

TAKE YOUR FOOT OFF THE BRAKE



18 INSPIRATIONAL REFLECTIONS TO ACCELERATE
YOUR CAREER

MAREE HARRIS, PH.D.

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Introduction

I have written these 18 reflections to inspire, motivate and empower you to take your foot off the brake and be and do everything you want to be and do.

They are reflections addressed to you personally which I hope will create an excited awareness in you that everything is possible. I also hope they will empower you to do the work on yourself to make it happen.

The big message I want these reflections to communicate is that you are the biggest obstacle to your own success, not your upbringing, not your circumstances or perceived lack of opportunities, not your manager or your organisation. It's what's happening in your head, the messages you are giving yourself that create the fear that stands in your way. You can change all that.

I realised as I was writing that I was reflecting on my own experience, writing about what had helped me take my foot off the brake over the years, to take risks, move into the unknown and dismantle every obstacle on the way to achieving the success I now have.

There is a repetitive theme across the reflections. They are all about managing yourself, especially managing your fear. They are about developing and enhancing the self-mastery that creates a deep knowing in you that you are in control of your life. I want you to reach the belief that whatever happens, either personally or professionally, you can respond in a pro-active and positive way to bring about an outcome that is good for you.

So, carpe diem! Seize the day! Take these 18 reflections and make them your own. Do what you need to do to create the professional future you really want.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Maree Harris' in a cursive script.

Dr Maree Harris, Ph.D.

1

***Take your
foot off the
brake and
accelerate
down your
career
highway to
achieve
everything
you want for
your
professional
success.***

- Maree Harris, Ph.D.

When I rebranded my business in 2005, it was a group of my clients who chose its new name – People Empowered. They had felt empowered working with me. Their fears, doubts and uncertainties faded into the distance. They let go of the beliefs that were limiting their potential. They developed a confidence to be everything they wanted to be and do. They became “Can Do” people. They took their foot off the brake and just went for it.

In these times of uncertainty and unpredictability, there are so many talented people from CEOs to receptionists, who are living their lives with their foot on the brake. They are hesitant to be who they want to be. They fear to do what they want to do. They don’t make the decisions they know they need to make. They don’t speak their own truth in their own voice. They too often are living by someone else’s agenda and expectations when they really need to be setting their own agenda and living by their own expectations.

What I am about at People Empowered is helping you empower yourself to confidently negotiate these uncertain and unpredictable times so you can play a bigger game than the one you are playing now. Only you can do the work to get there, however. A big part of that work is conquering your fear. The flipside of fear is excitement and I want you to increasingly embrace that flipside with every reflection you read.

I can’t empower anyone but myself, but what I can do is create an empowering space for you if you want to join me in what I am doing. It is an energising and pro-active space where you discover potential and strengths you didn’t realise you had and where you learn how to optimise them.

Empowering spaces are where empowered people hang out.

Empowered people are:

- positive, not negative,
- optimistic, not pessimistic,
- glass half full people, not glass half empty ones,
- pro-active, not reactive,
- supportive of others, not working competitively with them,
- “can do” people, not “can’t do” people,
- solution focused, rather than problem focused.

I want to encourage you to become an empowered person. Discover the websites, blogs, newsletters, podcasts, webinars, and videos that feed your sense of empowerment. Seek out coaches and mentors who can sustain you. Attend workshops and conferences and join organisations where other empowered and empowering people hang out. Share your thoughts and ideas, your solutions to the challenges you face, with other empowered people. One of the most exciting things you’ll discover about being empowered is that you empower everyone else with whom you come into contact and they you. That’s why discovering empowering spaces is so important to your success.

- Make a decision, before you go any further, to be an empowered and empowering person.
- Make a commitment to remove from your life everything that stands in your way of doing that. That includes negative, disempowering people.
- Spend your time with empowered people in empowering spaces.
- Take your foot off the brake and be and do everything you want to be and do.

2

The greatest challenge you will ever face in life is the conquest of fear and the development of courage.

- Brian Tracy

You are reading this book so I'm guessing that you are one of those people riding through life fearful of taking your foot off the brake to be and do everything you want to be and do.

Fear, as Brian Tracy reminds us, is the greatest obstacle to your success. It is epitomised by the words "I can't." "I can't," not because I am not able to, but because I fear to. When you contemplate something new or different, fear rises in you. If you keep thinking about it, the fear consumes you and becomes overwhelming. "I can't, I can't" grips every part of your being so you switch off thinking about going into that new space, together with all its possibilities and opportunities. You go back into your comfort zone, as unchallenging as that might be.

You probably fear one of two things – or maybe both. You fear failure or you fear rejection. They are the two greatest fears of us all and they often go hand in hand.

Fear of failure can make you impotent. It can paralyse you and cause you to contract and shrink when the reason you are here is to expand and grow and enhance your potential. You won't try anything unless you have a guarantee that you will be successful at it. The alternative – failing – sends shivers of fear through you that you don't want to entertain. You might want to start your own business, but you fear leaving the security of a salaried position, that you might go bankrupt, that you may not be able to attract clients and customers, that there may be too much competition, and so it goes on. In fact, the longer you stay stuck in the fear, the more things you find to be fearful about.

Yet failure can be the greatest of learning experiences and the most successful people will tell you that they have failed often. It's the mindset you bring to failure that separates out the successful from the unsuccessful.

There is also the fear of rejection. “I can’t” because I need the approval of my colleagues, my parents, my friends. You are living your life according to other’s expectations, always concerned about what they think of you. If I choose to do something different, to go in a new direction, I may become a different person. Will people still like me? Will I lose status, respect, credibility, or professionalism? Will they criticise me, ridicule me or laugh at me behind my back? You can’t be sure what the outcome might be. You can’t be sure whether making this decision, taking this step to take your foot off the brake and move forward will see you isolated and alone professionally. An even worse fear arises. What if I take this step and I fail? The feeling of rejection will be far worse.

So, you decide to stay where you are. You know that this is not where the opportunities are for you to tap deeper into your potential. It is also not where the possibility lies to discover talents you never knew you had. There will be just more of the same.

So, What Do You Do About Your Fear?

You have two choices.

1. You can sit with your fear, hold it close, nurse it and feed it so that it increases in size and eventually makes you impotent to do anything about your life, or,
2. You can feel the fear, understand it then take control of it, overpower it, and let the determination to master it drive your success.

Of course, logically you have no choice but to take the second option. That’s easy to say, however, but harder to do. It takes courage in abundance.

Understand what fear really is. Franklin D. Roosevelt said that “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” When you let fear inhibit or paralyse you, you are attributing a power to it that it doesn’t really have. It is only a feeling that rises inside you when triggered by something you’ve decided is threatening. It is not real even though it feels very real. It cannot hurt you.

For example, if you change the feeling you have about the poor performance review (or whatever else has triggered the feeling) from fear to resilience and pro-activity then it becomes no longer threatening.

How do you do that? You work on yourself.

- You work on what's going on in your head and what you are saying to yourself that is creating the fear.
- You work on your mindset. You develop a growth mindset that is characterised by that feeling of resilience and pro-activity. You say to yourself: "I am not going to let this poor performance review destroy me or stand in the way of my success. I am going to go to my manager and find out what I need to do to turn it around. I'm then going to give 150% to make it happen. I am going to bounce back from this. I am going to use this as a motivator to move on and up."

Every time you confront your fear head on you reduce its power over you. Eventually you discover that rarely does fear stop you from doing something you want to do. It will still rear its head, but you are now in control, not it. That's how you eventually conquer fear and develop the courage to take action. Success and achievement follow.

Ask yourself two questions:

- What would I do if I knew I couldn't fail?
 - What would I do if I knew that I would be supported rather than rejected?
- Answer that question and then JUST DO IT!

So, take your foot off the brake. Be courageous and take a risk. Do what you fear to do. Be who you fear to be.

3

The failure to act is much more a product of inner, emotional resistance than external resistance. To move forward you must give up your story.

- Dan Kennedy

How often do you look outside yourself for the reasons why you don't achieve your goals and dreams? How often do you blame those external factors for obstructing your success, or for making it impossible? Dan Kennedy reminds us that it happens way too often for way too many people.

It's so much easier to do that than look inside yourself, to go down deep and discover what is crippling your spirit and your soul, what has stolen your drive to be fully who you can be. That takes you right outside your comfort zone. That is hard work.

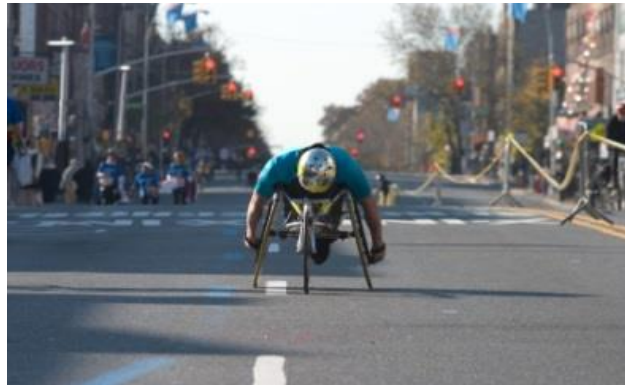
You immortalise the story of your life and you hold on to it because it gives you a reason to stay stuck where you are. But it is only a story, to which you have given more weight and power than it actually has.

My mother died when I was 7 years old; my father sexually abused me; my parents lived in a violent relationship; we were very poor. Or maybe it was that I had to leave school at 15 and support the family; I went to a very rough school and was bullied; I was told by teachers constantly that I would amount to nothing and that I was stupid; I live on the wrong side of town; No one from my suburb ever achieves anything; We don't get chances and opportunities like people from the other side of town; No one in our family ever went to university.

What is your story that you replay in your head over and over that gives you an excuse to not even explore your potential? The longer you listen to that story, the more you will come to believe it. The tragedy is that it is not true.

The world is full of people who challenged their story and wrote a new one, people who faced every possible obstacle and difficulty and rose above them. They did that not by

removing the externals in their way. Rather they did it by facing and struggling with their inner obstacles – their fears, their limiting beliefs, their feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness and their anger, for example. You, too, can challenge your story and give it up.



If you know there is something you want to do in your life, but you have your foot on the brake and therefore are stopping yourself from doing it, ease your foot off the brake and do some reflection about making it happen.

What is it you really want to be doing?

What is the story you tell yourself that stops you from doing it?

Where did your story come from?

What is stopping you from writing a new story so you can achieve what you want to achieve?

Who could help you so you can fast-track your success?

You can challenge your inner demons and achieve anything you want. Take your foot off the brake. Give up your old story and create a new one. Leave your excuses behind.

4

Don't join an easy crowd; you won't grow. Go where the expectations and the demands to perform are high.

- Jim Rohn

What's happening in your professional life?

- Who do you mix with professionally?
- Where do you do your networking?
- Do you only go to places where you know most of the people, where you won't be taken out of your comfort zone?
 - Do you always take a close associate with you and then sit with them or stay beside them for the entire event?
- Maybe you surround yourself with people who like you and tell you what a great person you are?
- Is it too challenging to go into new spaces, to go by yourself, to expose yourself to new people, new ideas, new challenges, to be put on the spot?

On another occasion, Jim Rohn said that you can measure your personal and professional growth and success, by the five people with whom you spend most time. Your level of success will mirror theirs. If they are in struggle land, you are likely to be there too. If they are entrepreneurial, you will be also. If they are positive, pro-active, "can do" people you will probably share the same traits.

When you are frightened or challenged by the way you need to stretch yourself to be in this company, reflect on what is happening for you and take hold of it. Don't let it take hold of you. If one person makes it clear they don't think you have anything to offer them and make it obvious they don't want to engage with you, don't take it personally. Move on because there are many people out there who will respect and admire your drive and commitment to being the best you can be and will want to share the road with you. You just have to find them.

Be prepared to invest financially in spending time with high energy people whose expectations and demands are high. It

has been my experience that events that are free to attend may well be socially very enjoyable but that they rarely offer an experience that sees you grow yourself, your career, or your business. Events where a professional fee is charged will attract a crowd whose performance, ideas, opinions, and reflections will challenge you to grow, change, rethink and stretch yourself both professionally and personally.

If you want something different to what you have now, become part of something bigger than yourself. Rise up, stretch yourself and grow to meet it, even surpass it.

5

In a world of change, the learners shall inherit the earth, while the learned shall find themselves perfectly suited for a world that no longer exists.

- Eric Hoffer.

You are living in a highly unpredictable, uncertain, and complex world. There are no absolutes, few black and whites anymore, but many shades of grey. The days have gone when any professional group has all the answers within its own professional arena. Your success lies in how willing you are to open to, and draw upon, insights from a multi-disciplinary field of expertise. This is about letting go of the professional badge of honour of becoming learned in your field of expertise and becoming a learner as well. Only if you do will you be able to stay up to date and work at the cutting edge in this rapidly changing environment. As Eric Hoffer reminds us: "the learners will inherit the earth".

As a professional, one way you tend to keep your foot on the brake is to maintain control of what you know. This sees you becoming the expert in your field. As one commentator has quipped, however, "an expert is someone who knows more and more about less and less." The learners, in contrast, would say that the more they have come to know, the more they realise how little they know. They see no boundaries on the knowledge that is open to them to solve the problems that their world presents to them.

This may well take you out of your comfort zone, create fear in you and make you want to put your foot even more firmly on the brake. At the same time, I'm sure you recognise that what Eric Hoffer says is right.

So, What Do You Need To Do To Become A Learner?

1. Become self-directed. Take charge of your own learning and professional development. Discover what you don't know and need to learn, find a way to learn it and people who can help you do that.

2. Become a reflective practitioner because it is a very important process for understanding a changing and complex world and also understanding how you are responding to it. Learning then becomes a journey, not a destination, as it is for the learned. When you attend a formal learning event like a workshop, tune into what you are saying to yourself in the workshop, as well as what the workshop presenter is saying to you. What you are saying to yourself is what you need to write down because following through on that is where the real learning is.
3. Make becoming self-aware one of your high priority learnings. It is now seen as one of the most important skills for leadership, so if you want to accelerate your career it has to be at the top of your list. Self-awareness is about coming to understand you and what makes you tick. It is an on-going, lifetime process of discovering your strengths and weaknesses, what inspires and motivates you as well as what stresses and challenges you. You can then use what you learn about yourself to give focus and direction to making a reality the professional future you desire.
4. Move outside your disciplinary area and be open to ideas, thoughts and opinions that are different to your own. Attend events where you can experience things from another perspective and meet people whose starting point is different to yours. Experience what can happen when there is a cross-fertilisation of ideas and opinions.
5. Be prepared to take on assignments and projects that stretch you, challenge you and take you out of your comfort zone. This is where you bring what you have learned already to what you don't know and need to learn, to create an exciting new learning opportunity for yourself.
6. Develop a curiosity about everything and see everything as a potential learning experience that assists you to understand better the world in which you live. The learned often see knowledge as fixed and able to be learnt in an organised and straight-forward way. Be prepared to become the learner who grabs fragments of information from a whole range of sources and gathers half-baked ideas and connects them together to provide creative solutions to the problems this uncertain

environment throws up at you. Learn to ask good, open-ended questions. Take nothing as given. Reflect on how what you learn and discover impacts on your work and life.

This self-directed process which takes you along the road less travelled, requiring you to draw on inner resources that may not be well-developed or understood, may trigger more fear in you. I encourage you to use the reflections in this book to challenge your fear and take your foot off the brake because in doing so you will discover potential and talent you never knew you had. That is exciting. That is empowering. That will accelerate your career.



6

Gently, yet often, exercise your risk threshold like a muscle. Eventually it will become stronger and able to withstand greater pressure.

- Frank McKinney.

These are words of wisdom from Frank McKinney, for all you people who, in these uncertain and unpredictable times, fear to take risks. Instead, you ride down the road with your foot on the brake.

You need to change this because being able to take calculated risks is the way to move to the cutting edge in your profession or industry sector in these changing times. If you stay in your comfort zone, you'll get "run over". The risk lies in moving out of that comfort zone into the unknown which can hold opportunities that you have only ever dreamed of.

All physical fitness trainers are about building muscle, strengthening our bodies to prevent injury. Yet if you haven't done exercise for a while, you don't go in and start lifting heavy weights. You start small. You do light weight bearing exercise and lift 1 or 2 kg dumb bells and as you become stronger you move up and take on bigger challenges.

Something extraordinary and unexpected happens for you. You feel empowered physically but also emotionally. You can feel a strength and power in your body that you never knew was there.

You can do the same with your professional self. Start taking little risks and exercise your emotional muscle. Build your confidence and feel it grow.

- Go up and introduce yourself to someone you don't know at a networking event.
- Stand up and do a presentation at a professional forum.
- Volunteer to chair a meeting when you have never done it before.
- Take a decision for your team that you know is right but which you also know will greatly challenge you.

- Apply for a job you really want but for which you don't meet all the criteria and go into bat for yourself big time.

Draw up a list of your own.

- What creates fear and apprehension in you professionally, yet you know it would be good for your career?
- Decide to take one risk a week and watch what happens to you.
- Keep a record to read back because after a very short while you will find that very few things present as risks anymore. When you read back, you will realise how far you have come.

You have nothing to lose and so much to gain. Steve Jobs made the comment when he knew he was dying: "Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life." Don't wait until you are dying. Live life at this exciting edge today. Whatever it is that you fear, take hold of it, and start today to exercise your risk muscle and be ready to seize the next opportunity that presents itself to you.

7

***Self-discipline
is the ability
to make
yourself do
what you
should do,
when you
should do it,
whether you
feel like it or
not.***

- Elbert Hubbard

I remember when I first read these words of Elbert Hubbard. The very words “self-discipline” spontaneously triggered motions and reactions, all grounded in past experiences:

- old fashioned concept,
- deprivation,
- nuns who “preached” this at me in my Catholic schooling,
- restriction of freedom,
- boring,
- routines.

It was a very negative and reactionary response.

I read on as Kop Kopmeyer, a legend in the field of success and achievement, said that there were 999 other success principles that he had found in his reading and experience, but that without self-discipline, none of them worked. He believed Hubbard had it right.

That did get my attention! I moved myself from the past into the present and began to think about how Hubbard’s words might impact my future if I took them on board.

I wrote the quote on a sticky note, and I stuck it on my computer. I typed it out on an A4 page and put it on my office wall. Every time I procrastinated on something, every time I told myself I could do “it” tomorrow, every time I let a BSO (Bright Shiny Object) distract me, I drew myself back to Hubbard’s words.

Sometimes what I couldn’t discipline myself to do was just a 5-minute task. Other times it was starting a major project of some duration. In those situations, I started my commitment to self-discipline by bargaining with myself and committing to ½ hour of focussed self-disciplined work on the project. After that I could stop if I wanted and have a break. Amazingly I rarely did once I’d started.

I was surprised at what happened. The sense of satisfaction was considerable, the power of focus that comes with self-discipline, the knowing I was living and working from my higher self, which was so empowering.

O.K. I'm not perfect - being self-disciplined is a daily commitment – but I am 100% more self-disciplined than I was.

Hubbard's words I carry with me always. They inspire, motivate, and empower me and success and achievement follow.

I hope his words can do the same for you.





You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage to say “no” to other things the way you do that is by having a bigger “yes” burning inside.

- Stephen R. Covey

When you have discovered that bigger “yes” burning inside you and you let it drive, motivate, and inspire your work, your career will take off. That’s the easy and exciting part. The hard part is having the courage to say “no” to the people and situations that are low priorities and do not serve your personal or professional career development. These take up so much of your time and energy leaving you with less to spend on what is important to you. Stephen R Covey inspired my life for some decades.

Are you one of the many people who find this so difficult? Saying “no” is associated with not being collaborative, not wanting to help and support, not being there for others, not giving importance to what others want, “selfishly” putting your needs before others and not being a team player.

Do you also fear that in saying “no” you may be seen to be abrupt, aggressive, forthright, offensive, even rejecting? In other words, saying “no” is about not being “nice.” If you are a woman, it goes against the grain of everything you have been “brought up” to believe is the way women should be.

If you don’t learn how to say “no”, however, you become everything you don’t want to be – overwhelmed, irritable, stressed, depressed, running on empty, impatient, abrupt. You also have no time for the things you really want to do, or for the people you really want to spend time with.

Not being able to live that bigger “yes” inside you kills your passion and enthusiasm, in fact, it kills the real YOU.

So, What Do You Do?

- Get clear who and what are most important – your highest priorities - in both your personal and professional life - and then make sure they are aligned and not in conflict with one another. These are what you consistently say “yes’ to.

- Determine what the negotiables and non-negotiables are in your life and commit to them, making sure that those with whom you live, and work understand your commitment.
- Know what the trade-off is, or price you will have to pay, for saying “no” and learn skills to pay it with integrity rather than guilt.
- Believe in yourself and the decisions you make and trust your own judgment. If you don’t, how can you expect others to. This is what you want, for them to respectfully honour your “no.”

It is much easier to say “no,” to what you need to say “no” to, when you get these things clear.

Some Strategies For How To Say “No” Confidently.

Different strategies may be helpful in various situations. For example:

- Say “no” to what the person wants you to do (the task), but “yes” to the person herself. Explain why you can’t do the task but have a conversation about how she may be able to get her need met some other way, rather than you doing it. You therefore are still being helpful.
- Sometimes using as few words as possible is best – no reasons or justifications whatsoever. For example, if it is expected that women are the only ones to clean up the tearoom or take the tea towels home to wash at the weekend!
- If you are on overload at work and your manager asks you to take on something more. You need to say “no” but feel it will be detrimental to you, turn the problem back to your manager. “Yes, I can do that, but I will have to let go of one of the projects I am presently working on. Which would you like me to let go of?”
- Say “no” to spending a long time doing something, but “yes” to spending a short time. “I am overloaded at the moment, but I would be able to spend a half hour helping you work that through if that would be of any help.”

- Don't ever say "yes" on the spot to anything you are invited or asked to do. Take some time to step back from it and get back to people later. There's the old stand-by, otherwise: "If you need to know right now, the answer will have to be "no".

Best Strategy of All – Learn How To Say "No" Without Using the Word "No."

Don't say "yes", but don't say "no" either.

- "Tell me more. I'm very interested". Get all the information so that you really understand what is involved. "Can I get back to you? If I took that on, I would want to feel I could do it justice. Let me check my diary."
- "Thank you for asking me, but can I get back to you on that. I need to see if I'm available on that day."
- "I'm not sure I can take on anything more at the moment, but I would very much like to make a greater contribution to the organisation. Maureen (your partner) and I will have a talk about it, and I'll get back to you. Her support would be essential to me being able to do it."
- "That's a project I would very much like to be a part of, but I would have to let go of something I'm already doing. Give me some time to see what I can organise."

These kinds of responses give you the opportunity to remove yourself from the emotional space of the invitation and into a more objective space where you can think through whether you can, or whether you even want to, do what you are being invited to do. You are much more likely to make a decision that is right for you.

These strategies will ensure that you stay true to the bigger "yes" inside you and let it empower your career – and personal life.



***Don't wait!
The time will
never be just
right.***

- Napoleon Hill

How often have you waited for the time to be right and in retrospect missed out on a great opportunity?

How many years have you been waiting for the time to be right to do what you really want to do, knowing it will change your life?

- You want to go back to do your MBA, but you wonder if you should wait until the children are older.
- You're a professional woman who wants to start a family and you wonder if you should do it now you are 29 years old or wait another 6 or 7 years until your career is more established.
- You want to leave corporate life and start your own business, but you wonder whether the economy will support you at this time.
- You've been heading your department now for 12 months and believe you need to restructure if you are going to achieve the goals you have set, but you are concerned whether this is the right time.
- You want to talk with your CEO about your future in the organisation and what she can offer you for your career development. You've been delaying doing it for 6 months now, waiting for the right time.

You've been thinking and pondering for some time now, but you keep your foot on the brake.

How do you decide "the right time" to do something?

- Right for you?
- Right for the people who share your life?
- Right for your team?

- Right for your organisation?
- Right for.....?

Or will you try and do the impossible and wait until it is right for everybody?

Ease your foot off the brake just a little and do some constructive reflection on it.

- Weigh up whether it is practical and possible at this time.
- Get a handle on the emotional issues – how you really feel about it?
- Talk with a trusted colleague or friend.
- Go talk with a coach or mentor.
- Talk with the other significant people in your life who will be impacted by your decision.
- Put all your thinking together. Get it out of your head and on to paper where you can see it. Draw up the pros and cons. If the pros are stronger than the cons, don't wait! Go for it.

Before you do, however, make a commitment to yourself that you will keep your eye on your goal, on making it happen. As every difficulty and challenge presents itself – as they inevitably will – deal with it head on in a proactive, solution focused way. Don't regress into "I knew I shouldn't have done this", or worse, "I need to back track out of this as fast as I can." Don't put your foot back on the brake!

There are no guarantees that any decision you make will be right, that any action you take will be successful. What you can guarantee is your own absolute commitment to it. I can do this. I will do this. I can make this happen no matter what gets in the way. Now is the right time. I will make this the right time.

10

Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.

- Winston Churchill.

Byrd Baggett wrote this in **Dare To Soar**

He failed in business in '31.

He was defeated for state legislator in '32.

He tried another business in '33. It failed.

His fiancée died in '35.

He had a nervous breakdown in '36.

In '43 he ran for Congress and was defeated.

He tried again in '48 and was defeated again.

He tried running for the Senate in '55. He lost.

The next year he ran for Vice President and lost.

In '58 he ran for the Senate again and was defeated again.

Finally, in 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected the 16th President of the United States.



Abraham Lincoln epitomises, like no other, what Winston Churchill said. People who are successful, who are achieving the goals they set for themselves, will all tell you that what has made them like they are is what they have learned from their many failures. Sometimes they were very big and public failures like Lincoln had. Sometimes they were multiple little failures, mistakes they made, hiccups that set them back. Momentarily they question whether they want to keep pursuing this goal of theirs. The difference between them and those who never make it is that, like Lincoln, they enthusiastically get up again and keep moving towards their goal.

Failure itself is not a life-defining experience. What you do with it is.

So, when something goes wrong on your career highway, don't slam your foot on the brake, do a U-turn and go back to where you came from. Instead stop, reflect, ask what you are meant to learn from that experience, learn it and move on and up towards the success you really want.

Don't ever give up on something that is important to you.

11

Out of control emotions make smart people stupid.

- Daniel Goleman.

Out of control emotions are professional suicide and career breakers! Whether it be aggressive outbursts at colleagues or clients, angry and abusive emails sent back and forth without thinking, wild behaviour fuelled by alcohol at end of year parties, inability to manage stress and conflict which you take out on your colleagues or constant bouts of moodiness and depression, and we could go on and on.

There is no “delete” key when we allow our emotions to overwhelm us in a negative way.

One of your high priorities, on your career highway to the professional future you really want, has to be the self-management and self-mastery of your emotions. They are an intrinsic part of your makeup, and they travel everywhere with you, influencing all your relationships.

So why is it that when someone presses your buttons, you lose it, have a meltdown, respond automatically without thinking and then regret it afterwards, and say things you wish you'd never said? What if I told you, it was the reptilian brain of your caveman ancestors that activated those kinds of responses? It sees everything through a lens of fear, and you react to protect yourself.

Recent research into the brain has taught us that we tend to respond to social threats – fear of losing our job, rejection or criticism by colleagues, receiving a poor performance review, for example – in the same way we respond to physical threats – hearing an intruder in our house at night, being trapped in a burning car, or facing a venomous snake beside us in the grass on a bush walk. The former, social threats cannot physically hurt you, the latter, physical threats, can.

Your brain still holds the imprint of the reptilian brain of your caveman ancestors of millions of years ago. There were no

social threats for them, but they were constantly facing physical threats – wild animals, fire, and floods, for example. They developed a way of responding to those threats. They girded themselves to fight or to go into flight. That fight/flight response was written into their DNA, and you have inherited it.

Faced with the socially threatening implications of criticism and bad mouthing from a colleague, for example, your body prepares to fight. Your heart begins to race; adrenaline and cortisol are released into your body; your pupils dilate. You even say: “My blood boiled” to describe your reaction to what your colleague said. In a sense it does and flows to your limbs and muscles preparing you for the fight. It’s not a wild animal, however, that’s threatening you, just some words and actions of a colleague, but you react as if it was – automatically, defensively without thinking, as if your survival depended on it.

Alternatively, you may take flight and decide not to deal with it directly. You push it down inside you, sink into a depression, take what is said as the absolute truth about you, disengage and turn the experience into a life-defining issue. You hold it in your body and allow it to eat away at you from the inside.

Over millions of years, however, your brain has developed. You also have a modern brain that reacts in a much more considered and thoughtful way, drawing on your memories and past experience. It has the capacity to reflect, and problem solve. This is the Neocortex, and it is from here that you need to respond when someone presses your buttons. Learning how to do that is what becoming emotionally intelligent is about.

It was Daniel Goleman who made us all sit up and take notice of the fact that our emotions play a very important role in our success. In his work on emotional intelligence, he showed us the importance of

- recognising and identifying our emotions,
- being able to name them,
- becoming aware of their impact on ourselves first, as well as on others,
- discovering what triggers those emotions in us,
- taking ownership of them and developing self-mastery of them,

- then, how doing that sees you highly sought after because of the exceptional skills you have in managing yourself and managing other people.

I urge you to take your foot off the brake and learn to express your emotions in an intelligent way. Do not let your own emotions, or those of others, threaten you. Recognise what you are feeling and name it. Take ownership of it rather than blaming someone else for “making” you feel that way. You can then manage it and express it in the way you want to. That is very empowering and liberating.

What is also so empowering is that you are then able to identify what is happening emotionally for others. You no longer react to their reactivity. You discover that you are having much more constructive relationships with everyone in your life.

That is what makes the difference to your professional future. You become highly sought after for your skills in managing highly emotional situations and crisis, as well as the emotions of people with whom you work. This is one of the greatest challenges leaders face and having highly developed emotional intelligence positions you well for leadership.

12

Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one getting burnt.

- Buddha

It is not always easy working out what is blocking your success, what is standing in the way of you achieving what you want. You address all the obvious things. You get yourself well qualified for your job. You get a position working in an organisation where there are opportunities for growth and advancement. You join the right professional and community organisations, and you network in the right circles, but the opportunities are not coming your way.

This whole book is about the emotion of fear that sees you keep your foot on the brake of your career advancement. There is another key emotion, however, that can be equally powerful in hampering your career development – ANGER.

You may have very good reasons to be angry with someone. They may have treated you very badly. When you hang on to that anger, however, unable to disperse it, you continue to hurt yourself. The offender has often moved on. As Buddha says, you are the one getting burnt.

You need to manage the anger or find a way to resolve it. If you don't, it bleeds through your public persona, no matter how hard you try to hide it. It shows in your body language, in your face, in the words you use, in your general attitude to life. People pick it up and say to you: *You seem very angry*. You, without even being aware of it, angrily reply: *No, I'm not angry!*

You are probably no different to the rest of us. You have probably often said: "She made me so angry. He makes my blood boil." She doesn't; he doesn't, however. They pressed your buttons, triggering something in you. You didn't, couldn't or wouldn't manage the emotion they triggered. You either exploded angrily – you fought – or you suppressed it – fled – and are holding it in your body still.

Employers and recruiters often pick it up. They may not recognise it as anger. It can be interpreted as a particular “attitude” that is not engaging. They recognise an emotional blockage in you that sees you come across with compromised soft skills that are so important for career success today.

So, What Do You Do About The Anger?

- Explore and understand your anger and its impact on your life and relationships. If this is too difficult, or too frightening, to do by yourself, get yourself some professional help – a coach or therapist, depending on the nature of the anger.
- Resolve your anger and let go of it. This is about forgiveness. It doesn't mean that whatever someone has done to you, you exonerate him/her. Forgiveness is not about them. It is about you, about empowering you. You refuse to imprison yourself in a feeling. Forgiveness is about letting go and moving on and up. As Wayne Dyer reminds us “You don't die from snake bite, rather what kills you is the venom that keeps pouring through your body after the bite has taken place.”
- Master anger. You need to find new and different ways to manage it because you will feel angry with someone or angry about something again sometime in your life. Instead of responding in an inappropriate way from out of your reptilian brain with the flight/fight response of your caveman ancestors, you can learn how to move into your higher functioning reflective brain and make a more considered response from there. As an emotionally intelligent professional you can express your anger in a way that is constructive, that allows you to let go of it in the process, and that has a powerful impact in bringing about change in those to whom the anger is addressed.

So, forgive and let go, and empower yourself for the big opportunities that holding on to your anger prevents you from seizing.

13

You can't hire someone to do your push-ups.

- Jim Rohn,

Are you one of those people who really wants to be fit and healthy? You want to exercise, lift weights, go to the gym, get back on your bike or swim 30 laps every morning. But you never get around to it. Why? Because it is all too hard. It would be so much easier if you could hire someone to do it for you! But as Jim Rohn says you can't hire someone to do your pushups.

You have this inner struggle with yourself when the alarm goes off in the morning and decide you'll start next week. You have another struggle with yourself every night about turning off the television and going to bed at a reasonable time so you can be ready to get up early in the morning. When you do start to exercise, you have another struggle with yourself to be consistent and keep it going.

It's not just with exercising that you do this. It's a whole range of things in your life. The reason you don't begin things is because you tell yourself it is too hard, too much of a struggle. It will take too long. It will be emotionally too difficult. It will take me forever. So why would I start?

You decide you are happy just being ordinary, that you do not want to engage in a struggle that would make you extraordinary. You have painted every experience that stretches you with the brush of hardship and struggle and in doing so have lost sight of the richness and personal growth that is embedded in that experience. I therefore want to inspire you with this story.

The Story of the Butterfly

- Author Unknown.

A man saw a butterfly in a cocoon.

The butterfly struggled for a while, trying to get out of the cocoon.

Overcome with compassion, the man wanted to help the butterfly and, so, he took a little knife and opened the cocoon.

The butterfly emerged, tried to move around, and open its wings. This went on for hours, then the butterfly died.

Here is what the man in his kindness did not understand: the struggle required by the butterfly to get through the opening was nature's way of forcing the fluid from the body into the wings so that it would be ready for flight once that was achieved.

Sometimes the struggle is exactly what is needed to help you fly also. Without it, your aspirations and dreams are never tested for their resilience and sustainability. You never quite break through to achieve the results you want. It all fizzles and you then let it die because, unlike the butterfly, you can't face the struggle to make it all happen.

When you embrace the struggle in a pro-active way, you will feel something significant begin to happen. With every struggle you push through, you discover you are building psychological strength and resilience. Every new challenge is less a struggle than the one before. You feel empowered and you begin to achieve the success you really want.

You can't get someone else to do your "push-ups", but when you make the commitment to do them yourself, you will discover a liberating energy that will motivate and inspire your life.

14

The greatest danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.

- Michelangelo.

Sometimes you have to keep repeating something over and over so that it becomes part of you, so I'll say it again. You need to take your foot off the brake and play a bigger game than the one you are playing now. Because you are reading this, I'm assuming that this is what you want to do.

You have so many dreams and aspirations. You know you have so much talent and ability, but you fear to put it out there, to test it out in the marketplace of ideas and opinions. You worry that maybe you will fall short of other's expectations, that you will receive embarrassing critiques, that someone will deflate your dream in one foul swoop.

So, what do you do? You stay safe. You become the person everyone says is "such a lovely person," the one everyone likes. You become the one your CEO says is "an enormous asset to our organisation," the one "the organisation would be lost without," yet you haven't had a promotion, or a new opportunity offered to you in the last 5 years.

So, what's happening here?

You are playing small because it's safer, but it is the fast-track to nowhere. Have you noticed that while you thought setting yourself a big goal would be too stressful, playing small also brings you stress. As Eckhart Tolle said: *Stress is caused by being 'here' but wanting to be 'there.'*

Marianne Williamson's words on playing small so inspired Nelson Mandela that he used them in his inaugural speech as President of South Africa in 1994.

*Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.*

We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be?

You're playing small does not serve the world

There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

It is your limiting beliefs that cause you to set your aspirations low. They are those things you have come to believe about yourself, that you have given a truth and power to that they really don't have. They have become ingrained in you from childhood by people who were important to you – parents, family, teachers, and friends. They underpin all your decision-making.

- *I wouldn't be accepted in that group.*
- *I could never do that job.*
- *No one will pay me that much for my services.*
- *My friends would move away from me if I got that job.*
- *I always wanted to go to university but I'm too old at 40.*
- *There's no use applying for that job; I would never get it.*
- *I could never promote myself like that.*

Even when you do challenge beliefs like this, you fall short because they have become self-fulfilling prophecies for you. You stretch yourself at one level and override those beliefs and set a big goal. At another level, deep inside you, the limiting belief high jacks your opportunity.

You have to do a lot of work on yourself to shift those beliefs so deeply embedded are they into your psyche.

- Because they reside beneath the surface in your sub-conscious, you don't even recognise that they are guiding your decision-making. That's why you often need someone to help you – a coach, mentor, performance partner or a trusted colleague who has set big goals and is already achieving them.
- You have to first identify your limiting beliefs, what's standing in the way of you setting big goals. Ask yourself:

- Why am I not going after this?
 - What am I frightened of?
 - What is the voice in my head saying to me about this? Dig deep into yourself and write down everything that comes up for you.
- Bring your higher self into conversation with what you have written down. Respond to every disempowering fear with an empowering new belief. Spend reflective time exploring that new belief, understanding it, empowering it with all the energy you need to turn it into action.
 - Create some new beliefs like my examples below.
 - *I can do it. I will do it.*
 - *Age is only a number. I'm not going to let it stop me.*
 - *I have everything within myself to turn my dreams into reality.*
 - *If I don't believe in myself, then no one else will.*
 - *I will surround myself with empowering people who support me.*
 - *I can do anything I set my mind to do.*
 - Develop an action plan for what you need to do to bring your goal to fruition.
 - Anticipate what may derail it and have a contingency plan ready.
 - **Most importantly:** Surround yourself with a group of confidantes who believe in you more than you believe in yourself, who will hold you accountable and cheer you on when you doubt yourself and want to put your foot on the brake again.

You have no choice but to explore, develop and enhance your talents and potential. That is why you are here on this earth. As Oprah Winfrey has said:

Every time you suppress some part of yourself or allow others to play you small, you are in essence ignoring the owner's manual your creator gave you and destroying your design.

15

Procrastination is attitude's natural assassin. There is nothing so fatiguing as an uncompleted task.

- William James.

Are you one of those people who is the "Pro" in procrastination? If they were giving out Gold Medals for procrastination, would you have a display cabinet full of them? Have you noticed how stressful it is, not to mention how it weighs you down, day after day, month after month, as you delay doing what you know you need to do?

You pay a high price for procrastinating.

- It creates enormous mental anguish.
- It keeps you awake at night or wakes you up in the middle of the night and stops you going back to sleep.
- You wake up in the morning with a sense of dread which is about what you haven't done.
- It overwhelms you with a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness.
- It provokes self-doubt and fuels guilt
- It absorbs a great amount of your time and energy.

You find you are living a life that is full of unfinished business which gives you a feeling that you are not in control of your life. In fact, procrastination can create emotional and psychological paralysis. You end up not being able to take action, even when it is a life/death issue like getting a lump in the breast checked or going for a prostate check.

If what you are procrastinating about is not important to you or does not have a value for you, then you are not going to be moved to take action on it. What you do need to do in these situations, however, is be decisive and move it off your agenda. Don't leave it sitting there causing you angst when you have no intention of acting on it. I'm going to assume that what you are procrastinating about therefore is important to you and that your motivation is both clear and persuasive.

Why Are You Putting Off Doing What Is In Your Own Best Interests To Do?

You have limiting beliefs about your potential for success so you don't even try because you are sure you will fail anyway. You engage in disempowering self-talk and create scripts that you rehearse over and over that re-enforce those beliefs: *I will never get this done. I cannot do this. I know it will not be any good when I finish. It's too difficult and there's no guarantee it will work anyway.*

- Revisit reflection No 14 and create for yourself a new set of beliefs that will see you able to begin to take action and see it through to completion

It looks too big and overwhelming, and you feel you are drowning in it before you even start.

- Use a project management approach. Break down the action into small steps and write them down. This makes it less overwhelming. Set deadlines for each step and commit to working on the steps every day for a set period. Make this work the first priority of your day so if you get nothing else done in the day, you will have a feeling of achievement. Mark off each step as you complete it.

You often even procrastinate about whether or not you should do something that is up for consideration. You let it go round and round in your head endlessly. You talk with others about it over and over, sharing your doubts and fears, fatiguing them with your indecision. You feed your procrastination with endless thinking and pondering. This is analysis paralysis.

- Become aware of how disabling this process is for you and how destructive it is to your professional advancement. Confront your fear about making decisions. Start dealing with your indecision by setting deadlines for choosing what you will do and then just make a start. Engage in positive and constructive self-talk to complete it – *This is my best option. I am going to follow through on this. I am not going to think about other options. I can clearly see how I can take this through to completion and I believe I can do it well. I am going to stay focused on this goal.*

Are you instead one of those people who procrastinates on completing what you find no difficulty in beginning? Are you a perfectionist and therefore won't draw the action to a close until you are absolutely sure it is perfect? You correct and

correct again, get second and third opinions, let it sit and 'gel' and then rework it again. All the time you are stressed and anxious about the final outcome. Of course, you never reach the degree of perfection that you seek and so you don't sign off until someone takes control of your work and demands that you do.

- Acknowledging that you will never achieve perfection in anything you do is the first step to a "cure." Reflecting on your fear about what may happen if your work is not perfect and dismantling its false premise comes next. Accepting that your 80% good enough is everyone else's 100% is another step forward. Revisit all the reflections in this book and use them to help you take your foot off the brake so you can complete what you started.

Distractions that stop you from working on stuff is a form of procrastination. You blame the distractions as if they were something external to yourself. In fact, they usually come from within us, and we use them to sabotage our best interests. They are the bright shiny objects (BSOs), the great ideas we have, often very creative and innovative, so we justify the distraction while we explore them. Meanwhile we procrastinate on what we need to be doing.

- Learning to focus is a very important skill today. Distractions are par for the course but learning how you stay focused on what you are doing, on your present priority, is an extremely useful skill that turns you into a highly productive performer.

Procrastination often becomes a habit that you perfect over the years. It becomes almost a lifestyle for some people. Changing that is a challenge but, if that is you, you can break the habit. Overcoming it is about developing self-discipline, that "ability to make yourself do what you should do, when you should do it, whether you feel like it or not." Revisit Reflection 7 and start the process of change within yourself.

In the end, trust yourself. Take your foot off the brake and go for it. Make a start! As Richard Branson famously says: *Just do it!*

16

Everything can be taken from a man or a woman but one thing: the last of human freedoms, to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

- Viktor Frankel.

You missed out on that promotion. That was bad enough, but when you found out who got the position, you

Your manager is passively aggressive and very difficult to work with and you

You've been given the worst office on the floor with no windows and

You feel your career opportunities in the organisation are being stymied because you are a woman and

How you respond to all these situations is all about ATTITUDE and you choose your attitude. It is energised from inside yourself where there is a Space that belongs only to you that no one can take from you. As Viktor Frankel says, others can take everything from you, but they cannot take from you the Energy and Spirit that fuels that Space.

Viktor Frankel is one of my heroes. He has inspired my life ever since I read his classic book "Man's Search for Meaning" many years ago. His message is inspiring, motivating, and empowering.

Frankel was a Viennese psychiatrist, imprisoned in concentration camps in World War II. He was deprived of every basic human freedom. You've all seen the images and films of the deprivation experienced by the people in those camps. It became clear to him "that the sort of person the prisoner became was the result of an inner decision and not the result of camp influences alone." While men died around him, Frankel survived, physically broken but psychologically alive and strong.

He discovered that Space within himself which no prison guard could touch and he lived out of that Space. He chose an

attitude of I will find meaning in this most brutal of spaces; I will live, survive and I will also thrive – at least within my inner self.

You generally can't control what cards life deals you, but you can control how you respond. You can choose your attitude. You can be negative or positive. You can be reactive, blaming someone or something else for what has happened, or you can be pro-active, taking charge and being solution focused. You can see difficulty in every opportunity, or opportunity in every difficulty. You can be a glass half full person or a glass half empty one. You can take a "poor me" stance and go into a deep depression, or you can accept the reality of what has happened and bounce back into new beginnings.

Your attitude determines your altitude. How tall you stand, how high you climb, how big a person you are, how successful you are, depends on your attitude to everything you do. You have the power to choose. "They," out there, can do whatever they want to you, but you still have the power to respond in the way you want.

If you don't recognise the power of attitude within you, you are disempowering yourself. Every time you choose, however, to bring a positive and pro-active attitude to whatever happens, you are exercising, growing, and stretching yourself to become bigger than your problems and the adversity you face. That is empowering. That is career making material.

17

Energy, not time, is the fundamental currency of high performance.

- Tony Swartz
& Jim Loehr

You, like so many professionals, have probably been programmed to believe that the way to accelerate your career is to work longer hours, to fit more in, to fill your calendar by seizing every opportunity that may enhance your chance of advancement, all in the cause of proving your commitment to high performance.

If you are someone who opts to follow that pattern, time management becomes a highly essential skill as you endeavour to achieve some work/life integration without becoming stressed and jeopardising your health.

What if I told you that it is not your time that you need to focus on managing, but rather your energy and that if you did that the stress so often associated with high performance would be significantly reduced?

Energy, according to one definition, is the strength and vitality required for sustained physical or mental activity. You need that when you wake in the morning, right through the day and then into the evening with your family and friends if you want to live a happy, fulfilled, and successful life.

If you are one of those high performers, you do not have your foot on the brake. You have already decided to speed down the highway. However, just as no car will perform well unless it is serviced and its engine looked after, neither can you perform at a high level unless you look after yourself. Just as a car cannot accelerate anywhere without petrol in its tank, neither can you accelerate your career without putting into your body what will sustain it for the ride.

If you are one of those people who puts a lot of energy into managing your time, but very little time into managing your energy, then you have to turn that around.

Take the first step in focusing on your energy by taking time to do some reflection. Ask yourself these questions:

- What in my day drains my energy and depletes me?
- Is it emails, meetings, constant distractions, phone calls?
- Is it certain people?
- Is it lack sleep?
- Is it dehydration?
- Is it not stopping to eat?
- Is it too much junk food or too many cups of coffee?
- Is it anxiety about not being able to get things done?
- Is it personal issues?
- Is it sitting down all day, or the constant glare of a computer screen?

Having done that, ask yourself this second question:

- What can I do about this situation to restore my energy and make me feel refreshed?

Some action you will be able to take on your own initiative. Some may require you to develop a persuasive argument to take to a staff meeting and get agreement across your team because it asks for organisational change. Don't hesitate to do that because, what is an energy sapping experience for you, that drains your productivity, is highly likely to be one for others as well.

Once you've made this discovery about how your energy is being high jacked by the way you work, do not let anything stand in the way of you turning that around. If you have to, get someone to help – a coach, mentor, or therapist. Alternatively get a few colleagues to join with you as performance partners. Share your goals with one another and meet regularly to keep one another accountable, until such time as the rituals and routines you have set up to become a high energy person are an integral part of your life.

Energising Rituals, You Can Create For Yourself – Now!

- Get plenty of sleep – eight hours - and develop a ritual around going to bed and getting up, embedding a routine for yourself that provides equilibrium.

- Engage in regular exercise. First thing in the morning is a great energiser for the day.
- Eat breakfast and ensure it is food that will sustain you through the morning – including protein or high fibre cereals like rolled oats or muesli.
- Drink water regularly during the day and keep hydrated.
- Take regular breaks. Work in short bursts of around 60-90 minutes, stop, get up and move and then return for another 60-90 minute “sprint”.
- Stop for lunch and preferably get out of the office.
- Build into your week time for you and your inner self. Work on yourself, not just on your business or professional career. Learn mindfulness and practice it often to sustain your newly integrated self.
- Discover a place that restores your energy – the beach or bush, an art gallery, or a wildlife sanctuary, riding your bike or swimming, doing Pilates or pumping iron at the gym. Prioritise it and spend time there on a regular basis.
- Make quality time with family and friends a top priority to which you say your biggest “yes.”

After getting all this in place, you will then be far more focused to make the decisions you need to make to re-energise your work practices.

You may have to do the opposite to what this book is about – put your foot on the brake and slow down on the acceleration. What you will discover, when you embrace this idea of managing your energy not your time, is that you are moving faster than you were before. You are far more productive, achieving so much more. As well, you will be a happier, healthier you, performing at an optimum level, motivating, and inspiring all those who work with you.

18

If you are proactive, you don't have to wait for circumstances or other people to create perspective expanding experiences. You can consciously create your own.

- Stephen R. Covey.

It is a classic business book, Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People*, and if you haven't read it, put it on the top of your "To Read" list. His first habit, which he saw as the foundation for the other six, was "Be Proactive."

I asked myself as I was putting these reflections together whether I put this one first or last. I decided to put it last because I wanted to leave you with the important message that when you develop an attitude of being proactive, you can take charge of your life and make it everything you want it to be.

It's easier to understand what it means to be proactive by looking to its opposite – being reactive.

- Reactive people wait for things to happen and then react to them.
- They see themselves as victims of circumstances and other people's actions.
- They engage in a "learned helplessness" believing they can't do anything to change their situation.
- They always look outside themselves for the reasons why things happen to them.
- They blame, criticise, complain, and whinge about what happens around them, but they don't take any initiative to do anything positive or constructive about it.
- They have a common language that is reactive: "I can't," "If only they...." "I have to....," "I must....," "You don't understand", "It's all right for you", "That's great in theory", for example.

No wonder these people keep their foot on the brake. It's a way of protecting themselves from everything that happens to them. They develop a defensive position to life.

I want you to be a proactive person because it adds excitement to your life and opens so many possibilities and opportunities for you.

Being proactive means

- taking initiative, seeing what needs to be done and doing it without being asked;
- being a “Can Do” person, everything is possible person. When things don’t go as planned, you move into solution focussed mode, with an attitude of “I am not letting this stop me. I will find a way through this;”
- believing that you are in charge of your life and what happens in it and that you can and will take charge;
- seeing your choice as ACTING or BEING ACTED ON and you become an action person;
- knowing that you have the personal resources within yourself to bring about good outcomes in your life;
- not engaging in blaming, criticising, whinging and complaining because you know they serve no purpose and certainly are not effective strategies for change;
- having an expansive, abundance focussed mindset.

Gandhi once said: “Be the change you want to see in your world.” This is an inspiring quote, calling for proactivity. If you look around you at your organisation, your manager, your colleagues, your marriage, your Rotary Club, your professional association, for example, and see them falling short through your eyes, you have two choices for how you respond. You can take a reactive approach and blame, criticise, whinge, and complain about what is happening – or not happening – there. Alternatively, you can accept Gandhi’s challenge. What do you want changed and then be that change. Make it happen.

If you want more participation in your organisation, your Rotary Club, or your professional association, start participating more yourself and bring at least one other person with you. If you want to feel more valued and appreciated by your partner, then begin valuing and appreciating her/him. If you want better leadership in your organisation, begin taking leadership yourself in small ways within your area of influence.

One important area in which I want you to become proactive is about your career development. Don't stay on cruise control. Certainly, don't keep your foot on the brake. Don't wait for opportunities to come to you. Seek them out.

- Go and talk with your manager about what you want for your career development and ask what the organisation can do to make that happen.
- If your organisation cannot provide you with the opportunities to take your career to the next level, then have the confidence to move to an organisation that can.
- Ask for stretch assignments that can open opportunities for you to demonstrate your talents and abilities.
- Volunteer to chair meetings, give presentations and work on task forces where again you can develop leadership skills and demonstrate your potential.
- See things that need to be done, that maybe have been constantly talked about, but never taken up and make yourself available to do them.
- Most importantly, proactively build your professional network because your network is the measure of your net worth. Remember it is not just about who you know, but who knows you. This is a group of people with whom you establish meaningful and reciprocal relationships and connections, who admire and respect your personal brand and who are prepared to help you advance your career by providing support and advice and sending opportunities your way.

Mary Kay Ash said: *There are three types of people in this world: those who make things happen, those who watch what happens, and those who wonder what happened.*

Be the proactive person who makes things happen and become the highly sought-after professional.

Conclusion

Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing him/herself.

- Leo Tolstoy

These 18 reflections are all about changing you. In fact, the only thing you can change with certainty is yourself. You have probably tried to change other people, to get them to do what you'd like them to do or be how you'd like them to be. If only they would oblige, how much easier it would make your life. You know, however, what a waste of time that was!

When life creates problems for you, when the people in your life become difficult, when pain, even trauma, unexpectedly visits you or when something comes from out of left field, you often can do nothing about it. You can't change your situation and circumstance, but you can change the way you respond to it and that can make an enormous difference. That can change your life!

Few people like change but what I have wanted to do in these 18 reflections is to help you see that when you do the hard work of changing yourself your life becomes so much more exciting, richer, and meaningful.

- You become a pro-active, "can do" person, rather than someone who feels victimised by the world.
- You feel that you have control of your life.
- You discover talents and abilities you never realised you had.
- You let go of fear and confidently and courageously take initiatives to change your life, seizing hold of every opportunity that presents itself.
- You find yourself having rich and rewarding relationships with almost everyone with whom you share your life.

Most importantly, you discover that you like this person you have become much better than the old one. You realise that there's a whole lot more to who you are and who you can become than you ever realised. You will want to continue this journey of discovery, growing yourself so that you are bigger than your problems.

Believe in yourself. Don't spend any more time regretting yesterday and being fearful of tomorrow. Today is the first day of the rest of your life. Take your foot off the brake and accelerate down your career highway.





Maree Harris, Ph.D. is a person on a mission with a commitment to help leaders spend as much time developing and enhancing who they want to BE as a leader and what they DO. She empowers highly motivated professionals with the Self-Leadership Skills they need to work at the cutting edge of their profession. As the Founder and Director of People Empowered, she has, since 2005, been an engaging facilitator of interactive workshops and an insightful coach and mentor. In 2022, however, she has ceased all her leadership development workshops and is specialising in mentoring, predominantly with Women, CEOs and Leaders and Encore Professionals.

For more information:

Visit the People Empowered website: <https://peopleempowered.com.au>

Mobile: +61 408 351 631

Postal Address: P.O. Box 6346, Highton. 3216. Victoria. Australia.