



Simple Steps... Real Change
A GUIDE TO LIVING IN MODERN TIMES

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INTRODUCTION

“How Did I Get Here?”

One day I woke up unemployed, overqualified, under qualified, financially and emotionally drained, overweight, over fifty and clueless about dealing with any of it.

My life probably isn't much different from most people. I grew up knowing that I was expected to go to college but didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. After graduation I worked in a small family business where I met my husband Jack.

My career developed not by design but by opportunity. I did the jobs that I was asked to do, not ones that I chose. I landed with a company that offered continuous opportunity for growth and rewards. My goal at one point was to have the corner office, the title and salary to go with it. Every position that I accepted reinforced my commitment to the company and as they use to say, "I drank the cool-aide," willingly. Twenty-five years later and a couple of short detours down the path my company was acquired and I was unemployed.

While that turned out to be a blessing in disguise it didn't come easy. I was happy for the change and of course a severance package that bought me the time to decide what my next steps would be.

What I wasn't prepared for was dealing with the "loss" of my job and the stability that defined me. I was excited for some time off. Like many others I believed that it would be "my time" and that I could find another position, easily, when I wanted to. Unfortunately the economy tanked and I joined the millions of other "experienced" workers now competing with recent college graduates and much younger candidates. If there was ever a reality check I thought this was it.

I should mention that while I was going through these career changes Jack & I moved from Seattle, our home of 20 years, to Texas, leaving behind our friends and a life style that we took for granted. My parents moved into a home beside ours. We hadn't lived this close to each other in two decades.

I use to pride myself on being adaptable. What I didn't realize was that all of the changes were piling on top of each other and I was barely keeping my head above water.

Just about this time Jack was diagnosed with an incurable disease. My world collapsed at that point and all of the changes that had come before this one paled in comparison to facing life without the love of my life. While his illness is chronic, not immediately life threatening, the fear consumed me. When I reflected on all of the changes in my life during those years I wondered how I managed to crawl out of bed in the morning.

Throughout my life I'd always been resilient. If something bothered me I could work through it in 24 hours. If it took longer I knew that I was in trouble. A day became a week... and then months. I was in trouble. I saw myself slipping into a depression built on a foundation of fear.

Reading was my solace and I searched for any nugget that would help me deal with my fears. Each book that I read offered plenty of solutions. It seemed however that every one of them was more complex than the next and I didn't have the energy to sustain the different "solutions." Life felt like it was both crushing me and passing me by at the same time.

I knew that there had to be a simpler solution. I needed **SIMPLE STEPS** to make a **REAL CHANGE** in my life.

Does this sound familiar? If so, you are not alone!

In addition to all of the changes in our personal lives the whole world seems to have changed also. Once there was a time when you helped your kids with their science project. Now they are teaching you how to set up your iPhone. Do you remember when a good chat meant that you actually spoke to someone? What about when people were employed with one company until they retired? This hectic and unfamiliar world we live can present unexpected challenges that test our spirits daily.

Have you experienced any of these stressful situations?

- Did your last child just leave the nest?
- Has your 401K disappeared along with your broker?
- Was your job outsourced or eliminated?
- Are you feeling the stress of today's economy?
- Have you moved to a new town and have to start all over again?
- Are you frustrated that there are no "good" men/women left out there?
- Have you lost your home because you lost your job due to downsizing?
- Are you dealing with a death of a loved one?
- Did your spouse wake up equally confused one day and walk out?
- Do you simply feel lost in this modern world?

If any of these sound familiar then, **SIMPLE STEPS... REAL CHANGE** is for you.

You must know, no matter what you are going through, **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!**

This roller coaster world we live in is full of people just like you and me. Regardless of what your life feels like you have everything that you need, right now, to change your life and realize your dreams!

Every moment of every day, you and only you, have the ability to transform your life. When the choices you make focus on what is good then you take a **Simple Step** forward to achieving **Real Change**. For the kindred spirits that believe that simpler is

better... **Simple Steps...Real Change** was written for you. With a little consistent effort your dreams become your reality.

NOW is your time! All you need is a willing heart and an open mind...and a genuine desire to live a better life.

Join me as we explore **SIMPLE STEPS.... REAL CHANGE!**

The Philosophy of Simple Steps... Real Change

Simple Steps... Real Change is based on five fundamental principles. You will learn how to adopt or strengthen these principles in your life so that you can achieve your dreams. The Principles are:

- Believe in Yourself
- Trust Your Instincts
- What You Seek You Find
- Happiness is a Personal Choice
- Your Actions Determine Your Experience

The “Simply Positive” Philosophy

I think that “simplicity” is one of the most beautiful words in the English language and the philosophy upon which this book was created. The five fundamental principles of this book are based on simplicity and a method that intuitively makes sense. Life is complicated enough these days. So everything that we do here is, well, simple!

When you focus on the positive aspects of life you experience the good things that life has to offer.

Just a toddler begins with baby steps...each bolstering their confidence to do more...these **Simple Steps** boost yours... encouraging you to take another step forward on your journey to the life of your dreams.

Along your path you may encounter a few potholes. While the path is simple it is up to you to be persistent. If you have been living or believing a certain way for most of your life then it takes consistent effort to change those old habits. When you see the challenges that you encounter as opportunities to learn from, you’ll take the lessons learned along the way and pave a smoother path to travel.

It’s time to live your dream! Take my hand and we’ll take these **Simple Steps** together.

THE PRINCIPLES

Believe In Yourself

When you believe in yourself life is filled with promise and possibilities. Unfortunately, if you have experienced “failure,” in your own eyes, then your self-image prevents you from believing in your dreams.

Did you realize that how you perceive yourself is the single most important factor in your success? It doesn’t matter what your friends, family, boss or coworkers might be

thinking. If you believe in yourself and move forward with the confidence that can do anything that you set your mind to...you accomplish it.

“Often we don't even realize who we're meant to be because we're so busy trying to live out someone else's ideas. But other people and their opinions hold no power in defining our destiny.” Oprah Winfrey (1954 -)

Here are a couple of interesting facts that might just surprise you. Scientists estimate that every day we have 60,000 thoughts. Most of them, 95%, are repeat thoughts from the day before. If something hasn't gone right, and you keep thinking about what didn't work, then you are reinforcing this negative idea over and over again. Repetition is a fabulous process when you want to instill a new habit. It sucks the life out of you when you don't.

Consider Erin's Story. Erin allowed an abusive ex-husband's opinions to overshadow her own even after she had moved on and by all accounts had a wonderful life.

Erin* and her Past

*(*Names have been changed)*

Erin & I worked together for many years. She was married to a loving man, Dan, whose main purpose in life seemed to be spoiling her. Erin received flowers and expensive gifts from her husband in addition to enjoying quiet, romantic times where she could feel his love.

Erin had been previously married before to a physically and emotionally abusive man, Ron. They had children together. Erin raised her children with love and shielded them as much as she could from their father. By all accounts she was a loving & dedicated mother whose children adored her and supported her divorcing their dad.

In addition to being a good mother Erin was a hard worker, competent, and dedicated to her work. Yet despite all of the good things going for her Erin measured her self-worth by the comments of her ex-husband. She believed that she would not accomplish anything that she set out to do, that she was less qualified than just about anyone else, and her life was worthless. Erin's focused on the negative aspects of her prior life and she was miserable.

It was painful to watch Erin and even harder to talk with her. Though married to her second husband for far longer than she was with her first she had never allowed the support and love of Dan triumph over the Ron's abuse. The longer that I worked with Erin the more frustrating it was to watch. Erin became her own worst enemy.

One day when we were having a heart to heart chat about her attitude I asked her why Ron's opinions mattered more to her than Dan's. She was appalled that I'd even think that they did. As we talked through her negativity she came to realize that she was giving more power to her ex-husband than he ever deserved ...to the detriment of her wonderful family and her career. If there ever was an "aha" moment in Erin's life this was it.

Erin's life did not change overnight. She did however take a **Simple Step** by catching her negative thoughts and comments as they came to her. By reconsidering her focus and reaching for the positive thought she began traveling the road towards believing in herself.

Recall that 95% of our thoughts are repeated from the prior day. Now let's take this one step further what if all those negative thoughts that are going through your head are wrong? Have you ever thought the worst about a situation only to check in with someone else and they have no idea what you are talking about? If you don't know

what is going on do you look to fill that information gap some way? What if you are wrong?

Here is Mark's Story. Mark is a successful and charming man. His negative thoughts about his physical appearance drove even the love of his life away.

Mark* and his Self Image

Mark is a brilliant IT guru who has lived a colorful life. He's funny, outgoing, has traveled the world, enjoys a variety of sports. From the outside he has all the trappings of a good life (good job, close friends, nice home, sports car.) Mark however believes that he will never find his soul mate because of how he looks. He sees himself as short, bald and generally unattractive. Mark is a gregarious guy, though when he gets nervous around someone he would like to date; his comments turn to self-deprecating jokes.

Women are attracted to Mark because he is a caring and funny guy. By all accounts he is a great date. Mark is actually a cute teddy bear kind of guy. What he didn't realize was his self-image issues were more than his dates wanted to deal with.

Mark met a kindred soul in Amy. They enjoyed the same food, movies and liked to travel. Amy was a petite girl, highly educated, and so good at her craft that she tended to scare most men away. She enjoyed Mark's company and felt that she had found the man that she could spend the rest of her life with.

Mark's insecurity however kept him from seeing the opportunity for happiness that was waiting for him with Amy.

Amy grew tired of Mark's self deprecating ways. She decided to end their relationship rather than continue in the negativity that Mark defined for himself.

While there is no "Happy Ever After" in this story there is a valuable lesson. When you focus on the negative that is what you will receive more of. Don't let your negativity keep you from realizing your dreams.

Rather than imagining the worst about yourself...what if you imagined the best? Wouldn't that be fun?!? You feel so much better when you believe in yourself.

As you incorporate the **Simple Steps** into your life you can watch as your scales begin to tip to support you more often than before. Positive change soon outweighs the negativity. Keep your momentum going and your dreams become your reality!

On the next page is **Simple Step #1**, which enables you to question your negative thoughts, and convert them into ones that serve you better...and support your new focus to **Believe in Yourself!**

Simple Step #1 Re-frame Your Thoughts

Pick a thought that has been nagging you. Then change that negative thought into a positive one.

Here are a few examples:

➤ **Negative Thought**

I should have gone to the gym and worked out.

✓ **Positive Through**

I decided to spend time with my friends rather than working out tonight. I needed to relax after a stressful week. I know that I am committed to my workouts. Tomorrow is Saturday and I'll spend an extra 20 minutes running and increase my reps.

➤ **Negative Thought**

I should never have taken this job.

✓ **Positive Thought**

This job has been an eye opening experience. I have met some good people along the way. The job isn't right for me but now I know what I do want to do with my life and I will focus my job search in that direction.

➤ **Negative Thought**

I've failed at every diet and will never be in shape.

✓ **Positive Thought**

I've tried fad diets in the past but they weren't right for me. Being healthy is important and I need to learn about the best way for me to improve my physical condition. I made an appointment with my doctor and will ask for her recommendation and support.

You will feel better when you are kinder to yourself!

A comment on feeling better... Your emotions tell you when you are on the right path. If what you feel is good...you are on the right track. If they feel bad you are not. That may sound simplistic however you are the best judge of what is right for you. When you have negative thoughts...change them to what feels better and believe in yourself!

When you actively choose thoughts that feel better you are on the happiness path. And when you believe in yourself everything about your life improves.

Simple Step #1 Re-frame Your Thoughts

Simple Step #1 Re-frame Your Thoughts

Thought	Positive Story
Example: I shouldn't have purchased that new television. I should have saved that money so that I would have more for a down payment on our new home	Example: I love watching shows on my new TV. It is larger than my old one and the quality is better. I will actually save more money now because I will stay home rather than go to the movies or a show and dinner. In 3 months I'll have replaced the savings that I would have had if I hadn't purchased the TV and actually have \$300 more saved.

THE PRINCIPLES

Trust Your Instincts

Within you is absolutely every bit of knowledge, skill and ability that you need to change your life. Intuitively you know exactly what you need to do. The little voice inside of you never steers you wrong. Even when what you hear goes against popular opinion choose to trust your instincts.

“The very essence of instinct is that it's followed independently of reason.”- Charles Darwin

Over the years we relied on others to guide us. As children we usually listened to our parents. Later we listened to the advice of teachers, ministers, friends and co-workers.

If you trust yourself more than you trust others when making a decision then you have mastered this fundamental principle of **Simple Steps... Real Change**.

If you tend to ask others for their opinion before you make a personal decision then this **Simple Step** provides you a tool to make the choices that are right for you.

Lisa was a seasoned executive with good instincts about the type of leaders her department needed in order to be successful. She went against her better judgment at the insistence of her boss. Read more about her story.

Lisa's* Story

Lisa is an executive at a Fortune 500 company. Her job is to oversee day-to-day business operations. With some 450 people working in her areas she assembled a

strong management team to run the various departments. Lisa was a good judge of people and instinctually knew what type of leader that each group needed.

She had been with the company for about 10 years and was a Sr. Vice President when the CEO retired. The Board of Directors hired a Ken, President of a competitor, to be the new CEO.

Ken brought Sean with him. Sean had operational experience and could help Ken understand the similarities and differences between his old company and the new one. Sean worked exclusively with Lisa & her departments. He was confident, too confident, in Lisa's opinion. He made people uncomfortable. She chalked that up to Sean's scrutiny of their operations. Still something about Sean didn't "feel" right to Lisa. She wasn't sure if it was his communication style or just the change from one company to another but she sensed that he didn't have quite the understanding of operations that he said that he did.

Six months after Ken joined the company he asked Lisa to add Sean to her team as the Procurement Director. While Sean had been working with that department he had no prior experience as far as she knew. Lisa questioned Ken about Sean's experience and the wisdom of placing him in this position. After a lengthy discussion with Ken, and at his insistence, she did as he instructed, against her better judgment.

Within a few weeks Lisa heard rumblings in the department about Sean's direction and relationships with one particular supplier. Sean instructed his staff that this supplier was the only one that they could use. Key members of the procurement staff resigned.

During a routine audit of the department e-mails were discovered which documented that Sean had taken a vacation with this supplier, at the supplier's expense. Internal memos from department staff members expressed concern to Sean that this same vendor was not competitive and the company could save money by using other suppliers. Sean's responses were clear that only his approved supplier could be used by the staff.

Lisa fired Sean with Ken's blessing. Lisa's instincts about Sean were right all along. Ken never asked her to do something against her better judgment again.

You can probably remember a time or two when you realized if you had just gone with your "gut feeling" things would have turned out better. It's like when you took a multiple choice test and your first instinct was to pick "A" but you went with "C" only to find out that "A" was correct. When you listen to yourself you always make the best decision.

In **Simple Step #2** you will learn how to listen to yourself. This one is going to take practice... especially if you have trusted others more than yourself. If you are faced with an important decision this is a great tool. All you need is some paper, a pen and time alone. Make sure that you will not be interrupted.

Simple Step #2: Have a Conversation with You

- A) Write down; yes; physically write down, the issue that you need to resolve. Take the time to make sure that you are being absolutely clear with what the issue is. If it isn't clear to you when you write it down then keep revising it until it is clear in your mind.
- B) Next read the question. If you feel comfortable doing so read it out loud. Though doing so isn't absolutely necessary it does help you clarify it in your own mind.
- C) Now, do nothing. Sit quietly and listen. You will begin to hear words forming in your head.

D) Write down whatever pops into your mind. Keep writing until you don't hear anything more. You may find yourself asking the question again if the stream of dialogue comes too quickly for you to keep up with it. Amazingly you may also have a simple one-word answer. Whatever comes to you, don't judge it, just write it down.

Everyone experiences a different level of intuitiveness. It may take asking the question several times to get an answer that you understand. What is important is that you write down everything that comes into your mind.

When you are done writing read through what you have written. Is there a theme, a common thread that emerges?

Within the response is your instinctual answer. Be open to receiving it...and be prepared for the unexpected.

Within you are the answers that you seek because within you is everything that you need to do what is right for you. When you listen to yourself you are never misguided. It may take courage to move forward on the answer that you receive however as you start to trust your instincts you discover how good you are as a decision maker.

Try this **Simple Step** using the worksheet on the next page. Start with a small decision and build up to bigger issues as your confidence in yourself grows.

Simple Step # 2 Have a Conversation with You

Simple Step # 2 Have a Conversation with You

Question
Response
Question
Response

THE PRINCIPLES

What You Seek Is What You Find

If you believe that people are inherently good that is what you experience. If you believe that everyone is out for themselves then that is what you encounter.

So many people start and end their days listening to the news. It is easy to believe that it is a cruel world when your day is filled with stories of bad things happening to good people. You remember news stories and tune into similar incidents in your world. You will find what you look for.

Anna & her mom Jeannine's story is a good example of finding what you seek. Anna was raised in rural Kansas but dreamed of living and working in Atlanta. Her Mom was terrified of big cities. Read about their lives and how they experienced what they focused on.

Anna* & Jeannine* Story

Jeannine & Joe grew up in rural Kansas, as did every generation of their family before them. Anna was their youngest daughter. At 17 she traveled with her high school class to a conference in Atlanta, Georgia. From that moment on Anna dreamed of living in Atlanta and experiencing the excitement that the big city had to offer. While she applied to colleges in Georgia her parents wanted her to stay in Kansas and convinced her to go to an in-state school. She agreed though was determined that when she finished college that she would look for work in Atlanta.

Anna graduated and landed her first job in downtown Atlanta. Jeannine fretted about Anna moving to the city and believed that no good would come of it. The crime, drugs and all those other problems that she heard about on the news scared her. Jeannine had no qualms about sharing her worries with her daughter.

Anna however felt her mother was being overly protective and tried to assure her that Atlanta was a thriving city with cultural events, sports, restaurants and tons of opportunity that she wouldn't have in her hometown.

Anna and her friend Carrie were going to share an apartment. Carrie had family in Atlanta so they wouldn't be alone.

Anna packed the car and headed out on her adventure. Her Mom warned her to be careful and stay on the main roads. Jeannine worried that she would get lost. Anna did take a wrong exit and ended up in a town that was having a heritage festival. She stopped and explored the festival and thoroughly enjoyed her detour. When Jeannine learned of this she was angry with Anna for getting out of her car in a strange place.

Anna & Carrie had a Bar-B-Q at their new apartment in order to get to know their neighbors. The party got a little loud and the police showed up to quiet them down. Anna laughed afterwards that she'd never had so much fun even though the party broke up early. To Jeannine however this "run in with the law" was a sign that Anna was involved with a bad crowd.

Anna started dating a guy that she worked with and her mother cautioned her that she shouldn't date co-workers. When they broke up Jeannine felt vindicated. Anna however made new friends through this guy and developed many close relationships as a result.

To Anna everything was an adventure and she enjoyed every minute of it. To Jeannine everything was risky. What they sought...they found.

If you were able to listen to a news station that only reported the good stories that had happened...you'd be looking for good things in the world around you. And....You find them!

“If you change the way you look at things, the things that you look at change.”

- Wayne Dyer

When our results are not good we tend to automatically assume that they will continue to be bad. Have enough bad experiences and you'll always assume that there is a black cloud following you around.

If you are looking for or assuming the worst, refocusing on the positive aspects of life creates a startling change in your experience.

Looking for the good in others causes something amazing to happen. You take the focus off of yourself and your problems and then the positive aspects of life multiply.

When you look for the good in others – you open your heart and experience joy in your life. At the same time you start looking for ways to share the goodness with others.

Approaching any situation with a positive attitude sets you up to succeed.

Focusing on the positive is a key to this belief and there are three **Simple Steps** to help you refocus your thoughts.

If you tend to be more artistic and creative try **Simple Step #3**, the “Imagination” option. If you are a practical person you may prefer the “Seek Knowledge” approach in **Simple**

Step #4. And for those who are a little of both try **Simple Step #5**, “Re-frame Your Perspective.”

Simple Step #3 Imagination

Have you ever been a people watcher and created stories about them? Do you have a great imagination and enjoy making up stories? If you have ever had a dream, a fantasy, then this **Simple Step** will speak to you.

When faced with a challenging situation or person try this Simple Step:

- A) Take a “break.” If you can walk away or leave the room, do so. If not change your position or even close your eyes if you can.

- B) Create a story in your mind about the person that enables you to relate to them better.

- C) Take the person that you have created and interject them into your situation.

Here are a couple of examples that might help you:

- ✓ You are on a first date and are eating at a new restaurant. The waitress is overly friendly and you are not having the quality time with your date that you want. Excuse yourself and head to the rest room for a few minutes. As you walk away imagine that the waitress is actually working a second job. During the day she teaches handicapped children. She enjoys that work because she loves helping others and drawing them out of their shells. She is naturally a happy and social person. When you return to your table you are no longer annoyed but sympathetic. With this change in perspective you are able to relax and enjoy your date. When your waitress returns you actually engage her in your conversation. Let her know

that you are on your first date together and getting to know each other. Now she sees you from a different perspective and gives you the privacy you want.

- ✓ David is your boss and in a meeting he's being demanding and bit more unreasonable than normal. You can tell that he is agitated but you don't like his attitude. At the right time you ask to take a break. As you walk to the break area you realize that there must be something going on that is causing David to act out today. Imagine that David has seen a report that the department is falling short on their goals for the month. He knows that if they don't make their goal that he won't be able to give the team pay raises and bonuses. You see David now as your advocate.

Your new perspective enables you to humanize your boss. Rather than being annoyed at him you see him as your partner. As the meeting resumes you ask that the group take a few minutes to review the current status and what is required in order to meet the goals. Solicit ideas on how to refocus the team to accomplish their goals. While you have seen David from a better perspective he sees you as a leader among the team. David is then able to settle down and becomes more reasonable.

When you take the time to see the goodness in others not only do you find it but you also find more in yourself.

Simple Step #4 Seek Knowledge

Getting to know your co-workers, relatives & friends is a simple and practical way to improve your perspective. When you learn about what is important to them, what motivates them, the challenges that they may be dealing with, you are more likely to see their actions as honorable...not as a challenge.

The process for this **Simple Step** is more of a fact-finding mission. For each key person in your work and personal life:

- 1) Schedule lunch or at least a coffee date with them. If it's a work associate go out somewhere rather than to a break or lunchroom. This will set up a more comfortable place to talk.
- 2) Tell them honestly that since you will be spending more time together that you want to get to know them better. If this is a co-worker or other business associate tell them that you are interested building a strong relationship that will enable you both to be successful. The key here is to keep the conversation relaxed. This is not an inquisition. Your goal is to understand what makes them tick...and what ticks them off!
- 3) When you find yourself in a situation with your friend or business associate that doesn't seem to be progressing the way that you hoped step back and recall their motivation. Look for solutions that will play to that motivation. When they see that you are doing so because of what is important to them...they will respond in kind.

Take a look at these examples of how increasing your knowledge works.

- ✓ Lacy is always meddling in her sister Vicki's marriage telling her how to be a "good" wife. Vicki becomes annoyed with her and doesn't know how to tell her to butt out! Vicki takes the time to talk to her sister. She learns that Lacy is having troubles in her own marriage and doesn't know what to do. Lacy and Vicki end up growing a stronger relationship where they can discuss their marriages and "let off some steam."
- ✓ Connie is a vendor partner who is responsible for servicing the printers at your location. She is often abrupt with your team and while she does a good job no one

likes to see her come through the door. You ask her to have a cup of coffee with you. As you sit and chat you learn that she has 5 other accounts that she has to take care of on the same day as she comes to your office. She is new to her job and her boss made it clear that she should not interrupt her customer's work.

When she comes into your office she is trying to respect your business and get in and out without disrupting anyone. You take the opportunity to tell her that outsourcing the printers has not been a popular decision for your team. You ask her if she could plan some time in her schedule to talk to your team about her role. Connie is grateful for the opportunity and during that meeting your team gets to see that Connie is really a nice person trying to do the job that your company hired her to do. Next time she comes into your office she greets your staff by name and asks them if she can help them with anything.

When you have knowledge of what makes someone tick it makes understanding their motives far easier and brings a sense of peace to their actions. Spending a few moments trying to understand someone can make a world of difference when you are looking for the good in others.

Simple Step #5 Re-frame Your Perspective

This **Simple Step** requires that you change your frame of mind. Make the assumption that everyone you encounter wants to do good things. If you start with this foundation you look for ways to help them. Whether it is spending more time teaching them a better way to do a task or cutting them a little slack – by assuming that they come forth to do good – you'll realize that any "tweaks" in your relationship, the job, or the process are just that...tweaks. And tweaks are easier to deal with than assuming that you have to implode "what is" and go back to ground zero.

The process for this is straightforward. When you encounter a difficult person:

- 1) Breathe. This is an ideal time to count to 10 (silently of course) if the situation is immediate. If it is an ongoing issue prepare for your next interaction with the person.
- 2) See the person as being positively motivated. Whatever negative thought you may have, choose the polar opposite one.
- 3) Respond with kindness and support. Ask what you can do to help, offer solutions or just be a sounding board.

Here are some examples of how this **Simple Step** works:

- ✓ Ellen is a brilliant worker. She works very hard every day and oftentimes spends far too much time in the office. She always has her hand in every project which seems controlling and out of line. If you worked with Ellen you might want to sit back and ask yourself, why is she always in everyone business? Instead of assuming she is a control freak see Ellen as someone who wants to be a valuable team member. If you are a co-worker ask Ellen if you can provide her with any assistance. Tell her that you want to be a valued team member and offer to do some of the tasks that she has taken on. Ask her if she would be willing to mentor you. If you are her manager use your one on one time with Ellen to voice your appreciation for her dedication. Ask her to help mentor other team members by giving them some of her tasks and coaching them. Knowing that you value her input supports her ongoing dedication.
- ✓ Your brother Jim is 10 years older than you. Every time you see him, he complains about how easy you had it, and how hard your parents were on him. When you make a decision about anything that he considers significant he calls to tell you that you are making a mistake and then proceeds to tell you what you should do. While you love your brother his opinions are not appreciated. You've decided to buy a new

car and he's on the phone telling you what a bad choice you are making. You knew that this was going to happen and this time you are prepared for him.

Thank Jim. Tell him that you know that he only has your best interest in mind. Tell him that you have been researching cars for several weeks and that you have read the reviews from Consumer Reports and Car & Driver magazine. You also asked the family mechanic (who works on Jim's cars too) for advice. In the end you chose the car that met all of the key criteria that knew were important in making this investment. You end the call on that strong note. Perhaps you will call him back and ask him if he wants to go with you when you pick up your new car. (Or not...)

When you believe in the goodness of others you open your heart to embrace the joy in your relationship. You see the positive and can actually appreciate what they bring to your life.

Simple Step #3 - 5

Imagination – Knowledge – Re-frame

You can use this worksheet for all three of these **Simple Steps**.

Thought	Positive Story
<p>Example: Julie never seems to slow down. If she isn't at work she is taking her kids to games or school events. I always feel rushed by her and at times she seems to ignore me. I am frustrated when I can't get her attention.</p>	<p>Example: Imagination: Julie's husband travels with his job and he is rarely home to help Julie. Julie needs to be both Mom & Dad to her children & she is constantly busy making sure that they have what they need for school & athletics. Her job is important to her as she pays for all the extra activities her children participate in. Knowledge: Julie prides herself in being able to manage many things at once. She enjoys being respected for being a problem solver. Re-frame: Julie provides the administrative support for my IT project. I need her team to handle the day to day details and tell me when something isn't working the way I intended. Julie needs the solutions that my team is working on in order for her team to be efficient and cost effective.</p>

Thought	Positive Story

THE PRINCIPLES

Happiness Is a Choice

You choose your attitude in every moment and every situation. It is totally up to you how you react to the events in your life.

Happiness is not something you postpone for the future; it is something you design for the present.

- Jim Rohn

When I worked for a large corporation it was not unusual to see finger pointing anytime results weren't good. Executives would blame their staff and one department would blame the other.

It is very easy to blame someone or something else for your lot in life. "If my parents had saved more money for my college education I'd be able to get a better job." "If my husband would just listen to me I wouldn't have to get angry." "If only I had (a bigger house, better job, more money) I'd be happy." The minute however that you relinquish control of your happiness you take on the role of a victim. Is that how you picture yourself? Are the words "poor me" ringing in your ears?

The truth however is that regardless of what is going on in your life you can choose to be happy...or you can choose to be miserable. The decision is 100% up to you.

Consider Campbell's story. Campbell was a high-energy athlete and a motivating team leader. In an instant her life was changed. Read her inspirational story.

Campbell's* Story

Campbell was a happy girl. Even as child she would entertain herself for hours on end. She was a parent's dream...smart, considerate, and a good student. She loved being outdoors, riding her bike, playing tennis and hiking. Campbell was a gifted athlete and a team captain.

When Campbell turned 16 her parents bought her a car - confident that she was a cautious & responsible driver. One afternoon while driving back from school Campbell was hit by a drunk driver. Her back was broken and she was paralyzed. Her doctors told her that it was unlikely that she would ever walk again.

By all accounts Campbell had every right to be mad. Her friends & family even told her that it's OK to be angry. She chose not to be. The guy that hit her was not injured at all. Campbell however would go through several surgeries and years of painful physical therapy. Even worse she would never be able to do the things that she had enjoyed for so many years.

Despite her injuries Campbell never once cried over what she had lost. When the guy that hit her visited her in the hospital she welcomed him and accepted his apology. She forgave him.

Campbell remained optimistic about her prognosis and was an inspiration to her caregivers. Rather than feel sorry for herself Campbell uses her time to sit with children who are sick or injured. She makes them laugh and helps them deal with their situations.

Campbell chooses to be happy and in doing so she is an inspiration and role model to everyone she meets.

When you quit blaming others you give yourself the gift of freedom; the freedom to pursue your dreams, the freedom to give and receive love, the freedom from fear, worry and stress. When you are in control you determine what a priority is. You decide how to live your life. Anywhere is paradise; it's up to you! Choose Happiness!

If you have never believed that you create your own happiness then changing this belief is going to take some effort. The good news is that none of the **Simple Steps** are hard. They just require consistent application. The fun part is testing them out.

There are two Simple Steps to help you choose happiness. **Simple Step #6** "Just Say NO!" prepares you to combat the negativity your mind creates. **Simple Step #7** "Question Your Thoughts" helps you clear through the emotional aspect of your thoughts. Read more about these Simple Steps on the following pages.

Simple Step #6 "Just Say NO!"

In this **Simple Step** when you catch yourself falling into negativity and placing blame:

- A) Acknowledge your thoughts. State specifically what you were thinking.
- B) Stop and say "NO" out loud.
- C) Refocus and rephrase

Here are some examples of how this works:

- ✓ **Acknowledge:** "I was mad at my friend for not calling." **Say NO:** "No I'm not going to let myself be upset." **Refocus:** "I was expecting my friend to call. Something must have come up. I'll call her."

- ✓ **Acknowledge:** “I want to yell at my wife for not having dinner ready when I came home.” **Say NO:** “No I’m not going there.” **Refocus:** “I love it when my wife has dinner ready when I come home from work. She must have had a busy day too. We can make dinner together and have time to talk.”

Don’t you feel better when you have control of how you feel? Sure it takes some time in the beginning. After all you’ve been in a negative place for a while. In the long run however when you consistently practice “Just Say NO!” you’ll create a foundation for overall improvement.

In addition to being more positive yourself you will start to notice the difference in those around you when you are more relaxed and collaborative. It is in that moment that you raise the bar for everyone else.

Simple Step #6 Just Say “NO!” Worksheet

Acknowledge	NO! Refocus
Example: I will never lose these last 20 pounds. I don't have the willpower to stay away from the cookies over the holidays.	Example: NO! I am, not going to fall into that trap. I am motivated to get back in shape. I will let myself have one cookie at each party and make sure that it is worth the calories.
Acknowledge	NO! Refocus

Simple Step #7 Question Your Thoughts

In this **Simple Step** you're going to use a previous technique of questioning if your thoughts are accurate.

- A) State how you feel & why.

- B) Ask yourself if the “why” is accurate or just your perception. Take each thought and play devil’s advocate with yourself.

C) If you are still feeling frustrated with a situation after you have gone through this **Simple Step** ask yourself one more question:

- a. Is there something else that has happened in your day that is bothering you and you are bringing those feelings into this situation?
- b. If your answer to this question is “Yes” then you need to go back to what is really bothering you and work through a previous Simple Step or two.

Here is an example of how this **Simple Step** works:

✓ “My daughter has no respect for me or authority.”

- Does your daughter normally call when she is running late? (Yes/no)
- Does she always run late (Yes/no)?
- Is this an isolated incident? (Yes/no)
- Does she usually do what I ask her to? (Yes/no).

✓ “My daughter doesn’t listen to me.”

- Is that the case usually? (Yes/no)
- Were you clear about your expectations? (Yes/no).
- Do you feel that she should have known your expectations even if you didn’t state them this time? (Yes/no).

Use the worksheet that follows to interrogate your insidious thoughts

Simple Step #7 Question Your Thoughts Worksheet

Thought	Question the Thought	Response
Example: My husband would rather go golfing than be home with me.	Example: Does my husband prefer golf to being with me?	Example: It just seems that way sometimes.
Thought	Question the Thought	Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Does he spend more of his free time golfing that he does with me? · If we have plans does he break them in order to go play golf? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · He only plays golf on Saturday mornings & once a year in a tournament. · Never

Try this Simple Step out on the next page.

Simple Step #7 Question Your Thoughts Worksheet

Simple Step #7 Question Your Thoughts Worksheet

Thought	Question the Thought	Response

THE PRINCIPLES

Your Actions Determine Your Experience

Perhaps you've heard the phrase, "As you sow, so shall ye reap. " The Cambridge Dictionary goes on to define this to mean, "The way you behave in life will affect the treatment you will receive from others."

These days it referred to as the Law of Attraction. There are books written on how the Law of Attraction works and how to use it to get the life that you want. The principle of the Law of Attraction simply means that "like attracts like." What you think about is what you draw into your life.

There is however only one key point in the Law of Attraction, which, if embraced, results in the change that you seek. It is:

What You Focus On Is What You Experience

If you "focus" on good things such as being happy, good relationships or abundance, those are what you experience. Notice the emphasis on 'focus.'" This is not about a passing thought...those never come to pass.

If you are focused on the abundance in your life you have more of it. If however you are focused on the lack of abundance you experience more "lack." The key question is:

What are you focusing on?

Let's assume that you want to have more money. (Do you ever hear anyone say that they want less!?) Do you dread paying your bills or balancing your checkbook for fear that you'll come up short? It's like you are waiting for the sky to fall. This focus is on the lack or fear of not having enough money. What you focus on is what you attract to you.

So if you have a fear of never having sufficient funds... you never have what you believe is enough money.

This has been the story of my life until I came to understand the Law of Attraction. What I focused on was what I experienced. Read more about my story.

Cheryl's Story

Throughout my life I have worried about money. It wouldn't matter if I had \$100 or \$1000 sitting in the bank, I would worry regardless. I'd fret that something would come up and we wouldn't be able to afford to take care of it. Every morning I'd download my bank accounts into Quicken and go online to check my credit card accounts. Even at a time when we were doing well by all accounts I was still fretting. Inevitably something would happen that reinforced my fears. I'd forget to record a check or worse yet I'd pay a credit card bill twice (and you can never get that money back!)

When I was going through my lowest point after losing my job I began to read more and more about the Law of Attraction. Throughout my life I'd focused on not having enough money and that is what I kept experiencing (in my perception that is.)

It was then that I decided to experiment with how I thought about money. I began to express gratitude for being able to pay my bills and save a little each month. I would only look at my checking account on payday. I set up all of my bills to pay automatically, on time.

This was a huge step for me...one that significantly reduced my stress level and amazingly those little issues stopped occurring. I never missed a payment and my account was always properly funded.

When I started to see how being grateful for what I had resulted in having more I never went back to that obsessive place of negativity again.

If you focus on the joy of having an income and are grateful that each month you can pay your bills you are focusing on financial abundance. You see your financial position as being acceptable. To you it is a gift.

It is all about perception...your perception. It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks. If you feel rich you are. If you feel poor, you are.

Consider the person who is never happy in their marriage. They focus on what their spouse doesn't provide. As long as the focus is on what they feel are the bad aspects about their marriage that is all that they experience. Even if your spouse walks on water when your only focus is on getting wet there is no joy in the marriage.

Changing your focus is easy once you're aware of your thoughts. The **Simple Step** here provides ways to both become truly aware of your thoughts and how to change them.

Simple Step #8 Focus On the Positive

- A) Make a list of what is important to you...your goals & dreams.
- B) Beside each entry write down what first comes to your mind when you think of them.
- C) Decide if your initial thought is positive or negative.

D) If it's negative then re-write your thought into a positive statement.

Here is an example of how this works:

- ✓ **Goal:** I want to own a larger home in a particular neighborhood, which has better services and schools.
 - **Current Thought:** “I really want to live there but I could never afford it.”
“I wish that I could afford to live there.” Notice that the focus is on the “lack” or inability to live where you want.
 - **New Thought:** “My current home is appreciating nicely and we take good care of it. If the market continues to increase by just 1% more every year then we’ll have enough equity to put down 30% on the home that we want and keep our payments close to what they are for our current home.”

If you focus on the positive and keep your focus on the positive you’ll discover that your dreams become your reality.

When you are passionate about your beliefs there is another side benefit. You find yourself making decisions that enable you to attain your goal faster. Now doesn't that feel good!

Use the worksheet on the next page to test out the positive approach.

Simple Step #8 Focus on the Positive Worksheet

Thought	Current Thought	New Thought
Example: I want to find a life partner who shares my dreams and is a good, loving person.	Example: Every guy that I've ever dated has been a loser. I seem to attract the shallow self absorb ones that can't keep a job.	Example I have not had good relationships in the past but everyone has been a learning experience and I have honed in on what is important to me. Now that I know exactly what I want in a partner I won't settle for less.
Thought	Current Thought	New Thought

TAKING THE NEXT STEPS

Manifest the Life You Want

Runners run the race in their heads before they take a single step. If you watched the Winter Olympics you witnessed the skiers visualizing their run as they stood beside the starting gate. Speakers run through their presentations and feel the audience's energy and applause.

In order to live the life of your dreams you need to see your life and experience your success right now. The Law of Attraction states "that which is likened to itself is drawn." As you focus your thoughts on seeing, feeling, even tasting your dreams and reinforce those efforts regularly, your dreams turn into your reality. In the prior chapters we focused on **Simple Steps** to enhance the foundational beliefs. In this chapter we're going to provide you with three **Simple Steps** that tie it all together. You've heard the phrase, "Seeing is believing." These tools enhance your ability to do just that. When you see...you believe...and once you believe...you become.

On the following pages you'll learn about the **Simple Steps** of Visualization, Vision Boards and Video Vision Boards.

Simple Step #9 Visualization

This **Simple Step** requires nothing more than for you to picture in your mind exactly what you want.

By focusing on a piece of your dream for as little as 17 seconds you begin to draw it into your life. Increase your focus time to 68 seconds and you accelerate the process. This takes some practice but is neither difficult nor time consuming. Here's how:

- A) Sit in a place where you will not be disturbed. All you need is a couple minutes of free time.

- B) See yourself enjoying what you want, right now. Drop the “want” out of the picture and see yourself in possession of what you desire. Hold it, taste it, enjoy it. Act “as if” it was already part of your life. For example if you want to be in better physical shape picture yourself in that shape. Feel the tightness of your muscles. See yourself in a mirror wearing shorts in your new size. Turn around to admire your toned legs. Picture yourself in a bikini walking along the beach. See people turn to watch you go by, admiring your body, appreciating your beauty.
- C) If at any time your thoughts wonder, acknowledge the thought, release it, and then return to your visualization. Remember that there are 60,000 thoughts going through your mind every day. Keeping your focus will take practice.
- D) Several times a day when you have even a few seconds repeat the visualization process. Continue this **Simple Step** and watch your dreams move into place.

The more you see yourself living your dream the more that you make decisions and take actions that bring you closer to your dreams.

Simple Step # 10 Vision Boards

Vision Boards are physical impressions of what you want your life to be. They reflect the images, affirmations and quotes that speak to you, personally.

Think of a Vision Board as a giant poster depicting the life of your dreams.

On your Vision Board:

- A) Post pictures that represent your goals and dreams. The pictures that you use can be gathered from any source available as long as the subject moves you.

For example if your dream is to start a singing career select photos of your favorite singing artist, of a microphone up on a stage or of a costume you would wear.

B) Add affirmations and quotes. These are the words and phrases that are important to you. Using the singing career example you may print out the phrases, "I sing like a true diva." Or "I love to perform." If your goal is to be a runner you might add, "Run like the wind." Or "I love running!" Perhaps there are great quotes from role models that have achieved your desired dream. Print them out and post them on your Vision Board.

C) Choose an actual board to mount your photos and words on that is appealing to you. These can be as simple as corkboard or poster board. For something more elaborate paint an actual bulletin board or cover it with fabric. Whatever you choose must be visually appealing to you.

Vision Boards are great to post in your office or anywhere that you see it often. Take a few moments every day to look at what you have gathered. What you focus on is what you experience. Start experiencing your dreams and goals faster by using this **Simple Step**.

Simple Step #11 Video Vision Boards

If you enjoy technology and would like to take your visualization efforts and amp them up then this **Simple Step** is for you.

Video Vision Boards or Mind Movies are impressions of what you want your life to be. They reflect the images, affirmations & sounds that speak to you, personally.

Generally lasting 3-5 minutes you can watch them anytime you have a spare few minutes. Because they are videos you can play them on your iPhone, Laptop or almost

any video device. As with visualization the more you watch your Video Vision Board the faster you realize your dreams.

- A) For your Video Vision Board select pictures that represent your goals and dreams. Photos can be personal or ones that you have found on the internet. For example if your dream is to visit every country in Europe then select photos of landmarks or cities that represent them.

- B) Add affirmations. These are the words and phrases that are important to you. Using the travel example you may say, "I travel in Europe often." Or "I enjoy exploring new cities in Europe." If your goal is to be physically fit you might say, "My body is strong, toned and fit." It is important that you phrase your affirmations in the present tense and act "as if" you are already in possession of your dream. This affirmation may be spoken by you or someone else or appear as words on the screen.

- C) Finally add music or sounds to your Video Vision Board. You may select a favorite song that energizes you or sounds that are soothing. These are all personal choices.

Watch your Video Vision Board every morning when you first get up and before you go to bed at night. These few minutes of video reinforce what you are attracting into your life.

Search for "Mind Movies" on the Internet for more information on how to create your own Video Vision Board.

A Few Final Thoughts

The first step to creating the life that you want is to realize that you already possess the skills and talent that you need. I wrote this book to help you make subtle changes in your perspective. Those **Simple Steps** have the power to result in **Real Change**... substantial change... in your happiness. When you make the choice to be happy your life miraculous improves in every aspect.

The **Simple Steps** don't take much time and you don't need to do all of them. Pick one. Make it the one that you can commit to doing every day for the next week. When you have accomplished that keep going for another week. As you start to see how your changes affect your life and the lives of others for the better then you are ready to take it up a notch and try another **Simple Step**.

It is not important that you tell anyone what you are doing. In fact it's actually quite fun not to say anything and just watch their reactions to you when you act differently than they are use to!

It's time to take control of your life, your happiness and to make your dreams your reality!

Enjoy the journey! It is there that you will find the greatest joy.

For more **Simple Steps** that address specific issues please visit us on the Internet at <http://www.simplestepsrealchange.com>. You can also download additional copies of the worksheets for your personal use.

Become a Fan of Simple Steps... Real Change on Facebook [here](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cheryl Maloney

After a life-changing move from her home in the Pacific Northwest to Texas in 2006 several major events in her life compounded her stress. Her husband was diagnosed a series of life changing conditions.

The company that she had been loyal to for almost 25 years was acquired. At 53 she found herself unemployed at a time when jobs were scarce and when literally thousands of experienced workers and new graduates were competing for a decreasing number of positions. She invested in real estate when the market was hot only to have it crash. The investments which were planned to be an additional source of income disappeared. Now separated by distance and employment from her friends and support system, Cheryl joined the ranks of the unemployed and isolated.

Daily news would compound the stress and fear reporting doom and gloom for workers, investments and the future in general.

While Cheryl joined the millions of baby boomers struggling to recreate their future and retirement in this ever-changing world she still felt alone. She knew however that she wasn't.

It was in this space that Cheryl found her voice. The voice was the one that reminded her that she was grateful for the life that she had. She is blessed with a wonderful husband, a loving family and the ability to deal with anything that is thrown at her.

In November 2009 Cheryl launched the website, <http://www.simplestepsrealchange.com>. It is her vision that when you focus on the positive aspects of life they multiply.

She believes that happiness is a choice and her mission is to help others make that choice. She blogs daily (Monday-Friday) on everyday life and current events. With each blog Cheryl provides Simple Steps which, if used consistently, have the power to move you into that positive place where happiness thrives.

Cheryl lives with her husband Jack, dog CJ and cats Max, Calvin, Hobbes, Poncho and Lefty outside of Dallas Texas.

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