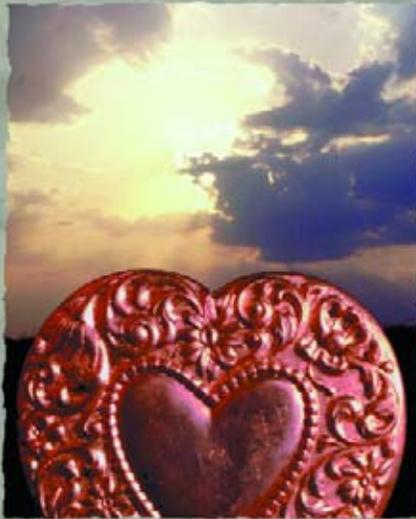


Co-authored by Dave Ellis, author of *Becoming a Master Student* which has sold over two million copies.

HUMAN BEING

DAVE ELLIS STAN LANKOWITZ



A MANUAL FOR HAPPINESS, HEALTH, LOVE, AND WEALTH

hundreds of ways to create a wonderful life

HUMAN BEING

DAVE ELLIS STAN LANKOWITZ

A MANUAL FOR **HAPPINESS, HEALTH, LOVE, AND WEALTH**

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Dave Ellis Stan Lankowity

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HUMAN BEING IN A NUTSHELL

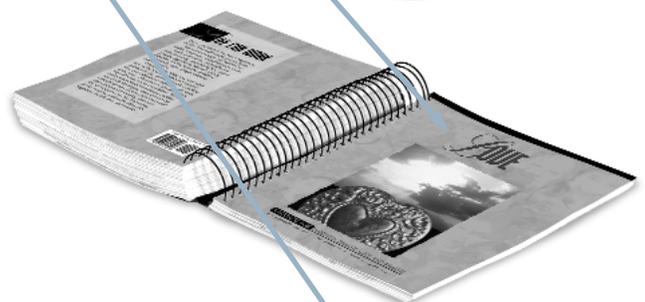
The premise of this book is simple: You can create a wonderful life no matter what your history is, what your current circumstances are, or how much money or time you have—or don't have. And you can begin creating this life right now.

This may sound like a tall order—far too tough to swallow. If you feel this idea is too outrageous, practice applying a strategy mentioned later in this book. Ask: “What if this idea is true?” Note that you don't have to agree with the premise yet. Just be willing to play with possibilities for now, remembering that you can release them later if you choose.

Just for a moment, consider a few questions. Could you be more satisfied with your life? Could you significantly increase your overall level of health? Could your relationships be richer and more often free of persistent conflict? Could you be more comfortable with money and have more time for the activities most important to you?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you've opened a window to change. You might consider raising your standards and not being content to live with the self-imposed and often needless suffering that many human beings experience. You're already on the way to getting what you want. *Human Being* can help you discover and travel the path.

The ideas and strategies you can use to be more happy, healthy, loving, and wealthy already exist. The aim of this book is simply to communicate those ideas so you can immediately put them into practice.



The suggestions in *Human Being* are organized into five major parts:

Part One: Power Processes, the core of *Human Being*, is a set of suggestions for creating the life you want. These suggestions are general in that they can be applied broadly to many areas of life. The 21 power processes explained in *Part One* include the following;

1. Determine what you want
2. Tell the truth
3. Practice acceptance
4. Examine
 moment-to-moment choices
5. Investigate your role
6. Focus your attention
7. Speak candidly
8. Make and keep promises
9. Surrender
10. Keep looking for answers
11. Notice your expectations
12. Listen fully
13. Enjoy
14. Detach and play full out
15. Choose your conversations
16. Revise your habits
17. Appreciate mistakes
18. Choose courageously
19. Manage your associations
20. Contribute
21. Define your values,
 align your actions

The remaining sections of the book demonstrate how you can apply these processes to getting what you want in four general areas: happiness, health, love, and wealth.



Part Two: Happiness starts with a chapter on how to deal with feelings of unhappiness.

Following is a chapter on how to solve problems and another on how to be happy no matter what your circumstances, no matter what you have or do.



Part Three: Health affirms that changing health habits can be difficult and offers techniques for

doing so anyway. Look for some new perspectives on how to eat, exercise, rest, manage stress, and protect yourself from injury and illness. You will also find some help in sorting through the smorgasbord of health treatments available today.

A NOTE ABOUT GENDER-FAIR LANGUAGE

To avoid awkward sentence constructions, the authors chose to alternate the use of male and female pronouns throughout *Human Being*. Their intent is to use language that is as inclusive and bias-free as possible.



Part Four: Love tackles the challenges of building relationships that work. Here you'll

find specific methods for increasing your effectiveness at listening, speaking, raising children, and enjoying romance. Suggestions are also included for becoming a leader, resolving conflict, and thriving in an era of diversity.



Part Five: Wealth explains how you can start erasing worries about time and money from your

life. Also included are practical hints for career changes. If you actively absorb these ideas and practices, you just might free up enough time and money to share your bounty with others. For that reason, *Part Five* ends with a chapter on contribution.

Each part of *Human Being* begins with its own cover. These covers make it easy for you to skip easily to the beginning of each section of the book and the covers also emphasize that each section is like a book by itself.



E X E R C I S E

Do a book reconnaissance

Start participating actively with this book by doing a 25-minute reconnaissance. Begin by reading the table of contents. Then turn page by page through the entire book, noticing whatever catches your eye—a picture here, a headline there. The benefit of this exercise is that it establishes a mental framework ready to receive new information.

Think of this book as a house you're entering for the first time. Once you become familiar with the floor plan, you can find your way from room to room more easily. In this case, the "rooms" are the articles that make up this book.

To make this exercise more effective, keep your eyes peeled for ideas or techniques you can use right away or ideas that are particularly interesting. In the following space, describe each of these ideas or techniques in a phrase or two and note the accompanying page number.

Page: _____

Idea:

DID YOU DO THE EXERCISE?

Throughout this book are opportunities to interact with the book—to actually “do” the book. If you did not do the exercise on the previous page, please do it now. Also, following are two more exercises that are designed to assist you to get the most out of this book.



E X E R C I S E

Create a personal time capsule

Before using this book to increase the amount and quality of happiness, health, love, and wealth you experience, take a few minutes to mark this moment in time. Write a letter to yourself that sums up who you are right now and who you wish to become. If it helps, as part of your letter, complete the sentences below.

I'm becoming a person who . . .

The gift I most want to give myself is . . .

The most important thing I want to remember about this period of my life is . . .

The most important struggles I've experienced so far in my life are . . .

The most important accomplishments I've experienced so far in my life are . . .

In the future, the words of wisdom I'll most want to hear are . . .

Date the letter, put it in a sealed, self-addressed, stamped envelope and send it to the address below. It will be returned to you in 15 months.

Human Being
P.O. Box 8396
Rapid City, SD 57709-8396



E X E R C I S E

Write your testimonial

This exercise includes a crazy request. You are asked to write a testimonial for this book. In fact, you are asked to do this now, even before you read the book.

Right now, write what you want to be able to say about this book once you've finished reading it.

Examine what you've written to see if you are doing justice to your potentials. Read the following sample testimonials to stimulate your imagination. (Note: These testimonials are pure fiction.)

"The ideas in this book make significant life changes easy and joyful."

"When reading this book, I discovered that I can be happy no matter what is going on in my life."

"I saw for the first time that even when I feel sad or sick, I can have a wonderful and joyous life."

"Life is just wonderful! It always has been great, but I didn't realize it until I read this book."

"Every hour of every day, I can make the choices to have my life continue to be outstanding."

"Several years ago I read this book and made remarkable changes in my life. I haven't forgotten what I learned, and I continue to use the power processes."

"After I read this book, I transformed the quality of my life—dramatically—in just a few days."

"I'm a skeptic, but the book showed me how to be happy almost every minute—and the ideas work even though I still don't agree with all of them."

"I've read dozens of self-help books, many of which were extremely helpful. This book did more than all of those books combined."

"Like most people, I was doing pretty well and thought life couldn't get much better. Then I read this book and my life took an unbelievable leap forward. But, I realize that I don't even need to read the book; I can just choose moment-to-moment happiness."

"I thought I knew what transformation meant; then I read this book and realized that transformation means more than just improving. My life shifted dramatically for the better."

"Unbelievable! I've never experienced anything like this book. It is possible to be happy no matter what happens in my life. And happiness is not equal to complacency."

Now that you have read the preceding examples, write a second testimonial that could reflect your experience of this book, once you have finished it.

The writing of your own testimonials is based on a simple idea: You don't need to wait until you're finished reading to decide if this book will be valuable. You can choose up front—right now.

Of course, the content of this book plays an important role. Yet, what you choose to do with this book plays a far larger role in the outcome than do the words on the pages. Commitment is more important than content. Nothing that's written here can equal your intention to actively use the suggestions in this book. That's what writing a testimonial is all about.

Commitment is the key not only to the value of this book, but also to the quality of your life. You can use your work with this book to re-create your entire life. And, you can do it with ease. Now, it's time to write again. Compose more of your own glowing testimonials in the space below.

WRITE THIS BOOK

Extra sheets of blank paper can be found in the back of this book for those exercises where you are asked to write on a separate piece of paper. Also, some of the exercises may not have as much space as you want to fully express yourself. Please continue to write this book by filling these pages with your discoveries and intentions.

WANTED: YOUR IDEAS

Please help us write the next edition of this book. Sometimes, after a book has been written, rewritten, edited, designed, typeset, and printed, it is declared complete. That is not true of this book. This book is still in development.

In fact, this book will be in transition for many years. We will change it frequently as we learn more about what works. For this reason, we want to hear from you. Please write to the address on the right to let us know your reactions to this book.

Most of the interactions we have had with others have been in workshops, classrooms, and counseling sessions. In these situations, feedback is usually frequent and complete. The communication takes place in two directions. Communicating through a book is different. Often there is no feedback, and when there is, it is usually sparse. Such one-way communication does not give us a chance to improve.

We want your feedback. When you see ways to improve this book, write to us. We want the next edition to reflect your experiences as a result of doing this book.

If an idea in this book doesn't work for you, let us know. If a technique is particularly effective, let us know that, too. When you write to us, you are completing a communication loop. You are teaching us to be more effective teachers.

Thank you for your help.

Dave Ellis & Stan Lankowitz
P.O. Box 8396
Rapid City, SD 57709-8396

P.S. BOOK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Throughout this book you will see references to its continued development. They are indicated by the following icon:



BOOK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Just like a human being, *Human Being* is a work in progress. When you come upon this symbol, please send us your ideas.

Human Being

Introduction

→ *In this introduction you'll find...*

How to get the most from this book.

Participate actively with this book and maximize your benefits.

Declare your purpose and commitment: Discovery/Intention Statement.

Declaring your goals for participating with this book sets the stage for achieving them.

Apply strategies across the board.

Notice how the methods in this book apply to several areas of your life at once.

Create your own article-exercise.

Practice finding at least two different applications for a set of strategies.

This book is not for everyone.

Human Being is intended to help already successful people learn to be more successful.

The Discovery/Intention Journal System.

To get what you want, describe it in writing. Then, choose a course of action.

Seven Discovery Statement guidelines.

Discover what you want, record specifics, notice self-talk and sensations, suspend judgment, stay with discomfort, and tell the truth.

Seven Intention Statement guidelines.

Make intentions positive, small, and keepable. Choose criteria for success, set timelines, stay in control, anticipate self-sabotage, and identify rewards.

Practice the process: Discovery/Intention Statement.

Practice writing about some area of your life that presents a consistent problem. Describe the problem and decide what to do about it.

Learn from your champions—exercise.

Describe what you've learned from three significant people in your life.

Go beyond the printed page: Discovery/Intention Statement.

You can invent your own Journal Entries at any time while doing this book.



HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS BOOK

Following is a list of suggestions that can help you maximize the value you derive from *Human Being*. As you read, please mark up the book. Highlight graphically the suggestions you will put into practice. Any graphics will do—asterisks, commas, check marks, stars, or any other marks that catch your attention.

Do it your way

Becoming happier is a do-it-yourself job. Everyone does the wonderful life thing differently. Every human being has different abilities, backgrounds, styles, and preferences. It's no surprise, then, that every individual charts a slightly different path to living her dreams. No one else can know exactly how living a life filled with more happiness, health, love, and wealth will happen for you.

This being the case, find out what works best for you by experimenting with a variety of techniques. And that's what you'll find in this book: page after page of methods that have worked for numerous people from all walks of life.

Think of this book as a huge grab bag of methods, techniques, processes, suggestions, hints, tools, skills and habits for you to play with—a kind of toolbox. Some of those tools may work for you as is, right from the box. Great! Others may not work. That's OK. Put them on the shelf for now. Modify the suggested strategies, come back to them later, or design your own. It is up to you to tailor this book to suit your individual situation and style. Do what works for you.

If you're insulted, ignore it

This book is written with love. It is written as if it were communication to be given to a parent, brother, or sister. It is written with respect for and with a commitment to honor your dignity. If what you read does not sound that way, it is the authors' mistake. If this happens, please just pick out what you can use and move on.

Start with the purpose

The purpose of *Human Being* is to provide an opportunity for you to learn and adopt methods and ways of being that assist you in being successful.

Examining key words in the above sentence will help the purpose of this book come to life.

The purpose of this book is to—*provide an opportunity* (set the stage, enable, give a chance, not to force or guarantee) . . . for *you* (this book is designed to be a personal experience) . . . to *learn* (to acquire new skills and experiment with new ideas) . . . and *adopt* (use, apply, put into practice, make part of your daily routine) . . . *methods* (plans or actions based on plans) . . . and *ways of being* (values, basic principles of living, who you *are* beyond what you have and what you do) . . . that assist you in being *successful* (getting what *you* want, achieving levels of happiness, health, love, and wealth that *you* choose.)

Please read the statement of purpose again while considering the definitions of the words in italics. It says a lot about the experimental nature of this book and the value of taking action on the methods suggested.

Enjoy the benefits of a book

As a means of learning, a book offers big advantages over a classroom, a workshop, or a TV. You just experienced one of those advantages if you reread the purpose statement. With a book, you can review and study that which you consider important.

If you didn't reread the purpose statement, then you experienced another advantage of a book: You have control. You get to choose what is interesting to you, what is helpful, and what is not. You can skip around in a book. This is harder to do when watching a videotape and impossible when listening to a lecture. Also, you can read at your own pace.

When reading, you have the option of quickly skimming the material, or you can slow down so that you can study each word as you read. This freedom is not possible when learning from a TV or a lecture. When you read, you can even take the time to look up words in the dictionary. Even a sentence of familiar words comes more "to life" when you look up the key words.

Many people don't take full advantage of a book. You can. Skip around. Study what is useful. Reread what is unclear for you. Take the time to write about what you like. Ignore what you think is rubbish.

Proceed with caution

Doing this book could be hazardous to your current life circumstances. You might decide to change, to leave your comfort zone, and to take the risk of trying some new behaviors.

This book is not for the faint of heart. If you avoid skeletons in closets, then avoid this book. Many books allow—even have as their purpose—an escape from life. This book can drive you *into* your life.

There are moments in our lives when we grow significantly. There are times when we push to a breakthrough. There are moments of dizzying change when we make a decision that alters our lives forever. Your experience with this book might be such a time—particularly if you're willing to put some of its suggestions into action.

Change

It's been said that if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten. Many people expect to get different results in their lives without changing any of their behaviors. It's not very probable.

There is another option, and it's available at any time. You can grant yourself the gift of freedom from self-limiting behaviors. It all starts with action—planning and making simple, small changes in daily behavior. Over time, all those minute changes carry the momentum of an avalanche.

Disagree

Many people who gain tremendously from this book will disagree with some of the ideas. If you don't think a particular strategy will work for you, then tailor it to your circumstances or let it go for now.

Use some tools of the trade

You can now think of yourself as being engaged in a profession called "learning happiness, health, love, and wealth." Like every trade, this one has its own tools. Here are some you could use in practicing your craft and working with this book:

- *Highlighters for marking key ideas.* Using more than one color adds variety and a way to designate your own categories or distinctions. For example, you could highlight top-priority ideas to use now in green. Yellow could be used for ideas to consider more thoroughly or for suggestions you might use later.
- *Two pencils or pens to write in this book.* Far from being taboo, marking up this book will help you make it your own.
- *A bound notebook for keeping a journal.* This can be a place to discover your goals and to map a clear path to reach them.
- *Several packs of 3x5 cards.* These have multiple uses, as explained in many of the exercises in this book. For example, you can use 3x5 cards to remind yourself of strategies that you want to practice. Write the strategy on a card and then tape it to a mirror, put it in your pocket, store it in your purse, or put it somewhere else where it's easily noticed.

Get a partner

Find an individual or small group who will do this book with you. Meet regularly to discuss and apply the ideas. Others can help you find new ways to create happiness, health, love, and wealth, and you can do the same for them.

Remember these techniques work—except when they don't

No idea or suggestion in this book is absolute. A technique that works like magic in one area of your life might flop in another. Even the same strategy applied consistently in the same way might lose its effectiveness over time.

Consider these examples: You can be happy, regardless of circumstances—except when you can't. (Sometimes it pays to change your circumstances.) Choose the career of your dreams and the money will follow—except when it doesn't. (Have some savings in the bank.) Learn to listen well and your relationships will improve—except when they don't. (Sometimes people need more than a sympathetic ear.)

When it comes to enjoying happiness, health, love, and wealth, there are no sure-fire formulas. When your chosen plan or strategy doesn't work, it's time to choose another.

You can use this idea to create more value from this book. If you read a suggestion that sounds particularly effective, consider how the *opposite* of that suggestion might also be useful. For example, take the preceding suggestion to do this book with a partner and explore the possible benefits of working through this book alone.

Keep looking for other techniques

When you search for a way to apply the techniques in this book to your own life, you are doing the hard and rewarding work of critical thinking. Be willing to persist as you search for ways to create value from *Human Being*. Put the question clearly: “What new strategy could I use now to dramatically improve the quality of my life?”

It’s OK if answers are not on the tip of your tongue; just keep searching. Ideas will come. By staying in the inquiry even when answers are not immediately obvious, you might be arousing and getting in touch with the part of you that is already wise.

Rise to the occasion

Standing engages your attention and helps you be active and alert. The quality of your thinking just might rise when you rise. It is possible to read, write, and think while standing or walking.

Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence while standing. Winston Churchill, Virginia Woolf, and Ernest Hemingway were also fond of standing while writing. Bill Clinton and Gen. Colin Powell, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have been known to use stand-up desks. When you stand, you’ll be in good company.

Be alert for strategies with impact

As you read *Human Being*, prepare to encounter hundreds of suggestions and strategies for happiness, health, love, and wealth. Often you’ll see lists of a dozen or more suggestions, each with a short description. It might be easy to dismiss a powerful strategy because it is relatively short and imbedded in dozens of others.

You can avoid this problem by slowing down and giving attention to each item. That way, you’re more likely to pick up on a transformational idea—one that can make a real difference in your life.

Expect something different from this book

The fact is, this book is different from many other books—different in three ways.

First is content. Even if you’ve read lots of other books, chances are you’ll find some new ideas here. They are presented in a straightforward, no-jargon conversational style.

Second is design. This book looks different from most other books. Its format is designed to invite you to explore lots of ideas and to really participate in putting those ideas into action.

Third is participation. This book invites you to take action. There are scores of invitations for you to discover, write, plan, and experiment with a strategy; to adopt new behaviors; and then to repeat the whole cycle again. The idea is to help you bridge the gap between getting a good idea and putting it into practice.

Note: You might encounter some repetition as you read. This is intentional. Repetition is one way to reinforce key ideas. Because many articles in this book are self-contained, they occasionally summarize ideas from a previous article. When you notice repetition, congratulate yourself. It means you have retained well what you have read.

Apply this to yourself

The ideas explained throughout this book are most effective when we apply them to ourselves. Readers who say, “My life would be great if only other people put these suggestions into practice,” are missing an opportunity to get value from *Human Being*.

The fact is, we have far more influence on our actions than we do on the actions of those around us. Applying a powerful suggestion to our *own* behavior makes the difference.

Do it!

If you want to benefit from *Human Being*, then get your hands, feet, and mouth moving. The real value of this book lies not in the words and pictures you see on each page but in what happens to you as you bring the ideas to life. The exercises and Journal Entries scattered throughout the text are designed to help you do this.

As you read this book, you might find ideas and suggestions that sound familiar. If you're tempted to stop reading for this reason, consider that people often *know* but don't *do*. That is, they neglect to practice what they've heard or read. One of the most important functions of any book or speaker is to present familiar ideas in a new way, to remind us of what we already know—and to invite us to take action.

Actively participating with this book is the most effective way to achieve your goals. Participating with this book includes writing in it, doing most of the exercises in it, and experimenting with its suggestions.

Be prepared for this to take time. Some of the exercises, if you do them thoroughly, could take hours spread over several days or weeks. A master builder who is creating something magnificent often loses herself in her work and forgets about time. In working through this book, you too can build something magnificent—your life.

We have a way that we usually act around books. We call it *reading*. That is not the way to act around this book. This book is to be *done*, not just *read*. Get a taste of this now by doing the following Discovery/Intention Statement.

NOTE: You will be invited to write Intention Statements throughout this book. After giving a particular issue some thought, you might choose to do nothing about it right now. Even when you aren't going to use an idea, you can write an intention statement like, "I intend to do nothing about this right now."

This Intention Statement can be as valuable as any other. Deliberately choosing to take no action is far more effective than letting something slip by unconsciously. Rather than letting life happen to you by default, you can make thoughtful, decisive choices about what you will and will not do.



DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

DECLARE YOUR PURPOSE AND COMMITMENT

Declaring your purpose for participating with this book sets the stage for achieving that purpose. Your purpose might be exactly the same as the one stated on page 3, somewhat different or completely different. Whatever your purpose for participating with *Human Being*, write it in the space below:

My purpose is . . .

Given your purpose, commit to completing a minimum number of exercises and Journal Entries in this book. (In total, the book includes 91 exercises and 89 Journal Entries.)

I will complete _____ exercises.

I will complete _____ Journal Entries.

Choose a sentence from the list below that represents your commitment to creating value from *Human Being*.

1. "I've got the book in my hands right now. What more do you want?"
2. "I will skim the book. I might read a few pages if they spark my interest."
3. "I will read parts of the book and consider using a suggestion or two."
4. "I will read much of the book and consider using several of the suggestions."
5. "I will read most of the book and apply many of its suggestions to my life."
6. "I will read most of the book and do a majority of the exercises and Journal Entries."
7. "I will read the entire book, constantly searching for ways to use its suggestions."
8. "I will read and participate fully with almost all of the exercises and Journal Entries."
9. "I will read and participate with the entire book more than once, each time searching for new ways to map its ideas onto my life."
10. "I will read and participate actively with this book as if the quality of my life is at stake."

If needed, I will revise sections of the book and invent new strategies based on my own experiences so that my experience with this book will dramatically improve the quality of my life.

Write your level of commitment here: _____ Today's date: _____

If none of the previous statements of commitments apply to you, write your own below.

APPLY STRATEGIES ACROSS THE BOARD

Many of the strategies suggested in this book can be used in several different situations. Listening strategies, for example, are useful at home, at work, in the grocery store, at social gatherings, or anywhere human beings relate to each other. An idea for saving money might work for saving time as well. A suggestion for improving your relationship with your partner might also transform your relationship with your boss or your congressional representative.

An advantage of applying the same strategies to two or more different aspects of life is this: We are creatures of habit, and when we change our behavior in one area of our lives, that change can easily spill over into other areas. A single change can echo throughout our lives. We can take the strategies that work in one area and apply them to another area, often with little or no modification.

The following 10 strategies offer an example. They're about possibilities for exercising more—and even liking it. The same strategies can also work for contributing your money and time to worthy projects and enjoying it to boot.

The strategies are first explained as they apply to exercise. Then the same strategies are applied to contribution.

THE JOYS OF EXERCISE

1. Recognize side benefits

Some common benefits of exercise include a longer life, increased self-esteem, fun, a healthier and trimmer body, less stress, and a clearer head for thinking.

2. If you recommend it, do it

More people recommend exercise than do it. You can be a model of a person who practices what you preach.

3. Remember that anyone can

You can avoid the trap of excuses. Age, weight, skill level, income, disability—none of these factors needs to hamper you. There are creative ways for almost anyone to exercise.

4. Remember that you have a variety of choices

Look for what you enjoy, then choose several avenues to pursue your goals. When exercising, you can pick from several different activities, from weightlifting to armchair aerobics.

5. Join with others

Support systems work. For exercise, these include health clubs, YMCA's or YWCA's, running partners, teams, jogging clubs, neighbors, friends, and many more.

6. Build up to it

One of the more common reasons people stop exercising is that their initial plans are too ambitious and they burn out. When first starting to exercise, it helps to begin with a light or moderate program and increase slowly.

7. Do enough

Do enough exercise to make a difference. Unless you do, you may feel that it wasn't worth getting dressed for a workout.

8. Give until it *almost* hurts

Exercising too much can lead to bodily injury and time away from work and family. It sometimes becomes a harmful addiction.

9. Do it regularly

You get meaningful results when exercise becomes a habit. Exercise daily or every other day. Make it part of your routine.

10. Do it from your heart

Long-lasting habits are easier to maintain when we choose them freely, without feeling obligated. The joy of movement and the pleasures of improved health lay the groundwork for regular exercise.

THE JOYS OF CONTRIBUTION

1. Recognize side benefits

Possible benefits of contributing include self-empowerment, a wider network of people and resources, increased self-esteem, a safer community, and fun.

2. If you recommend it, do it

It's common for people to say, "I'll get around to contributing when I've got extra time." Often the "extra time" never arrives. You can break this cycle by promising to contribute and aligning your actions with your words.

3. Remember that anyone can

People who are busy or people with time on their hands, people with many skills or people who seek new skills, people with a lot of money and people with little money—all can contribute.

4. Remember that you have a variety of choices

When contributing, you can give time, you can give talent, you can give money, or you can give material things. You can also give all of these.

5. Join with others

If you want to contribute, there's a world of people waiting for you to join them. This includes employee campaigns, national and global organizations, volunteer meetings, and informal partnerships with others who have similar interests.

6. Build up to it

You can start contributing by giving time and money in a way that's within your means. Start at a level you can easily afford, increase your giving each year, and develop a long-term giving budget.

7. Do enough

To derive maximum satisfaction, avoid token gestures. Give enough to make a real difference.

8. Give until it *almost* hurts

Too much contribution can drain family relationships and personal finances. The trick is to contribute with enough intensity to make a difference, yet not so much that you harm yourself. You can avoid the fate of the unemployed homeless man who said, "When I did work, I was a philanthropist, but I got carried away."

9. Do it regularly

You can contribute at regular intervals, such as through monthly payroll deductions. Over time, your gifts of time and money really add up.

10. Do it from your heart

The most genuine motives for contributing come from compassion. When we see that others are not as fortunate as we are, we then help as if they were one of "us." Generous people who stick with it for years are those who are in touch with the joy that they receive from giving.



EXERCISE

Create your own article

The previous article explained how the same strategies can apply across the board to different areas of life. You can demonstrate this phenomenon for yourself. Pick one aspect of your life that you want to improve or select an activity that you want to do with more regularity and joy. Write this topic in the space below. Then, create examples of how the strategies in the previous article fit the topic you chose.

Topic: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

THIS BOOK IS NOT FOR EVERYONE

Human Being is intended to assist already emotionally healthy people in learning to be even more successful.

Human beings face a wide range of challenges. We deal with everything from short-term upsets and simple errors in communication to long-term problems and deep emotional wounds that cry to be healed. Sometimes serious problems call for therapy, hospitalization, or medication—which are obviously beyond the scope of this book.

Human Being is recommended for already emotionally healthy people who want to be even more successful at getting what they want in their lives. It is not intended to deal with mental disorders or to be a substitute for psychotherapy. If you are severely depressed, overly anxious, or have suffered from poor physical or mental health for extended periods of time, please seek professional care.

THE DISCOVERY INTENTION JOURNAL SYSTEM

There's one way you can magnify the power of all the strategies mentioned in this book.

This is a tool you can begin using immediately, and it's one that can serve you for the rest of your life. It's called the Discovery/Intention Journal System.

Write Discovery Statements

The first aspect of this journal system is writing Discovery Statements. These are records of where you stand today. The recipe for writing a Discovery Statement is simple. Just tell the truth about what you believe, value, want, do, feel, or experience right now. Tell the truth about your current skills at experiencing happiness, sustaining health, nurturing loving relationships, and producing wealth. Also state what you want, your values, and whatever matters most to you.

Discovery Statements offer a potent way to zoom out and step back from the chaos of daily life. Through writing, we gain a wider vision. Describing our current thoughts, feelings, desires, and behaviors helps bring them into clear focus. Through writing, we can create new and useful ways to look at the issues and circumstances in our lives. We keep our values in mind. That's what Discovery Statements are all about.

Write Intention Statements

Discovery Statements are about stating where you are now. Intention Statements are about where you want to go. When you write an Intention Statement, you can commit yourself to accomplishing specific tasks. You are setting goals and planning how to achieve them.

When your discoveries lead to precise intentions, you are on the way to new results in your life—more happiness, health, love, wealth, or whatever else you value most.

Journal Entries (Discovery or Intention Statements) are scattered throughout this book. And you can write a Journal Entry at any point. Every article in this text can be the occasion for a significant discovery and intention.

Write to gain clarity

As we write Discovery and Intention Statements, the patterns in our thinking and behavior emerge into plain view. If something in our lives is not working, we can detect it with more clarity and decide how to fix it.

Keeping a daily journal can help us keep track of where we've been, where we are now, and where we're going. After a period of time, reviewing our Journal Entries might give us a reason to celebrate how much we have grown.

Sometimes making charts or graphs to monitor our behavior and accomplishments helps us stay on track. These are additional forms of Discovery Statements. An example is noting on a calendar each day we get aerobic exercise. After we've set a goal, we can count each week how many times we exercised to verify that we were successful.

Write to stay on course

Since we are such creatures of habit, change is one of the most challenging tasks we can take on. It is easy to get lost in the details of what we are doing and forget the reason we started to do it in the first place. Frequently reminding ourselves of our overall purpose and remembering the big picture of our goals can help us stay on course. Taking time to remember and to get perspective can also help us make corrections if we discover that we are off target.

Amazingly enough, it often takes no more effort to reach our goals than it does to miss them. Sometimes it even takes *less* effort to get what we want in life. Instead of worrying and fussing about not getting something accomplished, we state clearly where we are now (Discovery Statements) and decide up front where we want to go (Intention Statements). With clarity comes focused action and personal power. When we chart a specific path to our goals, it's easier to know when we're off track. We can make timely corrections in our thinking and actions to get back on course. Intention Statements are not about gritting our teeth and trying harder. We can relax and enjoy the journey.

Write to coach yourself

When we are faced with a problem in our lives, it can be helpful if we put the problem into words. We can describe the problem to someone or put it in writing, defining it as carefully as we can. Then, we can pretend that someone else is having this problem—someone we care about deeply—and write down several suggestions for this other person. Then we can step back and ask if any of these suggestions might work for us. This is one way to start being our own coaches.

Another way is to pretend that you are describing to a very wise person your circumstances. Then you can shift gears and assume the role of this wise person and listen to what you say. You don't have to know in advance what you will say. Just trust that after you've described your problem, a very wise part of you will take over and play the role of a wise person. You might be surprised at the wisdom you discover that you already have.

SEVEN DISCOVERY STATEMENT GUIDELINES

1. Discover what you want

Most of us have more energy when what we're doing leads to what we want. Many people give up on life simply because they are unclear about what they want. Writing down what we want can make it clear.

2. Record the specifics

We can observe our actions and record the facts. If we spent 90 minutes reading spy novels instead of planning our next career, we can write it down. Including the details, such as what we did, when we did it, where we did it, and how it felt, can help us remember and learn from the events.

3. Notice inner voices and pictures

We talk to ourselves constantly in our heads, and our minds manufacture pictures faster than television does.

When we notice internal chatter, we can write down what we are telling ourselves. If this seems difficult at first, just start writing. The act of writing can trigger a flood of thoughts.

Our mental pictures are especially powerful. Picturing ourselves getting fired is like rehearsing to do just that, and resisting or ignoring negative images can make them even more powerful. We can replace these voices and images with ones that move us closer to our goals.

4. Notice physical sensations

Physical sensations can alert us to useful messages. When we avoid certain problems, for example, we might notice churning stomachs, shallow breathing, or yawning. We can write our observations quickly, as soon as we become aware of them.

We can also notice how we feel when we function well. If we discover that we have more energy in the early evening hours, we can adjust our schedules. We can use Discovery Statements about how we feel to pinpoint exactly where, when, and with whom we're being most effective.

5. Use discomfort as a signal to continue

When we are writing Discovery Statements, feeling uncomfortable, uneasy, bored, or tired, might be a signal that we are about to do valuable work. It might be a signal to stick with it. We can tell ourselves that if we can handle the discomfort just a little bit longer, we will be rewarded.

We can also use Discovery Statements to cut through the layers of doubt and self-judgment that restrict most people from living an abundant life. If we start writing about a touchy or painful subject, we can resist the urge to stop writing. Sometimes the most valuable insights lie just on the other side of discomfort.

6. Suspend self-judgment

When we are discovering ourselves, we can be gentle. If we continually judge our behaviors as "bad" or "stupid" or "galactically imbecilic," sooner or later our minds will revolt. Rather than put up with the abuse, they will quit making discoveries. Being kind to ourselves empowers Discovery Statements.

7. Tell the truth

"The truth will set you free" is a cliché. It has been said so often that people say it without thinking about what it means. Using Discovery Statements can help us find out why the phrase is so well-worn. The closer we get to the truth, the more powerful our Discovery Statements will be. There *is* freedom in the truth.

SEVEN INTENTION STATEMENT GUIDELINES

1. Make intentions positive

Instead of writing, “I will not fall asleep while reading,” we write, “I intend to stay awake when I read.”

Also, avoid the word *try*. Trying is not doing. When we hedge our bets with *try* we can always tell ourselves, “Well, I *tried* to stay awake.” The result is we fool ourselves into thinking we succeeded in some way because at least we tried. We also rob ourselves of the opportunity to fail. The willingness to risk failure is one mark of a skillful human being.

2. Make intentions small and keepable

We can give ourselves the opportunity to succeed by breaking large goals into small, specific tasks we can accomplish quickly. If we want to get a new job, we can ask ourselves, “What can we do today?” Choosing to make a list of companies we want to work for could be our intention.

3. Use observable criteria for success

Choose goals that can be measured. Rather than writing, “I intend to exercise more,” write, “I intend to walk briskly from 7:00 to 8:00 a.m., Saturday.” When we use observable criteria, we can determine precisely if we accomplished what we intended when we review our progress.

4. Set timelines

Timelines can focus our attention, especially if used in conjunction with the suggestion that we make intentions small and keepable. For example, if we are asked to write long memos at work, we can break the assignment into small tasks and set precise timelines for each one. You might write, “I intend to brainstorm the main points by 9:00 a.m., Wednesday.” And remember, we create timelines for our own benefit, not to make ourselves feel guilty.

5. Be careful of intentions that depend on others

Our intentions might depend on the actions of other people. If we write that we intend to make the most money of anyone on our sales team, our success depends on how our colleagues do. Such intentions can be powerful. They might also fail, depending on how others perform. Make such intentions carefully.

Another example is intending to talk to someone on the phone tonight. Succeeding depends on that person being home. An intention over which we would have more control is, “I intend to call John before 7:00 p.m. If he is not home, I’ll call at least twice more before 10:00 p.m.” With this intention, our success depends on us alone.

6. Anticipate self-sabotage

We can take preventive action if we are aware of what we might do, consciously or unconsciously, to undermine our intentions. If your intention is to write in your journal tonight, you can be aware that your nightly habit of watching television might interfere with your intention. You can then add to your Intention Statement that you will write in your journal *before* you turn on the TV.

7. *Identify rewards*

Rewards that are natural consequences of achieving goals can be the most powerful. For example, your reward for earning a college degree might be having the career you want.

Self-selected rewards, such as a movie or an afternoon in the park, are also valuable. These rewards work best when you're willing to withhold them until you successfully achieve

your goal. If you intend to nap on Sunday afternoon whether you write to your mother or not, the nap is not an effective reward.

Another way to reward yourself is to sit quietly after you have finished your task and savor the feelings. You might notice how your body feels when you have done a good job. One reason success breeds success is that success feels good.



DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

PRACTICE THE PROCESS

Choose some area of your life that has been troublesome or that presents a consistent problem. Using the guidelines for writing Discovery Statements, write a Discovery Statement about this aspect of your life.

I discovered that I . . .

Using the guidelines for Intention Statements, describe an action you will take regarding the problem you wrote about in the preceding Discovery Statement.

I intend to . . .



E X E R C I S E

Learn from your champions

Think of three people who've made significant and positive impacts on your life. In the space below, list the names of these people and briefly list their most memorable qualities.

1. _____
(person)

(most memorable qualities)

2. _____
(person)

(most memorable qualities)

3. _____
(person)

(most memorable qualities)

Now describe in one sentence the most important things you learned from each of these people.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Describe how you could apply these lessons today.

Now write a thank you letter to each of these people. Writing these letters can be valuable whether you mail them or not.



DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

GO BEYOND THE PRINTED PAGE

Here's a procedure for inventing your own Journal Entries at any time while reading this book:

- Set aside at least 10 minutes to write.
- Summarize the chapters or articles you just read. Include your own thoughts, keeping in mind the guidelines for Discovery Statements. Ask yourself if the ideas on the page correspond to something you've directly experienced. Take a general principle and ask how it applies to you. After reading suggestions, see if you can find an example of how it has worked (or not worked) in your life.
- Write an Intention Statement based on what you've just discovered about yourself. Ask if what you've read calls for action to be taken on your part. Describe that action in concrete terms. Include the details about what you'll do: when, where, and with whom. Describe the benefit you could experience as a result of the action.

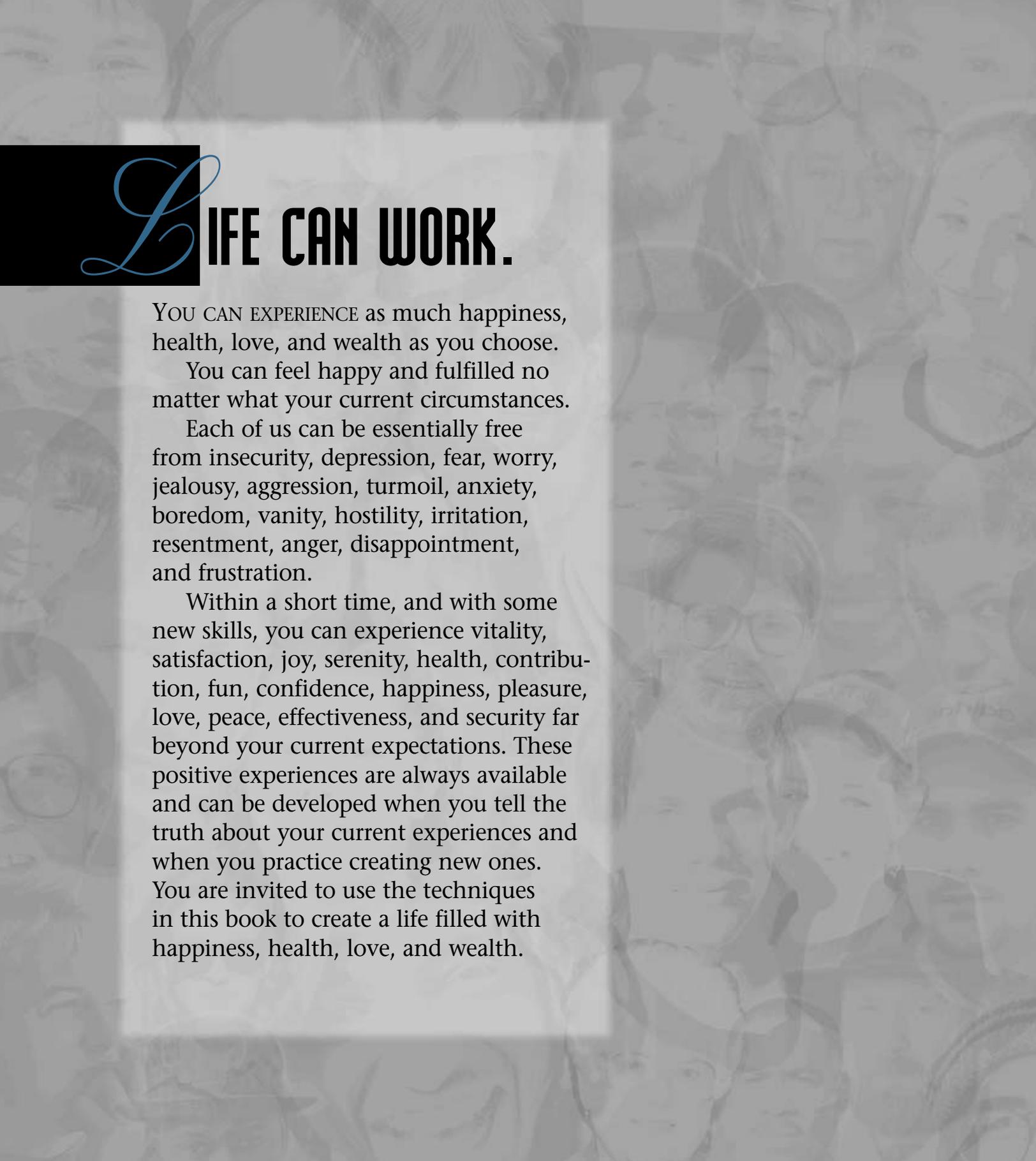
Note that the Discovery/Intention Journal System is not a once-through-and-you're-done affair. You can come back to any article in this book as many times as you want, writing Discovery and Intention Statements each time you do.

You are a source of wisdom. You have the ability to create hundreds of original strategies for increasing happiness, health, love, and wealth in your life. Journal Entries are one way to probe the endless depths of your imagination. When you write Discovery and Intention Statements, you're not just recycling the authors' ideas—you're excavating your own deepest knowledge.

Begin now. Complete the following sentences:

After reading this section of the book, the most important discovery I made is that I . . .

To follow up on what I discovered, a valuable thing I intend to do is . . .



LIFE CAN WORK.

YOU CAN EXPERIENCE as much happiness, health, love, and wealth as you choose.

You can feel happy and fulfilled no matter what your current circumstances.

Each of us can be essentially free from insecurity, depression, fear, worry, jealousy, aggression, turmoil, anxiety, boredom, vanity, hostility, irritation, resentment, anger, disappointment, and frustration.

Within a short time, and with some new skills, you can experience vitality, satisfaction, joy, serenity, health, contribution, fun, confidence, happiness, pleasure, love, peace, effectiveness, and security far beyond your current expectations. These positive experiences are always available and can be developed when you tell the truth about your current experiences and when you practice creating new ones. You are invited to use the techniques in this book to create a life filled with happiness, health, love, and wealth.

Co-authored by Dave Ellis, author of *Becoming a Master Student* which has sold over two million copies.

POWER PROCESSES

DAVE ELLIS

STAN LANKOWITZ



A MANUAL FOR HAPPINESS, HEALTH, LOVE, AND WEALTH

hundreds of ways to create a wonderful life

T a b l e o f C o n t e n t s

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OVERVIEW

This section of *Human Being* includes 21 Power Processes that explain strategies for increasing your experience of happiness, health, love, wealth, or whatever else you value. They are called Power Processes because they're rich in applications, embodying suggestions that you can use to generate new results in several areas of your life. These Power Processes are summarized in this article and then explained in detail in the following 21 chapters.

Chapter 1. Determine what you want

When our daily activities are guided by a clear vision for the future, we can be more effective.

Chapter 2. Tell the truth

When we tell the naked truth about ourselves, without shame or blame, we unleash a powerful force for change.

Chapter 3. Practice acceptance

Changing something begins with accepting the way it is right now.

Chapter 4. Examine moment-to-moment choices

The small decisions we make every day are a decisive factor in the overall quality of our lives. Treat the small stuff with care, and watch our whole life start to improve.

Chapter 5. Investigate your role

There are choices we can make under any circumstance to regain control of our lives.

Chapter 6. Focus your attention

Learning to “be here now” releases mental distractions and increases our effectiveness at any activity.

Chapter 7. Speak Candidly

When we say some of the things that we've been holding back, we can make a significant contribution to ourselves and others.

Chapter 8. Make and keep promises

Making promises that stretch us to meet our potential is an immediate way to raise the quality of our lives.

Chapter 9. Surrender

Sometimes the most effective way to deal with the challenges of our lives is to give up control and trust that help is forthcoming.

Chapter 10. Keep looking for answers

Going beyond the first solution we find can create a world of new possibilities.

Chapter 11. Notice your expectations

One path to happiness is releasing our pictures of how life ought to be.

Chapter 12. Listen fully

Paying close attention to others, to ourselves, and even to our environment can teach us more than the wisest sage. Practicing this type of listening is both rare and extremely valuable.

Chapter 13. Enjoy

Maximum effectiveness can come from maximum fun.

Chapter 14. Detach and play full out

We can care a lot about the people and projects in our lives. At the same time, we can keep the whole game in perspective and not worry about winning or losing.

Chapter 15. Choose your conversations

What we talk about and who we associate with play a surprising role in how effective we are.

Chapter 16. Revise your habits

Learning and adopting a systematic method for changing habits is an efficient way to erase unnecessary suffering from our lives.

Chapter 17. Appreciate mistakes

When we know how to learn from them, mistakes can be powerful and patient teachers.

Chapter 18. Choose courageously

Fears need not stop us from doing what we choose to do.

Chapter 19. Manage your associations

When we link a desired new behavior to pleasure, we can establish it with a minimum of struggle.

Chapter 20. Contribute

When we move from getting to giving, we discover a source of joy and our problems shrink by comparison.

Chapter 21. Define your values, align your actions

Effective living is enhanced when we are clear about our fundamental values and then make choices consistent with them.

Determine what you want

→ *In this chapter you'll find.*

The power of vision.

Once we know what we want, we're well on the way to getting it.

Consider the role of goals: Discovery/Intention Statement.

Consider the role that written goals have played in your life.

Write your life purpose-exercise.

Spend five minutes drafting a one-sentence statement of the purpose of your life.

Write your eulogy-exercise.

Write down what you'd like to be said in your eulogy. Consider what new light this exercise sheds on your values.

Create your lifeline-exercise.

One powerful way to determine what you want is to consider what you'd like to see happen during your entire lifetime.

Reflect on your lifeline: Discovery/Intention Statement.

After you've completed a lifeline, consider what your lifeline reveals about you.

Add details to your lifeline-exercise.

After listing your three most important lifetime goals, begin planning how to achieve them.

Experience the freedom of planning.

Planning puts us in charge of our lives, reveals opportunities, renews us, allows excitement, and stamps out resignation.

If you want it, rehearse.

One way to get what we want is to clearly visualize and imagine our success before we achieve our goals.

Stage a mental rehearsal-exercise.

Mentally rehearse one of your upcoming activities in great detail. Then describe how this exercise affected your actual performance.

Say that you've arrived—for a minute-exercise.

Imagine that you woke up this morning as the person you always wanted to be. From that place, choose how to spend the rest of your day.



THE POWER OF VISION

Imagine a person who walks up to a counter at the airport to buy a plane ticket for his next vacation. “Just give me a ticket,” he says to the reservation agent. “Anywhere will do.”

The agent stares back at him incredulously. “I’m sorry, sir,” he replies, “I’ll need some more details. Just minor things—such as the name of your destination city and your arrival and departure dates.”

“Oh, I’m not fussy,” says the would-be vacationer. “I just want to get away. You just choose for me.”



DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

CONSIDER THE ROLE OF GOALS

After considering the role that written goals have played in your life, write a Discovery Statement. Complete the sentences below:

Regarding my own history of putting goals in writing, I’ve discovered that I . . .

Regarding the practical value of putting goals in writing, I believe that . . .

Compare this to another traveler who walks up to the counter and says, “I’d like a ticket to Ixtapa, Mexico, departing on Saturday, March 23 and returning Sunday, April 15. I’d like a window seat, coach class, with vegetarian meals.” Then ask yourself which traveler is more likely to end up at a place he would enjoy.

Knowing where we want to go increases the probability that we will arrive at our destination. This is especially useful in achieving our goals to experience happiness, health, love, and wealth. Once our goals are defined precisely, our brains reorient our thinking and behavior to align with those goals. Once we know where we want to go, we’re well on the way.

Ask two people what they want in life. One says, “I just hope to be happy, somehow.” Another says, “I want to become financially independent in 10 years so that I can devote my time to writing a novel and working with homeless people.” It’s not hard to guess who is more likely to realize her goals.

You can begin now to bring your dreams into sharp focus. You can take actions that define your overall direction in life. Completing the exercises and Discovery/Intention Statement that follow will get you started.



E X E R C I S E

Create your lifeline

One powerful way to determine what you want is to consider what you'd like to see happen during your entire lifetime. You can even look beyond your lifetime if you choose. Creating a lifeline offers one way to do this.

To get the most out of this exercise, be willing to let it move you. Among the thousands of people who've done this exercise, many have reported it to be a life-changing event. Some have even wept. (Know, too, that the lifeline exercise can be effective even if it does not raise this level of emotion in you.)

1. Begin by taking a blank sheet of paper and orienting it horizontally. For ease in writing, you might want to use a larger-than-notebook-size sheet, such as an 11x17.
2. Draw a horizontal line across the middle of your paper. This is your lifeline. It represents the approximate number of years you'll be alive.
3. On the far left end of the line, draw a dot and label it with your date of birth.
4. Estimate how long you might live. Then place a dot somewhere near the far right end of the line and label it with your projected date of death. As you project the length of your life, take

into account the relative factors, such as your health habits (exercise, nutrition, seat belt use, and so on). Also consider the average life span of your family members.

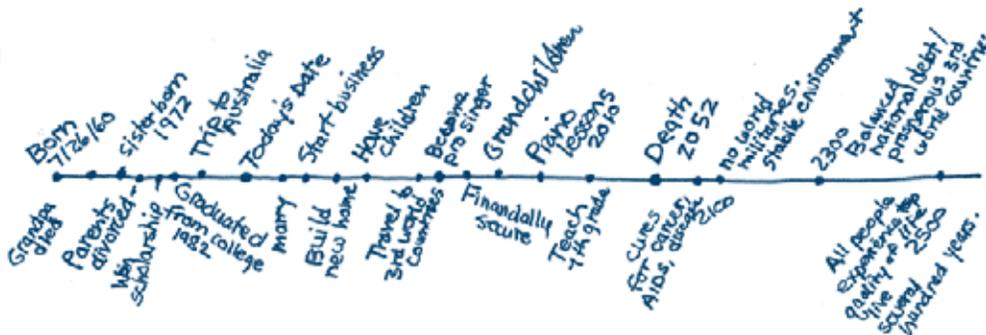
Note: Do not place your date of death at the extreme right-hand edge of the line. Leave some space on the line for goals that exceed your life span. Give yourself a few minutes to complete this step. Allow a few moments for the reality of your death to sink in.

5. Next, place a dot on your lifeline that represents today's date. Label it.

6. At appropriate points to the left of today's date, plot some significant events in your life. Examples include graduation from school, marriage, career changes, birth of children, deaths of relatives, and so on. Take at least 10 minutes for this part of the exercise.

7. Now set goals for the future. Do this by adding dots to the right of today's date. These points on your lifeline represent what you'd like to be, do, or have in the future. Take at least 10 minutes for this part of the exercise.

During this step you might find yourself drawing a blank. Consider this to be a temporary "planner's block." It's a signal that your creative juices are just about to flow, that great ideas are getting ready to explode to the surface. For most of us, reflecting on the meaning and scope of our lives is a new experience. Allow some time to let the process work.



8. Finish your session by considering what you want to have happen after you die. You might include goals for your family, friends, workplace, city, community, state, country, and world. Be willing to set goals that extend far into the future—50 years, 100 years, and beyond.

One of the advantages of this exercise is that it allows you to set goals in the context of your entire life. You get to consider the whole span of your individual life and even beyond. You might also find that remembering significant events in your past prompts you to make certain choices for the future.

For instance, you might choose to renew an old relationship or finish an uncompleted project.

You can repeat this exercise many times, at intervals ranging from once a month to once a decade. Each time you create a lifeline, you can gain new insights into the past and create a new vision for your future. Look at your lifeline as a living document—one that changes as you learn and grow.

As you do this exercise, you can allow the artist within you to emerge. Add colors to your lifeline. Draw pictures that depict significant events. Also color-code the events on your line. For example, you might choose different colors for different categories of goals.



DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

REFLECT ON YOUR LIFELINE

After you've completed your lifeline, think about it for a few more minutes. Consider what you've learned from this exercise and what your lifeline reveals about you. Complete the following sentences:

While doing my lifeline, I was surprised to discover that I . . .

Doing my lifeline taught me that the things I most value in life include . . .

Of the goals I've selected for the future, the three most important are . . .



E X E R C I S E

Add details to your lifeline

After listing your three most important goals in the previous Discovery Statement, plan how to achieve them. Following is one way to do so.

Draw a separate lifeline for each goal. On the far left end of each line, put today's date. On the far right end, write your goal and assign it a date. Between these two points, note the sub-goals you might set. For example, if you want to get a graduate degree by a certain date, set a date for applying to a college, choosing a major, securing financial aid, registering for classes, and so on.

EXPERIENCE THE FREEDOM OF PLANNING

Planning allows us to live with more freedom, and if we want to start enjoying new results in our lives, planning helps produce them. If we want to start enjoying more happiness, health, wealth, and love, making concrete plans moves us in that direction.

Planning is about being precise when it comes to the overall thrust of our years on this planet. Talk to some people about this and they'll recoil at the very thought. "I want to be free and spontaneous," they object. "Planning is too restrictive. The very thought of it makes me uptight."

Consider the possibility that planning and spontaneity go together. With a plan, you know what needs doing today, this week, this month, and this year. You know the contours of your schedule—the times when you can relax and play and the times when you're committed to being on task.

Planning does not mean that you have to be busier or more harried than you are now. It means that you get the maximum value from every activity you choose to do, since you understand how each activity contributes to your overall mission. It can actually take less time to achieve our goals than to miss them, because we often invest more time worrying about the goal than it takes to roll up our sleeves and get

the job done. Planning and then taking action can actually leave more time for relaxing, goofing off, or taking part in any new project that comes along.

Planning can help us find the surest path and the shortest route to our dreams. With the time we save as a result, we can actually gain breathing space and the freedom of spontaneity.

Planning allows us to be proactive

A plan is a scheme for doing something. It is a draft for achieving some result, a map for reaching some destination, an outline for taking some intended course of action, or a design for creating something new.

Many people have desires and many never satisfy them. When goals remain general and vague, they often remain mere wishes. When wishes are translated into plans, they turn into clear intentions to act. Translating our goals into specific steps helps us shift our thinking from “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if . . . ” to “Here’s what I want and this is what I intend to do about it.”

Many of us are so busy with crises and other urgent matters that we spend little time planning. The furnace isn’t working, the kids need a ride to the game, the report is due on Monday, we’re out of milk, the insurance payment is due this month—the list goes on and on.

In the midst of our hectic lives, we might plan for short-range goals—what to serve for dinner or where to go on vacation. Yet we may seldom get around to the big picture of our lives. We miss out on finding a quiet, relaxing place and thoughtfully inquiring into what we want, who we are, and where we’re headed for the rest of our lives. Without that inquiry, life can seem shallow and aimless.

When we react only to immediate demands and plan only for short-range goals, we can end up drifting. We are attracted to this, repelled by that, pushed here, pulled there. While we bounce from project to project in random fashion, we can fail to make significant progress in any one direction.

Planning presents a powerful alternative. When we plan, we are not simply reacting to whatever life throws at us. Planning makes us proactive. We create a path, channel our energies, and tap slumbering potentials. Rather than merely reacting to circumstances, we are preparing to take advantage of them and use them in ways that further our goals.

Planning makes opportunities clear

Life offers countless opportunities and resources for achieving our aims. When our goals are explicit and clearly defined, we can hone in on the relevant stimuli.

Say that you read a newspaper article about the increasing number of two-income families. If you’re without a comprehensive plan for your life, you might conclude the idea has little meaning or use.

This can be different if you read the article with a plan in mind. Perhaps you’re dissatisfied with your current job and have been thinking about starting a new business. When you read the article, you might wonder if there is a need for more daycare facilities in the community. You could explore the possibility of starting a new daycare center. You might even expand this idea and wonder if there is a market for a nationally franchised daycare business.

As you continue to think about a daycare business, you might notice a group of retired people sitting on lawn chairs in front of their home. Some of them might adore children and make wonderful daycare employees.

With a plan, circumstances that would otherwise appear meaningless can become opportunities to improve the quality of our lives.

Planning renews us

Sometimes it seems that there is not enough time to plan. It might even seem irresponsible to take time for planning.

When working hard to handle pressing issues, we often feel as if we're on task and accomplishing something. Tangible results are being produced, and we experience a sense of satisfaction. Planning can seem intangible, failing to offer the same sense of accomplishment.

This line of reasoning is flawed. It's much like saying that we are too busy chopping wood to sharpen the axe.

Once we have planned, we can dive into our work knowing that we are making the most effective use of our time. When we have a plan, it can actually take less time and energy to reach a goal. Charging thoughtlessly into activity with the vague hope that we'll get where we want to go can be highly inefficient.

Planning allows excitement

Some people see planning as a dreaded, dry activity that stifles creativity, eliminates spontaneity, and destroys excitement. They envision tedious charts, boring meetings, and constraining schedules.

There is an alternative. Planning can be seen as a way to help ensure happiness and enhance excitement. Planning is a creative adventure during which we design our lives. We can mentally rehearse the future, avoid costly errors, and increase the odds that our visions will become reality.

Planning stamps out resignation

It's easy to fall into the trap of resignation. We are told that many areas of life are complicated and that it's best to let the experts handle them. We're often told that it's smart to let others make decisions for us. We trust our cars to mechanics, our bodies to physicians, our children to educators, and our spiritual lives to

members of the clergy. These choices often make sense. The problem begins when we become resigned and then delegate blindly. Many people allow daily choices about everything from foods to furniture to be determined by advertising.

Our resignation is reinforced when we witness events that seem beyond our control. Faced with global catastrophes, inefficient bureaucracies, and unresponsive governments, we can discount our ability to make much of a difference. We give up. We resign. This mentality easily seeps into our personal lives: "Well, there's not much I can do about this job (or this relationship or this problem). I'll just make the best of a bad deal."

Many people fail to reach goals for the simple reason that they have no goals. And even when they do have goals, they might not have concrete plans to reach them. Resignation and a "why bother" attitude are a natural result.

There are probably several antidotes to resignation. One of them is planning. It is difficult to plan and be resigned at the same time. Planning invites exploration of purpose and inquiry into possibilities. It helps us generate energy that can be used to create new ideas.

Where there is a plan, there are possibilities. Where there are possibilities, there is hope. Where there is hope, there is energy and enthusiasm. Where there is energy and enthusiasm, there can be action.

Planning is already a part of our lives.

We already know how to plan. We do it all the time. Consider how we take a vacation, buy a car, clean a house, or shop for groceries. Each of these activities involves forethought. They call for some preparation to take actions in a certain sequence. Many of our activities, from getting dressed to making a business investment, require some level of planning. We make hundreds of plans every day. By refining and improving the planning skills we already have, we can increase our chances of reaching significant goals.

Warning: Planning can be overdone

Like most of the other strategies in this book, planning can be used inappropriately. Sometimes it's fine to be totally spontaneous and not plan a thing. At times it is appropriate to say, "OK. Enough planning. It's time to move into action. Let's go." Balance is the key.

In general, most of us spend too little time planning. We have a long way to go before needing to worry about planning that is getting out of control.



The secret of success is constancy of purpose.

—BENJAMIN DISRAELI

IF YOU WANT IT—REHEARSE

Mentally rehearsing with affirmations and visualizations can help us align our behaviors with the outcomes we desire. This process can be compared to how an invisible magnetic force aligns iron filings into a precise pattern.

Suppose that we want to organize randomly scattered iron filings on a piece of paper into an oval-like pattern. We could get a magnifying glass and a pair of fine tweezers and manually position the filings, one at a time, in the desired pattern. It makes more sense to put a magnet under the paper. The iron filings will respond to the magnetic field and align naturally into the desired pattern. Similarly, if we want to make a change in our life, rehearsing mentally is like creating a force field that helps us align our behaviors with the change we want to make.

Assume that a woman becomes interested in playing tennis and chooses to make this activity a regular part of her life. One of the most effective strategies she can use to make this change is to mentally rehearse playing tennis. She can picture what she will look like out on the court in her new tennis outfit. She might smile as she remembers the smell of opening new tennis balls. She can imagine the feel of the racquet in her hand and the warm breeze in her hair. She might repeat a daily affirmation that she is alert and responds quickly to her opponent's swing. She can remember the sound of the racquet hitting the ball as she serves powerfully and accurately. She can rehearse returning the ball with a strong, graceful backhand. And, she can

