch them out in your daily conversations.

CHAPTER 5

Meditation

Meditation is something you've undoubtedly heard of. It's a practice that's been around for thousands of years, yet in our fast-paced society, it hasn't become the norm. However, the amount of attention it's been getting over the last few years is impressive. To me, meditation has become my blank canvas to paint on. It's a place where I'm able to clear my mind, let my thoughts flow, visualize the future me, and see positive vibes flow to and from my body.

Meditation is a very personalized practice, and when I first began, I was beyond intimidated. Everyone I heard speak on it seemed totally on their game. Meaning they appeared to have their actions so well intact I never thought I could catch up. Looking back, I can now see that was one of my negative thoughts that needed to be sent away.

I successfully sent that negative thought packing, and couldn't be happier. That's not to say meditation is easy, because it's not. It takes constant practice and repetition. Even with it having its difficulties, once you start, you'll see the value almost immediately. The best part is the more you practice, the better you'll get, so much so I was able to notice progress after every session. The trick is to start.

Where do you begin? How do you want to meditate?

I consider meditation to be a very personal experience. It's something each of us discovers how to do in our own right. Below I dive into how I meditate. You may take what you can from it, but feel comfortable enough to change anything and everything if you want.

I sit down, generally with a pillow to support my lower back to help me sit up straight. I cross my legs while placing my wrist on my knees with palms up and index finger to thumb on each hand. I know plenty of people who lie down or stand up, it's entirely up to you. The main thing is to get into a position that allows you to feel comfortable.

Once in this position, I notice how uncomfortable my wrists are, though I keep them in their place. Then I breathe. When I breathe, I do so through my nose. I follow the air up through my nose, down my throat, and into my lungs. As I exhale out, I follow the air on its journey back out of my body through my nose. I repeat this process for about five minutes until I start to realize my mind is clear.

I mentioned how uncomfortable my wrists are in the position I maintain throughout the meditation. This is important to me because, during my first meditation, it was agony the entire time, all I could think about was how my wrists were uncomfortable. By the second time, I realized after breathing that I no longer notice the discomfort even though my hands were in the same position. Now, whenever I meditate, I no longer feel discomfort in my wrist.

That sums up the basics of how I generally get into my meditation. You may want to give it a try. If you do and it works, that's great, if it doesn't, that's fine too.

There are a ton of different ways to go about meditating. One is to use a guided meditation. There are various resources out there, including free meditation podcasts through iTunes, the Calm App, and other sources. Try some of them and take what you find valuable while discarding what doesn't work for you. If you do try the guided meditation approach, don't give up after the first one. I've found there are many different perspectives on how to lead guided meditations, and they vary greatly. If you find the first one feels funny or isn't working for you, try another. I believe there is a guided meditation out there for everyone. You just may have to look further to find yours.

The primary purpose of meditation is to be still and find calm amongst all the chaos. While also finding that stillness within your mind and body. It isn't about being perfect in your meditation practice, but rather something you will grow and change with as you continue doing it.

Don't think you need to clear 30 minutes on your calendar. If you find yourself swamped at work in front of the computer, or wherever you are, take 2-3 minutes, close your eyes and breathe.

A lady once told Dr. Wayne Dyer, she had no time to meditate. He, in turn, asked her if she drove to work. She responded with a yes, which he then asked, do you stop at traffic lights. She told him she does, which he replied, then you have 1-2 minutes at every light.

The short meditation approach can be just as effective and practical. Taking this approach has made it easier to increase my meditation time gradually.

No matter your style, the trick is starting. My meditation begins with breathing, but what I concentrate on during my meditation changes all the time. I'm a believer in everything being connected, so sometimes I like to visualize positive energy flowing into my body, then all at once, it streams out in all directions as I share it with the world. Sometimes I like to think positive affirmations such as I am worthy, I am healthy, I am strong during my meditations, yet other times I visualize and feel future events in my life.

The main thing about meditation is it's up to you to decide what you wish to accomplish with it. Many athletes use meditation to see themselves playing at their best or achieving specific goals. The sky is the limit, take the time to meditate and envision the person you wish to be.

I've found that since I started meditating and visualizing what I want, it has become much easier to do the physical work to accomplish it. For me, meditation is all about moving yourself in the direction you wish to go, becoming the person you were meant to be.

What if you don't know the person you were meant to be?

Meditation will help with that too. When you're meditating, you're spending time with yourself. The more time you spend with yourself, the more time you'll have to realize who you want to be.

Chapter 5 - Actionable Step:

Take a few minutes to sit in silence. With your eyes closed, take a slow deep breath in through your nose, followed by a slow exhale through your mouth. Do this for five minutes. Every time you inhale, think the words “Breath In,” and when you exhale, think the words “Breath Out.”

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

Now that you have the steps to better understand yourself, it's important to implement them. I know first-hand how hard it can be to keep going, to keep striving for more, especially when your inner voice asks, "what's the point?". It's crucial at this juncture for you to put time and effort into yourself.

These steps were not easy for me to grasp, let alone implement, but the common thread is I continued to work at them. Of course, some days, I forgot to keep an eye on my thoughts, some days, I forgot to send away the negative thoughts, and some days I let the excuse of being too tired or busy prevent me from meditating. That's ok. The best thing you can do is be kind to yourself, give it your all, and continue to try.

Over time I've found the more I was able to practice the steps, the more I noticed the reward. And what is that reward? For me, it was eliminating the foggy haze I found myself in, while also getting back to my energetic take on the world mentality. I'll freely admit I'm not there yet, and to be honest, I'm not sure if anyone truly ever gets there, but I've seen enough improvement to know I'll continue trying and learning for the rest of my life.

It's important to understand these steps are only as valuable as you treat them. As with many things in life, you get out what you put in, and if you give it your all, you will come out on top.

If you put in the time and effort for what you want along with the positive reinforcement of your thoughts and emotions, you will succeed. It doesn't matter what you're doing. Maybe you get a promotion or start your own business. Maybe you find happiness in the little things. Maybe you produce an album or paint a canvas, it doesn't matter, be yourself with positive intentions and you'll make it.

I'm not here to tell you how to live your life or the secret to everything is in the words you've just read. But I am here to tell you if you focus on yourself and trying to improve your understanding of the influences outside stimuli can have on your emotions, you will make progress toward your goals whatever they are.

Three years ago, I was in the worst spot of my life and didn't even know it. I had spent five years floating along, lost and confused, feeling as if I had no way out from under the rocks life had placed down on me. Now, I stand here with problems still, but the only difference is those problems are no longer running my life, I am. Acting on the steps in this book has allowed me to consciously decided how my problems affect me from an emotional standpoint, which has given me greater control into how I see and feel about my life. In turn, I'm a much happier me.

I sincerely hope you were able to gain insight from my experiences and the steps I've taken. I'm not an expert, though I plan to continue learning as much as I possibly can for the rest of my life to better understand the power of my mind. I will strive to be the man I wish to be, leading to a Happier Life!

If you find yourself confused by anything written in this book or have any questions about the steps, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly via email (eric@mountainmodernlife.com). I was in a bad place, and if I can help anyone else in a similar situation, I'll do my best to do so.