



## The Power of Focus

Book Notes by: Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD

**Author:** Canfield, Hansen & Hewitt

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### Author bio and credits:

Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen are the creators of the Chicken Soup for the Soul series, which has sold more than fifty million books worldwide! They have won numerous awards for their marketing genius, business acumen and entrepreneurship.

Les Hewitt is one of North America's top performance coaches. He is the founder of the Achievers Coaching Program.

**Noteworthy info regarding contents and chapter titles:** The book comes with a guarantee: If you study and gradually implement the strategies in the book, you will not only hit your business personal and financial targets consistently, you will far exceed the results you are currently experiencing. You will learn to focus on your strengths and build a stronger foundation for the future by using a technique called Unusual Clarity. They make this guarantee as they have had results with thousands of their clients.

Every chapter consists of a variety of strategies and techniques enhanced by anecdotes and inspiring stories. The first three chapters lay the foundation. Each subsequent chapter introduces a new set of strategies centered around a specific habit that will help you to focus and perform better. At the end of each chapter there is a series of Action Steps designed to facilitate the reader's progress.

### Author's main point and a few supporting ideas

#### Strategy #1 Your habits will determine your future:

Consistent choices lay the foundation of your habits. A habit is a behavior that you keep repeating. Your habits will determine your quality of life. Negative habits breed negative consequences. Success habits create positive rewards. Developing successful habits takes time. Up to 90% of our normal behavior is based on habits. By superimposing a new behavior on top of your present behavior, you can create an entirely new way of doing things, which will then become your new standard of performance and productivity. By systematically improving one behavior at a time you can dramatically improve your overall lifestyle. In order to change bad habits. Learn to observe the habits of successful

people who have developed successful habits. Learn to constantly refine your habits. In order to create successful habits the authors suggest a formula, which has three fundamental steps. 1. Clearly identify your bad or unproductive habits. Consider the long-term implications. 2. Define your new successful habit. The more vividly you describe the benefits, the more likely you are to take action. 3. Create a three part action plan. Put them into practice - nothing will change until you do.

### Strategy # 2 - Focus

You must invest most of your time every week doing what you do best, and let others do what they do best. Focus on your natural talents. When you focus most of your time and energy doing the things you are truly brilliant at, you eventually reap big rewards. What do you do effortlessly, without a lot of study and preparation? What do you do that other people find difficult? What opportunities exist in today's marketplace for your areas of brilliance? Priority focus works. Make it a part of your everyday plan and you'll experience dramatic jumps in productivity and income. Using the priority workshop tool you can be clear about what really goes on in your week. The next step is to list three things that you're brilliant at doing in your business. Let go of the things you don't like doing, resist doing or are just not good at. The 4 D Solution is a way to focus on your priorities. Use it to help prioritize. 1. Dump it. 2. Delegate it 3. Defer it, 4. Do it.

Priority focus is all about setting new boundaries that you do not cross. Staying within these boundaries requires a new level of self-discipline. That means being more conscious every day of the activities you choose to spend your time on. There are three areas to examine. 1. Yourself: focus on the benefits and rewards of sticking to your priorities, and remind yourself of the negative consequences if you don't. 2. Other people: A variety of other people may attempt to destroy your focus. 3. The telephone is the most insidious intrusion of all - unplug it when necessary.

### Strategy #3 Developing Unusual Clarity - the Big Picture

A goal is the ongoing pursuit of a worthy objective until accomplished. Setting and achieving goals is one of the best ways to measure your life's progress and create unusual clarity. The top 10 goals checklist consists of:

1. Your most important goals must be yours. Decide to create your definition of success and stop worrying about what the rest of the world thinks.
2. Your goals must be meaningful. Ultimately, you are responsible for every choice you make, so choose wisely. Commit yourself now to creating goals that will guarantee your future freedom and success.
3. Your goals must be specific and measurable. When you set a goal, challenge yourself with the words "be specific". By doing this you'll dramatically increase your chances of achieving the desired result.
4. Your goals must be flexible. If the system is too rigid you will feel suffocated by it. A flexible plan allows you to change course if a genuine opportunity comes along that is so good you'd be crazy not to pursue it.
5. Your goals must be challenging and exciting. To prevent boredom.
6. Your goals must be in alignment with your values. Synergy and flow are two words that describe any process moving effortlessly forward to completion. When your goals are in synch with your core values, the mechanism for his harmony is set in motion. Your core values are fundamental

beliefs that are well-developed and have molded your character for years. When you do something that contradicts these values, your intuition, or gut feeling, will serve as a reminder that something isn't right. When you harness your core values to positive, exciting, purposeful goals, decision-making becomes easy. There is no internal conflict holding you back - this creates an energy surge that will propel you to much higher levels of success.

7. Your goals must be well balanced.
8. Your goals must be realistic.
9. Your goals must include contribution
10. Your goals need to be supported.

In order to produce your master plan

1. review the top-10 Goals checklist
2. List 101 goals to accomplish in the next 10 years and prioritize your list.
3. Create a picture goals book.
4. Use an ideas book to record day-to-day observations and insight.
5. Visualize, think, reflect and review. The sharper the images are, the more intense you feel, and the more likely you are to create the desired result.
6. Develop mentors and mastermind groups.

Dedicate a portion of your time to accomplishing one significant goal in each of the following areas every 60 days: financial, business/career, fun, health and fitness, relationships, personal and contribution.

#### Strategy # 4 Creating Optimum Balance

The B-ALERT System for optimum balance.

**B: Blueprint** - a map for the day to prioritize the important tasks on your agenda. Research shows that if you create this the night before, your unconscious mind will actually work during the night figuring out how to fulfill your next day's plan. A well planned blueprint allows you to take charge of the day right from the start.

**A: Action** - when it comes to reviewing your results, the amount of action you put into your day will directly determine your score. Concentrate on the activities that produce the greatest results for you. Set limits on what you will and will not do. Delegate effectively, and be alert to stepping outside your boundaries.

**L: Is for learning** - taking time to expand your knowledge base. develop the habit of reading at least twenty - thirty minutes in the morning. Consider taking a good speed reading course. Learn from every source - from yourself and from others. Learn by observing and studying other people. Invite a successful person out to lunch every month. If you really want to rise to the top, invest one hour of your day to learn more about yourself and your industry.

#### **E: Is for exercise**

Exercising improves your sleeping habits, increases your energy levels, relieves stress and anxiety, protects you against injury, promotes a healthy posture, relieves digestive disorders, enhances self-

image and expands longevity. Find out more about your unique metabolism and how to maximize the magnificent vehicle you have been given.

### R: Is for relaxing

To preserve your energy, take a nap! TPM - twenty-five peaceful minutes. Relax in your car. Lie on the floor. If you have worked long, hard hours all week, you deserve a break to re-energize. To maximize your progress take regular breaks to re-energize. Schedule your family time every week. Develop the habit of creating real time for relaxation.

### T: Is for Thinking

If you want to have unusual clarity about what is working in your life, schedule time for reflective thinking. Take a few minutes at the end of the day to take a mental snapshot of the day. What did you do well? Are there any adjustments you could have made to create a better result? Focus daily on the progress you made. Make reflection a daily habit.

### Strategy # 5 Building Excellent relationships

In this chapter you will discover several powerful strategies that will ensure that you enjoy outstanding relationships in both your personal and business life. It is helpful to look at your life as a spiral. You are on an Upward Spiral when things are going well, your confidence is high, and life is rewarding. A Downward Spiral is when things begin to unravel and life becomes a constant struggle. To clearly understand the potential impact this can have on your current and future relationships, think of a relationship you have been involved in that didn't work out. Re-create in your mind all the steps that caused this relationship to fall apart. Recording all the steps on the way down will help you understand the pattern. When you carefully reflect on what causes relationships to fall apart, you can take steps to heal them. Awareness is the first step to progress. You can also use this spiral technique to review your most important business relationships. There's a good chance that you will repeat the same behavior in your next relationship. Interrupt the pattern with clear thinking and decide to make positive adjustments. Changing your behavior is the only way you will get a different result.

In examining an upward Spiral, repeat the process but focus on a relationship that you gradually nourished, expanded and enriched, until it blossomed into a wonderful long-term friendship or business relationship.

Avoid toxic people. Take a close look now at your present relationships. If someone is dragging you down all the time, make a decision. Let go and move on.

The three big questions concerning key people: Do I like them? Do I trust them? Do I respect them? Look for clues that demonstrate their integrity, honesty and experience. Learn to nourish your most valuable relationships in a win-win atmosphere. Your core clients are people at the heart of your business. They are happy to provide excellent referrals for new business. They are the passports for future growth. Remember Stephen Covey's analogy that you must treat your most important relationships like a bank account. Value the ones you have and do whatever it takes to make them even richer. Use the "And Then Some" feedback technique. Be totally open to feedback. By asking a few simple questions every week, you can learn more about yourself from people who care enough to

give you honest feedback. "And Then Some" means that you are willing to learn more, do more, and put more into the relationship because it's important to you. In the process, both people are rewarded and strengthened.

Surrounding yourself with well-chosen mentors can dramatically change your life. Here's a three-step method to help you enjoy the considerable advantages of mentorship:

1. Identify the target: select one specific area of your life that you want to improve.
2. Select your mentor candidates - someone experienced or talented in the area you have selected for improvement. Make sure he/she has a proven track record and is truly successful.
3. Create your strategic plan. Be sincere. Call - get right to the point. Stick to a well-prepared script using a relaxed conversational tone. Control the conversation.

A mastermind group requires a meeting of the minds. The primary purpose is to establish support for each other emotionally, personally and professionally. It also provides a unique forum for sharing ideas and information, as well as discussing meaningful topics and everyday challenges. Four main action steps are:

1. Select the right people - who are likely to create synergy - ambitious, open-minded, goal oriented individuals who have a positive outlook and bring a positive energy to each discussion. Include people who have real experience and success in business, or who have overcome challenging personal situations.
2. Everyone must make a commitment. The level of commitment will determine how successful your Mastermind Group becomes. Agree to keep everything confidential. The real benefits occur only when there is a high level of trust within the entire group.
3. Decide when, where, how often and for how long you want to meet.
4. What will you talk about? Elect a chairperson whose main role is to keep the conversation flowing, and to allow everyone equal time. Start each meeting with a brief comment from everyone about the best thing that happened since the last meeting. Then ask two questions: "What's happening in your business life?" And "What's happening in your personal life?" Go around the table one person at a time. "What's your greatest challenge at this time?"

#### Strategy # 6 The Confidence factor

Confidence is an all-important factor you need to protect yourself from the slings and arrows of negativity. In the absence of confidence, fear and worry take control. Progress is held in check and momentum grinds to a halt.

Resolving Unfinished Business - a term describing all of the messes in your life that you haven't dealt with. There are three ways to handle this:

1. You can play the denial game
2. You can go into limbo which keeps you stuck.
3. You can confront the issue head on - step into your fear. If you want to gain confidence, accelerate your progress and restore your energy to maximum levels, you must confront your fears. Unfinished business is an ongoing reality. Handle them promptly and with confidence.

What do you really fear? Once you have identified your fears, you have a tremendous advantage. Now you can design strategies to topple them whenever they show up. Address each fear with the question - What can I do to overcome this? When you have a strategic plan to counteract your fear, you sow the seeds of confidence and certainty. Self-knowledge is the key.

A big point about unfinished business is that you must learn to forgive. You need to forgive the people who obstructed you in the past (anyone who undermined or abused your confidence verbally, physically or emotionally) and also yourself. Silence forever those negative thoughts of guilt. Whatever you did, your choices were based on your level of knowledge and awareness at the time.

#### Six Confidence-Building Strategies

1. Every day remind yourself that you did some things well. Use your B-ALERT daily habit to clarify this.
2. Read inspiring biographies and autobiographies
3. Be thankful
4. Build excellent support around you
5. Push yourself to accomplish short-term goals - make sure your goals are realistic
6. Do something for yourself every week.

#### If you hit a slump

1. recognize you are in one
2. Remind yourself of a major accomplishment
3. Get back to basics.

#### Strategy # 7 Ask for What You Want

Ask and you shall receive. Why do people stumble when they have an opportunity to ask?

1. They have a belief system that says it's not right to ask.
2. They lack confidence
3. They fear rejection.

#### *Seven Ways to Boost Your Business by Asking:*

1. Ask for Information. To win potential clients you need to know what their current challenges are. Focus on sincerely helping the person with whom you are meeting. Show genuine interest. Listen carefully - removing more layers eventually leads you to the core of the issue.
2. Ask for business
3. Ask for written endorsements - right after you have provided excellent service. Take the most powerful sentences from ten different testimonials and place them on one page.
4. Ask for top quality referrals - make sure you describe in detail what your definition of a good prospect is. Give your own clients referrals. Use the word "introductions" instead of referrals.
5. Ask for more business - develop a system to determine when your clients will require more of your own product or service. Asking for more business helps you gain momentum.
6. Ask to renegotiate - it's another form of asking that can save you time and money. Opportunities to renegotiate include stretching payments over a longer period of time. If your situation requires change, ask for it.

## 7. Ask for feedback

### *How to Ask*

1. Ask clearly - be precise. Design words that have the greatest impact.
2. Ask with confidence - people who ask confidently get more out of life than those who are hesitant and uncertain.
3. Ask consistently, until you find the answers.
4. Ask creatively. Brainstorm with your mastermind group. Schedule time every month for "purple snowflaking" and don't be surprised when those impenetrable doors swing wide open and welcome you in.
5. Ask sincerely. Ask from your heart. Keep it simple and people will open up to you. Clearly show that you have already put in a lot of effort.

### Strategy # 8 Consistent persistence

You will never achieve big results in your life without consistent and persistent action. When you stand for something and do a remarkable job of it, you attract the top people and create huge rewards for yourself.

Everything in life is a choice. You don't have to do anything. If your activities are producing positive energy, then you will have a greater capacity and desire to complete them. The reason you are where you are in life, is simply a result of all the choices you have made to this point. The consistency of your positive choices or lack of them has given you the lifestyle you own now.

When you constantly live your life in Have-To land, you put yourself in a position of pressure. This causes resistance and resentment, and drains your life of energy. When you live from a position of Choose-To, you are in a position of power. You feel in charge, in control of your life. Make every day a conscious choice. When you consistently make better choices you create better habits. These better habits produce better character. When you have better character, you add more value to the world. When you become more valuable, you attract bigger and better opportunities. This allows you to make more of a contribution in your life. This in turn leads to bigger and better results.

The Double - A formula is all about you. It stands for: Agreements and Accountability. All broken relationships can be traced back to broken agreements. True integrity is based on keeping your agreements. There is no such thing as a small agreement. In contrast, when you consistently do what you say you will do, the names attached to you are reliable and trustworthy. If you have difficulty keeping an agreement, it is possible to renegotiate. Always use this option to maintain your integrity.

The Integrity is a three-part formula to help you live with the utmost integrity.

1. When you always tell the truth, people will trust you.
2. When you do what you say, as promised, people respect you.
3. When you make others feel special, people like you.

The words "as promised" in part two are significant. Use them in your regular correspondence.

### Strategy # 9 Taking Decisive Action

Decisiveness is your greatest ally as you chart your path through life. Procrastination is a thief. There are six good reasons you may be procrastinating:

1. You're bored. Recognize that you are bored. Be conscious of your feelings and energy levels. Think about creating bigger deals and what it would take to produce that kind of revenue. This of course requires a whole new set of contacts and connections. You also need to be more creative and innovative.
2. You are overwhelmed with work.
3. Your confidence has slipped. Fear and doubt join forces - most of the things you fear will never happen. People who are decisive, and who move quickly from one task to the next, do so because the thought of having to do it later creates even more pressure and stress.
4. You have low self-worth. May sabotage any potential success because in their minds, they don't deserve it.
5. You are doing work you don't really enjoy. Successful people do the things that unsuccessful people don't like to do. They don't enjoy doing some of these things either, but they go ahead and do them anyway. The biggest rewards in life are found outside your comfort zone. Live with it. Fear and risk are prerequisites if you want to enjoy a life of success and adventure.
6. You are easily distracted, or just downright lazy.

Lack of motivation is usually at the root of your procrastination. There are primarily two ways to motivate yourself: You can fear the consequences of not taking action; or can get excited about the rewards and benefits of being proactive.

#### The TA-DA Formula

1. Think - time for reflection is essential.
2. Ask - find out everything you need to know to make an intelligent, informed decision.
3. Decide. Use the Double Spiral technique to increase your decisiveness. Visualize the negative consequences if you don't make a decision. Compare these with the positive benefits of moving forward.
4. Act - just take the first step

#### Strategy # 10 Living on Purpose

Your purpose transcends your goals. It's the Big Picture. Goals are the steps you take along the way. When you align your everyday goals with a well-defined purpose, you will enjoy peace of mind and a wonderful sense of being alive. The following key points will help activate your own purpose.

1. Align your purpose with your natural ability.
2. Be determined. Many people lose their direction in life because they are easily distracted or influenced by other people. Living your purpose requires single-mindedness - a resolve to do whatever it takes.
3. Maintain a humble attitude. Don't let an unhealthy ego override your good intentions

**Reviewer's recommendation:** Each chapter ends with a series of Action Steps. I would recommend that doing this work would be an asset to anyone.

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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.

To schedule a free *Break From the Pack to Success* consultation email

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