

PART ONE

HOW TO CLAIM YOUR FREEDOM AND
CREATE THE LIFE YOU DESIRE

Part one lays down the unshakable, stone-solid foundations of your personal transformation project, by examining the pivotal, indispensable elements you need: *freedom* and *radical change*.

Chapter one explores our human *freedom*, a truly remarkable gift without which any talk of personal development would be impossible.

Chapter Two delves into the idea of *change*, examining how we can all be transformed, focusing on the genuine possibility of making real, radical and lasting changes in our life.

Live your own agenda

The intoxicating challenge is magnificently clear and plain for all to see: *be free*. My invitation to you: be your own person, “free as the clouds” floating across an endless sky, like a Disney character.

Never forget there is a huge difference between saying you are free and actually experiencing, and creatively living your freedom. So many words, easy to say!

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It's action alone that creates a new reality. Be brave and ask yourself, how free am I? Once we look into it we might find, to our horror, that there are whole swathes of our life, where we are "slaves".

Yes, I repeat, slaves. Slaves, to other people's agenda. Are you a slave – to your own doubts, false beliefs, long-standing fears, self-hatred, self-distrust, self-disgust? I know it is so painful to even imagine any of this applies to us. Courage and honesty are golden.

That's why you need to delve deeply into these issues. Our freedom may be more illusion than reality. We must face the threatening fact: we're not nearly as free as we should be. This has to be addressed. There is no point in even dreaming of a better life-style, if you're not really free inside.

Control your life journey in perfect freedom: foundations

Living your freedom is the infrastructure and bedrock of everything else in your life. You must be free, deep within your heart and mind, before you can take complete control of your life, and then change what's needed.

This book has one simple awe-inspiring message: grasp your personal freedom, as Leonardo da Vinci grasped his paintbrush, to create your own masterpiece – your dream life-style.

It is certain that freely created, radical life change really is both eminently desirable and fully possible. What's the next step? We analyze the severest challenges you will face: things you definitely ought to change. You'll discover dynamic strategies, and deploy them to crush and eliminate the enemy within your soul.

Enemy? Yes, all those negative thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and

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behavior that can never foster, nor serve your dreams. Rather, they are but monstrous road blocks to the magnificent life-style you deserve.

Have the courage to question deeply and honestly

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to personal transformation is a certain 'blindness' about ourselves. We can't even see what needs to change. I therefore invite you to set forth on this journey of self-discovery: to find your true starting point. To "see yourself as others see you".

The very thought of personal transformation can be terrifying. Yet it's a necessary step, towards your dreams of success. You may have to abandon long-standing beliefs. You will need great humility, and a searing honesty: the truth about yourself is often hard to take. Recognizing and admitting your needs is crucial. You can't solve problems you don't even see. Even when we do see our problems, we furiously defend ourselves by denying them.

Being "in denial" is a sad human condition, as old as the mountain ranges. For all of us, there's so much more to learn and love. Love alone, as we know, creates a happy and successful life. Love and total commitment to our 'highest and best self'. Love of self and love of others.

Your self-examination begins by observing yourself, as you are right now. A rich and complex tapestry of the good, the bad and the indifferent. Where has it all come from? Your whole life experience, like a potter, has molded and shaped your raw material and human clay. This unique and flawed experience has fashioned your heart, mind and body. Crucially, numerous people

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have conditioned, influenced and constrained you, for we don't live in the isolated bubble of a desert island. Remember those people too have their own limited perspective. They weren't always right, with their subjective and often short-sighted opinions.

You need to freely investigate and test everything put before you. To question deeply, with an open mind, is of immense value and profit to you. Why? How? It's the essential key to profound knowledge: of yourself, and your unique place on life's journey. Why do I need to stress this need to question and challenge everything?

Because, like many people, you may be alienated from your 'true self'. Do you sometimes feel this too? Unfortunately an 'alienated' person can be, to some extent, the creation of another! Almost the 'unthinking product' of the conditioning acquired and accepted without murmur from others.

A 'received wisdom', often welcomed with flowers and a kiss. Especially in our formative years, our tender hearts and receptive minds wide open to our 'elders and betters'. The remedy is to realize what has happened, and then take charge of it. Examine your thoughts and feelings about yourself.

Distinguish the good from the bad. Gut feelings, emotions, intuitions and insights are so important. Feel what resonates deepest within. That's a clue to your gifts, beliefs and values . . . and your true path through life. You must discover what makes sense to you. You owe it to yourself to meditate, and think and feel intensely on such profound matters.

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ONE

UNLESS YOU DO THIS YOUR LIFE WILL NEVER BE YOUR OWN

“You are not a robot; neither are you merely an animal; you have greatness within that is infinitely more. For you are a free human being, the very pinnacle of life on earth.” (The Merry Monk)

Slave, or free?

I’m not a slave. Neither are you. We are free. So why not claim and live your freedom to the limit? No bird was created to crawl through the mud like a worm. We would hate and detest enslaving a fellow human being, transporting them bound and chained to a life of forced labor and an early death.

So let’s make sure we don’t impose slavery on ourselves. Let’s abolish any self-imposed slavery, smash our chains, and stand tall and free. If freedom is worth bleeding and dying for then, massively more, it’s worth living for.

Freedom: the engine of change

Positive life-style change really is possible for everybody. That does mean . . . *everybody*. Without exception. You, me, all of us. How do we know that we can all change? What makes us certain

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that such change is not simply wishful thinking? It is our inborn gift of human freedom that makes controlled, positive life-change possible.

The never-ending world of change

Never fear change. It's normal, natural, okay. The way it is. Remember that we live in a world that's never still – nature itself is in a constant state of change. We experience the incredible, beautiful and mysterious never-ending cycle of birth, life and death. Imagine the oak tree, like an ancient colossus in the quiet meadow. Visualize the confused amazement on the face of a child when told that the little acorn, it holds in its hand, contains the power to become a mighty tree.

The child's mind can't yet grasp the connection – growth – until someone explains it. Growth, in its million natural forms, transforms a group of simple cells into a living masterpiece. In nature, nothing stands still. All life involves movement, growth, change, decay and eventually death – and rebirth. No, change is never fearful; it's as natural and unthreatening as a summer's evening sunshine in the blue sky.

What about people? Where do we fit into this creative ballet of change, growth and life? We too are biologically programmed to be miracles of constant growth and change: from a single fertilized egg to a baby, and then to a fully grown man or woman. We are like the rest of nature, in our passage from seed to grave. By our very nature, we're always moving, growing, changing and evolving, as we progress through our life-cycle. Change is in nature's DNA.

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We have the power to change the world

So what sets us apart from everything else in nature – plants, trees, birds, and animals of every kind? Why are we “the pinnacle of creation”, and in charge of the planet? Simply because we have the power to control change. Why? How? Because we can think and make choices: in a way that’s totally superior to anything else in the animal kingdom. These higher powers of thought, free choice and decision, enable us to build upon our biological programming and instincts. The seeds of greatness are our birthright. These mighty, innate, higher powers are responsible for all the huge progress human beings have made.

We all have this inborn power to make our own free choices. Academics have analyzed, debated and argued over this issue of ‘freewill’ for centuries. My own experience confirms that they’re still arguing. However outside the academic world, it’s much simpler. A matter of everyday experience and common sense. We really do have the power to make our own independent decisions. At every moment, we are clearly aware of this great, liberating truth.

The power of freewill

This power of free choice, Freewill, is neither undermined nor negated by those other great influences in our lives: Nature and Nurture. By Nature we are born with certain gifts, talents, interests, tendencies, character and personality. The environment too, in which we are Nurtured, doubtless dictates many of the circumstances of our life. However we must never forget this one crucial fact. Experience teaches us that neither nature nor nurture

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can destroy our freewill. Whatever our character, personality and upbringing, we remain free.

We are not trapped and frozen forever in an arbitrary, dictated and scripted existence, like a film character. No matter how many times you replay the movie, everything is exactly the same, a “groundhog day.” However we experience the future as completely open to our free choice and decision. Why? We’re not puppets, and there’s no-one “pulling the strings.” Quite the reverse, we ourselves are the puppeteer and we get to do the dictating. All of us can and do say, “It’s my life, my choice, my freedom. I’ll do what I want.”

Freedom and monastic obedience

Freedom has played an enormous part in my own life. As a Franciscan monk, I had vowed myself to a life of complete obedience to the will of another, “in everything except sin.” I handed over my freedom to my religious superiors for 40 years. So, was I a slave? Had I lost my freedom?

Paradoxically, just the opposite. How’s that possible? Simply because obedience itself was my own decision. I freely chose my path of self-discipline: to be trained to the highest level of Christian love and service. Those good men taught me and helped me, like all-embracing life coaches, to follow my chosen path, and to be happy, fulfilled and thriving in an environment of love and freedom.

I never suffered any coercion. I was not under the command of Religious Police. There were no Religious Prisons. The whole enterprise floated on a tranquil sea of freedom. I was always completely free to walk away from my coaches. That’s exactly what

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I did 40 years later, when I left the community. I freely chose to follow another journey, later in life: I married my wife Sue.

Your future is a choice, not a jail sentence

Because I exercised my freedom, I chose my own life. That's the exciting consequence of this awesome power of human freedom. Your future is not fixed, it is totally open: to your own free choices. You always get to decide. You are a creator. You can fashion a new life for yourself, by a simple free decision. Many things may be difficult, and much in life is beyond our control. Yes, agreed. Yet you still remain free.

Look around you. Everything you see, hear, feel and touch is someone's free choice. You, yourself, are exactly who you have chosen to be: the result of a million personal choices. If you don't like something, anything at all, you have the power of freedom to change it. I know this can be an extremely challenging thought. Perhaps even threatening. However, bear with me. Let's look at why I say this. Look back on your life.

Your present life is what you have chosen

Your house, your job, your partner, your friends; the things you do, places you go, people you meet. All, in some way or another, your choice. And therefore, changeable. Nothing's irrevocable – like a primitive outline carved, centuries ago, into the dark wall of an ancient cave. In the past you have chosen to make many changes. You are well aware of your freedom to opt for change, repeatedly, in the future.

Your freedom is your most precious possession. Take it for granted no longer. Wake up, come alive: fully aware of your

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sovereign autonomy, and all that promises for your future. We are all born free. Throughout history, millions have died in the name of freedom. It's that important.

Join the freedom fighters

Every age, and every country has its very own 'freedom fighters'. Freedom is an immortal longing in the heart of all people. It is a living, breathing issue, still with us today: in countless forms, and in numerous places. Just think, for example, of the 'Arab Spring', suddenly flourishing in these last few years, in country after country of the Middle East. This is a massive issue, an almost intractable moral dilemma: What is the best way to secure political freedom? One man's "freedom fighter" is another man's "terrorist." Taking the path of violence inevitably spawns bloodshed on a mammoth scale. Would a "Gandhi approach" be better? Would it always work? There can be no trite and simple answer.

Whatever the answer, there is one key issue that is clear and certain: people want their freedom. When asked by a TV reporter, "What do you want?" one such young 'rebel' simply replied, in English, "freedom." Freedom from what? It's obvious. Cruel, authoritarian regimes, with dictators who deny civil liberties and throttle freedom – even to the extreme of killing, destroying and traumatizing their own people.

We must recognize and appreciate that freedom is our most priceless possession. That's why people are ready to die for it. Let's never take it for granted, and remain grateful if you live in a relatively free society.

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The abuse of freedom

If freedom is so precious, why then do we sometimes throw it away? How crazy is that? Why let ourselves become slaves: to other people's agenda for our lives? That's the ever-present threat, hanging over us all. There are so many people out there, who abuse their own freedom, by using it to oppress and enslave others. Therefore freedom has an obvious, very serious and far-reaching moral dimension. Why? Because the truly terrifying consequence of such power is this: it can be, and often is used both to build and to destroy, to create a "little piece of heaven on earth" or go on the rampage like wild beasts, without sense, reason or mercy. We put men on the moon, and we also drop atomic bombs. We liberate our brothers, and we murder them too.

Enough, in God's name! When will it end? We must use human freedom, our most precious gift, to create positive changes, not for generating evil. It is so well and accurately said that "corruption of the best becomes the very worst."

Making the right choices

You must be strong, clear-headed and decisive in using your personal freedom. Just make sure you put your freedom to good use – legally, morally, ethically and even philanthropically. We must make honest choices and appropriate changes. Never forget that freedom is a 'package deal'. It comes with responsibilities and consequences. Strength and freedom should never oppress. The strong are called to share their love, and help to inspire the weak to become strong as well, living their own freedom, creating their own life agenda.

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Challenges to freedom in our own family

Our personal freedom is always being tested, forever under fire. How? Why? Simple. We are not alone on life's journey. We don't live in a vacuum. Other people, especially our loved-ones, exert a powerful influence in our life. They cajole us, pester us, flatter us, wear us down, keep on and on and even make demands on us. Why? They want to persuade us to do what they want. Unwittingly, we can become their servants, or even slaves. We suffer from a loving clash of freedoms:

“I want you to . . .”

“Yes, darling, I know you do, but . . . I also want . . .”

Whose agenda do we follow? Often it's a battle of wills. Even manipulation: “If you really loved me, you wouldn't . . .” Ask yourself, “In my life, whose agenda do I follow?” That is such a powerful, creative, liberating yet difficult question. Unfortunately, in this mental contest, the strong will often crush the weak. Maybe, unthinkingly, by imposing their own agenda.

We all need to be fair, ethical and loving, but also strong. Being weak should not be an option. We have a right to our own agenda. Sometimes we even surrender and allow others to dictate our whole way of life. We follow the herd, like thoughtless cattle. Why not dare to be different? Stand up for yourself? You're no longer a child. Grow up, and behave like an adult.

The thought of death helped the late Steve Jobs to follow his own dreams, choose how to live his own life. He wrote:

“Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new. Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life.”

Design and live your own life, the way you want. What's

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stopping you? You're free. Yes, of course, respect the wishes of loved-ones, dialogue, discuss, negotiate, seek 'win-win' – but still remain free. I would add one simple proviso: let love color all your decisions.

An inspiring movie about freedom in the ghetto

An example of an awe-inspiring struggle for personal freedom is the brilliant 2007 movie, *The Freedom Fighters*. It movingly portrays the true story of how a young female teacher in America, Erin Gruwell, encouraged and energized her class of kids to reach unexpected heights. They lived, enslaved, in a run-down neighborhood. Their world was a life-and-death culture of gang violence. She inspired and helped them to break free. Those kids needed a brave, loving and committed teacher to challenge and galvanize them.

They listened. They struggled. They changed. They became free, happy and productive. That uplifting story can arouse and waken us. Courage! If those poor, deprived kids can do it, you certainly can do it. Anyone can do it, if they really want to.

Follow your heart

“Don't be trapped by dogma and deceived by conventional thinking.” Never allow the din and clamor of other people's opinions to smother and suffocate your own inner voice. Be bold and audacious; follow your heart and intuition. Deep in your own spirit you'll discover what you truly want, your own genuine and authentic desires, dreams and personal vision. Everything else is secondary. Steve Jobs came to a deeper realization of the importance of living his freedom. He wrote:

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“Once you discover one fact – that everything around you, that you call life, is made up by people, who are no smarter than you – then you can change it, you can influence it. Once you’ve learnt that, you will never be the same again.”

Steve’s new and liberating awareness was that he no longer had to surrender, and conform to other people’s ideas and agenda. He was now free to follow his heart and passion, and create his own life. He then went on to revolutionize phones, music, film and computers. Let’s listen to the similar wake-up experience of Duncan Bannatyne, the Scottish entrepreneur, millionaire and famous member of the Dragons’ Den team. He writes:

“At the age of 30, I was a penniless beach bum. At the age of 37, I was a millionaire. I honestly believe that anyone – absolutely anyone – can do exactly what I did and turn their life around; you just need to wake up to the possibilities that are all around you, and make a decision to change your life.”

Duncan Bannatyne insists here that every one of us has the inborn power of decision, enabling us to change and even transform our life. We just need to be brave, follow our best instincts, and make full use our freedom. A sobering thought: you yourself have actually chosen the life you lead right now. Harsh words? Sorry, but perhaps it’s the truth. You are the one responsible for where you live, what you’re doing, and the people in your life.

Why? Because, in some way or other, they are all the result of your own personal choices. You can’t blame others; you are free to say “no” to all the circumstances in your life. You are not that marble statue in your local museum. You are free to walk away, any time you want. Accept your responsibility, it’s your life.

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Fashion it in the way that seems best for you and your loved-ones.

Start to ask questions

An extremely powerful way to experience more personal freedom is to question. Question, investigate and scrutinize everything you have known and believed so far. Why? To discover if it's what you really, really believe. Have we simply absorbed and accepted as true things that we haven't really thought much about? Other people can mold and shape us: our personality, our beliefs, convictions, opinions and values. But ask yourself, are they really your own? We can unthinkingly believe everything we've been told.

You should ask yourself liberating and empowering questions. Questions that give you back control of who and what you are. Ask yourself: "Do I honestly believe that? How true is this? Do I really want that? Is that right? Is it ethical? Is there a better way?"

I believe we should ask such questions about all the things that are important to us. Let's fully exercise our freedom, take better control. The huge benefit derived from such questioning is clear. You discover what you really believe, and find your true self. Then be brave and reject the rest. It's not you.

The power of our conditioned beliefs

Reject "the rest"? What things? Conditioned beliefs we're not happy about. These beliefs have built up over a period of many years, and are too prolific to count. So it's a process, an open-minded refining of what we firmly believe. Try this little strategy. Make a comprehensive list of all the influences that have held you

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back, confining you in a tiny closed and artificial world. All those people, places, situations, experiences that have ‘dictated’ your life for you.

This will be time excellently spent. A profound eye-opener, giving you deep insights to where you’re at now, and where you’d prefer to go in the future! Your list will include the level of freedom you experienced in some of the principal areas of your life:

Political, religious, emotional, physical, intellectual, cultural, ethnic, and financial.

As you focus on this list of inherited and conditioned beliefs, questions begin to surface and force their way into your conscious mind. These questions will help you ferret out the truth. Take all the time you need to do this properly. If you really are searching for the truth, then do yourself the honor of dedicating plenty of relaxing time and effort to the project. Ask yourself, “Is this particular belief a heartfelt conviction, or something more superficial which I haven’t really thought about?” Then brace yourself for some very revealing discoveries!

Questions to ask yourself

1. Politics: Did I freely choose the political party I support? Or was it rather a matter of following the common opinion of others, such as family and friends? Does your “clan” always vote with this party? What conditioned beliefs and prejudices do I have about politics and politicians? I invite you to think it out for yourself.

2. Religion: If you are religious, did you choose your religion, or were you ‘brought up’ in it, whether you liked it or not? Have you

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ever delved into these beliefs, evaluating them for yourself? Have you thought much about your religion, researched it, perhaps discussed it with others, or simply accepted or rejected the religious views of others?

3. Emotional control: Think also about your 'emotional intelligence'. Are you still at the mercy of your strong emotions, or have you learnt to control and channel them? Do you often act out of raw emotion rather than common sense and reason? Revert to behavior more appropriate for an immature child? Very often we emulate the behavior of other people in our life, even when that behavior is not who we really are. We can simply follow others like sheep. How grown up are you, how often do you think before you act?

4. Health: If you have a body that's out-of-shape, is that just the result of your own free, yet poor, choices? Or rather, have you just followed a damaging life-style of others around you, or one you were born into? I'm thinking of bad habits we pick up: smoking, drinking to excess, recreational drugs, poor diet and overeating, lack of exercise, overwork and stress.

Do you just live like everyone else, becoming overweight, out-of-shape and in poor health in the process? As we all know, these are major problems today, perhaps especially here in the 'affluent' west. Remember, you have the power to eat healthily, drink responsibly and exercise your marvelous body into a work of art, whatever your starting point?

Always remember that you're free; what you put in your mouth

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is up to you. No-one else can make you an unhealthy ‘couch potato’, smoker, alcoholic, drug user. Once you’re an adult, you have the power to choose how to care for your own body. Don’t let others dictate your choices.

5. Wisdom and learning: What about your intellectual life? Have you freely chosen to educate yourself in all the important things that you really love and want? Or do you still blame your parents, the teachers, and others for your ignorance? Learning is lifelong; your privilege, challenge and choice. There’s really no excuse for ignorance these days. Unlimited education is now at our fingertips. Why ignore or despise this potential goldmine of information and fulfillment? Learning can unlock for you the door to a very successful and wealthy life.

6. Culture: Think of your cultural background. Are you simply a reflection of the culture you were brought up in? Or have you freely chosen to explore other cultures, and become a truly international person? Travel, I have found, certainly ‘broadened’ my mind in so many ways. Living in Central America for almost a decade made me realize, in a new and deeper way, that the whole world doesn’t revolve around ‘merry England’, or even the U.S.A. I learnt so much from that profound experience, and the beliefs and values of the people.

Are you perhaps blindly imprisoned in your narrow ethnic world? Or have you chosen to live with an open mind, way beyond the confines of ethnicity, language and race? I myself soon came to see Central Americans, of many color, as my brothers and sisters. My first-world ‘superiority’ soon evaporated, as I grew to

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appreciate and love them as my equals.

Ask yourself this: just how important, for world peace today, would such an open attitude to race and color be? Really getting to know, and accept, other nationalities sets us free from our own corrosive, negative, narrow-minded attitudes.

7. Finance: Are you, financially, where you want to be? Are you wealthy? If not, who are you blaming for your plight? Many people feel they have no choices, that they are victims of circumstance. To some extent that's true; and all over the world there are people who are just surviving day to day. Some indeed have very little freedom, but many have far more choices than they think.

Where do you see yourself in this picture? Are you from a family where education wasn't important, or learning a skill or trade wasn't seen as an option. Did you waste time and play around at school, agreeing with a "can't be bothered" attitude like others in your peer group? Were family pressures holding you back? Whatever has happened in the past has long gone; it's never too late to grasp opportunities. You don't need money to learn your way out of poverty. Books, internet, other people, companies and voluntary organizations are great ways to gain the knowledge and experience, needed to earn a living.

My wife Sue, for example, even as a mother did extensive voluntary work for years, learning and developing new skills. This allowed her to gain the discipline needed to self-study. Despite being dyslexic, she worked hard as a full-time university "mature student", whilst also juggling her childcare responsibilities. After three years she gained a BA honors degree. She now had vast

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experience to offer employers on her Resume, and soon found an excellent job.

Perhaps you are one of the vast majority that, although having a good income, still seems to be struggling financially. Have you even bought into the ‘debt culture’ – where so many live beyond their means? Ask yourself: is it essential to live with bad debts piling up? Have you really no freedom, no choice – over your job, the money you have, and how it’s spent? Do you allow it to leak away, thoughtlessly, in some unnecessary buys? Is saving something you believe is ‘impossible’ in your circumstances?

Yet I know, from lifelong experience, leading a simple life, and working with dirt poor people living in shanty towns, just how little we really need to spend. What we want to spend always seems much more attractive: even though, inevitably, it leads to more bad debt.

Self-questioning: take it seriously

It demands great courage and self-love to undertake such a deeply personal self-examination. I myself know and feel the force – even pain – of being completely honest with myself. Persevere, be determined, “Face your demons’ – it will repay the effort abundantly, many times over. It will give you a self-knowledge, that is utterly priceless, and a wisdom to be revered. As the ancient proverb wisely counsels us, “Knowledge of self is the beginning of wisdom.”

This loving investigation into your past will be difficult, because total and all-embracing honesty about ourselves is a rare gift. It should definitely take some time. This is not the superficial work of 5 minutes, in between TV programs. It’s far too important

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for that. Indeed, why not watch no TV at all one evening? “What? Are you serious?” Yes. It’s a ‘no-brainer’. Just press the ‘off’ button! Go on, you can do it!

You’ll be amazed how you suddenly discover quite a few free hours, not just minutes. I’ve found it can be a liberating and surprisingly peaceful experience. Remember, we’re talking about your life here. It’s not just some little amusing parlor game. Please take it seriously; you really have so much to gain and nothing to lose at all.

Don’t be lazy; just do it

Laziness can be your greatest enemy here. Sensible and creative self-discipline is your best friend. Make the effort and then follow through, just do it. It will change your life forever. Make a written list of all the many rewards, benefits, and positive outcomes that will happen, if only you take the first vital step. A step towards changing your life. Wake up to your freedom, change your life and then, within reason, do anything you want. That’s the promise. Allow yourself to dream of all the desirable things that clearly are quite possible. Whatever you want to be, to do, and to have. Don’t permit negative experience in the past to deter you. It doesn’t matter what has happened before. That’s all history, slowly fading away like a morning mist. The past is past, already fixed, dead and gone forever. Live only for today and tomorrow.

Today’s the day

Today’s a new day, and you are free to create a new future. The creation of this better future, and how to do it step by step, will be examined in detail as we go through this book. That’s what it’s

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all about: the beautiful future that's within your power to create. However nothing can happen, nothing will happen, unless we take that very first step: the glorious realization and acceptance, that we are indeed free.

Don't listen to those negative friends, who put you down, feeding your mind with doubt and despair. They are mistaken, so very wrong. You are free and you alone decide, not them. Love them, but let them get on with their own life, and leave you alone to decide yours. Their vision can never be your vision.

This liberating process cannot even begin, as you know, unless you acknowledge and rejoice in your freedom. So be free. Why not just launch out into the ocean of abundance? No fisher hauls in his priceless catch by surrendering to fear, anchored safely in port.

So change your life, find your deepest self and start right now, forward into freedom and fulfillment.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gerry first met Sue in London, at a social justice conference. They felt an immediate and mutual attraction. They chatted over lunch, delighted to discover they both lived in Kent, and would be working with the same groups of people. Thrown together, their relationship blossomed into a deep friendship and mutual respect. Gerry found himself falling deeply in love. It was the very last thing they expected or needed. Why? Gerry was a celibate Catholic priest and monk: he couldn't marry. Sue was separated with 3 children: the Church doesn't recognize divorce.

Where then would their relationship go?

Born into a Catholic family, at the age of 13 Gerry experienced a profound spiritual awakening. One day, sitting alone in school at lunchtime, it suddenly hit him, "There simply must be a God," he realized, "otherwise nothing makes sense." His traditional faith was now thoroughly grounded in his own heart and mind. From that day on, he began to feel drawn to the priesthood. Eventually, just 18 years of age, he left home to become a Franciscan monk and priest.

His life then changed forever, as he experienced the heart-wrenching pain of saying goodbye to mum and dad, both in tears as they watched the train depart. Their oldest son of three boys, he was the first to leave the closely-knit family home. His new life meant a far-reaching commitment to a very different way of life, a massive personal transformation.

John McCann "died" and was "reborn" as Friar Gerry, robed in a celibate monk's long grey habit. He devoted every day, every hour, to his religious vocation: a life of love and service of others.

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For the next 40 years he followed the example of that extraordinary 13th Century Saint, Francis of Assisi. In a Franciscan Community radical change is a way of life. The Vow of Obedience frequently demands a readiness, often at short notice, to undertake a variety of careers in different locations.

As a Friar Priest he faced countless challenges, highs and lows, in his work as a Pastor, Preacher, Healer, Teacher, Writer and Author, University Lecturer, and Missionary in Central America. This demanding life-style tested all his reserves and strength: physical, mental, emotional. A real “rollercoaster!” He loved the life, experiencing a whole range of emotions in his work as a “public servant” dealing with people of every kind.

As a ‘spiritual soldier and athlete’, his greatest test was to develop massive self-discipline and strength of character. This psychological battle was to overcome his own weaknesses: common human traits, such as negativity, self-doubt, fear, mediocrity, laziness, and ignorance.

His passion to help people also inspired him to a life of ongoing study. He obtained University Degrees in the Social Sciences: Philosophy, Psychology and Theology. These studies gave him a wide-ranging knowledge and wisdom about the complexities of human nature. This equipped him, not only for his own struggle with human frailty, but also with a professional competence to assist others. On a daily basis, he offered guidance and counseling to thousands of people from every walk of life, and in different countries.

Now, after 40 years he faced his greatest challenge yet. Would he leave his beloved vocation and marry Sue – without the Church’s blessing? Or would he abandon his love, and continue

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his mission as a Friar Priest? Not an easy choice, for his love of God and the Church had remained strong throughout this process. If he left it would not be because he had become disillusioned with his faith.

After many months of tormented deliberation he came to a final decision to be brave and true, and follow his heart. He found the mental and spiritual courage to leave the life that meant everything to him, for an uncertain future with the woman he loved.

Massive new challenges faced him as he entered a very different way of life. Fifty eight years old, he now assumed the identity of a married man, living with his inspirational wife, Susan, and her 3 children. He successfully adapted to this profound change, drawing upon his deep-seated experience of a highly disciplined life-style. Gerry went on to work for a Homeless Charity at London Bridge for 6 years. He also qualified as a Life Coach, NLP Master Practitioner and Hypnotherapist, and continued to learn, write and study.

Gerry has a great sense of humor, and enjoys music, travel and running marathons, as well as the occasional large glass of red wine.