

“Everyone’s Child”

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Introduction

Inside of each story lies an intertwined perspective of who we are becoming, what we want to become, and why we stand still. Growing up, things seemed so different. As a child, following a parents' directions was expected. It was respect shown or preparation for a heavy handed consequence. Parents got to know the teachers, your friend's parents, and the community you lived in. When outside, the neighbors were just as accountable and as strict as your parents, taking pride in having a hand in helping raise a child as the role of their own. The pain was relatable. There was no choice but to walk a path of understanding as each one child became everyone's child.

Communication has changed, yet I am constantly learning more about myself and others through this misguided communication of sorts. Accountability and discipline seem to be emphasized with criticism. Attitudes are growing more intense with expectations, while less respect is met at the end of each path. Critical thinking skills are more often questioned instead of prompted, and social media has created a misconceived ability to help its users find truth behind the information of someone or something other than their own reality. Adulthood overpowers mixed emotions of expectations and purpose. Written from the transformative perspective of your parents, their children, and the child who navigates today's world tomorrow; this book will help all of us discover understanding of what is important, while creating our own legacy. We are all in a race to the finish line, understood not by the journey that defines us, but instead by this very moment which has no moving parts.

None of us are lifeless. We just need a connection; a healthy perspective finding its way through the idea that each one of us is capable of finding a better place inside of ourselves. Embedded at the end of each chapter, a story, submerged behind the perspective provided before it.

Chapter 1: Eat With Me, but Don't Throw It at Me

I am trying to live in an emotional space where I tell myself that I will not get offended by anyone else. Judge me and critique me, but at the end of the day I will just keep telling myself that judging me is easy for you because you really don't want to know me. You will relay the gossip that you hear about me, but I know exactly where it's coming from. Instead of overreacting, I will continue to tell myself that no words offered my way will offend me. I may harden my emotions and perhaps at times, shut down all together. The old me would normally not react in such a quiet manner for a peaceful resolve, but I know that there is a healthier place I should live where I do not get offended, nor use that opportunity to offend you. It would be easy for me to give energy to pass judgement on things I have not gone through or people I do not know.

I understand that communicating means that I must be willing to open myself up to you in order to be vulnerable. I ask that if I am going to do this, you also allow yourself to be vulnerable. There have been many times that I have failed, but we both have weaknesses which are vulnerable. When you see the vulnerability in me, I ask that you reach into understanding me instead of constantly breaking me down. If you have mercy on me, I will conquer my judgement of you. I won't be offended by you and I promise never to seek judgement.

If we agree to disagree on things, neither of us will try to force our point. If you cannot do this, it will be hard for me to listen. I want to listen to your point of view, but at times it seems you never respect mine. By interrupting me when I am speaking, you are automatically shooting down my ideas. If you value my opinion and want me to change, trust that the transformation can take place over time. I want us to find mutual grounds to stand on, not just stand here while you continue to throw things at me.

Understanding Criticism

Criticism is inevitable and we will not avoid it. We are prideful and will become pessimistic when we are criticized. The only way to avoid criticism is to put ourselves in a shell and ignore growth. Many times we will develop a shell and become bitter when someone criticizes us. Self-pity and self-anger will hold us in the same place, but taking a chance will open opportunities. Don't be devastated by criticism. Have you ever felt like the person criticizing you was doing so because they were jealous, insecure, wanted to make you sweat the small stuff? Could they actually be criticizing us because they want to bring out the best in us? Perhaps it's not the actual critique, but the refusal on our part to accept the criticism to gain valuable insight towards our actions. How can we not retaliate and cope with criticism while being positively optimistic? Constructive criticism is what brings direction and an action plan together. It is this type of criticism that brings respect and trust between people. If we remain constructive in our criticism, positive results will most likely occur. Our tone will play a big part in our constructive criticism. When we are aggressive with our constructive criticism, it will be hard for the other person to receive it openly without being defensive.

If our tone is aggressive, consider that we may not even listen to what others have to say. If we do not approach constructive criticism with a positive tone, people may not want to work with us, or, because they will feel everything they do will be judged negatively. Everyone listens differently even with constructive criticism. It is important to feed positive outcomes into negative conversations. Not all criticism we receive is constructive.

If we are receiving deconstructive criticism, consider who the person is. Our first thought is that the other person is trying to hurt us. They have created a tense situation by trying to hurt our self-esteem or make us feel guilty. Nothing we do seems to be

right. This has pushed us into a resentful position, and our first reaction is to shut down. Does this person giving deconstructive criticism have a hidden agenda? Don't be afraid to let them talk and express their concern while looking deeper into their agenda. Whether constructive or deconstructive criticism, if we learn not to take it personal, we will always come out on top. The hardest thing to do right now when someone's tone is aggressive with us is to remove our feelings from the situation. Yes, they may be out of line, but we have the power to keep the conversation in check. When we don't react with emotions, the other person is put in a tough position. They can either back down and away, or they can continue to push us. By managing our emotions, we will actually be able to manage our stress and they won't be able to push very far. Now that we understand what type of criticism may be coming our way, we can address it with communication.

"Being understood and loved means that you have to add an ounce of accountability, a teaspoon of acceptance, all without a gallon of expectation.

Activity 1: Deal With It

The next time you are being criticized, understand what you are being told and decide if there is truth behind the criticism. If there is truth behind it, prepare to address it, but if it is deconstructive criticism, stand there and absorb it with a smile. Either way, thank the person for their criticism. Remove your feelings from the criticism and focus on the critique itself. How did you handle the criticism? Did you throw up defensive walls because you didn't want to hear what was said? Are you going to make excuses? Are you going to head towards an action plan, and if so; how?

Activity 2: Create Your Mechanisms

In this activity, you are going to choose one mechanism and focus your attention the whole day using that responsive mechanism. Choose 1 mechanism including: 1) Resisting the temptation to shut down or fight back; or 2) Practicing detachment. Whichever mechanism you choose, you should use that same mechanism as your response in every criticism whether someone criticizes you while you are driving, at work, at home, or on the phone.

Please note that you will learn all about how to verbally and non-verbally communicate effectively in the next 3 chapters. After reading those chapters, challenge yourself you revisit this activity and apply the different methods of communication to express shut down, fighting back, or committing yourself to detachment.

Maggie's Story

Maggie, a late 40's single mom, raising an 11th grade daughter, was starting a fresh new day. The weekend was busy, but Maggie was ready for a smooth start from a busy weekend. The year had been tough leading up to this point with a very messy divorce three years earlier and the loss of her parents in an automobile accident that same year. Maggie's daughter, Sara, had changed emotionally since the divorce. Sara before was an upbeat student-athlete, giving her time to help at the local community shelter and with the youth group in their church; but since the divorce, Sara wanted nothing to do with her church and helping others. Maggie didn't push Sara to get involved as she herself stopped doing many of the community activities. Sara had always questioned why her dad had left both she and her mother to fend for themselves. With no communication from her father, Sara felt as though she wasn't loved. Most of her time was spent in her room with the door closed. In the previous months, Maggie's days had revolved around her daughters' extracurricular activities, but now she felt as though she was losing her daughter.

Maggie's job as an administrative assistant for a top advertising company in Denver was stressful; but Maggie felt she had no other options. She needed the money, and knew that it was the only thing keeping both she and Sara afloat. By now Maggie was living a repetitive schedule where she didn't want to deal with many of her co-workers. She knew that her boss, George McCathy, would always have something negative to say to her at work. Maggie always felt that her boss had no respect for what she did, but in the back of her mind, she knew that her value to the company was priceless. As Maggie entered the 35 story building, she felt uneasy about the day. She had not slept well the night before and her head was throbbing. As Maggie entered the lobby of the building, she had hoped that her boss would be late to his office so that she would have some down time to decompress before the stressful week. As she waited for the elevator doors to open, all she could think about was how messy the house looked when she walked out the door this morning. The weekend had flown by and neither Maggie nor Sara did any cleaning.

As the elevator doors opened, Maggie stepped in between a crowd of people, already prepared to head up to their offices. Doors closing, a hand reached in to catch the doors. It was Maggie's boss. As he entered the elevator, he found an open spot next to Maggie. Without a hello, a slight glance and frown sent her way, the two of them stood in a small space that felt like a sea of people. Maggie wondered if her boss would even acknowledge her. Mr. McCathy was a mild mannered, mid 50's man who always seemed to be stressed. He had been divorced two times and had one child named Noah. As the two of them stood in the elevator, M. McCathy stood still with his head buried in his phone. Up 24 floors and not one motion of eye contact made with her boss; Maggie began fuming. Common decency should prevail, she thought. As the doors opened, Maggie aggressively

brushed past her boss on the 24th floor and headed towards their office.

As she entered and sat at her cubicle to begin her day, Maggie couldn't help but think about all of the things that needed to be done when she got back home. "Maggie", Mr. McCathy, the same man who had paid her no attention in the elevator. "Coming sir", she responded as she got up and briskly walked towards his office. As Maggie entered her bosses' office, she noticed the papers sprawled all over his desk. They were the same papers she had just organized the week prior with stickie notes, paper clips, and neatly placed into folders. "Why isn't this paperwork organized correctly? Don't you know how to organize and file all our projects," shouted Mr. McCathy. Before Maggie could even respond, her boss ran his arm across the table and brushed all of the papers onto the floor. "This is unacceptable. The projects are not filed correctly." Maggie, usually a calm woman, was now boiling. She knew that she had filed all of the projects correctly last week, but her boss mixed all of the files together on his desk. As she kneeled down to pick up the papers, Maggie mumbled, "if only you weren't such a jerk, I wouldn't have to clean up your mess every time." "What did you say", asked Mr. McCathy. "Nothing", Maggie responded as she stood up with the papers and carried them back to her desk.

As the day progressed, Maggie sorted through and organized the project files, just as she had done before. Though, tired, Maggie was determined to prove her boss wrong by organizing the files even better. It was almost 3pm and the day was winding down. As Maggie sat on the phone, speaking with a client, her boss came out of his office. "Maggie, these project files should have pink sticky notes instead of yellow sticky notes. You can't remember that I like pink sticky notes on the top left of the paper, not the top right? And when you use the copy machine, please make sure that you hit clear after you make copies. When I went to make copies, I had to figure out that the cue was not cleared. When you

enter the records into the computer, don't put them in the office folder. I didn't tell you that, but its common sense." Maggie had enough. She couldn't believe that her boss was speaking to her like this with such deconstructive criticism while she was on the phone with their client.

"Do we need to continue this conversation later", asked the voice on the other end of the phone. "Absolutely not", responded Maggie. "We cherish your business and I will get you the contract this afternoon". As Maggie hung up the phone, all she could think about was how rude her boss was while she was on the phone. Maggie was completing a big deal for Mr. McCathy and the company; yet he didn't think twice to interrupt her conversation while berating her. Maggie was ready to quit, but as a single mother and her daughter Sara going through so many things, she knew that leaving the company was not an option right now. Maggie had always felt a stronger calling where she was respected for her hard work at a new employer. She knew that it would be a matter of time before she would lose it as the administrative assistant at her current job; would scream at Mr. McCathy, and storm out of that office building for good. Maggie told herself that something needed to change, and that change would need to be this week.

It was nearing 3:30pm and Maggie began packing her bag to head home at 4pm. Frustrated with how the day had gone up to this point, Maggie picked up the phone and called Sara's cell phone to check on her. After 5 rings, the phone went to voicemail. Maggie, becoming annoyed, called again, and again; 5 rings and straight to voicemail. Maggie slammed the phone down and picked it back up, this time dialing the home number. As the phone rang, all Maggie could think about was how insensitive her boss had treated her all day and how she deserved so much more respect than the little bit she had been given at work.

Mr. McCathy reemerged from his office and asked Maggie to come see him. “Maggie, you are doing an excellent job with keeping this office running smoothly. I spoke to you very inappropriately earlier and I apologize.” As Maggie tried to analyze what she just heard, she replied, “Mr. McCathy, I enjoy working for this company and you are truly keeping us moving in the right direction”. With a pat on Mr. McCathy’s back, Maggie was ready to head home and attack her situation with Sara.

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Chapter 2: Between You And I

The question isn't whether I communicate; it is whether you listen. I know that we have different ways of communicating. My parents communicated with me differently; and their parents communicated differently with them. Children communicate differently than adults, and adults communicate differently with one another. All I ask is that you listen when I communicate with you. I try to communicate my feelings with you most of the time and for some reason we end up not understanding each other. I try to explain my situation but I can tell you just don't understand my perspective. I feel like I make myself clear, but something makes me feel like we are not connecting in our conversations. I feel at times that you would rather hear what I don't say instead of what I do say. Between you and me, we both have a lot of work to do communicating with one another.

When you raise your voice, it doesn't help how we communicate with each other. That causes me to shut down, and I know that it doesn't help either one of us. When I do not speak my thoughts or intentions, it's not because I am trying to withhold anything; it's because I don't feel we are connecting on the same page with our communication. It feels like you are going to dismiss what I have to say because you don't take me seriously. My actions end up speaking on my behalf which is a misrepresentation of what I truly want to say. Between you and me, the solution to our communication problems is unclear; but I do know that I am tired of holding my feelings inside. We are just in different places, in different seasons in our lives.

Progressive Verbal Communication Methods

Our thoughts are sometimes holding us back from communicating correctly. We wanted to say one particular thing to someone; a thought or even a frustration that ended up coming out completely wrong. Something held us back; possibly the thought of the repercussions of what we might say. What if we were able to attach progressive verbal communication methods to our conversations so that we felt comfortable communicating any scenario; causing more meaningful conversations without having to always communicate in a stance and defend position.

The first progressive verbal communication method to implement is influential love. This method allows us to positively change how we view our communication from a stance and defend, to a cause and effect. Communicating love directly to our friends, our family, and even our enemies will create an entrusted experience for everyone because when disagreements occur, we will be more cognitive in our response. Communicating to the other person with continuous love and kindness allows the other person to hear respect in our conversation. This understanding allows us to be heard clearly through our perspective without the other person feeling defensive.

The second progressive verbal communication method to use is productive respect. For some, it is important to have the first word all the time; while for others, having the last word is necessary. Respect is so much more than earning (being heard); it is how we provide it throughout the conversation. We shouldn't be afraid to listen first; but this means turning off our negative senses of detachment and turning on our positive senses of perspective. Provide a clear path to what the other person is saying and find a way to listen all the way through. End with respecting the other person's opinion while finding a way back to the progressive verbal communication method of love. Sometimes finding our way back to love after respect in a

conversation is the healthiest thing for the conversation. This helps everyone understand that the conversation has different points of view and that both sides see value in the others point. However, when respect cannot find its way back to love, it is important to use the third progressive communication method.

The third and final progressive verbal communication method to implement is forgiveness. When we communicate forgiveness, we are opening the idea that although in disagreement, we will find a balance of where the conversation ended, and where the other person's perspectives may be headed. We begin to understand that we don't see things the same as someone else, but within the method of communicating forgiveness, and create balance in that moment. While forgiveness can be the hardest of the three methods to demonstrate, it is the most dynamic. It shows a combination of love and respect. Forgiveness within communication raises awareness of both our personal internal views and external output reflections. Using this verbal communication method prevents us from verbally attacking the conversation.

Let's take a step back for a moment and think about how many times a conversation was not clear. Should we have placed more emphasis on getting our response in or using a progressive verbal communication method to help with both the timing and direction of the conversation? When we need to be candid with someone, or a problem needs direct communication, no matter how badly it hurts their feelings, we feel obligated to respond. It is this type of conversation which requires all 3 progressive verbal communication methods; but in order to use these methods, we have to learn how to mirror the conversation without directing interpretation or assumptions.

If we commit to waiting until the other person is finished speaking, and then mirror what they said back to them by starting with something like, "so what I hear you saying is ...", or "are you

saying”, we will be able to apply the necessary progressive verbal communication methods. Remember, communication is the tool used to redirect the journey. There is an extrinsic direction we must all take in order to reach our internal destination. While many of our thoughts are driven by interpretation and assumptions, leaning towards the most positive outcome is what defines our purpose in how we communicate. The mild dangers here are that many times there is no solid evidence to our interpretation or assumption. It may truly take a lifetime to understand how to progressively verbally communicate positive outcomes which align our interpretations and assumptions, but integrating these three progressive methods of communication with our approach of first impression will bring us a lot closer.

First Impressions & Para-Verbal Cues

In order to change the direction of your communication, we must take a look at our first impressions. Some would say that being standoffish can be taken as cold, while making too much eye contact can be considered threatening. How do we find a common ground where neither of these things reflect their non-verbal meaning? The answer is quite simple; implement para-verbal cues before beginning the progressive verbal communication methods of love, respect, and forgiveness. This cue incorporates body language, voice pitch, and talking speed. Non-verbal cues create an introduction to how the other person receives the conversation. This is generally conveyed through facial expressions, body posture, and hand gestures. “I love this”, emphasized by your body language; “I respect you”, emphasized by the tone of your voice; or “I forgive you”, emphasized by hand gestures. The destination of each conversation is continually changing because we are introducing the para-verbal cues, then steering the progressive verbal communication methods.

Expressing our needs, wants, and concerns is important when reaching those unavoidable problems that just need to be

addressed. Whether sitting with a child, discussing with a spouse, or in a heated discussion, it is important to think about the other persons “efficiency timing”. This is the timing when we look deeper at the pattern of the person’s emotions. By understanding the other person’s efficiency timing, we can actually avoid confrontations and have meaningful conversations. This takes a lot of patience as we may be used to speaking our words wherever we feel necessary. While understanding response and efficiency timing is important, how we utilize our progressive verbal communication methods is highly important.

1-1-2 Communication Rule

When it is difficult to find positive words in a negative space, we may need to apply the practice of the 1-1-2 rule. This communication involves a para-verbal introductory cue; followed by (one) positive progressive verbal communication method; followed by another para-verbal introductory cue; followed by the (one) negative problem; followed by (two) positive progressive verbal communication methods. This system flows very easily into a general conversation. Let’s say we are mad at our daughter because her room is a complete mess and we are tired of telling her over and over again to clean her room. Our para-verbal approach with her may include a smile and giving her a hug; then backing her up in a safe space where you are close enough but she has room if she wants to get in her stance and defend position. Our first positive progressive verbal communication method may be love. For example, “Emma I love you so much and you always make me smile”. The negative infraction might say, “But right now I am so frustrated with how your room looks”. We should stop there and find another para-verbal cue. Maybe we softened the tone during our negative infraction; or our body motion shifted to a sulk showing that we feel her pain of disappointment. Whatever is done, we don’t want to keep adding on to the negative infraction with other negatives (i.e. with stuff everywhere, your bed never made, your closet is a mess, etc.).

Now follow with a positive progressive verbal communication. Our method this time may be respect. For example, "I have so much respect for you because it is normally clean"; or "I respect the fact that you have so many other things going on". Finally, use the third progressive verbal communication. In this instance, we may use forgiveness. For example, "If you clean your room now and can remember to keep it clean without me asking, I promise to stop nagging you."

"Love, respect, and forgiveness are only a word until you make a conscious effort to communicate dynamic change through your actions."

Activity 1: Progressive Verbal Communication

As human beings, we always seem to be on the go. For 30 minutes, take some time with someone to look at them, without any distractions, and practice progressive verbal communication. This means find something positive in your communication as it relates to something about the other person. Make sure it includes the word love (i.e. I love how you take the initiative to stay on top of things), respect (i.e. I respect how you reminded me not to text and drive), and forgive (i.e. I hope that you can forgive me for yelling the other day when I got upset with you). Practice this activity for a full 30 minutes. This means have a lengthy conversation using each progressive verbal communication method.

"Random moments of your communication today can shape your whole life tomorrow."

Activity 2: The 1-1-2 Communication Rule

Pick something that you have always had to bring up and really frustrates you. Figure out your 2 para-verbal cues, how to address the negative point, and your 3 best progressive verbal communication methods. Pick a time to sit down face to face during the other persons "efficiency timing". This activity cannot be done via text or over the phone call. Try to implement all of your 1-1-2 communication along with the para-verbal cues, before the other person interjects. When you are finished, look them directly in the eye and do not say anything. Keep in mind that the way you put the other person in a stance-defend position is to make a comment like, "do you understand". Do not pry for a response. If nothing is said at the end, give them another para-verbal cue.

Sara's Story

Sara had just walked into the house from school when the phone rang. It was her mom, Maggie. "Sara, did you clean up the downstairs living room like I asked you to?" Yes mom, Sara replied with a small attitude. "Well, I just got an email from your teacher saying that your science project was incomplete. I am so tired of this Sara." said Sara's mom. Sara huffed with a stern sigh, and hung up the phone abruptly on her mom. Later on that evening, when Sara's mom got home, Sara was surprised to find out that her mom didn't want to talk about her failures. Instead, the two sat down for dinner and ate quietly. Sara did her best not to make eye contact with her mom as she thought about their last conversation. She wondered why her mom wouldn't say anything about her hanging up the phone.

For the longest time, Sara felt as though nothing she did was good enough. As they sat quietly at the table, Sara began to ponder the idea that her mom really just didn't care anymore about her daughter. Communicating any problems from this point moving

forward seemed irrelevant towards their relationship. The next day at school, Sara went and spoke with her science teacher about her grades and together they came to a mutual agreement that if Sara could complete her project then she would get 80% of the credit. Sara agreed and spent the rest of the day working on her unfinished science projects. Still steaming from her mom's attitude the day before, Sara decided not to tell her mom anything.

As the week came to an end, Sara's mom mentioned to her that they were going to a mother & daughter event. Mom, I have plans this weekend with my friends. Well you are going to have to cancel those plans, replied Sara's mom with a stern voice. Now Sara was fuming. She stormed off to her room and slammed the door. Sara retreated to her bed and began to sob uncontrollably. Why do I have to live here with her; why does she make my life so miserable? Tears continued to stream down Sara's face. After about 25 minutes of crying, Sara fell asleep. When she woke up, she went downstairs to get something to drink. As she got to the bottom of the stairs, Sara could not help but notice that there was someone else in the living room talking with her mom. Sara peaked around the corner but could not see who was talking to her mom without being seen; so she sat on the stairs and listened.

I love my daughter so much. I don't know why she treats me as badly. Sara doesn't respect me. Where am I going wrong? As the room fell silent, a voice replied, Sara needs you just as much as you need her. You are both transitioning through 3 dynamic levels of communication. Let her know that you applaud her efforts and that you see she is giving her all. Sara had heard that voice before; but where? As Sara sat there and continued to listen, she realized she began to think about her mom and how hard her mom wanted to be a better parent. Sara went back up to her room and closed her door. For the entire day, Sara had no interaction with her mom; and as day turned to night, they occasionally passed by each other. While Sara's mom said hello, Sara,

stubborn in anger, walked right past her mom without acknowledging her.

The next morning, Sara was awakened by the shaking of her moms' hands on her shoulders. Sara, get up, it's time to go, replied her mom. I don't want to go replied Sara. Get up and get dressed Sara, we are going. Sara continue to sulk as she climbed in the car with her mother. What seemed like the longest car ride only turned out to be a 10 minute ride to the local community center. As they got out of the car, Sara's mom walked ahead and opened the door to the building. Sara followed behind, just knowing that she was going to have a miserable time. As the two entered the building, Sara could not help but notice all of her friends and their parents there. Sara's face began to beam with joy even though she had no clue what was happening. Sara's friends ran over to her and gave her a big hug. Your mom is so cool, replied one girl. I cannot believe your mom did all of this for you considering the circumstances, replied another friend. Sara nodded in agreement with a hint of confusion. I know right, she said. .

Sara was now dumbfounded as she looked around her friends, through the crowd, to try and locate her mom. What is all of this, Sara asked a friend. You don't know, replied the friend. Your mom organized all of this for you because she knew that next year was not guaranteed. Huh, what are you talking about, asked Sara? Her friends stood there, stunned. Sara, you aren't funny. Your mom already told our parents, so you don't have to pretend. Sara was still confused by what was being said. Sara stormed off looking for her mom. As she made her way through the crowd, she began to hear the voice she heard at the house. It was her church pastor. Sara stopped and tugged on the pastors' shirt. Were you at my house yesterday, asked Sara? Yes I was said the pastor. Why, asked Sara. The pastor looking heartbroken told Sara that she would have to ask her mom. Sara walked briskly looking for her mother. Sitting on the bench with some of the

other parents, Sara walked up to her mom and asked if she could speak with her. Sure, said Sara's mom. They found a quiet area in the building and began to talk.

What's going on mom, asked Sara. Her mom began to weep. Sara, I have had cancer for the last 5 months, and they said that it is terminal. I only have another couple of months to live. Sara's face dropped with disbelief as she began crying hysterically. Don't cry Sara, we are here now. I know mom, but if I would have known, I would not have said all of those mean things to you. I would have communicated with you. I would not have treated you the way I have been. Her mom interjected; but Sara, why is it only now that we communicate when things are at their worst. I have failed you because I didn't communicate with you when things were good. We are both at fault. They both began sobbing as they held each other tight.

As the days passed, Sara became a new person and communicated in depth with her mom. As the months went on their communication grew. And as the months turned to years, their communication became inseparable. As Sara went on to college, she called her mom every day. And after college, Sara's mom, Maggie, had the opportunity to witness her daughter get married and give birth to a beautiful baby boy. Sara's mom was now a grandmother. Over the next 20 years, Sara and her mother would talk about everything, would spend invaluable moments with the little one, explaining to her the importance of communication and love. Sara was blessed with 20 wonderful before her mom's passing of cancer. And to this day, Sara learned to communicate every day, every moment, as if tomorrow is never guaranteed.

Chapter 3: Who's To Blame?

Now that I have established that I do not communicate, it's obvious that someone is to blame. I know that I am capable of hearing you, but now there are so many other things on my mind and I really don't have the energy or time to listen anymore. I am not angry, but I know we don't communicate well and my opinions are different than yours.

There are clear reasons why I don't hear you. I spend too much time in a space that we both agree, you just don't understand. I have tried to use the progressive verbal communication methods, but things are still being miscommunicated with no respect finding a resolve. I have been automatically putting up my defensive mechanism to protect myself because it feels like you are verbally beating me down. You don't even consider my point of view or respect my opinions.

I know that I state my expectations clearly. I feel like I have earned respect and no longer need to go out of my way to prove my conversation. Every day I text my friends and get on social media to connect photos and verbiage to communicate. I even email to respond to things or explain myself. I am doing everything in my power to communicate but the thought of not having to hear your voice means when I text or email, we don't have to disagree and get in an argument. My feelings get to move at their own pace without feeling pressure from our verbal conversation. It's easier for me to text you; that way if you or I get upset, we don't have to hurt each other's feelings. You keep telling me that I don't care, but I express emoji's such as a hug via brackets, and a frown with an upside down face in my text messages and emails.

Mindfulness – Hearing, Listening, & Breathing

Perhaps something earlier just hit home and we are beginning to understand that changing our thinking of how we communicate will change our actions. Did you know that practicing mindfulness has a tremendous positive effect on who's to blame? The question is not who's to blame, but instead who understands how to listen the best. Along this exploration of self, we may find the energy to redefine ourselves by creating balance, support, and openness needed for inner personal growth.

Our easiest skill is hearing someone because we don't have to focus on the person speaking in order to truly hear bits and pieces of what is being said. By not making eye contact, we effectively have the ability to tune out whatever we want to. Our ears are observational tools, facing the same direction on our head for the very purpose of listening and not just hearing. Our ears align to listen where our eyes (also observational tools) align.

In order for us to listen, consider the perspective that being the last to speak can also be an incredible observation tool. Letting someone finish what they have to say gives us the ability to fully process what is being said, allows us to make a formative analysis of the content, and gives us time to absorb ways to transform the way that we can progressively communicate verbal love, respect, or forgiveness. Along these lines is our awareness that hearing instead of listening can cause us to shut down socially and emotionally. When this happens, we may find that one of the best tools to combat these shut down mechanisms is the art of breathing.

Breathing is more than just an action. It can help keep us calm and focused in a moment where frustration is bound to set in. Many times the interpretation of how we reach our destination is based on how we breathe and the time in between each breath. A great conversational example is to ask ourselves, do we have the ability

to breathe internally (and quietly) when we don't agree with someone; or do you instantaneously huff? Letting our actions speak louder than our words means that we live in the "an" action, and not the "i" idea. Breathing through tough conversations doesn't mean that we have to see the good in everything and everyone, but it does mean that we need to listen, and breathe the idea without escalating verbally by breathing the action. When we don't breathe properly during and after listening, we allow ourselves to build frustration in our response, and possibly our tone. This eventually causes us to build a stance and defend position where we don't want to listen to anything, holding our emotions hostage. Once this happens, we have a high risk to miscommunicate what we truly want to say. Understand that a good fight comes from listening all the way through, breathing, using para-verbal cues, and applying the progressive verbal communication methods of love, respect, and forgiveness.

So who's to blame if we continue to disconnect from listening; climb into a negative non-verbal social cue, and get upset? Ultimately both are to blame if neither of us applied the para-verbal cues and progressive verbal communication methods in our conversation. Remember, in our text messages, emails, social media, and even computer gaming, we are hiding all of these socio-emotional skills. We do not have to identify with anything or anyone in particular, and if we do, we do not have to place emotion into our content. Just maybe a phone call will not work. Try communicating face to face, where we can bring forward a stronger platform of discussion.

"Practicing mindfulness helps you breathe; how you breathe helps you understand why we are listening, and why you are listening helps you understand what you hear. "

Activity 1: Self-Invest Through Action

Are you aware that there are common identifiers which causes you to lose self-investment through action? At some point this week, self-invest through action and do not text that someone in your life that makes you happy. Call them and set aside at least half an hour to get together with them to have a discussion. First try having a 5 minute discussion, only via text, while sitting next to each other. Don't ramble, because you would not ramble in a text message. Don't be physically emotional, because your words in a text are not physically emotional. Do not exhibit body language or eye contact during your texting experience back and forth. Instead of laughing with them, just say Lol. Remain conscious of how your conversation shifted. Use this as an experiment to see if there is a difference in how you communicated in the 5 minutes of texting verses the remaining time you spent together.

Once you have completed this activity with someone that you enjoy being around, try the same experiment with someone that you do not enjoy being around.

Activity 2: Change Your Thinking

As adults and kids, we all have a tendency to hear without truly listening to what is being said to us. We are quick to react instead of breathing and gaining clarity in our responses. Think of a similar situation you have had where you heard one thing, when in fact something else was being said to you. Did you mirror and discuss it with them or just assume that you listened and heard them correctly? If not, in your next discussion, practice mirroring the discussion. The next phase is to have a discussion with a family member you feel hears you, but never listens. Remember to use the model of communication from chapter 1 to point out ways that you are going to become more adherent to listening to one another, breathing through the response phases; reflecting on

compromises, and building trust in your communication. Try to do this with para-verbal cues, and a mindfulness towards the activity.

Matthew's Story

"Matthew, did you take out the trash?" asked Sara, Matthews's mom, as she yelled upstairs to her son who was sitting on his bed playing computer games. It was Saturday morning, 8:00a.m., the sun was out, and the birds were chirping. Sara, a lawyer, decided to make the most of her weekend and get some house work done while her husband was at an early Saturday meeting. Yes ma'am, replied Matthew. Minutes later, a banging sound was heard on Matthews's door. Come in, replied Matthew. It was his mom with a strong scowl on her face. "Why didn't you do what I asked you to do?" As Matthew turned and saw the scowl on his moms face, he went straight into defensive mode. "I heard you yelling upstairs. You asked me if I could take the trash out and I said yes. You didn't say do it right this minute. I was going to do it in a few minutes, geesh". Matthews's aggressive voice resonated throughout the house. "What did you just say", shouted Sara with a large vibrating voice. "Don't you ever geesh, me. I will take everything in this room and you can sit in an empty room." As Matthew sat there and listened, all he could think about was why she was coming down on him so hard. He knew his mom was always so up and down with her emotions.

As Sara walked off, she listened for any snide remarks from Matthew as she just knew he would have something smart to say. Matthew began mumbling things under his breath, still audible, but not clear. This warranted every reason for Sara to go back into his room and go off. As she turned and reached for the door, ready to scream, she bumped into Matthew who was heading out. "Where are you going", Sara asked. I am going to empty the garbage replied Matthew. Well, I don't appreciate you talking about me behind my back Matthew, and if you have something to

say, say it to my face." Mom, what are you talking about, replied Matthew as he turned down his headphones. I put my headphones on and started singing music while I got my shoes on to go downstairs and take the trash out." Matthew continued walking, shaking his head in disbelief as to such a big misunderstanding. Matthews's communication with his mother had always seemed to be a big misunderstanding. The only time either of them really talked was when they had criticism or judgement. Not hearing one word started another downhill spiral of communication. After taking out the trash, Matthew went right back to his room and laid on his bed.

After a few minutes, there was a knock on his door. Come in mom", said Matthew in a much softer demeanor than earlier. As Sara entered the room, she did so with a grin on her face. "What did I do now", replied Matthew. "Nothing", said Sara as she took a seat on the edge of the bed. "You know I love you, but when I asked you if you had taken the trash out, you said yes. But then when I looked at the trash, it was still sitting there". Matthew sat there with a confused look on his face. "Mom, you asked me if I could take the trash out, not if I did", replied Matthew. Sara took a second to think about what her son had just said. Without an ounce of hesitation, she leaned forward and hugged Matthew, seemingly until he was out of breath. With a sigh of relief, Sara took a deep breath and then explained where there was miscommunication. "Matthew, you heard me say, can you take the trash out; but what I said was did you take the trash out". Matthew sat up and turned off the music. Matthew rose from his bed to fully embrace his mom. "I'm sorry for not listening to you. I thought I heard you", said Matthew.

"I never knew that you were actually singing a song, but in a defensive moment I anticipated that you had something smart to say back to me", Sara said with a soft tone of expression. "I am so sorry son for getting upset", said Sara. The two of them realized they were in the wrong. As Sara got up from Matthews bed to

leave the room, she turned and with a grin on her face replied, your dad is home and wants to talk to you. Matthew always felt that his parents took sides, so he just knew that since mom had been so tough on him, that dad was about to give him good news. As Matthew walked downstairs, his father was just entering the house. "Hey dad", replied Matthew with a huge smile. Matthew's father was not smiling. "Matthew, I got an email today from your math teacher saying that you have three missed homework assignments and currently have an F in the class", Matthews's dad had already had a long day and now had to bring this news home. "Matthew, you are grounded for your missed school assignments", replied his father. Matthew couldn't believe it. He had just worked out miscommunication with his mom, but he was still getting in trouble. "You are grounded for the weekend Matthew", replied his father. "For what? I will make it up and turn it in for a grade.", replied Matthew. "For that bad attitude and smart mouth", replied Matthews' father as he placed his briefcase down and headed upstairs. As Matthew stood there, he couldn't help but think that his dad was being unfair to him. Matthew knew he was struggling in math and had asked his math teacher, Mr. Devin, if he could tutor him that next Tuesday. Although Matthew wanted to tell his dad and mom that, he instead shut down and expressed nothing.

Matthew always took sides and tried to pit his parents against one another. But dad was home and it just seemed as though both parents were unleashing on him. Matthew sulked as he knew that this weekend was a big party and he was going to have to tell his girlfriend Christina that he couldn't go. He figured he better let her know now not to go to the party since he was not going to be there and that she should just stay home and they text all weekend.

Chapter 4: An Empty Glass of Trust

Refilling this broken glass of my soul is hard, especially when my trust in you has been leaking from the side. There is a disconnected balance of hope that floats between the possibility of the unknown and its emotions. I have worked hard to keep the glass filled. I always felt I was able to trust you, but the more I travel this journey in my life, the more I began to question if my trust has been gained. For me to trust someone who doesn't trust me; a quarter of this glass becomes emptied. How do I trust you when I can't see the trust in our communication? Another quarter of my glass becomes emptied. I am at that point where I even ask myself if you deserve my trust. There is only half-truth left to fill the broken glass of my soul. Where do we go from here? You have broken my trust, but you are asking me to trust the new you; the better you.

You tell me to have faith in my ability to judge; secure my feelings, but also honor my promises to you. I am beginning to realize that I need to be able to say "No" without being questioned every time. When I say "no", that does not mean there is always a problem; it just means that I cannot commit at that exact moment. I know that when I tell you "yes", I expect it will usually heal a "no". I need to start standing true to my own values, not feeling pressured to trust you or even myself.

My feelings have a lot to do with my values. I thought I had a clear sense of my direction, but lately I have been experiencing hesitation. This hesitation I am having causes uncertainty, doubt, and big questions while you are asking me to make important decisions. Perhaps this is what causes me to shut down and not communicate with you. There are certain things that are not as important to me; and while you can't accept that this is a value I cherish, I try not to beat myself down, developing low self-esteem, hoping to be able to cope while not being accepted. I keep telling myself that we are capable of achieving something greater, with a

purpose; but lately I question myself. I am stuck looking at a broken glass, only half filled. I am learning quickly that doubt is pushing me further out of my comfort space. I am tired of you expecting me to be more mature than the learning experience. I am constantly being given lectures on trust; trust over acceptance, and trust over doubt. I am constantly being challenged to trust, but haven't been given a playbook. You are challenging me to trust you, but you haven't even taught me the definition.

The truth is, there are areas I know that I can't trust you and myself, but lately it's been easier to focus on the next disappointment. While I work on the process of communicating forgiveness, something tells me another let down is right around the corner.

3 P's To Fill a Broken Glass

There are 3 P's used to rebuild a glass and fill it with trust. The first of the 3 P's is positivity. Positivity will help us gain internal trust as well as trust from others while impacting perceived trust. This begins with trusting that we are creating positive results for others and for ourselves. When only trusting ourselves, we place our positivity and reality into an inflated sense of our own importance; also identified as a narcissistic personality. Be mindful that we should never spend more time trusting negative thoughts such as bad outcomes in others, the need to be defensive, or being verbally abusive in a situation. Creating such a negative energy will only crack the glass more and trust will be very difficult to repair. Positivity can help change two or more of our outcomes at the same time, making our relationship between two elements become constant. Such elements include hope, resiliency, optimism, and efficacy.

One of the biggest fears in our positivity is our willingness to be vulnerable based on another person's behavior. Yes, we are taking a chance by using positivity to rebuild trust, but we are also taking a chance in so many other areas of your life. The

easiest thing to do is to shut down and be negative, but the more time we spend there, the easier it is to shut down, overthink, and not communicate. The phrase “speak it into existence” is so relevant in the topic of trust. The same person may disappoint us more than once. Being positive in that scenario is the only thing that can rebuild trust; that a different outcome can occur.

The second of the 3 P’s is peace. Peace creates a safe space for dialogue; a respectful relationship and is usually important to find when we cannot trust yourself. It is important that we trust peace will give us a better outcome than the fight. Peace is an acquired information that outweighs the dissonant beliefs and usually occurs best through meditation. It is important that we push a peaceful energy from our mind, through our heart, towards our actions. This begins with looking within the affirmation that we can trust ourselves and love ourselves no matter what. Things are going to happen which rattle our peace. Remember that peacefulness lends a hand to positivity which can often be expressed through our words.

Finally, the third of the 3 P’s is placement. Trust that we will remain in the right mental space. This means live life and go to sleep with a peaceful purpose. Trust that our placement is not triggering our brain to overload with negative thinking. Wrap our head around our own thoughts for a moment, and ask ourselves if confusion has ever guided our trust. Did it weaken our stance for better communication? The calm lies within how we perceive trust. If we sit in a place of calm, answers are usually shown over time. For some, trust implies not knowing what is around the next corner; while for others aligning trust and faith make each day easier to navigate. Trust that which challenges us to change while not always feeling the need to justify our purpose. It is our values that we should live by, not others; and most of the time it is important to trust our instincts.

With a firm belief, reliability finds its course, self-esteem finds personal contentment, and creativity finds a passion for life.

We know that in order for others to trust us, there are many things that we must do. When things are going wrong, instead of being in attack mode, we need to keep our attitude in neutral and use non-judgmental language. We need to listen instead of only hearing the words spoken. We need to understand another's point of view while still trusting your own expressions. The idea that we should volunteer information so it is not viewed as omission of guilt is an important value to place on our early emotions. This prevents us from being in a position where we may feel overly defensive and argumentative. Instead, try to be loyal, standing side by side while keeping secrets shared in confidence. We know deep down that we need to avoid abusive behavior and use assertive communication to address needs.

Keep in mind that building trust goes back to first impressions and para-verbal communication. Gain trust by shaking the other person's hand or giving a hug, making eye contact with them, and smiling. When we communicate trust, make a promise and do everything we can to keep the promise. Never promise something that we cannot deliver on; and finally be respectful of someone else's opinions.

"A cracked glass can take time to fill, so be patient through positivity, peace, and placement as you understand the attempt that is made."

Activity 1: Create Your Strategies for Building Trust

What does it take for you to trust people, someone you just met, your family members, or a potential relationship? Build a routine for how you are going to earn and keep someone else's trust. Challenge yourself to keep the routine and see if you can trust yourself to follow through. Mean everything that you say and share how you really feel. Practice saying "No". Trust your reasoning but give a volunteer explanation after you have said "No". Remember to think about their perspective and not to be verbally aggressive. Work on this for a week and reflect on your experiences.

What did you learn about yourself from the trust routine experiment? Do you trust yourself to be able to maintain these standards? Do you see a difference in response from those whom you committed this routine? Remember, if you cannot trust yourself, then do not ask someone else to trust you.

"The sand does not question the seashell; nor does the water question the wave. And so as the water believes in the wave, you too must see yourself pushing forward towards the beauty of the shore, where the sand trusts the water and the seashell trusts the waves."

Activity 2: Follow Your Actions

At some point, you lost trust in a situation or someone. When this trust was lost, did it take a long time to rebuild? Have you ever really gotten over it? If you have feelings that are still holding you down, how can you redirect your actions through the 3 P's? Use this activity to attack a problem where you have lost trust. Implement the 3 P's in each part of the problem and determine how that particular "P" can steer you towards a different outcome.

David's Story

Today is Monday, and David has forever feared this day; the day when he knew a lie would come back to haunt him. He had lied to Matthew about a lot of things, but knew that his friendship could potentially end all because of a girl. Matthew had already been in a bad mood from getting chewed out by his mom, and grounded by his dad on Friday. It was Monday, and the two boys would have a chance to see one another to discuss the weekend. The bell rang and it was break. As Matthew approached David with a moderate smile, David felt very tense. How long could he hold the secret? Would Matthew ever be able to trust him again? As Matthew reached out and gave David a high five, he could tell something was off with David. "What's up man", asked Matthew. With an innocent tone, David said "Nothing". As their conversation continued, David became even tenser about the direction the conversation could potentially go. "What did you do this weekend? Did you go to the party", asked Matthew. "Yeah, I was at Noah's house party. It was off the chain. Everyone was there", explained David. "Man, my dad grounded me for the whole weekend because of math", replied Matthew.

As the two of them stood there, David knew that he had to say something. "Hey Matthew. I need to tell you something." David took a deep breath and continued. "At the party, I saw Noah making out with your girl." Matthew stood there in complete numbness as if he had lost his breath. "Man, what are you talking about? Christina stayed home this weekend because she knew that I was grounded. We text all night. She said that she wasn't going to the party since I wasn't going. Are we talking about my girlfriend Christina?" replied Matthew in utter disbelief. As the conversation continued, Matthew began thinking that there was more to the story. "What do you mean you saw her making out with Noah", asked Matthew. As David continued with the details, Matthew's shoulder shrunk. "When I was at the party, I walked into the kitchen and I saw Christina kissing Noah. They were lip locked in the corner of the kitchen and were making out

for a while”, explained David. “I don’t believe you David”, replied Matthew with a stern voice and little empathy for the situation. “Your just jealous man. I don’t trust you. You would say anything to get under my skin.” Matthew continued with his voice raising. “We had this issue before, and I didn’t trust you then. Remember when you gave that note to Christina last year talking about how she should date you because then she would be dating a real man? You told Christina that she deserved better than me because I was dating other girls at school. Now you want me to trust you with this?” As Matthew finished explaining his point, David took a step back. David never thought that Christina was going to mention that note to David. She promised him.

“Man, you don’t even know your girl. You trust her right now? She is completely playing you. Get over it man”, replied David. Matthew had reached his boiling point. As he leaned forward to shove David, the bell rang. It was time for class. “I’ll get with you after class David. I am sick of you”, replied Matthew. As David walked off, he shouted, “Man you never trust your friends. You’re going to trust some girl over me. I have been your friend since we were in elementary school, and you have only known Christina for a year.” As the two went their separate ways, David headed past the cafeteria towards his math class; the same teacher that Matthew had gotten grounded because of. David’s math teacher, Mr. Devin, was one of the tougher teachers. Mr. Devin was a former marine who had given his life to making things better.

As David entered the classroom and sat down, Mr. Devin approached him. “Why were you and Matthew arguing a few minutes ago”, asked David’s teacher. “Matthew doesn’t trust me, but I think he realizes that his girl doesn’t trust him. A complete mess in their relationship.” Mr. Devin began shaking his head with a broad smile and said, “Trust is a powerful word, and when it’s broken, it can mess up everything.”

Chapter 5: Mistakes Are the Proof Needed

I realize that I am going to make a mistake. I consider it an indifference of perspective relating to my decisions and actions. I may have offended you without even realizing it. I will not be able to please everyone, but I know that I cannot only take credit when things go well and blame others when things don't go as well. It is so much easier to tell myself that if I don't go, don't try, or just don't care, I will feel better because I will not be judged by the results. Most of the time I feel like the world is looking at me, judging me, and placing me in a box of failure that is suffocating my efforts. I feel like the world is waiting for me to fail. I keep telling myself that I have to attempt to master self-forgiveness before my emotions get the best of me. If you haven't noticed, I have begun sheltering myself where I don't have to worry about the pressures of failing. I have learned to keep my head down, duck behind the questions, and not stand out.

Too many times I have made bad decisions and felt like it was the end of the world; but I have also made decisions I didn't think were bad, but got labeled as mistakes anyways. Now I feel like I am walking on egg shells, afraid to make mistakes, denying my actions while refusing to have consequences. You keep telling me that my mistakes can become fatal if I do not view them as bad decisions. I know that I shouldn't place the blame on others and expect everyone else to fix my mistakes. I am learning how to accept my poor reasoning and carelessness so that I won't justify making the same mistake over and over again. I know that as long as each mistake teaches a valuable life lesson, I should not fight against the idea that making mistakes is inevitable. Perhaps over time I will learn how to relinquish my fear and be willing to take a chance of owning my mistakes so that I can learn how to forgive myself and remind myself that I am not perfect. For those who expect perfection from me, I ask you to question your imperfections and mistakes to find explanation in how I should be doing things perfectly.

3 Rules Behind Each Mistake

While we live in the moment of each truth, we may think that we have made some bad decisions and are now realizing that we must own them moving forward. There are some things we have done and will do which we realize may have some people disagreeing with us; but if we are not intentional in our bad decision, label ourselves only by our errors. Do not allow ourselves to classify our bad decision as a mistake. Keep in mind that the mistake is something we did without intention and the bad decision is something we made intentionally. The reason we classify our bad decisions as mistakes is because it removes us from responsibility and makes us feel at peace with the feeling that we are not at fault.

Behind each mistake lies a rule. First is the rule of our “willingness to make a mistake”. Owning this understanding brings light to an overwhelming darkness. Every time we make a mistake, it is because we are willing to head towards a better conscious identity of ourselves. Reaching out to grab ahold of it, we may get tired, frustrated, angry, or just flat out sad, but we know that if we just push forward, there will be stronger, more positive results at the end. This will surface the true meaning of our purpose. Too many times, the negative impact for not having a willingness to make a mistake can lead us to a communication shutdown. Being judged by others sometimes puts us in a position where we feel that we cannot make a mistake. This causes so much fear and anxiety, and only multiplies when mistakes and failure come into play. We know that building resilience creates an individual discipline within ourselves, but we still must hear and listen to what others have to say. Becoming fearless will help us become less inhibited and will open up so many possibilities in our lives. Along the way, know that our willingness to make a mistake will show our courage and an ability to break down our own barriers of failure.

The second rule behind each mistake is the rule of “learning from a mistake”. If we fail, don’t give up, just stand up, take one step backwards, own that failure, and move on. The cliff has a bottom which is waiting for us to reach it; but before we fall off the cliff, know it is important to rise with a new purpose and take a step back to examine our process; then refine our process at the same speed, with the same attitude we had before. The bottom of the cliff waits for everyone, but if we learn to accept failure, we will only soar higher. This means looking at the place where we are willing to learn from a mistake. By learning from our mistakes, we can do it differently next time, and continuously until we get it right. Some people deny their mistakes, push them to the side and continue to make the same mistake over and over again. If we are doing this, we are on the path to insanity where we are not learning from our mistakes, but instead, we are doing the same thing over and over expecting a different result. When we make the mistake we were willing to do, own it and immediately learn from it.

The third rule behind the mistake is our willingness to help others through their mistakes. We are in no way perfect, but too much time we spend our lives in a cocoon telling ourselves that the mistake clearly isn’t our problem. Maybe we’re protecting our feelings and our fears by settling with those who will only agree with us and won’t expect us to help them through their mistakes. We all need to realize that helping others through their mistakes helps enlighten the path towards understanding our own. Compassion is important because it keeps all of us nonjudgmental. It only takes a minute to judge someone else’s mistake, but could take a lifetime for us to accept our own.

“Trust the process as you walk the journey with no expectations of the destination.”

Activity 1: Mistakes vs. Bad Decisions

Think about bad decisions you have made and mistakes you made. Did you come up with more bad decisions than you did mistakes? How many of those mistakes could actually be classified as bad decisions. Keep in mind that if you are labeling your bad decisions as mistakes, you are likely to make the same bad decisions over and over again.

The Story of Noah

Noah had just gotten out of alternative school and figured things were back to normal. He was always disruptive, in trouble with the law, and verbally abusive to his teachers and classmates. Many people had tried to help him over the years, but Noah was stubborn in his ways and his attitude usually pushed others over the edge of patience. He came from a very wealthy family; his dad an executive for an advertising company, and his mom a lawyer. He volunteered his summers working with young people at basketball camps and seemed to have a very caring attitude; so as Noah returned to public high school, he was determined to change his ways. He told himself that he would be on time to class, would pay attention without being a distraction, and would not get an attitude with adults. Although the first couple of days went smoothly, by the end of the next week, the problems began to show.

Noah became increasingly late for class; sometimes not showing up for class at all. On other occasions Noah would get an attitude in class and curse at the teacher. Enough was enough, and nobody in the school had a solution. It seemed as though every time Noah’s parents were called on the phone, there was either no answer or a disconnected line. When the administrators asked the

parents to come in, they were both too busy and could not find the time. The decision was made by Principal Knight to kick Noah out of school and push for him to get his GED. The principal was a hard, no nonsense type of guy, who never seemed to put up with anything from the students. As Principal Knight sat in his office, there was a knock at the door. "Come in Noah", replied the principal with a firm voice.

As Noah entered, the principal stopped him at the door. "Freeze young man. Turn around, walk out that door, and knock when you are ready", replied the principal. Noah responded with a firm outburst, "What are you talking about man, you told me to come in." As Noah continued to the seat, Principal Knight spoke the same words again. "Freeze young man. Turn around, walk out that door, and knock when you are ready". Noah sat there and glared at Principal Knight as though he was trying to burn his soul right there at that moment. Principal Knight put his head down and continued writing on the paper he had in front of him. As minutes passed and nothing was said, Noah became increasingly frustrated. Why did you call me in here, asked Noah? Just give me my expulsion papers and I will be gone from here for good. When Noah finished explaining to Principal Knight how things needed to go down, the principal put his pen down on the table and put both hands over his eyes.

Noah was confused as he realized Principal Knight was crying. What's wrong with you Principal Knight, asked Noah. The principal gathered himself and wiped his tears. As he looked calmly into Noah's eyes, he said, "Noah, it's not your fault." Noah was so frustrated at this point as he expected to maybe get a small lecture, but nothing with crying. "What are you talking about", replied Noah. The principal then gathered his thoughts, leaned back in his chair and sighed. The principal was about to open Noah's eyes.

I used to be in your position Noah. I used to be that kid in alternative school, bounced back to public school, and right back to alternative school. I used to want to fight everyone, bully kids that I couldn't stand, and curse teachers out." Noah was now listening. He couldn't believe that this man sitting in a suit used to be a thug. "Noah, I was bounced around as a foster child, had no real guidance, and got labeled by every teacher and administrator when I was in school. Even when I tried to do right, it just turned out wrong." As the Principal kept talking, Noah began hearing things that he too had gone through. Noah could now relate. Principal Knight continued; "I made a lot of bad decisions and it took me longer than most to learn from those decisions. Growing up, people just kept telling me that I was making mistakes and that I could easily correct those mistakes by just trying harder. As I got older, I realized they were giving me an easy out by calling my actions, mistakes. I was flat out making bad decisions, and I knew that I needed to own them and change. It took me years to change, but when it clicked, I realized that my actions were my decisions, and that mistakes were things I did on a test, or a form, or in my answers. Son, when I changed my bad decisions, the mistakes became fewer and fewer."

As Principal Knight finished his story, he could see tears running down Noah's face. Principal Knight leaned forward across his desk and handed Noah a tissue. "You are growing up young man, and your days of making bad decisions ends now. If you make a mistake from this point on at school, I will forgive your mistake, only if you are first willing to forgive yourself. No lecture here. You can go back to class." The principal handed Noah a slip to return to class, and Noah stood up tall, pulling up his pants first. Principal Knight stood and smiled. Why are you smiling Principal Knight, asked Noah? The principal placed his hands on the desk and said, "Noah, your simple action of pulling up your pants is going to prevent many people in this building from labeling you. That first action of pulling up your pants is the first best decision you will make of many good ones to come.

Noah reached out and shook Principal Knight's hand. "Thank you sir. Thank you for allowing me to have another chance," replied Noah. "No Noah," said Principal Knight; "thank you for reminding me that I was once you."

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Chapter 6: Balance within the Process

My life, held by my visualization of a Frisbee. The outside of the Frisbee protected by the wind, only to soar freely with no direction intended. It catches the direction that everyone else is flowing. The inside of the Frisbee is protected by a secure border. Its sides stern, so that when circling the inside of the Frisbee, there is no escape; only the ability to hit the walls holding the design of the Frisbee. These walls become my everyday protection, for these walls will never let me titer off of the edge of the Frisbee. They will allow me to flow within my own strength, but will take the time to balance my movement.

Balance becomes a process. In order to find it, I know that I need to find that border that protects my thoughts. The border represents four half-moon walls which connect to form a complete whole. For me, those walls or that border metaphorically represents half-moons of my mental preparedness, emotional response, spiritual growth, and physical follow through. This balance allows me to explore the roller coaster of my life, but still understand that I a growing during this process. No matter how many times I make a mistake, I will always be able to know that I still have that secure border which balances my landing. I find a peace knowing that I have faith in a higher purpose. That purpose balances my journey each and every day so that when I land, I understand why the journey took place, the mistakes along the way, and the lessons learned.

I know that I must find balance within the process of my life, or my life may not be fulfilled. It only takes a small crack in the Frisbee for it to have no balance. And like the Frisbee, when my life is thrown into turmoil, it is only because of those sturdy walls that I know I will have a smooth landing, whether on this earth or in heaven.

The outside of the Frisbee represents the luck in my life. It is the unknown. If I really put this into everyday practice, the unknown

represents my life financially, employment, material items, and health. In these instances, I do not know where I or the material things will be day to day. While many people spend years trying to figure out how to control that side of the Frisbee, this is what helps me enjoy my life. It is the unknown of tomorrow. This is what helps me make the most of today. Leaving a footprint means that I trust that I am doing everything on the inside of the Frisbee that I can control within the walls. I am taking a chance in everything I do, whether working a part time job with a large family, designing AI technology, writing a book, or building a leadership company which helps train the minds of young people.

I throw my Frisbee every time I imagine reaching my destination or coming closer to closure within something. My Frisbee takes flight, guided by those four walls which I constructed to give its flight balance within the process. While many others may not see the walls underneath protecting my flight, I know that it is up to me to build these walls without any cracks; for the wind is just the motion that will carry me up and down each day. My journey stretches far, and when it lands, I must decide if I am content on staying there, or soaring again to see where I land next.

The Process of Practice

Sometimes the hardest thing to remember is that balance is not a final goal, but a process of practice. When we first begin at something, we may feel the biggest challenges mentally and emotionally as we tell ourselves that we won't be able to it, that it's too hard, or that we will fail at it. Through all of these mental and emotional challenges, we may have come to realize that the more we practice balance, at some point we will succeed; just long enough to eventually fail again. Hopefully by now, we know that accomplishments and failures are both a part of practicing balance. That is not the problem. The true problem we will have is spending more time in the negative than the positive when practicing such balance. We may think that things are going well,

but then everything collapses around us. Maybe we lost something or someone; we feel hopeless; or perhaps we are just angry. Maybe we are still learning how to control our emotions so that we are not showing aggressive behavior towards others; feeling anxiety; or feeling lost. No matter what the problem is, at some point we have the potential of finding balance. If we remember to set goals and assess our life without using the destructive subconscious to identify things, access our life by changing the way we think; and realizing that every time we find balance, it will not stay that way; and that we will find peace by setting goals every day. We should not let others access our goals. Their access of our goals may alter our overall goals, or change us from a constructive learner to a destructive over thinker.

We will be confident in our growth over time as we have come such a long way in life, jumping hurdles, almost drowning, and yet still having that little bit of strength to climb that last hill. Please don't stop climbing. Keep climbing, never stop, and whatever we do, don't settle. Clearing our negative thoughts takes more work than believing in our positive thoughts; however we need to know that it can be done. First we must spend a few minutes each day calming my mind. We used to think that this meant talking to friends and family; but believe it or not, not that is completely wrong. By connecting with others, we are allowing ourselves to connect with the thoughts, opinions, and lifestyle or others, our clarity can become blurred. We will need to disconnect socially and emotionally from everyone and everything. This doesn't mean run away, it just means take time for ourselves. We cannot take time for ourselves by watching television, being on social media, talking on the phone, or even reading. We need to meditate by finding a calm place where we can be one with his environment. We have found the best parks; one with a lake and the other with a waterfall. It is so calming to sit outside and hear what our body is supposed to hear; peace. A second approach to eliminating more time in the negative than the positive is to challenge ourselves and the way that we think.

Do we think constructively or destructively? Our destructive way of thinking is to dive deep into our subconscious on everything. This is what causes us to go from emotional to overemotional. When we begin to question things with our subconscious, we tend to lean our thoughts towards negative emotional triggers such as stress, anger, fear, or sadness. We are becoming self-destructive in our thinking and possibly at risk of our physical being. Memories and experiences are usually stored in our subconscious. It now becomes a game in our head whether or not we have the strength to place constructive learning experiences of the subconscious over destructive emotions that overpower our learning experiences. If we can be conscious of our thoughts, we may just be able to filter more in a constructive way, finding peace and resolve when our thoughts arise.

While knowing how to clear our thoughts is a big part of practicing balance, there is also a fundamental rule that we live by every day. We may try to assess and access our life in real time. We know that it took us a while to get to this place as we would put so much pressure on ourselves to succeed at the moment we were thinking about. Over time we realized that this process of assessing really entailed us restructuring our life. Things that we took for granted have become the backbone to our accessing a better us. These things include our sleeping habits; the way that we respond to someone; being quick and not fast; understanding perspective in making mistakes versus just flat out making bad decisions; finding trust within our values; communicating with purpose; and leaving a piece of our legacy every day. We realize now that taking a risk means changing our habits to see if we can obtain a different outcome.

Setting Goals Means Everything

The easiest way not to clearly see our direction is by not having any goals. We should have goals in everything we do. We should have goals set in employment with job status and salaries; relationships with significant other or children; physical wellbeing with healthy eating and weight; finances with spending and saving; spiritually with how we align our lifestyle; and so many other areas. For as much time as we spend assessing ourselves and being critical of ourselves, we should spend that same amount of time developing our goals.

When setting goals, the most important thing is to make sure we set a goal that motivates us. This means choosing goals that are specific. Each goal should be clear and well defined. Once we have our clear goal, measure the degree of the goals potential success and make sure that it's possible to even achieve the goal that we have set. While we set goals, sometimes we reach into a bag of dreams instead of a bag of goals. This doesn't mean that we should set a bunch of easy goals, or else our expectations will never truly meet up to the real world. Set goals that challenge us to bring out the best in our potential. The goal should be relevant to our life or career achievement direction. Once this is accomplished and our goal has relevancy, set a deadline. A sense of urgency is important in everything we do or else we will lack the time management skills necessary for every other area of our life.

“You will never be able to build a supportive wall where faith carries you further than fear if you let your fear dictate how far your faith carries you.”

Activity 1: Build a Wall

Take the one thing that you know most about, and one thing that you know least about. Think about how you could combine those two things to set a goal to achieve something related to both. We tend to turn to our natural abilities for reassurance that we can reach something. Our talent is just as the definition states; “a capacity for achievement or success, such as a power of mind or body considered as given to a person for use and improvement”. Is it possible to assess your strengths and weaknesses in real time every day? Do you settle on focusing solely the negative? If so, can you apply this chapter to accessing change? What walls have you built around your Frisbee to assure a balanced journey?

Activity 2: Balance Your Own Frisbee

Create your very own physical Frisbee. Inside of the Frisbee write on each of your four walls and label the strength of each wall (i.e. mental preparedness, emotional response, spiritual growth, and physical follow through). See if the Frisbee is able to fly or if it crashes. If it crashes, continue to rebuild the walls until your Frisbee is able to fly.

Mr. Devin's Story

Mr. Devin is the type of teacher at Jones High School who would always give his best. He was a former marine who, after his first tour, came home a hero many years earlier. All of the younger kids admired him and loved talking with him. Although he is what many parents now considered an incredible teacher, there was always something off with Mr. Devin's appearance. Some people at school always noticed that Mr. Devin was wearing the same jacket and shoes to school. He never took off his jacket. David didn't think anyone else ever noticed those things about Mr. Devin, but it had been bothering him for the last couple of weeks.

Last year Mr. Devin was the teacher of the year in the state of Colorado. He volunteered his time in the community, spending time with the homeless. The students always said that he loved spending his time with the homeless because most of them would see him under the bridge talking with the homeless, along the bike path every Saturday. It was obvious that Mr. Devin would one day be an administrator and possibly a principal at the high school. Every day during school, Mr. Devin had a specific schedule. During breaks and lunch, Mr. Devin would grade papers. Nothing ever seemed to distract him. He sat in his classroom while everyone else was packing to leave for the day. Other teachers looked up to Mr. Devin as they consider him a great role model for all other students. On Tuesdays and Thursday's Mr. Devin stayed after school and tutored whoever wanted tutoring. Somewhat of an odd schedule, Mr. Devin never seemed to let other adults or students know anything about him; but he always provided a hand and shared a smile. David took advantage of getting tutoring every Tuesday.

Matthew and David's parents were friends with Mr. Devin through a mutual friend. David's parents felt Mr. Devin always set a great example for the kids because he was respectful and

responsible. That was the major thing that David liked about Mr. Devin; that he cared about everyone. It was now Tuesday, and although the incident had occurred between David and Matthew the day earlier, they were both expected to show up for tutoring.

David went and talked to Mr. Devin immediately after school before tutoring and asked him to speak with Matthew and him about the incident earlier. Mr. Devin was always good at seeing everyone's side and bringing everyone to a place of understanding. Mr. Devin agreed and as tutoring began, Mr. Devin brought the two boys together. Everything seemed to be working out through Mr. Devin's discussion about friendship. The next day everything seemed to be just like nothing had ever happened between the two lifelong friends who agreed not to put another person in between their friendship.

Now Wednesday afternoon, both David and Matthew, friends once again, wanted to go by and thank Mr. Devin. As the end of school bell rang, the boys rushed down the hall to Mr. Devin's class. As they got closer, they noticed Mr. Devin bolting out of the side doors of the school, as if he wanted no one to notice he had left. Wait, someone shouted; I need to talk to you about something. As if he didn't fully the person shouting, Mr. Devin turned while continuing to walk briskly towards the street. Mr. Devin replied, "uh-not right now. I have to uh-got to walk down to the post office." Both looking confused, David and Matthew felt that something wasn't right. "Let's walk to the post office and make sure Mr. Devin is okay", said Matthew with a hurried tone. Nodding in agreement, David grabbed his bag off the ground and followed Matthew. Not once had either of them seen Mr. Devin look so nervous while walking off; but as usual, being the aggressive teenagers they were, they decided to follow Mr. Devin and make sure that everything was okay.

As they began following their teacher towards the post office, they couldn't help but notice Mr. Devin turning off onto a wooded

path. The path opened up into a field where there was a bike path approaching a bridge. Their anxiety levels went up but they continued to follow. "Where do you think he is going", asked David. "I don't know, but I don't think we should follow him", replied Matthew. As they hurried through the open field to keep a distant glimpse of Mr. Devin, they wondered. "If Mr. Devin is going home, we are going to be in a lot of trouble for following him", said David. Although they both questioned whether or not they should continue following Mr. Devin, they proceeded to follow him. What seemed to be a miles journey was finally coming to an end. Mr. Devin stopped at the base of the bridge and made a sharp right, ducking behind a pillar. The boys froze, feeling that they may have been spotted. All kinds of thoughts began swirling through their minds. "Mr. Devin is going to hate us forever for this", said David. The boys slowed down as they got closer to the area that they saw Mr. Devin duck into; and then without thinking, Matthew yelled out; "Mr. Devin wait".

As they turned the corner where they assumed Mr. Devin would be, there was nobody. They could not figure out how he had eluded them so quickly. As they turned to begin their quest back home, the boys heard a noise. As they looked up, they saw Mr. Devin huddled between the crevasse of the pillar and bridge along with what seemed to be an old homeless man. As the boys walked closer, the shadowy figures grew. They realized it was Mr. Devin with an older man. The boys ducked where they could not be seen. "What is he doing here", asked David. "I think he is helping that guy", Matthew said as they stood and watched. As the boys sat and listened, they heard Mr. Devin thank the homeless man for helping him when he was homeless. The boy's heads dropped when they heard Mr. Devin say this.

Mr. Devin continued speaking to the homeless man, now being called Mr. McCathy. "Right after I got out of the marines, looking for work and not being able to find any. I became homeless for almost two years and lived right here underneath this bridge.

You gave me my first real job. Working on the design projects for the school system helped me shift into teaching. You saw the impact I made of people. Even though you lost your job, and soon became homeless, you always stayed gracious and happy through life.”

As Mr. Devin finished telling Mr. McCathy how thankful he was, the boys became very sad. They soon realized that Mr. Devin came and visited Mr. McCathy every day under the bridge after school; except for Tuesdays and Thursdays when he would bring Mr. McCathy dinner in the evening after his tutoring sessions. “Maybe you and I can chip in and help” echoed Matthew to David in disbelief. This sounds like an incredible man who was always there for others. Mr. Devin would always try to get Mr. McCathy to leave the bridge and come stay with him, but Mr. McCathy’s pride never allowed him to leave. He would always tell Mr. Devin that there is a plan in a hurry to move slowly. Mr. Devin decided to help him by putting money away each month to help him. He also give him many of his own clothes and came out here to sit with him every day.

Mr. Devin never quite understood what Mr. McCathy meant by there being a plan in a hurry to move slowly; why this man who was once his mentor would tell him every time that “there is a plan in a hurry to move slow.” Mr. McCathy always tried to see the good in every opportunity. He walked every day with purpose; always saying hello to those he passed, even when homeless. The boys sat there with their mouths wide open. They couldn’t believe what they were hearing. As Mr. Devin got up to leave Mr. McCathy, he turned to him and said, “There is a storm that carried you here, but in the end the sun shines and a purpose shows itself on the other side.” The boys began weeping as they saw Mr. Devin get up and walk off from Mr. McCathy.

Chapter 7: The Grass Is Greener When I Water It

I have begun to understand that my mistakes are just that, and that balance through the process helps lead me through my valley between the mountains. My posture has been very important for creating stronger, more positive outcomes in my life. I am beginning to understand that the grass is not greener on the other side; I just need to water it consistently. The grass has a better chance of staying green if I continue to water it and study its behavior and process in order to not kill the grass. Instead of looking for greener grass, I need to spend more time understanding its behaviors and what it needs to maintain its beauty when the seasons change.

The idea that my instinct is to continuously look for something better is invalid. I desire to take time and enjoy what is in front of me. Enjoying the challenges and the obstacles, maybe I will appreciate more, the effects of seeing what I can do better to keep the grass healthy. If I take time to enjoy material items, maybe I will realize that I don't need the next best item because it is the exact same item with one new additional feature. If I take time to enjoy who I am, maybe I will actually appreciate myself outside of what others label me. So again, I ask myself; is the grass greener on the other side, or is it just the fantasy of a different grass?

If I can agree that different types of grasses represent an emotional fantasy, then head in the clouds, perhaps I should have never committed to that grass. The grass I want to commit to should represent all elements of my existence including; physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. I live inside of this ideal in my relationship. Inside of the physical, if I water her existence means that I show her by my touch just how much she means every day. Whether holding hands, giving a hug, putting a hand on her shoulder, touching her cheek, giving her a kiss, or rubbing her feet, I commit myself to the physical existence of the grass. Inside of the mental, I water her existence so that I communicate

affectively everyday with her by hearing her (with eye contact) when she speaks and when she is silent, whispering in her ear, encouraging her passions, and just simply telling her why she means so much to me. Inside of the emotional I water her existence by protecting her fears and anxieties, and being patient when she is in a hurry. Finally, inside of the spiritual I water her existence by being the man God designed me to be and keeping myself grounded in faith alongside her.

Create an Action Plan

The grass we water every day is because we understand our responsibility in keeping the grass beautiful. Our relationships, our attitude towards others, the things we affect, and our everyday purpose is the grass we stand on. We are committing to only planting additional grass around what has purpose in our life. We will love and forgive the grass that does not stand tall when it is watered. We will empower the grass to grow with sunlight and happiness. We will trust the grass to take our water when it is thirsty. And if the grass ever begins to wither, we will give it a spiritual awakening while planting fresh grass around it so that it still knows it is needed.

Things are really bad only some of the time, but did you know that if we get into our own destructive subconscious, we will fester on that really bad moment? In order for us to have purpose, we have to sacrifice complaining and own our unfavorable experiences. We are not going to save the world, but we can place something in it that makes it grow even better. We will only become passionate about something that we do, and we cannot sit and talk about it; especially when we know that we need an action plan. Action will help our purpose come to life. Too many times we spend more time thinking about our execution and potential mistakes. When we learn to dive head first into the action, we will learn that balance can be practiced while mistakes are happening. When we learn to dive head first into the action, we will create

hobbies and passions. Our life will become a daring adventure, full of mystery and suspense, failures and successes. This action begins with our willingness to just water the grass instead of looking for another patch of grass.

We are going to have people who try to walk all over our lawn and it is our job to protect it. When the weather gets hot outside, the grass has a higher chance of dying. At the end of the week, we should sit in reflection and ask ourselves if our action plan was aggressive or passive. We already know that sometimes the lawn will not be receptive to our watering. The grass may have empty patches that may need to be watered more than the rest of it. We need to be observant without judgement of the grass, for the lawn is big and watering the grass could be an all-day event.

No matter what age, we know that it is up to us to understand how to water our own grass. Sometimes we have struggled with that because we weren't willing to put in the work necessary to keep our grass fresh. With action being the priority, we should now understand that watering the grass every day is important in order to truly live our purpose.

"No water corrupts healthy grass, while watering cultivates healthy growth."

Activity 1: Water Your Lawn

Take the time to label your lawn, then create a plan to water it every day. The lawn may be school, your home, your family, your spouse, your children, and your pace of work, your boss, or perhaps your soul. Only label one lawn for the week and be specific. Write down your weekly watering plan and stick to it, keeping in mind that watering the lawn more than once a day is good for keeping the grass healthy.

Christina's Story

Christina Brinkley had so many goals growing up. She wanted to be a pilot, a doctor, an astronaut, and a computer programmer. Christina's teachers felt that she was all over the place with her dreams, but after being depressed in middle school and the first couple of years in high school, she was finally becoming more social and active in high school. Christina went through High School, growing taller physically, and now was one of the taller girls in the school. Everyone told her that she had to play sports, but Christina was focused on her goals and didn't like sports. Somewhat pressured by teachers and her peers to play basketball or volleyball, Christina shut down altogether her first two years high school. She rarely spoke with anyone and always kept to herself. Her parents sent her to counseling, but still no answers. Her parents knew that she had faced a lot of tough challenges while in middle school, but always felt like bringing those things up would only shun Christina away even more.

It was Christina's senior year in high school, and it seemed like she was ready for college. The first day of class, Christina's counselor called her into the office. "So Christina, what do you want to study in college?" Well, replied Christina; "I want to be a pilot, a doctor, an astronaut, and a computer programmer." The counselor looked at her and said with a firm voice and a confused tone; "you have to pick one thing and focus on that." Christina shook her head in disagreement, but sat and listened as the counselor tried to point her in one direction. Christina's parents had always told her to dream big and reach past her limits, but here she sat being told the complete opposite. As the day ended, Christina decided to write her goals down on paper. She had always used a S.M.A.R.T. Goal concept her dad taught her in Middle School, and Christina still knew deep down that she could succeed at all of her dreams, even if nobody else did.

Every day after school Christina would go home and have a regiment. She would take a break from school and decompress. This included no social media and very little television. For Christina this usually incorporated taking a small nap or getting a bite to eat while watching a little television. Once Christina woke up, she would go over all of her homework agenda notes and start with the assignment that took her the shortest amount of time to complete. She would work all the way up to the assignment which took the most time. When her parents got home, Christina, would stop and take her second break. Christina took that time to speak with her parents about life, although usually this was the time when they were tired and just didn't fully listen to her needs. Of course if time and work aligned with dinner, they would all eat together, but it was very rare.

Christina's final homework assignment would sometimes take her into the early hours of the morning, but she was still able to find balance. Her parents didn't interact much with her during the week as they were busy working. Every night before bed, Christina would stare at the ceiling and ask "why now". Not really knowing why she was asking that question, she would always find peace in waiting for an answer. Every morning, Christina made sure that she was at her locker early so that she was prepared for the entire day. She seemed to have a lot of structure to her days and nights. What the teachers at Christina's school did not know was that she actually lived with a lot of procrastinators and that her biggest goal was not to become one as well. She saw her parents always in a hurry, doing things at the last minute. She knew that she could not find opportunity like that and wanted to have more balance. And because she found that balance in the process, she would be able to accomplish all of her goals.

When Christina graduated from High School, she attended the Air Force Academy, where she became a mechanical engineer in the Air Force. After a few years in the Air Force as a mechanical

engineer, she was called up to work with NASA on the space shuttles. While working with NASA for years, Christina had a passion for helping people. She used her spare time to volunteer at a local clinic creating more detailed database systems for patients so that their records were stored properly. And when Christina retired from NASA after 9 years, she was offered a position at the White House, working directly with the President on a new space program. Christina always trusted the walls inside of her Frisbee. She let her mental, emotional, and spiritual blocks build the walls so that when she launched herself, everything would be balanced.

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Chapter 8: Hurry Up and Move Slow: Things Are Happening

There is a 7 day forecast. Monday has begun and it's time for me to start this week all over again. It seems like just yesterday the summer was beginning. I know that there are some things going on which will be out of my control, but all I ask is that they take a minute to listen to me when I have something to say. Things may not be working out from the start and I'm already counting down the days until I am out of here. I can't wait for this day to be over; better yet for the week to be over, so that I can just chill in my space in oneness on my phone. My best connection is my disconnection of sitting in front of others.

By the time Thursday rolls around, I am already visualizing the weekend. Who cares what people are doing because my space is my calling, right? The only thing I will have to deal with this weekend are those voices telling me what I should be doing, and how I can be more productive with my life. I know that if they are busy enough, they will forget all about me and not check up to see if I am being productive.

They don't need to teach, and my work doesn't need to be preached at. I know that the biggest advantage to this gap is my lack of communication. They don't really care how I am doing, they just want to hurry and ask to justify my existence. The importance of being on time, being more productive, not being disruptive, getting work done, and not talking back will be the topics this weekend.

I am in a hurry to get to the finish line. They want me to slow down and redirect my approach with better overall goals in mind. They want me to designate a set amount of time for us. They want me to set a schedule which works best for them. I know that it's not going to break me, but they want me to hurry. They don't understand how fast my life is already moving. They never have to go through anything like what I am going through.

For so long I have loved the idea of technology. This month I decide to read less of my story and instead get on Instagram and Facebook. I love these platforms because I can keep up with all of my friends, or so called friends, and what they are going through. As I dive into my social media, I drown my own thoughts of my life into the thoughts of the lives of my friends. Along the way, I don't even realize it but I begin comparing all of the wonderful things they are doing for themselves, and I begin to realize that my life isn't as great as theirs. Now I begin to question every post I place on social media to compete with others and not make my life seem so dreary. And for some reason without even trying I am now analyzing how I am not where I wanted to be at this point in my life. Wait, I didn't feel this way last month when I was reading my book. But now I am living through others. It's like I am reading 20 different books at the same time and trying to remember my own.

Make Your Life That Much Easier

Our journey is essential because it allows us to plan for our destination while learning the changes that occur along the way. One of the most important things to realize is that the way we think is more important than the circumstances handed to us. Be willing to trust from within, not from the thoughts that drive our emotions. This is a formula for helping those coping with any type of depressed state. Our emotions will continue to drive the negative things surrounding us, thus causing us to only see negative. Although we may want to see positive, we will only pull our emotions towards negative if we think negative.

We are cut out for this world. Although things may not be going our way right now, don't jump; instead find the courage to start and the strength to endure. Finding the courage to start means that we have to find the strength to tell ourselves that starting over is okay. It's not the falling down that hurts, but it's when we overthink the pain of the fall and we refuse to get up. This is the

danger of the internal message we tell ourselves. We are all facing or have faced hard times. Yes, we are all different and value ourselves differently; but that is what makes us so special. We are both committed to seeing this life through.

We are each living one chapter of an entire book. We know that we shouldn't live in the chapter of sadness when the next chapter may hold a ray of light. Just like so many books, we will never be exposed to the next chapter. Don't assume that every chapter of our lives is the same; and don't assume that the same book has different endings. We belong to the next chapter of our destiny which is the book we are reading now. Don't jump to the next book when we can find the courage to start the next chapter. This strength that we will use to endure is different for many. We may find room to call it faith. For without faith, we may read in darkness. With the light, we will be guided into the next chapter of our book, along the way understanding our purpose.

Our lives can be made that much easier by eliminating that self-destructive attitude of failure. This attitude takes us away from our daily life. Instead we dwell on everything not working, or our enemy within. But what if we recognize our fears and conquer them by skipping the chapter. Growing up, our teacher may have said that we had to finish every chapter in the book. But instead of questioning every page of the book, our teacher tested us on the synopsis of the book. Just as such, why not skip over the chapter which brings us to that state of fear and depression, and read into the next chapter which may hold a much different outcome. If the chapters keep leading us into a dark place, stop reading the book. Lingering on that one negative chapter could prevent us from understanding our true purpose. We cheat life when we don't give ourselves a chance to understand every chapter. Make life that much easier by reading the entire chapter and giving the book a chance.

Our emotions can feel like a freight train at times, especially when we are in a hurry for an answer. While we understand that every emotion provides us with different information, we know that we must also be aware of the things that trigger our emotions. Every feeling that we have is an emotion on the surface of another emotion. By hurrying to the solution, we may miss the information in between the problem. We need to take a moment to sit with our feelings, not simmer in them, but to grasp them and embrace them.

Perhaps at this point in our lives, it's time for us to hurry up and move slow. We plan today with purpose for our actions tomorrow. Each situation we are faced with, we can learn from instead of hurrying for situations where we predict ways to be held down. We have been moving fast enough for the world ahead of us to slow down. In the mirror we have only been able to see a glance of our own reflection.

What if someone else's opinion of us mattered? What if people continued to tell you that us that we were not worthy? What if a game manipulated our own perception of self? Face it; why should we move slow when we can love to trust someone else's mistake, right? Isn't this what being in a hurry is all about? Creating a high intense intervention; many times negative and depressing. We want our brain's neural pathways to come alive in creative and positive ways and we are sure that someone else's opinion of us can solve that, right? If we slow down, are we removing yourself from the formula of our purpose?

Consistency and inconsistency continue to happen when we are in a hurry; but if we hurry up and move slow, we have time to make sense and create an escape plan for all of our fears and anxieties. We learn to take a breath to become more consistent, stronger and productive. While we create these habits, we are led to a more positive outcome including our ability to expand on our balance, posture, and discipline.

“If you hurry to rise with purpose, you will have time to meet passion. But if you move slowly enough with direction, you can meet passion and purpose at the same time.”

Activity 1: Create Your Goal

Every time you want to slow down, do so with the passion of a goal. This means be simple, sensible, and significant when choosing a specific goal. Find the delicate information in between your goal. Sometimes this information may draw applicable sub goals. The importance of these sub goals are that they allow you to be measurable with your overall objective. Remember to draw your goal as an action plan. When you get stuck in planning mode, it may eventually get shelved. You may be doing too much planning because you are trying to figure out if the goal is truly realistic and attainable. The main thing to ask yourself is if you are willing to jump; take action, and yourself in this moment as the right time. Be sure to align your values to the emotional transformation you want. Now, if you have hurried through the book to slow down at this point, you are ready to design your goal. Begin!

Jim McCathy's Story

From the beginning, Jim always gave everything he had. He loved his family, his job, and spent every extra minute helping others. He began his community work at the military hospital where many officers would come for health care, employment, and a fresh start. Jim was always a strong professional man who kept his family protected. When he lost his job over someone else's lie, it destroyed him. Jim was a hard worker at an advertising company for over 5 years. When he lost his job at the advertising company because of his boss' nephew who stole some things and blamed him, Jim was devastated. Jim tried over and over again to convey to his boss that the boss' nephew was the

culprit, but his boss always looked at his work differently after that; criticizing every move that Jim made. Jim, knowing that his boss would never look to him with an unbroken glass of trust, decided to quit his job of 5 years. Once this occurred, things seemed to tumble downhill from there.

He was not able to pay for his wife's medical bills anymore, a woman he was married to for 6 years; and when she died, his relationship with his son Noah got rocky. Noah became very hostile at school and at home during his early middle school years. He went from alternative school, to public school, back to alternative school, and a year in rehab. Jim, feeling like he was losing his son, spent every last dime he had to help his son Noah. Jim felt the only thing he could do was to place Noah in foster care. At last Jim heard before he lost his home and became homeless, Noah was adopted by a wealthy family who could provide everything Noah needed to get better. Jim felt that he could never get a job again because of his boss giving negative comments to other employer who wanted to know about his background at his previous employer. Jim's wife passed shortly after he lost his job and he isolated himself from everyone.

Even when struggling, Jim gave everything to help others; until that day came where he could help no more. Jim had nothing left. For a time he felt that the world had let him down. He had helped so many people, including military personnel who were lost, but yet now he was in a hopeless position and nobody was there to help him. Jim slowly moved from shelter to shelter, until he found a place where he remembered helping a young marine. Jim took all of his things and made his way to a bridge underpass where he could become lost in the shadows of everyone else's life. Jim would stay there during the nights, head to the local shelter where they would let him shower, and then muster through restaurant trash cans for food.

He had given up on the thought that he would ever see Noah again, and felt like every day was moving in one motion towards the end. That is until the day Devin walked up on him at a shelter, where he recognized him from the days when he was homeless.

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Chapter 9: Dream in Real Time Towards The Finish Line

My years of dreaming are slowly disappearing as I have been told that my dreams should have become my purpose by now. Without feeling the pressure of falling short if I do not reach the finish line, I desire to learn how to dream in real time. No amount of time set, yet feeling as though I am reaching a higher plateau quicker than normal. I compare these thoughts to when my friends used to tell me that I would be in a specific position by the time I was older. I am not there, and there are many days where I begin to doubt if I would ever be able to get there. Or maybe the question I should be asking is if I was ever meant to even be there. Not that I have hit disappointment in my journey, but the biggest and most seemingly impossible challenge is in front of me. Continue living my dreams in real time, instead of putting them on the shelf and living peacefully in the space handed to me. This is a vision for my exit season. This is the point where I either continue living these dreams or push myself into a place where I can tell myself that I should have never attempted reaching for those dreams in the first place.

A new attitude is revamping my fear. I am hoping that somewhere along the way, I can find resolve of my fear. Living my dreams in real time, it is easy for me to get distracted by what the world tells me I should believe about myself. I am not a color, I am not a sex, and I am not a language. The world continues to try and beat down my dreams, while I suffocate the enemy by ignoring them. I argue to make my point and realize that I am spending too much time not focusing on my dreams. I am using all of my energy, throwing everything I have, and still don't get it. My money and my power will not win. I have a dream, and it is in real time. I have a purpose and an action plan to go with it. All of the thoughts I throw at myself to try and destroy myself only empower me to complete my purpose. I have a different type of brain activity which helps me to live my dreams in real time.

Today my posture is strong yet quiet, confident yet kind, and demanding yet abrasive. I am ready to walk quickly towards success, through the doors of each day in a vibrant manner as I walk through life. I have the confidence to rise quickly when I fall. I understand the importance of communication and finding balance, and I know how to present myself on my own with my head held high. I look to guide towards an outcome that is relevant to my values and beliefs of where I feel I should be in life; not based on the eyes of the world around me. And while there are changes in the world around me financially, socially, technologically, spiritually, and emotionally, these pressures will not surmount with me while I deal with the sentiments of those who try and define me. As a sole responsibility, I as an individual lie within the morals of my own judgement.

In order for me to find the finish line, I have always walked with my eyes wide open; sometimes looking for short cuts, while other times looking for a helping hand to push start me and give directions. With the use of technology, I don't think I need anyone's help anymore. I can align my life on my own with the help of television, movies, and podcasts; tools which help me create my identity or the identity which I am striving for. I can achieve all the areas of my life by connecting with people that can easily help me get there. They don't need to be patient because I won't be patient. I want it now, deserve it now, and will put myself around people who can help me get there. I don't need to make an impact along the way because I am only looking for the finish line. I know what my purpose is, but I am just having a good time right now living my life. I have my whole life ahead of me to bring forward my values and experiences to leave my mark on this earth. My purpose is clear, but none of you understand me.

Connect The Tools Towards Stability

What is important to us? Before living our dream, it is important to start with what we know. No matter who we are, we should by now after reading this far into the book, understand the tools needed to have a better understanding of ourselves in order to head towards our purpose. Connecting the tools of communication, listening, and trust; to the understanding of mistakes, balance, posture, and speed; leading into our posture and reaching the finish line, we are becoming a more stable person in our space. In doing so, when others enter our space, they have a harder time judging us because they spend too much time trying to figure out what makes us stable. We know why we are here when we are there.

“Those of you who hold the torch control just the torch, but those of you who hold the flame have the ability to bring light to the world.”

Activity 1: Goal at the Finish Line

How many of us see what is in front of us but still walk around with our eyes closed waiting for someone to tell us what lies ahead? I want you to find your purpose? The argument by some would be that the only way you can reach your goal is by having a faith. As this is my perspective, I completely agree. Without faith, you are running a blind race. You have to live your life on facts, or things you tell yourself are acceptable. So if this is the case, in this activity you will have a lot of work to do. If you don't believe in faith, find your purpose through factual resources. Now, the flipside are for those of you who have faith. I will ask you to do the same thing. Find your factual resource and show how you are led to your purpose. Whichever perspective you believe in, make sure that you get to the finish line which is understanding your purpose.

The Story of Journey

David and Matthew had come to a place in their lives as high school seniors where they saw a need to help people. Whether it was someone in the community, a teacher, or the homeless, both David and Matthew felt they had found their calling. Although Matthew always loved Christina, he knew that at some point she would move on. Matthew knew that Christina's dad knew a lot of people. He used to be a pastor, and was now the mayor of the city they lived in. He sat on numerous boards around the city of many prominent businesses and had once owned an advertising company.

As each day passed since middle school, the boys would get together. Now in high school, their mission was to help Mr. McCathy, the homeless man under the bridge. One evening, Matthew called Christina while she laid in her bed staring at the ceiling, and told her that they needed to talk. Of course for Christina, this was the most uneasy feeling because she knew that if Matthew was calling her now, it had to do with her kissing Noah at the house party. Christina agreed to talk to Matthew but only wanted to do so out of her house. As Christina walked to the park the next day to talk to Matthew, butterflies ran through her body. She didn't know how to respond to any accusations Matthew was going to make. As she approached the bench where Matthew and she always sat, she began crying. "Why are you crying Christina?" asked Matthew. As Christina drew back tears, she said, "I messed up and kissed Noah when I told you that I would always be loyal to only you". "It's okay Christina; at some point we knew that this would happen", replied Matthew. Somewhat offended, Christina became upset. Matthew continued, "None of us are perfect and I have done some things I have regretted in the past, but I am committed to being a better person as I know you are also. By you bringing this up, it shows me just how much you respect me. We will always get through things together." said Matthew. As Christina put her head down, she felt Matthews hand on her shoulder. "There is another reason

I asked you to meet me”, said Matthew. As Matthew continued, he told Christina about his memorable experience with David, Mr. Devin, and the homeless man. Matthew asked Christina if she would be willing to speak with her father. Without any hesitation, Christina agreed to go right home and speak with her dad.

Matthew felt like he and Christina were always growing closer, but being brought together by this moment of helping someone else was an amazing experience. That evening, Christina laid in the bed and spoke to Matthew. “I spoke with my father and told him everything and he would like to help”. My dad would like to meet with the homeless man on Saturday and see what he can do”. As Christina finished her incredible news to Matthew, she felt overjoyed that she was able to share such great news. Christina then told Matthew that since tomorrow morning, she had math first period, she would break the wonderful details to Mr. Devin. Matthew was thrilled not to have to be in an awkward position explaining to Mr. Devin that he and David overheard everything underneath the bridge. Christina went and told Mr. Devin the next morning, who went after school and told Mr. McCathy. Mr. Devin brought Mr. McCathy to his house to take a shower, eat a healthy meal, and get ready for Saturday mornings meeting with Christina’s father. Mr. McCathy who never accepted Mr. Devin’s requests for help before had finally taken him up on something.

It was now Saturday and Mr. Devin got his mentor showered and dressed for the new day; kind of in a hurry, but still moving slow enough to make sure that they both appreciated every step. Matthews’s mom and dad had always seen a bright light shining from their son as he explained his purpose over and over to them. As the day got started, all seemed to be going well. Mr. Devin and Mr. McCathy were on their way in Mr. Devin’s car to meet with Christina’s father. As they were driving towards the downtown meeting location, Mr. Devin began hearing a rattling

noise in the car. The car began shaking and smoke soon erupted from the engine. "I don't believe this", sighed Mr. Devin. "Not today of all days". Then Mr. McCathy chimed in, "its okay Devin, this means that the meeting was not supposed to take place." As Mr. Devin got out to look and see what the problem was, he noticed that a car was pulling behind them. "Are you having some car trouble", said the female voice shouting over the hood of Mr. Devin's car. "Yes maam", replied Devin. As the woman approached, she asked if she could call someone for them. Mr. Devin explained that they were on their way to a meeting; a job interview, that was set up for the homeless man in the car.

"Wow", responded the woman. "That is touching. Let me give you guys a ride. I am headed that way to my daughters' house anyways." As the men got in the strangers car and began driving towards the city, Mr. Devin could not help but notice the picture on her dash. "Is Matthew related to you", Mr. Devin asked. "Yes", replied the woman; "he is my grandson". Mr. Devin's face lit up. Mr. Devin realized that he was sitting with the grandmother of one of his biggest admirers. Mr. Devin continued to explain to Maggie that he remembered the first time he had met Matthew. "I was returning from my first tour and these middle school kids ran up to me at the parade. I remember Matthew because he kept telling me over and over again that I was his biggest hero and that he wanted to be a marine one day. He said that he wanted to help people." As Mr. Devin finished what he was saying, Maggie continued their conversation. "Yes, I remember Matthew always mentioning you, not by name, but just as this marine he met as the coolest man next to his dad". "Yes, I know Sara and her husband, Jacob very well. We all went to college together", explained Mr. Devin. Maggie couldn't believe how small their circle was. Their conversation grew as the trip into town approached its ending.

As the two men got out of the car, Mr. Devin thanked Maggie and told her just how much of a blessing her grandson was. This

made Maggie feel wonderful as she began thinking about how difficult it was to raise her daughter Sara, and how Sara had turned her life around to become a purposeful mother for Matthew to do so much for others.

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Chapter 10: Don't Get Off At the Next Exit

I am looking around and I can tell that things are happening. This entire week has been one of the toughest weeks of my life. I see failure, but I try so hard not to have any regrets. I want to exit this strategy, but something deep down tells me to see it through. I make excuses for why I should exit, but something always pulls me back to stay in place, and keep traveling the road straight ahead. My eyes are wide open and I don't see what's in front of me. My faith is not blinded, but I really feel like I should just get off at the next exit and leave this journey behind. I can find another journey, one that shows me clarity so I can get there all by myself. I don't need to stay on this road when it is so foggy and unclear. There is a chance that I could crash.

I have been down this road before and I crashed last time. Every time I get to the same place of my last crash, I ask myself why I didn't just get off at the last exit. All of the signs were there. Yet, something keeps telling me not to get off at the next exit. Something tells me that if I change something about my perspective, I may be able to see ahead of me. I am beginning to realize that I don't use my rearview mirror enough. I expect things to be seen behind me without looking in the rearview. Why don't I use this? Maybe it's because I am just as afraid of what is behind me as I am of what is in front of me. I think I should exit today and try to get back on the road tomorrow. Maybe I just need to rest and that is why my sight is not so clear in either direction.

Am I going to quit when things are not going my way? Am I going to exit quietly so that others don't see me quitting? I have been on this road for a long time and I am running out of gas. The last exit I passed was four miles back and I don't see any signs with a gas station coming up. I need to refill or else I am going to just stop with nothing left. What if I don't see a sign to refill? What will I do? Should I pull over now and hope that I can flag someone down? What if I keep going and there are no lights

around me and I am in complete darkness? I have never been in this situation before, but now I am starting to believe that I should have gotten off at the last exit.

Wait For The Detour

We have questioned parts of our journey. It has been so rocky at times we have questioned the vehicle. Yet, we are determined to stick with it and see just how far we can go. What we never realized on our journey was that the detour waiting ahead of us was always there. It was the redirect that we never thought about and the direction that could eventually give us a different perspective. The detour was inevitable, whether it changed our conversation, our perspective, or our outcome. And to think that we always complain when we see the detour ahead. Take a moment to think about what that detour really does for us. It tests the vehicle that we're driving. It can challenge the vehicle to be able to make sharp stops and turns. The detour can challenge the balance holding up our vehicle. When it becomes bumpy, our balance has to adjust. When it is smooth, we still have to maintain it; and when it pulls against our balance, we have to control it.

Be happy that we are able to experience the detour. Our journey to the exit will face many obstacles, but be true to our purpose. Our strongest leader inside of us comes from inspiration into the possibilities. We will be shown the path to our purpose, but it is up to us to continue on the path. Take the detours when shown, understanding that they will ultimately put us right back on the path. The people we view ahead of us are not necessarily our leaders, but rather the ones set ahead of us to help us decide our own inspiration. Not to touch through our words the possibilities of others, but instead to touch the possibilities through our actions of self.

Fear is trapped in our subconscious thoughts that failure is inevitable. Accept the journey we are on and the detours that are

directed our way. Create our purpose of identity not by where we are going, but rather by how we decide to get there. This is what defines us. Draw our security by creating the balance necessary for us to reach our destination. And finally, live each day with a purpose, knowing that just because there is a detour ahead, it doesn't mean to get off at the next exit.

“Your purpose is like the tires on your car. When bald you have the potential of swerving every which way, but with traction there is no fear of which direction you will head, for you know who's in control.”

Activity 1: Create Your Purpose

You have created your goal in the last chapter, but now I want you to create your purpose. Take a moment to re-examine your goal and ask yourself if you left this earth tomorrow, would that goal help people understand your purpose on this earth? Do your goals align with a bigger picture or are you just creating goals that get you through short term life? We all want long-term life; but in order to view long term life, I believe we must start with how we function with our purpose.

Take some time this week to define your purpose. This will begin with understanding your bigger goals. Do you have bigger goals? If not, it's time to find them. Once you have identified your bigger goals (minimum of 3), ask yourself how each goal can align to a bigger purpose you have while here on earth. Perhaps it is to give others hope; or maybe provide them with your expertise and life knowledge. Perhaps you know that taking someone under your wings of tutelage will help them soar and you will define your purpose that way.

The Story of Purpose

As the three men sat in the office looking at one another, the door opened. It was Sara. Devin's eyes lit up. He knew Sara because he remembered her son. Sara, her husband, and Devin were all friends growing up through high school and college. When Devin left to join the marines, Sara's husband used to care for Devin's mother and father when they both got sick. He used to stop by the house everyday and make sure that they were eating properly. He would tend to their yard, help out with their accounting, and would be there until they both passed. Devin although gone on tour with the marines, was forever grateful as an only child who was not able to be there with his parents.

"Hello Sara, it's great to see you", Devin replied. "Hello Devin. Sorry to interrupt; Mr. Brinkley, I was just in the neighborhood and thought I would drop off these documents to you", said Sara with a bright smile as she turned to hand Mr. Brinkley a contract she had been working on. As Sara left, the three men began discussing the purpose for their meeting. Mr. Brinkley, this is Jim McCathy, the gentleman I told you about who fell on hard times, but has done so much for the community. I wanted to bring him here to meet you in hopes that we may be able to find something for him. "Nice to meet you", replied Mr. Brinkley as he shook Jim McCathy's hand. "You have a great circle of friends who speak very highly of you. Unfortunately, the only thing that I know hiring right now is an advertising company upstairs. I use to own it, but I sold it and now just sit on the board. There are some great opportunities there, although I don't know if this would fit your skills". As Mr. Brinkley finished his commitment to trying to help Jim, he could not help but notice the smiles on both Devin and Jim's faces. "What did I miss", asked Mr. Brinkley. "Well sir, I used to work for an advertising company before and that has always been my passion", replied Jim. "Well that's settled, we can walk over and I will introduce you to the team right now for an informal interview", said Mr. Brinkley as he joined in with the others smiles.

As the three men headed upstairs to the advertising company, they talked about stories that affected their lives and the children who inadvertently connected all of them. They could not help but think how fortunate they were to have such caring children in their lives. As they got to the advertising company, Mr. Brinkley wished them well as he made introductions and left. Devin sat in the lobby as Jim followed a member of the advertising team up the elevator. As Jim was in his meeting, Devin drank coffee and read lobby magazines, but couldn't get off his mind how Matthew and David had put this whole thing together. After nearly two hours, the elevator door opened and Jim McCathy emerged. He greeted Devin with a smile and told him that he was given a job in the mailroom. Jim's life was getting back on track and he had Devin to thank for it. Of course Devin had Matthew and David to thank.

As the two men left the building, Maggie was waiting out front. She honked her horn and the two men walked over. "What are you doing here", asked Devin. "Sara called me and said that you were meeting with one of her clients. I told her that it was a strange coincidence that I had given you a ride there. She then asked me to hang around and wait for you guys to finish so that I could get you back to your car." As Maggie finished explaining, Devin began to get teary eyed; but Maggie wasn't finished. She explained that when she was at the supermarket, she stopped at the mechanic shop next door and asked if someone could help her with her friend's car. They sent a mechanic, who followed Maggie back to the broken down car and he fixed the car. He said there was a bolt that had gotten loose and was making the engine smoke. As both Jim and Devin got in the car, Devin asked Maggie what he owed her for all of her help. Maggie responded; "you don't owe me anything. The mechanic didn't charge me anything. He said his name was Noah and he does free services because he was blessed with a job after growing up doing all of the wrong things when he saw his dad doing all of the right things". Jim's face looked confused as he wondered if there was any way it

could be the same Noah who he had raised and given up to foster care.

Over the course of the next couple of weeks, Devin got Jim situated in his own apartment, with his own clothes. He drove Jim to work every morning on his way to school, until Jim was able to afford his own transportation. Jim continued over the years to work his way up the ladder from the mail room. He was early to work every day, was positive with those he worked with, and always found the good in his job. He realized through this second opportunity that he didn't want to work for the money, but instead wanted to reach his goals and live his purpose. As he moved up to assistant manager, he had the opportunity to interview a woman who worked in his office before as his administrative assistant. Over time Jim found out that she was a former Real Estate agent and was incredible with designs. He ended up hiring her as an executive designer with the advertising company.

Chapter 11: Random Moments Shape Our Lives

There are so many random moments that will shape my life such as friendships, relationships, careers, family, traveling, heartaches, births, and deaths. These are all opportunities to shape a better me. Thoughts towards things I want to accomplish, coming full circle and allowing me an opportunity to create a second chance of life. Many things I do not see happening around me, readjusts my vision of what's ahead. Feelings flowing through me that cause me readjust my thoughts at that exact moment. I know that every opportunity I walk forward, there will be those who question my decisions; however this is the life I shape in order for my purpose to extend my legacy.

I react to adjusting the thoughts that the step I am taking is meant to happen. I am going to reserve my energy for my best use, to become and to give the best me. I will live the perfect opportunity every day, understanding that every opportunity has a perfect storm. I am beginning to realize more and more that I have substituting my goals for my best purpose. It has taken time for me to find my creativity, but being successful in life has begun with me believing that I will be. My brain has always wired itself to hone in on its goal, but with simple reprogramming I have figured out how to rewire my brain to hone in on its purpose. I have an opportunity to understand that if I make this an obligation, I will not reach it because I will make it something instead of pushing myself to reach it.

If I learn to manage myself, it is guaranteed that I will shift my measure of progress from time spent to competencies mastered. Once I understand myself as a complete person, I will be able to self-reflect with a destination for my goals. This practice will ultimately drive me to get to know myself and love how I listen to my needs and the needs of others. This will involve creating alignment around a clear purpose. I must be willing to find

something that is different about myself but can connect to a greater purpose with someone else.

Why Commit To Attraction When Committing To Love Lasts

We have been living a life committed to the attraction of things including a better position or even a better person. We have been absorbed in the lust of the next best thing (similar to the idea that the grass is greener on the other side). Our lust of attraction has caused us to lose friends, lose jobs, lose relationships, and possibly lose your sanity. We possibly fall in and out of a depression with everything around us becoming negative. It becomes harder to pull ourselves out and we begin looking at everyone else's failures to justify our own. Did we know that our attraction can change with the blink of an eye? Think of it like this; we are attracted to a television show. The show eventually gets challenged by a better show on a different network. Our attraction shifts and we have forgotten all about the first television show because something else grabbed our attention. Our attraction to things can cause bad experiences; but our love for something or someone can create our purpose, ultimately allowing us the journey towards our legacy.

Your Experience Can Create Your Legacy

Each one of our experiences influences our perspective to either become a stronger person or a weaker person. This decision influences our direction of purpose, ultimately leading to our legacy. If we believe that our surrounding experiences are detrimental to us, our purpose may be detrimental, leading us on a path towards a detrimental legacy for others such as our own children to follow. On the other hand, if we believe that our purpose can be redirected; our goals, while possibly becoming much tougher to achieve, can be foreseeable with opportunities. It all begins with our perspective of how we view things. We may be a person who is always negative because we don't see our purpose past our goals. We are the person who is always

inflicting the negative “what if” on others. Our if’s usually include negative words like don’t, won’t, and can’t. Today we are given an opportunity that we overlooked because we are stuck in our negative position. This is becoming the legacy others around us are beginning to see as they too become stuck.

Imagine for a moment that we took the same energy put into negative words to readjust our perspective in order to see purpose along our journey. Does this put our life on a balanced playing field for either positive or negative outcomes? One thing does happen which didn’t happen before. We become the person who inflicts the positive possibilities into the atmosphere. We open opportunities to explore positive outcomes in our goals, leading to a stronger purpose, ultimately driving our legacy. Opportunity becomes our driving force for positive outcomes when we take advantage.

“When you fail, your story is given potential by the direction of the things you allow to shape it.”

Activity 1: Create Your Legacy

Ask yourself if everything you are doing this week is helping you reach a step closer to your legacy. This implies that you already understand the purpose of each week. Create a chart showing the path you are heading in order to leave your legacy.

The Story of Legacy

In the early years, the connections were clear. Maggie was a part time realtor. Her daughter Sara went with her on many of the showings. Maggie’s last two showings before she stopped doing real estate, due in part to depression from her husband leaving, was showing a house to Devin’s parents and Christina’s parents. Maggie went into a shell, raising Sara as a single parent. As Sara grew up, she became friends with her now husband, as well as

with Devin, and David's parents. They all used to hang out in high school and many going to the same college at University of Colorado, staying close to home. When they all graduated college, all of them moved back to the town where they all grew up. Sara got married and had Matthew. David's parents had him around the same time. The two families became close and Matthew and David pretty much grew up together. While they were in elementary school, they used to clean the yards of their teacher Mr. Devin. Matthew had a school crush on Christina Brinkley. The two of them were inseparable and told each other that they would get married when they got older.

During this time, there was a man named Jim McCathy who worked at an advertising company. He was a very wealthy man who worked long hours. His son Noah was also in middle school, but was not really friends with Matthew and David. Noah was very rebellious and one day backed his father's car out of the driveway for fun. It was at this same moment that Matthew and David were riding their bikes down that same street. Unbeknown to Noah, Matthew and David were intersecting with his driveway at the exact moment Noah hit the gas and peeled out backwards. Noah hit the two boys, running them over. After more than 5 months in a coma, the doctors advised the boy's parents that they would never come out of their comas. Both boys' parents agreed that it was best to release their pain and let them go.

Christina was devastated and swore that she would never be in love with anyone ever again. As Christina entered high school, Jim McCathy's life turned upside down. His son Noah was in and out of alternative schools and juvenile detention centers, he lost his position at an advertising company, his wife died, and he felt he had nothing left. During the better days of Jim's life, he gave his time to help military personnel at the veterans' center, giving some of them jobs with his company while finding placement for others. Devin was one of the marines that he helped.

Christina, now in high school, still had love for Matthew. While getting math tutoring with Mr. Devin, now a teacher, she asked him if he could name his tutoring sessions after Matthew and David in their honor. In total agreement, Devin turned his Tuesday and Thursday tutoring sessions into Matthew and David's math tutoring academy. Christina growing up, kind of lost, started hanging out with the wrong people. She ended up at a party where she got drunk and ended up kissing Noah, the last person she ever wanted to kiss. It haunted her and she wanted to talk to Mr. Devin about it. She tried to catch him one day after class, but couldn't. He ended up coming to her the next day and asking for her help. There was a man under the bridge that he wanted to help and something told him to get in touch with Christina. At that same exact moment, Christina showed him a picture she saw of Mr. Devin standing with an older gentleman which looked like the father of Noah. Mr. Devin could not believe that they were talking about the same man.

Christina felt compelled to talk to her father for Mr. Devin and see if she could help. She was able to set up a meeting, but on the way to the meeting, Mr. Devin's car broke down. Maggie was driving by and stopped to give them a ride. When Devin and Jim got to the office of Mr. Brinkley, they were afforded a meeting with an advertising company; the same company that Jim was fired from. Jim McCathy got the job on the ground floor, started over, working his way up the position ladder. While he was a manager of the company, Maggie worked for him. Almost 4 years later, he became president of the advertising company. Maggie was moved into an executive position as a layout designer because of her experience from real estate with layouts. Matthew and David had created a legacy of love by embedding their attitudes of service in all of those they touched.

Chapter 12: Live It Like You Mean It

We return to perspective, with our eyes wide open, the wave lands its soul on each breath. By touching sight, yet washing away time hoping to stand still; and though happiness lies within ourselves, there is a still glimpse of solace through the smile we see today. This touch is the touch of unending light, peaking over each sunset you see. Your heart is no longer intimidated to surround itself in strength found in plain view; but yet a ray of true beauty piercing reality beyond the foreseen. This moment you are in is the moment when words unspoken touch the soul as if a ripple gently touches a calm stream. This we both tether a peace within ourselves, brought to clarity by the hands no search will longer hold. Our hearts we touch, and the eyes unto which we see is a reflection. While we continue to see the beauty in that of which surrounds us, nothing will diminish the strength of our reflection that embodies what words may not direct.

We all feed off of those who inspire, yet we should allow those who touch the hearts of others, to touch ours. Adulthood follows our innocence of childhood, and yet we are strong in our journey to explore every uncertainty. There are no cares of the destination which lies within our inspiration to feel. There are two strengths that make us whole, inspiring us to lead with no regrets. Each word becomes truth to our journey, a complete abstraction of your physical beauty and my emotional beauty. Only our inspiration writes the next chapter to our story. I want you to know that each piece of what we have to give, our hands touch to receive, that two become in comparison to nothing surrounding opportunity, built without expectation, and formed without response.

I have dreamed for you to know the rhythm of my understanding; a still truth to your needs, yet support to your strength. This has become my simple reminder formed and maintained without sight, through the ever changing rhythm of emotions formed within. There can be no confusion in the depth of where I stand

or who stands next to me; for each of us represent everyone's child.

Activity 1: Live Your Life To The Fullest

Hopefully after reading this book, you now understand that how you communicate verbally, through action, non-verbally; how you listen; how you respond; how you feel; your action plan; your goals, purpose, and legacy; and everything around that which defines you, will help you make the most of life every day. For this final activity, head out this morning and do all of the things emphasized in this book, within a single day. Keep in mind that any day could be your last, and if you haven't put a dent in your purpose, you have only put a dent in your possibilities.