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Prologue

Ladies and Gentlemen, Start Your Engines

“Freedom is never granted; it is won.”

A. Philip Randolph

Far too many people are content with merely surviving—just getting by. To find true happiness and success, you need to do more than that in your business or profession, as well as in your personal life. You need to *thrive*. Let your dream drive you to overcome any obstacles that get in your way. Challenge yourself so you can grow and reach your potential.

To be ultimately successful and create the life you want, express yourself and take action. You can’t be successful alone, so appreciate and accept the differences in the people you need to associate with. Develop a dynamic team where everyone pulls together—driven by their dreams, their reasons why.

Life constantly provides us with opportunities, typically disguised as challenges, for growing and becoming. Pursuing your dream fuels this process, while failure and success both provide powerful lessons along the way. Life can be a magical experience when you are open-minded and accept all the challenges it gives you. After all, growing *through* challenges offers you excellent opportunities to reach more of your potential.

As you move on, you’ll discover even more challenges that can provide you with even greater opportunities for growth. The fact is, you can grow only when you squarely meet and overcome more obstacles. This is how you get to the next level of your personal development, which is the key to your success in all areas of your life! As George S. Patton, Jr. once said, “Accept the challenges so that you may feel the exhilaration of victory.”

This book features stories from my workshop participants, as well as my own personal experiences, which illustrate how the

human spirit can accelerate through challenges and go *full speed ahead!* Proven practical exercises will help you recognize the skills you already have to excel.

You'll also learn about the tools you need to fine-tune and add to those skills, so you can make your dream a reality. When you want to accelerate to the next level, in any arena of life, shift your thinking and behavior into the next higher gear. *You cannot solve a problem on the same level it was created.* You need to learn, grow, and take different actions to create new and better results.

This book can help you excel, and achieve your goals and dreams, by suggesting options to assist you through those challenges. Then you can proceed *full speed ahead* to achieve your personal best and get in the passing lane on the road to your dream. Top performers realize that their best can always get better. They know that constant improvement is a habit for excellence—at home, in business, and in all areas of life.

I hope this book helps you achieve more success and happiness. Every day is a fresh new beginning—a chance to do whatever it takes to get closer to living your dream. Get into the driver's seat and grab the wheel of your high-performance vehicle. Start your engine, put it in gear, and “put the pedal to the metal”—*become driven by your dream and go full speed ahead to attain it!*

Introduction

Revving Up for Success

“If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.”

Henry David Thoreau

Have you ever said any of the following things to yourself?

- ◆ I’m so stressed-out, I just don’t know what to *do* anymore—I’m stuck in neutral.
- ◆ If one more negative thing happens to me today, I’ll *scream*.
- ◆ My boss just doesn’t understand *me, or my job*. I have to do more with less and I just can’t take it anymore!
- ◆ My family expects too much of me. I just can’t keep up. I’m really feeling like a doormat.
- ◆ Work used to be fun. I used to enjoy my job. But these days I’m just putting in the time at work—living for the weekends. I wouldn’t bother going in at all if I didn’t have bills. I can’t wait until I retire!
- ◆ There’s no time in my life for *me*. I’m on a treadmill, going nowhere fast, and I don’t know how to get off.
- ◆ I did everything my parents, teachers, supervisors, and managers told me to do, and my life *still* isn’t working.

It’s no secret that our workaday world is often like a pressure cooker. To think about all the things that can cause stress is mind-boggling. So what are you supposed to do? Try not to think about it? As you may have experienced, that doesn’t work. If you shy away from achieving your rightful share of success and happiness in this world, you merely survive—rather than grow and thrive. And as I’m sure you’ve observed, all too many people are doing *just that*—“grinding it out.”

The aim of this book is to help you gain the control you need to excel in all areas of your life. It's to help you get "revved up" for success, so you can make your dreams come true. Completing the exercises and implementing the action plan at the end of each chapter will help you put more joy, fun, and creativity into your life—so you can better enjoy the journey of your success. You'll learn ways to reach your potential to create the kind of life you want. The vision of that life lies within you—maybe deep within you—but it *is* there.

All the great men and women of history, and of our time, are no better than you and me. They've simply found a way to reach deep within themselves and generate the courage, wisdom, and strength to create their place in history.

Whenever I walk on the beautiful beaches of the world, I look at the powerful waves and compare them to us. Like the mighty oceans, we *all* have magnificent potential. Treasures and mysteries lie within our depths just as they do at the bottom of the ocean.

You were born with everything you need to be the person you want to be, to do what you want to do, and to have what you want to have. All these things add up to your dream. And you have more control and choices than you may think. For example, you can choose to get financially free, if you want. It's up to you. Your life is simply the sum of the choices you make every day.

In my workshops I love to use this catchy little phrase: "*The magic inside you is no hocus pocus. Set your goals and you create the focus.*" I define magic as a process to unveil the potential that resides and operates within each of us. As American writer Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

You may be saying to yourself, "Yeah, yeah, this all sounds good, but how can I make it work for me? How can I overcome my daily challenges and add excitement, joy, and creativity to my life? How can I break free from daily routines and self-limiting boundaries? How can I get beyond just making a living—to creating the life I want? How can I achieve my personal best and make my dream a reality?"

To create the life you want, I encourage you to write in a notebook or day-planner "keeper ideas" that you want to remember. Be as spe-

cific as possible. Use people's names, names of places, brand names, times, and such. The more descriptive you are, the more likely you'll achieve the results you want. Keep your notes with you and refer to them throughout the day as you develop strategies to help you go *full speed ahead*. People who win focus on success-generating ideas, and don't allow themselves to be distracted by anything else.

As you develop your personal action plan, use your immediate keeper ideas to help you focus on your goals and gain more control over your life. You'll be better able to more clearly determine what you need to do to make things happen, so you can achieve your dream.

As a professional speaker, I have the opportunity to interview hundreds of people at my workshops. Along the way, they've shared various insights about how they faced and overcame their challenges. Some worked for the government, some were educators, some were leaders, while still others were on the front lines. Some were in corporate settings; others were at home. I'll be sharing some of their tremendous ideas that I have found along the way. I'll also be sharing ideas with you that I've learned from my resources and life experiences.

You may already use some of these ideas. Experiment to determine what works best for you. And, as you use these ideas, you'll learn what you need to do to be your personal best. Your life can be better. The choices you make every day determine what kind of life you live. You already have many answers. Use this book as a catalyst to help you discover solutions that are right for you. Then you can put more joy, fun, and creativity into your life and find the happiness and satisfaction you deserve.

Remember the wise words of Abraham Lincoln, "*Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing.*" And American inventor Charles Kettering wrote, "You will never stub your toe standing still. The faster you go, the more chance there is of stubbing your toe, but the more chance you have of getting somewhere."

Now let's get revved up for success and move *full speed ahead*. Be driven by your dream to maximize your success and live the life you want.

Chapter 1

Gaining Control—Put Yourself in the Driver’s Seat

“No man is free who is not master of himself.”
Epictetus

What Could Be Holding You Back?

Let’s begin by discussing some things you may or may not be doing that could be negatively affecting your ability to be successful. The question is, “What are you doing, or failing to do, that could be holding you back from living your dream?”

Here are some examples for you to consider:

- ◆ Do you have a negative attitude?
- ◆ Are you watching the negative news on TV, listening to it on the radio, or reading it in the newspaper?
- ◆ Are you in the daily habit of reading personal development books that are helping you grow as a person?
- ◆ Are you associating with negative-thinking people who are attempting to steal your dream? (By the way, they can only do that if you let them.)
- ◆ Are you meeting and making friends with new positive-thinking people? Are you regularly associating with winners?
- ◆ Do you look for the good in people and situations?

- ◆ Are you committed to doing whatever it takes to make your dream a reality? Are you just talking the talk, or are you walking the walk?
- ◆ Do you dislike your job, yet fail to do what is necessary to move on and create the life you really want?
- ◆ Do you find yourself constantly discussing sickness or problems i.e., focusing on the negative with people who are basically stuck in life?
- ◆ Are you investing in yourself and your business or profession through continuing education activities like going to seminars and listening to educational and motivational audiocassette tapes?
- ◆ Are you in close communication with a forward-thinking person who is a mentor to you?
- ◆ Are you bogged down with debt, living beyond your means, and not doing anything about it?
- ◆ Do you have personal and professional goals?
- ◆ Are you making each day count by focusing on your dream, and doing something daily that moves you closer to it? Or, are you just busy, doing everyday maintenance activities that aren't productive? Are you just spending time, rather than *investing* it in your future?

What else would you add to this list?

Go from Reactive to Proactive

How can you move from being reactive, i.e., having a “knee-jerk” reaction (virtually automatic) to what you encounter day-to-day, to being proactive? Do you take the initiative and follow through with planned action to change a situation you don't like? You need to keep negative input out of your life as much as possible since it saps your valuable energy. Turn adversity into an opportunity for growth and positive change.

Most people seem to waste their lives complaining about challenges that simply come as a result of being alive and interacting with others and the environment. This is an easy thing to do. Yet, it gets us nowhere except further entrenched in the situation we don't want.

You get what you focus on. So you need to focus on what you want, not on what you don't want.

Trade negativity for positive energy, so you can get beyond the challenges, and create the life you want. Then, if someone asks "How are you?" say, "I'm excited and making my dreams come true," instead of saying "Same old, same old," or just, "Okay." What's your response been lately? How could you upgrade it? You could say, "Great!" Break out in a big smile and they'll probably wonder what you're up to!

Have you had enough negativity? Take a deep breath, then exhale—forcing all negative thoughts from your body. Now inhale deeply, filling your lungs with oxygen and the fresh air of positive energy.

Be a "Goodfinder"

Always look for the positive—be a goodfinder. Give people sincere compliments regularly and look for the good in any situations that may arise. If you're already doing this, my hat goes off to you and to all the eternal optimists who are reading this book. However, most people need to exert more effort in this area to transition into being a goodfinder.

Some of us have had more negative programming than others. You may be asking yourself, "How can I grow and stay fired up about my dream in such a negative-thinking world?"

Here are five strategies to help you be a goodfinder as you deal with the daily challenges of life:

- 1. Put your thoughts into action!** Take positive action every day, doing whatever it takes to realize your dreams and goals.
- 2. Accept responsibility for your decisions and actions.** Take responsibility rather than blaming others. You'll feel and be more in control.
- 3. Accept and appreciate the differences in others instead of judging them.** Be thankful we're not all alike!
- 4. Welcome the challenge of change!** Prepare yourself for change—it's an inevitable part of life.
- 5. Attitudes are contagious—is yours worth catching?** Maintain a positive attitude regardless of what happens in the world around you.

Strategy 1—*Put Your Thoughts into Action*

We all face challenges in life such as health issues, having a job we dislike, being in debt, investing our time wisely, and the like. Just because certain people *look* like they don't have challenges, don't be fooled!

Are you letting life's challenges keep you stuck in situations where you're unhappy? Remember, *you* choose how you respond to situations. Some have learned to carefully respond while others just react without thinking of the possible consequences. How about you?

Seventeenth century French philosopher and writer Voltaire compared life to a game in which each player must accept the cards he was dealt. Once in hand, he or she alone can decide how to play those cards to win the game.

Shakespeare said, "Life breaks all of us. Some of us get stronger at the breaks." Be one who gets stronger and helps others do the same.

You can choose to dwell on your problems or *focus on the solutions* and get on with your life. Take time to mourn a loss—a loved one who has died, a job lost to downsizing, a marriage torn apart, or any other significant change in your life. You need a certain amount of time to heal. It is important to deal with the stages of loss, but then *move on*. Don't dwell on the past and use it as an excuse not to create the life you want.

Do what you need to do. Some people are so busy just *thinking* about what they need in order to live their dream that they don't *do* what is necessary to make it happen.

For example, an independent business owner or other professional may believe they're building their business or career, when they attend training sessions, continuing education or motivational seminars, and conventions. They socialize with the other attendees, learn new things, and get excited about reaching their goals and dreams. That's great and it's definitely a key part of going *full speed ahead*.

However, a lot of people have just become motivational and educational junkies. And, amazingly, they often don't understand why they're not more successful!

So what can they do? First, they certainly need to maintain their level of enthusiasm and gain knowledge. Keep listening to motivational and educational tapes every day and associating with other positive-thinking people who are learning and growing. Second, they need to firmly put themselves in the driver's seat of their vehicle and *take* action with what they've learned. Nothing happens until they *do* something that moves them forward.

Get into and participate in a success system. Learn from the leaders. Put your pedal to the metal and get into action! Leave the past behind. It's over and done with. Get in the driver's seat and make it happen for yourself and your family. Others are doing it and you can too!

Strategy 2—*Accept Responsibility*

You have the ability to choose your responses to challenging situations. *You* choose whether you live a boring, unfulfilled, miserable life of surviving day to day, or a life full of joy, contentment, growth, and financial freedom.

Some people blame their parents, boss, mate, or business associates for the way things are. They don't accept responsibility for their own lives. They've adopted a victim mentality. A timeless wisdom from the 16th century says, "Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." We *all* need to keep this simple, yet profound, thought close to our hearts.

Some people find it easy to just blame and complain. They need to shift into a positive gear. Here's a simple, effective question to ask yourself or someone else who's stuck in neutral—"Now that I (or you) recognize the problem, what am I (or you) going to do about it?" Be a leader and show others that *you* are self-responsible, and encourage them to do the same. Remember, all change begins with you—*lead by your example!*

After I earned my masters degree in guidance and counseling, many people called me to complain about their mate or their job. At first I just listened and empathized. Then I realized that many of them were bright, loving people who had been complaining for

years, but never made any changes! They were “spinning their wheels,” going nowhere—like a gerbil running in a caged wheel. I began to respond with, “I’ve listened and you have a legitimate complaint. Now my question to you is, ‘What are you going to do about it?’” A lot of their phone calls ceased. It was no longer fun for the complainers, who were used to crying on my shoulder. They needed to look to *themselves* for solutions!

As a spouse, friend, business associate, boss, leader, parent, or in any other role you may have assumed, be sure to tell the people, especially those who are important to you, what they *need* to hear, not just what they *want* to hear! Do it with kindness—care about the person. Share how you feel about their behavior, without verbally lashing out at them with cutting words that could negatively affect their self-esteem. It takes courage and you can do it.

Once, while presenting a workshop to a Fortune 500 company, management told me what they tell all new employees. They suggest that new staffers look at constructive feedback as a gift, and not take it personally and become defensive or insecure about it. What an incredible message!

Accept responsibility for your actions, and *move on* when you feel stuck. These are two important things to do when dealing with challenges.

Strategy 3—*Accept and Appreciate the Differences in Others*

Learning to accept and appreciate differences in others, without judging them, is another vital lesson. You might be thinking, “I’m a fair person; I don’t judge people.” Look at the following list. Have you ever caught yourself saying these things?

- ◆ “You should have known better.”
- ◆ “I can’t believe you did that.”
- ◆ “Why did you quit your job when you had all those benefits?”
- ◆ “How could you possibly date *that* person?”
- ◆ “What do you mean you don’t smoke?”
- ◆ “Chill out and join the party.”
- ◆ “Tofu? How disgusting!”
- ◆ “What would the neighbors think?”

These are examples of subtle and not so subtle ways of judging others. When words like should, could, or why creep into the conversation, look out! These words shout, “Be like me, because different from me is wrong!” Pay close attention to your words. Strive to become nonjudgmental in all your communications. Remember the importance of accepting and appreciating the differences in others.

Strategy 4—*Welcome the Challenge of Change!*

Change is inevitable in this fast-paced world. Some major changes in life relate to health, jobs, business, relocation, a new boss or co-worker, death of a loved one, or the breakup of a close relationship. Minor changes could be the weather, traffic, your hairstyle, and new eyeglasses or contact lenses. These minor changes may seem insignificant, but nonetheless, such things are likely to affect us every day, in one way or another.

Some believe that life just happens to us, failing to understand that it is a cause-and-effect world. Things happen for a reason. Some things are truly out of our control. But we can control our attitude and look for the positive. If we look hard enough, we may notice how the change occurred. It may be the result of poor communications, or something else we had a role in.

French novelist Victor Hugo once wrote, “The future has several names. For the weak, it is impossible. For the faint-hearted, it is the unknown. For the thoughtful and valiant, it is ideal.” And as Will Rogers, noted American author, actor, and down-home philosopher, said, “Those were great old days! But darn it, any old days are great old days, even the tough ones. After they are over you can look back with great memories.” So much change has occurred, frequently due to new technology, in such a relatively short time. Change is ever-present!

Participants in my workshops sometimes complain when I ask them to change seats and find new partners for an exercise. They groan, “Do we have to?” or “I like my space!” These activities challenge their comfort zones. Yet others thrive on change and love to be paired with new people. Such courageous people face the fear of change and find it exciting!

You might as well be prepared for change. It's going to happen—even if you're not prepared! And flexible people are more likely to succeed.

A classic example of flexibility is found in the popular Aesop fable, *The Oak and the Reeds*. A proud oak tree grew on the banks of a stream. For a hundred years it withstood the buffeting of the winds. Then one day a violent storm knocked the great oak to the ground with a mighty crash and blew it into the swollen river, which carried it toward the sea. The oak tree came to rest on the shore, where some reeds were growing. The tree was amazed to see the reeds standing upright, not bent at all from the strong winds.

“How did you manage to weather that terrible storm?” the Tree asked. “I have stood up against many a storm, but this one was too strong for me.” “That's just it,” replied the Reed. “All these years you have stubbornly pitted your great strength against the wind. You were too proud to yield a little. I, on the other hand, knowing my weakness, didn't resist. The harder the wind blew, the more I let go of my pride and bent, so here I am!”

Start with a little change at a time. Alter just a few small habits daily. For example, listen to a continuing education tape that motivates you, instead of the radio—as you travel to and from work. Much of what appears on TV and in the newspapers won't help you succeed anyway. It's just entertainment. Take 15-20 minutes each day, when you would normally watch TV or read the newspaper, and invest that time in yourself by reading a personal development book. Invest your time in activities that will take you closer to your goals. (If you haven't set your goals yet, now is a great time! Go ahead and write them down.)

Go out to lunch with a new friend or different co-worker. You may even develop a relationship that'll lead to teaming up to achieve a common goal. You won't know unless you venture out a little. How about taking a brisk walk at lunch and listening to a positive tape as you do? You'll feel invigorated mentally and physically!

Raise the standards you've set for your own behavior when you want to change. It's time to modify the limiting belief, “I've

always done it like that.” *If you want some things to change in your life, you need to change some things in your life!* This means creating some new success-generating habits. That makes sense, doesn't it? Yet a lot of people are on automatic, always in a reactive mode. They don't seem to understand this simple truth!

You cannot change a habit simply by talking about it. You need to *take action!* If you sincerely want your life to improve, you need to adjust your daily routines accordingly. If you have something else that you need to do on a weekend when you would normally work, ask for that weekend off. Give your boss enough notice so he or she can adjust the schedule accordingly. Make it as easy as possible for your boss to say yes. Make an agreement with a co-worker to switch weekends in advance!

Each time I want to make a change in a certain aspect of my behavior, this is what I do—I put 10 pennies in my right pocket in the morning. When I notice I'm using a new skill or breaking an old habit, I move a penny to my left pocket. At the end of the day I count the pennies in each pocket and review the actions I took to change my habit. This is an easy exercise. The results are obvious, and the rewards are uplifting. You continue to build confidence in your ability to get the results you want. I stopped using the expression “you know” by doing this. It works!

One of the best examples you can give future generations, your children, co-workers, business associates, and other people you deal with is to constantly upgrade your skills. Keep learning and always be flexible. When you experience change, and you surely will, you'll then be like the flexible reed rather than the rigid oak. Here is an example.

When my children were young I met a little girl named Susie, who was afraid of most men. Since she was starting nursery school, her mother took her to meet the other mothers and children in the carpool. She wanted to prepare her so she wouldn't be afraid. Wouldn't you know it, on the first day of school, the mother charged with driving got sick and sent her husband to pick up the children! Even though Susie's mother had done her best to prepare her, Susie still had to confront her fear. We all

need to learn to adapt to change. Susie surely did and, as a result, she overcame her fear.

When you find yourself doing well and are satisfied in a personal or business-related situation, challenge yourself by asking, “How can I do better?” People lose out when they rest on their laurels, thinking they have achieved their goals and don’t need to improve their skills and habits. They’re just fooling themselves. It’s so much more fun and productive to dream bigger and set new, more challenging goals! This causes us to stretch and grow. So keep pushing “the edge of the envelope.”

Strategy 5—Attitude Is Contagious—Is Yours Worth Catching?

When you observe successful people as they deal with their challenges, you’ll notice a common theme which can be summed up in one simple word, the A word—Attitude. These people are consistently monitoring and upgrading their attitude. They have or develop a positive outlook—no matter *what* they’re experiencing. They know every challenge has something beneficial within it.

Having a positive attitude is the main key to your success personally and professionally. Anyone who believes they can change a negative attitude into a positive one, and puts this idea into practice daily, is bound to have a happier, more fulfilling life. No matter how skilled you are, without a terrific attitude, you are in for a bumpy ride on your road of success.

One of my favorite movies is *Forrest Gump*. The story covers the life of a 30-year-old man with an intelligence quotient (IQ) of 75. His mother, regardless of his low IQ, told Forrest, “You can be anything you want to be.” When Forrest Gump’s girlfriend asked him, “What are you going to be?” Forrest innocently replied, “Aren’t I going to be me?”

Douglas Malloch, in his poem, *Be The Best Of Whatever You Are*, wrote, “If you can’t be a highway, then be a trail. If you can’t be the sun, be a star. It isn’t by size that you win or you fail. Be the best of whatever you are!” He drove *full speed ahead* to his dream.

Rudy Ruettiger comes to mind when I think of people who achieve their personal best because they *never* give up on their

dreams. Why is his story so special? As a child, he had a dream—to play football for a certain prestigious school. Rudy graduated from high school with terrible grades and had very little athletic ability. He seemed to be a most unlikely candidate! Family and friends laughed at him for stubbornly holding on to his dream. Yet Rudy had a vision and decided to fight for the right to play football for this university.

Rudy’s next few years consisted of working with his father and brother in the steel mills because “The Ruettigers don’t go to college.” Then Rudy decided to attend a junior (two-year) college. There he met a priest who promised Rudy he would pay his tuition if he worked hard and received excellent grades. Why did that happen? Rudy was committed—that’s why! It was no accident.

Rudy consistently worked toward his dream and was finally accepted to his dream school—the University of Notre Dame in the U.S. He tried out for the football team again and again, and was always rejected. The coach thought Rudy was too short and lacked the necessary skills to play on the team. But this didn’t dampen Rudy’s enthusiasm; with all his heart, he wanted to play football! So Rudy, keeping an optimistic attitude, despite the odds, persistently showed up for every tryout session.

Finally, the coach relented and let him join the team. The coach had never met a player who wanted something as passionately as Rudy wanted to be a part of his team.

However, Rudy still had some roadblocks to overcome. During the football season, the coach never allowed Rudy to play in a regular game! He had only been permitted to play during practice sessions. In the last game of the season, however, the players convinced the coach to allow Rudy to play. As a result, he made a tremendous play that actually won the game—the *only* game that Rudy was ever allowed to play!

Rudy’s teammates respected his perseverance and work ethic. At the end of the game they carried him, their new hero, off the field on their shoulders as the crowd roared “Rudy, Rudy, Rudy...” over and over again. This happened in 1976—the year Rudy graduated from Notre Dame. And since then, no other player has been carried off the field in such a victorious manner.

What an inspiring story for all of us. Here was a young man who stood tall against the odds and wouldn't take *no* for an answer. My daughter, Wendy, introduced me to the tremendously uplifting movie, *Rudy*, and to the novel based on Rudy's experiences, which was written by James Ellison. Rudy, now a popular professional speaker, also wrote the book, *Rudy's Rules*.

Excellence Is a Habit

Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." British writer Somerset Maugham penned, "If you refuse to accept anything but the best, you often get it."

Find your special uniqueness. And stay away from negative-thinking people—dreamstealers, who put you down and try to stop you from reaching your dreams and fulfilling your potential. Again, participating in a continuing education and motivation program is key. Ask other successful people in your business or profession to give you guidance, be a mentor, and recommend some books and tapes that'll help you to learn and have a positive attitude.

Associate with dreambuilders and other people who support you and your dreams. Find other people at motivational seminars who are also excited about life and moving on. Also, ask your mentor for their suggestions of seminars you could attend. Obtain dates and times, and schedule them into your day planner or date-book so you can plan ahead.

We need to stop saying "I can't" and "It's impossible"—words which only serve to limit our creativity. They just promote failure. Pogo, the cartoon character, may be right when he says, "I have found the worst enemy and it is me." Be your own best friend, rather than your own worst enemy. French emperor and military strategist Napoleon once said, "Impossible is a word to be found only in the dictionary of fools." Be a "can do" possibility-oriented person—that's the attitude that wins, no matter what the odds may be.

Playwright Neil Simon said, "Don't listen to those who say it's not done that way. Maybe it's not, but maybe you'll do it anyway. Don't listen to those who say you're taking too big a chance. Michelangelo would have painted the floor of the Sistine

Chapel if he had listened to average people, and it would surely have been rubbed out by now.” For example, if someone puts you down, be courteous, and let it go. There are always naysayers—those who are jealous and quick to criticize. As the old saying goes, “There are no statues erected to critics.” You need to do what’s right for you, even if others don’t understand or agree.

We have many choices in how to live our lives. Some choose to live surrounded by negative-thinking people. Others choose to associate with forward-thinking people and grow and become their personal best. Winners create the future they want, while others wait endlessly, hoping opportunity will knock at their door and give them an exciting life!

People who invest time in reading about personal growth, then use what they learn, create their futures! Optimists realize they have options and they find solutions to their challenges. They see the opportunities that life provides. They know they need to be flexible and continue growing to go *full speed ahead*.

Think about your challenges. What is your greatest obstacle? Is it fear? What is the biggest mistake you ever made? Is it giving up, rather than doing whatever it takes to achieve your goals? What is your greatest weakness? Is it finding fault with yourself and others? What do you like best about yourself? Is it your uniqueness? What is your greatest gift? Is it forgiveness?

And what is your greatest day? It’s today! Today is the *only* day you can take action and experience your life. So make it a great experience!

As Henry David Thoreau once said, “Events, circumstances, and situations have their origins in ourselves. They spring from seeds we have sown.”

Now Implement the *Full Speed Ahead* Action Plan...

Get a piece of paper and answer the following eight questions:

1. What situations do I find stressful in my profession, job or business, and in my personal life?
2. If I feel upset, how do I typically react?
3. What specific upcoming situations do I anticipate may be stressful?

4. Which people cause me to experience stressful feelings—at my job or business and in my personal life?
5. What things do these people do, or don't do, that I find unpleasant?
6. What can I do to prepare myself more effectively for these situations (avoid them, change my behavior, or accept them)?
7. Have I put myself in the driver's seat in these situations? Or, have I allowed someone else to take the wheel? If so, who? How can I take responsibility next time?
8. How do I approach these experiences? Do I tell the story as if I'm a victim or in the driver's seat? How can I take full responsibility for my behavior? Do so with each situation in #1 now.