

Taking CARE of yourself

The four non-negotiables
of achievement

Gareth Boot

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This book is dedicated to the memory of my dad, a man whose support, advice and friendship I cherished more than anything.

Robert (Bob) Boot

1943-2008

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Chapter 1

Taking CARE of yourself: an introduction

I wanted to write a book on personal development for people who don't read books on personal development.

Why?

Because I really do believe that, if we are honest (and I mean truly honest), we all have goals and dreams. And we all have things in our lives that we struggle with and would love to change. But to achieve our goals or make changes in our lives, we sometimes need a little encouragement and a gentle nudge in the right direction. This book is that gentle nudge.

I know though that many personal development books are a bit of a bore. I've lost count of the amount of books that I have bought only to read the first couple of chapters before I got bored and resigned the book to its dust-collecting place in my ever-growing library of self help books. For me, any book that claims to be able to help you has to be two things: short and

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practical. If a book does not possess these attributes it's useless. I have made sure that this book ticks both of these boxes.

In this increasingly fast-moving world we live in, we all have one resource that we should never take for granted and certainly not waste. TIME. So before you go any further with this book, I want to be upfront as to why I wrote it and clear as to what you can expect from reading it. That way, your most precious commodity will not be taken up with my words unless the results I offer are for you.

I learnt a long time ago that it's not enough just to want to achieve or change something (although the desire is very important). You need to have some simple systems and ways of thinking in place to bring that change about. This book explains a simple system I have developed. By reading it and trying a few of the suggestions, your way of thinking will also be changed.

The principles in this book saved my life; a dramatic but true statement. First and foremost, the contents of this book are a record of the discovery I made that enabled me to go from as close to killing myself with alcohol as I had ever been to entering the most successful and happy period of my entire life. Having found a system that worked for me and those I shared it with, I decided to make it available to anyone who wants to experience a better quality of life.

Change can be painful though and that's why very few people actually ever take steps to improve their lives. Instead they just tolerate a life that is less than it could be. That, in my opinion, is a real waste when change, if done with purpose and focus, is actually much simpler than you think.

I should, at this point, qualify what my opinion of success is. Firstly, what we all class as success is as individual as we are and what we see as success can differ wildly. But one thing I know to be true of everyone, regardless of nationality, gender, age or class, is that we all want to be happy. That's why, for me, if you are, more often than not, living in a state of happiness, then you, my friend, are indeed successful.

This book is the result of me studying my life so far and picking out those times when I was most happy. I found four common factors that were present in my life when I was doing well. These four things were ridiculously simple, to the point where I had come to take them for granted. But, I realised, when one or more of them was missing in my life, it was not long before trouble, stress and hardship showed up.

You may not be looking for a way to overcome a life-threatening addiction like me, but I am sure you would like to be able to live a happier life, overcome the challenges you face or achieve goals you have set yourself. By reading, studying and deploying the four simple principles in this book, and putting some hard work in, I can promise you that the success and happiness you look for is not that far away.

Sounds simple? Well it is but don't mistake simple for easy. If you're looking for an easy way to be successful and happy, put this book down and move on because easy never leads to anything. But if you take small steps on a regular basis towards your goals then you can massively reduce the stress and pain that a lot of people associate with change.

My goal for this book was to make it simple, informative and readable. And here's a goal for you, the reader: I want you to

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have belief and hope in the fact that, no matter how hard something is right now or how big the goal or challenge you're facing - with the right mindset, with authenticity and self-awareness, and my four non-negotiable principles - you can really make the changes you need to get to a stage where you can truly say that you are living a happy and successful life.

This is how you take CARE of yourself.

Good luck with whatever journey you're on and I hope that my system will bring you as much happiness and contentment as it has brought me. And when you're ready to put it into practice, try the 30 day challenge at the end of the book.

Now I want to tell you a bit more about myself. So head to the next chapter and allow me to give you an insight into who I am and what I have done, and more crucially, why you should CARE.

Chapter 2

My story: some days are bigger than others

In this chapter I want to tell you a bit about myself and how I got to this point in my life. Now, I'm fully aware that when you pick up a book that offers help and advice the most important thing you want to know is how it will help YOU. But in order to get the best out of this book, you need to know me a little better. And sharing my story will help me do a couple of things:

1. By showing you what a mess I was in a few years back and how I got out of the hole I found myself in, I want to give you hope if your life seems bad right now or your challenges and goals seem too big. Basically, if my system can work for me, it can work for you!
 2. Writing my story down has helped me make sense of it. While I obviously know the story well, recording it in this book has been, I think, something of a healing experience.
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So, here we go.

20th July 2014 - a date that's etched forever in my memory

The sunlight is pouring through my front room window. It's a beautiful summer's day, in fact, as far as summer days go in the UK, it's pretty perfect. I, on the other hand, am a right mess. I've got food down my once stylish Calvin Klein t-shirt and I haven't changed my pants in several days. My beard has gone from short and sporty to huge and bushy, and my normally neatly-combed hair is stuck up and greasy. I look like a hobo.

To anybody who knew me back then I am unrecognisable from the successful well-dressed businessman they were used to experiencing. Me successful, what a joke! I am messed up mentally and physically and at that moment death seems like a better option. I feel like a fake.

I'm surrounded by empty beer cans and clasped in my somewhat clammy hand is a half-full bottle of vodka which I'm fully intending to finish off in an attempt to ease the violent shakes I'm having. The room stinks of stale beer, sweat and vomit.

I've been drinking solidly for the best part of two months. Looking back, I don't remember much of that period. Well I probably remember much more than I would like to admit but it is painful to recall so I have somehow chosen to conveniently forget it. But I clearly remember that particular day.

I've properly fallen off the wagon. I don't know why. I do know that another drink could quite possibly kill me. I know I've

reached rock-bottom. But I really, really, want that vodka.

How did I get to this point? How did I get so low? And what could I do about it?

...

It's fair to say, my life had been something of a rollercoaster ride up to that point. I'd had a happy childhood, growing up in Batley, near Leeds. But I was a shy lad and I hated being shy. I was skinny with a big nose and bright red hair that, for reasons even today I can't understand, my mother chose to have cut in styles that were clearly designed for functionality not fashion. I was not popular at school and found it difficult to socialise. Plus the combination of my physique, over-sized nose and daft haircut made me an easy target for the idiots who got a buzz out of name-calling and bullying. I was called Duracell because I had a copper-coloured top like the batteries and Golf Club because I wore big boots and had a skinny body.

Apart from my time in the sixth form, I hated school. Leaving was a real relief for me but with no qualifications my options were limited. I got into the motor trade, selling cars. Which I soon discovered was not the ideal occupation for someone as shy as me. Having to meet and talk to new people every day was incredibly stressful. I hated it. I started to drink, before and during work, as a way to build my confidence. And it worked. Drinking increased the size of my ego and my sales figures, both essential to maintaining my position on the sales floor. But it wasn't really me. And of course, the drinking took its toll. After a few years of drinking every day and being drunk most evenings, alcohol addiction had really started to take a grip of me and to affect my health.

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In November 1998, I found myself on a course up in the north of England learning how to sell cars better. Me, alone, away from home, doing something I hated was always going to be the recipe for some sort of negative event but I could never have imagined what that day had in store for me.

At 6am I started to consume my usual breakfast of whisky and lemonade. By 9am I was drunk and the ego was in full swing, so much so that I told the course tutor to piss off and got in my car to drive back home to Leeds.

Now, let me be clear. I, in no way, shape or form, take any pride in the fact I risked other people's lives by driving under the influence. But it's a part of my life and story that has to be told.

A bottle of whisky is not, of course, the best choice for the first meal of the day and although the initial buzz was great, somewhere between leaving the course and my final destination I was forced to pull up and have a little snooze.

Now I have been woken up from sleep by many things, alarm clocks, loud noises, other people, but this was the first and only time I have ever been woken by a police officer. And as I was full of Scotch, sat in the driver's seat of my car in the lay-by used by the police to check for speeding on a major A road, I became aware very quickly this was not going to end well for me.

Some two hours later I was in a police station being informed I was three times over the legal limit for alcohol and I was to appear in court the following week charged with a drink-driving offence. The brash, cocky man who had told the course tutor to piss off earlier that day was now replaced by a sobbing child full

of fear and regret.

Due to the kind actions of some people, one of them the officer who'd arrested me, I avoided jail but an 18 month ban was inevitable. With the ban came another harsh reality: a car salesman without a licence can't do his job. So I lost my licence and my job in the same week. If I was tasked with messing my life up as quickly as possible I could not have done a better job.

I had no work, no ability to drive, no money and a drink problem. This was not exactly the dream life I had imagined in my teens.

Over the next couple of weeks my drinking got worse and eventually something had to change. I would like to say it was me that came up with a solution but it was not. All I wanted to do was drink, but my family had other ideas and on the 5th December 1998, I was taken to Scotland to spend a week in a rehab centre. It was an experience I am convinced saved my life.

There, things started to turn around. I loved every moment of my time in rehab. I felt happy, safe and for the first time in a long while I had some hope that I could live without drink in my life. I got sober and spent time with people who had faced and overcome the same demons I was battling. In rehab I was introduced to some ways of thinking that had a real impact on me and I started to develop an interest in and love for anything to do with self help and personal development. The love of this subject has been with me ever since.

Once out of rehab and sober I needed some money. I had a wife and mortgage and both had been neglected while I was pissing my life up against a wall for three years. I found a job in a

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factory, sweeping floors. It was a shock to my system; the days of company cars, smart suits and fancy watches were over. But it was good honest work that made me sweat and, crazy as it sounds, it was one of the happiest times of my life. I felt at ease with myself. I wasn't drinking, my self-confidence was improving and my ability to work hard was paying off. I took to it like a duck to water.

While spending my days lifting boxes and loading lorries, I spent my evenings reading and studying self development books. I started studying what successful people did and looking for ways I could bring some of those principles into my life to help me move forward. And it worked. I was soon starting to get noticed in the firm I worked for. And I was given more responsibilities.

Fast forward a couple of years and I'd worked my way up to a managerial position. All the experience of the motor trade, my personal development study and my work ethic really started to give me an edge and I felt at home in a warehouse.

To help me support my team, I developed a coaching and management style based on my new-found knowledge. It was then I realised my true vocation in life was to coach and manage people to bring the best out of them. I had a great team and for a while I was very content in my role as site manager. But after a while I began to want more.

I felt I could do more in this industry and so I started to work towards the ambition I had had as a kid.

Growing up, I'd dreamt of being Del Boy from Only Fools and Horses, wheeler-dealing my way to success and being my own

boss. I had done a few things, market stalls, selling door to door but now I felt it was time to actually do something about it. I had nothing to lose so I decided to work towards having my own business.

Three years down the line and I did have my own company. I took over the business where I had started sweeping the floor a few short years earlier. This taught me a very important lesson - there is opportunity in even the most challenging times, providing you look for it and work incredibly hard.

At this point it was as if I had it all - a successful business, a wife, kids. I had a nice house and plenty of money; I was living the dream. I told myself I was invincible and after a while I started to believe it. I became cocky, complacent and full of my own self importance. What could possibly go wrong?

They say pride comes before a fall and I was about to find that out in spectacular fashion.

In November 2008, my dad died suddenly in his sleep, setting off a whole chain of events. Things had started to slip for me well before Dad popped his clogs though. I had started to feel increasingly pissed off with things that a few years earlier had made me happy. And things I would normally take in my stride had started to become hard work. Having experienced all this happiness and success, it was now all starting to go horribly wrong and I did not know why. I used my dad's death as an excuse to feel sorry for myself rather than really look at the issues I was facing. The fact was I was a terrible and unfaithful husband and a poor dad who had started to use people for my own gain both personally and professionally. I was once described as a benevolent dictator and there was a lot of truth

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in that at the time. My dad was the only person I ever looked up to and he was the only person who could make me see sense. With him gone I was a law unto myself and I was turning into a right dickhead.

And then in June 2010 I fell off the wagon for the first time since I had last taken a drink back in 1998. I blew all my hard work getting to 12 years' sober in one afternoon in the company of a serious amount of rosé wine. Afterwards, I felt terrible and was racked with regret and guilt. I couldn't understand why I'd done what I'd done. The thing is, despite all my experience and learning, I had thought I was bigger than booze and that I could handle it. But the fact is, there are certain people, me being one of them, who just can't handle alcohol. No matter how hard we try to prove that fact wrong, it always kicks us where it hurts if we mess with it. My illusion of being invincible was shattered.

But I dusted myself off, sobered up and marched on, hiding all my disappointment and regret about falling off the wagon behind my over-inflated ego.

Some time later I decided to take my personal development interest to the next level. I trained so I could become a life coach. My life was back on track, I was sober again and the business was doing well. I even managed to focus more on my marriage and spend some quality time with my young children. But something still wasn't right. There was no consistency. I would do well then just mess it all up again and feel bad. This up-and-down, win-and-lose pattern went on for four years. My marriage broke down and I resigned myself to the fact I was just a terrible dad. I was deeply unhappy and I moved out of the

family home leaving my young kids, a decision that feels just as painful now as it did then. But I truly believe if I had not left I would have killed myself - I was that low.

There had to be more to why I couldn't make drink a thing of the past. There had to be a way to be happier and more successful. But rather than look for it I decided being pissed was a better option.

And that's when I found myself sitting alone in my front room on that summer's day in 2014, seemingly about to drink myself to death.

But something stopped me.

Call it a flash of inspiration, call it a lightbulb moment, call it God. Whatever. But the thought came to me: *Gareth, is this all you're here for - to be a pisshead and die in your 40's? Is this the sum total of your life?* I really do believe we are all here for a reason, a purpose and I felt certain at that moment this was not mine.

Why, I asked myself, did I feel so miserable, so fed up with my life that I was willing to throw it away? Lots of things were going well - the business for one. I had become skilled in personal development and coaching techniques. But despite that, here I was, hitting the bottle once more. Hitting it hard. In an almost joking fashion I thought, *'maybe I should use some of this stuff I have learned on myself'*. Sounds obvious now but that was the answer - I had to coach myself. I had spent so much time focused on growing the business and helping others I had neglected myself and until that day I'd never realised it. It was time to go to work.

One fundamental idea in coaching is about asking ourselves

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better questions. I had been asking myself why my life was so bad, which in the coaching profession is known as a bullshit question. So I asked myself a better question:

What was I doing or thinking when I was experiencing happiness and success in life?

I took a pen and paper, and over the rest of the day, I wrote down everything that had gone well in my life and what I was doing and thinking at the time. It filled pages and pages of my notebook and as I wrote I realised how much stuff I had done well and it made me feel good.

I also looked at the times it had all gone wrong and what I was doing and thinking then. And not unsurprisingly, it became clear that what I was doing when I was doing well was missing when it was all going wrong.

Reading over my notes, I started to see a pattern. But it seemed too simple; it came down to just four simple things. It had to be more complicated than that. So as well as looking at my own life, I started to study well-known successful people, looking for those four things. And, yes, they were there. And when anyone in the media had a dramatic fall, one or more of those things was missing.

So what are they, these four simple things? Before I tell you, let me say this: They are not magical or mysterious or only available to the rich and powerful. Anyone, regardless of age, race, gender or nationality, can get them and use them in their lives.

This is what I discovered:

1. I realised that successful people know what it is that they want to achieve - they have **clarity**.
2. Then they do something about it - they take **action**.
3. They seem to be able to take setbacks on the chin - they are **resilient**.
4. And they appear to have a lot of get-up-and-go - they're full of **energy**.

When things had gone well for me in the past, all these four components - clarity, action, resilience, energy - had been there. And when one or more was missing, that's when things had got messy for me. Not only that, but when I wrote the four components down I saw that the first letter of each spelt a simple four-letter word. One that everybody would understand and easily remember: **CARE**.

And so, the CARE system was born. A system which sets out the essential elements we all need to have in place if we want to develop, change and achieve success. I call them the four non-negotiables of achievement.

I've been using the CARE system ever since. Applying it whenever I want to try something new, progress my career, improve my relationships with the people who are important to me. Using it to help me be the best version of myself I can be. Using the CARE system has allowed me to have the most fulfilling, happy and successful period of my life. And whenever I feel something is slipping, I just go back and check my clarity, the action I'm taking, how resilient I feel and how much energy I have and I am back on track in a heartbeat. It works every time.

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And I've shared it with many people who have also found it to be hugely helpful whatever the change is that they want to make to their lives. And that's why I'm bringing it to you now.

Now I had to reach rock bottom before figuring all this out. You don't have to. Whatever it is you want to change, whatever you want to achieve, whatever your circumstances, if you've got to the stage in your life where you're wondering, '*is this it? I want more*', then this book - and the CARE system - is for you.

Thank you for letting me share my story. It means a lot to me. But that's it about me now. The rest of this book is all about YOU. I will share some of my experiences to help give context to the ideas in this book but from now on it's over to you.

One small tip (actually it's a huge tip): don't skip the exercises. The only way you will get the results this book offers is to do the work. That's why you'll need some paper and a pen to hand as you read. So go and grab them now!

Ready to get going? Well roll up your sleeves, have an open mind and turn the page to start learning about the four things in life you need to BE, DO or HAVE in order to overcome any challenge or achieve anything you set your mind to.

DISCLAIMER!

If you're new to this personal development thing, don't get overwhelmed. Take this book at a pace that suits you and only go on to the next chapter when you really understand the chapter you're on. And don't beat yourself up if you don't get it first time. Not many people do. When I started to delve into this stuff it took me a long time to really get it. It involves some hard but really valuable and important work. You're about to take steps to make yourself the best version of yourself you can be and that's a pretty big deal.

Chapter 3

Clarity:

**know what you want, why you want it,
and when you want it**

Everything starts with clarity. And nothing ever gets done without it.

The importance of this can't be overstated so I will say it again. Everything starts with clarity. And nothing ever gets done without it. Whatever it is you want to achieve, change, overcome or improve in your life, you have to be clear what the end goal is.

Why? Because without knowing what it is you want to get - how are you going to know when you've got it? Simple really. Although not necessarily easy!

I will give you an example of how a lack of clarity can cause you stress by looking at a situation I am sure we've all experienced.

Have you ever gone to the supermarket without a shopping list?

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And even worse, without a list and when you're hungry? What happens? You wander the aisles for ages, picking up any old rubbish. Being led by your stomach and being seduced by the 2-for-1 offers and half-price junk food. You come out with a load of crap you didn't need, having spent a small fortune and you've forgotten the toilet rolls and milk you went in for. What a waste of time, effort and money! And on top of that you get stress from your other half when you get home because everyone has to drink black coffee and avoid going to the loo because you instead came home with 24 jam doughnuts and a mens health magazine. All of which was avoidable if only you'd had some clarity.

With clarity (in the form of a shopping list), you're much more focused, you do the shop in double-quick time and you avoid any doughnut incidents.

Whatever your goal is or whatever you're trying to change, whether big or small, personal or professional, having clarity is essential.

Here's another example: what's one of the best experiences most people have during their year? I'm pretty certain it's their summer holiday. And why is that? It's not just because it's hot and sunny, or the food's better, or you're away from work. It's because of clarity. More often than not, you'll have spent a lot of time thinking about where you want to go, what you'll do when you get there, where you're going to stay, the sights you're going to see. You know too why you're going on holiday - whether that's to relax, to spend quality time with the family, to experience new things, to visit new places. And because you have that clarity, that's what tends to happen - you do spend

time with the family, visit new places, relax. And that experience lives long in the memory.

Now what if you applied the same level of clarity to other areas of your life? What would happen then?

In this chapter I'll give you a simple way to get crystal-clear about your goal and show you how that clarity will create the focus you need to get working towards it. I'll explain why you also need to know why you want to make this change and how that helps to keep you motivated.

Perhaps you don't know what it is you want to change. You just feel fed up and unsatisfied with where your life is right now. To try and find the root of your problem, you ask yourself, *'why am I unhappy?'* This is the wrong question. Remember from the last chapter how, in the coaching profession, we call these kind of enquiries 'bullshit questions'? I'll explain why you need to ask yourself better questions. And how a little bit of doubt goes a long way to changing how you think.

So let's get started. All you'll need is a blank piece of A4 paper and a pen. Please get these things ready because there is real power in writing things down.

Be crystal-clear about your goal

What is it you want to do? Do you want to lose weight, spend more time with the kids, get a new job, start a business, give up smoking, meet someone special, increase your self-confidence, be more productive?

Whatever you want, big or small, being clear means being specific about your goal. *'I want to lose weight'* is too vague. Do

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you mean a pound or a stone? So is *'I want to get in shape'* or *'I want to be healthier'*. Do you mean you want to go down a dress or waist size? Or fit into those expensive jeans you love to wear but can't fasten? Eat more vegetables? Reduce the amount of sugar you consume, have more energy, not feel exhausted at the end of the working day?

Think about what it will look like once you've achieved your goal. It could be as simple as *'I'll fit into those Armani Jeans'* or *'I'll do a 10k charity run in March'*.

For example, right now I want to be 11 1/2 stone with a visible six-pack. That's my goal.

Perhaps it's not weight you want to lose. I will use weight loss as an example a lot simply because most people know what that looks like. But it doesn't matter what I use as an example. It simply serves as a way of highlighting that thing you do want to achieve.

Perhaps you want a better job or to start a business. So imagine what that better job or business looks like for you. Is it about having more responsibility? Or less? Is it about making more money? Or having more flexibility to do other things? Is it about having a more challenging or interesting role? Do you want the opportunity to make more of a difference? Or have more fun?

Or do you want to be more self confident and have more belief in yourself? What does having more confidence and self-belief look like for you? Imagine yourself as that confident person. What would you be doing? How would you behave?

Whatever the change is that you want to make, be clear about what that change is and what it will look like when you get

there. That way you'll know when you've achieved it.

Now take that sheet of A4 paper and on the top half write down what your goal is, as succinctly and clearly as you can. Keep it short and keep it sweet - that's very important. That's step one.

Clarity creates focus

You know when you're thinking about buying a car? You've decided on the make and model and suddenly everywhere you go, you see that exact make and model. And you even keep seeing it in the colour you've chosen.

Why? Because all your attention has become focused on what you want. You don't register other cars because you're not interested in them. But the car you want suddenly seems to stand out like a sore thumb.

That's because clarity creates focus. Once you know what you want you'll start to focus on the things you need to do to get you there.

You don't need a massively detailed plan at this point. You just need focus. Extensive planning takes time, delays you from taking action and often doesn't fit the reality.

But having focus will give you a pretty good idea of what you need to do. In my experience, once you have focus, you can trust your own intuition to help you. And a plan will follow.

Perhaps that sounds a bit wishy-washy or spiritual to you. But it's not. It's just that once you know what it is you're after, you'll subconsciously start to make things happen.

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Once you have clarity about what you want, ideas of how to get it will pop up. Make sure you write those ideas down. Writing them down will create momentum and form the start of your plan. You will start to create a list of actions for you to take to get you closer to your goal. But we will talk more about that in the next chapter.

When I decided I wanted to write this book, I started talking about it with other people. That led to a friend recommending someone who could help me get it published. Suddenly, it became much more real, more possible. I started to have ideas about how I would go about achieving my goal and the things I would need to do to complete it. I made a note of these ideas and so a plan started to emerge.

In the same way, once you're clear about what you want, you'll start to seek out opportunities to get it - opportunities to get fit, or increase your skills, or find the people that could help you achieve your goal. All because you have focus. All because you have clarity.

Ben Hunt-Davis, Olympic rowing champion, nails this in his book, *Will it make the boat go faster?* He talks about how he and his team achieved such great success by focusing on only those things that would get them where they wanted to be - i.e. making the boat go faster and therefore helping them win the race.

That focus meant they knew what to say no to. If an activity didn't aid their goal, they didn't do it. It's like with me writing this book - that's my goal and all I'm focused on right now, other than dealing with clients, is getting it written. So if I find myself watching dumb shit for hours on YouTube or discussing other

business ideas with people, that's not getting me anywhere towards achieving this goal. So I know to stop and refocus. Do I stay focused all the time? Hell no, I am fully aware that I have the attention span of a goldfish. But the clarity around my goal helps me keep on track.

I know that if I start to drift, that's when the work starts. I may have to adjust what I'm doing but I'm always making sure I am going in the direction of my goal.

Remember, it's ok to stumble. Don't let a few stumbles stop you, they are an unavoidable part of the journey towards achieving your goal. Having a bit of a wobble is not a sign you're failing, it's a sign you're actually doing stuff, you're making changes, you're making an effort. And that puts you in the small percentage of people that actually take action to change their lives, overcome a challenge, achieve their goals.

But these inevitable wobbles are why you need to have a good reason for making the change you want to make.

Have a big enough WHY

Clarity gives you direction, it gives you focus. But knowing what you want isn't enough. You also have to know why you want it.

It's the WHY that gives you the drive to keep going when things get tough.

And it's got to be a big WHY. It's got to be meaningful.

For example, I want a visible six-pack. Why? So I look good on the beach?

No, that's not a good enough reason, it's not a big enough WHY.

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The 'why' for me is actually that I've had a great-grandparent, a grandparent and my dad all die from a heart attack. I don't want that to happen to me. I want to be here a long time, be around for my kids, feel good about myself and have the energy to live life full on. Belly fat on men is dangerous as it leads to a number of health issues, none of which I want to experience. (Of course, the nice byproduct of this goal is I will also look great in my speedos! Win/win!)

That's the sort of WHY that will motivate me to keep going when I don't feel like doing those bench presses or hauling myself out of bed on a cold, foggy morning to go for a run.

That's why so many New Year's resolutions fail. People may have decided what they want to do but haven't given themselves a big enough WHY. So by the end of January, they're back on the booze. Or scoffing the chocolate. Or smoking the fags. (Ah, booze, chocolate and fags - that would have sounded like a pretty good evening to me a few years back!)

On that day in July I became crystal-clear that I no longer wanted to be a drunk. I wanted to live a sober life. And my WHY? I realised that I didn't want to die, I didn't want to leave my children without a dad and I had more to give the world. That's the big WHY that's kept me sober ever since.

Once you've got clarity about what you want and a big enough why for doing it, that's when you're driven to do it. You'll do anything to get there.

Viktor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor, wrote in *A man's search for meaning*, 'A man who becomes conscious of the responsibility he bears toward a human being [...] or to an unfinished work,

will never be able to throw away his life. He knows the 'why' for his existence, and will be able to bear almost any how.'

If I can be permitted to paraphrase that I would adapt it to: *if you've got a big enough 'why' to do something, you'll do any kind of 'what' to get there.*

So what's your WHY?

Why do you NEED to make this change? What is the BIG difference it will make to your life? To your future? To the wellbeing of your family? What will happen if you don't make this change?

Now write down on the bottom half of your sheet of paper why you want to achieve this goal, why you want to make this change. What it will mean to you. That's step two.

Ask a better question

Have you been reading this and thinking - *'that's all very well if you know what you want. But I don't. I just know I'm unhappy. But I don't know why and I don't know what to do about it?'*

Sometimes of course, we don't know precisely what our end goal is, we just feel like something needs to change in our lives for us to be happy.

So how do we find out what needs to change? You might think that the first step is to work out why you're unhappy. To pinpoint what the problem is.

No. Asking yourself why you're unhappy is a bullshit question. The problem is never the problem. The reason you are where you are, the reason why you're unhappy is irrelevant right now.

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Because what you should focus on is where you want to be.

When you ask yourself bullshit questions like *'why am I unhappy?'* or *'why am I so overweight?'* or *'why don't I have any friends?'* or *'why does no one love me?'* then all you'll get is bullshit answers.

The mind is like a computer - it will answer any question you ask it, even if the question is a bullshit one.

That's why, if we ask ourselves these kind of questions, we get answers like: because you're lazy, because you don't deserve to be happy, because you're ugly/stupid/weak, and so on and so on. This makes us feel even worse and even less likely to take action to change things.

To get better answers, you need to ask yourself better questions.

Like: *How can I be happier? What would things look like if I was happy? What could I do to feel optimistic instead of fed up?*

When you start to ask better questions like that, things change. When you ask better questions like: *how could I be slimmer, more fulfilled at work, in a sound relationship*, the answers will show themselves, your goal will appear.

Again, I'll use the example of writing this book. I was beating myself up at the start for not finding the time to focus on it. *'Why can't I just get on with it?'* I asked myself. And the answers came - you're lazy, you're not really a writer, what gives you the right to think of yourself as an author? Lovely. So I reframed the question. *'How, I asked myself, 'can I get this book written, enjoy this experience and make it a valuable one?'* I woke up the next day with a better answer - dedicate three months to the project.

If you ask a positive question - like *'how can I enjoy this?'* - your mind will find a more constructive answer. An answer that will start to give you more clarity about what you want to change in your life.

Remember your brain is designed to answer any question you ask it without fail, so ask it better questions.

Change your mindset

Everyone has their own view of the world. In my work, we call this their map. We all look at things differently because of our personal map, mindset and beliefs.

Here's an example of how our maps work and how they are individual to us all: I was holidaying in Spain last year, in St Joan in Ibiza. One day it started to rain. I was pretty blasé about this. I didn't mind a little bit of wet. Sheltering with me under a shop awning was another English couple who were moaning about it, about the fact that a day of their precious holiday was being spoiled. Meanwhile, a local hippy bloke was dancing in the street, splashing about and letting the rain wash over him. Turns out the Ibizans hadn't seen rain for over six months and were delighted to welcome its return.

The same scenario. Three different viewpoints, three different maps.

We all have our own beliefs. Many of which are based on how we were brought up and our experiences of life so far. Many are very entrenched. And some of those beliefs will work for you and some of them won't.

These beliefs though are not necessarily facts. And if you're held

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back by something you believe to be true, then to counter that belief, you need to throw some doubt at it.

For instance, I've had clients who say, 'I can never lose weight'. They completely believe this to be true. And because of these beliefs they feel they can't make any sort of change. But then I ask them a simple question, 'if I locked you in a prison cell for three months and never fed you, would you lose weight?' To which they always reply, 'that's silly. Of course I would lose weight!' I follow this up with, 'so there is a chance you could lose weight under certain circumstances? Let's explore what that looks like.'

I've sown a seed of doubt in their minds. And once doubt gets in the way of a belief, people start to change the way they think. If their firmly-held belief has been shown to be not completely true, a new more helpful belief can begin.

Every belief you have may or may not be true. Knowing that gives you a lot of power to change.

I used to have a fear of meeting new people because of my shyness. I'd get physically sick if I had to go anywhere where I didn't know people. People don't believe this about me - I hide it well! But it's true. I believed that people wouldn't like me, they'd think I was daft. Then one day, I thought, '*is that true? Does everybody think I'm daft. Really? Does anybody think I'm daft? Actually, when I think about it, no.*'

And the minute I threw doubt at it, I could do something about changing it.

Getting what you want is about getting clear about what you want and why you want it and then understanding that the only

reason you are where you are is because of the way you think.

And you can change your thinking very quickly.

What do you do when someone cuts you up on the road? You probably, like me, get really annoyed, maybe you shout at the driver or flick the V's at him (sorry fellas, most bad drivers I experience are males!). Maybe your own driving behaviour changes - you speed up too.

No doubt you think the driver's a twat - driving like no one else has anywhere to go, like they rule the road.

But how about you think about it differently? How about you imagine he's just had a call that his wife's gone into premature labour and it's not going well. She's at the hospital and she needs him. Urgently. All of a sudden his behaviour looks different, it looks reasonable, justified. Something you'd do too, in his place. Right?

Now whether or not that's true (he could still just be a twat), this scenario serves you better, makes you feel more relaxed about being cut up. Heart rate and blood pressure stay normal and you avoid road rage and getting into something that has the potential to turn very nasty for a lot of people.

Likewise, on that rainy day in St Joan, Ibiza, who was having the better time? The moaning couple who believed the rain spoilt their holiday? Or the joyful guy who believed it brought an end to a drought that had damaged crops and affected livelihoods? Two ways of thinking about the same scenario that had a huge impact on how much each enjoyed their day.

So when getting clear about what you want to do, and why you

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want to do it, make sure your own beliefs aren't getting in the way. Are not holding you back. Sow some doubt in your mind. Change the way you think.

Decide when you want to have achieved your goal

So when you know what you want and why you want it, the final step in really nailing clarity is to decide when you want it all by. In a week, a month, a year? Give your goals a completion date by which you want to be that or have that thing.

You have to have a timeframe for any of this to make sense. But make it realistic and don't try and be a hero here. Slow and steady is far more effective than trying to do too much too quickly. That leads to disappointment so don't do it!

Write WHEN you want it by on your piece of paper at the bottom under your WHAT and WHY statements and sign the page. This one page document with the details of what you want, why you want it and the completion date is your contract with yourself and you've signed it so it's legally binding!

Set it in stone

So now you know WHAT you want, you have a big enough reason for WHY you want it and you have decided WHEN you want it by. And it's all written down very clearly and succinctly on a piece of paper.

This piece of paper is very important. It's your mantra, your commandment. If it could be written on a tablet of stone, it should be. But it's hard to get hold of a block of marble these days and you may not have sufficient skill to chisel your words onto stone, so a piece of paper will have to do.

However you write it down and record it, think of it as that big a deal. Think of it as set in stone. And make it so it's always to hand, something that you look at every day. Pin it somewhere prominent. Set it up as a daily reminder on your phone. Make it your screensaver.

With it in front of you, you'll always be clear about what you're aiming for. It will help you maintain your focus and your drive.

Well done for surviving this chapter. You should be proud of yourself. A lot of people don't get past the first chapter of a self development book before they quit!

Now it's time to take action. To make things happen. And that's what the next chapter is all about.

Clarity - a recap:

- Be crystal-clear about your goal, not vague or wishy-washy
- Make sure you have a really big reason for making this change to your life
- Instead of asking yourself why you're unhappy, ask a better question
- If your mindset is holding you back, throw some doubt at your beliefs
- Set a realistic timescale for when you want to have achieved your goal.

Chapter 4

Action:

small, sustainable steps - the surprising secret of success

Congratulations! If you've followed the steps in the previous chapter, you now have laser-like clarity about what it is you want to achieve, why you want to achieve it and by when. You're focused on your destination - you know what it will look like when you get there. And you have the drive to succeed, because you know how important it is to you to make this change to your life, you have the big WHY. Plus, you also know when you intend to get there by.

But having a destination is one thing. Now you need to work out how you're going to get there. You know doing nothing gets you nowhere. To achieve your goals, you need to take action.

But where do you start? What action should you take? How do you know if you're going down the right path? In the right way?

Perhaps you're worrying about the huge steps you need to take

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to get to your destination. You're dreading the strict diet and punishing exercise regime. Or the financial outlay. The late night studying. The giving up of something you love.

Because the steps have to be huge, don't they? If you're going to get anywhere? It's all about no pain, no gain, right? There has to be struggle and effort and yes, pain, for you to achieve this big and scary goal of yours. Because it is a big and scary goal, isn't it? After all, if it wasn't big and scary you'd have done it years ago. And if you've got a big enough reason for why you need to make this change, then the price of failure must be pretty scary too.

Calm down. Don't panic.

With the CARE system, it's not about pain. In fact, if it hurts, you're doing it wrong. Because if it hurts, you're going to give up. And giving up is not an option. Not if you want change to truly happen.

So stop thinking about massive effort, about taking big painful strides towards your goal.

Instead, think small. And think sustainable.

That's the surprising secret to success - it's the small, sustainable steps that you build into your daily life that will, over time, create the big change you want. Yes it will get tough and you will need to be resilient at times, but we will cover that off in the next chapter.

In this chapter, I'll show you how small steps make a big difference. How, with small achievable steps, you'll start to build your confidence, enjoy yourself and become ready to take bigger steps. Which will get you ever closer to your goal.

I'll also help you find out what actions are the right ones for you to take, whatever your goal is - actions that are achievable, feel good and work. You'll see how you need to push yourself, but only a little - and how if you push yourself too hard or too fast, you'll fail. And, you'll find out how to avoid distractions and temptations by asking yourself one very simple question.

So let's get on with it.

Start right now

First things, first. When should you begin to take action towards your goal?

Perhaps you're thinking, *I'll start my new diet next month, once I've got that party, that family meal, that wedding out of the way. Then I'll properly get going on it. Or, I'll knock the drinking on the head after Christmas and New Year. Or, I'll just finish this project I'm working on. Or, I'll just wait until baby Louise is sleeping through the night. And then I'll be ready to start.*

No. Start right now. Right this minute. Yes, this minute (well not exactly this minute, the end of this chapter will be cool!).

Now is the absolute best time to start. Because you're all fired up about your goal. You've spent time thinking about what you want to achieve and importantly, why you want to achieve it. If you do something about it now your enthusiasm will make it so much easier. Leave it a few days, a few weeks and you may never get round to it.

As soon as you have clarity you must take immediate action towards your goal.

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So, what action can you take, right this minute, that will set you going on your journey? It doesn't have to be much, just enough to get the ball rolling.

Let's say your goal is to lose two stone in weight. Now it's that time of day when you'd normally be making yourself a cup of coffee with two sugars. So right now, make that cup of coffee but with one sugar not two.

Is your goal to decorate the kitchen? So right now, choose a paint colour for the walls.

Perhaps you're aiming to start a business. So right now, come up with the name.

It doesn't really matter what you do. The important thing is that you do it now. Because then you've already made your first step, you've already started progressing towards achieving your goal. And that will feel good, and we always do more of what feels good.

Start small, very small

Notice what all those actions have in common - taking your coffee with less sugar, choosing a paint colour, thinking up a business name?

They're all really small. All seemingly insignificant actions.

It's all very well having a big dream, a big goal to aim for. But that doesn't mean you should take big steps to get there. In fact, you should do the exact opposite. You should take really small steps.

It's not my rule. It's nature's. When you're learning to walk as a baby, you don't start by running straight away. You take small steps - you crawl, you toddle, you walk, then you run.

You wouldn't go into a gym for the first time and try to lift a 100kg barbell. You'd start with the lightest weight and build up from there. And that's what you need to do with any action you take towards your goal. Start small and build up from there.

Small actions create the momentum you need to achieve big goals.

Push yourself just a little

Just because your actions are small, doesn't mean they should be easy. The action has got to challenge you. It's got to change your behaviour in some small way. And that may not, at least at first, feel very comfortable.

But then comfortable's not going to get you very far. For me, sitting on the couch in my pyjamas on a Sunday morning, watching the Grand Prix and eating what's left of last night's takeaway Jalfrezi is comfortable. But it's not helping me achieve my goals.

So often, when we have big dreams, all we do is dream about them. We read the lifestyle magazines, we watch a fitness video, we buy the latest business book. But we don't actually do anything about our dreams. But if we don't take any action, we stay where we are. At least until it gets too painful to stay there - like it got for me on that sunny day in July 2014. I had to act then, but it was almost too late.

The easiest option might be to do nothing. But eventually, doing nothing will be the most painful thing you could do.

If you're going to change your life, you need to take action. And that action may feel a bit strange, a bit uncomfortable.

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But with small steps, you can make sure it's not too uncomfortable, not too hard. You want to be taking steps that push you a little but not too much. Actions that are just above comfortable.

For instance, I know I can comfortably walk three miles a day. I want to lose a stone in weight. So my action is I'm going to do three and a half miles a day. It's a push but not too big a push. And then, when that feels comfortable, I'll do four.

So what could you do that would push you just above comfortable? And remember, it's not the action we think about taking that counts, it's the action we do take that matters.

Be realistic

We've been conditioned by the self-help industry to think too big. To think that in order to achieve big goals we need to take massive steps.

You'll have no doubt heard self-help guru-types (or fitness trainers) say things like - think positive, push on through the pain, etc, etc, etc.

It's all nonsense. You won't ever hear me say that.

Perhaps you want to run a marathon. So you think - *'well to achieve that I'm going to have to put in a huge amount of effort. I'll start running five miles every day.'* But if you're starting from scratch, that's a huge leap to take.

Unless you're very focused and dedicated (and most people aren't) you're not going to be able to sustain such a massive action. It's just not realistic. And if you can't sustain it, you'll stop doing it.

The actions you take have got to feel like they're achievable. Especially if you're just starting out with self-development or you've tried and failed many times before. Because what you've got to avoid at all costs, when you're just starting to take action, is your head telling you you can't do it. That you're going to fail.

Your body might be capable of much more than you can imagine but your mind may not be right now and it's your mind that you're working on here. By taking small, achievable steps, you're training your mind to believe you can do it, to believe you're capable of more. And when your mind is onside, there's nothing you can't do. But again, it's all done one small step at a time.

So trust your instincts - if it feels like something you can't do yet, then don't do it. Try something smaller. If walking for twenty minutes feels like too big a push, walk for ten, or five. Then when five feels comfortable, build up to six, then seven and so on. Keep doing that and one day soon you'll be doing twenty minutes. And it won't have felt like a huge effort even though when you look back you will have come a long way from where you started.

Give yourself realistic actions to do every day and you're far more likely to achieve your goals.

Find what works for you

It's important to find the actions that work for you. And by 'work for you' I mean both that they get you further towards achieving your goals and that they feel good. If they work but they don't feel good you won't keep going.

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So what will work for you? What form of exercise will suit you best, for instance? Given my build I should love running, but I really don't enjoy it. But put me on a bike and I'm your man. I'm not the best cyclist but I enjoy it and therefore I keep doing it. I've found what works for me.

It's all about becoming more self-aware, knowing what works for you, what feels good to you. There is no one size fits all. Everyone is unique and you need to find - through trial and error and a bit of time - what actions are right for you.

So if you try walking for ten minutes every day and find after a couple of weeks that it's not really for you, try something else. Try cycling. Or swimming. Just make it something you can do a little bit of every day.

Do something towards your goal every day

People underestimate the amount of action required to achieve their goals. The steps might be small, but you need to take those steps regularly and consistently.

For instance, I want to be a writer. To do that I can't get away with doing half an hour's writing on Sunday afternoon once a fortnight. I need to write something every day.

It's consistent action we're looking for. Consistent, sustainable action.

So take those small steps and build them into your day. Build them into your routine. Take that walk. Drink that sugarless coffee. Ignore the biscuits. Run up the stairs. Read a chapter of that book. Study that business manual. Every day.

Every day, come rain or shine, do those small actions you've set yourself. Turn them into habits.

If you take a small step towards your goal every day, each day you'll get closer to achieving that goal. And the closer you get to achieving your goal, the more confident you'll become and the bigger actions you'll be able to take because your capabilities will increase. Making that goal even more achievable.

Action is all about taking small steps every day towards where you're going. It is this that creates the momentum you need to achieve your goals.

Learn to say no

Being busy isn't taking action. Often being busy is just a distraction from taking action.

If you are doing something - making a phone call, sending an email, watching TV - it doesn't matter what, you have to ask yourself this one simple question - *'does what I'm doing right now take me closer to where I want to be?'* And if it doesn't, ask yourself why you are doing it. And then stop. Simple as that.

Once you decide where you want to be, the actions you take from that point should be getting you closer to that destination. Learn to say no to the things that distract you from that goal.

So I've decided I'm going to work for two hours every day on this book. One day a friend calls asking me out for coffee. I think, *'that sounds nice, I haven't seen Andy for ages, let's do it.'* But then I ask myself that one, simple question - *'hang on a minute, Gareth, you said you were going to work on the book today. Is going out for a coffee getting you closer to that? Erm. No.'* So I don't go.

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Saying no to things, to friends, to family, to business opportunities, isn't easy. It feels selfish. But, I'll be honest, you're going to need to be a little bit selfish in order to achieve your goals. You're going to need to turn things down, to rearrange, to disappoint people so that you can fully focus on the steps you need to take.

Because, ultimately, your goal is to be the best version of yourself you can be. And everyone around you will benefit from that. So you owe it to them to focus on yourself.

It's like this: you're on a plane about to take off and the air stewards are doing the safety briefing. 'If air pressure in the cabin drops,' they say, tugging on the mock oxygen mask, 'place the mask over your nose and mouth and breathe normally. If you're with a child, please put your own mask on before attending to your child.'

What they really mean is you'll be no use to your child if you're already out cold through lack of oxygen. You can only help others by first taking care of yourself.

I put myself before everybody else - not because I'm selfish, but so that I can be the best version of myself I can - for them. I have to consider what I'm willing to do, what I'm willing to sacrifice in order to achieve my goals. My focus at the moment is this book - because I'm clear that without it, none of my other dreams can happen. So every one of my decisions and actions is informed by my goal of writing this book.

Someone once said to me, 'you're bloody obsessed, you are!' And I am. I've had several obsessions, some healthy, some not so much. When I was drinking, that was an obsession. Then I got into fitness and that became something of an obsession too.

The fact of the matter is, if you want to achieve anything, you have to become a little bit obsessed. If it's a big stretch you're going to have to be all in. And before you start thinking you're not an obsessive kind of person, I can guarantee in one way, shape or form we all have obsessions.

Remember, now that you've got clarity about where you're going, your job - your only job - is to get yourself there.

Be patient

I am certain that with clarity and by taking small actions every day you will achieve your goals. But I can't guarantee it will be fast. It will take time. That, of course, is the problem with taking small steps - it will take you longer to get where you're going.

But it's better to get there slowly than not at all.

And if you try to do things too fast, you risk failure. In fact I will go a step further and say you will guarantee failure!

Let's say you want to lose two stone. And you want to lose those two stone quickly - in two months, perhaps. That will probably entail a severely calorie-controlled diet, cutting out everything you love and embarking on a serious exercise regime. How long could you realistically sustain that for? Unless you're completely focused and massively dedicated, it's unlikely you'll be able to keep going at that rate. I'd give it a couple of weeks.

So you give up. The disappointment of failing means you eat more. And then one day, you look in the mirror and instead of the Adonis you were hoping for, you see a Michelin man staring back at you. And you feel like you've let yourself down.

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Instead, let's think small and sustainable. Perhaps your small actions might be to reduce your meal portion size slightly, knock some of the chocolate consumption on the head, swap fizzy drinks for water, walk for ten minutes a day. Doing that consistently, day in day out, you could probably lose half a pound a week, meaning it would take about a year to lose two stone.

This might seem like a long time, but by taking small steps, you'll make it much easier on yourself.

And if you can do it easily - or at least at a level that's just above comfortable, you can sustain it for a year. And probably beyond. In fact, it's change you're likely to be able to live with.

So rather than taking bigger action, allow yourself more time. Be patient. After reading this don't be afraid to go back to your one page document and adjust the date you want your goal completed by. Doing that is not a sign of failure, it's actually you becoming more aware and sensible. It's a smart move.

Good things happen when you take small steps

You know the best bit about taking small steps every day that push you just above comfortable in a way that works for you? It will feel good and we always do more of what feels good.

And there you were thinking that this was going to be painful?

No. As humans we are designed for efficiency, we are designed to look for the path of least resistance. It's an inbuilt behaviour designed to help us and keep us safe. So work with it, not against it.

The more you do something - when that action is right for you,

feels achievable and has become a habit - the more pleasurable it becomes. It becomes automatic to us and we do it without thinking.

Remember when you first learnt to drive? It was difficult. You had to think about every move you made, which pedal to use, how to mirror-signal-manoevre. It all took concentration and effort. And felt uncomfortable, right? For a while, you didn't think you'd ever be able to do it.

And now, you do all of that automatically. You don't have to think about which pedal is the brake, you just know. And because it all comes naturally to you, you enjoy it so much more.

In the same way, when you first start walking for five or ten minutes every day, it feels a little bit uncomfortable, a bit of an effort. You can't quite see the point. You're not sure you'll be able to do it. But then, after a while, something will happen. You'll think, *'hmm, I quite like this walking lark now, I like the rhythm of it, I like breathing in the fresh air, looking at my surroundings and saying hello to other walkers.'* Your legs become stronger and what once was an effort you now do with ease.

Everything we do starts off feeling uncomfortable - because it's new and because we don't have confidence we can do it - but when you do it regularly and consistently, you start to appreciate it more, enjoy it more. And when you enjoy it more, you can start to take bigger action. Walk for a few more miles, for instance.

And it's not just that it becomes more pleasurable. By doing something every day that pushes you just above comfortable,

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you're achieving something every day and that will build your confidence. Every time you take a small action, you'll get a little burst of personal satisfaction, a little sense of 'I did that', you'll feel good about yourself and then you'll take on bigger things without even thinking about it. We always do more of what we feel good at.

It's a hugely positive circle - taking small steps means you're always taking action, you're always achieving that next step and every time you do it makes you feel more like taking the next step, and the next one and the next one. You're getting into the habit of achieving success.

That's the beauty of this whole CARE system process - your clarity, action, resilience and energy increases automatically because you're doing it - you're always taking action, however small, and that feeds back into your focus, your drive, your energy and your ability to carry on when things get in the way.

If you keep saying to yourself:

I decide what I want, I take action towards it.

I decide what I want, I take action towards it.

you'll end up building this process into your life, one where you have clarity and you take action to achieve success.

What are you going to do now?

You're now at the end of the chapter on action. Time to do something.

Do one small thing, however minor, that gets the ball rolling. Yes, I know it feels a bit strange but think of it like this - when you

first start pushing a stationary car, it takes effort. But once it's moving, it's a whole lot easier. You have the momentum to keep going. But without that first push, there is no momentum. So start pushing, just a little bit, right now.

When you are at the start of your journey, the action you take should be small and sustainable. Keep checking with yourself that what you're doing is getting you closer to where you want to be and be prepared to be patient - it will take time. But if you're doing what feels good to you and pushing yourself just above comfortable, you will get there.

That's not to say there won't be roadblocks in the way, that you won't feel like giving up from time to time. In the next chapter, I'll help you to build your resilience so that you can overcome the challenges that stand between you and your goals.

Action - a recap:

- Now is the absolute best time to start taking action towards your goal. Yes, now
- Taking small steps will create the momentum you need to achieve big goals
- Small doesn't mean easy. Push yourself just above comfortable (and no further)
- Keep taking small steps every single day. Without fail. Turn them into habits
- Achieving your goals will take time, but it's better to get there slowly than not at all.

Chapter 5

Resilience:

***when the going gets tough,
you need to get tougher***

Ever given up on a task, or a project, or a goal? Stuck to the diet for a week, then gone overboard on the puddings? Bought an annual gym membership that got used twice? Decided to read a book, but only got through the first two chapters?

Of course you have. We all have. But why? Because it got tough. It became too much like hard work. And most people aren't big fans of hard work. Like I said in the last chapter, we are built as humans to take the path of least resistance, to find the easy way.

But it's important to realise that when you're making a change to your life, big or small, it won't always be a smooth ride. In fact, I guarantee beyond any doubt that at some point, at many points, on your journey to where you want to be, it will get tough. You'll want to throw in the towel.

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If we're doing something significant enough, meaningful enough, there will be times when it just feels too difficult, too hard to continue. There will be setbacks and challenges. Circumstances that throw us off course. People who put up barriers. We run out of time. We run out of energy. We get bored. We get distracted. We feel like giving up.

I'm not telling you this to depress you. I'm not telling you this to put you off. I'm telling you because it's true and because knowing this will help you ride those storms when they come. Being prepared for challenges is half the battle to overcoming them.

But we all have a weapon in our armoury we can deploy to shield us from these difficulties, that can help us recover from setbacks and tackle the next challenge. Resilience.

Resilience is our ability to grit our teeth and carry on. To push on through. To tough things out. To bounce back from disappointments, from failures, from disaster. Without it, we'd all still be crawling on our knees. Resilience is what got us walking when we were babies, despite all the times we fell over, tripped up and landed back on our bottoms.

Some people are more resilient than others. Maybe it's in their genes. But we can all, with practice, build our resilience. So we're better able to face down whatever life throws at us.

In this chapter, I'll show you how to build up your resilience levels, bit by bit, every day. How to recognise when you need to show resilience and ways to overcome tough challenges. I'll also explore how we should respond when something big hits us from out of the blue, something we can't control, that could knock us completely off course.

Teeth gritted? Let's get to work.

Accept it will get hard

People generally underestimate how hard things will be. Here's the truth: whatever you do in life, it's always going to take longer than you think it's going to take, be harder than you think it's going to be, cost more money than you think it's going to cost. Fact.

But we tell ourselves (led astray by all those self-help gurus) that it'll be fine, it'll be easy, I can do it! We do this to protect ourselves, to bolster ourselves. It's a way of talking ourselves into it, of getting our heads around it. We might never get started if we had any idea of the struggles, pitfalls and problems we were going to face.

But the first step to building your resilience is to be honest with yourself. To recognise and accept that things will get hard. There's nothing you can do to avoid it getting tough. Life can be tough at times, but we already know that.

You'll know in advance some of the challenges you might face along the way. Perhaps your all-conquering chocolate habit might cause problems. Or your inability to say no to a Saturday night booze session. But other things will come totally out of the blue. And while some issues will just be minor inconveniences, others may seem insurmountable. Building up your resilience is how you deal with whatever gets in your way, large or small, predictable or unimaginable.

By recognising that things will inevitably get tough - and that they're tough because what you're trying to achieve is so

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important - then you're pre-armed for the battles you face. You're less likely to get knocked over when crossing the road if you're already looking out for cars.

Accept that it will get tough. Expect that it will. Know that you're going to need to call upon your resilience reserves at some point. In which case you need to build those up right now.

Think of resilience like a muscle

When you think of your grandparents, does it seem like they were so much tougher than you are? That they had to cope with things when they were your age, that you'd never be able to deal with? Well, that's why they're tougher than you - because they lived at a time when things were harder. Every day they had to keep going, despite everything life threw at them. They had to pick themselves up when things got tricky, carry on when it felt really tough to do so. They had to be resilient every day. Meaning they got more resilient as time went on.

Because resilience is just like a muscle. You become more resilient by being resilient. Fact.

Like when you first go to the gym, you've not got the strength to pick up the 100kg barbell, so you start with the 5kg one.

And in the same way that you need to develop your muscles to pick up the heavier weight, you need to build up your resilience in order to take on tougher challenges. This will take time. So don't beat yourself up for not feeling very resilient right now.

Your grandparents were resilient every day of their lives. And if they can do it, so can you. By practising resilience it builds up your resilience muscle, so after a while your capacity for

resilience increases and you can take on bigger challenges. That's how you grow.

Practise resilience every day

To build our resilience muscle, we need to find opportunities every day to practise being resilient. The more we practise the more resilient we become and the easier it gets to keep taking action.

Start off small. Show resilience by doing those little things you don't want to do. And do this every day.

For instance, do a little bit of extra work. Perhaps you're close to finishing a task and you think, *'I don't want to do any more, I'll leave the rest till tomorrow'*. Don't. Do it now. Get the job done, push on through. Perhaps you feel ready to put this book down and make a cup of tea, or turn the telly on. Don't. Finish this chapter. Then make the cup of tea. Get into the habit of completing a task.

In the same way that taking small actions builds momentum, so taking every opportunity to push on through things we don't want to do builds our resilience.

Keep that pattern of being resilient going in everything - relationships, work, exercise, it doesn't matter - as long as you're practising resilience, resilience will grow. And if you develop your resilience in one area, it will work in other areas too.

Resistance - recognising when resilience is required

How do you know when you need to be resilient?

There's a really simple way of knowing when resilience is called for. It's when you realise you're resisting doing something. You're

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putting something off. You're doing a whole load of other stuff to avoid doing this one thing.

When resistance shows up, that's when resilience is required.

For example, you've a difficult phone call to make. Perhaps you're chasing payment for an invoice. You've put it at the top of your to do list for 9 o'clock in the morning. You feel uncomfortable about making this call so you think *'I'll do my emails first, get those out of the way.'* And so it gets to lunchtime and you still haven't made that call. You think, *'I better have some lunch first, I'll do it this afternoon.'* Then after lunch you think, *'it's not the right time now, they'll be busy, it's a bit late in the day to call, I'll do it tomorrow.'*

And so on and so on. Resistance.

It's obvious why you're resisting it. Cos it's hard. Because you've built it up in your head as something really tricky. That might go wrong. You make excuses for not doing it. And so it doesn't get done. And gets even harder to do.

This is when you need to call upon your resilience. Think of it like a superhero coming to your rescue.

Grit your teeth. And take action. Do the thing you're resisting, right now.

Yes, the minute you feel resistance, you need to act on it straight away. Easier said than done, I know. But it's the only way.

Because if you resist something for too long, another emotion shows up. Fear. And that's a much bigger and scarier animal to deal with than resistance. If you're afraid of making that phone call then that phone call becomes almost impossible to make.

So do it now. It will be easier to do now than later, I promise. And once you've done it you'll discover that that phone call wasn't nearly as difficult as you were making it out to be. These things are never as difficult as you imagine.

And each time you use your resilience to tackle resistance, you'll feel more comfortable and confident doing it the next time. And the next. And the next.

Now make a list of all the things you've been putting off. What jobs, large or small, have you been resisting? What conversations have you been avoiding? What projects have you allowed to slip down your to do list?

This is where authenticity and honesty comes in. You know, in your heart of hearts, what those things are that you've given up on or been avoiding. Be honest with yourself.

Stick this list somewhere prominent and get to work on those tasks. Stop resisting them. Do them. It's not easy, I know. But make a start, take some small action towards getting those jobs done.

When you do, the personal satisfaction you'll get will be immense - and your resilience will be even stronger for the next time you're resisting a task. This practice will pay dividends on the goal you have now set yourself. Once you're more resilient when it comes to the little things, you become more resilient in everything you do.

Take smaller bites

Sometimes the task we face just feels overwhelming, too big a commitment. But don't avoid it. Instead, break it down into tiny

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actions, into bitesize pieces. And then just commit to doing that first action.

If you've got to run a mile, say, but that feels way too hard, break it down into smaller chunks. Think, *'I'll just do another 10 metres and then I'll think about stopping.'* And when you've done those 10 metres, think about doing another 10, and so on. You might surprise yourself with how far you get. (But remember, don't yourself push too hard! Aim for just above comfortable.)

It's like when the house is a tip and you think *'I'll clear up in the morning'* and then you think *'well I'll just pick that toy up and put that away, oh and I'll just empty the dishwasher while I'm here.'* Before you know it, the job's finished.

I went to the swimming pool the other day. I didn't really want to swim, but I thought *'well, I'm here now so I'll just get in the water.'* So I got in the water and then I thought, *'I'll just do one length as I'm already wet.'* I did one length, then I thought *'well, I've got to swim back so I'll do another length.'* Before I knew it I'd done 50 lengths!

Doing all these little tasks we resist, consistently, builds up our resilience. And it helps to change your mindset so the tasks you need to complete don't feel so overwhelming. If you think of a marathon as a 26 mile run, that's huge. But you don't run for 26 miles, you run for 1 mile 26 times. Not so huge.

Recognise when you might need to change course

There's no point doing the same thing over and over again and not getting the right results. Part of being resilient is about recognising when you don't have the capabilities, the skills you

need to complete a task.

Brian Tracy is the author of some 65 books, including *Eat the Frog!* and *Earn what you're worth*. He tells this story about when he was writing his first book. He had just six months to complete it but it was really slow-going, not surprising given he was typing the whole thing with one finger! So, despite the tight deadline, he took a month out of writing the book to learn how to touch-type. He couldn't really afford to spare a month of the schedule but it meant he actually got the book written much more quickly - he completed it in just four months!

If things are becoming a struggle, ask yourself, honestly, do you have the tools to do the job? Do you have the knowledge, the skills to tackle the task in front of you? And if you don't, what do you need to do about that? Learn those skills? Research and study the topic? Ask for help?

Perhaps you haven't given yourself enough time to complete something. You thought it was going to take a week to do, but actually it's more like three. Resilience is about recognising that instead of quitting, you need to give yourself more time.

So consider what capabilities you might need to learn to get you to your goal. Be creative. When you know what it is you want, there's always a way. But it may not be a quick way.

Being patient is part of being resilient

You're stuck in a traffic jam, going nowhere. You moan, you swear. You punch the steering wheel a few times and honk your horn, just to get your point across. But none of that's going to make your car move any faster. It is what it is. You are where you

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are. It's out of your control and no amount of f-f-ing and blinding's going to make any difference. You're going to have to wait. You're going to have to tough it out until the traffic starts moving again. You're going to have to be patient.

In the same way, on the road to achieving your goals, you might get stuck, get frustrated that things are moving too slowly, get angry that events outside your control are getting in the way. Be patient. Recognise that it is what it is. That you'll have to tough it out until things start moving again.

Being patient when things get difficult and allowing more time is another form of resilience.

Stop making excuses

We all make excuses for why we haven't succeeded at something we set out to achieve. Here are three of the most frequent excuses I hear when someone's not done something they said they would - which of these have you heard yourself saying?

1. I didn't have enough time
2. It's someone else's fault
3. I didn't have enough money / the right materials to get the job done.

Sound familiar? But these are all bullshit excuses. Here's why:

Time: It's so easy to blame lack of time - we're all busy people. But you can always find more time. You can cut out distractions (not watching TV, not going out at the weekend, not going on holiday). Or you could give yourself longer to complete something.

People: Other people can and do get in the way of your plans. They might let you down, or block you from doing something. Or simply take up your time. Just remember that nobody can affect your goals if you are clear enough about what you want. You may not be in control of their actions, but you are in control of yours.

Resources: Feel like you just don't have the resources to achieve what you want to achieve? Wrong. It's not resources that are lacking, it's your resourcefulness. Resourcefulness is the only resource you need. Want to go to the gym but can't afford the fees? So what can you do instead? You could go for a walk or do press ups and sit ups in the lounge. That's all free. Ask yourself, *'based on where I am, with what I've got, what can I do?'* When we become more resilient, we become more resourceful, we find ways to achieve what we want to achieve.

We make these excuses to stop ourselves from feeling bad, because deep down we know that we actually quit because we didn't give it 100%. That we simply gave up when things got too hard.

Remember, if you quit halfway through you're going to be left with regret and that's a horrible thing to carry around. There's nothing worse than *'could have, should have, would have done.'* You want to be able to say you gave it your 100% best, truly. And that's 100% as judged by you, not anyone else. Even if others are cheering you on, telling you you're doing great, only you know deep down whether you're giving 100% or not. Unless you do, you're never going to feel satisfied. So stop with the excuses.

Is your WHY big enough?

Often we give up on something, not because of a lack of resilience but because of a lack of motivation. We just don't want it enough to push through our resistance or tackle that tough challenge.

This is why you need to have a big enough reason for achieving this goal. If you have a big enough why it will drive you on to be more resilient. Because you want it so badly, nothing will get in your way. Nothing will stop you.

So when you feel like giving up, check your WHY. If you've followed the CARE system, you should have your WHY written on a piece of paper. Read it every day. If your WHY is big enough it will give you the motivation to continue. If it doesn't, get a new bigger WHY.

Bouncing back from disaster

Sometimes we come up against a really tough challenge that can threaten to throw us completely off course.

Let's say you lose your job. Or someone close to you dies. Clearly, that's going to really hurt. Naturally, you're going to want to grieve, to come to terms with what you've lost.

But too many people stay stuck in that place of misery and despair. All their plans and dreams go out the window. But if you want to achieve your goals, at some point you need to move on. You need to accept what is. You have to say to yourself, *'I'm not happy about this situation but I can't change it. So what can I do next?'*

When my dad died, I said to myself, *'would he have wanted me to sit around being upset or would he want me to get on with my life?'* And I know the answer to that - he would have wanted me to push on. The way for me to honour his memory was to carry on.

By accepting what is and by being authentic, we can choose what we do next. The circumstances in which we find ourselves may not have been our choice and they may be very unpleasant but what we do with those circumstances is in our hands. We can take ownership of our choices, decide where we want to be and move towards that. And the quicker you move forward from a setback, the better. If you leave it too long, inertia sets in and it becomes painful to do anything.

Go back to the beginning

When we get knocked off course by something big, it can be difficult to get back on our old path. Things might have changed for us. Our goals might have changed. Our circumstances might have changed.

It's ok. Accept where you are now. Go back to the beginning of the CARE system and get clarity on what you want to do from here. Once you have renewed clarity about that you can start to take action towards your new goals.

In fact, at any point throughout these four non-negotiables you can flick back to an earlier stage. If you're not feeling comfortable about the way things are going - perhaps you're feeling confused or uncertain then it might be you don't have clarity. Or it might be down to a lack of action - you're not making progress. Check your clarity first. Do you have laser-like

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clarity about where you want to be? Now take some action, start to build some momentum towards your goal. Practise your resilience to cope with the next challenge that comes along - because whatever your goal, it's going to get tough again. Or maybe you lack energy? Worry not, I'll cover that in the next chapter.

Have the right backup

We all need help sometimes to get through the bad stuff. Just make sure it's the right kind of help.

Our friends and family might be very supportive, but what you don't want when things are tough is a load of tea and sympathy. That will not help you move forward. Who we spend our time around makes a huge difference to us. In the next chapter I will talk about radiators and drains, but I'm not referring to plumbing!

Think about what you need. Look for the people who can help you in the situation you find yourself in. Do you need someone who will be a bit tough on you, who will kick you into action? Or someone who can provide useful advice about where to go next. Do you need a coach or a mentor? An expert in the field? Could you read a book or explore the internet for guidance?

Remember that when you set out to change or improve your life, you'll probably not going to have all the resources you need at your fingertips right away. You need to be resourceful and find out what you need to know, what help you're going to need, what support will aid you best.

Oh, and also - only share your dreams and goals with the people you know are going to support you. If you're in any doubt that the people around you won't support you, don't tell them. Because if you're new to personal development you can very easily be knocked off course. Your resilience may be weak. All it would take would be someone to tell you it's a silly idea and you might very well give up. Once you've built up some resilience then you can share with more people, because you'll be better able to resist any negativity.

Practice makes perfect

By being resilient, by pushing yourself when things get tough, every day, you are teaching yourself that however tough it gets you can do it. That it's not down to the amount of time you've got, the people around you, your resources. It's down to you. You are in control.

In my opinion, success or failure is all in your head. By building your resilience, by overcoming resistance, being patient, taking your time and getting into the habit of doing things you don't want to do, you're teaching yourself to have the mindset that says, *'whatever I set my mind to, I can achieve.'*

That mindset will take you a very, very, long way.

Of course, you're not going to get anywhere without putting some effort in - and for that you need energy. In the next chapter I'll show you how you can improve your energy levels - so that you're fit and ready to take on the world!

Resilience - a recap:

- If we're doing something meaningful enough, there will be times when it feels too difficult to continue
- Resilience is our ability to grit our teeth and carry on when it gets tough
- Resilience is like a muscle. So practise being resilient every day
- When you're resisting doing something, that's when you need to call upon your resilience
- Being resilient is about recognising when you need more time, more skills or more help.

Chapter 6

Energy:

***nothing is possible without energy
but with energy, you can do anything***

Don't underestimate how much hard work you're going to need to put in to get where you're going. To get anywhere in life, you need to make an effort. Without effort and hard work, nothing's going to change, meaning you'll stay exactly where you are - or go backwards.

Everything I've talked about so far in this book requires hard work. Getting clarity about your goal requires focus and self-awareness. Taking action so that day by day, step by step you get closer to that goal requires drive and determination. Building resilience so you're able to tackle all the challenges and setbacks you'll inevitably face requires grit, courage and patience.

Everything important in life requires hard work. And to do that work takes energy.

Unless you've got energy you're not going to complete any task.

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You're not going to be able to put the hours in, day in, day out, keep driving yourself forward and overcome challenges unless you have the energy to do it. Without energy nothing is possible.

But energy is something that's often overlooked when it comes to personal development and self-improvement. It's often sidelined as an aspect of 'health and fitness' and nothing else. But energy is fundamental to our achieving anything - whether that's getting into shape, improving relationships, starting or growing a business, climbing a mountain, running a marathon.

For me, energy is the most important element in the CARE system. All the clarity, action and resilience in the world won't count for chuff all if you're neglecting to take care of your energy. In this chapter, I'll explain why energy is so important, the factors that affect energy levels, both positively and negatively and how to look after yourself better, so you're in the best shape you can be to achieve the goal you've set yourself.

Whether you're feeling bright-eyed and bushy-tailed or can't even muster up enough effort to turn the telly on, this chapter will give you the tools you need to increase your energy levels straight away.

Energy is everything

When I talk about energy as part of the CARE system, people are surprised. I'm often asked, 'what does having energy got to do with achieving your goals?'

Everything.

You can have real clarity, you can be taking lots of action, you

can be really resilient when you need to be, but if you run out of energy, it's game over.

Let's look at two examples - Steve Jobs and Elvis Presley.

To become as hugely successful as they did, both were, in their different fields, really clear about what they wanted to achieve in life. Both took a lot of action towards achieving their goals - Elvis was a very hardworking musician, Steve Jobs was completely focused on growing his business. Were they resilient? Absolutely. Steve Jobs was fired from the company he started and he had to build up his business again from scratch. That's resilient. Elvis was physically ill from nerves before he performed. He showed massive resilience every night, just getting out on stage.

But at the end of the day both ran out of energy. Steve Jobs didn't take care of his body despite warnings from doctors and we all know how unhealthy Elvis was.

All the clarity, action and resilience in the world couldn't prevent the worst happening. But if they'd taken care of themselves, of their energy, things could have been very different.

These are both, of course, extreme examples. But at the other end of the scale, how many people simply don't get things done because they're too tired?

Having the energy we need to live the life we want to lead

Think about what you're like when you're tired. Listless, sluggish, irritable, emotional, impatient, stressed, anxious, bored, depressed, fed up?

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Think about what you're like when you're full of energy. Kind, patient, calm, easy-going, optimistic, hopeful, brave, happy, determined, switched-on, up for a challenge?

Now which state would you prefer to be in, do you need to be in, to achieve your goals?

Let's say you want to improve your relationship with your partner. But when you get home from work you're too tired to do anything other than slouch on the couch watching TV. That's not going to help. If you've not got the energy to spend quality time with your partner, how is your relationship ever going to improve?

If you're trying to get into shape, low energy levels will mean you won't have the enthusiasm or the drive to do any of the things you need to do to get fit, like cooking healthy food, going to the gym, avoiding the biscuit tin. And because your physical energy levels are low you're more likely to eat rubbish food; when we're tired we comfort eat. And eating that type of food tends to make us feel tired. It becomes a downward spiral - all because of your lack of energy.

Put simply - if you've got an empty tank of petrol, it doesn't matter how good your map is or how clear the road is, with no fuel you ain't going nowhere. That's how it is with this. You've got to make sure your tank is always being topped up with more energy.

Increasing your energy levels

The good news is that, of all the things I've talked about in this book, energy is something you can do something about very quickly and easily.

You might think that you have no control over how tired or how energetic you feel. After all, some days you just simply feel more knackered than others, right? Wrong. Actually, your level of energy is completely within your control. Once you know how your energy is affected by different things, you can start to do more of those things that make you feel energised and avoid those things that wear you out.

Energy is not the same as resilience. Resilience is like a muscle that gets stronger the more we practise being resilient. But energy's like the fuel in your petrol tank. We only have so much of it and it can get used up really quickly. But we can also increase it quickly by adding more fuel. When you think about it like that, it's clear how important it is to find ways to refuel and ways to avoid depleting your tank.

Energy comes from a range of different sources - from the food you eat, the exercise you get, the people you spend time with, from the places you go and the things you do. And all these things can suck your energy too. All you need to do is work out which is which.

So let's look at each of those sources in turn:

Energy is affected by what you put into your body

What you eat and drink has a huge effect on your energy levels. Junk foods tend to make us feel sluggish. Fresh foods, fruit etc, tend to make us feel, well, fresh.

But I'm not suggesting you need to go on some sort of radical diet, where you cut out all but nuts and berries! You just need to eat a healthy balanced diet, where you consume more of the

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foods that energise you and less of the ones that don't.

Be honest with yourself. What food makes you feel good (by which I mean energised) and what food makes you feel sluggish? That's all it is. It's not rocket science, it's about you being aware about what food works for you, and what food doesn't. I know, for instance, that rice fills me with energy, while bread and potatoes make me sluggish. That won't necessarily be the case for you - so find out what is. It all depends on your body, your metabolism.

What about what you drink? The most important thing you can do for your energy levels is drink more water. Because I'm willing to bet that you're not drinking enough water right now. Yes, you might take on plenty of fluid during the day but tea, coffee, fizzy drinks, booze don't count. They don't hydrate you like water does. In fact they can actually be dehydrating. And so many things, including tiredness, are caused by a lack of proper hydration. Headaches, muscle ache, constipation, erratic behaviour and wrinkles may all be down to dehydration.

So before you make yourself another coffee or drink an energy drink, try water. Before you reach for the paracetamol for your headache or the expensive anti-wrinkle cream for your fine lines, try water. Simple, clean, pure, straight from the tap (or bottled if you prefer) water.

And if you want to supercharge it, try it with a little lemon juice squeezed in. I guarantee that will get your system firing quicker than any cappuccino in the morning!

When it comes to your diet, ask yourself whether what you're eating and drinking is energising you or having an adverse effect.

Cut out those foods that drain you of energy, eat more of the food that fills you with get up and go. And drink more water.

The more mobile you are, the more energy you'll have

Just as important as what you eat, is the amount of exercise you get.

I know, when you feel tired, the last thing you want to do is exercise. The sofa looks far more welcoming than the gym, doesn't it? But the next time you think, *'I'm too tired to exercise'*, change it to, *'I'm too tired not to exercise'*.

Think about it - you won't feel worse or more tired, after you've exercised compared to how you feel now. In fact, you'll feel better, more energised. The endorphins will be flowing round your body, making you feel good. Often the best way to give yourself more energy is to spend time doing something physical.

I'm not talking about Mo Farah levels of exercise here, not extreme weights or a 10k run every night. I'm talking about simple things you can do to get your body moving and get energy circulating through you. Three of the best forms of energy-raising exercise are walking, gentle stretching or yoga and swimming. All very gentle, just enough to get your body moving.

You know those mornings when you wake up tired. You just can't be arsed. All you want to do is stay in bed. Perhaps you think, *'well it's my body's way of telling me I need to rest.'* No. No way. It may sound counterintuitive but when you're tired, you need to get up and move. It's that movement that will get your energy levels moving. Whatever you do, dancing in the shower;

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running up the stairs, doing a stretch or two, it doesn't matter. It will take resilience to push through your 'can't be arsed' resistance but remember, the more you practise being resilient, the more resilient you become.

Again, find what works for you. If you're not keen on swimming, go for a walk instead. If you find yourself stuck at your desk all day, do some stretching.

It's not about doing anything extreme. Keep it small and keep it simple. But do it regularly and consistently. Make this exercise part of your daily routine.

Are the people you spend time with radiators or drains?

In life, people are either radiators or drains. Radiators are those people you want to spend time with. They always make you feel good, they energise you. Then there are the the people you meet who instantly make you feel tired or fed up. They seem to bring down the energy in the room, they're miserable and negative and they drain your energy levels. We should aim to spend as much time with the radiators as possible and reduce the amount of time we spend with drains.

If you have people in your life, a friend, a drinking buddy, a work colleague, a business contact, who make you feel miserable when you're with them, you need to avoid them if you can. This can be really hard. We're programmed to want to please people, to say yes to that coffee, yes to that evening out, yes to that meeting, but we need to learn to say no. To say no to the things and the people that diminish our energy.

Sometimes, of course, you can't avoid people. Drains come in all shapes and sizes, they might even be a family member. So if you can't avoid them, you can protect your energy levels by changing your attitude towards them.

It might be that, for instance, visiting one of your close relatives is never a good experience, there's always some kind of conflict, argument, or upset. You always come away feeling miserable or angry or just plain exhausted.

You may not be able to avoid that individual completely. But you do need to try and improve the situation for your own benefit. Because right now, it's doing you no good whatsoever. So start thinking about ways you could change the situation. Could you meet somewhere else rather than at their house, take them out, do something different together?

Or try to come at things from a different angle. Recognise that they look at the world in a different way and try to see things from their point of view. What's going on in their lives that makes them behave in the way they do?

Remember that you may not be able to change the way they behave, but you do have control over how you respond to the situation. You can choose not to lose your temper, not to get upset, for instance.

One way to cope with a difficult situation is to reframe it in your head. Try and look for the positive in the situation, think, *'well I may not like this but it is improving my resilience so in a roundabout way, it's actually good for me.'* It's not easy to do this, of course, it's something you may have to work on over time. But once you're clear that you want a better experience with

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this person, you'll be able to take action towards that. That clarity will help you to find potential solutions.

Just as we should aim to increase our energy levels by eating the right food, taking some exercise and drinking lots of water, we also need to work to protect the energy levels we have by avoiding those things, places and people that drain us of energy.

Are you getting enough sleep?

We all know that getting a good night's sleep has a huge impact on how we feel the next day. But so many people think they can survive on less sleep than they actually need. And everyone's different. Some people only need five hours, while others might need as much as nine hours. You need to figure out how much sleep you need and then ensure you get it. It will make a huge difference in the long run.

A simple, yet energising breathing exercise

Meditation is a really good way to improve your energy levels. If you've never meditated before, here's a really simple exercise that anyone can do, anywhere, that will really help. Just sit somewhere quiet, close your eyes and focus on your breathing. Breathe deeply and slowly, in and out, and try to work out when your out-breath ends and your in-breath starts. Do that for a few minutes. It's a great way to calm yourself down and increase your energy levels.

Doing things that energise you

What music gets you dancing? What TV programmes make you feel revved up? Do you find being out in nature uplifting? Or

perhaps wandering round an art gallery is what restores you when you feel tired and pissed off.

Everyone's different. But by recognising those things we do that give us energy - and those we do that don't, we can make better choices about how to spend our time so that we have the energy we need to do the things we want.

It's the same with the places. Any place you go into will carry a level of energy. It's up to you to determine whether that's good for you, whether it increases your energy level or diminishes it. There will be places you like spending time, that make you feel upbeat and engaged - perhaps a church, a sports club, a community centre. And there will be others that bring you down. For me, I find shopping malls a bit much, they're too busy, too stifling, they wear me out. So I avoid them. And if I have to shop in one, I make sure I do it as quickly and as efficiently as possible by being very clear what I am going in for.

Finding the energy sources that work for you is like knowing where the fuel stops are on your car journey. And once you know what gives you energy, you need to build those sources into your life so they become habits. It is your habits that dictate the quality of your life.

How tired are you right now?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how tired do you feel at this moment? Where 1 is exhausted and 10 is you feel ready to wrestle an alligator.

You want to be aiming for about a 7. 7 is enough energy to be effective, to get through your daily routine. Plus if you need

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more energy - you've got a workout at the gym booked for later perhaps - it's not too hard to get from 7 to 9 or 10, whereas trying to get there from a 2 or a 3 is really hard.

Think of this as an energy barometer. Check in with yourself on a regular, daily basis. Consider how tired or energised you feel and if you're feeling low, take steps to increase your energy.

And if you're feeling less than 7 you can take action straight away. Drink a glass of water, go for a 20 minute walk or call that friend who always makes you feel better. It's that simple.

We should always be aware of where our energy levels are at all the time. We need to ask ourselves, *'do I have enough energy to complete this task? 'Is my energy high enough for me to achieve what I want to achieve?'* Because if we haven't got enough energy, we need to take steps to make sure we have.

It's like this: if you've got 150 miles to drive but only 75 miles left in the tank you know you've got to stop and refuel otherwise you're not going to get where you're going.

It's a learning process - finding out what gives you energy and what doesn't. Then we can do more of what works for us and avoid the things that don't. It's important to become more attuned to that, because it's a really good barometer of how to live your life.

Putting yourself first

Saying no to people, turning down nights out or being honest with a relative that you just can't see them any more is hard. It feels selfish. We don't want to upset people or let them down. Many of us (I'm looking at you mums especially) put others first

all the time. Mothers run themselves ragged sorting out the kids, making sure tea's on the table, keeping the house shipshape.

But ask yourself this - what use are you to anyone if you're exhausted?

Remember the oxygen mask analogy in the Action chapter? You can only look after others properly if you're in a fit state to do so. That's why taking care of yourself is so important. It means you're better able to care for others.

You have to recognise that if you've not got enough energy, if you've not got clarity, if you're not taking action, if you're not building up your resilience, your life's a car crash and sooner or later that's going to affect everybody.

But on the flip-side - once you have clarity, once you're taking action and overcoming problems, and you're improving your energy levels, then you're far more use to the people around you.

Be honest with yourself about what you need. To be a more effective mum, do you need to take an afternoon off to get your energy levels back up to where they need to be? To run your business more effectively, do you need to avoid that potential client because you know they'll have a negative effect on you?

It's about understanding yourself. About being authentic. And about taking care of yourself.

A positive outlook

You know those days when you bounce out of bed full of boundless energy? Perhaps that only happens for you when

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you're going on holiday or on Christmas morning (whatever your age!). Why? Because you're excited and excitement increases your energy, looking forward to something is energising. Being optimistic is energising.

Your attitude to life has a big impact on your energy level. If you look on every situation as an opportunity to learn, to experience new things, to grow, you'll have more energy. If you look at things in a negative light, that will drain you of energy.

So you lose your job - you could be depressed and think your life is over, or you could see it as the chance to do something you love. Which attitude is going to make you happier? And which attitude is going to get you somewhere good?

Of course, it works the other way too. If you're full of energy, you're more likely to feel hopeful and optimistic. If you're low on energy you're more likely to feel miserable and negative.

So, if you eat better, drink more water, take some exercise, choose who you spend time with, you will feel more hopeful and optimistic. The more hopeful and optimistic you feel the more likely you are to eat well, drink lots of water, take some exercise, spend time with the people who you like and so on, and so on.

It's a beautiful upward cycle of positivity. More energy makes you happier, and being happy gives you energy.

And if you've got energy, then anything's possible.

Congratulations. You have now worked your way through the whole of the CARE system and are (or should be) familiar with the four non-negotiables of achievement. But your work is not yet done. Because to be truly successful, you need to approach and deploy the CARE system with authenticity and self-awareness. I'll show you how in the next two chapters.

Energy - a recap:

- Everything important in life requires hard work. And to do that work takes energy
- Energy's like fuel in a petrol tank. It can get used up really quickly. But it's easy to refuel too
- You need to find out what gives you energy and what doesn't. Then do more of what works for you and avoid the things that don't
- One simple thing you can do right now to boost your energy is drink a glass of water.
- A positive outlook gives you energy. And the more energy you have, the more positive you'll be.

Self-awareness and authenticity:

The foundations upon which the CARE system is built

The CARE system sets out the four non-negotiables of achievement - the four factors we need to deploy in order to develop ourselves, to improve our lives, to achieve what we set out to achieve.

But in order to utilise them effectively - to really make them work for you - you've got to approach the CARE system with self-awareness and authenticity.

Because without authenticity - being true to who you really are - how can you be sure that the goals you've set for yourself are the right goals for you? And without self-awareness - being honest with yourself - how can you be sure that you have the skills and the ability to take the action you need to take to get

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you where you want to be?

In the next two chapters I'll explain what self-awareness and authenticity mean for you and for your personal development. I'll show you some simple steps to start becoming more self-aware and more authentic in your daily life and I'll demonstrate the huge impact self-awareness and authenticity can have on your life, your relationships and your happiness.

Chapter 7

Authenticity: *being true to yourself*

The CARE system is a way for you to achieve the things in life that will make you happy. That will enable you to be the best you can be. But only if you're being authentic. Only if you're being true to yourself about what will make you happy.

The reason most of us don't achieve the things we've set out to achieve is because our goals aren't the right goals for us. They're the goals we think we should aim for, the ones other people told us would be good for us, the ones we think other people would want us to strive for.

It starts when we're young. How many of us had a parent, or a teacher or a careers advisor tell us we won't make it as an artist, a musician, a footballer, an actor? That we should be a doctor, teacher, plumber, accountant instead? I bet most of us had that experience in some shape or form when we were growing up.

It doesn't stop when you become an adult either. Too often we

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do the things we think we ought to do, that others would have us do. We look for approval, we want to be liked, to be loved. So we do what we feel we must in order to fit in, to be what others want us to be. Or at least what we think others want us to be.

So many of us live inauthentic lives. Our true selves, desires, wants and needs are hidden beneath the masks we put on in order to feel accepted by other people. You only have to look at people's social media feeds - they present an image of themselves on Facebook, Twitter, etc that is worlds away from who they really are.

But being inauthentic isn't good for us. Being something you're not is damaging. It's stressful, bloody hard work and ultimately, unsustainable.

It's time to start being authentic. Authentic in how you understand who you are and what you need, authentic in how you deal with other people and authentic in how you move forward towards your goals.

It's hard being something you're not

There are three versions of you:

1. How other people see you.
2. How you think other people see you.
3. Who you really are.

For many people, these versions are often very different from each other.

Being authentic means all these versions are aligned.

Think about when you were a small child - or look at your own children. They are who they are, right? There are no filters. When they're happy, you know about it. When they're sad or frustrated or angry, you know about it. They don't disguise their feelings or what they want. They don't worry about what other people think of them.

As we grow up, we become increasingly concerned about what other people think. And we start to hide what we truly feel. It's natural. In a way, it's necessary for society to function - if we all stayed as we were as kids, stomping our feet to get what we want, it would be a very noisy, very difficult place to be.

But being inauthentic is damaging to your health and happiness. People get into all sorts of trouble in life when they're not authentic. They put themselves under a lot of stress and pressure because they're trying to be something for somebody else. Pretending to be something you're not is a heavy weight to carry.

For instance, my issues with alcohol were caused because I wasn't comfortable in the job I was in, I wasn't comfortable acting in the way I needed to act in order to make sales. Drink enabled me to create this inauthentic version of myself, this mask, but I couldn't sustain it for long. It's very difficult to be something we're not long-term without doing damage to ourselves.

Knowing what you want

Perhaps you were really good at football when you were a kid. You loved it too, never complained about a training session, always turned up early for a few practice shots beforehand and stayed late to help put kit away afterwards. Your dream was to

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play for England. But your dad said that was just a fantasy, that you'd be much better off getting a real job, with a real pay-packet and a pension. So you studied hard to become an accountant (because that's what your dad said you should do) and you put a lot of energy into building your career. But then one day, it all came tumbling down around your ears. Perhaps you got overlooked for a promotion or had to leave your job with stress.

If you're trying to achieve something that isn't the right goal for you, however hard you work at it, however much clarity you have about where you want to be, however much action you take towards that, however much resilience and energy you show in order to get there, when you achieve it it will feel empty because it's not really what you wanted.

If you're not completely passionate about the things you want, you will feel like a failure, even if you achieve the goal.

Because you're not being authentic. You're not making authentic decisions and choices. You're not being true to yourself.

Achieving anything in life is, in part, about knowing what you want on an authentic level. Not what someone tells you what they think you want or what they think you should do.

Because when we are truly authentic, living the life we want to live and being the person we want to be, all the decisions we make will be the right decisions, all the action we take will be the right action, we'll be resilient about the right things, and we'll find a way to develop our energy in a more effective way.

Your authentic self is who you are when no one's looking

When you go into a room full of strangers - a party, a networking event, a conference - do you worry about whether you look alright? Do you worry that people will judge you on what you're wearing? I know I used to.

Of course the truth of the matter is, no one gives a shit. Everyone else is too busy worrying about what other people are thinking about what they're wearing!

But we put a lot of sway on what people think about us. We want to be liked, to be loved, to feel like we belong, like we've been accepted into the gang. And that very normal human desire makes us disguise who we really are. We put on masks to protect our true selves.

When you're home on your own, singing in the shower or talking to the dog, that's your authentic self. Your authentic self is who you are when no one's looking. We are who we really are when we feel safe. When we feel we won't be judged.

The irony is that authenticity is the very thing we find attractive in other people and what other people find attractive in us. People, generally, want to see the real you, the person behind the mask.

We've all been in shops where the staff clearly love what they're doing. They're happy in their work, they're attentive to you, they love the product. They were born to work in customer service. And then there are those shop workers who seem to be putting on a bit of an act, they go through the motions but we

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can tell their hearts aren't in it. Which shops do we have a better time in? Which do we probably spend more money in? The ones where the staff authentically love working there. Because we connect with authenticity. Authenticity is attractive.

What does it mean to be authentic?

Authenticity is about being who we are, being honest with ourselves and with those around us. It's about having faith that who you really are is good enough. It's about being honest about the clarity we have, the actions we're taking, the resilience we show and the energy we create.

If the only reason you're going to the gym is because someone said, 'hey, you look a bit chubby in those jeans!', that's not an authentic reason. But wanting to become healthy '*so I can spend more time with my family, live a long, healthy and happy life,*' is an authentic reason to go to the gym. Being clear about your goals, based on what you really, truly want, rather than what others want, is the way to become the best, most authentic version of yourself.

So now is the chance to go back and look at the goals you've set yourself. Are they authentic, do they reflect the authentic version of you? If not, rewrite them. I know I said they were set in stone but if it's not an authentic goal, redo it. Don't feel bad if the work you've done up to this point feels like a waste, it was good practice. This time when you do it you'll do it much faster.

Sometimes we tell mistruths to make people think we're on a certain path when actually we're not. A prime example is when people say, 'oh, I've been to the gym three times this week.' Have you? Have you really? Did you have a proper workout or just a

jacuzzi and coffee with friends? There's a big difference.

Your authenticity shows up in your actions and the results. If you're not telling the whole truth about something, you won't get the results you want.

Honing in on what you really want, rather than what others want for you, can seem very selfish. And of course, you're always going to have to do things that you don't want to do. That's life. We have to make sacrifices and compromises in order to be part of our community. But that doesn't mean we can't be authentic. We need to be open and honest with ourselves, to recognise what it is we want and what isn't working for us so we can move towards a better life.

Authenticity means deeper relationships

When you first meet and start going out with a new girlfriend/boyfriend, it's not always the authentic version of either of you that's showing up. You're both trying overly hard to impress the other. But later on down the line when the relationship is more established, there's much more authenticity and openness between you. With time and familiarity you start to feel safe with each other, safe enough to be your authentic selves. Which makes for a much closer, more trusting, more honest relationship. Or you may dislike the authentic version and it breaks up. Either way you will have found the right thing for you.

But what would happen if we didn't wait to show our authentic selves? What if we were always authentic, right from the get-go?

When the authentic version of me connects with the authentic version of you, we automatically have a deeper, stronger relationship. When we are authentic we connect with people on

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a deeper level. This is true for any type of relationship - with our partner, our family, our friends, our work colleagues.

Those people who you feel like you've known all your life, or those who you might not see all year but when you do it's like you saw them five minutes ago - those are people you have connected with on an authentic level.

But people think the wider circle of friends they have the better, the more 'likes' they have on Facebook the better. They fear that if they were their true selves, some of those friends would vanish. But what's better - 100 friends who are friends with an inauthentic version of you, or 10 friends that know, value and appreciate your authentic self? It's not about quantity, it's about quality. About depth, not width.

Be authentic about who you are and see how many people connect with that.

Becoming more authentic can be painful

We have to develop the ability to be more authentic. But this process can be painful. There's a chance people won't like us, they won't understand our decisions or choices, they might fall out with us and take the piss.

Remember the film Billy Elliot about the lad who wanted to dance? If that had been me in the 1980s wanting to be a ballet dancer, the people around me wouldn't have understood that choice. I would have been teased, maybe bullied, maybe persuaded that it wasn't the right thing for me.

In years gone by, being gay wasn't socially acceptable so lots of people were forced to live inauthentic lives, pretending to be something they weren't.

Being authentic means being brave. Having the courage to know what it is you want and the courage to stand up for what you want and to go after it.

I had my awakening on that day in July 2014. My decision to live a different way, to be a different person, was about being more authentic. It resulted in a number of things. A number of things that were painful. I changed my life in so many ways it's unrecognisable now from what it was then. Many people found some of the things I did strange but I knew that what I was doing was right for me.

It can be really painful to look back on your life and realise you've been living inauthentically. There may be opportunities you've missed that you can't get back. For instance, when I was 12 or 13 I was shaping up to be a decent cricketer; I could have played at a higher level. But I didn't pursue it, and no matter how much I'd like to become a great cricketer and play for Yorkshire now, it's never going to happen. The opportunity passed me by.

Remember you haven't got forever, none of us do. Every day counts.

So make a decision today to live more authentically. It doesn't matter how inauthentic you've been in the past, you can be more authentic now. There may be things you wanted in the past that it's too late to pursue now. But that doesn't mean there's no hope. You can still be the best you can be, based on where you are now.

The first step to authenticity

How many times do you say yes to things you don't really want to say yes to? Many of us have this habit of saying yes to

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everything because we don't want to upset or disappoint people. A whole industry has built up to profit from this inability we have to say no. Cold-calling. How many times have you bought something you were sold over the phone or on the doorstep, just because you couldn't bring yourself to say no to a stranger? How many times do you agree to do things with friends, or for friends, that you don't really want to do?

Well that ends today.

Your first step towards living a more authentic life is to say no a little more often.

Start to recognise the things you're doing on a daily basis that you don't want to be doing. Ask yourself, *'do I really want to be doing that?'* And if you don't, say no.

That person in the shopping mall who tries to sell you double-glazing, just say 'no, thank you' or 'not today' (unless you're in the market for double-glazing of course!).

A friend calls, suggesting a night out on the tiles. You don't want to go. Say no.

You're at a party and you've had enough. Get up, thank your host for a lovely evening. And leave. No excuses, no explanations, no justifications. You don't have to justify why you're saying no. Just say no. Politely.

Some things will be easier than others to say no to, of course. You may not be able to leave the job you hate right this minute, after all. But by recognising that it is something you want to change, is the first step to making that change happen.

Being ok with saying no is an important step to bringing out your authenticity. You will find that by doing this, bit by bit, every day, you will start to become more authentic.

Like everything else in this book, the way to become more authentic is by taking small steps. Doing too much too quickly is hard, sometimes impossible. But with little steps you can build up the momentum to tackle bigger challenges. You become more authentic by being more authentic.

Go deeper

Authenticity is about going deeper with yourself. Coming to a richer understanding of who you are and what you want.

It's not easy. It can be painful. That's why people don't choose to be authentic - because it is hard. But once you get in the habit of doing it, like everything else, the muscle builds and you become more and more authentic.

And when you go deeper - with yourself, with others - that's where the juice is, that's where the joy is, that's where the real connection is, that's where the real achievement is. Living authentically opens up so much more possibility in your life, so much freedom, so much joy.

Being authentic gives you a level of peace. People who are authentic, even if they don't have a lot of material wealth, are rich in happiness. Because they are who they are, they're chasing what they want to chase, they're achieving things based on what they truly want. Unlike those who achieve something and then say, 'is that it?'

You've got to be sure that the clarity about what you want, the action you take, the resilience you show, the energy you put in all comes from an authentic place. But authenticity requires you to have a better understanding of yourself. And you get that by having self-awareness. So let's see how we can develop our self-awareness in the next chapter.

Authenticity - a recap:

- The reason most of us don't achieve the things we've set out to achieve is because our goals aren't the right goals for us
- Achieving anything in life is, in part, about knowing what you want on an authentic level
- Your authentic self is who you are when no one's looking
- Being authentic means being brave. Having the courage to know what it is you want and the courage to go after it
- Living authentically opens up so much more possibility in your life, so much freedom, so much joy.

Chapter 8

Self-awareness: ***being honest with yourself***

When you embark on making any change to your life, big or small, you need to develop your self-awareness. No change of any kind will happen unless you are honest with yourself about your skills and talents, what things you enjoy and what you're really capable of. Honest about who you are, how you behave, what makes you tick, what turns you on, what turns you off.

You will only ever develop through being self-aware, through giving yourself honest feedback.

Self-awareness helps us to make choices about what we do in our lives and with our lives. Choices that enable us to be the best version of ourselves we can possibly be.

But first we need to recognise when we're doing things that we've been conditioned to do. Things we think we should do or that other people have told us we should do.

The conditioning that affects our choices

From an early age, people tell us what to do, what to think, how to behave, who to become. As children, we rely on the adults in our lives to guide and instruct us, to help us develop into fully functioning adults ourselves. But this means we are conditioned from childhood onwards to take onboard what people tell us about ourselves.

That conditioning can shape the adults we become, we make choices based on what others want for us, what we think others want for us, what we think is the 'right' thing to do.

Here's an example: my dad didn't socialise much, he didn't enjoy it and as a police officer he couldn't really be seen to be letting his hair down too much. I picked up on that and when I was a young man I didn't socialise much either. The choices I made had nothing to do with what I wanted, they all stemmed from what I had been shown as a child.

Here's another example: because of the people around me, I grew up thinking that all men drank and smoked. That to be a real man you had to drink and smoke. So when I was older that's what I did too. Was it my choice or had I been conditioned into it?

What choices do you make because of the way you were brought up or the way people around you behaved when you were young?

For instance, how do you like your steak? Well done? Rare? Blue? Chances are, whatever you choose won't actually be your choice, it will be a choice someone's forced upon you. Perhaps someone told you once, 'oh you won't like it rare, have it well

done.' And from then on you've always had it well done.

How many of your choices would you still make if it was entirely up to you?

Do your choices serve you?

Being self-aware is about knowing whether something you're doing is a choice you're happy with and that serves you. Or is it something someone else has imposed upon you, that doesn't make you happy and doesn't serve you.

What do I mean by 'serve you'? If an action gets you somewhere good, moves you forward in a positive direction, then it's serving you. If an action sets you back, makes you feel bad, makes you uncomfortable, then it's not serving you.

For instance, you might relish the idea of eating a pepperoni pizza, washed down with gallons of pop, followed by a strawberry cheesecake. But afterwards, having consumed all that food and fizzy drink you don't feel so good, you might feel a bit sick. So that meal hasn't served you well. And eating like that often certainly won't serve you well in the long-term.

Self-awareness is about recognising what it is we do that serves us and what we do that doesn't serve us.

It took self-awareness for me to realise that alcohol wasn't serving me. I had thought it was, it made me more confident, more extrovert. But in truth, drinking alcohol didn't serve me at all. I made bad choices, it made me sick, it turned me into a nasty person.

If an action doesn't serve us, we have to think about changing it.

Is that my thing?

I grew up in the 80s, the Loadsamoney era when it was all about getting rich. That's what it meant to be successful - having a filofax, a Rolex and a Porsche 911. It was supposed to be everyone's thing.

Self-awareness is thinking, *'really? Is that my thing?'*

Because just because something is somebody's thing doesn't mean it's your thing.

For instance, everyone seems to be into running these days. It's a very popular form of exercise. But just because everyone's doing it doesn't mean you should. You might not like running. I don't. So what form of exercise do you enjoy? Swimming? Cycling? Dancing? Do that then.

People tend to look at somebody who's successful at something and say, *'ooh, that looks exciting, they're doing well, that's a good sphere to be in - I'll go and do that.'* But if doing that is not in their skill set, they fall down, they fail.

Rather than being what everyone else says you've got to be or doing what everyone else is doing, self-awareness is about being comfortable and confident enough in yourself to say *'I'm going to follow this route because that's where my strengths are, where my skills are.'*

Play to your strengths

What are you good at? What are your talents, skills and abilities?
What are you not so good at? What are your weaknesses?

Each of us carry a number of talents and skills that are unique

to us. For instance, I know that my area of expertise is talking. I've got a very good understanding of the spoken word and I know how to use that very effectively.

Self-awareness is about recognising what your skills and talents are.

And then, once you recognise what your strengths are, play to them. Focus on developing, improving and enhancing the skills, talents and strengths you already have.

I realise this goes against what is usually said about self-improvement. Our culture, our education system, the whole personal development industry says, 'if you're not good at something, get better at it. Work on your areas of weakness, develop skills in areas you're not currently competent in so that you become a rounded individual, a jack-of-all-trades.'

No. Waste of time. That just means we end up being ok, and just ok, at lots and lots of things. That's why we never succeed, never achieve much. Much better to just find out what you're good at and aim to become even better at that.

Self-awareness is about recognising what you're good at - and doing more of that. And doing less of what you're not so good at.

Outsource your weaknesses

When you're self-aware you might identify things you know you're not good at or don't enjoy but which are necessary if you're going to achieve your goals. Let's say you want to start your own business but know accounting is not your strong point.

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If you haven't got the skills and capabilities to take an action that's not a problem as long as you're aware of it. Because once you're aware of it you can find other people to help you.

So if accounting's not a strength of yours, find someone who can do your accounts for you. Because that will enable you to get where you want to be much more quickly than trying to learn how to do it better yourself.

Being honest, without judgement

Often when we think about things we're not good at, we start to criticise ourselves for not being good at that thing. We think, *'I'm not good at that so that means I'm useless.'* It's that little voice in your head that picks up on your mistakes, berates you for your failures, tells you how embarrassing you are.

But being self-aware is about assessing your abilities, your talents, your strengths and weaknesses without judgement, without criticism, without condemnation.

Imagine a room with three people in it. The first person is talking, the second person is listening and the third person is watching the first person talk to the second person. Perhaps the first person is being quite critical, perhaps the second is getting quite emotional listening to what the first person has to say about them. The third person though is perfectly calm, simply noting down everything that is going on.

This is what it's like in your head.

The conversation between the first and second person is the internal debate that goes on in your head when you're thinking about something that didn't go to plan. It can get heated, critical,

painful. But what we need to try and do is become that third person, the one who is observing the conversation between the other two. We need to watch what we are saying to ourselves and the answers we are giving, without judgement, without emotion. Just looking at the facts and deciding what we want to do with that information.

A commonly-held belief in coaching is that there is no failure, only feedback.

What it means is that you have never failed at anything in your life. Instead, whenever you did something, whenever you took action, there was a consequence, something happened as a result. Whether that consequence was good or bad is a label you put on it. But what you actually got from that consequence was feedback. Information you can use to do things differently next time.

Being without judgement means we simply assess the information, the feedback, we have before us so we can work out what we can do about it.

Recognising the red flags

How we feel - whether that's excited, sad, stressed, happy, miserable - manifests itself physically in our bodies. The butterflies in our stomachs when we're excited, the headache when we're stressed. How these feelings are manifested will be different for different people. When I'm nervous, for instance, I get this feeling in the top of my chest - it sort of tightens up. When I'm excited it's a similar feeling but lower down in my diaphragm.

How we feel can also be seen in how we behave. When I'm

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stressed I don't eat, I skip meals. And I tend to retreat from the world a bit, I stay in the house, hibernating.

There's nothing wrong with these behaviours, they're simply coping mechanisms. But they mustn't be ignored. They're trying to tell you something. With self-awareness, I have come to recognise these physical feelings and behaviours as signs I'm not feeling quite right. Something's not quite working for me in some way. Something's wrong. They're like red flags, warning signs that something in my life is making me feel uncomfortable. And, of course, knowing that means I can do something about it.

Because there will always be times in your life when things aren't where you want them to be.

Self-awareness enables you to recognise when this is happening and will help you understand what the problem is. And once you're aware of the problem then you can deal with it.

Being realistic about what you can achieve

The people around us and the media sell us this idea that we can be anything we want to be. This is where I think a lot of self-help gurus, coaches and the like have gone wrong over the years. They tell us that whatever our dream, we can achieve it.

No, you can't. You've got to be realistic. We can only achieve what we are capable of achieving. Making any sort of change has to be based on the reality of where we are right now.

I could now, with all my heart, with every ounce of my being, want to be the fastest man over 100 metres on the earth. But I simply can't do that. I am 46 years old and I am not a sprinter so never mind how much I want it I'm never going to achieve it.

Usain Bolt's got nothing to worry about!

That's not to say we shouldn't strive to improve ourselves. But we need to recognise we're unlikely to become world-class at something. All we can be is the best version of ourselves we can be. So what I could be is the fastest version of me over 100 metres. You can only be the best version of yourself you can be. That's all you can be in life.

But while you may not become world-class, being the best you can be at something you're good at and that you enjoy is the best route to happiness I know.

The perfect marriage of talent and enjoyment

People have said to me, 'you ought to work with businesses because you've done that and you were good at it.' But the truth is, I don't really enjoy that. I was competent at running a business because I am a good communicator, so I used that skill to get people to see things in a different way, to do things they didn't always want to do so we could move the business forward. I used my skill set to grow a business. But I didn't really enjoy what I was doing.

I was effective because I was good at it but to be happy I needed to deploy my skills doing something I really enjoyed.

If you're using your skills but you're not enjoying what you're doing, you're not using those skills properly.

What we're looking for is to use the talents we've been gifted with in a way we enjoy. That's a match made in heaven. That's when things will really sing!

The first step to becoming more self-aware

Self-awareness can take a long time to feel your way into. But it's definitely worth spending that time getting to know yourself better, getting to understand what makes you tick and what your strengths and weaknesses are.

The first thing to do is simply make a list. Write down what you enjoy doing, what you're good and what you're not so good at, where you've had success in life, what you've struggled with. Remember it's not just knowing what you're good at, it's knowing what you're bad at too.

It's ok if you find it hard to do this. We don't always know what our strengths and weaknesses are. Perhaps we're so good at something it's become automatic, we don't realise we even do it. Perhaps we're too critical of ourselves, we can't imagine there's anything we do particularly well.

The more I talk to people the more I realise it's often easier to find out what their strengths and weaknesses are by asking someone who knows them.

If you're struggling to identify your skills and talents, ask somebody you trust, someone who knows you well, who will be honest and won't bullshit you. Ask them, how do I behave when I'm happy, when I'm sad, when I'm stressed? What am I good at? What am I not so good at?

Being honest about effort

Back when personal development first became popular, one classic mantra was 'ask and the universe will provide.' Meaning all you need to do is think positive. Think about what you want and you'll get it. I personally think this idea is bollocks.

There's nothing wrong with thinking positively, but you need to put the work in too. The one thing the universe expects is a little bit of effort!

That's what's missing from those kind of books. Effort. People believe that if they think about what they want, it will come into their life. No. If you think about it, the opportunity will come into your life. It's then up to you to work at taking those opportunities. Achieving anything in life takes effort.

Self-awareness requires you to be honest about whether you're putting in sufficient effort to get you where you want to be.

Ask yourself, *'am I giving 100%? Am I doing enough?'*

It could be that you're doing something really well because you're already really good at it but only actually be putting 30% effort in. Could you do more?

How self-awareness applies to the CARE system

Is the clarity we're getting, the action we're taking, the resilience we're showing and the energy we're developing authentic or does it stem from how we've been conditioned to think and to behave by other people?

Self-awareness will help ensure that what we think we want to achieve is what we really want. And by being self-aware we will be honest and realistic with ourselves about our capabilities.

Knowing what we're good at and what we're not good at will help us determine whether the action required to achieve our goals is something that fits in with our strengths.

And if not, we'll know whether that's something we can learn or whether we need to outsource it to other people.

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Being self-aware will help us build our resilience. It will help us recognise when we're feeling resistance. It will help us tackle the challenges that come our way because we'll be able to calmly and objectively assess the situation and our response to it - without judgement.

And self-awareness will help us monitor when and how our energy levels increase and when they dip so we are better able to take the steps we need to maintain the energy we need to complete the tasks we've set ourselves.

Developing a self-aware, self-improving mindset

Every single human being, at their core, wants to be happy. This whole book, the CARE system, everything I do, comes down to this one truth.

You can't be happy all the time, that's an impossibility. But what I want is for people to live a life where they feel happy for the majority of the time.

Happiness comes from having purpose in life, doing something, achieving something we know we're meant to achieve. And we know we're meant to achieve it because we're doing it authentically and with self-awareness.

By always being in a state of self-awareness, asking ourselves, *what can I do today to improve my happiness levels, what can I do to be more effective in this area, what can I do to improve this relationship, what can I do to improve my career?* you'll always be moving forward in a positive direction, with purpose.

What I'm advocating is a new mindset, a mental attitude of constant improvement. An attitude to life where you're always

working on some aspect of yourself. Always working on being the best version of yourself - the best version of your true self - you can be.

Self-awareness - a recap:

- Self-awareness helps us to make choices about what we do in our lives and with our lives
- Think about how many of your choices would you still make if it was entirely up to you
- Start becoming more self-aware by recognising what your skills and talents are. Then play to those strengths
- Be honest with yourself but avoid being self-critical
- Recognise that you can only achieve what you're capable of achieving. Change has to be based on the reality of where you are right now.

Chapter 9

Your 30 day challenge: ***get into the habit of achieving things***

Now you've read the book, you understand the importance of having clarity about what you want to achieve and why you want to achieve it and by when. You recognise the value of taking action towards that goal. You appreciate why you'll need to show resilience to overcome the challenges that will inevitably get in your way. And you grasp why you need to be able to sustain your energy levels throughout the process of achieving your goal.

You also understand the importance of being self-aware, being honest with yourself and the importance of authenticity, being true to yourself.

You know all this now. But, frankly, it's not what you know that's important. It's what you do with what you know that matters.

So what are you going to do with the knowledge you now have?

Begin with a 30 day challenge.

What is the 30 day challenge?

The 30 day challenge is a simple way to put what you've learnt into practice. And in doing so, start to develop the tactics you'll need to tackle any challenge, achieve any goal.

The 30 day challenge puts into practice three things that are essential for personal development:

1. being very clear about what you want - having a definite goal
2. putting in daily practice. Not once a week or once a month but something you do every single day towards what you want to achieve
3. getting you in the habit of recognising and celebrating when you've achieved something.

If you're new to personal development, or a bit rusty, it helps to have a framework in place - a challenge to motivate you. A challenge that's achievable.

The 30 day challenge is a framework. 30 days is long enough for you to turn your daily actions into habits. And short enough that it feels attainable. And won't get boring.

And because it keeps things small.

What most people do is they read a self-development book, realise their life's a mess and want to do something massive about it. They put a huge goal in place but then fall over because it's too far to reach.

It's not that I've got anything against having big dreams. But to achieve big dreams you have break them down into smaller goals that get you closer to that big thing you want. You've got

to get in the habit of achieving small things before you can tackle something major.

With the 30 day challenge it's all about keeping it small. Yes it should still be a challenge, still be a bit of a push but it also should be well within reach. Nothing too big, too ambitious.

What to do for your first 30 day challenge?

Take a bit of time to think about what it is you're going to achieve in this 30 day challenge.

To be successful it needs to:

1. be something you're interested in - ask yourself, *do I really want to do this?*
2. be a goal that's just above comfortable so it's a challenge that's achievable
3. be something you can get into the habit of doing, something that's sustainable
4. fit in with your lifestyle.

Don't forget to have a good reason for wanting to achieve this goal - and make it a big enough why to motivate you throughout the 30 days.

If you've already got a big goal you want to achieve, a big change you want to make in your life, think about what you could achieve in 30 days that could take you a little way towards that goal.

Be realistic about what you can achieve within 30 days. For instance, you might want to lose a stone in weight. I'd say, for

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most people, that's probably not achievable in 30 days. But eight pounds in a month - so that's two pounds a week - is more realistic while also being just above comfortable for most people.

Let's say you're a bit of a couch potato but you want to be able to run five miles at the end of 30 days. Again, I'd say that's a bit too much of a push. So maybe adjust your goal down to one mile or two.

See what I'm aiming at here?

It's about not doing anything too dramatic. The 30 day challenge is about us getting into the practice of deciding what we want, taking daily action towards it, achieving and celebrating it and then starting all over again.

When thinking about your 30 day challenge, ask yourself:

1. Am I clear that it's really what I want to do, and why?
2. Is it something I can take action on, on a daily basis, starting now?
3. Will I need to show some resilience to achieve this goal?
4. Will I need energy to put in the work that's required?

If the answer to all of the above is yes, then it's a good goal to choose for your first 30 day challenge. Because it gives you a way to practise using the CARE system. And once you've got the CARE system down, there ain't nothing you can't achieve.

Developing daily habits

Once you know what it is you want to achieve, you need to

work out what you're going to do to get you there. To do this, think of four or five actions you will do on a daily basis, every day for 30 days to achieve your goal. These daily actions are what will become your daily habits.

This is what the 30 day challenge is all about - developing daily habits. Because it's the habits you have in life that determine the quality of your life. It's not what you do once a week or once a month that makes you who you are, it's what you do on a daily basis.

People who worry don't just worry on a Friday. They don't think, *'oh, it's Friday, 3 o'clock - time to worry.'* They don't do that, they worry all the time. It's a habit. It's the same with people who are quite upbeat and positive. They tend to be upbeat and positive all the time, they don't take days off.

It's the same with this. If you want to change there are no days off. So if I say I will walk for 20 minutes every day and then I have an hour long walk on Monday, that doesn't mean I get Tuesday and Wednesday off. It doesn't work like that.

The way to achieve your 30 day challenge is to do something towards it every day.

But that doesn't mean you need to do exactly the same thing every day. You'd get really bored, really quickly.

So don't be too specific when you're thinking about what your daily action will be. Rather than writing down *'I'm going to go to the gym every day and lift weights,'* try *'I will exercise for a minimum of 20 minutes a day'* instead.

This means you're not constrained to doing the same action

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every day. If you get bored with swimming you can cycle instead. With a flexible approach, there's no reason why on the days you don't go to the gym (because it's not healthy to do a full workout every day), you walk for 20 minutes instead. It's still exercise, you're still keeping up with your practice of *'I'm going to do 20 minutes of exercise every single day.'*

So leave room for flexibility. Because by leaving it loose, it gives you the chance to be creative about what you're going to do every day towards your goal.

Stay just above comfortable

I talked in the Action chapter about how it's important to push ourselves, but not too much. In the 30 day challenge we can put this into practice.

Make sure your actions are achievable actions. Always look to be just above comfortable and no more.

This is where a lot of other self-help books differ to this one. They want you to go way, way, beyond your comfort zone. But that's not the way to build consistency. We're building habits here.

Always, whatever we're doing, we should be just above comfortable because then it will challenge us without overwhelming us.

Keeping it just above comfortable means it's consistent, achievable and sustainable. And that means we're always achieving something. Always pushing ourselves just that little bit more. Setting goals and achieving them becomes our default mode - *'I choose what I want and make it achievable. I achieve that*

and move onto something else.' This way of thinking enables us to always be improving.

Write it down

You have a much greater chance of achieving your goals if you write them down. You can't do it all in your head. By writing down your aims and your actions you'll have something to refer back to, you'll be able to see how far you've come and it's a way of drilling your goals into your subconscious self.

You don't need any special equipment. You can write on whatever suits you - be that paper, your computer, your phone. I recommend paper - seems old-fashioned I know but there's something about having a physical record of what you're aiming towards that really helps get you there. So get hold of a notepad or paper (or use the space at the end of this chapter) and have a pen or pencil to hand.

1. Write down what it is you want to achieve in 30 days.
2. Write down why achieving that goal is important to you. Remember it needs to be a big enough why and it needs to be authentic - your goal, not anyone else's.
3. Write down four or five simple things you can do on a daily basis that will get you closer to that goal.
4. Make a note every day of how it's going. What action did you take? How did you feel? What were your energy levels like? Were there any challenges that came up that you weren't expecting? Make sure you're being honest with yourself. If you're struggling you need to write that down. If you're finding it easy you need to note that down too.

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Keeping a journal of your progress and how you feel about it will help you keep on track and help you take the steps you need to take to achieve your goal.

Tinkering with your goal and actions

You may find you struggle - either with a specific action or with the overall goal. Be honest with yourself about whether you're finding something difficult. Jot it down in your daily journal and take steps to adjust it so that it becomes achievable. Perhaps two pounds a week was rather ambitious. That's ok. Change it to one and a half. Just remember to keep things just above comfortable.

And if you're finding things too easy? Then adjust the goal or actions up a little. Make things a little tougher for yourself. Because it's not a challenge unless it's a challenge.

The 30 day challenge is about you becoming aware of what you're feeling on a daily basis towards what you want to achieve. And becoming aware enough of yourself to adjust what you're doing.

Read the book again

If at the end of the 30 day challenge you don't feel like you got anywhere and it was a real pain to do - go back and read the book again. Because you've missed the point. You haven't understood the principles of the CARE system.

This isn't about being judgemental and making yourself feel bad. It's all about being authentic and realistic.

People have this habit with self-help books. They read the first

two chapters and then go straight to the exercises at the end. You can't do that with the CARE system. You've got to understand it, feel it, know it.

The 30 day challenge is achievable once you understand the principles of clarity, action, resilience and energy.

If you're struggling to describe the goal you want to achieve and why you want it - go back and read the chapter on clarity again.

If you're struggling to make a list of things you're going to do on a daily basis - go back and read the action chapter again.

When it gets tough and you can feel resistance building - go back and read the chapter on resilience again.

If it gets to the stage when you feel completely knackered - go and read the energy chapter again.

If nothing's working and you're worried it's because the goal you've set yourself isn't really your goal - go back and read the authenticity and self-awareness chapters again.

Every 30 days is a fresh start

All you need to do is break down your goals into something you can achieve in 30 days. And when you've completed those 30 days, do another 30 days. And another. Until eventually that big goal is reached.

That's the beauty of the 30 day challenge. The longest you're ever going to have to do a challenge is 30 days. At the end of the 30 days, you get a fresh start. And who doesn't love a fresh start? It's a chance to renew and refresh. To do something different. To achieve something else. And if the 30 days you've

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just completed weren't a success you can put it bed. Leave it in the past and move on to the next 30. To the next challenge.

Because that's the thing. If it's not going the way you want it to, there's nothing wrong with starting again. It doesn't matter. Take a blank sheet of paper and make a start on a new challenge.

Because all this is about is you developing daily habits. And getting used to achieving success in 30 days. It's about you developing self-awareness and authenticity. You will end up knowing yourself much better.

At the end of the 30 days you will understand the process for any goal you want to achieve. Anything you want to overcome. Anything at all. Because you'll have the format for doing it.

And if you keep doing it, if you keep doing something that's significant but achievable within 30 days, over the course of a year you will have achieved 12 goals. Which right now, I'm guessing, is probably more than you've achieved last year.

Get some support

The 30 day challenge is a powerful approach to achieving your goals. It's even more powerful if you do it with other people. Try and find just one or two people to join you in a 30 day challenge - even if they're not doing the same challenge as you, it doesn't matter. You'll be able to support and encourage each other when the going gets tough.

Keep going

The 30 day challenge is called the 30 day challenge for good reason. It will be a challenge.

But because it takes time to form habits, it's important you keep going.

With any change process, it's not bad if you fall over, it's not failure if you fall over. The only failure in personal development is if you don't keep moving forward. It doesn't matter whether that's an inch a day, a foot a day or a mile a day, it just means moving forward. Just keep moving forward.

The majority of things in life are not failed through lack of capability, they're failed because people didn't keep going.

The first two or three days you're going to be on a high because it's new and exciting. But by day three or four, it will start to get more difficult. It becomes laborious. This is when you've got to show resilience. This is when having a big WHY comes in to keep you motivated.

If it's new to you, you are going to find it difficult. You've got to get in the habit of doing this.

So when it gets tough, go back to what you want, go back to why you want it. Go back to the things you said you'd do on a daily basis and adjust anything if you need to but just keep going.

Get started right now

Once you're in the frame of mind to make changes in your life, it's very important to take action straight away.

Don't put it off. Don't wait until next month. You don't have to start on the first day of the month. You can start on the 4th, the 10th, the 28th. Whatever today's date is that's the first day of your 30 day challenge.

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Start right now. Start by writing down what you want, why you want it and some steps you can take towards doing that immediately.

Good luck!

What I want to achieve in 30 days

Why I want to achieve this goal

The steps I'm going to take to achieve this goal

1. I will

2. I will

3. I will

4. I will

5. I will

Need more help?

Congratulations! You've reached the end of the book. That's a major achievement in itself so give yourself a big pat on the back.

What I'm sure you've realised though, over the course of reading these chapters is that your journey of self-development is only just beginning.

The CARE system gives you the tools you need to get into the habit of improving your life, but you may need a bit more help to get going. Or a bit more support and encouragement to continue making progress towards your goals. Well, that help, support and encouragement is at hand.

Email me at gareth@garethboot.com for a complete 30 day challenge workbook. Watch my videos at youtube.com/c/GarethBoot for insights into every aspect of the CARE system. And follow me on twitter.com/GarethBoot and facebook.com/GarethBootCoach/ for updates, tips and advice.

Good luck. And take care of yourself.

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About the author

Gareth Boot helps people and businesses overcome challenges, deal with issues they are facing or achieve goals they have set themselves.

Having spent 10 years as head of a six-figure business that he started from scratch, Gareth knows something about what makes people and organisations tick.

He has been involved in personal development for over 20 years and has become known for his straight-talking style and lack of interest in doing things the way they have always been done. Gareth believes in challenging the norm to get the best out of people.

He developed the CARE system as a way to save his life, after having come close to killing himself with alcohol in 2014. And he did so by discovering the four simple things that are required to make any change possible. Since then, he's been sharing the CARE system with people who want to improve their lives. He

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provides one-to-one coaching as well as an online course in taking CARE of yourself.

Find out more about Gareth and his work at garethboot.com and follow him on:



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