

DUCKLINGS TO SWANS WORKBOOK



A companion to the novel

Secrets of People

With

Extraordinary

*Willpower**

KATIE MORTON

*Available on Amazon

Introduction

In 2010, my daughter was born, and I was laid off from my job right after I returned from maternity leave. I was devastated. And so I escaped mentally. Every day when my daughter went down for her afternoon nap, I numbed out in front of the TV with a box of Cheez-its and a glass of wine.

Do you know how delicious it is to smear some cream cheese on a Cheez-it? Oh, and the luxury of putting my feet up and turning on a show that would immediately render all of my problems obsolete. And the warm buzz of a glass of wine...Heaven. After a few months of this, my weight really started to climb. My clothes were getting tight. I tried to stop. But I couldn't.

What? I couldn't? How could this be? The habit was ingrained. I loved it and I hated it.

Just a few months after my layoff, the TLC network came to me with a writing job. As I researched and wrote extensively about the psychology and the neuroscience of habit formation and willpower, I began to uncover a formula that people could apply to their lives to heal their issues around unwanted compulsive behaviors.

I learned that—when people frequently struggle with cravings for food or alcohol—there is often an issue of brain chemistry at play. Friendships and creativity are two factors that boost serotonin, the neurotransmitter of happiness. When I lost my job, my work-friendships and my creative purpose were suddenly ripped away from me. A probable drop in serotonin in my brain led to depression and anxiety.

Certain foods also raise serotonin and thus give us feelings of happiness and well-being. I was in the habit of medicating my emotions with food, leading to unstable mood swings and cravings for the foods that could bring my moods back to Happy Land. This led to a cycle of cravings for these foods for the rewards they would bring.

Dopamine, the neurotransmitter of craving, can be satisfied and redirected by ambition. I realized that I could nurse my bad habits, or I could come up with new friendships, new creative endeavors, and new ambitions that would eventually funnel my cravings and habits away from self-destructive impulses and towards creative and happy-making habits.

Once I had the answers, I climbed out of the hole of bad habits I'd dug for myself. I lost weight in the most mindless, healthy, and enjoyable way. I'd discovered a formula for beating cravings and elevating mood.

I had always dreamt of being a novelist. I lost that dream somewhere during my career years. But the urge came back. Strong. The novel came to me—the ideas, the characters, the plot, in great, clear rushes of insight and inspiration. Even the title: [*Secrets of People With Extraordinary Willpower*](#). It's my hope this novel will heal many people who can benefit from the formula.

This workbook is meant to deepen your understanding of the concepts introduced in the novel *Secrets of People With Extraordinary Willpower*. The clues to the willpower formula are found in the novel. If you want to dig deeper and apply it to your own life, then do the exercises in this workbook.

While I mention scenes and chapters in this workbook, I tried not to provide any spoilers. As you go through the workbook, don't worry if you haven't yet read the chapters of the novel that are referenced—give the exercise a shot. In a few cases, however, you'll find you'll need to read the novel to fully understand the exercise.

In the novel, Earnest tells his students that experience is the best teacher. It's by your experiences of the exercises that you will internalize the lessons and let them work for you. What do I mean by this?

Grab a pen and a journal. Over the next several weeks, work through these exercises to get a better understanding of how your mind works. In doing so, you will learn how to get your mind working *for you*.

Thanks for reading,

Katie Morton



Workbook Exercises: Master Your Mind

Get curious about your feelings.

Emotions are often responses to our thoughts—but as Kelly learned in Chapter Seven in the diner during her discussion with Amy about the Negativity Bias, we can't believe everything we think.

Many of our emotions are essentially reactions to inaccurate thinking. When we consistently ignore our emotions, we're unable to root out the source of our emotions—our thoughts and our limiting beliefs. What is a limiting belief? It's a belief that limits what you're capable of.

In Chapter Eleven, in Sandy's apartment while she coached Kelly, Sandy first taught Kelly about her experience with conquering limiting beliefs. Then Earnest expanded on the topic during his lecture in Chapter Fifteen. Earnest exposed more of Kelly's limiting beliefs over their dinner at Tao in Chapter Sixteen.

Despite the Negativity Bias and limiting beliefs, sometimes our emotions can give us an accurate reading of our circumstances, and show us where we need to take responsibility and make changes.

Journal Exercise

- 1. What feelings do you routinely ignore?** Are you afraid to feel sad, angry, or lonely? Does happiness make you feel uneasy or undeserving?
- 2. What might these feelings be telling you?** If you took time to notice your feelings, what messages might your feelings send you?
- 3. Feelings come and go.** When we resist feelings, they persist, coming back to us over and over again. We feel a tightness in our throat or chest as we try to push the feeling away. When we lean into a feeling and allow it to wash over us, the feeling can run its course. Practice opening up and softening to a feeling, rather than resisting it. How does that practice feel?

How to Turn a Negative Emotion Into a Positive One

When we journal, our goal is to root around and find reality. It's to define the circumstances in real terms, to parse out our thoughts and to evaluate them rationally, to soothe our emotions and to recognize when negative emotions are generated due to inaccurate or overly imaginative thoughts about what circumstances mean.

- 1. If you haven't already, get into the practice of daily journaling.** Aim for a minimum of 3 pages per day, but every bit counts.

- 2. When you experience a negative emotion, tease out what it's trying to tell you.** Remember the last negative emotion you had. What thought caused the negative emotion?
- 3. What limiting belief or element of the Negativity Bias might be causing the thought?** How can you turn such a thought into a Success Mindset? (Chapter Fifteen)
- 4. Is there an actual problem you can solve?** What actions can you take to improve a situation that might be making you feel bad?
- 5. Journal with the aim of steering positive.** If you have a negative thought and resulting emotion, how can you turn it around and steer your thoughts positively?

Prevent negative emotions via boundary setting.

Boundary Setting can be a particularly tough practice to begin, because when we're not good at setting boundaries, it's usually because the thought of drawing a line and making sure we get our needs met, sometimes even at the expense of others, can make us feel anxious. However, when we have poor boundaries, we *already* feel anxious; once we begin to practice setting boundaries, our anxiety is lessened over time.

Throughout the book, Kelly has experiences of testing and learning about boundaries. We get the sense that her friendship with Terry was a little bit unhealthy. Maybe Terry was too quick to mother Kelly and offer her advice; we're not sure, since that relationship took place in the past. We might get the sense that Amy begins to step into that role when she takes Kelly dress shopping.

Towards the beginning of the book, Kelly's emotions are heavily swayed by the opinions of others. By the end of the book, Kelly starts to show some strength and the development of healthy boundaries. She decides on terms for her friendship with Amy and how she might move forward with her healthier habits.

From Chapter Thirty-Six through the end of the story, Kelly blossoms when she upholds her boundaries and navigates the muddy waters between Lydia and Earnest.

- 1. Take a moment to journal how easy or difficult it is for you to set boundaries.** Is there anywhere in your life you could be better at it? Where in your life are you working beyond your limitations, giving too much, routinely putting others' needs before your own, feeling uncomfortable asking for something, denying your needs, deeming your needs unimportant relative to others' needs, or feeling uncomfortable expressing your opinions, needs, or feelings?
- 2. What do you think you could do differently to make sure your needs are met?** How might you allow others the freedom to solve their own problems?
- 3. Think of a time when...** you put off having a difficult conversation with someone, when you felt reluctant about asking them to do something, or when you otherwise feared you might put someone out. What were you afraid of? Were you afraid they wouldn't like your request? Were you afraid they

won't like *you*? Did you fear a potential conflict? Tease out the circumstances, the thoughts, and the resulting emotions.

4. How can you set boundaries in a loving and kind way? Even if you feel afraid to set boundaries, how might they actually benefit the other party, as well as yourself? After the initial discomfort, what are the long-term benefits to setting boundaries?

Record your triggers, cues, and excuses that tempt you towards bad habits.

Do you ever wonder why you stay up late checking Facebook or surfing your favorite web sites when you'd be better off sleeping? Or why you dive face first into chocolate cake or ice cream when such indulgences run counter to your health and wellness goals? Blame it on dopamine.

In *The Willpower Instinct*, Kelly McGonigal, Ph.D., writes:

When the brain recognizes an opportunity for reward, it releases a neurotransmitter called dopamine. Dopamine tells the rest of the brain what to pay attention to and what to get our greedy little hands on. A dopamine rush doesn't create happiness itself—the feeling is more like arousal. We feel alert, awake, and captivated. We recognize the possibility of feeling good and are willing to work for that feeling.

Dopamine makes us feel desire and stress simultaneously, and we mistake the fulfillment of our desire with happiness. The problem with making decisions based on dopamine is that we may only feel a brief sense of relief when we give in to our cravings. (I've never heard anyone say, "I'm so happy I ate a pint of ice cream an hour ago!")

If we can distract ourselves from the craving, we can interrupt dopamine production, while obsessing about what we want only makes it worse.

In actuality, when we do give in to a craving and pay very close attention to what happens while we're indulging, the experience just about never lives up to our expectations. Maybe a bite or two of cake taste fabulous, but if we're really tasting it instead of shoveling it in, by the fourth bite we feel a little queasy from all that sugar. Perhaps a little bit of Facebook is fun, but it starts to feel disappointing when we really pay attention to our experience of sitting in an uncomfortable desk chair while our eyelids droop and sleep is lost.

In Chapters Nineteen and Twenty, we learn about Excuse Neutralizers. When I performed this set of exercises, I practically carried my journal with me everywhere for a week. These exercises were among the most pivotal activities I did for changing my life. It helped me to view those dopamine-driven craving thoughts as exactly what they are: excuses.

You are going to study yourself and your habits. You're simply acting like a scientist at this stage. You're observing yourself and your thoughts from a detached state.

1. When you feel a craving to engage in a habit... whether it's compulsively checking email or web surfing, pouring a drink, or eating an unhealthy treat, notice the feeling that dopamine gives you. Notice the want, the pull, the desire, the craving. Make a mental note of what that feels like so you can be aware that dopamine is going to work on you.

2. What's the trigger or the cue that starts the craving? Is it environmental, meaning you go somewhere or you see something that sparks your desire? Is it a feeling or an emotion, like stress or sadness that you want to relieve? Are you frustrated or overwhelmed? Did you have an argument with someone, or are you afraid to express your feelings? Write down all the cues that you notice, as you notice them.

3. You are going to write down every "craving thought" you have. These are all the reasons that your brain gives you to give in. When you have the feeling like you want to give in to a craving, notice what your brain is saying and write it down. Write all of the thoughts and reasons and excuses your brain gives you.

I came up with a massive list of things my brain told me to encourage me to give in to cravings. It seemed to go on all day long! It was just shocking to realize that my days were so craving-and-habit fueled, but that's your brain's aim—to automate your behaviors.

I had to laugh at some of the thoughts I had, like, "You always eat something bad every day. It's not normal for you to have a perfect eating day." Or "It's inevitable that you'll have a glass of wine." I mean, really?? Hopefully you'll find yourself laughing too at both the cleverness and ridiculousness of your brain's excuses.

4. If you decide to give in to the craving and to proceed with the action part of your habit, pay attention to your thoughts as you indulge. Are you focused on the pleasure of the moment? After the action ceases to be pleasurable, do you keep going, or do you stop? Are you wanting more, and plotting to keep going past satisfaction, even mid-action?

Perform the following meditation exercise to access the Witness.

The Witness is introduced in Chapter Three and mentioned again in Chapters Nine, Eighteen, Twenty, Thirty-Five, and Thirty-Six.

You're going to choose one of the two following options. I find Option 1 to be extremely important to accessing the Witness, to learn the art of letting words fall by the wayside, and to learn how to access a calmer, more controlled mind. However, I find Option 2 more fun, and it's also effective in its own way.

Option 1: Focus on the breath, release thoughts.

Set a timer for 5 to 10 minutes. Sit down and get comfortable. Close your eyes. Zoom out and be one with the Witness.

Focus on the breath. Deep, relaxing breaths. When a thought comes, don't hitch a ride—stand back and see it. Don't attach. Let it float by. Return to the breath.

The goal isn't to stop thinking; that's not possible. The goal is to access the stillness between thoughts.

Simply notice thoughts. Don't argue with them or agree with them. Don't examine them or follow them. Notice a thought, then let it go, and return focus to the breath.

Some see a river in their mind. When a thought comes, place it on a leaf and let it float away, down the river. Return to the breath.

Each time a thought comes, return focus to the breath, over and over.

Option 2: Focus on a Success Mindset, release thoughts.

We learned about Success Mindsets in Chapter Fifteen. A Success Mindset runs counter to a limiting belief.

For this option, you're going to choose a Success Mindset or some kind of inspiring and confidence building mantra. (Something you believe to be true, something that your mind won't push against) and you're going to repeat it to yourself, over and over, silently in your mind for 5 to 10 minutes.

Set your timer, sit down and get comfortable, and close your eyes.

Say your mantra, your Success Mindset, over and over. When a thought intrudes, return to your Success Mindset.

During either of these practices, a time will come when you suddenly alert yourself to the fact that you're off on a thought trail—a thought came, and you attached yourself to it and followed it. When this happens, simply observe that without judgment and kindly steer your mind back to your Success Mindset or your focus on your breath.

Discover how your limiting beliefs cause struggle in habit change.

Often our limiting beliefs (Chapters Eleven, Fifteen, and Sixteen) convince us of the impossibility or excessive difficulty in changing our behavior. We convince ourselves that we're destined to struggle, when all we need is a simple mindset change so that we can acknowledge this: It doesn't have to be hard. In fact, it's probably easy!

1. Think of some habits you've tried to change in the past that you've struggled with. What are the limiting beliefs you tell yourself about your ability to change?

2. What qualities do you assign to yourself that prevent your success? (For example, "I'm a slob." Or "I have no willpower in regards to certain foods or behaviors.")

3. What qualities do you assign to the habit about the habit's inherent difficulty or unpleasantness? (For example, "Keeping my home neat is tedious, time consuming work." Or "Eating healthy is so boring and draining. Life is unpleasant when I only eat healthy food.")

4. What Success Mindsets can you adopt to counteract your assumptions about both yourself and about the habit you want to change? (For example, "I have great willpower." Or "Keeping the house neat is easy as long as I'm mindful of tiny decisions." Or, "There are plenty of healthy foods that are delicious and a pleasure to eat.")

How can you change your thinking from difficult to easy, or from complicated and full of struggle to smart relaxation? Choose beliefs that are both true and helpful. (Don't say, "I love broccoli" if you actually gag at the sight of it. Keep the exercise honest!)

5. Write down these Success Mindsets and place them where you'll see them every day. Practice saying your Success Mindsets to yourself every day during meditation, and whenever you feel resistant to the habit you want to adopt.

Catch yourself being good.

As Kelly gets better at seeing her cravings from a more objective viewpoint, she begins to notice that her thinking is changing and that she's making progress. It's important to notice and to give yourself credit so that if you do make a mistake, you can evaluate the problem objectively and create solutions rather than abandoning your goals.

When you "Catch Yourself Being Good" it gives you a new way of valuing your decisions; it reminds you to notice the positive, which can fuel the upward trajectory of your life.

- 1. Where can you give yourself credit?** What little wins and positive decisions can you celebrate?
- 2. What kind of progress have you made,** and how can you continue to build on this progress to get closer to your goals for your life?
- 3. Notice a positive action you took recently.** How can you make it more likely that you'll behave this way again in the future? How can you give yourself credit and positively reinforce these behaviors and make it more likely you'll do them again?

Create Your Vision for a Blissful Life

Ignore the fear and listen to your heart.

When you spend your time focusing on your Red Herrings (Chapter Nineteen) rather than listening to your heart, then you never have to face your fear of the unknown. Instead, you get to continue dealing with the fears you already know about.

These fears, such as the fear that you're harming your health or otherwise wasting your life, will eventually become your reality—the downhill slide you'll face if you stay on the same old path, wrestling with Red Herrings for eternity. Your Red Herrings will keep you stuck to those fears and the raw deal that you already know about.

While your Red Herrings protect you from the unknown, they prevent you from living the amazing life you deserve. Following your heart's desires in life can sometimes involve a perceived risk. It's certainly a risk to the status quo, and change can feel uncomfortable.

1. When you think of listening to your heart, do any of the three fears show themselves? The fears are:

- That we'll choose to do something unpopular or we'll somehow lose love.
- We'll do something that's a bit nutty or out of control.
- If we're successful, we'll be seen, which means we will become a target of criticism.

2. How might these fears impact your life right now?

3. How might your life change if you practice ignoring the fear and listen to your heart anyway?

Prioritize

When we use “lack of time” as a Red Herring, we spend our whole lives feeling rushed and helpless. We need to get **deliberate in how we use our time**, rather than feeling tossed about in its wake as it passes us by. We have all the time we need. Period. The secret is to reprioritize what you do with the time you have. We are all given the same 24 hours; examine them carefully and maximize their potential.

1. Make a list of all your priorities, goals, and ways you spend your time.

2. Prioritize your answers from #1 into the following two A or B categories:

A: Thrive and Flourish:

- **Physical wellness:** You allow your body to stay healthy via sleep, nutrition, and movement.
- **Mental space:** You have a way to organize your thoughts and clear your head. Journaling is a must. Some variation of meditation, prayer, or quiet time alone to focus on love and kindness is encouraged.
- **Loving friendship:** You can share your deepest thoughts and desires with at least one person whom you trust and love and consider a close friend. Significant others are great, but you need an intimate-but-platonic friendship you can turn to when you need a compassionate witness who will hear you without judgment and without fear that sharing information with this person will somehow bite you in the butt.

- **Creativity:** You express yourself in some way, whether it's via writing, art, music, cooking, knitting, singing, dancing, crafts, etc.
- **Purpose:** You are actively seeking why you are here on Earth (or you already know why) and you are pursuing a purposeful life.
- **Financial abundance:** If you don't already feel financial secure or stable, you are working to raise your station in life so you can enjoy some level of luxury or security, whatever that means to you.
- **Thriving social life:** You can pursue some relationships beyond your close loved ones as a means of experiencing new opinions and ways of seeing the world, of helping others and being helped.

B: Nice but not Necessary: Everything else. Things I'd like to do that aren't technically important to my wellbeing.

3. If you only had one hour each day, what is the most important area for you to spend your time?

4. What are you spending time on instead?

5. What activities (that do not fit into the A category) will you backburner or eliminate from your life?

6. What activities can you add to your life to make sure your 'A' category gets completed first?

7. If some or all of your 'A' category can't get taken care of right away, add relevant action items to your calendar from one to three months away so that these priorities aren't forgotten.

Flush out your Red Herrings.

In this exercise, I want you to know that you'll never be *ready* to make changes. You'll never be "ready" to flush out your Red Herrings or drop a bad habit. It will never be the perfect time. But I do want you to notice that every time you delay going ahead and you delay taking positive leaps forward and getting into action despite the presence of your Red Herrings, you're habit fondling.

Habit fondling means that instead of living big, instead of deciding you're going to go for it, you're standing around debating yourself over a Red Herring, something you're keeping in your way to prevent you from getting to the good stuff.

So what are your Red Herrings? Fill in the blank after this statement to discover your Red Herrings. "I'm not going to take a meaningful action towards following my heart's desire until I...

Have more time.

Have more money.

I'm thinner.

I feel more confident.

Things settle down at work.

Things settle down at home.

I'm more organized.

I get a particular habit sorted out.

I feel more in control.

I take care of that thing that I keep putting off.

Make a list your possible Red Herrings.

2. How will your life change as you let go of these Red Herrings and focus on what you want?

How is your ego getting in the way of listening to your heart?

When we follow our hearts' desires, we're not seeking approval or trying to look a certain way; instead, we earn our *own* approval and our need for others to validate us falls away.

Over time, when we follow our hearts, we gain more and more evidence that we're on the right track towards satisfaction and fulfillment. We get to deeply experience that it's our *own* approval that's the most reliable, steadfast and important.

1. How might your ego be influencing your decisions or lifestyle? (Earnest teaches Kelly about ego in Chapter 10.)

2. What are you doing in your life because it looks cool or because you want people to be impressed?

3. What are you *not* doing in your life because you're afraid of how it would look or what others might think?

4. Is there something about your goals or your life that you suspect your ego has romanticized?

5. When you set your ego aside, what goal or purpose would make your heart feel right?

6. If no one was looking, what would you rather do with your time? What would make your heart feel fulfilled, regardless of how it would look to others?

Discover your purpose.

In Chapter Four, Kelly reveals her dream of becoming a writer to Lydia. But many people don't have a dream. They feel like they are floundering without a purpose and they'd like to know what it is.

May I be so bold as to suggest that your main purpose in life is to enjoy yourself? Your purpose should feel good to you, not like it's constraining or like an obligation. Your purpose doesn't need to be an overwhelming or lifelong commitment. We can try on different purposes at different times.

When we turn our focus outwards to how we can help others, we begin to feel more loving and loved. We build a tribe of people we want to be around and who want to be around us. When we connect with and help others, our lives and our confidence grow in positive and loving ways that we can't possibly predict.

You're going to brainstorm a list of potential purposes. If you're really lost about what your purpose might be, here is what I've found to be a helpful formula for picking a purpose:

Your struggle + talent + people you can help who share your struggle

Coming up with your purpose can take lots of time and experimentation. Don't get frustrated when you don't hit it out of the park on the first try.

- 1. Make a long list – aim for at least 10 or 20 of each category: struggles, talents, and people you can help.**
- 2. See if you can piece together a few different purposes. Don't think too hard.**
- 3. Decipher what actions you can take to start testing your theories. How can you practice your talents? How can you connect with others?**

If answers aren't forthcoming, don't stress. You don't need to reach a conclusion right now.

Visualize your blissful life.

You're going to do this exercise each day for 7 days. Each time you perform this practice, you'll be able to see more detail and the picture of your blissful life will get clearer. This will also help you commit your vision to memory, which will support your pursuit of your vision over time. You'll envision a life that creates a burning desire inside you so that you're driven to transform in order to get it.

You're going to enter a nonverbal state while you use your imagination to create your blissful vision. Why nonverbal? Because we *don't want to think* our way through this exercise via logic and reason—we want to *feel our way and see our way*, with our heart and our right brain. You're going to use your imagination to see and feel your vision using your mind's eye and the power of emotion.

Choose a time and space where you'll have twenty calm, quiet, undisturbed minutes. When you're in your spot, relaxed and ready, perform the following steps to create your blissful vision.

Close your eyes and relax. Picture a warm, golden light that brings a feeling of love. This loving light pours over your head, gently flowing like liquid through the atoms of your body, relaxing you as it slides slowly down the inside of your head, your neck, your chest and back, and pooling in your heart.

This feeling of love and light relaxes all of the muscles in your face. Your tongue, jaw and mouth are relaxed. Your neck, ears, and shoulder blades are relaxed. Light and love illuminate and relax your whole body. Light and love saturate every cell of your being. Breathe this loving light in and out of your lungs.

Your heart fills, expands and opens with a feeling of ecstatic love, and it's bursting with light. Smile and take a few deep breaths, in and out. In and out. In and out, smiling.

Loving light bursts back out of you in a delightful high-energy explosion, shooting back out the top of your head, into the Universe. Golden light streams out in all directions, covering and filling everything and everyone on earth. Every person. Every city, town, and village, covered and filled with loving light. Every leaf, every blade of grass. Every animal, fish, bird and creature filled with loving light. All of the lakes, streams and oceans. Every stick, twig and grain of sand is covered and filled with a loving, golden light.

Imagine yourself one day, three years in the future. You have transformed into your higher self, and you are living a blissful life. Picture a scene during this blissful time. You can see your blissful, higher self. See what's unfolding for you, and how your life feels. What's happening, right now, in the moment that you see yourself? In this scene you're creating in your mind's eye, where are you? What are you doing? What do you hear and see?

Whether you're with others, or you're alone, you feel so much **love** in your life. You can feel so many heart-felt connections, loved ones and warm friendships in your life, some of whom you haven't even met yet. You're surrounded by love, laughter, and joy.

Imagine in pictures and feelings the answers to these questions:

Imagine the feeling your work gives you. What is it that makes your work feel more like play?

In this work, what kind of problems are you solving? What are you helping people with?

Do you work with your hands, your body, your mind, or a combination of these?

Do you work with a team, or do you work alone?

Where and when do you choose to do your work?

What kind of creative outlets, hobbies, or means of expression do you enjoy?

Feel the financial abundance flowing to you in gratitude for the work that you do.

Now visualize, in great detail, what it's like to inhabit the body of your higher self.

Feel the energy contained in your muscles. Feel the power and energy of a healthy, happy, cared for body. How does your body feel? Enjoy this feeling and breathe it in.

In your daily, blissful life, what kind of foods do you enjoy eating, and how do these foods make your body feel?

What kind of physical activities does your body enjoy, and how do these activities make you feel?

Now turn your focus to your home. What does your home look like? How do you feel when you're at home? Which room in your home is your favorite, and what's it like?

What are your favorite parts of your daily routine? What do you see yourself doing? How does it make you feel?

Take in the awesomeness of your blissful life. Feel the warmth, the love, the giddiness, and the excitement. Imprint a burning desire for your vision into your mind.

Record your blissful vision in writing.

Now take the time to write down the details of the amazing life that you visualized. Choose a date approximately 3 years in the future and write down that date. How old will you be? How old are your loved ones?

Refer back to your vision in your mind's eye and write down all of the details. What kinds of feelings and experiences do you want for yourself? Even if you think something seems too grand or unachievable, write down every detail. We don't want you to forget any of the finer points. Right now, you aren't concerning yourself with "how"—you're only writing down what you see in your vision.

What kind of work will you be doing? What are you creating? Where will you live? What's your home like? What kind of relationships will you nurture? What's your body like? What kind of money are you making? What kinds of physical activities do you enjoy? Write down everything you saw happening.

Each day for 7 days after you perform the visualization exercise, you're going to write down more details as they make themselves known to you. Be sure to record the details each day so nothing is forgotten.

You are going to create a simple vision board. For this exercise, there are a billion options out there and ways to do this. However, **the most important thing is getting your vision board done and where you can see it.** I'm going with low-tech instructions here so that you can be sure to complete the exercise the easiest and quickest way possible with fewer distractions.

Don't worry about perfection—worry about simply doing the exercise—and keep it simple, so that you're sure to follow through. You don't have to try to match your mental image exactly – this is only a reminder to return to your vision again and again.

Create a simple vision board.

Start with a blank piece of paper. Use magazines or search for images online, and find images that represent elements of your vision. Print or cut them out, and tape or glue them to the paper.

You may decide to include an image of yourself, or you can print out or cut out images you like that can represent you. Choose photos that represent the physical location, like a room in a house, the outdoor landscape, or other places you love to spend time. Choose images that represent the kind of work you'll be doing. Find images that represent the people that you'll meet and spend time with, and the relationships you'll nurture and enjoy. Choose pictures that show the hobbies, creative outlets, self-expression, and the physical activities you enjoy.

Don't worry about accuracy or exact representations—the point is to find photos that light your fire and that bring you feelings of excitement for your vision.

You might choose to make multiple copies of this creation, and put it in several places in your home. The most important thing is that you hang the vision board on the wall where you're going to see it and call your vision to your mind's eye.

Confident and at Peace With Yourself

Get to Know Yourself

The practice of developing high self-worth involves being alone with yourself and listening to what you have to say. We're going to practice being with ourselves via journaling, a practice I recommend you adopt for life. We're going to start easy in that you're going to be with yourself by journaling the answers to these specific questions:

- 1. What path in life were you groomed to follow?** (Some factors to consider: marriage, occupation, income, religion, hobbies, friends, appearance, geographic location.)
- 2. If you deviated from that path, who might this disappoint, or who might judge or reject you?**

- 3. How has your fear of disappointing others or your fear of deviating from the path shaped your life?** How might you live differently based on your own preferences?
- 4. In what circumstances do you resent giving or doing for others?** How can you get your own needs met so that you can lessen your resentment?
- 5. What does it look like when your cup is full?** If you don't know, then brainstorm a few ideas of what that might look like.
- 6. If you engage in martyrdom, how can you free yourself from feeling so needed?** Do you underestimate what others could do for themselves or what others could do to help you?
- 7. Where in life have you been overly concerned about keeping up appearances, and how does it manifest itself?** In buying (or wanting) particular material goods? In the fulfillment or pursuit of a particular career?
- 8. Where in your life do you allow other peoples' opinions of you to negatively constrain your choices?** It could be something small like your choice of clothing or something big like your career or lifestyle.
- 9. Do you have any examples of what low self-worth looks like in your life?** Do you endure a certain level of treatment from other people that you don't like or that makes you feel bad? Are there scenarios in which you're currently afraid that expressing your wants, needs, or thoughts will garner a negative reaction?
- 10. Having a fear of rejection is normal. The real question is: how can you acknowledge the fear, and express yourself anyway?**

Discover Your Coddling and Punishing Behaviors

Many of us think that if we think highly of ourselves, if we love ourselves, if we're kind to ourselves and we compliment ourselves, that we would essentially be giving ourselves permission to slack off.

For example, we think that accepting and loving our bodies as they are would mean giving us permission to overeat or avoid physical activity. We think that patting ourselves on the back might mean we won't get our work done. We fear that offering ourselves self-respect is the equivalent of getting too comfortable in a situation that won't bring us lasting peace.

We are confusing having self-respect and being kind to ourselves with coddling. Coddling is when we say to ourselves, "Oh Snookums, this was a tough day. You can eat that pint of ice cream / drink those beers / watch that marathon of shows on TV / stay on the computer until the wee hours (instead of going to bed so you can feel good tomorrow.)" This is not kindness. This is not showing ourselves love. This is not a demonstration of self-respect.

Strangely, coddling and punishing are eerily similar. And people who tend to coddle themselves also tend to punish themselves by withholding self-approval, self-respect, and self-love.

I used to think that I was being kind to myself when I drank wine to relieve stress or ate unhealthy foods. “I’m stressed out. Wine will help me feel better.” Or “I’ve been so good with my eating, I deserve a treat.” Unhealthy behaviors are often coddling. When we coddle ourselves, we effectively infantilize ourselves. I’m basically saying to myself that I need to pacify myself because I’m not adult enough to function without distractions to numb my feelings or to change the way I feel. I’m giving my power and my responsibility to things that lie outside of myself.

Once my self-worth began to rise, I began to view cravings differently, whether a craving was for extra food, alcohol, or any other behavior that could negatively impact my mental or physical health. As opposed to my old perspective when I viewed giving into cravings as a comfort, I wondered, “What kind of mean force inside me would make me do this to my poor body?” It struck me as such a vicious and malevolent thing to do—to harm myself, whether it was a craving for sugar, crackers, or wine, or to be sedentary—it’s all harmful to my body. It was a breakthrough to view these habits as abusing myself, and quite violently, as opposed to the nurturing, protective feeling these habits always had in the past.

For a workaholic, the punishing routine is similar to the coddling routine in that one turns to work as the outside distraction and a way to control or numb feelings. Workaholic behaviors demonstrate a lack of self-trust: “Give me an inch, and I’ll take a mile. I better not stop working, or I won’t get this done.”

The workaholic is basing their self-worth on how much they do, what they accomplish, or what their career trajectory looks like. And God forbid you make a mistake! Workaholics and procrastinators alike wrongly believe that self-worth depends on making sure mistakes never happen or at least that no one finds out; you crumble in shame otherwise. You might feel relief for a moment when you accomplish something great, but then the next day it’s back to self-loathing and working constantly so that you can’t hear yourself think. It’s numbing out, it’s refusing to be with yourself, and work is the vehicle to oblivion.

Some of us punish ourselves by restricting food intake or going on diets we don’t enjoy, doing exercise we hate or that results in injury, or by taking on jobs or chores that we loathe rather than delegating or outsourcing.

Some of us might coddle more, some of us might be more prone to punishing, and many engage in a mixture of both, but the result is the same. We trap ourselves in habits, behaviors, or activities that are bad for our mental and physical health.

1. How do you coddle yourself?

2. How do you punish yourself?

- 3. How do you withhold self-love and self-respect based on your behaviors, accomplishments or mistakes?**
- 4. What would it be like to accept yourself, even though you don't always behave or perform perfectly?** (Important note: no one alive on this earth behaves or performs perfectly.)
- 5. What are you afraid will happen if you give up your coddling and punishing behaviors?**
- 6. In what ways are your coddling behaviors harming you?** It might seem on the surface like you're soothing or being kind to yourself, but how might that not be true?
- 7. What negative feelings arise in the wake of punishing or coddling?**

Lizard Brain vs. Neocortex

In Chapter Nine, Earnest lectures about the Lizard Brain and the Neocortex.

A main theme of the novel is this: Have critical awareness that you are infinitely worthy and valuable. You don't need to be perfect to be loveable. Perfection is impossible; you are worthy regardless.

Feel compassion, empathy, and love for yourself while you do this exercise. You are going to reflect on how you've been influenced by the media, your parents, and your peers to doubt your self-worth.

My advice to you on this section is to work quickly through it; there is no need to drudge endlessly. Grab a few things, then move to the next question to shed positive light on the issues. The goal is practice, not perfection. You can revisit all of these exercises again over time. It's an iterative process, so if you're uncomfortable diving too deep, just wade into the shallows for now.

- 1. Think of the media's portrayal of worth (for example, young, rich, physically perfect, etc.)** Has your lizard brain been concerned that you could stand to improve in any of these areas, for fear that you might endure rejection by others?
- 2. Think of your parents' idea of worth, and the messages they've given you about how you need to behave in order to be accepted by your family.** Write down some of the things they may have done or said and the ways your fearful lizard brain may have internalized their messages to negatively impact your feelings of self-worth.
- 3. Think back on interactions with your peers that hurt your self-confidence or left you doubting your self-worth.** What lizard-brain messages might you have internalized from your interactions with your peers? Based on past or current experiences, in what ways does your lizard brain fear that you don't fit in?
- 4. We have the power to choose to stop believing negative messages about our self-worth.** (Like most of these exercises, this is a practice, not a one-off deal.) Look back on your answers from

numbers 1, 2, and 3 and dispute the messages you've received from others and your lizard brain about your self-worth.

5. Knowing that you are magnificent and infinitely worthy of self-love, what are adjectives you can use to describe yourself that are true, and counter to the negative assessments of your self-worth?

6. Without other peoples' opinions ringing in your ears, write down a list of all the loveable things about you.

There's no one here to tell you that you're full of yourself. Go ahead and recognize a mere fraction of what makes you special and amazing and worthwhile. (You are more amazing than your 5 senses would let you know, but we can try to capture just a little bit of your glory on paper!) Take it in. Bask in your awesomeness.

7. Often we have talents or activities that we love to do growing up or at different times in our lives, but then stuff gets in the way. Perhaps you loved poetry, art, walking in nature, or sports.

Take a moment to remember what you loved to do and why you stopped. Maybe you were insulted or discouraged by someone. Maybe your lizard brain told you the activity wasn't cool enough or it took too much time away from others. Maybe you were told you couldn't make a living at it, so you shouldn't bother. Maybe you were afraid you weren't talented enough and that the activity that fed your soul was a waste of time.

As we get older, our adult obligations, time constraints, or other priorities can also take over. But staying in touch with those activities that make our hearts sing, that get us into flow, that make the world drop away when we're engaged in them—as Earnest says, these activities are almost like prayer or meditation and they can help restore our feelings of worth and purpose when we allow ourselves to engage in them again.

If following your heart's desire seems crazy but not following it is becoming more and more difficult with every passing week or month or year, your choices come down to taking a leap of faith or living with the regret of never having tried. Wouldn't you rather jump? —Martha Beck

Make a list of activities that make you feel good. What are you good at? What do you love to do, regardless of what others think? I won't make you do any of these things in public, so if you like dancing, then write down "dancing." In a vacuum, without the prying eyes or opinions of other people sounding in your head, with no plans of how or why you would do these things except that you know you would enjoy them, write a list of activities that make you smile, that make you feel in the zone, or activities you used to enjoy when you were younger but that you have set aside as life got busy.

Becoming Integrated and Loving Your Shadow

In Chapter Nine, Earnest talks about the Shadow. And a peculiar thing in the novel is that before Earnest speaks to Kelly after class, he's often hiding in the shadows of the room in order to keep his Shadow behavior hidden.

When you begin to love and value yourself unconditionally, you realize that you are human, you are not supposed to be perfect, and you don't deserve to berate yourself when you make mistakes. You are worthy of constant love; no matter what you do, no matter what you say, and no matter how you feel, you are worthy of your own love and respect. You do not deserve to be punished or rejected for being human.

When you're able to accept the beauty of your shadow and stop blaming him or her for getting hurt, you are able to see your loved, whole self who deserves success, confidence, power and healthy self-esteem, without any trace of punishment, scorn or wrath.

1. Often when we look back at our younger selves (“younger” could mean just yesterday), the self that couldn't protect us, who didn't know what to do when we were treated poorly, our reaction is to think, “That person doesn't belong to me.” We want to disown that weak part of ourselves. This is your Shadow. In this exercise, you're going to learn how to embrace your Shadow and lovingly accept that part of yourself. You're going to write a letter to your younger self.

Take the time to look back at your life and think fondly on your younger self. Congratulate him or her for all of the tough obstacles he or she overcame. Commiserate with your younger self over the times that you didn't have the wisdom of age to guide you to higher ground sooner. Think of negative events that frightened your lizard brain or made you feel ashamed, like being bullied or punished. Think about your younger self, your Shadow, and your essential self, and how perfect and beautiful each and every part of you actually is, and how you don't deserve the kind of treatment you endured.

Write about how you may have stumbled, made mistakes, or believed negative messages about yourself because you were too young to know any better. As you write, forgive and comfort all parts of yourself. Offer love and sympathy for the way things went. Understand that *all of you* is worthy of love and understanding and forgiveness. Parent the younger version of yourself, your essential self, and your Shadow the way you needed to be parented, loved, and cared for.

2. Now let your younger self speak back to your current incarnation, where you stand right now. Allow your Shadow to show gratitude for your current level of knowledge and experience: you know how to take care of yourself. You are an adult who is capable of learning how to set boundaries. You can learn how to defend yourself without disowning the sweet, vulnerable part of yourself.

Write down 5 kind things about yourself. Think about the tough things you accomplish each day and ways that you act that are constructively building a loving life and home for yourself. Essentially, have gratitude for yourself.

If your Shadow is angry that you disowned him or her, air that. Resolve it. Forgive it for happening and make peace. Become reunited with your wholesome, beautiful, sweet younger self. Feel excited to be with him or her and to stand together in your power.

3. Sit quietly and close your eyes. Create a mental image of your younger self. Remember some of the delightful qualities you had when you were younger that you might have rejected when you were hurt. Smile at each other. Embrace and merge together. Together as a team, you're more joyful and powerful. Enjoy this time together. Study the details so you can recall them often.

Value Your Own Opinion

As the novel progresses, Kelly moves from being externally motivated—driven by the opinions and approval of others—towards being intrinsically motivated, meaning she learns to act based on her own hopes and desires for her life.

When we become someone who is *intrinsically* motivated, it means that you aren't doing it to look good or to get praise from other people. You're doing things for yourself because YOU MATTER. You're taking the high road because you deserve to be taken care of. You are worth the effort.

Know that your opinion of yourself is extremely important—what you think of yourself, how you talk to yourself, and how you feel about yourself is everything in life—it creates your life, your moment-to-moment. Every experience you have and every thought you have is influenced by how you feel about yourself. Accept your own praise, because it's critically important that you think highly of yourself.

1. How have you been taking your opinion of yourself for granted? How have you been acting like your feelings towards yourself don't matter?

2. Are there times when you “cheat” because you think no one else will know?
3. Do you overwork yourself because you think it’s a victimless crime?
4. Do you take too many liberties via coddling yourself – living in a messy house, overeating, etc.—because you think no one else will find out so it doesn’t matter?
5. As you begin caring how you feel about yourself, how might your behavior change?
6. Journal what this means to you: “My opinion of myself is the most important opinion. I matter.”
7. Self-talk: become aware of what your self-talk is like. Do you insult yourself? Or are you kind to yourself? Take a moment to praise yourself. Does it feel natural or awkward?
8. Start offering yourself regular praise. Speak kindly to yourself. Know that you matter and how you treat yourself, think about yourself, and talk to yourself matters deeply and contributes to your experience of life.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The following exercises are extremely important for being able to fulfill your blissful vision. If we can’t spend time getting to know ourselves, and learning what’s working and what’s not working in our lives, then we won’t be able to pursue a meaningful blissful vision that will make us feel fulfilled. Please have patience with yourself. Patience, self-kindness, and persistence will get you through.

9. Start journaling, for your eyes only. The point of this exercise is to get back in touch with yourself as a person. Get used to being with yourself and enjoying your own company and what you have to say.

Every morning, get up by yourself, pull out your notebook, and just write anything and everything that comes to mind. Write *at least* one page. It might feel like drivel. It doesn’t matter. Just keep writing, and let your mind flow onto the page.

10. Begin learning and practicing how to stay with yourself through tough emotions. This is a biggie for self-satisfaction and happiness.

Don't ignore your feelings. Don't over-identify with them either. Keep an eye on your lizard brain! Don't go on and on with negative thoughts and feelings and go down a terrible rabbit hole—but rather *observe* your feelings so that you can shed light on how your lizard brain might be overreacting. By paying attention to your emotions, you give yourself the chance to turn the thoughts fueling your feelings around in a rational fashion.

11. Become aware of those times when you drown out your feelings with distractions. Take a moment to see what your feelings are trying to tell you.

Answer yourself when you come knocking. Comfort yourself. Solve problems rather than ignoring them when the opportunity presents itself.

12. Notice those times when you're unkind to yourself, or you disregard your own opinion or feelings. Practice aligning with yourself and being on your own side.

Believe You Will Succeed

How is the Negativity Bias Impacting You?

Since we're biologically wired to be influenced more by negative events than positive ones, we tend to brush off all the good things that happen to us, all the lucky breaks, and all the abundance and joy we're surrounded with on a daily basis. In an overwhelming ratio, we're more likely to fondle our negative memories and experiences than we are to hang onto the good ones. We think we're protecting ourselves, but this negative slant actually hurts us.

In the diner in Chapter Seven, we get the sense that Kelly is a negative nelly, but the fact is, Kelly is pretty typical. The older we get, the more we naturally veer towards pessimism unless we make an effort to practice gratitude on a regular basis.

- 1. Did any light bulbs go on as you read about the Negativity Bias and how it might be impacting your life? List a minimum of 5 stories you've been telling yourself that could be a product of the Negativity Bias.**
- 2. List alternative, positive meanings you can assign to these stories.**
- 3. When you take the facts of your life at face value, where are you assigning meanings that are frightening or pessimistic? What are some comforting or optimistic meanings can you choose instead?**
- 4. Are there areas of your life in which you're trying to predict a negative future? How might things turn out for the better?**
- 5. Are you assuming you know others' intentions or feelings without having a conversation? How might expressing your own feelings help clear the air?**

Limit your consumption of news.

Generally speaking, the newsrooms of today aren't here to help you—their purpose is to make money for media companies. News shows and news web sites should be considered entertainment at best; much of what's reported is garbage information meant to stir you up and get you talking so that others will consume the same garbage.

Especially if your sense of the world is fear-based, check yourself when it comes to your news consumption. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Am I curating my experience of the information I receive, or am I a passive consumer of whatever headlines happen before my eyes?

2. How can I take steps to either limit the amount of news I consume, or to be more careful in researching and selecting the kind of information that would actually benefit me?

Take a moment to feel grateful.

Use **gratitude** for an immediate perspective shift when:

- you feel worried or anxious
- when you're suffering in some way due to illness or loss of a loved one
- you're suffering because you created a story about how bad things are going due to Negativity Bias
- to heighten good feelings and make them last longer
- for motivation, a positive outlook, and a sense of safety and wellbeing

Take a moment and close your eyes. Think of at least 3 things you're grateful for. Feel the emotion of gratitude make your heart swell—experiencing *the emotion* of gratitude is key! (Don't just say, "Yeah, yeah, I'm grateful, life is good, whatever.) You must feel it deeply in your heart for gratitude to benefit you. Write down your thoughts of gratitude. I love to say to myself, "I am so lucky!" whenever I notice how good I have it.

Practice gratitude.

Here's the bottom line: without gratitude for life as it is in the present, you'll spend your whole life trying to get somewhere else and you'll die without ever having enjoyed life. This is your life; it's happening right now. Have gratitude for it.

The unfortunate truth is if you don't fully appreciate what you have now—and acknowledge that you already have a lot going for you—it's highly likely that you'll be unable to truly appreciate anything else that you achieve or acquire. Without appreciating all of your stations in life and the abundance you already have, you will never feel satisfied; it will never be "good enough."

1. Feel grateful for everything in your life exactly as it is now. Regardless of any changes you're anxious to make, what's working in your life right now?

If you're resistant to appreciating anything, start with the fact that you have internet access and clean water to drink. Feel grateful for the circumstances or relationships that bring you pleasure.

2. Choose a means of practicing gratitude. You might keep a gratitude journal and jot down 10 things each week that you're grateful for.

There are many free gratitude phone apps out there you can experiment with. Studies show that a formal gratitude practice like writing things down is best limited to once per week for maximum impact—but spontaneous feelings of gratitude are always beneficial.

3. Any time you find yourself thinking, “This is crap, my life is crap, what a bunch of crap,” stop yourself.

Look around and find something to be truly and completely grateful for. Stop in moments of anxiety or resentment and give yourself a shot of perspective via gratitude.

Problem solve your doubts to strengthen your belief.

To believe you’ll succeed, it simply means to have faith that you’ll be rewarded for your efforts. It doesn’t mean you’re guaranteed a particular outcome, but know that if you go all in, if you dedicate yourself to the task, and you can stay flexible—both in where exactly you go and how you get there—you’ll experience success.

While it’s natural to have doubts, a key to success is to question your doubts rather than buying into them. Despite doubt, lean on what faith you have and go all in anyway.

1. What scares you about creating and pursuing a blissful vision? What’s potentially at risk if you chase your dreams? Are you afraid of criticism or disappointing others? Are you afraid you won’t be rewarded for your efforts? What concerns or doubts might hold you back?

2. Problem solve these doubts. What could you do to alleviate your fears, to make your success more likely, to garner more support, to ensure you will be rewarded for your efforts, and to squash your concerns and doubts? What can you do to become more certain of your ability to succeed?

3. What are you worried you might sacrifice by fully committing yourself to making big changes in your life? On the flipside, what benefits might you gain by making changes?

4. If you go all in, what’s the worst that can happen? What would you do to fix it? How would you recover?

5. Are you attached to any habits that might stand in the way of your success?

6. What are you afraid it will be like when you leave these bad habits behind? What exactly would you be giving up?

7. What benefits will you gain from sacrificing a bad habit? How might the benefits of making the sacrifice outweigh what you’re giving up?

Counteract your Limiting Beliefs with Success Mindsets

Let’s talk some more about limiting beliefs, this time in depth. (Again, limiting beliefs were covered in the novel in Chapters Eleven, Fifteen, and Sixteen.)

Whenever we have a belief or we assign meaning to a situation that restricts how successful we can be, we're creating Limiting Belief. Our Limiting Beliefs are overwhelmingly false, but they keep us imprisoned nonetheless. Limiting Beliefs keep your life restricted to a set of terms that seem difficult or impossible to escape.

1. Write down all of the Limiting Beliefs you think you may have. You might choose some from the examples that Earnest and Sandy provide, and you might have some that you don't see in the novel.

When you think about living the life you were meant to live and being the person you know in your heart you most want to be, what are the Limiting Beliefs that stop you? Write them all down.

2. Write down all the ways in which your Limiting Beliefs are not true.

3. Look at the Limiting Beliefs that trouble you the most. Choose positive Success Mindsets that resonate with you and that are directly counter to these negative thoughts.

5. For each of these Success Mindsets, write down reasons why they are true.

6. Create Success Mindsets to counteract the rest of your Limiting Beliefs. What beliefs make you feel more peaceful, happier, more secure, or free to pursue your dreams? Look at the list and choose the beliefs that feel better to you, are more helpful, more powerful, and are more true to you than your Limiting Beliefs. You can also create new Success Mindsets you don't already see listed.

7. Of all the Success Mindsets you choose to adopt, pick 3 of these to focus on. Write them out nicely on paper and place them somewhere you'll be able to see them often.

You deserve to know the truth you're hiding from yourself.

In his last lecture in Chapter Thirty-Eight, Earnest tells the class: don't be afraid to look at your reality and to challenge your views. Don't fear that you'll uncover something in life you can't deal with. Don't be afraid to find out you could be wrong or out of touch. Despite scary consequences, seek to know what's real. It's only by being in touch with reality that we can improve our stations in life.

1. Go on a truth-hunting mission to see where you're making excuses for yourself. How do you sabotage yourself, your happiness, or your success? What dysfunctions in your life are you choosing to ignore?
2. Challenge your beliefs. For example, if you think you can't go a whole day without putting something junky into your body, just because it isn't "normal" for you, then challenge that! It's only a belief. It's not true, first of all, and beliefs can be changed. Make a list of beliefs you're using as excuses and counter them.
3. Notice when you make excuses for bad behavior. Write down the beliefs that are behind the excuses. Counter these beliefs and excuses with Success Mindsets.
4. Don't be afraid to see your own faults. Remember that humans aren't perfect. You still deserve to be loved, but you do have flaws. Take a look at them and see where you want to make changes.

Powerful New Habits

What are your reasons for engaging in bad habits?

As you work your plan towards your blissful vision, it's possible that you'll bump up against some or all of the below **10 Reasons Why We Engage in Bad Habits**:

- We feel trapped by Limiting Beliefs or actual circumstances.
- We're not used to happiness or we don't feel entitled to it; or we feel like we're bad; or like we don't feel entitled to connect authentically with others.
- We resist change, we have a fear of the unknown, or we fear doing what we don't know how to do in case we make mistakes. We use our habits to sabotage our actions to avoid these fears.
- We feel unworthy of love or success; we feel flawed or unlovable. We sabotage to keep away what we feel isn't rightly ours. Maybe we're afraid to shine, to feel proud, or to be seen. Feeling proud could cause a loss of love, approval, or could cause distance from loved ones. Perhaps we fear something bad will happen in the wake of something good that will knock us off our pedestal (so why bother.) We might feel like a fraud, or like we'll be found out or caught if we enjoy love or success without being perfect.
- We turn to numbing behaviors to shut out stressful thoughts and feelings.
- We fear loss of love. We have friends and loved ones that engage in bad habits with us and we fear distancing ourselves from friends and loved ones if we stop or lessen these behaviors.

- We experience an environmental cue: we see the thing we want, or we see someone else doing it, and then we want it, or there are certain times or places when engaging in a particular habit feels customary.
- We want to escape uncomfortable emotions. As the underlying problem and negative emotion persists, so does the bad habit.
- When we have too much to do or not sure what to do next, this is another time when we sometimes seek escape.
- When things aren't working out as planned, sometimes we can feel hopeless, depressed or otherwise distressed about the situation. Sometimes waiting to see how things will pan out might seem like too much for us to handle.

All of these issues are solvable when we take the time to journal about our circumstances and thoughts.

1. Examine each of the 10 Reasons Why We Engage in Bad Habits, and discern which ones resonate for you. For each reason, write down your thoughts, feelings and reflections about the impact it has on you.

2. Via journaling, figure out and write down solutions for each item that troubles you.

For example, if you feel trapped—physically like a rat in a cage (e.g. Rat Park, Chapters Twenty-Four and Twenty-Eight) or mentally by Limiting Beliefs—how might you gain your freedom?

Or if you fear creating distance between yourself and a loved one by leaving a habit behind, how might you bond with this person in other ways? If you fear being alienated or proud of yourself, how might these fears be overblown or irrelevant in reality?

3. Some of the issues are resolved by simply shining a light on them.

For example, if we feel unworthy of love or success, and then we discover this outright, we can recognize sabotaging behaviors for what they are, which can liberate us to pursue love or success without hang-ups. Over the long term, this requires vigilance and keeping these concepts in mind; journaling about how they may have affected you in the past and how they could in the future if you aren't wary can be helpful. If you notice any Limiting Beliefs during this exercise, create Success Mindsets.

What Macro and Micro Feelings do you seek?

When I lived in Manhattan, I loved stepping outside my apartment and having the feeling like anything could happen. There was always a feeling of excitement. One day, I was strolling through a quiet department store in midtown and I was startled by the sound of loud drumming. Nearly-nude Brazilian carnival dancers wearing enormous feather headdresses swooped through the

aisles of the store in a frenzy of wiggling and shimmying. It wasn't a dream. This sort of thing happened all the time.

When I moved to the DC suburbs, I figured out pretty quickly that normally the most unexpected thing that could happen to me was getting cut off in traffic. I deeply craved that feeling of excitement and possibility I felt in New York. Wine occasionally gave me back that feeling of excitement. I remember walking around a path near my home one evening after dinner. I'd had a glass of wine and I had a slight buzz. I felt ecstatic. Excited. I suddenly realized that's the feeling I wanted to have in my life. That feeling of openness and possibility. I wouldn't get that feeling by wandering the same old track of woods near my house over and over again. I needed variety. A bigger life.

I realized that I had to get proactive about making some changes in my life. I needed to make opportunities to meet and connect with new people, and I needed to create opportunities for travel. I also needed to broaden the activities that I engage in.

This feeling I was seeking—excitement—is a Macro Feeling, meaning I wanted a sense of excitement to prevail over my entire life, and I needed to make big changes in order for that to happen. Sometimes we turn to bad habits day in and day out because there's something big missing from our lives, or our entire life is structured in such a way that we can't get the feeling we're seeking. Maybe we feel lonely or unloved and we'd have to put forth substantial effort to remedy those feelings by finding a way to connect with others. When we have a Macro Feeling that requires fulfillment, we often have to make big changes in our lives.

On the other hand, when we engage in bad habits to manage specific situations, we may be seeking a Micro Feeling. A very common example would be eating or drinking something because we want to feel comfort or relief from stress during a specific moment. We can get into the habit of turning to substances outside ourselves in order to feel comforted, or relaxed.

Here's the anatomy of a habit:

Trigger -> Action -> Reward

The trigger is the reminder (e.g., the emotion, the environment, or the sight of a food) that kicks off the habit. The action is just that: picking up the pint of ice cream, for example. And the reward is often the feeling or sensation that we seek (e.g., comfort or pleasure.)

Luckily, we can create a new habit so that we can get the feeling we're looking for (the Reward) via a different Action.

So for example, when I was in the process of giving up wine for a year, a lot of times I was seeking something that tasted good to distract me from negative emotions. I like the bitter flavors of alcohol. I also happen to like the bitter flavor of tea, and tea is also a comforting drink. So when I felt the cue—the craving for alcohol—I could replace the action of drinking wine with drinking tea. The reward was basically the same; I'd get the relief from negative emotions, which means I would

get the Micro Feelings I was seeking, like comfort. Of course I didn't get the euphoria or the excitement that wine gave me—I had to make big changes in my life so that I'd enjoy the Macro Feelings of euphoria and excitement without wine.

One issue that came up early in my wine-free year in social situations was that I was seeking the feeling of courage. In the past, courage was readily available to me in the form of Liquid Courage: wine. One of the most beautiful things I learned in my year without wine is that courage is a practice, and once I gave myself the chance to practice courage in the face of connecting with others, I was given the wonderful gift of social ease. Now when I'm at events where the booze wouldn't exactly be free-flowing anyway, like a Saturday morning entrepreneurs meeting, I know that I already have all the courage I need available to me at all times.

When we have a Macro Feeling (like love or excitement) that requires fulfillment, we often have to make big changes in our lives. When we have a Micro Feeling (like stress-relief) that requires fulfillment, we often have to learn habits that will help us get the feeling we're seeking.

1. A Macro Feeling is a feeling like Love or Excitement that might require substantial time, effort or life changes in order to fulfill. What Macro Feeling(s) are you missing in your life?

Maybe you want to feel Free or Challenged, or Connected to a wider community. Maybe you want a sense of Purpose or Fulfillment. Think about what big feelings you want to feel.

2. What are some ideas for how you could change your life, or what actions could you take in order to enjoy the Macro Feelings you're seeking?

3. When you turn to bad habits on a regular basis, what Micro Feelings are you seeking? If you're trying to relieve stress, maybe you're seeking a sense of calm. If you feel overwhelmed, perhaps you're seeking a feeling of control. If you're sad or bored, you probably want to feel happy or like your time is well spent.

If you don't know what Micro Feelings you're seeking, start paying attention when you have cravings and ask yourself what feelings you're seeking and write them down over several days.

4. When you seek a Micro Feeling and you engage in a bad habit in order to manage your emotions, what feeling are you left with?

For example, I might seek *comfort* in ice cream, but the feeling that I'm left with instead is *guilt* for harming my body. I used to want to relieve stress and to feel *calm* via wine, but I'd often be left feeling *anxious* instead. Sometimes when I felt *disorganized*, I would sit down to watch TV as a distraction to feel *entertained* which would ultimately leave me feeling *overwhelmed*. What's the feeling you seek via a bad habit, and what feeling are you left with instead?

5. When you look at the parts of a habit: Cue -> Action -> Reward, what Action will you take instead of a bad habit that would give you the Reward, the Micro Feeling you're seeking?

For example, if I feel overwhelmed or disorganized, and I want to feel a sense of control, one thing I can do is sit down and write a to do list, then check off some easy items in order to give myself that feeling of control.

6. If there's a feeling you seek such as calm or courage that a bad habit helps you with, for example my search for liquid courage at social gatherings via wine, what can you do to practice getting that feeling without your bad habit?

I cultivated courage by practicing connecting with others at times when alcohol wasn't part of the gathering, like at my entrepreneur meetings. By way of another example, seeking stress relief in nature walks or meditation and then learning to tap into the feeling of calmness in times that you aren't meditating or walking. What practices might help you cultivate the feelings you're seeking?

Commit to an Apex Habit for a meaningful period of time.

In Chapters Nineteen, Twenty, and Twenty-Two, Earnest teaches Kelly about Apex Habits. We're going to focus on changing only one habit at a time. When you focus on just one habit, you give yourself a great shot at success. Conversely, when you tackle changing more than one habit at the same time, it's extremely difficult to make lasting change.

We need to commit to a meaningful length of time so that we can experience keeping up the habit through difficulties, through those times when a wrench has been thrown into the works. We need to experience what it's like to keep the habit even when we don't feel like it, even when we think we don't have enough time.

1. Choose a habit to focus on.

Tackling any habit that affects sleep is a good target, since getting adequate rest has a major impact on brain function, stress levels, and willpower. Exercise helps you sleep more soundly at night and has been shown to create overall increases in willpower, so exercise is another wonderful Apex Habit to consider.

2. Commit to a minimum length of time to focus on this habit, at least 30 days, but it's preferable to choose a time period that exceeds 9 months to give your brain time to form new neural pathways.

3. If creating a new habit, choose a cue: when and where will you engage in your habit? How will you be reminded to take action?

4. Reminder from Chapter Nineteen: our habits must bring us pleasure, or they won't stick.

Associate your cue with pleasure. When creating a habit, it's essential that we associate the cue—our reminder to take action—with the pleasure of the reward. This way our brain will crave the habit and make it “stick.”

In Chapter Twenty, Kelly makes this mistake: *Remind yourself of the pleasure your new habit will bring. That's easy. After thirty days, I'll get a porking from Earnest.* There are two problems here: one is that the reward isn't immediate (it's thirty days away) and thus can't become wired to the habit in her brain. The reward has to be closely associated with the action on an immediate level. Her second mistake is that the reward is an external motivation, based on Earnest's approval rather than on her

own internal feelings. Of course, this go round, she fails. The second attempt (Chapter Twenty-Three) involves writing and iced tea, which bring her immediate feelings of gratification.

As you create and use your cue to kick off your habit, how will you remind yourself of the pleasure your new habit will bring? What *immediate* pleasure and reward will you get from the new habit?

5. In Chapters Nineteen and Twenty-Two, Earnest talks about tiny decisions. Tiny decisions matter. Track your tiny decisions.

Make a progress chart and use stars or check marks so you can track your decision making over time. Whether you succeed, or you fail, take note. Don't leave space to explain away behaviors or to make excuses. This is pass / fail. Use the data—not to beat yourself up—but as an honest assessment of how you're doing so that you can adjust your approach as necessary.

6. Use the data to help you solve problems.

If you failed one day, why? No excuses, just the circumstances. How can you work within those circumstances the next time to succeed?

7. Recall past attempts at changing or creating habits.

How did ignoring tiny decisions impact your efforts to change? What sorts of things did you tell yourself in order to discount tiny decisions? If you find that follow-through is difficult for you, reflect on how your attitude towards tiny decisions in the past may have negatively impacted your efforts to follow through.

Create a list of Excuse Neutralizers.

In Chapters Nineteen, Twenty, Twenty-Two, and Twenty-Three, we learn about Excuse Neutralizers. We are revisiting this concept for the second time in this workbook, but we're going into more detail this time.

The idea behind an Excuse Neutralizer is to recognize your needs and to write up a list of alternate behaviors: when I feel this, I'm going to do something to get my needs met—instead of the former default behavior, which was to give in to cravings.

1. When you decide to break a bad habit and / or to create a new habit, time and again, you will feel the impulse to go back on your word. When you feel this happening, take note of the excuse you invented.

Appreciate how clever, convincing and truly ridiculous the excuse is. Keep a growing list of all your excuses.

2. Create your Excuse Neutralizers.

Examine each excuse, and one-by-one, figure out what your actual need is. Write down the actions you will take to get your needs met.

3. Review and add to your list of Excuse Neutralizers daily until the stream of excuses slows down to a more manageable trickle.

When you notice unhelpful thoughts and impulses, continue to counter them with more helpful truths about your needs and the actions you can take to fulfill them.

4. Make a list of lessons you don't care to learn again.

As much as we sometimes like to hang onto old habits and ways of thinking as if they somehow offer us a sense of security or comfort, what we're actually doing is forcing ourselves to relearn the same lessons over and over again.

This means that we need to be honest about what's working as well as what we need to change. Sometimes we need to give things up that we don't want to leave behind. What lessons have you already learned that you'd like to really own so that you never need to learn them again?

Give yourself an easier set of circumstances.

At the end of Chapter Nineteen, Earnest says, "When your willpower feels ironclad, don't make the mistake of thinking that you'll always feel that way. Willpower waxes and wanes. We tend to mistakenly think we're going to have more self-control in the days ahead, or later in the day, or later in the year, than we will. This I know: we're all going to feel weak sometimes, well into the future.

"And so I urge you, do favors for yourself to help yourself succeed in the future, even if you think you won't need it. I call this the 'Don't Buy Chocolate' rule. If your weakness is chocolate, keep it out of the house for now."

Give yourself an easier set of circumstances so that when you're in the moment of temptation, it will be more attractive to make good decisions. Two important tips: first, set yourself up for success; when you're feeling strong, plan ahead so that the path is smoother when the going gets tough. Second, don't allow insignificant decisions soak up all of your attention and energy so that you can't perform at your best when important decisions need to be made.

1. Routines help to reduce choices. Decide where and when you will fit your Apex Habit into your routine.

Can you do it first thing in the morning? If not, is there any planning or prep work you can do to smooth the path to success later in the day?

2. How can you organize your environment to reduce decisions?

Do you need to hide some things so you can't see them? Do you need to leave other things in plain view so you'll be reminded to take positive action?

3. How can you make it easy for yourself? When in the past have you assumed you'd have more willpower and thus unwittingly set yourself up for failure?

Do you do this repeatedly around any particular habit – luring yourself into temptation's way because you keep thinking you'll be able to resist when the time comes?

4. It's harder to make good decisions later in the day. What can you do or how can you plan ahead to make it easier to make smart decisions in the evenings?

5. What notifications do you need to turn off? How can you reduce the number of times you check email and social media? Is there a notification or an alarm you can turn on that would remind you to take a positive action?

6. How can you mess with tradition when it comes to the timing of your behaviors? Is there anything you put off until later in the day because it seems like it "should" be done at that time, when you could just as easily do it earlier?

Think about the times of day that you have energy ebbs and flows, and work within that context. When do you most feel like tackling certain tasks? Look for when your "should" and "should not" thinking might get in the way.

For example, I always have this burst of neat-freakness first thing in the morning that I used to resist. In my head, I thought that the house "should" be tidied when the day is done, right before bed, and that we "should" wake up to a neat house. While that might be true, that way of thinking doesn't work for me. If I go with my natural inclination to tidy the house in the morning, then it gets done.

7. Keep your routine updated. If your routine routinely falls apart, don't beat yourself up.

Routines regularly change with the seasons and as we grow and change. Instead of fighting your natural inclinations, just keep revising your routine until it works for you. Be aware that routines are living, breathing works of art and they need to be changed often to keep up with our evolving lives.

Motivate Yourself

Vision without action equals nothing.

You're going to come up with a plan so you can move forward and do the work to bring your vision into reality. In this next exercise you'll create goals based on your vision, and you'll make an action plan towards your goals by mapping out the short-term tasks you need to cross off in order to make your goals a reality.

- 1. Based on what you envisioned back when you did the Blissful Vision exercise, write down a list of goals you want to achieve over the next 3 years.**
- 2. For each of your goals, write down a list of tasks and steps you'll take.**
- 3. For each step or task that you will take in the next 3 to 6 months, write it down on a post-it note or index card.**
- 4. Tape or place the post-it notes or index cards on sheets of paper that you can hang in a sequence on the wall near your vision board.**
- 5. Re-arrange, replace, throw away, and write up new tasks on post-it notes or index cards as you begin to reach towards your goals.**

Create an enjoyable process and lifestyle.

In Chapter Twenty Nine, Earnest says, “When we ignore turning the process itself into part of the blissful experience, we get tired of trying and we give up. We have to keep renewing our commitment to ourselves and our blissful lives. When you feel your attention waning, it’s not time to relax! It’s time to make your process more pleasurable. You might need a change, but it’s not back to where you’ve been in those old unhealthy habits.

“Spend as much time as you need creating an enjoyable lifestyle. We need to create a healthy and fun lifestyle that we enjoy in order to make sure that it’s sustainable. This isn’t about depriving ourselves and working ourselves to the bone to keep all the balls in the air. It’s finding out how you can engineer your lifestyle and your habits so that you can be consistent and peaceful, rather than always struggling to maintain a punishing regime.”

1. Have you been attempting to sustain an unpleasant lifestyle to get what you want?

For example, waking up too early so you rarely feel great, or eating foods you don’t like, or engaging in workouts you don’t enjoy?

2. When we have goals that we repeatedly fail to reach, this is an indication that we’re either being overly ambitious in the steps we take to get there or we have goals that are way too unpleasant and so we avoid them.

For example: you have a goal of grueling daily gym workouts but your brain is dreading the pain, so you never even set foot in the gym. Do you have any goals that are overly ambitious or unpleasant at this stage in your process?

3. What’s a pleasant alternative, or a smaller and less-intimidating action you could come up with that you’re more likely to succeed at because it feels good and you actually want to do it?

For example, what’s a kinder step that you’ll actually want to take, such as a daily, 15-minute walk? Or showing up at the gym, but choosing to do whatever activity your body feels like while you

get into the habit of going to the gym? Or sitting down to work on goals related to achieving your vision for 15 minutes per day? If you're hesitating on taking an action towards your vision, is there a different step you could take first?

4. What actions have you thought you should take, but you've avoided doing them?

Why are you avoiding taking these actions? What would make you want to take these actions, or are there different actions you can take instead?

5. In Chapter Twenty-Nine, Earnest talks about Beneficial Pain. How can you embrace Beneficial Pain?

Is the voice in your head complaining? What images in your imagination can you turn to in order shut off the voice?

6. Finding the right method of achieving a goal often takes some experimentation, mistakes, and learning from those mistakes.

If you made a mistake, why do you think it didn't work out? What can you try differently next time? This is a practice you may have to revisit over and over again while you learn what works for you.

Decide when, where, and how you'll take action.

We can do all the planning and task lists and calendaring in the world, but if we don't come up with a habit of acting on those plans, then it's all for naught. Whether you want to take control of your home, your finances, your weight, your career, or anything else that needs attention, the answer is the same. Decide on a time and place every single day when you will engage in your implementation rituals. This means that you will check on your plan to see where you are and what still needs to be done. And then, this is the most important part: do it.

1. Refer back to the list of the goals you want to achieve in the next 3 years. Give each goal a due date.

Remember that now we're working in reality. You might have to adjust some of your plans to meet your reality. In the novel, Kelly wants to be a writer, but her reality is that she needed to get a "real" job in order to stay financially solvent. Adjust your real life dates and goals to accommodate your vision in reality.

2. Experiment to find the right planning system. Decide what kind of calendar system you'll use, and where and how you'll record new tasks as they arise.

Do you need to keep these things in plain view via a several months of dry erase calendars? Or will an online or paper system suffice? Experiment to find out what works. If one way falls through for you, try something else.

3. Devise a system of visual reminders that will prompt you to stay on track.

You might consider progress graphs or photos, a large calendar of events, regularly updating your vision board, or a physical collection of tchotchkes that will remind you to stick to your plans. These might include small statues or decorations in your home that remind you of your vision.

Place physical reminders wherever you have a habit of procrastinating or sabotaging plans, where you work, and where you have quiet moments alone.

4. Devise your implementation rituals: decide where and when you'll work your plan.

Choose times and places each week to dedicate towards working your plan. Ask for help meeting your other obligations wherever necessary. Make these times non-negotiable. This is the work of your life—make it happen.

5. Each evening, write down 3 actions you'll take the next day. Each morning, review the list of actions you'll take that day.

6. Whenever you feel pressure or stress, or like you're inefficient or making mistakes, remember to keep a sense of playfulness. Step back and rest. If life feels overwhelming, it might be a sign to reevaluate your actions, your map or your process.

While it's important that we challenge ourselves and vow to do our best, it's also important to be mindful of our stress levels. Sometimes you'll have to let a few things fall off your to-do list if it means preserving your sanity.

In Chapter Thirty, Lydia helps Kelly deal with her stressful and solitary work situation by mixing self-care activities into her day.

When you feel like you're overworking yourself or like you're not taking care of yourself or your relationships, then regroup, and alter your schedule or goal deadlines if necessary. It's important to stay rested, peaceful and calm.

Mistake Worksheet

As you pursue your blissful vision, you're bound to make mistakes. You can use this worksheet to help you through the process.

1. Identify what happened that tripped you up. What was the situation? (Just the facts please.)

2. What meaning did you assign to the facts? What was your emotional reaction? What kind of things did you say to yourself? Were you kind or punishing towards yourself?

3. As a result of the meaning that you created and your emotional reactions to the meaning that you created, what actions did you take?

Did you turn to bad habits to numb out? Did you take your frustration out on a loved one? Did you also take it out on yourself? Did you beat yourself up mentally? Or did you look at the facts objectively and work to solve the problem?

4. Do you notice any meanings, emotional reactions, or physical actions that are patterns?

How might any negative emotional reactions have untrue stories behind them that are based in the Negativity Bias or Limiting Beliefs? What are more helpful beliefs you can consider?

5. What can you do to remedy this situation?

6. What have you learned?

7. What can you do going forward to adjust your plan?

8. How will next time be better?

Failure Desire

In Chapter Twenty-Two, Earnest introduces us to the concept of Failure Desire. Often we think nothing of a few glasses of wine at night, or we stay up late watching TV or surfing the ‘tubes, or we procrastinate in achieving our blissful vision, thinking we’ll do better the next day or sometime in the future. But when we follow a bad habit all the way to its conclusion, it often turns out to be a lot less innocent than it seems.

1. Take a look at the habits you feel may be holding you back.

Do you eat too much or unhealthy foods? Do you drink more than is healthy? Do you numb out or procrastinate too frequently via watching TV or surfing the internet? Write down any lifestyle factors you have that you feel could be detrimental to your blissful vision.

Let’s follow these behaviors all the way down the path towards their logical conclusion. Answer the following questions:

2. What are the risks for you if you keep engaging in these behaviors?

In what ways will the quality of your life suffer? Will you impact your income, your levels of fulfillment, the amount of love and engagement with others that could be available to you?

3. Are you negatively impacting your health, leading to preventable medical emergencies in your future, for example, increasing the likelihood you could suffer a stroke, cancer, heart attack, or diabetes?

What would these medical issues be like for you or your family to endure? What would this cost you in terms of money, quality of life and fulfillment? What about the effects on your body; could you suffer from paralysis, cognitive decline, or limb amputation? Could you shorten your life?

4. After you've written down the answers to these questions, take a few quiet moments to perform the following visualization. Close your eyes and get comfortable.

Think of the lifestyle factors that could be detrimental to your blissful vision. Visualize what will happen if you continue with sabotaging behaviors and any habits you feel are holding you back.

If you keep going like that, what's going to happen to you?

Are you hurting your body, your health, your levels of wellness and vitality?

Will you shorten your life? Will you have to say goodbye to loved ones all too soon only because you didn't change your habits?

Will you spend more days feeling helpless and guilty that you aren't taking control over your life to make it better?

Imagine every negative result that's going to befall you if you don't shake up your current life and make changes.

5. Write down what your life will be like if you *don't* take action towards your blissful life.

What will your health be like? How will you feel? What about your work, and your levels of fulfillment? How will you spend your days if you don't pursue your blissful vision, and how will this make you feel? Are there any other negative impacts you expect?

6. And finally, write down your own version of 2 Paths: Desire or Failure.

Create 2 columns, and write down what will happen if you engage in sabotaging behaviors versus what will happen if you engage in behaviors that are driven by your desire for a blissful life.

Beware the "Deprivation" Trap

In Chapter Thirty-Two, Earnest tells his students about the Deprivation Trap. When we start out in the creation of our blissful lives, and we embark on creating new lifestyles, it's easy to fall into the "Deprivation" Trap. After all, we need to give something up in order to get something different. We're not actually deprived, but we're so used to thinking of old, unhelpful behaviors or ways of thinking as "treats" or pleasures, that giving them up can feel like deprivation.

- 1. Do you worry that making certain changes will lead to your feeling deprived?**
- 2. What about these changes makes you feel that way?**
- 3. How might you not feel deprived? What benefits will positive change bring? What are you getting in return for sacrificing old behaviors?**
- 4. Are there substitute behaviors that would make the transition easier?**

Become aware of judgment.

In Chapter Thirty-Two, Earnest talks about the pitfall of judgement. When people judge, it's frequently a reflection of their own crap and what they are leaving unaddressed in their own lives, or bad feelings that they have about themselves, or perhaps their expectations are deranged.

Judging others is a problem you need to solve. While you're busy giving somebody the side eye, you're distracting yourself from your own issues. Learn to stop your mind when you feel a judgment rising up; then roll up your sleeves and do something to improve your own life.

1. Make a list of the ways in which you judge other people.

Who in your life do you find yourself judging most often? What kind of things do you judge them for? If it's because they are unaccepting of you, do you find it ironic that you are unaccepting of them too?

2. Choose to accept that person, warts and all.

You aren't perfect either, but you are still worthy of unconditional love. By accepting and loving that other person along with their faults, you will find it easier to accept and love yourself with all of your faults. (You'll also improve your relationship!)

3. Sometimes when we're judging someone harshly, repeatedly, it's because we're trying to force them into a role in our lives that they aren't suited for.

Do you need to change your expectations for the role you want this person to play?

Evaluate the company you keep.

In Chapter Thirty-Two, Earnest urges the class to find the right support system. He says, "Moods and ideas are contagious, and what you focus on persists and emerges. It's vital that you find people who have positive information and input, people who can elevate you to new heights. As you look for your own support system, when you evaluate the people you know, take an honest look at their personalities and how they might view you and how they might support and encourage you, or not."

1. Pay attention to the company you keep. Do you have any friends or family that drag your focus downward with any of the following?

- Gossiping
- Complaining
- Pessimism or cynicism
- Bad moods
- Drama
- Low standards for how amazing and fulfilling life can be
- Habits such as drinking, drugs, unhealthy eating, or excessive TV watching that are counter to your goals

How can you put boundaries in place to prevent their behavior from influencing your behavior? Do you need to limit your exposure to them, at least in the short term while you get some practice, so that they don't interfere with the positive changes you're making?

2. Do you have idealistic or unrealistic expectations for anyone in your life?

Do you expect them to behave in a certain way, when they've shown you over and over again how they want to behave? What would happen if you love and accept them exactly where they are in life? How can you prevent yourself from feeling disappointed if they behave in ways you don't agree with in the future?

3. Is there a particular person (or people) in your life you keep trying to impress?

Is there someone from whom you want appreciation or approval, even though this person has shown themselves to be either incapable or unwilling to give you the recognition or support you're seeking?

4. Do you fear making "unreasonable" demands of other people in order to achieve your vision?

Is it possible for you to request support or help from loved ones? If you need help, who can you ask, and what will you ask them to do for you?

Create a support system.

In Chapter Thirty-Two, Earnest says, "Successful people don't get that way by operating in a bubble. They announce their intentions. They enlist friends or coaches for support, encouragement and advice. Think of pro-athletes. They are the best in the world at what they do. Do they think they're too good for coaches? Of course not. No one is above the need for help and support. We all need help at some point. It's part of being human."

1. Do you know others who are striving and thriving?

Choose to hang out with people who will support you and propel you forward. Find people who are looking to make the same kind of changes you are. Brainstorm a list of such people, or where you might find some.

2. Is there a group you can join that could help further your goals?

Is there a MeetUp group, community center group, a book club, coffee klatch, an outdoor adventure outfit, an industry or professional group that you want to get involved with, or another organization that meets in person to discuss topics you're interested in?

3. If you want to expand your support system, what are other ways you can find people who are positive, supportive or encouraging?

4. Consider enlisting an accountability buddy: someone who may have the same goals you do so you can compare notes and encourage each other.

Or maybe you don't share the same goals, but there's someone you know who "gets" you and will support any effort you make to improve.

Personally, I thrive in groups—I don't have to count on any one person to buoy and support me. But others thrive in a duo. Would a twosome be helpful for you? Or do you prefer joining a group? Perhaps you don't need to choose, and you can have both.

Conclusion

Feel free to email me with questions or to let me know about the changes you're making in your life: Katie@KatieMorton.com

I hope you found the novel and this workbook life changing and inspiring.

May joy and bliss be yours,

Katie Morton