

HOW ^{not} ✓ TO KILL

your spouse, kids, and coworkers

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Chapter 1

Silence is Golden

Learning when we don't need to talk about it

"Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment." Benjamin Franklin

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

Think of a time when you have chosen to talk about it or point it out when you could have given the gift of silence instead. **Who are the people in your life who could use the gift of silence from you more often?**

Make a list of current situations where it would be wise to practice "silence is golden" and just take care of it yourself, like Mary did with her quality steaks.

Make a list of current situations where it would be wise to practice "silence is golden." **In each case, how can you stay engaged even while remaining silent about something, like Carmen did?**

Chapter 2

Plan B, C, . . .or Z!

If I want it, I'm responsible for it.

"The key to success is the ability to go from one failure to the next with no loss of enthusiasm." Winston Churchill

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

What is your dining room table dilemma? What request has your spouse, child, or coworker seemingly ignored? Is it the messy cubicle that you requested be tidied? Is it the stereo that's constantly on in the garage even after you asked him a million times to turn it off? Or maybe you have an unspoken expectation: "She should know that I need at least a half hour at home after work before being bombarded with stuff about the kids." **What is that request or expectation that is not being met?**

This is something that *you* value, and it may not be something your spouse, child, or coworker values. And that's okay. So, if this is something that *you* value and something that *you* want, how will you get what you want? **Write down three different strategies to get what you want**, keeping in mind that you can't change the other person.

Chapter 3

Trash the Trivial

Living our priorities

“You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage—pleasantly, smilingly, unapologetically, to say ‘no’ to other things. And the way you do that is by having a bigger ‘yes’ burning inside. The enemy of the ‘best’ is often the ‘good.’ The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.” Stephen R. Covey

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

I know it may drive you nuts that the dishes are in the sink, that the files are unorganized, or that your daughter wants pink hair and piercings. (Breathe.) Those things really don’t matter. You may even need to repeat this to yourself: “Those things really don’t matter.” Your relationships matter. It’s time to be real with yourself. **What have you made a priority that’s actually unimportant?** (If you’re like me, there are probably several things. Write them all down!)

What is truly important to you?

While you’ve been focusing on the unimportant, what have you been sacrificing? **What have you missed out on that is important because you were spending too much time on the unimportant?**

Further reading:

Covey, Stephen R. *First Things First*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 2001.

Covey, Stephen R. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 2003.

Chapter 4

Plugging the Leaks

Stopping the downward spiral of emotion

“When another person makes you suffer, it is because he suffers deeply within himself, and his suffering is spilling over. He does not need punishment; he needs help. That’s the message he is sending.” Thich Naht Hanh

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

Whose emotion do you allow to leak onto you? Some of us allow *all* emotion from anyone to leak onto us. When someone gets mad, we get mad back. When someone says we hurt them, we feel hurt too. If this is you, admit to yourself that you allow almost everyone to leak onto you. For others, there are a few people to whom we react the most. Often it is a spouse, child, parent, or boss. Who leaks on you?

Think of the last time you reacted to being leaked on. **What could you have done to plug the leak for yourself in that situation?** Write down at least 5 ways you think you could help plug your own leaks and keep emotion from growing inside you.

Think of a time when someone’s emotion leaked on those around you. Maybe it is the same situation you just thought of. **What could you have said or done to plug the leak for others?** You might want to use some of Frank’s tactics (changing the subject, saying “Sorry, man,” etc). Write down at least 5 things you could use to help plug the leaks and keep the negative flood of emotion from destroying people.

Chapter 5

PMS

Preference, Mistake, or Sin?

“Much that we call evil is really good in disguises; and we should not quarrel rashly with adversities not yet understood, nor overlook the mercies often bound up in them.” Horace Mann

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

Now that you’ve figured out what PMS really stands for—Preferences, Mistakes, and Sin—it’s time to figure out what you’ve been getting angry, frustrated, and upset about that isn’t really wrong at all. Perhaps it’s the way your kid’s coach runs basketball drills, or how your spouse leaves laundry on the floor, or how your co-worker talks so loudly you can’t think. **What have you been getting angry, frustrated, or upset about that is truly just a preference?**

You *should* not leave your dishes in the sink. You *should* not park in the handicapped parking space. You *should* speak up during meetings. You *should* spend your day with the family. **What’s your list of SHOULDs that causes you to “should all over people?”** Be honest; if you are anything like me, I bet there are quite a few!

There are some people we give a free pass to, aren’t there? We get angry at our loved ones, but let the neighbor across the street that we barely know off the hook. Interesting, isn’t it? Who are the people in your life who do not get those free passes? **How will you get yourself to extend “The Neighbor Rule” to your spouse, coworker, child, mother-in-law . . . and let them off the hook?**

Now the big question is: **what are you going to do to stop should-ing on people?** Is it extending “The Neighbor Rule”? Is it saying “I prefer” instead of “you should”? Is it pinching yourself every time the word “should” comes out of your mouth to remind yourself that you’ve said it once again?

Chapter 6

Q-Tip

Translating well

"We tend to judge others by their behavior, and ourselves by our intentions." Albert F. Schlieder

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

Criticism is 100% perspective. Think back to a situation in the past few weeks when you felt like someone was criticizing you. Perhaps you were offended by this person's words. What was your perspective at the time?

Now choose to look at it from a different perspective. How can you change the translation of what was said to you to have a better understanding of what was intended or what was really going on? **How might you change your translation?**

Is there something that your spouse, child, or coworker does that drives you nuts? In fact, you just know they're doing it on purpose in order to drive you crazy—or are they? What do you need to Q-Tip? **I need to "Quit Taking It Personally" when....**

Instead of taking it personally, I will...

You have a choice. Have you ever caught yourself saying, "He just makes me so angry" or "I can't help it that she makes me so mad." If you've ever done this, do you realize that you are giving the other person an awful lot of credit for "making" you feel a certain way? I say give credit where credit's due! You are the one choosing to be angry. But no worries! You can choose to ignore it, respond positively, take a time-out, dance a jig—whatever you want—in place of that anger. Think about the last time you responded in anger to something someone said or did. How could you have responded instead of in anger?

How would that have benefited you?

Chapter 7

Seasons

Going forward even in the dead of winter

“However long the night, the dawn will break.” Unknown

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

Sometimes you just don't feel like being nice, right? We all have days when the thought of being nice to every person who crosses our path makes us cringe. But you just learned that right feeling follows right action. It's worth a try if it will actually make you feel better. **What are some small ways you can commit to shining your sun and being warm even when you don't feel like it or even when it isn't deserved?**

Now for the difficult one. **What can you do to keep shining warmth through the winter even when it seems like the snow will never melt?** Maybe you keep silent while your boss rants and raves, or maybe you make welcoming small talk with someone who hasn't spoken to you in days. Perhaps you leave little notes of kindness, cook a favorite meal, bring coffee to her cubicle, or help him out with something you know will make an impact (wash a car, finish that report, do their chores). Just be ready to persevere, and don't expect a warm return for a while.

Look closely for the smallest bud of spring in your relationship. **What positive things can you choose to celebrate today?**

Chapter 8

Life Jackets

Moving beyond the issue to settle the emotion

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.” Stephen R. Covey

How can we make them feel safe again so that we can get this problem solved?

- **Apologize:** “I’m sorry that we’ve gotten to this point. I must not have said that very well.”
- **Listen:** “It sounds like you feel I’m just trying to get my way, but I really want to know what’s important to you too. What are you thinking right now?” Then actually be quiet and listen.
- **Empathize:** Empathy focuses entirely on what the other person is feeling, not on what we think or feel. “You seem angry...” or “That seems hurtful to you...” are great empathic statements which can help drain that emotion away.
- **Ask questions:** They can help you draw out more of their heart: “So when you found out that I didn’t do *x*, what did you want to do?”
- **Reflect understanding:** “So let’s see if I’m hearing you right: you think I’m being too eager and that we should think it through some more? Is that right?”
- **Validate:** “Well, I can see your point. If I thought that someone was trying to take advantage of me, I would feel angry about that too.”
- **Encourage:** “You know, you’re such a smart kid, and you have so much going for you, I just know you’re going to do great things in life. I know you’ll figure out how to get your homework in because you’re a smart kid, and you know failing classes will hurt you in the long run.” (By the way, this is what I call a “sandwich”—you’ve got the meat in the middle and the nice soft bread on both sides. Keep in mind that this soft, fluffy bread is not dishonest fluff, but encouraging words reminding them of their value in your eyes.)
- **Offer options or solutions that the other person would like:** “Would it help to do *x* or *y*?” If not, then “What do you think might help?”
- **Give them time and space:** Sometimes people need to step back and think. Solving the issue in the moment is overwhelming for them, and the most effective way to deal with their emotion is to step away and process it themselves.

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

Think of times when the people in your life have been drowning in emotion. What does that look like for each of them?

Which of the tools (life jackets) above could you put in your own personal toolbox to help you have more productive conversations? (copy/paste or highlight them)

How could you start using these tools immediately?

Think of a recent argument in which you were emotionally exchanging defenses and accusations—spinning your tires and getting nowhere fast. If you had been trying to drain the other person's emotion, what would you have said differently? Choose your tools and list three approaches.

Further reading:

Patterson, Kerry, et al. *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002.

Patterson, Kerry, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler. *Crucial Confrontations*. First edition. Columbus: McGraw-Hill, 2004.

Chapter 9

Welcome to the Jungle

How to relate to different personalities

“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”
Winston Churchill

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH A LION:

- Expect a Lion to act exactly like a Lion. The more you expect a Lion to act like a kitty cat, the more frustrated you will be with them. They are quick to speak and act, focused only on accomplishing the task, not on relating to people. Try not to take it personally.
- Speak the language of a Lion. The language of a Lion is forward and direct. Give them the facts, and get right to the point.
- Lions are motivated by challenge and results. If you want to persuade and motivate a Lion, show them (quickly) how what you are wanting is connected to the results they want.

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH AN OTTER:

- Expect an Otter to act like an Otter. They live a life of adventure, often bouncing from one thing to another and from one person to another. Understand that they are far more interested in people than in tasks. Try not to take it personally.
- Speak the language of an Otter. Praise, praise, praise them, and they'll do anything for you. Even if you doubt their ability to follow through, be enthusiastic about their ideas. There are times when it will be challenging to find a balance between sharing their excitement versus worrying that they might make one of those impulsive decisions. These are the times when you'll have to choose your words carefully because your approval is so important to them. They will need affirmation that you think they're great and that it's just not so sure about this idea.
- Otters are motivated by fun and praise. If you want to persuade them, show them how what you are wanting will either be fun or win them social approval.

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE: See next chapter for questions

Chapter 10

Welcome to the Jungle (cont.)

How to relate to different personalities

“The hardest struggle of all is to be something different from what the average man is.” Charles M. Schwab

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH GOLDENS:

- Expect Golden to be Golden. They are most interested in being with the people they love, far more than they are interested in tasks. They will lack initiative and assertiveness at times, preferring to move at a slower pace. Try to be patient; they simply have different values.
- Speak the language of a Golden. If you really want to know what a Golden is thinking, you must first make them feel safe. One of their greatest fears is losing stability or losing a relationship. So when conflict or tension arises, assure them that you are okay and that the relationship is fine, but that you just want to deal with the issue at hand.
- Golden are motivated by stable relationships. Appeal to their desire to do things together, to make decisions together, and to live life together, peacefully.

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH BEAVERS:

- Expect Beavers to act like Beavers. They are slow-paced, task-oriented people who want to do the job well. And because a job well done is so important to them, they greatly dislike being put on the spot, having to make quick decisions, being forced to change their plans, or being interrupted during a task. Try not to take it personally; they simply have different values.
- Speak the language of a Beaver. One of their greatest fears is being wrong, which is why they tend to avoid conflict. Because excellence is so important to them, they don't take criticism lightly. Your criticism means not only that they did or said something less than excellent, but that they failed. Further, since tasks are so much a part of who they are, it means that they are a failure. Even suggestions will often be heard as criticism, so you must choose your words extremely carefully around them or learn simply to keep your mouth shut when it isn't particularly important.
- Beavers are motivated by being right and doing things well. Their ideal world is one where they have the time to process and perfect those details that are so important to them. Thus, you must patiently give them plenty of time to make decisions. If you want to persuade them, use research, logic, and facts.

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

First things first: have you figured out which animal best represents you? Did you take the free quiz noted at the end of the last chapter? **Which animal are you? What strengths do you have as a _____ (Lion, Otter, Golden, or Beaver)?**

What areas could you work on? Be specific. We all have areas we could definitely grow in. Do you react too quickly (Otter)? Maybe bulldoze people (Lion)? Judge much (Beaver)? Give in too frequently (Golden)?

What motivates you? Write down one example of when this type of motivation worked for you.

Now that you know the different personality types, you are ready to change some things with *that* person. You know who I'm talking about: that person that you are ready to strangle . . . yeah, that person. **Who do you have the most conflict with? Which animal best represents him/her?**

In hopes of future peaceful conversations with this person, what can *you* do about it? You actually have quite a bit of power here to make things change. **How can you change to better speak his/her language?** (Refer to "tips" at the end of each personality section.)

Let's say you really want this person to see a situation differently. Or maybe it would be great if he/she would come alongside you in a certain project. **What ways can you motivate this person?** (Refer to "tips" at the end of each personality section.)

Let's say you are trying to make changes and things start looking better for you. I mean, why not? If by making some small changes, you end up reaping major benefits then it's a win-win situation. You speak their language, they feel good about it, and you get what you want! **How will speaking their language and how to motivate them directly benefit you?**

Further reading:

Smalley, Gary Ph.D. and John Trent Ph.D. *The Two Sides of Love*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 1990.

Chapter 11

WAR

Wants, Approach . . . Results!

“Wisdom is the power to see and the inclination to choose the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it.” J. I. Packer

Think about it in terms of winning the WAR:

Wants

Approach

Results

Ask yourself, “Is what I’m doing now (i.e. your Approach) getting me the Results that I Want?” **If your approach isn’t working out for you, it’s not a matter of blaming the other person for being so horrible; rather, it’s a matter of finding the approach that will be most likely to succeed in getting you results.**

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

So what is it that you really want? Do you actually want your mother-in-law to stop giving you advice? Or is it just that you want some boundaries as to when she gives advice and on what subjects? What will it cost the relationship? Your approach **will** matter. So what do you want?

Think about that want from all angles. Ask yourself, “Is this the only thing I want, or is there something else that goes along with it?” (Think back to Lisa’s wants—to both spend time with her dad and be on time for youth group.) **What else do you want?**

If you recall, in Shannon’s story about her kids, the first two approaches to “make” them treat each other kindly both failed miserably. The third approach was the winner. Play out in your mind how you think an approach will work, so that you can choose effective ones. You also want to choose approaches that you are 90% sure you will actually do. **Write down three approaches you will try to get what you want.**

You will have to come back to this question after you’ve tried each approach (unless you get what you want from the first one!), so remind yourself to write out the results from each approach. Perhaps program a reminder into your phone, put sticky notes on your mirror, or email yourself . . . **What were the results from your approaches?** Which approach got you what you wanted? Or is it back to the drawing board to figure out different approaches?

Chapter 12

Little Devil

Feeding our good side and starving the bad

“Life consists in what a man is thinking all day long.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

Knowing those lines he repeats in our heads and **learning to recognize the voice of our little devil will ultimately help us ignore him.**

The book, *Crucial Conversations*, lists three voices: the victim, the villain, and the helpless.⁸ These are three voices that the little devil tends to take; which voice do you hear most often?

- The victim says, “Look at what they did to me.”
- The villain says, “He’s such a jerk!” or “She *knows* I hate that!”
- The helpless voice says, “There’s nothing I can do” or “I’ve tried everything.”

The first two voices are ways of blaming others for our problems and the third voice makes us feel weak and at the mercy of our problems. All of them steal our power to make good, healthy relational decisions. These voices are destructive to us and to our relationships.

Listening to any of these voices is like listening to only half a story. We must be intentional about telling the whole story.

- If you listen to the victim voice, the other half of the story involves acknowledging your role in the situation and taking responsibility for it.
- If you listen to the villain voice, the other half of the story involves removing the negatively skewed filter through which you see the world and humanizing all those people you’ve turned into villains in your head.
- If you listen to the helpless voice, you’re missing the other half of the story that involves your underused resources, power, and creativity—you *are* able to do *something* about this!

One of the quickest ways to get these voices to quiet down is to find someone to feed our little angel side, someone we can call who helps us to be the bigger person and have the best in our relationships.

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

What are the favorite sayings of your little devil? Do you hear the victim, the villain, or the helpless voice most often? Some of us hear the same voice for everyone, but others have different voices that we hear for different people. For my mother, I hear: “She knows I hate that!” For my spouse: “He never helps out!” For my boss: “There’s nothing I can do!” Let these be the cues to remind you to feed your little angel. Write down your little devil’s phrases.

Who do you call that feeds your devil? You may have different people for different issues. You may talk to a coworker to complain about your boss, but your sister to complain about your spouse. Commit to ending these types of conversations. Make your boss, your spouse, or whoever you complain about, an off-limits topic. You can do this without them even knowing it.

Be ready with a phrase that you repeat like a broken record whenever you are asked about that person. For example, When Marsha asks about my marriage my broken record phrase is: “We’re working on it and getting better.” Or if Fred brings up my boss, my broken record phrase is: “I hear you, but nobody’s perfect. I sure wouldn’t want his job!” These are lines you can use whenever the subject arises, then change the subject. What lines will you use?

- Person: _____ Broken record phrase: _____
- Person: _____ Broken record phrase: _____
- Person: _____ Broken record phrase: _____

Be ready to change the subject whenever the old conversations arise by finding other topics these people are interested in. For example, when Mary asks about my spouse, I change the topic to her grandkids because she loves to talk about them. What topics will work for you?

- Person: _____ Change topic to: _____
- Person: _____ Change topic to: _____
- Person: _____ Change topic to: _____

Who can feed your little angel side? Maybe there are different people for different relationships. For example, my angel for my daughter is my mother-in-law. But my angel for my spouse is my friend, Cindy. Who can help redirect you to be the bigger person and do the wise and loving thing?

- My angel for _____ is: _____
- My angel for _____ is: _____
- My angel for _____ is: _____

Chapter 13

The Dance

Overcoming patterns of conflict

“Don’t do something permanently stupid because you are temporarily upset.” Unknown

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

Think of a recent conflict. Write a brief summary of it here (For example: Fight with my daughter about the laundry she shrunk)

Imagine yourself back in that conflict and answer the following questions:

What did you feel? Underline (or highlight) all that apply: abandoned, betrayed, controlled, deceived, defective, disconnected, disrespected, like a failure, helpless, humiliated, ignored, inadequate, invalidated, judged, misunderstood, not good enough, rejected, taken advantage of, unimportant, unwanted

List the top three you underlined here:

These are your buttons.

How did you react? Underline (or highlight) all that apply: deny responsibility, blame circumstances or someone else, belittle (call names, mock, or ridicule), catastrophize (exaggerate or dramatize), control, criticize, cross-complain (bring up another issue), defensiveness, demand, dishonesty, escalate (get louder and louder), fact find (usually to prove your point), fix-it mode, humor/sarcasm, invalidate or minimize, isolate yourself (shut down), lecture, mind read (assume intent), pacify (try to calm the other), passive aggressive behavior, rationalize, repeat yourself, rewrite history (view the past as negative), replay the argument in your mind, argue about who is right/wrong, self-deprecate, stonewall, withhold (affection, information, etc.)

List the top three you underlined here:

These are your knee-jerk reactions.

What did you want? Underline (or highlight) all that apply: acceptance, approval, adequate, appreciated, important, loved, peace, respected, safe, supported, trusted, understood, useful, validated, connected, intimate, noticed, competent, good enough, worthwhile

List the top three you underlined here:

These are your goals.

How well did your reactions reach your goals?

What can you do differently the next time your buttons are pushed? **What new responses could replace your reactions so that you can reach your goals?**

Further reading: (The concept of this chapter along with the questions were derived from this book.)

Smalley, Gary, et al. *The DNA of Relationships*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 2004.

Chapter 14

ICU

Just when you think it's over, it's not...

"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves." Viktor Frankl

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

The ICU is for people in critical condition. This is the time when unconditional love is mandatory. You must lead with compassion, understanding, and grace rather than with venom, tirades, and blaming. It's not always easy, but it's worth it. Let's figure this out. **What might this person be doing or saying because he is in protection mode?** For example, is she blaming you for all of the financial mishaps because she is in self-protection mode? Is he shutting you out because he truly cannot handle the situation right now? Perhaps he really does need some space to think and process. What signs of self-protection are you seeing in your relationship crisis?

Now that you realize they're in self-protection mode, you are also realizing that they are not equipped to handle your emotion in this delicate state. Remember the ICU room? How will you stay "positive, peaceful, and pleasant" and contribute positive, peaceful, and pleasant words and actions to this relationship?

What's the broken record phrase that is going to get you through this? (e.g. "I can do this. It's just a season. Spring is around the corner," "Positive, peaceful, patient," or the Serenity Prayer)

Write yourself a letter of encouragement right now (at the end of the questions for this chapter), and include the following things: Tell yourself how you are going to get through this, step by step if necessary. Remind yourself of your coach and cheerleaders whom you can turn to when times get tough, but make sure to choose them carefully. Spell out your self-care strategy for the next several months. Write out your broken record phrase. Remind yourself of what you ultimately want, and tell yourself that you are willing to do what you need to do to get it. You'll want to write this in a separate place for better access.

Once you write your letter, make a copy—or two or three. **Where do you need to put these copies?** In your car? Office? Bedroom? Purse? Station your letters at places where you know you'll need the encouragement and the reminder that this is just one chapter in your book, the whole story has not been written yet, and what you do now impacts the ending!

Chapter 15

Monoscope

Expanding our focus to be treasure hunters

“People are not disturbed by things, but by the views they take of them.” Epictetus

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

Ah, your own personal monoscope. It provides great tunnel vision, allowing you to focus in on those things that others keep doing wrong. Maybe your teenage daughter actually enjoys the chaos in her room because it sparks her creativity. Or perhaps you neglected to see that your wife did the bills that way because she thought she was being helpful. **Where are you using a monoscope?**

It’s time to broaden your lens and take in a panoramic view. If you were to open up the lens of your relationship, **what could you see differently, in a positive light?**

People are never the problem; the problem is the problem. Ouch. That’s going to change things a little the next time you’re angry with your spouse for leaving the gas tank on empty or the next time your coworker drinks the soda you’d left chilling in the staff fridge. Who is one person you seem to have conflict with more often than you’d like?

Now that you know the person isn’t really the problem, what is the actual problem? To identify the actual problem, try simply removing the person from the sentence and starting with “I.” For example, instead of “My husband is lazy,” the actual problem is “I want these dishes done.” Be careful that you don’t simply change it to “**I think** my husband is lazy” or “**I wish** my coworker would file these forms on time.” Instead say, “I would like these forms filed on time.” So, what’s the real problem?

Okay, it’s time to put on that thinking cap again. Now that you know the actual problem, what will you do to respond differently? Is it going to be a change in thought? For example, “She probably didn’t mean to single me out.” Perhaps it’s what you will say? “Wow, you must have been thirsty.” Maybe you’ll simply fill that gas tank up yourself instead of starting an argument about it. Perhaps you’ll get access and file the forms yourself, or you might learn that if you email your coworker first thing in the morning so that it’s at the top of her inbox, it gets done more quickly. **What will you do to respond differently?**

Chapter16

Roadblocks

Removing the pain that plagues us

“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.” Mahatma Ghandi

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

Forgiveness is really a gift to yourself. Who are you letting live rent free in your heart and head, allowing bitterness and anger to swell and take over?

Now imagine your life without all that bitterness and anger consuming you every time you hear their name or see their face. What would that be like? Write down five benefits for your life if you chose to live without the bitterness and anger.

What roadblocks to forgiveness are you having difficulty moving around right now? (See this chapter in the book for a list and explanation of each one.)

How will you maneuver around that roadblock to embrace your new FREE life, a life of forgiveness, so that person is no longer taking up residence in your heart and mind? Be specific. **Write down your path to forgiveness. What are you going to do? When?**

Further reading:

Luskin, Frederic. *Forgive for Good*. New York: HarperCollins, 2002.

Smalley, Dr. Gary, and Ted Cunningham. *From Anger to Intimacy: How Forgiveness Can Transform Your Marriage*. Ventura: Regal, 2009.

Chapter 17

The Golden Rule

Changing from referee to cheerleader

“Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.” Mark Twain

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

What are some areas where you need to learn to be silent and put down the yellow flag?

What has that yellow flag cost you in each of those areas? For example, maybe you repeatedly nag your teenage daughter about her messy room, resulting in her slowly pulling away from you. Maybe when your coworker speaks up during meetings, you cut him off, and now he doesn't share his ideas anymore. Or maybe you are negative and upset when your spouse gets home from work, and now he comes home later and later.

Some potentially difficult conversations are necessary. There will need to be talks about finances, the children, and the future. But how you go about those conversation really does make a difference. What topic of conversation with your spouse, child, or coworker usually creates frustration and hostility?

Perhaps it's your approach. **How can you change your approach to follow the Golden Rule**, so that next time you have that conversation, fur won't fly? List three changes that you will make to your approach.

In what areas could you pick up the pom-poms and cheer others on? How could you cheer on your spouse? Kids? Coworkers?

Chapter 18

But Why?!

Letting go of “Why” and grabbing hold of “Now what?”

“Always focus on the front windshield and not the review mirror.” Colin Powell

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

What is the “why” that keeps eating at you?

What is the “now what” that you need to focus on? What are the things you can do right now to improve the situation?

What will you do to get yourself back on track when your mind turns back to “But why!?”

We value things differently from those around us. Sometimes we have completely different value systems, and sometime it’s just a momentary difference. What have you been telling your coworker, friend, kids, or spouse that they ought to be doing? Are you telling your friend she needs to start dating again? Are you telling your coworker to stop sucking up to the boss? Did you tell your spouse last night how they should put the dishes in the dishwasher? **What is it you’re telling that person to do or stop doing that is really just a difference of values?**

Chapter 19

Simple, Not Easy

Tipping the scales toward a positive, rewarding relationship

*"We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as an impossible situation."
Chuck Swindoll*

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

Recall that Dr. Brown said it takes just one person to breathe life back into a relationship. Also recall that she said our minds often get trained in that superhighway of thought. If you've trained yourself to think, "It's not worth it," "I'm better off without him," or "She doesn't care, so why should I?" then it's going to take some effort to create a new superhighway of thought. Let's start that new highway. **What more positive thoughts could you use to replace the negative ones for your relationship?**

You will not regret wise choices. It's always beneficial to have a huge surplus in the bank rather than a deficit, right? We all want +\$1,000, not -\$1,000. It's the same with relationships. What will you do this week to add deposits to your relationship? Maybe it's a word of encouragement or a simple acknowledgement of how hard he works all day. Maybe it's a "thank you" for folding the laundry. Or a "good job" for your coworker. Maybe you decide to run the errand for her. **What deposits will you make this week to invest in your relationship?**

Perhaps it may benefit you to actually keep a ledger, like a checkbook. **Write down all of the deposits and withdrawals you make.** It will give you a realistic look of what you are really doing in your relationship.

However, for the other person, it is best not to focus on the deposits that they aren't making or the withdrawals that they are. I'm sure you can think of things you want them to do that they are not doing, or things they do that you wish they did not do. But try to focus on all the deposits that they are making. This can put deposits in your heart and bring a smile to your face. Maybe your spouse doesn't help with the dishes but always mows the lawn and takes out the trash. Maybe your coworker tends to be late and flighty but has a streak of creativity that brings life to your presentations. **List deposits that others are making in your heart.**

Chapter 20

Walls

Finding a way in

“Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.” Mother Theresa

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

People put up emotional walls for many reasons. You may or may not have contributed to the walls barricading your spouse’s, child’s, or coworker’s heart. Regardless of who helped build those walls, you need to show that you are safe and trustworthy by respecting that barricade. **List the people with whom you have not been trustworthy.**

List the things that you say or do that make others feel unsafe, as if they need to hide behind a wall.

Now what will you do to instead show that you are safe and trustworthy and that you respect their wall? Perhaps you will stop picking on your son when he tries to hide his emotions from you. Or maybe you will respect the fact that she said she doesn’t want to talk about it right now and let her have some time alone. Why don’t you ask him if there may be a time later that he would be willing to talk about it—and be okay with hearing “no?”

Chapter 21

Trigger Points

Humility is for the strong.

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less.” Rick Warren

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

What are some trigger points for you that cause you to react emotionally?

How can you reduce your sensitivity to each of your triggers? You might consider going for a walk, counting backwards, or playing your favorite song, but you will also want to choose a “script” — something you say to yourself to reduce your tension and sensitivity to your triggers. For example, “We all make mistakes” or “This is just a preference, it is not wrong” or “You can do this, it is no big deal.”

When your spouse, kids, friends, or coworkers are emotional, **what are the typical symptoms that start to show up that would tell you they are hurting?**

How could you choose to respond differently? Think of a recent interaction that did not go well. **What would the humble choice have been in that scenario?**

Many times we have an opinion, but we don't hold it as strongly as the other person holds theirs—a scale of 1-10 can be a handy tool. So ask each other, “On a scale of 1-10, how much does this matter to you? How much does this bother you?” You may be surprised at what you learn. What behaviors or words do you use that trigger major withdrawals in the hearts of your loved ones? (If you don't know already, try using the scale of 1-10.) How might you work to change those behaviors or choose different words?

Who do you know who is a great example of humility? What is it about them that gives you the impression of humility?

Chapter 22

Stop It

Figuring out what works

“The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people.” Theodore Roosevelt

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

Think of an area of your life in which you need to tell yourself to “Stop it!” Perhaps it’s with your kids before school. Or maybe it’s what you say to your coworkers about your boss behind his back. **What do you need to stop doing?**

We’ve listed some possible methods to help you “Stop It” in this chapter. **Which of these methods, or what other method might you use, that would work best for you?**

How and when will you start to implement this new method? How will you make this method work for you? Write out a detailed plan.

Chapter 23

As Is

Accepting the shortcomings of others

“Everything has beauty but not everyone sees it.” Confucius

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

Who is that person or people in your life who you need to accept “as is”? Is it that co-worker who is loud and obnoxious, your brother who parties too much, or your teenage daughter who has fallen in love with black eyeliner, weird music, and odd friends? Who are your “as is” people?

What specifically have you been trying to change about these people? What is it that they do that drives you crazy? Is it his smoking habit? Is it her messiness? Perhaps he’s lacking the work ethic that you think he should have. What are you trying to change about them?

What is a lack of acceptance costing you? For instance, how often are you frustrated by this person? It’s costing you happiness. How many fights have you had when you could have been enjoying each other? It’s costing your relationship.

Now that you have pinpointed what you’re trying to change, let’s get real here. You can’t make someone change. It’s just a fact. You can plead, beg, and cry over it, but they have to make the change for themselves. And that only happens when and if they want to do it. So instead of focusing on them, let’s focus on you. What can you do to make yourself happy? Instead of letting their lack of change bring you down, change yourself, like Bob did with Mary’s smoking. What can you do to make yourself happy and stop focusing on changing the person you mentioned above?

Now, the even better question is: **when and how are you going to make the change in you happen?**

Chapter 24

Self-care

Making sure you're at your best

"Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live." Jim Rohn

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

It's time to give yourself an honest self-assessment. How well are you taking care of yourself? You can't give your best at work, at home, or in relationships when you're running on empty. Step back and take a good look at your life in the four main areas: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. If you were to give yourself a grade in each of those areas, what would you give yourself? Assign yourself a grade, and be honest. **What grade would you give in each area: physical - ____, emotional - ____, mental - ____, and spiritual - ____?**

For each area that you listed and graded, list three things that you will make into a new habit in order to fill yourself. Some examples are: exercise three times a week, have coffee with your best friend once a month, journal every Sunday, play some basketball with the guys after work, attend church with your kids, listen to your favorite music in the morning, etc.

Now for the key: volunteering. **What aspect of volunteering most appeals to you?** Is it serving a certain group: children, the elderly, the disabled, unwed mothers, minority groups, or animals? Is it a certain cause: poverty, hunger, abuse, or drug prevention? Is it a certain organization? This is the one step in the book that I think people will be less inclined to do even though the rewards are so great. Volunteering actually does feel foreign and backward to some people. But even if you are shy or introverted, I know many like you who have volunteered to stock shelves at a food pantry, sort clothes at a thrift shop, or do administrative tasks, and have felt deep rewards knowing that they have impacted the life of a child or a hurting family. I also know busy executives who volunteer once a month and are allowed to rearrange their volunteer time around their schedule. No matter who you are, give it a try, and you'll be so glad you did!

Now list three places you could volunteer. Underline the first place you will go for a tour.

Some places will let you try out volunteering without requiring a commitment. **When will you give it a try?**

Epilogue: Scheduled Sex

"You haven't had real sex until there are two dogs at the end of your bed staring at you." Bill Engvall

HOW TO APPLY THIS TO YOUR LIFE:

Maybe this whole concept of having sex again after so long terrifies you. Maybe you don't think you can make that move anymore. Maybe you're so angry or dejected because it's been so long that you don't think it's really worth the effort to even try. If you're there, hang in there.

*If you are a survivor, who has faced a traumatic event, what can you do to move forward in this area? If you need counseling who can you contact? Keep in mind that many latch on to the idea that sex is no big deal and will reduce your anxiety by telling you not to worry about it. Despite your history, make it your goal to determine "how" to make this happen, not "if" - **what can you do to move forward in this area?***

If marital conflict has separated you, love has died or time has passed, bite the bullet and move on to the next question.

This week you are going to start meeting that need of your spouse. So guys – it's time to start letting your wife talk about her day, listen, show empathy, laugh with her, hold her. And gals – yes, it's time to get a little physical with your hubby. Touch him – every time you cross paths. And I don't mean trying to wipe a stain off his shirt – I mean touch his chest, arms, face . . . and his "happy place." Time to be purposeful - Because saying you're going to do it and doing it are two different things. So what's your plan guys? Gals? **Write out here what you will intentionally do this week to meet the need of your spouse.** Include days, times, and what you will be doing.

So now you have your plan in place . . . time to rise to the occasion. Be bold. Remember – you used to do this stuff all of the time! AND if your spouse doesn't notice or "get" the new attention at first – it's ok! Keep working at it.

When will you be having sex this week? What day? What time? **What is the best way to make this happen** (consider what's good for your spouse!)? Guys – is it after your wife's favorite meal, show, and a hot shower? Gals – is it a 5 minute quickie in the morning right before he checks his email? What works for him? What works for her?

And one last thing – Orgasms . . . ahhhh, orgasms. Guys – remember to follow her lead; Gals – remember to actually give some lead to follow. Lastly – HAVE FUN! **Gals – write down what turns you on.** How

do you like to be touched? Where do you like to be touched? Lights on? Lights off? Bed or counter?
Guys – write down what turns you on. How do you like to be touched? Where do you like to be touched? Lights on? Lights off? Bed or counter?

How will you communicate this *effectively*? Perhaps demanding may not be the appropriate approach – maybe it's a whisper in the ear during foreplay. Maybe it's a sit-down discussion on a date. Maybe you write it down and slip your spouse a note in his briefcase; her purse. **Write out your plan to effectively communicate what you like.** Remember be specific about the time, day, and all the details you need to make it happen!