



**Are You Ready to Succeed?  
Unconventional Strategies for Achieving Personal Mastery  
In Business and in Life**

**Notes by Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA,Ph.D.**

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**Publisher:** Hyperion, New York  
**Copyright year:** 2006  
**ISBN:** 1-4013-0193-2

**Author's Bio:** Srikamur S. Rao is an adjunct professor at Columbia Business School, teaches at London Business School, and is a professor at Long Island University. He has consulted with leading corporations nationwide and holds a Ph.D. in marketing from Columbia University.

**Author's big thought:** Through anecdotes, exercises, observations, and an extensive list of readings, Dr. Rao offers lessons drawn from both spiritual traditions and business situations that enable you to reconstruct and improve your professional and personal worlds. These unconventional strategies will turn your life around and help you become exponentially more effective in your career and flourish in every aspect of your life. This book is a powerful tool that will help you discover the purpose that can suffuse your life and bring stars to your eyes. The crucial question is Are YOU ready?

**Introduction:**

- The author puts forth the provocative construct that your reality is but a shadow, and one that you created. Knowing you are living in a dream world is actually liberating, because it gives you the option of waking up.
- Dr. Rao developed a course to help students achieve a breakthrough in their lives, one that would enable them to be true leaders. On the surface, the syllabus had nothing to do with traditional business principles. The course became Creativity and Personal Mastery. Over the years people of all ages and stages of life have heard the call. To his knowledge, it is still the only course at any top business school that has its own alumni association. Students embarked on a journey of exploration and growth that was expected to last decades, even a lifetime.
- Here are some of the transformative experiences reported: depression being replaced with deep-seated optimism and joy; warm relations developing with an estranged parent; changes in career path in line with innate interests and passion; an astonishing turn-about in job-interviewing skills – rejection changing to nearly 100 percent callbacks; an extraordinary increase in effectiveness; clarity about personal values and how to shape jobs, relationships, and other activities so they are in conformity with each other.

- This book is an outgrowth of the course and is designed to produce fundamental change in your life. This book is the catalyst and the tool chest, but YOU will produce that change. It is an invitation to you to explore and define what you want to create.
- The major difference that separates those who receive remarkable results from those who enjoy just modest improvements is that the latter find innumerable ways not to do the recommended assignments and exercises. The motivated reader finds a way to make the time to do the work.
- There are assignments and exercises throughout this book. It is important that you:
  - Do the exercises in order
  - Really, really give the exercises your very best shot
  - Create a support group
  - Begin keeping a journal
  - Note your emotional tenor on a day-to-day basis.
- If you want to feel natural doing the exercises in this book, if you want to feel comfortable in the world you are creating, there is only one way: Just keep doing it. If you persist, each exercise will cease being one and will become a part of you.

### **Chapter One: An Ideal Life**

- This book will help you create the internal changes that will resonate far beyond your individual pleasure. We can never truly live an ideal life unless we recognize that we are inseparable from others. “Whatever befalls the earth befalls also the children of the earth.”
  - There is little question that we are living in a time of acute change. Change will have to happen on three levels before the “new era”:
1. *Individual altitudinal change* – the first step toward getting there is recognizing that you want to get there. All change begins here, and no change is possible until you have the deep desire for it. The paradox is that it is extremely important that you not particularly care whether you do or do not. The secret of personal mastery is you should be steadfast in your pursuit of that goal, but not be fixated on it or consumed by it. Your ideal life does not yet exist – you will have to construct it in bits and pieces like a jigsaw puzzle.
  2. *Organizational structural change* – Suppose it were possible to set up a system whereby you did not have to build a network of people to help you. Anytime you needed help, a person would appear who had precisely the knowledge and/or resources you required. You can learn to function in this way. By a change in your intentions you no longer have to relate to others solely with the purpose of fulfilling an agenda. It becomes critical that whatever you are trying to accomplish bring material and spiritual good to a larger community. In addition you need to learn how to let go. When you have the right mixture of passion for what you want to accomplish, and detachment and acceptance of whatever actually happens, you will be amazed by how locked doors automatically swing open. In this book you will learn new ways of connecting with people – ways that are powerful and in harmony with your values. It is designed to spawn a community. A community dedicated to personal growth and to supporting all those who have started on this quest that is both arduous and exhilarating.
  3. *Societal value change* – leadership is a state of being not a skill. The exercises in this book will help you become an authentic leader.

## Chapter Two: It Ain't Real!

- The first block to personal mastery, and one of the biggest, is our unquestioned mental models. These are our fixed ideas of how the world works and how things should or shouldn't be done. We accept these models so completely that we live our lives according to them.
- Mental models permeate our workplace interactions and all our relationships.
- Here then, is the first important idea in your transformation: *Your life is a jumble of "mental models." You use them for EVERYTHING.*
- You have one model that tells you who to fall in love with, another that evaluates how you are doing in your job, a third that lets you know if your child is growing well, a fourth that spurs you into getting a divorce, a fifth that picks your friends, and so on. You have constructed dozens of these structures over the years and, collectively, they rule your life.
- Many of your old models do not serve you well. The author will present you with some new ones now that are radically different from anything you have encountered before.
- When confronted with a new model, ask yourself "Does this new model work better for me than the one I am now using?" If the answer to this is yes, or even maybe, then try it on for size. You can tailor it and tweak it and modify it and make it your own. You use *only* what works for *you* in *your* life.

### Exercise: My Mental Models

- Take out your journal. On top of the page write four headings for columns: family, work, love, and self. For the next ten minutes, your pen is not to leave the page, you are not to cross anything out or rewrite or pretty anything up. Just start at the first column and write down the first thing about your family you can think of – see where it takes you. After ten minutes, put your journal away. You have already identified some of the more important mental models in your life. Through exercises like this one, YOU will create the changes in YOUR life.
- When you change your mental models, your world WILL have changed. You CANNOT unlearn an idea that has taken root in your mind.
- All people perceive the world differently. If others have different world views, then we, ourselves, can change ours. And if we can change our perceptions, then what does that say about what we have always thought of as our true reality? The world we live in, the one in which we experience such love, angst, and sorrow, IS NOT REAL!!!! We invented it. We constructed it out of bits and pieces. We made it out of our mental models and then lived by their dictates. Our mental models were made merely of perceptions, not facts. Thus, our lives are not real.
- Go back to your journal and read the mental models you wrote down earlier. Somehow you have stitched all your "realities" together into a crazy quilt and together they constitute the REALITY of your life.
- In the programs Rao conducts, at around this point utter chaos erupts, swiftly followed by fierce resistance. Quite a few participants feel personally attacked and react strongly. They list their many misfortunes and demand, "How can you say this is not real?" This is where Rao becomes more precise. The hurt you feel – are feeling – IS very real. The life you are living is real. What you don't realize is that the life you're living is **A** reality. The mistake you are making is that you think it is **THE** reality.

- This is not a trivial distinction. Think about it – If your present life is **A** reality, you can do something about it. You can explore alternatives. You can steer in a different direction. You can create a different reality. If your present life is **THE** Reality – you are stuck.
- Think about your own life. Do you choose to live in a reality that is negative? Is there a toxic person in your life who inspires a negative mental model? Can this person unerringly press all your buttons and leave you quivering with indignation and frustration? If so, what you have done is taken your most valuable possession, your ability to be happy, and given it to someone else.
- Sooner or later a plaintiff voice in his class asks “How would I go about living in the other reality? How could I avoid giving power my happiness to someone else?” That’s when the breakthrough happens. When you sincerely ask that question and you really, truly, absolutely want to know the answer. That is when you experience a paradigm shift, when you slip into a parallel universe that has always been available to you but that you never looked for.

Exercise: The Alternate Reality

- Go back to your mental-models exercise. Pick any one situation that is troubling you right now. You have constructed a “reality” around your situation. Come up with an “alternate reality” for your situation. One that you like a whole lot better.
- It is important that YOU, personally, be able to accept the alternate reality you devise. Play around with different plausible scenarios. Then pick one reality that:
  - Is better than the one you are experiencing right now, and
  - Is one that you can plausibly accept.
- For the next week, live “as if” the alternate reality you have experienced were true. As you live in this alternate reality, immediately acknowledge and dwell upon every scrap of evidence that it is working.
- The odds are pretty good that the first few times you try this exercise; you will have less than stellar success. Stick with it.
- Helpful hints:
  - If you are totally unable to live in your alternate reality then come up with one that you CAN plausibly accept.
  - Write down every scrap of evidence that your alternate reality is working.
  - Start with something important to you, but not one of the big boulders in your life.
  - Be gentle with yourself. Just construct a whole bunch of different realities according to the guidelines given and try another, and another, and another.

**Chapter Three: it’s Mental Chatter and it’s Real!**

- So the world you live in is not “real”. Or rather, it is real but only one of many different possible realities. Certainly the pain you experience, the frustration you feel, the loneliness that comes welling up, the stress that assaults you – these emotions are all real.
- The truth is that you were ultimately involved in bringing this reality about. We all construct our own realities. Why then, would you create one that is so full of things for which you have no

particular affection? The answer is – you did it through your mental chatter without even realizing it. Your mental chatter is your constant companion.

- When you examine your mental chatter, you will find it is an unending stream of noise, but you will also quickly discern that this noise has patterns. One of the most powerful and prevalent is your Voice of Judgment (VOJ).
- Sometimes your Voj puts you down directly, at other times it does so more subtly by comparing you, to your disadvantage, with someone else. Your Voj is equally ready to judge others. Or it can be gracious – but the odds are that most of its pronouncements are decidedly negative.
- When you wake up in the morning and start thinking of all that you have to do, before you have taken a single action, your Voj reminds you of all your weaknesses and failures. Over time, the negative judgments start to accumulate. Eventually they form a huge barrier that is placed squarely in front of the path to your ideal life.
- We also have “pop-up” ads that are another form our mental chatter takes. They are all the ideas, beliefs, habits, and attitudes that you have collected. They came from your parents, your relatives, your teachers, your friends. They came from society and from the media. They have taken over your life, intruding constantly without your permission. These distracting images come from both inside your mind and from the world around you.
- Are you beset by fears? They too are the result of your conditioning. The problem is that this conditioning not only restricts you, it also prevents you from exploring pathways that could lead you to freedom. That is why you feel boxed in and enervated.
- All of the judgments, the put-downs, come from values and beliefs you picked up in passing. You used them to create your mental models, hundreds of them. And then your mental chatter use these models to create the reality that you now live in.
- Once you become aware of what you have unconsciously let happen to you, you can fix it!

#### Exercise: What's my mental chatter like?

- This exercise helps you become aware of your mental chatter, of the random thoughts that spring to mind throughout your day. You are going to simply observe this chatter without judging. Especially become aware of your first thoughts in the morning as they are untainted by external events.
- Try to become aware of any emotional undertones. Common ones are sadness, a sense of being overwhelmed, fear, frustration and dissatisfaction, and so on.
- Is there one dominant feeling throughout the day, or are there two or three? Do they change from day to day? Are they generally negative or positive? How do these undertones affect your behavior?
- Do these undertones tend to disappear when you start noticing them?
- Finally, notice when external stimuli hijack your mental state.
- Do this exercise for two weeks. This will give you enough knowledge to get started making changes.
- People are startled by how active their Voice of Judgment is, how often they put themselves down and are severely critical of others. They're surprised by how many snap judgments they make about trivial things.

- Since you build mental models out of your mental chatter, when you become aware of your judgments and emotional distractions, you gain much needed control over your life. You get to decide for yourself whether you are going to build a reality on the foundation of a negative judgment.

#### **Chapter Four: You Can't Kill It and It Won't Shut Up! The Witness is Your Salvation**

- Your mental models influence your chatter and your chatter modifies your mental models. Together, through constant interaction, they create *The Reality* of your life – or, at least, your perception of it.
- Since you see life as “reality”, you don’t have the same recognition of allowing external events to create your emotional condition as you would when reading a book or watching a movie. Instead, your trust in the make-believe “reality” of your inaccurate interpretation of events causes you to cede control simply because you don’t believe you have any.
- Now that you have begun to see how you have constructed your reality and are busy living in it, you can go to the next step and ask yourself if you are satisfied with your construction. The chances are that you are acutely dissatisfied with much that you have brought into being as a result of living in the “reality between your ears.”
- Think about the Voice of Judgment that is with you all the time and that you try to drown out with incessant activity. As you contemplate all this, can you honestly say that your mental reality works for you? Probably not.
- If you attempt to quell your mental chatter it will not take you long to discover – that you cannot! Any attempt to staunch its flow paradoxically energizes it and increases its intensity.
- Your mental chatter is not the enemy even though it may appear so. It has worked against your interests only because you have let it. You have been so unaware of its presence that you have largely ignored it. In doing so, you’ve given it free rein to merrily create the haphazard structure of your life.
- When you become conscious of what you are permitting to germinate inside you, something amazing happens. Almost effortlessly, the weeds in your life will wither simply by exposing them to the light of awareness. Awareness gives you emotional control.
- The moment you become aware of the Voice of Judgment, an outward distraction, or any emotional undertone of anger, hate, or fear, your conscious awareness will immediately diminish it. To use this tool effectively, however, you will need a special companion – *The Witness*.
- The Witness is a dispassionate observer. The Witness knows all and clearly understands the convoluted games you play with yourself.
- When you cultivate your Witness, a strange thing happens. You feel as if you are living life on two parallel tracks. You are doing things as you normally do, yet you are also watching yourself do the things you normally do. If you can hold on to the Witness for a few minutes at a time you are doing well, very well. Quite often the Witness disappears in seconds.
- The advantage of making friends with your Witness is that he shows you with absolute clarity the many ways in which you frustrate yourself and act in self-defeating ways.
- You pick up your mental models from all around you- from the media, from advertising, from friends and relatives, from observation. All too often you pick up these ideas and images of the way life is supposed to be without even knowing you have done so.

- These mental models are not the source of our problems. But our lack of awareness of them is. This is where the Witness comes to the rescue. The Witness calmly exposes us, and our models, to ourselves. Gradually you get to the point where you can control what you are consciously comfortable with letting into your mind. And that is how you start straightening out your life.

*Exercise: Present Moment Awareness*

- This exercise will bring your Witness to life. Pick one day and commit to doing all your activities deliberately and unhurriedly. Focus intently on whatever you are doing. No multitasking allowed. Slow life down. Firmly and deliberately.
- Try to let go of your mental model of how you should be and the results that should follow from your actions. Breathe – try to get to twelve breaths a minute or slower. Just being aware of your slow breathing will largely stymie your mental chatter.
- Bring this focus to all your activities. If you succeed, you will have achieved a level of great personal mastery – but don't expect to succeed – this takes practice,

*Exercise: Eating Mindfully*

- This exercise is a great companion to, not a substitute for, the previous awareness exercise.
- For seven consecutive days, eat at least one meal in *total silence*. Pay close attention to the act of eating. Chew your food slowly and savor the flavors. Bring the same awareness to whatever you drink. Pay attention to the reactions of your body. Be aware of when you are no longer hungry. Do you continue eating after this point?
- Most of us, indeed, practically all of us, will find it impossible to be mindful all the time. Don't berate yourself if you lose the Witness repeatedly. This is perfectly normal.
- If the Witness remains with you when you are in the grip of strong emotions, you are doing even better. You will notice that when you are with the Witness, your strong emotions are a lot less tumultuous and much less capable of sweeping you away.
- Trying to be mindful all the time is extremely challenging, and it is common to feel overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the undertaking.
- As your practice continues, your Witness grows stronger. He or she will become your protector. You need to protect your mind with the same ferocity that you protect your body. You have to be mindful of what you let in. Your Witness will help you observe who crosses your mental threshold.
- Try to remember when you are dealing with your mental chatter that force does not work. Observation accomplishes what force cannot. The Witness is a remarkable pacifier. Being aware of what you are doing brings change of its own volition.
- The Witness will hold up a mirror and show you what you are really doing. And that knowledge produces change by itself. Sometimes it takes a while because you have built up a lot of momentum. Very frequently you lose the Witness. Find him every time you realize he is gone. Do this persistently, and change *will* happen.

**Chapter Five: You CAN Change the Universe!**

- A mistake most of us make is that we believe that we are conscious, thinking entities, and if we think of it at all, we believe the Universe is a dumb, insentient mass. Sometimes it seems that

the Universe consists solely of those who collaborate to consciously thwart us. At other times, there is no malicious intent; there is just indifference to what we want. The net result is the same – we don't get what we would like to get. This is a common mental model that most of us have been using for a long time.

- Try this mental model instead: The Universe is a conscious entity that is intimately intertwined with you and *not* separate from you. It *wants* to give you what you desire, and you *can* influence it.
- The way in which you influence the Universe is simple and is summed up in the Law of Increase: *Whatever you are truly grateful for and appreciate will increase in your life.*

#### *Exercise: Appreciation and Gratitude Number 1*

- Try this for a week, for five to ten minutes every night, just before you retire. *It is important, so give it your utmost effort.*
- Think of something that happened today for which you are thankful. Think of the numerous ways in which you are fortunate. Let a deep feeling of appreciation and gratitude well up in you. *Allow* this feeling to surface. *Permit* it to take hold of you, to envelop you. *Broadcast* it out as a silent statement of who you are.
- Think of as many things as you can for which you are grateful. Remember: *Whatever you are grateful for and appreciate will increase in your life.*
- *The timing of this exercise is important. This should be the last thing you do at night.*

#### *Exercise: Appreciation and Gratitude Number 2*

- After you incorporate the first part of this exercise unto your life, try expanding it. Try letting feelings of gratitude take hold of you many times during the day. Observe what this does to your emotional tenor during the day.
- You will find it easier to hold on to the feeling of gratitude if you use your body – smile.
- When you interact with someone, wish that person every happiness possible. It is perfectly okay for the transaction to be brief. Just be conscious and beam out peace and well-being as if your life depended on it. Specifically notice the following:
  - Do your feelings about people and the nature of your interactions change?
  - Do you perceive that others' feelings and interaction patterns have changed?
  - Finally note what your emotional tenor has been during the week and how it compares to what it was earlier when you were doing the mind-chatter exercise and even earlier.
- Once you have realized that you can partner with the Universe through the Law of Increase, you will be more comfortable with the notion that you can influence the Universe and that you can cause miracles to happen.
- For a miracle to happen in your life, all that is necessary is that you have the firm conviction that the Universe has intervened for you on your behalf.
- If you look sincerely for the miracles in your life, you will find them in droves and you will soon start producing them effortlessly. The problem is, because you dismiss this notion, most of the time you ensure that the exact opposite will happen.

### *Exercise: How to Create Miracles in Your Life*

- Have you ever had a wonderfully synchronous event happen in your life? Say you thought of a friend you had lost touch with and he called later that day.
  - Pay careful attention to such happenings. Explicitly recognize and acknowledge them. Write them down! List what happened, the date, and time.
  - Mentally play around with the possibility that these were not “coincidences.” That, somehow, a conscious Universe was trying to make itself known to you. When you go shopping expect to find that item you want will be on sale.
  - Do this all the time. At least forty or fifty times a day. There will be many, many times when you don’t get the results you desire. Ignore them. There will be a few occasions when you “succeed.” Celebrate these. Jot them down. Remember, you are consciously using the Law of Increase. By celebrating these occasions, you are permitting more of them to appear in your life.
  - Gradually there will be a change in your thinking. You will begin to feel comfortable with the notion that maybe the universe does work in the manner described. The moment this happens, you will notice that the number of such instances increases exponentially. This is the signal for you to start to make bigger and more important things happen.
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- To change your Universe, discard the model of “frantic doing.” That requires us, when we face a situation that we do not like, to DO something. Preferably lots of somethings.
  - The alternative to “frantic doing” is “calm being.”
  - Remember that the world you live in is not “the” reality. It is “a” reality that you have constructed. Each time you change one of your mental models, and do so at a very deep level, you become a different person. When you change, so does the Universe, and in conformity with your change.
  - This means that in many cases you will be far more efficient in achieving something by doing “internal” work rather than by rushing around doing “external” work.
  - So, for example, if you want a job, you need to free your mind from thoughts based on desperate want and instead concentrate on being crystal clear about what you would like. When you are truly clear about this, the job flows into your life effortlessly, with very little action on your part.
  - Continue doing what you need to in order to make things happen, but even as you do, recognize that there is a better way to bring about the change you are seeking. Try to use frantic doing and calm being in tandem.
  - We try to “experiment” with this new-fangled way, but we have strong doubts, and the Universe picks up on these reservations and reflects them back to us in the results it produces.
  - If you accept what is presented in this chapter, it will permanently change the way you see the world. You will never again be the “victim” of forces beyond our control. You will team up with the Universe and co-create the “reality” in which you live.

### **Chapter Six: Your “Me-Centered” Universe Creates the Stress in Your Life**

- You live in a “me-centered” universe. We all do. Each of us evaluates events, near and distant, in terms of their impact on “me.”

- Even your altruistic inclinations are frequently tainted. You want to do “good in the world” and to “give back” but it’s important to you that you also be recognized for your actions.
- Go back and look at your mental chatter exercise and see how often the word “I” comes in. If you are like most people, it is an unbroken and unending string of “I”, “me” and “my.”

*Exercise: Me me me – 0*

- Get a small recorder and make a business phone call where you have to convey an idea or sell a product to a client or coworker. When the call is done, play it back and count the number of times “I,” “me,” and “my” come up. Don’t beat yourself up about this. Just recognize and acknowledge it.
- There is always something happening in your home, your office, or the world. You observe whatever it is and react in terms of its impact on you.
- ALL of the stress in your life results directly from your fixed notion of how the universe should behave and your inability to accept the merry diversions that the Universe takes from your agenda.
- All of us want the people in our lives – spouses, parents, children, siblings, relatives, friends, neighbors, bosses, and coworkers – to behave in particular ways that we determine.
- But while the ways in which you are frustrated are scintillatingly diverse, the way you react is always the same. You punish yourself by being uptight, anxious, irritable, and depressed. You punish those close to you by snapping at them, being emotionally withdrawn, not spending time with them, and generally being unhappy. It’s a toxic cocktail.
- Since unmet expectations are the cause of your problems, you might be tempted to give up on them. It is impossible for you not to have expectations. Even the simplest action you take comes with an expectation. If you scratch your nose, you expect the itch will go away.
- The problem is not with having expectations. The problem is with what you do when your expectations are not met.
- Begin with the clear understanding that you do have some limited control over your actions. But you have virtually no control over the outcome.
- The ONLY way you can prevent toxic feelings from being generated inside yourself is to accept whatever outcome actually occurs. “Embracing” an outcome different from what you expected DOES NOT mean that you compromise your values or give in to your enemies.

*Exercise: Good Thing? Bad thing? Who Knows?*

- Look back on your life. Have there been any events that you classified as disasters, as totally terrible things, that you now recognize as true blessings? Pick something that you are still grappling with.
- The author is inviting us to consider the model that you are NEVER given a lemon. You are given the opportunity to make lemonade.
- Finally can you think of the “good things” in your past that actually turned out to be “bad things? DO NOT play this exercise in reverse.

- When something happens in your life, you don't really know if it is a "good thing" or a "bad thing." If you look back, you will probably come up with quite a few instances where something you initially thought was terrible actually turned out to be quite beneficial.
- There are also many instances where you thought that something wonderful happened, and in fact it turned out to be quite crummy.
- This new perspective is important in eliminating the stress in your life. When you are less attached and sure of the efficacy and importance of certain outcomes, you are less emotionally bound to results beyond your control.
- You can eliminate all this stress by surrendering. What you are surrendering is your agenda for what happens. What you are giving up are predetermined expectations. Because your stress is caused by your response to the results of your actions. When you surrender to the possibility that these outcomes can be either good or bad and that you just don't know, then you are actually stronger and freer to capitalize on what does occur.
- The process of surrender has four steps:
  1. First, take all actions with a clear understanding of what you would like to have happen.
  2. Consciously wish that all outcomes be beneficial for all parties concerned.
  3. Recognize that your actions are simply one possible way of achieving the outcome you want.
  4. Detach yourself from the outcome. Accept whatever outcome the Universe provides.
- Your actions are within your control. Not entirely, but to a large extent. The outcomes are not. Reactions to the outcome are within your power – but only if you reach out and exert the control that you have. And this takes practice, repeated practice.

*Exercise: How to Act, How to Surrender*

- Think of something important in your life – right now – something that you really want to have happen and for which you are ready to exert considerable effort. Why do you want this to happen?
- Whatever your reasons, be honest and acknowledge them. Think of how others will be affected if you succeed. Mentally, and sincerely, wish them all the best. To the extent you can, make sure that what you are trying to accomplish is the best for all concerned in the complex trade-off of life. Go right ahead and pursue the course you have charted. You may get what you wanted. Or you may not. If not, acknowledge what has happened and be open to the possibility that it was really the best thing that could have happened to you.
- You are now at a new starting point and you repeat the whole process again. When you let go of anxiety about the outcome, you will be amazed by how frequently you accomplish what you set out to do and how much more effective you become.
- Remember that surrendering is not passive acceptance. Acceptance is that you simply acknowledge what has happened and that it is not what you wanted or set out to do. Do not compound the results and make your situation worse by feeling angry or hurt, or dejected. Try noting the outcome as dispassionately as you can.
- Acceptance does not mean "giving up". It means you recognize that you did not achieve what you set out to do, and you do this without any kind of emotional trauma.

- When you do this, you will find that you become more effective, exponentially more effective, when you keep your negative emotions out of the way. And you will also find that when you act in this way, you begin to accomplish what you set out to do more often than before.

*Exercise: The “Other-Centered” Universe*

- For one week, you will live in the “other-centered” universe. During selected times, you will do all things for the sole benefit of the person with whom you interact.
- In doing so – use judgment and be creative.
- Each day, deliberately and consciously, do more than one thing to make the world a little better. The possibilities are endless. Be practical and empathetic.
- As you do this exercise, your attitude is important. If you help someone, *do not* expect gratitude from that person.
- Finally, each day, *make someone’s day*.
- Be sure to write down the results of his exercise in your journal.

**Chapter Seven: Freedom and Happiness: They Ain’t What You Think**

- There are many layers to freedom, but almost all of us define it too narrowly. We tend to equate freedom with the elimination of restrictions to our behavior.
- But there is another type of freedom that we have not achieved and are not even pursuing. This is the “freedom” from the constant desire for “more”.
- Every time we imagine it will come from a better job, a different relationship, more money, or something else that is presently eluding us, what we are really doing is handing over to others the power to determine our happiness and tranquility.

*Exercise: Doing Nothing*

- Find an easy chair and sit down comfortably. Set your alarm clock to buzz in a half hour. For the next thirty minutes, you will DO NOTHING. The half hour will seem interminable.
- All our activities- our pursuit of fame and fortune, our quest for meaningful relationships, our drive to build or change things – are directed searches for the ephemeral state of happiness.
- In creating a list of things that make people happy lots of things come up, such as travel, good health, great sex, fame, friends, loving relatives, and interesting work. Many say having the resources, time, and talent for their special interests (such as rare art) would make them happy. Every once in a while people remember to list inner characteristics, such as faith or spiritual development, but these don’t show up too frequently.
- None of these items mentioned is necessary for happiness. Whenever your inner emotional state is dependent on something external, you can lose whatever you get. When you lose whatever you have gotten, does your happiness vanish with it? The answer is absolutely not. Your happiness is not dependent on your wealth, your intelligence, or your other abilities. Your happiness is not even contingent on your continued good health, or your having loving friends, relatives, or significant others. In fact, happiness is already a part of your innate nature. There is nothing you have to do or get in order to be happy. All you have to do is allow it to surface.
- If happiness is our innate nature, why do we not experience it more often? The answer is simple: We have constructed mental models in which happiness comes as a result of our getting something.

- We have a great deal of help with these beliefs. The media subtly paints our pictures of what successful and happy people look like. Advertising designs ads that make us feel unfulfilled, unhappy, and unsuccessful in order to create a desire for the products being sold as solutions to our manufactured needs.
- But advertising is only one facet of our brainwashing. Your parents, in subtle and not so subtle ways, reinforced this view and imprinted it on your mind that what they found valuable was what you too, should value. Your relatives, friends, teachers, classmates, and coaches all played a role. So did the movies and TV programs you watched, the books and magazines you read, the music you listened to, and what you observed in the world around you. They all contributed. But they succeeded because you did not question the mental models being presented to you.
- Anytime we want something, and we get it, there is a brief moment when we are content, when we are not our habitual wanting self. And in that moment we experience the happiness that is always a part of us. We are content. But the very next moment, some other desire raises its ugly head and we are off on our fruitless quest again.
- The problem is that we do not recognize that the happiness we experience is because, at that moment, we are free from want. It springs from an acceptance of the Universe as it is. Instead, we ascribe the happiness we briefly felt to the acquisition of whatever it was that we got. And so we try to get the next thing, and the next thing, and the next thing.
- Here is the paradox: When you are not emotionally involved in a particular result, you are far more effective in bringing it about.

*Exercise: List Your Accomplishments*

- Go over your life from your earliest memories and make a list of your accomplishments. Do this year by year until you were about ten, and then quarter by quarter until about two years ago, and then month by month until you come to the present.
- Write down everything that you can recall that was memorable. After you have done this exercise, reflect on whether there are any patterns that pop up in the occasions you have recorded.
- This exercise will give you some idea of the extent to which you are dependent on others for your well-being.

*Exercise: Corollary*

- Think about some activity that you really and truly enjoy. When was the last time you indulged in this activity? Set aside some time each week and indulge in it wholeheartedly. Do it NOW!

*Exercise: Dropping destructive habits*

- Clearly and dispassionately note the damage being done by your behavior. Don't beat yourself up about it. Just acknowledge that you have some bad habits. Be aware of when these behaviors are triggered.
- Immediately shift your attention to your breath. Take slow deep breaths. Visualization and music will have a profound effect on your mood.

**Chapter Eight: You Always Act in Your Self-Interest – Everyone Does**

- In this chapter, you will discover the secret of how work can become a joy and how to make success dog your footsteps. To get to this happy state, you will have to put down two enormous boulders that you have unthinkingly shouldered. One is *guilt* and the other is *blame*.
- Right at this moment, you are carrying a load of guilt on your shoulders. In despondent moments you think about the things you have done wrong and then pick up your trusty knobbed walking stick and beat yourself bloody. The number of things for which you berate yourself is legion.
- Think of how your mental chatter is devoted to running yourself down for what you did that you shouldn't have done, or what you didn't do that you should have.
- The other load you carry is blame. Your parents loom large in the blame game, as do spouses, former spouses, and significant others. In-laws also have a starring role.
- Guilt and blame are terrible burdens to carry.
- There are some things that we recognize are Laws of Nature. The Law of Gravity is one such law. Another law that is almost as immutable is the *Law of Self-Interest*. *Everybody, at all times, ALWAYS acts in his or her perceived self-interest*. The knowledge of this truth is both wonderful and liberating, even if it doesn't seem like it at first.

#### *Exercise: The Law of Gravity*

- Take a moment and think of three things you regret having done. The “should haves” and the “why didn't Is?” Think of how when you did them, you were acting in your perceived best interest. Do this exercise for a few days and you will see that your burden of guilt lightens and then slips away.
- Now for part two of this exercise. Make a list of all those people whom you blame. They, too, were acting in their own perceived self-interest.
- Ultimately you are mastering these principles for yourself. You are not doing it for someone else. When you carry anger, guilt, or blame inside you, the only person you are damaging is yourself.
- From the Law of Increase, you learned that whatever you are truly grateful for and appreciate will increase in your life. There is a dark flip side to this. The negative emotions you broadcast – anger, hate, distrust and the like – are also picked up and reflected back to you with greater force. The universe is like a very sensitive and powerful amplifier. It picks up what you emit, greatly increase its power, and beams it back to you.
- The Universe is a giant force multiplier, and you can learn to harness its immense power. The way you use it is by understanding how it operates and by controlling the broadcast you make that it picks up and amplifies back to you.

#### *Exercise: Make your Job Rejuvenating*

- Write a list of what keeps you in your current job and contemplate it. Think consciously that there are many, many people who would trade places with you and be grateful for this.
- Next think of what you do. Contemplate this list and be grateful for each item.
- Focus in what is right at your place of work.

- Identify one area in your work where you would like to improve your skills and become more efficient. Pick something where your success will result in increasing the part of your work you most enjoy.
- For one month focus exclusively on acquiring a skill you have identified and applying it appropriately. Remember that focus is the key. Your job makes you miserable if you focus on the myriad things that are “wrong” with it. You can start making it totally rejuvenating when you begin by focusing on what is right with it. Ignore all the stuff- even if it is the vast majority – that you feel is “wrong.”
- You will have many people tell you that when you ignore the “horrible” things at work, you are actually helping them continue and perpetuating the status quo/ they might even accuse you of actually “helping” the organization get away with all sorts of bad behavior. Ignore all of this. You are doing this for you, not for the company you work for. You always work in your perceived best-interest. Make this work for you.

*Exercise: A New Take on Networking*

- Pick five people you would like to cultivate. Figure out what it is about that person that resonates with you. You are going to write a letter to or take an action that involves each of these people. Use any form of communication that you feel comfortable with.
- Your communication has to come from your heart. Your offer of help has to be sincere and you should absolutely be prepared to follow through on it.

**Chapter Nine: You Create Your World from What is Inside You**

- This chapter will introduce you to a general purpose mental model that you can use to deal with a variety of life events. You can easily modify it to suit your unique circumstances, and you will find it very useful in transforming your life.
- The catch is that you cannot “adopt” a mental model because you recognize intellectually that it is better than the one you are using. You begin to start trusting a model only when you see it operate and produce favorable results in *your* life. As the evidence that it really works starts piling up, you begin to trust it even more. And, one day, you find that you have, in fact, adopted it.
- When bad stuff happens, you can’t get rid of it simply by determining to do so. You *can* get rid of it by changing the mental moods under which you operate. Healthier models allow more good into our lives, and as we focus on this goodness and use the Law of Increase, the bad stuff in our lives withers away.

*The Benevolent-Universe Model*

- The Universe is a conscious and benevolent entity. It ALWAYS acts in your best interests and ALWAYS brings into your life EXACTLY what you need at any instant. Think of a complicated trapeze act. The aerialist lets go of the bar and does a dizzying array of twists and somersaults, and just as she finishes, the next bar is available for her to grasp. That’s how the Universe acts. The bar you need is always available just when you need it. The lesson you need to learn is exactly what you get at exactly the minute you need it. The resources you need are made available at the precise time that is appropriate. The people who come into your life are the very ones you need at the stage you are in. It is perfect. It has always been perfect, but you just

never saw this. It will always be perfect in the future. All you have to do is relax and go with the flow.

- There are many things that happen to you every day that you see as mildly good or mildly bad or just neutral. You are more likely to easily accept that the really good things that happen to you are gifts from a benevolent Universe.
- What if you believed in the proposed benevolent model? You would feel no loneliness, because you would always be provided for in ways you cannot fathom. All sorrow would become bearable because it somehow, would be for your good and your growth. There would be no frustration, because you would never be thwarted. Instead, you would feel that the universe was simply charting a different and more efficient way to get you to where you needed to be.
- Regardless of whether the proposed model is “true,” *your* life would be immeasurably improved if you could sincerely adopt it. And what if it really were “true?”

*Exercise: Building Up to the Benevolent Universe Model*

- As you start you supplant old beliefs with the idea of the Benevolent Universe, begin with your own personal history. Can you remember instances in your life when something happened that you initially labeled as terrible but that later opened up wonderful vistas?
- Identify each one and write it down. The act of recording is extremely important. When you write something down, it becomes reinforced in your mind. When you have such a list, it is ever so much easier to go back to each example and relive it, and this re-creation anchors it inside you.
- Consciously look for more events in your life from now on. Do not be in a hurry to label something that happens to you as “terrible.” Think of ways in which whatever happened might actually be a wonderful thing for you.
- Gently entertain the possibility that the Universe is looking out for you. Do this sincerely and you will be amazed by how many instances you find worth recording in your journal. Fill the pages and keep reviewing them. Do this at least once a day. As the notebook fills up and you keep reviewing it, you will come to a turning point.
- When you arrive at that turning point, you will become acutely aware of the sheer number of instances where it seemed as if the universe was working with and for you and in your best interests. This is the time for you to redouble your efforts.
- It is only after you have become thoroughly grounded in this new model that you can come to terms with such deep tragedies as the suffering of others. Accept that the tragedies you find difficult to fathom are like a forest fire in some way. The suffering is a painful cleansing. Recognize that the fact the suffering disturbs you is a clear sign that your role is to do what you can to alleviate it and to work with others to lessen it. You have a responsibility.

**Recommendation:** This book gives you the tools to explore your life –your core beliefs, your areas of resistance, and the power available within you to transform your life into one of purpose and success. It is a resource on personal mastery and a great gift to us all.

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**About the reviewer: Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD**

Many CEO's find themselves asking "What now?" to sensitive situations that only an experienced former CEO can understand. Frumi is brought in to solve problems and often remains to work with you, as your confidante and secret weapon. She has an uncanny knack of getting to the heart of your corporate climate and maximizing your team's performance, profitability and sustainability.

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