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# **Letter from the Editors**

# Letter from the Editors

Welcome to ITD World Vietnam's October 2023 issue – in which we embark on a voyage into the topic of **Change and Mastery!**

In a world teeming with challenges and constant change, the pursuit of personal growth and self-discovery becomes ever more critical. With that in mind, we have curated a rich selection of articles designed to inspire and guide you toward lifelong happiness and fulfillment, including:

- **Personal Mastery in Leadership:** Inspired by the work of Dr. Marshall Goldsmith, we will discuss how leaders who have harnessed the power of personal mastery can influence and inspire their teams, fostering a culture of excellence and growth.
- **Attaining Self-Mastery:** What does it truly mean to attain self-mastery, and how can it lead to a life of enduring happiness? In this feature, we provide insights, stories, and practical tips on how to enjoy a happier and more meaningful existence.
- **From Self to Life Mastery:** We end our sharing with a thought-provoking exploration of how self-mastery transcends the individual and extends to mastering one's life as a whole. Within this section, you will discover the power of choice and intention in shaping the life you desire, whether it's in your career, relationships, or personal pursuits.

We trust that this issue will become your compass on the journey toward abundance in life.

Here's to your continued growth, happiness, and success!

*ITD World Vietnam team*

02

# Personal Mastery in Leadership

*Credit: Dr. Marshall Goldsmith*

# Personal Mastery in Leadership

## Personal Mastery in Leadership

Years ago, when most organizations were based on the hierarchical business model of the Industrial Age, great leaders were those who were unemotional, rational, and even mechanistic. Those days are gone. Today's leader, especially one who is in charge of a dynamic, global organization, finds himself or herself in desperate need of one key trait — **self-awareness**.

An organization's success today depends on such a variety of talents and skills that no one leader could possibly be gifted in simultaneously. There are technological issues, global issues, financial issues, human resource issues, leadership issues, employee issues, legal issues, and more. A leader who is self-aware enough to know that he or she is not adept at everything is one who has taken the first step toward being a great leader.

This sort of personal mastery entails having a heightened understanding of one's own

behavior, motivators, and competencies — and having “emotional intelligence” — to monitor and manage one's emotional responses in a variety of situations. This variety of situations is not limited to the home office, or the boardroom. It is of a global nature, across cultures that are very different and can be difficult to navigate, especially for those who are not comfortable, knowledgeable, or willing to admit their individual strengths and weaknesses. Everyone has a shortcoming or two — leaders who are willing to admit these, who strive to improve, and who seek out a consulting team to fill in the gaps will **1) encourage followers to do the same** and **2) make room for others whose talents lie where theirs don't**.

Have you ever worked with a micro-manager? This is someone who thinks he or she needs to be involved in everything that happens within the company.

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These leaders are closing out the talents of others by not divesting themselves from the day-to-day problem-solving activities of the company. Great leaders let go of the day-to-day, problem-solving activities of the company. Rather, they choose to maximize strategic and relationship-building efforts. These contribute to the forward momentum of the company rather than causing a “bottleneck” at the leader’s desk. No one person should do it all — and if they are self-aware, most people will realize that they really aren’t capable or knowledgeable enough to do it all.

Do you recognize the difference between what you need to do versus what you should pass along to your team? Does your boss?

Following is a short list of things you can do to achieve self-awareness and personal mastery in leadership.

- Monitor your performance. Note areas in which you excel

and need improvement. Communicate these to your team.

- Realize that failures and mistakes are just one step on the road to success.
- Recognize that being aware of the impact that your behavior has on other people is a critical leadership skill.
- Remember that when criticism is difficult to accept, there is probably some truth to it.
- And, finally, learn to give yourself and others credit for improving.

*(Original source: The Mark of a Great Leader -*

*<https://hbr.org/2010/02/the-mark-of-a-great-leader>)*

# Personal Mastery in Leadership

## Why We Resist Changing Ourselves

Each of us has a pile of behaviors that we define as “me.” These are the behaviors, both positive and negative, that we think of as our unalterable essence.

While many of these “me” behaviors may be positive (e.g., “I am smart” or “I am hard working”), some may be negative (e.g., “I am a bad listener” or “I am always late”). If we buy into our behavior definition of “me,” which most humans do, we can learn to excuse almost any annoying action by saying, “That’s just the way I am!”

As you read this column, think about your own behavior. How many times does your own “need to be me” get in the way of building positive relationships with the important people in your life? How many times have you rationalized away inappropriate behavior by saying, “That’s just the way I am!”

Some years ago, Dr. Marshall Goldsmith worked with a CEO

who was generally regarded as a great leader of people but was seen as lacking in the ability to provide positive recognition. As they reviewed his 360-degree feedback report, he snorted, “What do you want me to do, go around praising people who don’t deserve it? I don’t want to look like a phony!”

“Is that your excuse for not giving recognition? You don’t want to look like a phony?”

“Yes,” he replied.

The CEO was very animated in articulating his defense. For example, he went into a tirade about when he shouldn’t give recognition that included the following comments:

- He had high standards – and people didn’t always meet them.
- He didn’t like to hand out praise indiscriminately – because this cheapened the value of praise when it was deserved.
- He believed that singling out individuals could weaken the team.



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While pointing out when he shouldn't give recognition, he completely failed to deal with the fact that there were lots of times when he should be giving positive recognition. After his dazzling display of rationalization, Dr. Goldsmith finally stopped him and said, "No matter what you say, I am not impressed with your excuses, and I don't think that handing out praise makes you a phony. Your real problem is your self-limiting definition of who you are. You are afraid that if you recognize others, it won't really be 'me' who is doing the recognition. That's what the definition of phony is – not 'me.'"

"Why can't doing a great job of providing positive recognition be you? It's not immoral, illegal, or unethical is it?"

"No," he conceded.

"Will it make people feel better?"

"Yes."

"Will they perform better as a result of this well-deserved

positive recognition?"

"Probably."

"So please explain to me – why aren't you doing it?"

He laughed and replied, **"Because it wouldn't be ME!"**

That was the moment when change became possible – when he realized that his stern allegiance to himself was pointless vanity. He realized that he was not only hurting his employees' and company's chances for success – he was hurting his own chance for success!

He realized that he could shed his "excessive need to be me" and not be a phony. He could stop thinking about himself and start behaving in a way that benefited others.

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Sure enough, when he let go of his devotion to a pointless definition of “me,” all his other rationalizations fell by the wayside. He realized that his direct reports were talented, hard-working people who did indeed deserve his praise. He finally understood that giving recognition when deserved didn’t damage his reputation as a leader who had high expectations.

The payoff was enormous. Within a year his scores on giving recognition were in line with his other positive scores on leadership – all because he had lost his excessive “need to be me.”

The irony was not lost on him. He accepted the fact that the more he focused on his employees, the more they worked to benefit the company – and that benefited him.

It’s an interesting equation:  
**less me + more them =  
more success as a  
leader.**

Keep this in mind the next time you find yourself resisting change because you are clinging to a false – and/or probably pointless – notion of “me.”

*(Original source: An Excessive Need To Be Me -  
<https://marshallgoldsmith.com/articles/an-excessive-need-to-be-me/>)*

# Personal Mastery in Leadership

## How to Change for the Better

The main problem with behavior change is not a lack of motivation or intelligence — the problem is that most of us are just too busy. That's why we should pick the one behavior pattern for personal change that will make the biggest difference, and focus on that.

If you pick the right area, increased effectiveness in this one behavior will influence many other aspects of your relationships. For example, becoming a better listener will help you treat people with more respect and become a better friend and family member.

### "When I Get Better..." Exercise

Dr. Nathaniel Branden, a renowned psychologist and author, once shared a simple exercise that helps answer the 'Is it worth it?' question.

Seat about six people around a table and ask each person to select one behavior that he or she may want to change. One person begins by saying, 'When

I get better...' and completes the sentence by mentioning one benefit that will accompany this change. For example, one person may say: "When I get better at being open to differing opinions, I will hear more great ideas."

After everyone has mentioned their behavior and the first benefit, the cycle begins again. Now each person mentions a second benefit that may result from changing the same behavior, then a third benefit, then more benefits until the facilitator says 'stop.' Then participants discuss what they have learned.

### Moved to Tears

This worked wonders for a high-ranking military leader - who was extremely judgmental and seemed to be proud of it. When he began Nathaniel's exercise, he chose: "When I become less judgmental..." as his behavior to change.

# Personal Mastery in Leadership

The first time around he coughed and grunted a sarcastic comment rather than talk about a real benefit. The second time around he was even more cynical. Then something changed.

When he described a third potential benefit, he stopped being sarcastic. Several rounds later, he had tears in his eyes, and said: "When I become less judgmental, maybe my children will speak to me again."

The exercise has been applied by Dr. Marshall Goldsmith with several thousand people. Many start with benefits that are "corporately correct," such as: "This change will help my company make more money," and finally end with benefits that are more human, such as: "This change will make me a better

person." I will never forget one hard-driving executive who chose: "When I get better at letting go" as the behavior he should work on. His first benefit was that his direct reports would take more responsibility. His final benefit was that he would probably live to celebrate his 60th birthday.

Now, it's your turn to pick a behavior pattern that you may want to change. Complete the sentence: "When I get better at..." over and over again. Listen closely as you recite potential benefits. You will be amazed at how quickly you can determine whether this change is worth it for you.

*(Original source: Pick One Thing - <https://marshallgoldsmith.com/articles/pick-one-thing/>)*

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## Change is Hard – but Not Impossible

According to Dr. Goldsmith, there are five common reasons why people give up on their goals. Understanding these roadblocks will help you apply for some preventive medicine — and increase the odds that you won't fall into the same old traps.

### *1. Ownership*

"I wasn't sure that this would work in the first place. I tried it out — it didn't do that much good. As I guessed, this was kind of a waste of time."

The classic mistake made in leadership development, coaching, and self-help books is the promise that "This will make you better!" After years of experience in helping real leaders change real behavior in the real world, I have learned a hard lesson. Only you will make you better! For example, almost any type of workout scheme will provide benefits, if you do it. The ultimate driver for change has to come from inside you — not from the program, book, or coach.

Never begin a change program with the thought "This sounds like an interesting plan. I will just try it out and see if it works." If that's your thinking, it won't work.

To have a real chance of success, you have to take personal ownership and have the internal belief that "This will work if, and only if, I make it work. I am going to make this work."

### *2. Time*

"I had no idea that this process would take so long. I'm not sure it's worth it."

Goal setters have a chronic tendency to underestimate the time needed to reach targets. Everything seems to take longer than we think it should. When the time elapsed in working toward our goal starts exceeding expectations, we're tempted to just give up on the goal.

# Personal Mastery in Leadership

In setting our goals for behavioral change, it's important to be realistic about the time we need to produce positive, lasting results. Habits that have taken years to develop won't go away in a week. Set time expectations that are 50% to 100% longer than you think you will need to see results – then add a little more!

### *3. Difficulty*

"This is a lot harder than I thought it would be. It sounded so simple when we were starting out."

The optimism bias of goal setters applies to difficulty as well as time. Not only does everything take longer than we think it will, it requires more hard work. We all confuse two terms that appear to be synonymous but are actually quite different: simple and easy. We want to believe that once we understand a simple concept, it will be easy to execute a plan and achieve results.

If this were true, everyone who understood that they should eat

a healthy diet and exercise regularly would be in shape. As sales of diet books have increased, Americans keep gaining weight. Our challenge for getting in shape as well as for changing leadership behavior lies not in the understanding but in the doing! Understanding is easy. Doing is tough.

In setting goals, it's important to accept the fact that real change requires real work. Making yourself feel good in the short term with statements like "This will be easy" and "This will be no problem for me" can backfire in the long term, when you realize that change isn't easy and that you will invariably face hard challenges in your journey toward improvement.

Acknowledging the price for success in the beginning of the change process will help prevent the disappointment that can occur when challenges arise later.

# Personal Mastery in Leadership

## 4. *Distractions*

"I would really like to work toward my goal, but I'm facing some unique challenges right now. It might be better if I just stopped and did this at a time when things weren't so crazy."

Goal setters have a tendency to underestimate the distractions and competing goals that will invariably appear throughout the year. A piece of advice that I give all of my coaching clients is: "I'm not sure what crisis will appear, but I'm almost positive that some crisis will appear!"

The distraction or crisis may result from a problem, whereas in other cases it may result from an opportunity. Setbacks let us think, "I just have to take care of this problem first," while opportunities give us the handy excuse "I may never have this chance again." Either can be deadly in stopping us from achieving preset goals.

Plan for distractions in advance. Assume that crazy is the new normal. You will probably be close to the reality that awaits!

## 5. *Maintenance*

"I think that I did actually try to change and get better, but I have let it slide since then. What am I supposed to do — work on this stuff the rest of my life?"

Once a g has put in all of the effort needed to achieve a goal, it can be tough to face the reality of what's needed to maintain the new status quo. One of the first reactions of many dieters upon reaching their weight goal is to think, "This is great! Now I can start eating again. Let's celebrate with some pizza and beer!" Of course, this mindset leads to future weight gain and the "yo-yo" effect that is unfortunately so common in dieters.

When one of my high-potential leaders asked his boss, the CEO, the question, "Do I have to watch what I say and do for the rest of my career?" the CEO replied, "You do if you plan on ever becoming a CEO!"

# Personal Mastery in Leadership

You can either set goals that increase your probability for long-term change or set goals that may feel good in the short term but lead to disillusionment and giving up in the long term.

Here are the cold, hard truths. Real change requires real effort. The “quick fix” is seldom a meaningful one. Distractions and things that compete for your attention are going to crop up – maybe even more frequently. Changing any one type of behavior won’t solve all of life’s problems. And finally, any meaningful change will probably require a lifetime of effort.

All of these messages may

sound tough, but at least they’re reality. And now that you know how challenging setting a goal can be, don’t let that stop you. In fact, clear, specific goals that present a lot of challenges tend to produce the best results!

Have the courage to face the truth up front when setting goals. Honest, challenging plans can help you make a real difference – both in your own life and the lives of the people you know.

*(Original source: The Five Reasons We Give Up - <https://marshallgoldsmith.com/articles/the-five-reasons-we-give-up/>)*



03

# Attaining Self Mastery for Lifelong Happiness

*Credit: Dr. Marshall Goldsmith,  
Dr. Peter Chee & Aaron Ngui*

# Attaining Self Mastery for Lifelong Happiness

In the process of helping people, we discovered what worked wonders to produce outstanding results.

of loving fulfillment, average leaders turned into great inspiring leaders, and much, much more.

We have seen so many lives transformed for the better. People who were once disillusioned and frustrated became joyful and purposeful, destructive habits were replaced with empowering habits, lives of emptiness transformed into lives

In this adventurous quest, we will also be equipping you to mentor, coach, and multiply your greatness abundantly to those around you to make your world a better place.

## 5 Levels of Mastery

We have invested much time and effort in ensuring a very clear and carefully thought-out structure so that you can easily conceptualize and internalize the learning and apply it for sustainable results. With that in mind, we conceived an upward step-by-step approach and so the 5 Levels of Mastery was born.

### 1. Self Mastery

The first level - How to master yourself - is crucial for anyone who wants to achieve their aspirations. All mastery starts with self-mastery and only by mastering your own thoughts, imagery, emotions, actions, and habits can you begin to grow into the person that you aspire to be and spread your influence around your loved ones, colleagues, community, and ultimately, the world.

### 2. Work-Life Mastery

The second level is about mastering your work and life. How you work and how you live your life determines how much love you can experience, how much happiness you can have, and the level of success you can obtain. It is here that we demonstrate to you how all the elements in work and life can work in synergy so you can achieve more and live the life you desire.

# Attaining Self Mastery for Lifelong Happiness

## 3. Mentoring Mastery

At the third level, we share with you how you can expand your achievements to those around you. We find that progress and growth develop exponentially when you inspire and help others live a better life. Through mentoring, you can pass on your experiences, knowledge, and skills, and network directly to people at work and in life. In doing so, they too can enjoy the benefits and advantages you have gained. This is when you fully embrace the principle that the more you grow others, the more you grow yourself and the more you give, the more you receive abundantly.

## 4. Coaching Mastery

The fourth level is where you coach to empower and unleash the unlimited potential of the people around you. By enabling many people to achieve self-mastery and to live the life they desire, they can do more, be more, and accomplish more in work and life and you in turn make quantum leaps in your influence and impact.

## 5. World Influence Mastery

Once you get to the fifth level, you will have achieved and accomplished much personally and professionally. Now is the time to multiply and bring your influence to bear unto more people around the world. You amplify your uniqueness and spread your value to the wider community. You live a life of profound impact on the world and your legacy lives on.

## 7 Disciplines of Love, Happiness, and Success

Most managers and leaders think that the formula for success in work comes from effort, knowledge, skills, and smart work.

However, according to Shawn Achor - Founder of Good Think:

- ▶ Only 25% of job success is predicted by IQ.
- ▶ 75% is determined by optimism level, social support, and the belief that stress is a challenge – not a threat.

# Attaining Self Mastery for Lifelong Happiness

When the brain is positive, it can be 31% MORE PRODUCTIVE than when it is not.

Therefore, instead of trying to work harder and smarter, we must find ways to become happier at work. Here, we would like to share with you the 7 steps necessary to attain love, happiness, and success.

## 1. *Transform habitually*

Who doesn't want to be a better version of themselves? A better husband, a better son, a better leader, a better employee... the list just goes on forever.

The problem is: How?

Just two words: **Better habits**. Habits are what got you here. Poor habits lead to poor outcomes – such as losing control of emotions. On the other hand, good habits will bring forth good results.

We have the power to choose to maintain good habits – which start with seemingly trivial ones like making your bed after waking up. Over time, small practices like this will create the foundation for self-discipline,

which then culminates in bigger achievements.

Habits are the foundation of self-mastery. It is the continuous repetition of productive behavior that will lead to habit creation and help you become the person you want to be.

Therefore, abandoning unproductive habits (e.g.: not drinking enough water) and taking on productive ones (e.g.: drinking more water) will set you on the course to the life you want and deserve.

## 2. *Focus purposefully*

Imagine a life where you feel fully alive – as you wake up every morning with great eagerness.

# Attaining Self Mastery for Lifelong Happiness

You live each day at your best, doing what you love, and you are recognized for doing it well. Work is no longer a burden – you live by it.

Would that be a life worth living for?

But how can we attain such a life?

Simple – **you need a life purpose.**

Your life purpose is like your own compelling navigator. It will be your steadfast bedrock when you are assailed by doubt over what to do.

Most people dream of a purpose-centered life, yet only a few can enjoy one. Most have yet to discover their life purpose – they continue searching by wandering around continuously in circles.

So, how do I discover my life purpose?

Aristotle once said: *“Where your*

*talents and the needs of the world cross, there your calling can be found”.*

Overall, if your talent can add value to people’s lives, you are in the right place.

## 3. Align wisely

Have you ever felt overloaded with too many things to do, and you were trying to multitask whilst things kept changing unexpectedly?

Have you ever felt lost about your future direction, and that your life is a complete mess?

Have you ever felt that you know what needs to be done, yet you cannot get down to doing it, and your goals stay spent forever?

In this increasingly volatile world, more and more people are getting sucked into a crazy-busy life, which – if left uncontrolled – would spiral them out of their initial direction.

# Attaining Self Mastery for Lifelong Happiness

So what can be done to get out of such situations?

One word: **Planning.**

Effective preparation, prioritization, and alignment of plans will enable organizations – and individuals – to accomplish more in a shorter time. An effective plan starts with:

- A clear vision and set of goals.
- A detailed action plan – including strategies and possible contingencies.
- Resources, scorecards, and motivators necessary for execution.

## *4. Improve continuously*

Previously, we discussed the importance of changing habits, discovering your life purpose, and aligning with a detailed action plan.

However, even though you may carry out all 3 things above, there are times that you find yourself falling behind other people.

Don't worry – it just means that you need to improve yourself, continuously.

The world has been constantly changing. What is fashionable now may become outdated in just a few years. Your skills today may turn obsolete down the road.

Take a good look at what the Covid-19 pandemic has caused to the global economy. Industries that had been flourishing before – such as tourism – are now in a truly bad spot.

For businesses that are struggling in the current hard times, constant improvement is key to survival. This can be:

- Bringing in new players to the team.
- Shoring up the backroom staff.
- Making hard, yet necessary, human resource replacements.

# Attaining Self Mastery for Lifelong Happiness

## 5. *Present joyfully*

Have you ever felt bogged down by past mistakes or future unknowns?

This is the norm for many people. Usually, we are hung up over past problems and too scared to move forward – for fear of what may come in the future. In doing so, we lose the essential experience of being present joyfully.

Being present joyfully is to live in the moment, and be able to find happiness in it. Instead of focusing too much on the past and future, we enjoy life by making the best out of the situation at hand.

By being present joyfully, you free yourself from all destructive emotions (e.g.: doubt, frustration, and anger) and allow positive ones to flow in. This is the basis for unleashing your potential and attaining success. Below is the Seven Patterns of Joy (SPJ) Model:

- **Joyful Awareness:** You stay

in emotional control and choose better responses to events.

- **Joyful Responsibility:** You focus on what is controllable, to increase influence.
- **Joyful Reframe:** You continuously change responses to achieve better outcomes quickly.
- **Joyful Laughter:** You leverage humor to bring upon a happier state.
- **Joyful Tasks:** You focus on loving what you do and doing what you love to do.
- **Joyful Senses:** You utilize the 5 bodily senses to be more joyful.
- **Joyful People:** You spend more time with people who bring joy and uplift.



# Attaining Self Mastery for Lifelong Happiness

## 6. *Receive gratefully*

Gratitude is vital in your journey towards love, happiness, and success. It allows us to realize the many blessings we have in our lives – including seemingly trivial things, like the fresh air during a morning run, and bigger things, such as opening a café successfully.

With gratitude, you can appreciate people for the good things they bring into your life. In turn, they will be happy to lend a helping hand, and the cycle of goodness just grows bigger then.

Unfortunately, many people never feel that they have enough. Not enough money, not enough time, not enough real estate, etc. That feeling of inadequacy gnaws at their core – causing them to frequently compare themselves against others.

As leaders, we are always susceptible to feeling insufficient. Whenever one of our contemporaries does something special, we tend to feel envious of them. By envying others, we leave no room for joy and gratitude.

So, how can we turn envy into gratitude? Simple – try this Thanklessness Reversal Technique (TRT)



### Rejoice in the joy of others

One way to minimize envy is to partake in others' joy. If your neighbor has purchased a marque you like, congratulate her for her good taste in cars – instead of bad-mouthing her as a show-off.

### Count your blessings

By noting down what you have in life, you won't be tempted to focus on what you don't have in life. Just like Nick Vujicic, having no limbs did not stop him from enjoying life and aiming for success.





# Attaining Self Mastery for Lifelong Happiness



## Not taking life for granted

Ask yourself this question "What if I lose my loved ones, how will my life be?". Think of anything you value – your job, your car, your retirement benefits, etc. As soon as you realize how important they are, no longer should you take things for granted.

## Let go of unmet expectations

Having unrealistic expectations and not fulfilling them is one way to suck gratitude from life. Instead, set realistic goals, and keep expectations sensible.



## 7. Give lovingly

Mother Teresa once said:  
"There is more hunger for love and appreciation in this world than for bread".

Love is a critical component of success. By loving what you do, work becomes pleasurable. On the other hand, if someone dislikes their job, that dislike weighs on their psyche.

Unhappiness fills in their life – because they do not love what they do.

The more you give lovingly, the more you receive lovingly – and the more you want to give lovingly to more people. This spiral of love is what brings happiness and success to life.

# Attaining Self Mastery for Lifelong Happiness

So how can I become a loving person? These 8 steps should help you:

- **Loving yourself:** You appreciate everything you have, including your strengths and passions.
- **Loving forgiveness:** You let go of past mistakes – whether they are made by you or anyone else.
- **Loving presence:** Instead of focusing on yourself only, you are willing to spend time with those around you.
- **Loving words:** Be kind in what you say towards others – and be patient when those around you are not.
- **Loving touch:** Physical touch, if applied at the right time, can unleash a great deal of love.
- **Loving symbols:** Giving thoughtful presents (e.g.: a wedding ring) can bring about unlimited joy and happiness for the receiver.
- **Loving support:** Love and action go hand-in-glove. When you love someone, you are willing to sacrifice your time, money, and energy for them - no matter what costs it takes.



**04**

# **From Self to Life Mastery**

# From Self to Life Mastery

## Attaining Fulfillment in Life

In the journey of life, we all seek something more profound than fleeting happiness – we yearn for true fulfillment and a sense of purpose that ignites our souls. The pursuit of lasting contentment is a universal desire that binds humanity together, transcending borders, cultures, and beliefs.

Fulfillment in life is about having a vision – including a set of aspirations to work towards – and living in complete accord and flow with one's values. It is about enjoying a genuinely meaningful life – one that is purposeful and satisfying.

At the heart of fulfillment lies purpose – the guiding star that illuminates our path and lends deeper meaning to our existence. When we align our aspirations with a higher goal, we are propelled forward, even amidst challenges and setbacks. Ambitions empower us to transcend personal limitations and leave a positive

impact on the world.

This is what it means to be fulfilled. The more meaningful the outcome, the more delighted you will feel.

### *Happiness vs Fulfillment*

Happiness is a byproduct of fulfillment, not a prerequisite. The former is a temporary and dependent emotion that comes and goes – while the latter refers to a sustainable and internal state that comes from living a valued and purposeful life.

Happiness is often based on external factors, such as achievements, comparisons, or gratifications, that can change or be taken away at any moment. It can also be influenced by our expectations, beliefs, and perceptions of what will make us happy. Despite not being a bad thing, it is not the ultimate goal of our lives.

# From Self to Life Mastery

Fulfillment, on the other hand, is based on internal factors, such as values, passions, contributions, and growth, that are more stable and consistent. It comes from knowing that we are moving forward and progressing in one or more areas of our lives – and that we love the journey. Fulfillment also comes from finding meaning and purpose in what we do, and how we impact others and the world.

In a nutshell, happiness is what we feel along the way – while fulfillment is the feeling of reaching our destination.

## *What Gives You Fulfillment in Life?*



Fulfillment in life is a subjective and personal experience that varies significantly from person to person. That said, over time, researchers and scholars have

come up with a list of things that have been proven to bring about feelings of contentment:

- **Purpose:** Having a sense of purpose in life gives people a reason to get up in the morning and feel like their lives have meaning. It can be anything from a big goal – like curing cancer, to a small one – like making your spouse or children happy.
- **Connection:** Humans are social creatures; as a result, we cannot live meaningful connections with others. This includes close relationships with family and friends, as well as a sense of belonging to a community or group.
- **Contribution:** Making a positive impact on the world is a powerful source of fulfillment for many people. You may consider volunteer work, activism, or simply being a good friend or neighbor.
- **Growth:** Learning and growing as a person is another key ingredient for a fulfilling life. This can involve setting and achieving goals, trying new things, and expanding your horizons.

# From Self to Life Mastery

- **Engagement:** Being fully engaged in an activity or experiencing a state of “flow” – where you’re completely immersed and absorbed in what you’re doing – can lead to a deep sense of satisfaction.
- **Creative expression:** Engaging in creative pursuits, whether it’s through art, music, writing, or other forms of self-expression, has been proven to provide a fulfilling outlet for emotions and thoughts.
- **Well-roundedness:** Striving for balance in various aspects of life, such as work, relationships, leisure, and self-care, may result in a more fulfilling and satisfying life overall.

## *How to Find & Gain Fulfillment in Life*



## **Communicating**

Communication serves as a non-dispensable component in human interactions. Just as a broken limb severs the flow of nerve signals, a lack of communication hinders connections between individuals and society as a whole.

## **Confronting**

Our unwillingness to confront challenges is what allows them to persist and hold power over us. For example, your fear of public speaking may drive you to walk away from giving presentations at work or in class – which in turn prevents you from advancing in your career or getting the education you want. True growth starts with us daring to face our inner “demons” and limitations head-on. To transcend the confines of self-awareness, one must be willing to accept their vulnerabilities and insecurities. By doing so, we unify our fragmented self-image and step into a realm of inner strength where nothing holds superiority over us.

# From Self to Life Mastery

## **Forgiving**

As mentioned, the relentless pursuit of competition and comparison only leads to unfulfilled needs and lingering resentment. For us to tread the path to liberation, we must learn to let go – for our sake and for that of others.

Embracing forgiveness allows us to release the burden of holding on to grudges and negative emotions, granting us freedom and a chance to evolve.

## **Taking responsibility**

In modern times, the reluctance to accept responsibility has become a norm – stemming from our feelings of inadequacy. And yet, amidst the current culture of victimhood, accountability becomes more crucial than ever – so that we may be empowered to shape our destinies.

Now, imagine you are a student who keeps failing their classes. Instead of accepting responsibility for your poor

grades, you believe that you are not smart enough to succeed in school – as such, you give up and blame the teachers or the school system for their failures. In doing so, you deny yourself the chance to improve and live a truly content life.

## **Learning**

True knowledge arises from experience, not mere information. Fear should never hinder us from seeking to understand new things. Through learning, we expose ourselves to opportunities, expand our horizons, grow as individuals, and ultimately live more fulfilling lives.

## **Being humble**

The path to fulfillment lies in accepting change and being flexible in our perspectives. Being open to the idea of being mistaken allows us to discover new knowledge and insights that were previously unknown to us.

# From Self to Life Mastery

## **Serving**

The key to living a meaningful life is through giving. That said, the quality of help we offer does make a significant difference in achieving fulfillment.

True assistance eliminates the need for further help. Instead of simply giving someone money, empowering them with the knowledge and skills to earn it for themselves should prove to be a much more effective approach.

## **Helping the community**

Life is not a competition, but a collaborative endeavor –

## **Choosing Your Life**

*“Everyone seems to have a clear idea of how other people should lead their lives, but none about his or her own.”*

**Paulo Coelho**

When you earn the decision to choose your own path, you are essentially taking control of your destiny. It's your right to decide what kind of life you want to live – and what you want to achieve. This can be challenging, but also very rewarding – as you

community over competition. When striving to achieve our goals, it is far more beneficial to focus on improving our skills and abilities – rather than bringing others down.

As humans, everyone is connected. We can learn and grow faster when others are ahead of us, and we should be grateful for their guidance.

*(Original source: Fulfillment in Life - How to Find Meaning Passion Every Day*

*<https://vncmd.com/en/insights/fulfillment-in-life/>)*

are living a life that is aligned with your values and empowering you to make a difference in the world.

On the other hand, if you don't start thinking about your direction right now, you are likely to tread paths that deviate you away from opportunities to flourish. Worse, you have no right (nor does it do any good) to complain when things go wrong.



# From Self to Life Mastery

Now, let's say you choose to study medicine just because your family members/ friends insist it's the best career path for you – and totally abandon your love for arts. After a few years in medical school, you realized how much determination it required to follow this path, and you just can't bear it. By then, you cannot blame anybody, even your mom, for what's happening to you.

The best thing you can do right now is to start 'choosing your life' by asking yourself: "What do I want, and why?"

## *The Every Breath Paradigm*

*"Every breath I take is a new me."*

**Buddha**

Before diving deeper into how to choose your life, let's talk about 'The Every Breath Paradigm' first. This term, mentioned by Marshall Goldsmith in his bestseller 'The Earned Life', is a concept inspired by Buddhist philosophies, offering a profound way of understanding

the impermanence of life. It invites us to recognize that with every inhale and exhale, life unfolds, and with each breath, the world is in constant flux. In other words, with every breath you take, a new you is born.

The Every Breath Paradigm encourages us to embrace the transitory nature of existence, acknowledging that nothing remains static. By observing the world's impermanence within each breath, we gain deeper insights into the constantly changing nature of everything around us – from then, we are better equipped to live a more present and intentional life.

The main idea here is that we should learn to appreciate the beauty of the present moment – for each breath carries with it a unique experience that will never be replicated. Being fully present in every breath allows us to let go of attachments to the past and anxieties about the future. This mindfulness enables us to make conscious choices and savor the richness of life as it unfolds.

# From Self to Life Mastery

It reminds us that the journey itself is as valuable as any destination – for this reason, one should always strive to fill their life with gratitude, awareness, and a profound sense of the interconnectedness of all things.

If you can concentrate always on the present, you'll be a happy man. Life will be a party for you, a grand festival because life is the moment we're living now.

## *What is Stopping Us From Choosing Our Life?*

### **Inertia**

Inertia refers to a state of inactivity or resistance to change. An example is sticking to a job you dislike out of comfort and fear of the uncertainty of switching careers – as a result, you accept the current situation without embracing the new (yet unforeseeable) opportunities that will arise as you leave your job.

### **Programming**

Our upbringing and societal conditioning play a significant part in shaping our beliefs. For instance, if someone was brought up being taught that pursuing a creative career is impractical, they are likely to refrain from exploring their artistic talents, locking themselves into a less fulfilling career.

For those who wish to tread the path of choosing your life, we must be very mindful of the settings that we received from previous generations – and unlearn those that are no longer beneficial/ relevant.

### **Obligations**

Obligations, such as family responsibilities, have long been a major hindrance to many people's personal growth. We've all seen it before – people who delay pursuing higher education, because they feel obliged to financially support their family.

# From Self to Life Mastery

As human beings, we are naturally bound to our promise and responsibility to others. However, choosing your life requires you to unlearn this way of thinking, as it is not realistic at all. None of us can please everyone at all times – in all situations.

## **The pace of change**

According to Dr. Goldsmith, the pace of life we're currently experiencing is the slowest it will ever be for the rest of our lives. In other words, we are constantly pressured to adapt to ongoing changes – falling behind in this race means missed opportunities and diminished quality of life.

To thrive amidst the current chaos, one must commit themselves to lifelong learning, and cultivate mindfulness as a powerful tool for navigating the whirlwind of change with clarity and grace.

## **Time**

Time is an effective measurement – and yet, it is

also a major blocking stone in our journey towards self-mastery. Young adults enter life with full energy and, seemingly, an infinite amount of time in hand. No wonder why many tend to waste their time on meaningless tasks and temporary joy. On the contrary, those in the second half of their lives usually think they've worked enough, earned enough, and lived enough – this mindset discourages them from pursuing their dream.

Donald Trump became the president of the United States at the age of 70 – while Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Meta Platforms, became the world's youngest self-made billionaire at the age of 23. Everyone has their timeline; don't let your age stop you from getting what you want.

*You are never too old to set a new goal or to dream a new dream.*

**C. S. Lewis**

# From Self to Life Mastery

## *We Need to Follow Our Dreams*

Following your heart and not letting others dictate your choices is the crucial component of a fulfilling and authentic life. The pursuit of dreams requires you to prioritize your own needs, passions, and values, rather than conforming to external expectations/ societal norms.

Various research has proven that those who follow their dreams often find more satisfaction and success in their careers – owing to the fact that they are doing what they really love. For example, a survey by Mashable found that only 22% of adults pursue their childhood dream jobs, but those who do report an overwhelmingly high level of job satisfaction (nearly 90%). Entrepreneurs who start businesses based on their passions are more likely to thrive – because their work is driven by genuine enthusiasm.

Moreover, following your desire

is also vital to personal growth and self-discovery. It allows you to learn from experiences and make choices that align with your innermost convictions. While it is always recommended to seek advice from others, ultimately, you should trust your intuition and values when it comes to making significant decisions.

Remember that it's your life – and making conscious choices is your responsibility to enjoy a better life.



# The 6 Requirements of an Earned Life

According to Dr. Goldsmith, when it comes to choosing your life, one must take into account the following considerations

## MOTIVATION

Motivation is the driving force behind our actions and decisions. It's the inner spark that propels us toward our goals and aspirations.

Someone who is motivated to lead a healthier lifestyle may come up with fitness goals, such as running a marathon, and work diligently to achieve them. Their motivation stems from a desire for improved well-being – as well as the sense of accomplishment associated with completing the marathon.

## ABILITY

Ability encompasses the skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary to turn motivation into tangible results. It involves continuous learning, self-improvement, and acquiring the necessary tools to visualize success.

Continuing with the previous example, running a marathon requires physical stamina – plus the expertise necessary for long-distance running. For this purpose, one may seek guidance from a running coach and invest time in training and learning about nutrition.

## UNDERSTANDING

Awareness of oneself and others is pivotal for personal growth and healthy relationships. Now, let's say you decide to improve your leadership skills. In this case, you need to have a very clear understanding of your own strengths and weaknesses as a leader (self-awareness) and also empathize with the perspectives and needs of your team members (empathy) – so as to excel in leadership positions.

# The 6 Requirements of an Earned Life

## CONFIDENT

Confidence is the belief in one's abilities to overcome challenges and visualize their goals. For instance, an entrepreneur launching a new startup venture must have unwavering faith in their vision and problem-solving skills. Additionally, they need the courage to take calculated risks, such as securing investors or entering new markets, even in the face of uncertainty.

## SUPPORT

In the journey of choosing your life, a support system is an extremely valuable asset. Your support group might include friends, family members, mentors, and colleagues – anyone who can provide encouragement, guidance, and a sense of belonging.

## MARKETPLACE

The marketplace represents the external environment where people are able to apply their skills and seek opportunities. In the current rapidly evolving job market, someone seeking career advancement must continually adapt to changing industry trends and technological advancements. To remain competitive, one must remind oneself to never stop acquiring new skills and pivoting their career path.

# From Self to Life Mastery

## *The Paradox of Choosing Your Life*

The Paradox of Choice, a concept popularized by psychologist Barry Schwartz, highlights the dilemma posed by an abundance of choices in our modern world. Choice overload occurs when people are presented with an excessive number of choices – whether it's in selecting a product, a career path, or even a life partner. In such situations, making a decision becomes a truly daunting task that leaves people struggling with anxiety and stress. The sheer volume of choices quite often results in a sense of paralysis, making it challenging to come up with a decision at all.

One significant consequence of choice overload is decision fatigue. This phenomenon occurs when the mental effort required for making numerous decisions depletes our cognitive resources. As a result, our decision-making abilities deteriorate, leading to poorer-

quality choices – as well as leaving us drained and dissatisfied with the outcomes of our decisions.

To combat the negative effects of choice overload and make more meaningful choices, one may take into consideration the following strategies:

### **Defining personal values and priorities**

When you have a strong sense of what truly matters to you, it becomes easier to filter through the myriad of options – and select those that truly align with your core values. This not only streamlines decision-making but also ensures that everything you do resonates with your authentic self.

### **Setting clear decision criteria**

Establishing specific guidelines or criteria allows you to evaluate options more objectively. This helps in reducing the feeling of being overwhelmed by choices and allows you to make decisions that are more aligned with your goals and desires.

# From Self to Life Mastery

## **Practicing gratitude**

Instead of dwelling on the potential regret of not choosing other options, focus on appreciating what you have selected. Gratitude is crucial to enhancing overall satisfaction with your decisions – and contributing to a sense of contentment, even if the choices were challenging.

## **Accepting imperfections**

*“Life is not really having a good hand – it’s playing a poor hand very well.”*

**Robert Louis Stevenson**

We all need to understand that there is no perfect choice – every decision comes with its own set of pros and cons. Learning from your experiences, even if they don’t turn out as expected, is a key part of personal growth and development. It’s about embracing the learning process and understanding that making mistakes is an integral part of life.

## **Avoiding decisions for minor**

## **or inconsequential matters**

By simplifying or automating routine choices, one may conserve their mental energy for more significant life decisions. The conscious choice to let go of small decisions is a really effective way to save cognitive resources for bigger, more important things in life – ultimately reducing stress and increasing overall well-being.

*“Life is about choices. Some we regret, some we’re proud of. Some will haunt us forever. The message: we are what we chose to be.”*

**Graham Brown**



# From Self to Life Mastery

## *The Triple A's to Define Your Chosen Life*

“The Triple A’s” concept by Dr. Goldsmith offers valuable insights into shaping one’s life successfully. It comprises Action, Ambition, and Aspiration, each playing a crucial role in defining your chosen path.

### Action

The first A represents what we are doing in the present – including the choices and actions we take daily, which are influenced by both risk and opportunity. They are the tangible steps we undertake to move towards our goals and desires. As such, actions are the building blocks of the life we want to create.

### Ambition

- Ambition focuses on what we want to achieve in the future. It involves setting clear goals and aspirations, whether in our personal or professional lives.
- Ambition drives us to strive for success, pushing the boundaries of our capabilities to reach new heights. It’s about having a vision and taking purposeful steps to turn that vision into reality.

### Aspiration

Aspiration delves into who we want to become as individuals. Unlike Ambition – which often has specific goals or endpoints, Aspiration is an ongoing, continuous process with an infinite time horizon. It’s about personal growth, self-discovery, and the journey of self-improvement.

# From Self to Life Mastery

Aspirations are not limited by achievements; instead, they revolve around becoming the best version of ourselves, embracing lifelong learning and development.

These three dimensions, when integrated successfully into one's life, shape what is referred to as "the earned life." It's a life where our actions align with our ambitions, and our aspirations guide our choices. This balance establishes the foundation for a more fulfilling, purpose-driven life.

*"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life."*

**Steve Jobs**

*(Original source: Choosing Your Life - The Art of Purposeful Living  
<https://vncmd.com/en/insights/choosing-your-life/>)*

**05**

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**07**

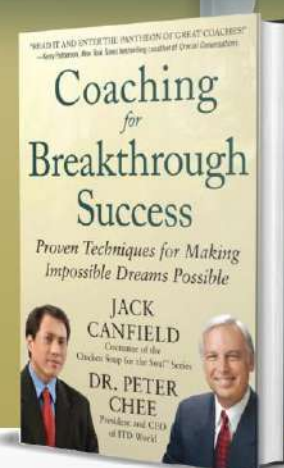
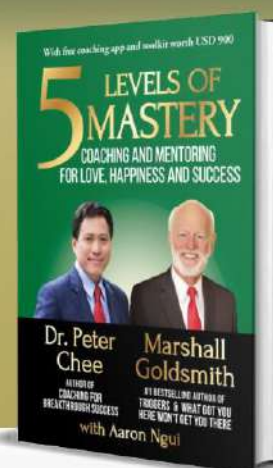
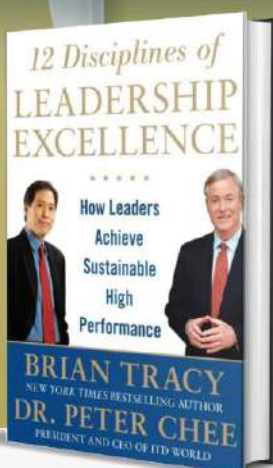
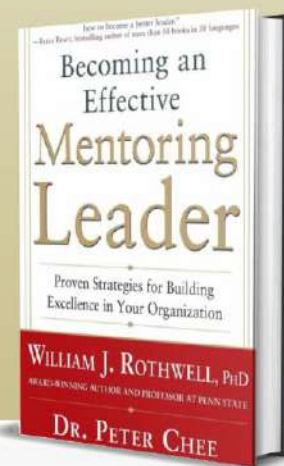
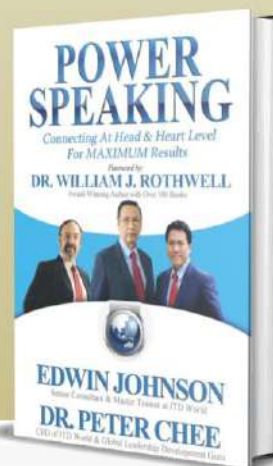
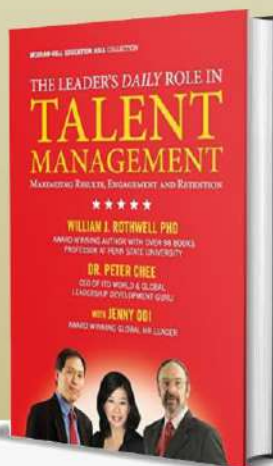
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