

Why I Wrote This Book

In the midst of the most horrific emotional pain one can imagine, I saw myself smiling again. Even with suicide lingering in the back of my mind; God gave me a glimmer of hope, and I held on to it.

A thought of who I was created to be, brought me out of my misery. Then God held out his mighty hand and offered me hope on a strand. I wrapped my body around this tiny strand, like a circus performer shimmying on a tight rope. But what if it broke? It seemed so fragile! If it broke I would fall into the abyss... never to return to life again. At that very moment, a voice inside of me said, "It will not break because I, Almighty God am holding it with my hand." And I cling to hope for life.

Hope on a strand, visions of a future, and promises of a better life is the reason I am writing this book. *10 Tips for Power Thinking* does not lend a sympathetic ear to the woes of the past, but provides you with faith for the future, applicable solutions, scientific fact and stories of success through power thinking.

If I could rise from such a state, think of what you can do. If you want more happiness, better health, better relationships and more success in your life, *10 Tips for Power Thinking* is for YOU!

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10 TIPS FOR POWER THINKING

Maximize Your
Health & Happiness
For an Empowered Life

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10 TIPS FOR POWER THINKING

**10 Tips
FOR
POWER
THINKING**

**Maximize Your
Health & Happiness**

**For an
Empowered Life**

By: Peggy Freeman

Foreword by Jerome Horton

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Maximize Your Health & Happiness For An Empowered Life
by Peggy Freeman

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DEDICATION

I am grateful to have had wonderful parents in my life; Samuel and Dorothy Nimmers who are now deceased but very much alive in my heart and soul. They have inspired me to believe anything is possible and their values and encouragement have enriched my life. Their guidance has given me the confidence to succeed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many wonderful people in my life who contribute to my happiness and the success of this book. I wish to thank my son and daughter-in-law, Gregory and Casey Freeman, and my daughters, La Shawnda and La Tanya Freeman. They believe in my vision and have encouraged me throughout this process. I am also appreciative to my niece, Erica Simmons for her support and for setting up sessions at Starbucks and Coffee Bean for us to meet and write our books together. I am grateful for my beautiful grandchildren, Christopher White and Makenze and Alexandria Freeman, who inspire me to be the best that I can be, and to leave this legacy for them.

Writing this book has been a journey, and I am thankful for the people who have been a part of it. People like my dear friend, Diann Shumate who is also one of the editors of this book. I appreciate Diann for taking time out of her busy schedule to work on my many projects and for her genuine love and friendship.

To my good friend and tennis partner, Marlene Brand, who encourages me constantly, and my play brother and sister Lemuel and Bronwyn Gregg, thank you for your ongoing support.

I cannot forget to acknowledge Pastors, Ron

(Senior Pastor) and Gina Taylor (Minister of Music), at Arise Christian Center in Los Angeles, California. Both of their ministries' brings out the best in me and motivates me to reach for higher heights with God. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to serve as the leader of the Business Prayer Group at Arise, where we talk about important topics like having a Vision, The Power of Your Thoughts, and Successful Leadership God's Way. I want to also thank my good friend and creative strategist, Jeannie Jones, for her artistic expertise and book cover design. In addition, I am grateful to Claudena Wesley for the late night brainstorming sessions that we have together.

During a difficult time in my life I had the privilege of meeting Robert L. Allen, LMFT, who is a family therapist of Circle of Love in Eagle Rock, California. I thank him for inspiring me to be myself and for giving me the opportunity to speak to men and women who have been challenged by domestic violence and abuse. It has been my extreme privilege to talk with them about changing their mindset in order to change their lives. Robert and his clients are an added inspiration for this project.

Most of all I want to thank God for the gift of Jesus Christ and for the Holy Spirit's leading while writing this book.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

One of my favorite things to do is smile at people and watch them smile back. At times I challenge myself to see if I can get the most difficult people to smile, and if they don't, I give them a nice complement. That usually works! Smiles that are sincere and from the heart can be contagious and I just love the fact that we can give them away for free.

Let me introduce myself, I am Peggy Freeman, author, speaker and journalist, and I am delighted to bring to you, *10 Tips for Power Thinking: Maximize Your Health and Happiness for an Empowered Life*. This title was given to me while preparing to speak for a woman's group. A friend, Lisa Perry listened to my speech about the trials and successes of my life. Then she interrupted me and said. "That sounds like; *10 Tips for Power Thinking: Maximize Your Health and Happiness for an Empowered Life*." Hurrying to write down my title, prompted me to keep writing. I wrote all ten chapter titles then proceeded to write the book. There you have it! 10 Tips for Power Thinking, working principles for receiving more happiness and better health along with personal stories of success.

When interviewing well known celebrities, I look for traits that could possibly attribute to their success.

Although they are no different from the rest of us, I find that their success seems to be attributed to the way they think about the job they are pursuing. One day, I was reading an article on the Internet from TIME magazine about celebrities who have been homeless in the past; people like Jennifer Lopez, Jewel, Hilary Swank, Steve Jobs and Tyler Perry to name a few. It appeared that these actors were determined to succeed. In my opinion, their minds were wired to think that no matter what it took, they were going to pursue their goals and dreams. This type of positive thinking seems to speak to the mindset and actions necessary for all of us to become successful in our careers and personal lives. I am in no way inferring homelessness is a criterion for success, but what I am saying is that with the right mindset, behavior and actions, you too can turn your challenges into successes.

Communicating is part of what I do as a journalist, mother, and the founder of Write Now Publishing Company, a professional writing and publishing firm (<http://www.writenowpublishingco.com>). I also interview people and write articles for *Aspirations* (a printed periodical), and *The Los Angeles Post* (an online newspaper). Effective communication is important in these arenas and in all areas of our lives. Effective communication is essential to our success, however,

all communication must first begin with a thought. *10 Tips for Power Thinking* is a simple guide for changing negative thoughts to positive ones. Although power thinking is a process, with repetition, diligence, and action, you can achieve more of what you want and less of what you don't want with the right mindset. Thank you for reading *10 Tips for Power Thinking* and it is my sincere desire for you to experience more happiness and better health for an empowered life of success.

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FOREWORD

As an elected official, I've had the great privilege of engaging in conversation with several U.S. Presidents, many CEO's of Fortune 500 companies and philanthropists from all over the world. I've also enjoyed the company of people from all walks of life; from my next door neighbors, to the homeless person name Charles. Everyday Charles weathers the challenges of climate and deprivation, in order to maintain his independence and freedom. In his mind, not having permanent housing, frees him from the complexities of the world including the millions of cares and anxieties that bombards our minds on a daily basis. The one thing they all have in common with each other, and with you and I, is free-will. God has given all of us the most powerful weapon on earth, the power of decision. That power can save lives, start a war, provide deliverance, or cause us to live happy and healthy lives. The truth is each of us has the uncanny ability to use man's power of decision to shape our reality, to change the direction of our lives and the circumstances around us; we all have the ability to impact the lives of others.

Just as we are inspired by the great decisions of Moses, to forsake the throne of Egypt, to endure

the pressures of leadership, to stay true to the Word of God, and to trust God against all odds – this book will inspire you too, to make better decisions for your life.

10 Tips for Power Thinking is an operations manual and a reference guide on how the mind's decision-making power was designed to protect, to guide, to uplift and to encourage you --- and how to get the optimum use from the tremendous gift of thought, that God has given you.

10 Tips for Power Thinking will also help you get connected with a friend who will always be at your side – if you so choose, someone who can help you and guide you through the many mazes of life and lead you back to God if you have strayed. You might refer to God as intuition, or the mighty conscience, or that still small voice inside of you. Jesus called Him the Holy Spirit. If you are interested in having an intimate relationship with the Person of God and want to understand what it means to become an imitator of God in your daily life, reading this book will help. All of the essentials are here for any individual who wants to tap into the power of decision that God has given every one of us.

The author uses personal stories in making these valuable lessons intriguing, entertaining and

memorable. Using real life experiences, the author challenges us to keep advancing to the high ground and to become advocates for our own happiness and the happiness of others. Be prepared to stop along the way and to laugh, to cry a little, to be surprised, and to be filled with joy. This book will not stop the negative thoughts from trespassing into your mind, but it will arm you with techniques to dismantle them or to have them arrested for consuming your time. People have gone insane, committed suicide, and abandoned their integrity because they have allowed too many of the wrong thoughts to control their actions. The ten tips you will learn in this book will help you process the multitude of ideas and information that assault your heart and mind daily, seeking to influence your thoughts and actions

The word of God tells us that we should renew our minds daily, in order to live a purposeful life! Romans 12:2. Be careful what you think because your thoughts can ruin your life. This book will give you tools to set boundaries around your mind; it will help you set up “do not trespass signs.” These signs can help you fight against empty, unproductive, and abusive thoughts.

I encourage you to spend time with the words in this book and take some time to change your mind. That is what free will is all about; the will to change

your mind at anytime. This book will help you practice thinking about the solution instead of focusing on the problem as you acknowledge the problem as the first step toward a good decision. Remember, your brain is designed to absorb thoughts so why not feed it something positive and read, *10 Tips for Power Thinking*.

Chairman Jerome Horton

State Board of Equalization 4th District

INTRODUCTION

10 Tips for Power Thinking: Maximize Your Health and Happiness for an Empowered Life, is designed to help you change or enhance your thought life. It is an easy guide for improving your success through the power of your thoughts and words. *10 Tips for Power Thinking* is based upon my own personal experience and the experiences of other people, along with scientific truths. In this book, there are ten topics along with personal stories. Although some of the names have been changed in the testimonial stories, the situations are real.

Foundations were set for me to write this book from my childhood upbringing, life experiences, and my faith in God. The principles that I practice continue to help me and others, become more effective, more confident, happier and maintain a healthier life. When I engage in power thinking, I worry less, fear less, and stress less. Power thinking has helped me to receive more of what I want in life and less of what I don't want. With application and practice, *10 Tips for Power Thinking* can help you to do the same.

The key to more happiness and better health is to change negative thoughts, actions and behavior to positive ones.

It is impossible to talk about power thinking without first addressing the makeup of the mind, body and soul. The soul is the spirit side of us where our thoughts, emotions and will reside. Although this is not a book that is scientific in nature, there are certain scientific facts that are important to mention when considering changing thoughts from negative to positive. It is a fact that our health and happiness are partly dependent upon the way we think (thoughts), the underlying emotions associated with those thoughts (feelings), and our willingness to act out our thoughts (will). *10 Tips for Power Thinking* will help you to uncover and change those thoughts that hinder you from living a happier and healthier life.

Mind

A recent scientific discovery revealed that the brain is dynamic in nature and not static, as previously thought. Parts of the brain are constantly changing due to its plasticity. The brain may change based upon our environment, physical stimulus, and thoughts. This notion is simplified in an article by Erin Hoiland, Neuroscience for Kids Consultant, and Edited by Eric H. Chudler, PH.D.

It was once believed that as we aged, the brain's networks would become fixed. In the past two decades, however, an enormous amount of research has revealed that the brain never stops changing and adjusting. Learning, as defined by Tortora and Grabowski (1996), is "the ability to acquire new knowledge or skills through instruction or experience."

Brain plasticity is what allows us to keep learning into adulthood and throughout our lives. Changing the way we receive and process thoughts can lead to growth experiences in both children and adults. Therefore, better thoughts can create better living and less than better thoughts can create less than better living. If thoughts can change the development of the brain, conversely we can change our development by thoughts. Ultimately, we have the power to change our thoughts in order to experience an empowered life of happiness and better health.

*Changing your thought life includes
changing the heart.*

Based on another scientific fact noted in an

article entitled *Neurocardiology: The Brain in the Heart*; Dr. J. Andrew Armour, introduced the concept of a functional “heart brain” in 1991. His work revealed that the heart has a complex intrinsic nervous system that is sufficiently sophisticated to qualify as a “little brain” in its own right.” In other words, the heart has a mind of its own. Yes the heart has a brain that operates independent from the one in our head. Therefore, it is easy to conclude that once the head’s brain accepts change, then the heart must accept it also. “For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” Proverbs 23: 7a (AMP).

Body

It has been proven that both negative and positive thoughts can affect the physical body. If you are consistently stressed, angry, or worried, doctors know that those ill emotions can lead to diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, headaches, eczema, panic attacks and even death. If you have an abundance of positive emotions, and your life is filled with thankfulness, happiness and love, the amount of stress that enters the body is naturally limited. Thus, the endorphins that make you feel happy are released throughout the body for good effects. Which one do you want more of?

Soul

The soul is the inner being of man that houses emotions and will. Some say it is the spirit of mankind. Emotions are linked to our soul and play a powerful role in how we see and feel about situations. What we feel from our emotions can be comforting or disturbing. Emotions can be based upon past knowledge and allowed to dictate feelings about new experiences. We often say that we don't feel like doing something, yet how we feel should not dictate whether our life is positive or not. We have the ability to alter negative emotions in exchange for positive ones with a change of mindset. Once a positive change of mind has occurred, a productive outcome is produced by engaging the will into action.

Will

Engaging the will is not always an easy task and some people are better at it than others. They are known for having "will power." Will power is an action word, and the Webster dictionary describes will power as "strength of will, mind, or determination; self-control." Although some people have strong will power, it does

not necessarily mean that they are always successful. There are external factors that can prohibit success, like a lack of action. However, will power operates best when it is used to change undesired behavior to desired behavior. For example, many people stop smoking by replacing the cigarette with a stick of gum. Whenever they feel the urge to smoke, they grab gum and chew it instead. Although having the determination to stop smoking is a key factor in changing behavior from one way to another, the brain wants to continue the task the old way. Therefore it is best to replace an old behavior with a new one.

Engaging the will in order to take action is the final step required to make a change. However, the question is, what will you choose to think? Will you think about those things that are good, lovely, and wholesome and discard fear, anger, and selfish pride? These are options that can create physical and spiritual life or death. What will you choose?

VISION

I like to think about the things that I want to happen in life, because the visualization of my dreams and goals make me happy. Visualizing paints a picture in my mind and mentally brings me closer to what I want to experience in life. Last winter, I was sitting in my living room enjoying the sound of rain hitting the sidewalk and the echo of planes flying overhead. Brilliant flames illuminated through red cinnamon candles in my fireplace. A blanket and hot cocoa warmed me inside and out as I typed on my laptop. Using all my senses, I smelled cinnamon in the air, tasted sweet white chocolate, and heard the raindrops pouncing on my rooftop. The sound of rain relaxed me and sent my thoughts into faraway places. I imagined myself at one of them, on my way to the continent of Africa! I leaned back in the soft leather seat aboard a luxurious wide body Boeing 757, with the clouds beneath the aircraft's wings. I was flying to a distant land to explore the countryside and the customs of its people. I was filled with joy in anticipation of my arrival.

I believe that the visions that we perceive are dropped into our spirit by God, and although many of them seem too big to manage, one day they can become our reality. When we receive visions, we should take steps to preserve them. Write the vision down in detail, talk about it to people who encourage you, and take action towards achieving your goal. Don't worry about the enormity of the vision because with hard work and confidence one day your dream can become a reality. I believe this because it has happened for me many times before.

With God all Things Are Possible For Those Who Believe

It was very early in my career when I received a vision to visit the location where my ghostwriting clients' stories would take place. I had not written publicly, nor did I have a client to write for at the time, yet the vision was given to me anyway. Within a year, I received a phone call from Michael Casey, PHD, who responded to an ad that I ran in the local paper. Dr. Casey and I met and he shared with me over eighty letters that his now deceased mother had written to him over a twenty-year period. When I asked him what he wanted me to do with the letters, he told me that he wanted to chronicle them and create a story to share

with his family and friends. After reading the letters from his mother, I was able to visualize scenery, faces of characters and some geography. However, I was not able to get a clear feel for the small town of Yazoo, since I had never visited Mississippi. Nevertheless, I continued the process with the help of my client.

Within a few months I was called to Indiana and then to Texas to work on two short-term assignments. While flying in the small aircraft from Evanston, Indiana, to Dallas, Texas, the pilot announced, “We are now flying over Texarkana. Texarkana is located in both Texas and Arkansas,” he said. Then there was dead silence until landing. I wondered why the pilot mentioned Texarkana and no other cities. Perhaps it was for my benefit, since my friend and fellow journalist, Althea (Alfie) Dixon, lived near there. Once arriving in Texas, I stayed with my brother, Alan, and sister-in-law, Evelyn, in their lovely two-story home in the quiet community of Grand Prairie. A friend and I drove back and forth to work and when the assignment ended I called Alfie to visit with her. She and I agreed to stay at her home in Mineral Springs, Arkansas a couple of days, then to visit Little Rock and to take a road trip to Yazoo, Mississippi, where my client had grown up. Eager to take the journey, I hopped on the Greyhound bus and arrived in Texarkana in less than

two hours where Alfie met me.

Up the winding road to the hills, Alfie and I ascended to the quaint mountain town of Mineral Springs. It was love at first sight! I saw the tall pine trees, an enormous lake, cows, and the countryside. All of a sudden we came to a screeching halt! Screech! went the brakes. Two large black and white skunks crossed the road in front of us. *Pee-yoo*, I thought, but there was no smell, just two beautiful furry animals that were not watching where they were going as they crossed the road. After composing ourselves from the initial shock, Alfie resumed driving into Mineral Springs, Arkansas, where the total population is 1,208 according to the 2010 U.S Census. That evening we toured the historical *Nashville News* printing press that has been in operation in the charming town of Nashville, Arkansas since 1878.

Saturday evening after coming back from Little Rock, we prepared for our road trip to Yazoo. We left at 3:00 a.m. Sunday morning and headed south down the highway. There was lush greenery that led into the back woods of Louisiana and Mississippi. Seeing the trees gave me mixed emotions as I viewed the remnants of civil war confederate flags, bronze war statues, and a battleground where the South experienced a major victory. There were reminders all over the South of the Civil War and what it represented. It was difficult to

understand why the people were still holding on to the past. I surmised it was because of the overwhelming economic loss they experienced without slave labor. After six hours of traveling, we finally reached Jackson, Mississippi, and it was time to take a different highway into Yazoo. The map directed us to take highway 363, The Old Confederate Road. The Old Confederate Road was named because of the South's vantage point during the Civil War. It was a historical road in the mists of slave quarters, cotton fields, and Confederate command posts. Here I was in the heart of slave trade off the Mississippi River. Although hundreds of years had passed, I could still hear the cannons firing in my head and see the slaves picking cotton in vast fields. What a vivid imagery I had in the midst of what is now known as a free country. Finally, we arrived in Yazoo, Mississippi, where my vision became a reality. It was a phenomenal journey between states of war, agriculture, industry, history, majestic countryside, and a dream come true. Wow! What a Vision!

Believing, speaking and taking action produced much more than I ever expected. It produced a vision that had become a reality. It also produced a memorable trip with a remarkable journalist and friend. In addition, Alfie and I met several people along the way who told us stories, stories of their struggles for civil rights

in the South, stories of college degrees and success and of inspiring thoughts and visions of their own. Although this was one of the most amazing visions that had ever manifested for me, there have been many others. I remember having a vision as a child that I forgot about until it became evident thirty years later!

Move towards your vision and make it happen.

A Childhood Vision

At the age of seven, I recall sitting on the ottoman next to the living room floor furnace of our white, wood-frame house. It was my ritual to sit there after getting dressed in my bedroom, where there was no direct heat. After putting on my clothes, I would run to the ottoman and wait for my mom to pull up a chair to comb my hair.

“Do you have the hair oil?” Mother would say.

“Yes, Mom,” I replied, handing her the greasy round jar for her to use.

My mom would then commence to parting my hair right down the middle and plait two braids that I called, American-Indian style; one on each side. Sitting there on the leather, oval-shaped hassock, as we called it, was my favourite spot to warm my feet from the cool Los Angeles’ mornings. Most of all, it was the best place

for daydreaming.

One morning, I envisioned myself holding a microphone and asking famous men and women questions. I never had to look at my notes or remember the lines because the questions came naturally. Although there were very few brown-skinned newscasters on television during the sixties, something in me could still see myself performing the role just as plain as I see the virtual paper that I am typing on. Over the years, I completely forgot about that vision. I worked many jobs but none of which included journalism.

During a desperate time in my life, I decided to put the pen to the paper and communicate my feelings to my ex-husband. Out of desperation came my love for writing prose and poetry. The passion for journalism that was instilled in me as a child was ignited once again. Today, I write for papers, interview celebrities, politicians, and everyday people. I also own my own writing firm, Write Now Publishing Company. Writing has become my passion and the love of my life. With faith, patience and perseverance you too can reclaim and pursue new visions, dreams and goals. It's never too late to dream again.

*Reach back and find your vision. It is only
one thought away.*

Visions Are Meant To Become Reality

The mind relays endless possibilities within our thoughts every day. Some are tied to lifelong vision and purpose, while others are merely passing through. It could be your quest to motivate people through public speaking, invent a device, or become the first to discover a cure for cancer. Either way, vision is very important for power thinking. The question is what will you do with your vision? Will you act upon it or will you watch your vision go by? There are people who live their lives in regret due to unfulfilled dreams. They allow fear and/or peer pressure to stop them from pursuing their visions and ideas. However, you can pursue your vision with courage and live a fulfilled life. Try following some simple steps that have become a part of my life.

- 1) Write the vision on a piece of paper.
- 2) Speak of it as if it exists.
- 3) Believe the vision is attainable.
- 4) Take action and create.

I know that it is natural for discouraging thoughts to creep into the mind. Thoughts that say, “I can’t do

this,” “I am afraid,” “Will I fail?” or “I don’t have the time.” These types of thoughts seem to be instilled in us for various reasons. It could be because as infants our parents or guardians told us “no,” “stop” and “don’t touch,” in order to prevent us from harm. Later in life we heard words like, “You can’t do that,” and “No one has ever done that in our family before.” These limiting beliefs are used to prevent us from becoming disappointed in the case of failure. Because of these negative influences, it will take practice, positive energy and positive actions to repel the untruths we hear or tell ourselves. Be aware! When you hear negative words from others or in your mind, tell yourself the positive counterpart, which is the truth. Recognize when unproductive outside influences try to sway your thoughts. Stay away from them. Keep your mind on what you want to achieve and how good that makes you feel. Think about your vision often. See it in writing. See the vision in your mind. Pray for success. Believe it is possible to achieve. Then practice steps 2-4 over and over again until your visions become reality and most of all, keep a positive outlook for your success.

“It was character that got us out of bed, commitment that moved us into action and discipline that enabled us to follow through.”

-Zig Ziglar

A POSITIVE OUTLOOK

Years ago, I carpooled with a woman named Lola, who seemed to be chipper all the time. What I mean by chipper is that Lola greeted me every morning with a big ole happy face smile and chattered all the way to work. She talked and laughed with enthusiasm about everything. Even when Lola spoke about something bad, she did not let it get her down. She sprang right back into happiness. When Lola talked, I responded to her cheer courteously, but in the back of my mind I was thinking, ‘It is too early in the morning for all this happiness.’ One morning I asked Lola, ‘Why are you always so happy?’ She told me that she was excited to see a new day and that she could not wait to celebrate it. You see, Lola had a miserable childhood, and when she became of age, she decided to rejoice knowing that she was able to determine her own personal happiness. I learned a valuable lesson from Lola that day. No matter what your situation may be, you can always find something to celebrate.

Do you tend to take a favorable view and expect a positive outcome; or do you consistently anticipate the worst? How you respond to these questions may determine the way you feel about yourself and the world around you. If you want to live a happier and healthier life, you must first look within, choose patterns of thoughts that produce optimism, and let go of unnecessary negativity.

Being an optimist means that you tend to look at events and conditions in a productive manner and expect a positive outcome. An optimist knows that he or she will face obstacles yet they decide to forge ahead and meet the challenges anticipating victory. A pessimist is the opposite of an optimist. A pessimistic sees situations as problematic and expects to encounter negative results. If you are uncertain which category fits you, look at the following list of traits and determine your present outlook?

Chart Your Most Frequent Emotions

Pessimistic	Optimistic
Anxious	Calm
Cynical	Honest
Depressed	Aspiring
Defensive	Loving
Angry	Kind
Unhappy	Happy
Worthlessness	Faithful

Occasional feelings of pessimism do not mean that you are a pessimist. It is when the character is reflective of a routine negative behavior. The reality is that there will be good experiences, and there will be bad ones. The outcome is not determined by the experiences, but how we choose to look at them. Gratitude is one way to produce a positive outlook for an empowered life of happiness.

Gratitude

We can find happiness by developing an attitude of gratitude. Being thankful and expressing that gratefulness to others not only impacts your attitude—it also affects the person who receives the gratuity. As the giver, you express and receive both rewards.

Many people believe the opposite, that success creates happiness; however, psychology researcher, Shawn Achor, author of *The Happiness Advantage*, and one of the worlds' leading experts on the connection between happiness and success found that:

“We think if we work harder and achieve some entrepreneurial goal, then we’ll be happier. But the research is clear that every time you have a success, your brain changes what success means. So for you and for your team, if happiness is on the opposite side

of success, you'll never get there. But if you increase your levels of happiness in the midst of a challenge—in the midst of searching for investment, in the midst of a down economy—what we find is that all of your success rates rise dramatically - every business' outcome improves."

Lewis, author and theologian, once said:

"I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. . . . If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them." –C. S. Lewis

Being thankful and expressing your appreciation shows gratitude. Giving of your time, money, space and resources is also a meaningful way to express gratitude—and don't forget to be grateful for the small things too.

Gratitude could be the key to your next level of success.

Is Success In Your Outlook?

In chapter one I talked about the trip that I took to Yazoo, Mississippi, with my friend, Alfie Dixon. From that trip my vision was birthed and so was one of hers. However, the discovery of her vision came from pain. Let me explain. Alfie and I visited the newspaper press in Nashville, Arkansas. After touring the facility the editor told us about the various types of services the paper offered. The editor told Althea that she could have a paper of her own. At the time, Alfie did not want to publish a paper. She said it would be too much work, and it had never been a desire of hers. Months later when Alfie was laying in the bed after having foot surgery and completely out of pain medicine, she thought about taking aspirin to relieve the pain. Alfie also thought about producing a paper while she recovered. She took her mind off of the pain and started to focus on the paper. “What should I call it?” she said. “Well, I am inspired, but boy could I use some aspirin right now. Oh! I will call the paper *Aspiration*, which comes from aspirin and inspiration.” That’s how her vision was birthed, and today she is known worldwide for the periodical she publishes and prints quarterly. Not only that, Alfie’s Facebook posting of *Aspiration* along with her positive political

views has earned her the distinction of being, White House Correspondent Journalist. Alfie's positive outlook created more happiness and success in her life.

Live In The Moment

Another way to enjoy a more positive outlook is to remain in a present state of mind, as opposed to the past or future. I like what Dr. Ron Taylor, Pastor of Arise Christian Center says when he quotes John Maxwell; "Do not over exaggerate yesterday; it ended last night. Do not overestimate tomorrow; it is not here yet and do not underestimate today; it is all we have."

There may be a need to reflect upon the past, but do not hang out there—especially if it is a grim reminder of something bad that happened. It is okay to envision the future, but consistently living in the future may be unrealistic since no one really knows the future. According to an article in *The Guardian*, dated November 11, 2010, science correspondent Ian Sample says that "people are distracted from the task at hand nearly half the time, and daydreaming consistently makes them less happy." Therefore, I find it best to spend the majority of my time in the present. Living in the present allows us to optimize our day and enjoy the things we would have missed while our mind drifts

elsewhere.

Maintaining a positive outlook can help to change circumstances from negative to positive. A positive outlook creates more happiness which ultimately leads to better health and success.

In the next chapter you will discover how setting emotional boundaries can help you to enjoy a positive outlook and to live a more fulfilled life.

EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES

Many people determine how they feel based upon the circumstances they face. If everything is going good, they are happy and satisfied, but as soon as they encounter difficulties their whole attitude changes. It is natural to react to undesirable situations that occur. However, if you do not want your emotions to dictate your actions, it's best to set boundaries on them. Setting healthy emotional boundaries has a tendency to lead to better relationships and an overall happier and healthier life.

At times our emotions cause us to feel or act like we are completely out of control as they sway back and forth like a ship tossed by the sea. All of us know someone who “flies off the handle” whenever he or she is faced with challenging situations. Their fits of outrage affect the entire environment and the people around them. When a person behaves in this manner it makes others feel uncomfortable because they are like a time bomb waiting to implode. I have experienced this with a friend. I never knew what to say to her

because I was never sure how she would process my comments. Many times she became offended, and I did not know what I said to offend her. She seemed to internalize my statements and personal opinions. If that person is you, and you find that your emotions are consistently out of control, this is a sign that something is amiss. Get to the root of the problem and be willing to control your emotions. Pray and ask God to reveal the problem to you-and be open to receive the answer. That may mean that you will need to find a quiet place of solitude to clearly hear the voice inside of you. If you seek God with your whole heart, He will answer according to His word.

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. Matthew 7:7

(NIV)

You may not react to problems or to people in this manner, but covertly your attitude changes negatively when you are faced with challenging circumstances. God would not have created men and women to suffer prolonged agony from their emotions. He gave each one of us a coping device. By setting emotional boundaries, we are able to define our limits and take control of our emotions. When I am faced with

challenges that cause excessive anger and frustration, I ask myself, “does the crime fit the punishment?” Perhaps what I am angry about is displaced. Maybe being a little annoyed is more appropriate. If that is the case, I will want to release the anger and work on the annoyance. I ask myself what annoyed me about the situation and was it justified. Analyzing your emotions is a good way to get in touch with them.

I find that often times our emotions are displaced because we set standards for people that are unrealistic and sometimes impossible for them to live up to. Then, we become disappointed, annoyed and angry when they do not meet our expectations. We should be careful about setting standards for others based upon our own principles. We should take responsibility for our own emotions in order to experience more happiness and better health. Besides, holding on to negative emotions is unhealthy. It can cause hypertension, diabetes, and numerous other diseases. Yet often we hold onto a problem like a woman clutching her purse from a suspected robber, or a football player gripping the ball as he catches it in the end zone. Move the problem away from you so that you may see it more clearly. That will give you an opportunity to examine it from a distance.

My friend Jeannie Jones is amazing when it comes

to setting healthy emotional boundaries while facing adversity. At one point in her life Jeannie had an accident and incurred several injuries and financial loss. Due to the accident, she lived in constant pain. At the same time her four-year-old granddaughter went through major surgery and stayed in the hospital for several months. In addition, Jeannie's sister had multiple strokes where she almost died. During this period of emotional and physical pain, some of Jeannie's closest friends had no idea that she was experiencing these awful personal and family trials. When she revealed to me what she was going through, I could hardly believe it! I asked her how she was able to endure such pain and still have joy in her heart. She told me that she has a lot to be thankful for. Jeannie said, "First of all I begin my day with gratitude. I thank God for my breath and every beat of my heart. I thank Him for setting the foundation and structure of my day to be good."

Jeannie's daily acknowledgement of her blessings help to keep the negative emotions in check and releases feelings of joy and gratitude that somehow overshadow the pain. Jeannie merely decides in the morning that her day will be wonderful.

Misplaced Emotions

Setting emotional boundaries is also important when it comes to relationships. I have a friend name Margaret who met someone from the opposite sex. They dated for several weeks in order to get to know one another better. Margaret found that they had a lot in common and enjoyed his company. He was outgoing and made her laugh. She was attracted to him, and he was attracted to her. However, after getting to know one another better they discovered that they were not compatible after all. There were social differences that could not be ignored.

In order for Mason and Margaret to maintain a healthy friendship, Margaret had to tell herself that there was no reason for her to be overcome with infatuation for him. After all, they had only known each other for a short period of time. It seemed as if her desires for Mason were exaggerated. She felt as if she was in love with him only after a few weeks. The emotions that she felt for Mason really had nothing to do with love. She did not know him well enough to love him.

She later discovered that her emotions were based upon a physical and emotional desire to have a husband. Having a clear understanding of herself, allowed Margaret to step away from her emotions and deal with the real feelings she possessed. She

and Mason remained friends as she continued to acknowledge to herself that she was not in love with him, but merely desired to be in love. Over time she was no longer infatuated with Mason, and Margaret learned many valuable lessons about putting her emotions in perspective. Setting emotional boundaries kept her from doing something that she might regret later. She also gained inner strength having resisted the temptations that confronted her due to displaced emotions. Setting a standard helped Margaret to identify the type of man she really wanted. Taking a realistic view of her emotions helped Margaret to put her relationship with Mason in its place while creating a healthy and happy friendship with him.

How To Change Your Mindset

If you want to change your attitude you must first change your thinking so that the heart will follow. I like to use Jeannie Jones' Model for Disciplining Emotions.

- Pray for guidance.
- Be grateful for the life that you have been given.
- Look for the lessons in the problems you face.
- Have conversations with people who love and encourage you.

- Do something you enjoy to take your mind off of the problem until you are in a better frame of mind. Try reading a book, watching a funny movie or doing whatever it is that makes you happy.

Jeannie says, “Even though I do these things, it is not what I do that changes my attitude; it’s my decision to change that changes me.” Certainly situations will arise and some will be horrific, but remember not to allow the circumstances to dictate your actions. The challenges we face are only temporary. When someone says, “I am going through,” it means exactly that; they are going through. Do not camp out with your problems. Trials are designed to build character and stamina. After enduring them, you should be stronger and wiser in that area. Looking for the lessons in the trial seems to make the challenging process go faster. If your attitude is determined by problems, change your attitude to one that is more positive and productive. Set emotional boundaries in order to control your emotional climate and maintain healthy relationships. Last but not least—focus on what you want to experience as opposed to what you don’t want.

What Do You Want More Of In Your Life?

Conflict	Peace
Sadness	Joy
Boredom	Enthusiasm
Discouragement	Excitement
Worry	Cheerfulness
Blame	Contentment
Regret	Interest

If you choose to have more of what is on the right side of the chart, congratulations! You are on your way to setting healthy emotional boundaries for more happiness in your life.

Setting emotional boundaries does not mean that you will not feel different emotions, good and bad. However, it does mean that you do not have to allow negative emotions to dictate how you feel over prolonged periods of time. In order to take control of our emotions, we must analyze negative thoughts and feelings, determine if they are justified, pray and seek a better way of looking at the problem. Find a quiet place or something interesting to do until you can think more clearly. Look for something good in every situation and decide today what you want to see your life look like. Set emotional boundaries on negative thoughts, words and actions for a happier and healthier life.

FRAME YOUR WORLD WITH WORDS

From the beginning of time words were designed to create substance and life experiences. For that reason, we must be careful to speak what we want to create in our lives as opposed to what we don't want. If we are not aware of what we are saying, the words we use could produce adverse effects. Therefore, thinking about what to say before speaking is essential for effective communication. Thinking before speaking may take a little extra time and effort but the end results are necessary for framing words that empower and not tear down. Think...Speak...Believe...and Create, what we want to happen...

Self-Talk

What you say to others is important—and equally as important is what you say to yourself. I believe some people downplay themselves to fit into a group and that may seem noble at the time; but it is dishonoring who they really are. If you are reducing yourself or

calling yourself names like stupid, ugly, and lazy, stop it! Silence your words until you find better ones. Words should be used to create what you desire. An example of words that create is found in the Holy Bible. God made the heavens and the earth by speaking to the environment and telling it what he wanted:

God said, “Let there be light;” and there was light. Then God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” Then God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear”; and it was so. Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. -Genesis 1: 3-11.

Throughout the chapter, God spoke to the elements that he wanted to create, and they obeyed his words. Why did He decide to speak things into existence? He is God, the creator of the entire universe! He did not have to speak for things to come into being. He could have just waived His hands or told the angels to do the work. However, I believe God did exactly what he

wanted us to see him do in order to produce a pattern for mankind to follow. What He thought and verbally spoke brought the world into existence and what you think, speak and do can bring your world into existence too. Speak what you want to happen ... and remember words can create both good and bad situations in your life.

Words Can Create

I remember growing up in a home where my parents encouraged my brother and I. Both my mom, a housewife and dad, the school janitor, told my brother, Alan, and I that we were smart and beautiful. Their positive attitude boosted our self-confidence and self-esteem. Because of their positivity, I live a life of encouragement.

One day I was troubled by the limitations that I believed had been placed upon women. I was about eight years old when I asked my father why I had to become a secretary or a nurse when I grew up. I told him that I did not want to work as a secretary, but that I might want to be a doctor or a newscaster.

My dad looked up from the evening newspaper and said, "Peg, you don't have to be a nurse or a secretary when you grow up. You can be a doctor, a lawyer or whatever you want to become in life."

Those words of empowerment lingered in my mind and changed my life. I believed what my father said and from that point on, I began to dream of doing all sorts of things in life. I thought that if I envisioned myself performing certain jobs (that I desired) and did what it took to achieve my goals, I would see my dreams come true.

Over the years, I have realized several of those career goals. I have worked in many professions—as a teacher, journalist, with computers, in sales and mortgage banking. I worked just about every job that I set out to work. I even desired to play tennis and be number one in my bracket, and my partner, Marlene Brand, and I did that too. Although it was a short lived victory, I will never forget the feelings of achievement and success. My partner and I accomplished these feats because of the grace of God and because we believed we could and took action. Think, Believe, Speak, and Create what you want in your life.

As parents and mentors, it is important to encourage our children and to speak words of love, kindness and encouragement to them. My friend Diann Shumate put it this way, “We must be careful what we say to our young. The words we speak can attach themselves and become a part of who they are. Words create a world inside of the mind of the receiver, and if we are not

careful that world can become obscured.”

Many people are still coping with the words that some adult or bullying child spoke to them. It may take years of fighting against the negativity, and in some cases a lifetime of therapy to rid their minds of the terrible words that were spoken over their lives. Frame your world with positive words because words can build and they can tear down. What will you say?

Words Can Build And They Can Tear Down

Growing up in the inner city of Los Angeles, California, I lived down the street from the Johnson family. There was Cindy, Sis, Rena and Lynn who were raised by their grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson. All four of the children possessed low self-esteem, but I remember Cindy in particular for her dim view of herself. This was brought about because of the things her grandparents said to her and about her. They called her fat and lazy and told Cindy she would never amount to much. After a while, she began to believe them.

Although she was a little overweight as a child, she was a pretty girl. She could cook, sing and dance. The good qualities she possessed did not seem to matter because she was constantly bombarded with negative words. Eventually, Cindy began to confess the

negativity; she told others that she was fat and no good. When she became a teenager, the downward spiral of low self-esteem continued. She received poor grades in school because she thought she was dumb and had sex with many boys so that she could feel loved. Once Cindy became an adult, the poor self-confidence and the low self-worth continued. The last I heard she was in an abusive relationship and would not leave because she felt she deserved that type of treatment.

Believing the negative untruths became easier than fighting to believe the truth. Perhaps if she had someone in her life to help replace the words “no good” with “beautiful” or “lazy” with “capable” she might have had a better life, and she could have learned to speak words of praise to herself.

Speaking the truth about the value you possess inside promotes happiness and the type of self-confidence that ultimately leads to an empowered life.

Adolf Hitler was a powerful orator and chancellor of Germany. Although his intentions were divisive and destructive, Hitler was able to persuade many people to believe in him. Hitler convinced Germany that the Jews were the reason for their economic downturn. Then he sought to destroy Jewish people based upon those words. Next he took action. One of his famous quotes was, “Make the lie big, make it simple, keep

saying it, and eventually they will believe it.”

Through repeated use of his words, he created an empire of terror. Hitler’s sporadic assaults of war led to a devastated and impoverished Eastern and Central Europe. His policies resulted in the death of an estimated 40 million people. Believing the end of his reign was coming, Hitler and his wife committed suicide on their wedding night. Hitler is a prime example in history of how words can create and tear down. The words he used were designed to control a nation in order to build an empire for him. That empire harmed many people and ultimately left a country in ruins.

Believe What You Say

It is not enough to merely speak words; you must believe the good and positive words you speak. Sometimes believing precedes speaking and sometimes speaking precedes believing. If you already believe the thing will happen, it is easy to talk about it. But if you are not sure it will happen, you may have to talk about it many times before you come to believe it. At that point, I find it helpful to recite words of affirmations about what you want to happen.

Consistently speaking words of affirmations creates habit. Thumbing through an old card file, I came

across some affirmations that I used to speak. One of them read: “I am a writer.” I wrote that affirmation before ever being published. Writing was a talent that I discovered late in life. I did not go to school to acquire the craft nor did I desire to become a writer growing up. In my forties, I wrote a poem in an attempt to express how I felt in what I saw as a hopeless marriage. However, I soon found the expressions were not for my ex-husband but therapy for me. I continued to write and within about a year of discovering my passion to write, my work was published online and in newspapers and magazines. I have been called by some publishers and professional writers, “one of the best writers they know.” I am not bragging , nor do I see myself as the best, but I will say a vision from God, a positive outlook and speaking words of affirmations, helped me to realize my dream of becoming a writer.

Below are some affirmations that you can speak to maximize your health and happiness for an empowered life.

Affirmations to Repeat

I am happy, healthy and wise.

Today I choose to use the words, “I can and I will.”

I can do all things through Christ who gives me
strength.

I ponder good thoughts of myself and of others.

I will enjoy this day because it was given to me as a
gift from God.



Remember, words can build and they can tear down. Frame your world with positive words. Practice thinking and speaking words that build up, not tear down. If your thoughts and words are out of control take every vain thought captive, then kill them with the positive truth. Maximize your health and happiness with thoughts and words that empower.

TAKE EVERY VAIN THOUGHT CAPTIVE

Although we may not always control the thoughts that enter into our minds, we do have the ability to choose the thoughts that will remain there. Embracing productive thoughts that add benefit and value to our lives is critical. Releasing those that are counterproductive is also imperative if you desire to live a happier and healthier lifestyle.

You Have The Power

Thousands of thoughts flow through the brain on a daily basis. Some are good while others are not so good. Either way we have the capacity to change the counterproductive thoughts if we truly have a sincere desire to change them. Since we have the power to determine which thoughts we will allow to flourish and which ones to abort, let's take a serious look at the unproductive thoughts we are thinking.

Dr. Keith Black, Chairman of the Neurosurgeon Department at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Beverly Hills, California, performs brain surgery on patients with some of the most serious forms of brain cancer and many with dim prognosis. Dr. Black said in his book, *Brain Surgery*:

People often ask me, “How can you work with these patients, knowing that so many of them are going to die?” I cannot imagine better people to work with. I learn from them as I watch them cherish every moment of their days. These people teach us all about the meaning of life well-lived.

Dr. Black goes on to talk about their incredible will to live a full life, even when they are facing death. I imagine that Dr. Black’s patients concentrated on life and not death. When adverse thoughts come to mind, we too have the power to dispel, discount and simply delete them. We can choose to focus on thoughts and ideas that give life; such as joy, happiness and encouragement. Conversely we can choose to think on those things that can lead to spiritual and physical death-like sadness, depression and worry. What will you choose to think about?

Steps For Eliminating Adverse Thoughts

Embracing a productive mindset may not always be as easy as it sounds. There are times when negative thoughts flood the mind like a hurricane during a torrential rain storm. I compare the barrage to tumbleweeds blowing in the desert sand. As the wind blows, the tumbleweed picks up momentum and gathers other weeds, than it becomes bigger and bigger. Like the tumbleweed, the longer we meditate on unhealthy thoughts, the larger they become. If we pretend they don't exist, that could be divisive also. In my opinion, ignoring a negative thought may cause it to reside in the memory bank only to crop up again at a later date. I say take every vain thought captive, and then kill it! Extinguish that enemy with positive thoughts, words and the Word of God. Allow living words to become your truth.

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:8 (NIV)

I remember preparing for a two and a half-hour train trip from Los Angeles to San Diego, California. The process of the journey would definitely take me out of my comfort zone. It required me to ride the Amtrak train, and then board the Metro bus and a shuttle to the hotel. I was to stay in the hotel room with a woman from our church that I had only known for a short period of time. Although I was excited about the trip, the next morning I awoken from my sleep with fear. Not knowing why I was fearful, I asked myself why I felt anxiety. A small voice inside of me said, “You are concerned about your trip to San Diego.” I realized that the fear that I felt was because of the unknown aspects of my journey. I decided that I had to deal with those emotions immediately.

Recognizing your enemy is the first line of defense for getting rid of negative emotions that have no merit. I believe that it is impossible to destroy an enemy that you do not see. After experiencing fear, I convinced myself that everything would be okay. I assured myself by saying, “It is common for people to take train trips from Los Angeles to San Diego, and I had never heard of any problems associated with those trips before.”

Then I began to replace those feelings of anxiety with thoughts of all the wonderful things that would happen during my travels. For example, how the train

would be relaxing for me and that my friend would eagerly await my arrival. I thought of ordering room service in the four-star hotel. Knowing I deserved this much needed vacation, I refused to allow fear and anxiety to take up residence in my mind for no valid reason. It turned out that we had a wonderful time. When I got to the hotel, Jen brought me dinner. We talked and laughed about all sorts of things. The next day I shopped at the mall across the street where they were having great sales. Then I got a manicure and pedicure from the nail shop. You see, my anticipated fears had no merit as long as I refused to accept them.

*The reality of a situation is based upon how
you choose to perceive it.*

We have the power to change the thoughts that enter our minds. Changing them from negative or unproductive thoughts to positive or productive ones is essential for ensuring a better outcome. Do not allow vain emotions to hold you hostage or plunder the mind and take up residence in your life. Get rid of them. Extinguish the enemy of your mind with encouraging truths and affirmations. They can help to change your outlook, circumstances and even your life! Let your thoughts, words and actions reflect what you want in life. Choose today what you want your life to look like

and go for it. That could mean that you will have to let go of some emotions that you have been holding onto for a while. However, the choice is yours. You can choose to replace sadness with joy; worry with confidence, anxiety with great expectation and anger with love. You can choose to maximize your health and happiness and live an empowered life today.

*Take every vain thought captive today,
for the freedom you deserve.*

LET IT GO

More people than ever seem to be looking for happiness. I talk to people who tell me, “I just want to be happy.” Why aren’t they happy? What are some reasons why we struggle in the area of happiness and how can we turn these feelings around? Everyone experiences life’s challenges, but the issues of life should not determine happiness. If you are unhappy the good news is there is no need to remain in that state any longer. There is a freedom that takes place when you learn to let go of unnecessary burdens and embrace a victorious lifestyle.

At one time in my life, I struggled to be happy. I felt like I was standing on the edge of a cliff, about to fall. This recurring vision plagued me for months. I told a friend about the dream, and he said, “Why are you standing there? Why don’t you just jump and see what happens?” Ironically, his unsympathetic advice caused me to think about why I was standing at the edge of the cliff completely out of control. Perhaps jumping was a form of letting go. I soon realized that part

of my unhappiness was due to holding on to painful experiences from the past. As I begin to let go of stuff, the layers of negativity were peeled back and the dream went away. You may not see your life in this way, but simply struggle to get ahead or find relief from the same old problems that come up day after day and year after year. You may need to just let go.

Just Let It Go

Letting go means releasing oneself of negative emotions, people and the old way of doing things. When we let go of whatever seems to hold us back, it opens us up to receive something that may be better than what we are holding onto. It's like holding a twenty dollar bill in a clenched fist. Someone may want to give you a hundred dollars, but you must first release your grip to open your hand and receive it. You should be willing to let go of the twenty. Begin to let go of worries, fears and unproductive thoughts and attitudes. Replace these emotions with the exact opposite. You can do it! Just let go and receive the good that is waiting for you.

As a Christian, I was taught to forgive those who mistreat me. I thought that I had forgiven my ex-husband. The truth was I had not forgiven him because

I was still angry with him. In addition to being angry, I felt guilty about the anger. I forgot the part of the Bible that says, “Be angry, but do not sin.” I didn’t have to feel guilty because anger is a natural emotion and denying that emotion only led to more difficulties.

Operating with guilt and anger are certainly negative emotions that I did not want to live with. These emotions were burdensome and caused me to become frustrated. However, once I got over the guilt associated with my anger, and began to focus more on the things that brought about peace and happiness, the anger subsided. Eventually the conflicts I had with him in the past really didn’t matter anymore. Finally, I had forgiven. Like Pastor Ron says, “forgiving is a choice, but healing is a process.”

I know people who are in conflict with others simply because they want them to see things the way they do. I hear more men say, “Women want to change me, and I don’t want to change.” Frankly, I don’t think anyone wants to be around someone who wants to change them. In some cases we may be the one who needs to change. Try changing your perspective about changing others and focus more on bettering yourself because change should always start from within.

For example, I remember becoming frustrated with a friend because he would take several days to return

my phone calls. I was offended by this practice and became upset. I felt it was rude, yet I knew an unreturned phone call should not control my emotions to the point of frustration. I prayed about it and heard an answer from God.

“If you don’t like his standard for returning phone calls perhaps you should change yours.”

What? That can’t possibly be right, I thought. It became clear to me that I needed to change my way of thinking about him returning my phone calls. Relaxing my standard of returned phone calls from him gave me a different perspective and it also helped me to cope with the frustration that I felt. I made a change for the better and let go of unproductive thoughts and emotions and so can you. The burdens of hurt and frustration are not worth holding on to. Let them go and forgive.

Offending Others

A prevalent negative emotion today is guilt. We can feel guilty for just about anything, whether it is justified or not. You may have accidentally or intentionally caused harm to another person. The burden of such an offense can weigh heavily on the conscious and in extreme cases it can feel inescapable. Some people have

committed suicide because they could not bear the guilt any longer. There is no easy solution for resolving guilt from a major offense and I do not know how you will get past the pain. However, what I do know is that talking about the incident, expressing sincere remorse to the person you offended and to God, as well as changing future actions, is a great way to start. Life is too short to hold on to guilt and un-forgiveness. Let it go!

Forgive Yourself

Sometimes we can forgive others more easily than we can forgive ourselves. In my opinion, this characteristic is common because we live in a society that places unrealistic expectations on people. You see advertisements of woman wearing the “perfect size” one. Society gives us a vision of a glamorous lifestyle of money, fine cars, exotic foods and an elaborate house. When we cannot live up to those expectations we may begin to feel inadequate. However, in order to live a happier and healthier life of freedom, we must not allow society to dictate our goals. Set realistic standards for yourself, and don’t feel guilty if you don’t meet them. Let go of self guilt and celebrate your accomplishments! Besides, feelings of guilt

and inadequacy are hindrances to achieving dreams and goals. These feelings can cause worry, anxiety, depression, and even immobilization. Have you ever noticed that when you feel inadequate it is hard to move forward? It is important to analyze reasons for negative emotions and let go of them.

Who Are You Not To Forgive

I am so glad God gives us mercy and grace because grace removes the burdens of guilt and condemnation. In Christian theology mercy encompasses favor, love and grace. It is forgiveness. God forgives us because He loves us and desires for us to be free from guilt and condemnation.

*We are forgiven because of God's mercy
and grace, not because of our own merits.*

In 1 John 1:9 of the Holy Bible, the apostle John tells us how to receive forgiveness. The scripture says that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us, and in Hebrews 8:12 not only does God forgive us, but He also forgets about our wrongdoings. My question to those who are living with guilt is this: If God forgives us, then who are we not to forgive ourselves?

Forgiveness is not earned, it is a gift. Stop your blame and forgive.

When I am feeling guilty because I did not meet my goals, I find it helpful to complete this little exercise. Here is what I do: make a list of all of the positive things that I completed throughout the day, including waking up and getting to an appointment on time. Even if I find that I did not accomplish as much as I wanted, I still feel successful because of everything that I did achieve. If you perform this exercise you may also find that what you don't do is miniscule compared to what you actually complete in any given day. What you achieve daily outweighs what you do not accomplish. Focus on the successes of your day and let go of the rest.

Why Worry? Take Action!

Worry is another emotion that we need to let go of. It can be one of the leading causes of diseases like hypertension, diabetes, acid reflux, eczema and many other ailments. Worry means the anticipation of something worsening. At times we face problems that we mill over and over in our minds. When we worry we are normally not thinking of solutions, but the “what

ifs” of the problem and usually the “what ifs” are negative. If you rationalize those thoughts you will find that the negative “what ifs” exaggerate the problem. In addition, what we are worrying about may not ever come to pass. Think logically about viable options for taking care of your problems. Don’t anticipate problems with worry! Let go of unproductive thoughts. Pray for peace and meditate on God’s word. Focus on solutions not problems. Let go of worry today for an empowered life of health and happiness.

Letting Go Can Be Difficult

I remember meeting a friend in the grocery store. Mercedes told me that her last child was going off to college. “That’s exciting,” I said. “Yes, but I will have empty nest syndrome,” she said. Having three children of my own go to college, I know letting a child go after eighteen years is difficult, but I must say that I never had empty nest syndrome. I prepared my children for college as soon as they could walk and talk and I prepared myself for them leaving home when they were infants. When they were babies, I looked at their tiny fingers and toes and cradled them in my arms ever so gently. I thought about the awesome responsibility of parenthood and how someday they would become

young adults and leave home. As I watched them grow, I imagined what they would be like as teens in high school and young adults going off to college. I even thought about how my life would change and what I would do to occupy my time. It was a sad thought. I wanted to cry. However, I had my time of grief, way before they left for college and when they left home it was bitter sweet but never empty.

If you have children you know that they can be a tremendous responsibility. For eighteen years, you care for them and make decisions that concern both you and the child. However, there comes a point in our lives when we know we will need to relinquish the responsibility back to the creator and prepare for their departure upon their arrival. Know that they are only under our care for a little while and in a little while they will leave. There are conscious choices that can be made with advanced notice. Releasing our children for adulthood is one of them.

Releasing people can be difficult, even when the relationship is challenging or unhealthy. In the case of an existing relationship of abuse, many find themselves giving one too many chances, being far too patient, and overlooking serious flaws. If you are involved in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, find the right time and means to leave. You are much

too valuable to spend your life being mistreated and certainly life is too short. You deserve the best!

Yet, there are some difficult relationships that we cannot walk away from but must endure. For example, I know people who care for an elderly parent because they feel it is their responsibility. I felt the same way when my father developed Alzheimer's. It was very difficult, but I was willing to do what it took to care for him. I found different ways to relieve the stress; taking frequent breaks, engaging in outdoor sports, and getting massages as time permitted, but at some point there were signs that I had to let go.

Knowing When To Let Go Of A Loved One

About 12:30 a.m., I awakened to voices in the hall. "Grandpa, you need to go to bed," Shawn said. I wondered why my daughter had taken that tone with her grandpa. After all, she was the one who had been the most patient with my dad, during the onset and progression of Alzheimer's.

Still groggy, I stumbled to the bedroom door and opened it to see what the matter was. My dad was still sitting on the bed folding the same clothes over and over again. I stood there for a moment watching him. He seemed to be content, neatly folding his shirts into

small stacks, but it made me sad to see him that way. I walked away and made my way to the dining room. There was Shawn and her friend Dania sitting quietly at the dining room table with all the doors open and lights out, at one-o'clock in the morning. They looked like schoolmarms trying to decide what punishment to give their naughty students. Dania sitting with legs crossed and arms folded, and Shawn resting one elbow on the table with her hand underneath her chin. Something was very wrong. I could feel it in the atmosphere.

My father's bout with Alzheimer's had heightened, and it became necessary for him to return home after living with a friend for five years. It was an unusual return because he was not the same person who left. He had experienced memory loss to the point where he was unable to drive himself. The initial duties of cooking his meals and driving him to bowling were no problem. I loved him, and caring for him was based upon the quality of life he had given me as a child growing up. He was a wonderful father and grandfather, and a gentle and kind man. La Tanya and I did not mind cooking his meals and driving him around and dad had required very little supervision at the time.

Then, three years ago, on a Saturday, after La Tanya moved out and Shawn moved in, we were away from home. My father decided to take the television remote

and a bottle of water to my neighbor Jackie's house. "You won the prize!" he told her. After insisting she keep the items, he politely went back to the house. When I returned home that evening, Jackie called me over to give me back the remote and bottle of water and to share with me what had happened. At that point, I knew he could no longer be left alone, and Shawn and I must come up with a plan. We charted a schedule where both of us could be with him around the clock. I was saddened about the turn of events because the transition meant my dad was not as independent as he once was. He had now become very dependent.

On the outside I coped very well, but within my heart I was hurting. I was angry and resentful. I didn't understand those feelings and became confused and frustrated. Nevertheless, I had to find a way to mask my emotions so that I could treat my father with the kindness and patience he deserved. Whenever I became angry, guilt would set in, and I didn't know how to handle the emotions. Yet somehow my father seemed to understand what I was going through. With gentleness, he hugged me, assuring me that everything would be fine. His encouragement comforted me for a while, but I needed a long-term solution. One day while praying about my attitude, God revealed to me that I was afraid. "Afraid of what?" I asked. I held on

to that thought until I got my answer. I was afraid of losing my father and guilt and anger were by-products of that fear. Immediately, one scripture came to mind.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

1 JOHN 4:18.

That's it! Love conquers fear, but how would I achieve this type of love? I began my quest with daily prayer and by reciting scriptures. Then I applied patience and soft-spoken conversation with him. With my whole heart I desired and received this love. God taught me his agape love, and I could walk in it and care for my dad with respect and dignity. No longer did I have feelings of guilt, anger or resentment, but of love only. I realized that:

Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV)

After finding love, I began to have a new outlook. I enjoyed our time together and felt it an honor to care

for him. I was able to handle his confusion better, and still be patient when he rebelled. I learned to live in the moment, not dwelling on how confused he was in the past or how confused he may become at sundown. The moment was all we had.

We went shopping together and to church on Sundays. I took him on the tennis court to watch me play on Saturdays. Everything went well for years until he became more and more confused. All too soon, it became difficult to work at home because of the attention he required. My daughter and I were constantly cleaning up after him when he missed the toilet. He became violent, uncooperative and did things like brush his teeth with shaving cream and put sharp objects in the bed. These unsafe incidents troubled us. Shawn and I had to stay awake very late at night until he went to sleep, and I would wake up early in the morning to care for him while she went to work. I became very tired and would take short trips to Arizona to rest. However, my mind did not allow me to rest mentally so I returned in the same mental state. My physical health was beginning to suffer too from a lack of rest and now his safety was at risk. I was at the breaking point, and it was time to make a decision.

Plan A was to have someone come in during the day and we watch him at night. Plan B, the dreaded

plan, was to place him in a health care facility. Initially, I chose Plan A, but that night I knew Plan A was no longer an option.

“What’s wrong,” I asked Shawn and Dania as I plopped down in the chair, noticing for the first time a strange odor in the air.

“Grandpa had all the gas burners on and they were not lit. The gas was escaping and the center grill cover was burning. When we came home about thirty minutes ago the house was full of gas and smoke. We have been here airing out the house,” said Shawn.

“I believe it would have only been a matter of time before an explosion occurred because the plate on the grill may have caught fire,” Dania added.

After Dania spoke, we all sat in silence. I could hear the deep dark nothingness and smell the smoke that clouded my lungs, but yet I had peace about the decision I knew I must make. I quietly thanked God that they came home in time because my father and I may not have come out of that alive. I walked out the house to get some air. I knew deep down inside that it was time to let him go, and a peace came over me. I had been the responsible caregiver for over five years now, and I just could not do it any longer. It was now unsafe for him to remain in our care. I needed to release my dad for his safety and ours and trust God to take care

of him. After all, he belonged to God, not to me.

Ten days later, I took my dad to the assistant care living facility where my friend's mom resided. I had gone to visit her, and I liked the facility, the residents and staff. I completed the necessary paperwork and sat with him for hours before I left. We had already talked about him staying there and he understood.

We visited him regularly, and once a week I picked up his clothes, washed them and took them back. On Sundays, we'd go to church and much to my surprise, he was happy! He had his independence and enjoyed talking to the residents. They loved his joy and the jokes he told. When I visited, I could be his daughter again, and when I said good-bye he was alright with that too.

Some people have a hard time with the idea of placing their loved ones in a home, but in some cases it is better. There are people there who are trained to care for them. They regain their independence and are able to socialize with people they can relate to and who relate to them. It is important to remember elderly people have feelings and needs. If you are the child, they know that as well. Even with Stage two Alzheimer's, many know their condition and do not want to be a burden. If you are faced with the decision, pray about it, and if you are moved to release your loved one, find a clean, loving and caring environment that will meet their

needs. When it's time to release them, pray and let go. Remember the lessons learned and pass them on.

Caring for my dad taught me many valuable lessons. I learned to seek God for answers to tough questions and to ask Him for forgiveness and to forgive myself. I also learned to want to change and make the change. In addition, I learned to accept the things I cannot change. My most valuable lesson was one of unconditional love.

Lastly, I learned how to release my father without guilt and fear. I have now placed him in God's hands and trust that the Lord will take care of him. Even though it hurt sometimes, I know in my heart that I had to let my dad go and I am glad I did.

*Samuel Nimmers went to be with Jesus on October 15,
2012.*



BE OPEN TO CHANGE

All living things that were created were made to change. Even the apple beginning with a tiny seed matures into a delicious piece of ripened fruit. Although transformation is inevitable, we human beings seem to inherently resist change. It may be because the process can be tedious and sometimes uncomfortable. Yet if we look at the world around us, we see that change is everywhere. As the earth rotates on its axis, the seasons change, babies are born; the world is ever evolving and so is mankind. We were created to change.

Every day we awake to subtle changes that occur during the night while we are asleep. We may look out of the window and everything looks the same as it did the day before, but what we may not notice are the twenty extra leaves that have fallen from the willow tree or a new red rose on the bush. Take a closer look and see what changes have occurred. Change is necessary for physical and spiritual growth and for renewal of life. Be open to change.

I once knew a man who wanted to stop smoking. “I

am going to die a horrible death one day if I don't stop smoking," Brad said. After finally convincing himself to stop, Brad left work on Friday night and all weekend he was smoke-free. However, something happened to him on Monday morning. Brad realized that he no longer had a social group to hang out with during smoke breaks. The desire to be social drove him back to smoking again. Brad now knows that next time he seeks to quit, he will have to change his environment and sphere of influence. That means Brad may have to sever some friendships in order to meet his goal. Giving up cigarettes alone can be tough but giving up the company of his co-workers only adds to the challenge. But if Brad desires to successfully reach his goal, making other adjustments in his life will become necessary.

"Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm."

- Winston Churchill

Why People Resist Change

Fear of failure is one of the main reasons people resist change. Often times we feel that if we change our routine, we will fail. Doing things the way we

have always done them insures the same outcome, and changing what we do can produce unpredictable results. Not knowing what change will bring can be unsettling. I know this to be true for myself. Upon pondering the growth of my writing firm, I decided not to move forward with my expansion plans. I thought that if I grew the company too fast, I would not be able to handle the business properly. This would cause Write Now Publishing Co. to have a bad reputation. However, a friend told me that I was being selfish. She said that there were people who needed jobs and the services that the company has to offer and that I was depriving them of opportunity due to my own fear. After listening to her advice, I decided to push pass my fears and grow the company anyway. Since then I have discovered that providing jobs and assisting others with their writing needs has blessed Write Now Publishing Co. staff and the clients we write for.

Another reason people resist change is because of a fear of success. This may sound strange but if we become successful there is the possibility of losing friendships and old ties. That possibility may cause us to remain in a state of complacency. You may have heard people say, "It's lonely at the top." Yet I personally would rather be at the top than at the bottom living in regret due to unfulfilled dreams. Fear can stop you

from taking action; it can cause anxiety, self-doubt and even guilt. It is best to push pass the fear and do it anyway.

I once read an article in *Psychology Today*, that it is common for battered women to remain in the home because of an emotional attachment to their spouse or partner. The article said that many women will not move because they hope their spouses will change and they wait for them to change. In this case, the responsibility for change is shifted to another individual. Yet, in order for these women to live a healthy and happy life, they should be the ones who change. These are extreme cases and testify to the fact that we must not resist change, it is necessary for our growth and well being. If anyone you know is involved in a relationship that is destructive and/or threatens their physical and/or mental health, tell them not to wait for the other person to change. But instead, seek help, find a safe haven and change their environment.

“You can struggle to change or you can just keep struggling”

Unknown Author

Make Gradual Changes

Making gradual changes helps to break the mode

of complacency and familiarity. It also prepares us for making bigger life changes. For example, when cleaning the house, I sometimes use the non-dominant hand to dust. When I brush my teeth or hit a tennis ball, switching to the non-dominant hand helps me to change my mind set about the familiar. It is uncomfortable at first but eventually I get used to the change. As an added benefit, scientists say that arbitrary use of the non predominant hand, aids in the prevention of Alzheimer's and dementia. That alone is a good enough reason for change. Making mundane changes is also a good way to practice and prepare for bigger ones. When making bigger changes such as an attitude, habit or behavior, try the following:

- 1) Focus on what you want as opposed to what you don't want and resist entertaining feelings of fear, anxiety and complacency.
- 2) Allow your thoughts, speech and behavior to line up with your desires.
- 3) Replace the old with something new.
For example, instead of thinking, "I don't want to go to work because my boss is too negative," tell yourself, "I will have a good day at work today because this day belongs to me. Other people's negative attitudes will not establish my day. I am going to respect my boss, but this day was created for me to enjoy."

Embrace change for the potential good it will bring. Accept change with gladness and look forward with confidence. Start by making slight changes, then move to bigger ones. Resist fear, worry and anxiety when it comes to change. Keep a positive outlook.

Lastly, if you find yourself doing the same thing over and over again and it is not benefiting you, consider making a change.

Overcoming The Stress Of Change

While facilitating the Business Prayer Ministry meeting at church, I asked the group if there was anything we could help them with to make their lives easier. One of the members raised her hand and said, “I have something that I need help with. “I am a full-time student in college and this is my first semester. I work thirty-two hours a week at the hospital, and I am also a union representative for the workers. My problem is that I am overwhelmed with all that I have to do, and I do not have time to exercise.” One of the members asked Joyce if she had a schedule for school and for her personal life. She responded, “That’s exactly what I need help with. I have my class

and homework scheduled but I do not have a personal one.” Since Joyce was having trouble finding time in her personal life, the group began to question Joyce about her personal time. She proceeded to tell the group about her activities while I wrote time slots on the white board. As Joyce talked more and more about her day, we noticed a common thread; she spent a significant amount of time opening her mail and paying bills online. Because she allowed the mail to pile up, opening her mail became a tremendous chore that Joyce had not recognized. The procedure she used was eating away at her time. The members noticed the time waster and gave her helpful suggestions, such as opening mail at down times. One member suggested she open the mail during her weekly visits to take her mom to the doctor. However, Joyce disapproved of each suggestion from the group. Soon it became clear that she needed to be open to change. Changing her mind about the way she had always done things was critical to her changing a system that failed to meet her needs.

One of the participants volunteered to help organize Joyce’s personal workspace, another to check back with her at a later date to make sure everything was going okay. Finally, Joyce agreed to receive the help she needed. As Joyce began to see improvements with

organization and accept that change, it opened her up to changing her routine of opening the mail. When we last spoke, she was opening her mail as it came in and that was working for her. She got it!

The ability to change usually comes after a frustrating situation, but if you are open, the process of changing is far less problematic than living with the problem. Now it's time to put change to practice on a consistent base.

“If we are to achieve results never before accomplished, we must expect to employ methods never before attempted.” -

Sir Francis Bacon

Being open to change can enhance your professional and personal growth, improve skills and even expand your influence, especially if it requires you to change your environment for the better. If the same old routine is not working for you, be open to change. Have fun with it, don't complain, look for the good in the change and above all, expect great things to happen and they will.

Change is a state of mind that one must sometimes fight to attain.

GIVE YOUR BRAIN A REST

In today's society, we wear the words "I'm busy" on our chests like a soldier wears the Medal of Honor. Hard work seems to be an outward sign of prestige and prosperity and society says in order to attain success, we must work hard. The truth is hard work is important; however, balance and rest is equally as important for prosperous living.

Some people tend to boast about the excess work they do because it is fashionable and makes for good conversation. When meeting an acquaintance in the restaurant for the first time the conversation inevitable shifts to the age-old question, "What do you do for a living?" I understand it is a good icebreaker, but when the question is asked we tend to stick out our chest and position ourselves to sound very important. Somehow we find ourselves talking about how much we work, how we are overworked and how challenging our work can be. This may be good, but productivity is not solely determined by the amount of work you perform, it can also be determined by the amount of

work you don't perform. In order to become more productive, scientists say we should take breaks every ninety minutes to rejuvenate the mind and creative energy. Standing to stretch at your desk, closing your eyes momentarily to rest and deep breathing exercises will allow you to work for longer periods of time overall. Getting a good night's sleep is also important. According to Len Kravitz, PHD, program coordinator of exercise science and a researcher at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque "Chronic and acute sleep deprivation will negatively impact learning and thinking." In other words get some sleep and give your brain a rest.

Rest Could Prolong Your Life

Compromising sleep and rest can be unwise. In 2012, I knew four people who died prematurely. Three of them died from heart attacks. Timothy was a man in his forties who owned a construction company in Los Angeles and assisted with the singles' ministry at church. Tim told a group of us that he had been working very hard and had very little time for himself. After becoming weary, Tim hired a company to teach him how to manage his time. I suspected it was a little late because within a month from that conversation

he was rushed to the hospital due to a massive heart attack. There was no known history of a heart condition to my knowledge but it happened anyway. Sadly enough, weeks later Tim died. Perhaps working too hard was the reason for such a serious attack to his heart. Studies performed in Japan reveal many cases of death from overworking. It is called Karoshi, “death from overwork.”

Let's Paint The Picture

Overworking puts stress on the body and creates imbalance in our lives. It can cause people to set priorities in areas that may be superficial. It is okay to achieve success through hard work, but excess can also lead to unhappiness. If you struggle in this area, ask yourself these questions: How is my success really determined? What will I do if I wake up one morning and find that being a workaholic was all for nothing?

Let's look at this scenario: A forty-five year old man named John, worked very hard to provide for his family. Because he worked a lot, he had no time for his wife and children. Eventually they left him. The economy changed and he lost his job then his home was foreclosed upon. The stock market plummeted and John lost a lot of money. Last month he had a stroke

that the doctor attributed to stress from overworking. The stroke left him paralyzed on one side of his body and the doctor bills left him financially broke. The sacrifices John made for money were in vain. He missed the kids' soccer games, basketball practices and piano recitals. Now the children are grown. All John has left are a few belongings and a 1982 Porsche. What a sad scenario, but it happens in life. Although this is only an example of what could happen, I hear stories all the time about people who felt they should have worked less and spent more time with family and friends.

Meaningless

According to the book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon, one of the richest and wisest men to ever live sums it up like this:

I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

Solomon acquired much wealth along with 700 wives and 300 concubines. Whatever he wanted was at his disposal and he had a lot... It was estimated that Solomon received roughly 1.2 billion dollars per year (666 talents of gold per year) during his forty-year reign. Perhaps after achieving much wealth, notoriety, success and fame, all he really wanted could not be achieved through accolades or wealth, but through peace of mind?

Be wise. Give your brain a rest sometimes.

Too Weary To Rest

Not very long ago, I went on vacation to Phoenix, Arizona. When I returned from vacation, I still found myself in a state of fatigue. I asked myself, “Why am I still weary after eight days of rest? I simply wrote a little, watched television, talked on the phone, and sat by the pool. I detoxified my body with raw fruit and vegetables and drank alkaline water. I went to sleep early and woke up without an alarm clock. Some days I made it a point to stay in bed until 9:00 a.m., yet I still felt so weary?” The answer that resonated in my mind, could affect a vast majority of us based on the many stresses associated with day-to-day living. Even

though I was on vacation I did not rest mentally. I did less but that was not good enough. I should have done absolutely nothing in the area of work and relaxed my mind for mental restoration.

There are many obstacles that demand our time and energy. There are financial obligations that require our attention such as bills, rent, the mortgage and relationships with family and friends. There are job demands, traffic to work and housekeeping activities, not to mention electrical devices like the cell phone, microwave and computer that put demands on our energy. Then we must contend with chemicals that zap our power, such as household cleaning agents, the chemicals we breathe, chlorine in the water, fluoride in toothpaste, mold and aluminum in underarm deodorant. These agents compromise our health and tap into the energy of life.

Taking a vacation and leaving the cell phone and computer at home could provide much needed relief. Slipping away to a tropical island in the Bahamas would be nice. Try relaxing at the beach under pristine blue skies on a hammock beneath a palm tree for a wonderful vacation of rest. But if leaving the state or country is not an option that's okay! You can find relief by changing your environment for the weekend. Perhaps taking a weekend trip to the mountains where

the smell of pine trees fills the air is better for you.

I once visited the Terranea resort in Palos Verdes, California, with Donny, Ginger and the other members of my beach tennis group. We set up nets in a cove backed by a wall of mountains on one side and the ocean on the other. Dolphins swam by and the sound of water hitting the rocks was like paradise. As the sun retreated behind the clouds, it reflected beautiful rays of color over the ocean and the moon shown as a perfectly round silhouette. That evening we were chauffeured to a restaurant on the premises for dining under the stars. Then, after dinner, my friend Marlene and I retreated to the resort lounge to listen to jazz and socialize with people from around the world. Both of us felt like we were in another place, far away from home. When I returned home that evening, I felt like I had been on vacation yet I had only traveled a few miles from home.

Even on a daily basis I find one of the best ways to give my brain a rest is through prayer and meditation. Our God and Creator is the life source, and once we connect with Him, we are able to find a place of peace in our mind, body and soul. If we take the time to find that connection, we can be restored and receive immeasurable peace from the cares and woes of the world.

Retreat from the cares of the world and give your brain a rest.

LAUGHTER IS GOOD FOR THE HEART AND SOUL

Health experts have revealed that laughter is like medicine for the heart and soul. Laughter can relieve stress, burn calories, circulate the blood, lower blood sugar and create bonds between people. Therefore, it is important to make a serious effort to find things to laugh at often. Adding humor to your life is a powerful and effective way to heal the heart and soul and to receive more happiness in your life.

An Easy Way To Relieve Stress

Researchers at the University of Maryland Medical Center found that hearty laughter can increase circulation sending 10-20% more blood through the arteries. An increase in blood flow relieves tension and helps with circulation. After watching a comedy, researchers saw that the audiences' arteries expanded. However, when they watched a battle scene from *Saving*

Private Ryan, their arteries constricted. The university also found that laughter lowers blood sugar in people with Type 2 diabetes. Hearty laughter can regulate the immune system, burn calories and ease pain. Making a conscious effort to laugh more often may be more beneficial than you think.

You don't have to laugh alone either. Laughing with others can create a sense of camaraderie. When people laugh together, they tend to enjoy each other more. Be careful though. If you laugh around another person, it can be contagious. Yes, laughing is contagious too. Test it out for yourself. Hahahaha.

Roman and Martin's Laugh In, a comical series on NBC in the late sixties and early seventies was known for televising its bloopers, blunders and hysterical laughter. At intervals, actress Goldie Hawn would break out in her trademark giggle and everyone would begin laughing with her including the cast and audience. What's funnier is that no one knew why they were laughing. Contagious laughter went on for minutes at a time. Some of the actors on the show included Judy Carne, who, along with Goldie Hawn, was one of the go-go dancers; they dressed in short skirts tights and go-go boots. Then there was the raincoat man riding his tricycle around the set, and special guest, Tiny Tim, who became famous for the song, Tip Toe through the

Tulips.

If you are too young to remember the show, try looking for it online. I loved that comedy. When it was time to come on, my family and I gathered around the television waiting for the “Sock it to me” and “Here comes da judge!” jokes to begin. This outrageous show of laughter, antics and humor ran for five years and is known for launching the careers of Goldie Hawn, Tiny Tim, Lily Tomlin, Henry Gibson, Ruth Buzzi, Arte Johnson, Pat Paulson, Joanne Worley and so many others. *The Roman and Martin Laugh In Show* changed a serious minded girl like me into a more lighthearted child. So have a good giggle from time to time. It’s good for the heart and soul.

Let’s Practice

Joke: This woman rushed to see her doctor, looking very much worried and all strung out. She rattles off: “Doctor, take a look at me. When I woke up this morning, I looked at myself in the mirror and saw my hair all wiry and frazzled up, my skin was all wrinkled and pasty, my eyes were bloodshot and bugging out, and I had this corpse-like look on my face! What’s WRONG with me, Doctor!?”

The doctor looks her over for a couple of minutes,

then calmly says: “Well, I can tell you that there ain’t nothing wrong with your eyesight...”

Joke: An Alsatian went to a telegram office, took out a blank form and wrote, “Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof.”

The clerk examined the paper and politely told the dog: “There are only nine words here. You could send another ‘Woof’ for the same price.”

“But,” the dog replied, “that would make no sense at all.”

Joke: A guy joins a monastery and takes a vow of silence: he’s allowed to say two words every seven years. After the first seven years, the elders bring him in and ask for his two words.

“Cold floors,” he says.

They nod and send him away. Seven more years pass. They bring him back in and ask for his two words.

He clears his throats and says, “Bad food.” They nod and send him away. Seven more years pass. They bring him in for his two words.

“I quit,” he says.

“That’s not surprising,” the elders say. “You’ve done nothing but complain since you got here.”

If you are taking life too seriously, take the time to laugh a little; enjoy life, after all, laughter is good for

your health and well being.

The final tip for power thinking is also good for the heart and soul and the most important tip of all. It is love. In order to maximize your health and happiness for an empowered life, you must master love. Not just any kind of love but Agape, the God kind of love.

AGAPE THE GREATEST LOVE OF ALL

In the popular but controversial song, “What’s Love Got to Do with It,” Tina Turner expresses her frustration with the connotations of love. She had been abused by someone who said he loved her and whom she loved. His acts of unkindness demeaned the meaning of love for her and left her with a cynical depiction of the emotion. I don’t believe that Tina was disbanding the idea of true love, but felt that his interpretation was meaningless. Even with its vast significance, love is a lot of things, but it certainly is not unkind. For centuries, man has longed to define the meaning of love; however, it is so expansive that one person cannot completely delineate its borders.

One of my favourite writers, C.S. Lewis, who is also a Christian author, wrote *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and many other books. Lewis makes a great attempt to define love in his book entitled *Four Loves*. He notes that there are four

types of love. They are the Greek words agape (divine love); eros (romance); phileo (friendship) and storge (affection). The most effective and inclusive love is agape; it is perfect love. The inspired word of God, talks about agape and its profound characteristics. It is the greatest of the four loves because it is unconditional. One of its basic qualifications is that it can be given without requiring anything in return. Eros, philía, and storge are mankind's natural love, and they expect both the giver and recipient to receive. The fact that natural love wants both participants to reciprocate creates limitations. Therefore, for the sake of optimizing our health and happiness, we will explore the greatest love of all, agape.

In the book of Corinthians, Apostle Paul talks to the church at Corinth about the type of love they should exhibit toward one another. It is the same type of selfless love God displayed when he sent His only son, Jesus Christ, to earth to die for the sins of mankind. Now that is agape love! Paul describes love as follows:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast; it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

This means love protects and does not expose the faults of others, it believes the best of another, hopes or trusts and preserves through all trials and misfortunes. Agape love is everlasting. Who can fathom the awesomeness of this type of love? It will take the rest of our lives to achieve. Even then I don't think we could perceive it in its entirety. Yet to strive for the characteristics of unconditional love could result in living a happier, more successful and meaningful life. For us to maximize our health and happiness and live an empowered life, it is necessary to ponder and practice giving agape love; a love that expects nothing

A Lesson In Love

One Saturday afternoon my friend Diann and I went to downtown Los Angeles to give away sandwiches that we prepared for the homeless people in the community. We were excited about the giveaway because we felt it would make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate. Of course, we expected no money or anything in return, it was our offering. However, much to my surprise, some of the people behaved rudely, they just took the sandwiches and acted as if we owed them the

food. I became a little disappointed by their attitudes. “At least they could have said thank you,” I said to Diann. Although this benevolent act was from the heart it was *philia*, brotherly love- not *agape*- because I expected at least a thank you in return for my charity.

In my search to find a story that displays unconditional love, I came across an article that was posted on Facebook by Don Shapiro who is the author of *Life is a Fork in the Road*. I found it to be a good depiction of unconditional love. With permission, I write his story:

A Story Of Unconditional Love

The year is 1986. After being happily married for years, my wife suddenly and without warning told me she was divorcing me to go back to a man she had dated before we met. There were no obvious problems in our relationship. No arguments. Nothing was going on to indicate any trouble brewing in the marriage. Even after she told me this, she never said there was anything wrong with us. She just said that she had come to realize she loved this other guy in a way she didn't love me and that's all it was about. Two days after she told me this, she moved into an apartment. The guy left his wife of twenty-five years that same day and

moved in with her. They got married within the year and are still together.

Hearing this completely out of the blue crushed me, as you can imagine. It was like I was run over by a steam roller. I have never before nor did ever sense feel pain like that. I had imagined we would spend the rest of our lives together. I didn't want anyone else. I loved this woman with all my heart. There is no way to describe the hurt and pain I felt except for it was like every cell in my body was being torn apart and run through a food processor.

Yet, within hours of hearing this something else from deep within me spoke loud and clear. This was my true inner voice of wisdom. I still loved this woman as much as I had before she broke the news. I still wanted her to be happy. I still cared about her. If she would be more happy with someone else rather than me, that was her choice. I realized at that moment that if you truly love someone, you want them to be happy; you want the best for them even if that means not being with you.

This realization did not make the pain and hurt go away. It was so severe and intense that it took me over three years to finally get back to being me. All my friends told me she was no good and would say unkind things about her. They thought that would make me feel

better. They simply didn't understand. The way I saw it, how can someone go from loving someone to not loving them overnight just because they did something you didn't like. That would negate the previous eleven years as if they never existed.

A couple months after she left, I did a very strange thing which was the next step in helping me move forward with my life. Once again, my inner voice of wisdom came through loud and clear. Suddenly, I started thinking about this guy she went back to and how he must be feeling. I literally began to look at this through his eyes instead of mine. That inspired me to write the lyrics to a love song written from his point of view.

How was I able to still consider her happiness as being of paramount importance after what she had done? How could I go through the most devastating pain and hurt imaginable without having any ill feelings toward her? How could I possibly write a song lyric that was a love song written from the other guy's point of view? There is one and only one answer to these questions. I loved this woman unconditionally regardless of what she did. I am living proof that it is possible for a human being to love unconditionally.

Love is unconditional. If you place conditions on love, what you're feeling is not love. Love is a spiritual

state, not an emotion. Relationships combine both emotional attachment and love. Emotions change. Love does not. Your choice is about the nature of your relationships, not whether you love. If someone you love does things you hate, you may not want them in your life but you can still love them.”

Some Final Thoughts

In order to maximize your health and happiness for an empowered life, one must first transform his or her thoughts. Changing your thoughts and words in a positive way will help you to change your actions and receive more of what you want in life. Since transformation is a lifelong journey, why not start today? Follow your God given vision. Take control of your emotions and set boundaries around them. Think on those things that are good and profitable for you. If what you are contemplating or saying is not positive, take those vain thoughts and words captive and kill them with encouraging words and affirmation of faith for a positive outlook. Let go of past hurts, pain, anger, worry and self condemnation. Replace those emotions with love, forgiveness, joy and peace.

Know that overworking can create imbalance in your life. Give your brain a rest sometimes and spend

quality time with family and friends in laughter. Be open to change for the better and last but not least, show love to others. Display the God kind of love that expects nothing in return. Maximize your health and happiness for an empowered life with *10 Tips for Power Thinking* today.

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