

# CHANGE YOUR THINKING, CHANGE YOUR LIFE

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*How to Unlock Your Full Potential  
for Success and Achievement*

BRIAN TRACY



WILEY

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*To my wife Barbara,  
from whom I have learned so much  
about the importance of love and family.  
You are my mainstay  
and my greatest inspiration.*





# Foreword

If you are ready to leverage yourself to greatness and achieve giant results, you have the right road map in your hands. You have before you the DNA of your future. All you need to create a wonderful future for yourself is to read this book, decide how you are going to apply it to your own life, write out a plan, and then go forth with enthusiasm and make it happen.

I have a confession to make. I am one of Brian's raving fans. I have studied him, his brilliant work, and the extraordinary results he has achieved. I am also one of his close colleagues and friends. We have worked together on many platforms, and met and talked with each other on numerous occasions.

Brian is one of the finest thinkers and writers on inner development and personal success in the world. I know; I have sold over 82 million books aimed at helping people get the most out of themselves.

*Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life* shows you how to discover your extraordinary inner resources and tap your incredible powers. You will learn how to attract into your life all the people and resources you need to achieve any goal you can set for yourself.

You will absolutely amaze yourself as you start to achieve new and better results by employing these concepts and ideas in everything you do. These are the same concepts used by all big-time winners, self-made millionaires, and leaders in every field.

In this book, you will learn a step-by-step process to great success that you will eventually implement, easily and effortlessly. This strategy for success is so logical, so inviting, and ultimately so fulfilling and omni-beneficial that it is virtually a breakthrough in personal performance.

As long as you are going to think anyway, why not think great thoughts and get great results?

Brian is a shining light in the speaking and writing world. He has done incredible thinking and achieved amazing results, for

himself and many hundreds of thousands of other people. Brian's thinking in this book will inspire you to do the same or more.

Get ready for one of the great adventures and explorations into the last great frontier, and the first—your mind! You are about to have a wonderful experience.

MARK VICTOR HANSEN

Author, *Chicken Soup for the Soul*

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Not least, I thank my wonderful wife Barbara and my fabulous children—Christina, Michael, David, and Catherine—for their support and patience during the long hours away from them to finish this book.



# Introduction

There is nothing on earth that you cannot have once you have mentally accepted the fact that you can have it.

—Robert Collier

## ■ THE TRUTH ABOUT YOU

You are a thoroughly good person. You deserve a wonderful life, full of success, happiness, joy, and excitement. You are entitled to have happy relationships, excellent health, meaningful work, and financial independence. These are your birthright. This is what your life is meant to include.

You are engineered for success and designed to have high levels of self-esteem, self-respect, and personal pride. You are extraordinary; there has never been anyone exactly like you in all the history of mankind on earth. You have absolutely amazing untapped talents and abilities that, when properly unleashed and applied, can bring you everything you could ever want in life.

You are living at the greatest time in all of human history. You are surrounded by abundant opportunities that you can take advantage of to realize your dreams. The only real limits on what you can be, do, or have are the limits you place on yourself by your own thinking. Your future is virtually unlimited.

## ■ GET REAL!

How did you react to the preceding three paragraphs? You probably had two responses. First, you liked what they said, and your fondest wish was for them to be true for you. But your second response was probably one of skepticism and disbelief. Even though you deeply

desire to live a wonderfully healthy, happy, prosperous life, when you read those words, your doubts and fears arose immediately to remind you of reasons why these dreams and goals may not be possible for you. Well, join the crowd!

This is exactly how I felt many years ago. Even though I wanted to be a big success in life, I was unskilled, uneducated, and unemployed. I had no idea what I could do to improve my situation. I felt trapped between big ideas on the one hand and limited resources and opportunities on the other. Then I discovered a series of remarkable principles that have been responsible for all the great successes and achievements of the ages, and my life changed forever.

After proving these laws and principles in my own life, I began speaking, and training others to apply the same ideas. Since then, I have given more than two thousand talks and seminars as long as four days in length, in 24 countries, to a total of more than two million participants. Most of them were also skeptical when they first heard these ideas of optimism and possibility, until they learned what you are going to learn in the pages ahead. It changed their lives, as it will change yours.

## ■ THE GREAT PRINCIPLE

Perhaps the most important mental and spiritual principle ever discovered is that *you become what you think about most of the time*. Your outer world is very much a mirror image of your inner world. What is going on *outside* of you is a reflection of what is going on *inside* of you. You can tell the inner condition of a person by looking at the outer conditions of his or her life. And it cannot be otherwise.

## ■ THOUGHTS ARE THINGS

Your mind is extraordinarily powerful. Your thoughts control and determine almost everything that happens to you. They can raise or lower your heart rate, improve or interfere with your digestion, change the chemical composition of your blood, and help you to sleep or keep you awake at night.

Your thoughts can make you happy or sad, sometimes in an instant. They can make you alert and aware, or distracted and de-



pressed. They can make you popular or unpopular, confident or insecure, positive or negative. Your thoughts can make you feel powerful or powerless, a victim or a victor, a hero or a coward.

In your material life, your thoughts can make you a success or a failure, prosperous or poverty-stricken, respected or ignored. Your thoughts, and the actions that they trigger, determine your whole life. And the best news of all is that they are completely under your own control.

## ■ THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND DESIRES

You are a complex bundle of thoughts, feelings, attitudes, desires, images, fears, hopes, doubts, opinions, and ambitions, each of them constantly changing, sometimes from second to second. Each of these elements of your personality affects the others, sometimes in unpredictable ways. Your entire life is the result of the intertwining and interconnecting of these factors.

Your thoughts trigger images and pictures, and the emotions that go with them. These images and emotions trigger attitudes and actions. Your actions then have consequences and results that determine what happens to you.

If you think about success and confidence, you will feel strong and competent, and you will perform better at whatever you attempt. If you think about making mistakes or being embarrassed, you will perform poorly, no matter how good you really are.

Pictures and images, from your imagination or from the external influences, produce ideas, emotions, and attitudes that correspond to them. They then trigger actions that bring about certain results and outcomes. The *thought* of a person or situation can cause you to instantly feel happy or sad, elated or angry, loving or lonely.

## ■ ATTITUDES, ACTIONS, AND EMOTIONS

Your attitudes, positive or negative, constructive or destructive, lead to corresponding images, emotions, and actions that affect your life and relationships. Your attitudes, in turn, are based on

your previous experiences and your basic premises about how things are supposed to be.

Your actions trigger the emotions and attitudes that go with them. By the Law of Reversibility, you can actually act your way into feeling in a manner consistent with the action. By acting as if you were already happy, positive, and confident, you soon begin to feel that way on the inside. And your actions are under your direct control, whereas your emotions are not.

In and of themselves, the outer aspects of your life are *neutral*. It is only the *meaning* that you give to them that determines your attitudes, opinions, emotions, and reactions to them. If you change your thinking about any part of your life, you will change how you feel and behave in that area. And since only you can decide what to think, you have the ability to take complete control over your life.

## ■ QUESTION YOUR BELIEFS

The Law of Belief says: *Whatever you believe, with conviction, becomes your reality.* You always act in a manner consistent with your deepest and most intensely held beliefs, whether they are true or not. And all your beliefs are learned. At one time, you did not have them.

Your beliefs largely determine your reality. You do not believe what you *see*; you rather *see* what you already believe. You can have life-enhancing beliefs that make you happy and optimistic, or you can have negative beliefs about yourself and your potential that act as roadblocks to the realization of everything that is truly possible for you.

The most harmful beliefs you can have are your *self-limiting beliefs*. These are beliefs about yourself and your potential that hold you back. Most of them are not true. Most of them are the result of information you have accepted without question, often from early childhood. Even if it is completely untrue, if you *believe* yourself to be limited in areas such as achieving wonderful health and happiness and earning a lot of money, that will become your truth. As the author Richard Bach in his book *Illusions* wrote, “Argue for your limitations and sure enough, they’re yours.”

## ■ YOU ARE A LIVING MAGNET

The Law of Attraction says that you are a “living magnet” and that *you invariably attract into your life the people, ideas, opportunities, and circumstances in harmony with your dominant thoughts.*

When you think positive, optimistic, loving, and successful thoughts, you create a *force field* of magnetism that attracts, like iron filings to a magnet, the very things you are thinking about. This law explains why it is that you don’t have to be concerned where your good is going to come from. If you can keep your mind clearly focused on what you want, and refrain from thinking about what you *don’t* want, you will *attract* everything you need to achieve your goals, exactly when you are ready. Change your thinking and you change your life.

## ■ THE ONLY REAL MEASURE

Bertrand Russell, the English philosopher, once said, “The very best proof that something can be done is that others have already done it.” In the New Testament, Jesus taught the way to measure the truth of any principle: “By their fruits, ye shall know them.”

In other words, the only question you need to ask about any idea is, “Does it work?” Does it bring about the results that you desire? Milton Friedman, the Nobel prizewinning economist, said, “The only true measure of a theory or idea is your ability to make accurate predictions of the future based on it.”

The good news is that the ideas and principles you are about to learn have been tested and proven in the lives and experiences of millions of people. In themselves, like any principles of nature, they are *neutral*. Nature plays no favorites. Nature treats everyone alike. Whatever seed you plant in the ground, nature will grow. Whatever *thought seeds* you plant in your mind, nature will grow as well. It is entirely up to you.

## ■ CHOOSE YOUR THOUGHTS

Successful people are those who *think* more effectively than unsuccessful people. They approach their lives, relationships, goals,

problems, and experiences differently from others. They sow better seeds, and as a result they reap better lives. If you learn to think and act like other successful, happy, healthy, and prosperous people, you will soon enjoy the kind of lives they do. When you change your thinking, you change your life.

**Nature understands no jesting. She is always true, always serious, always severe. She is always right, and the errors and faults are always those of man. The man incapable of appreciating her she despises, and only to the apt, the pure, and the true does she resign herself and reveal her secrets.**

**—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**

# *C h a 1 p t e r*

## **Change Your Thinking**

**There is a law in psychology that if you form a picture in your mind of what you would like to be, and you keep and hold that picture there long enough, you will soon become exactly as you have been thinking.**

**—William James**

Once upon a time there was a woman, about 30 years old, married with two children. Like many people, she had grown up in a home where she was constantly criticized and often treated unfairly by her parents. As a result, she developed deep feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem. She was negative and fearful, and had no confidence at all. She was shy and self-effacing, and did not consider herself to be particularly valuable or worthwhile. She felt that she was not really talented at anything.

One day, as she was driving to the store, another car went through a red light and smashed into her. When she awoke, she was in the hospital with a mild concussion and complete memory loss. She could still speak, but she had no recollection of any part of her past life. She was a total amnesiac.

At first, the doctors thought it would be temporary. But weeks passed and no trace of her memory returned. Her husband and children visited her daily, but she did not know them. This was such an unusual case that other doctors and specialists came to visit her as well, to test her and ask her questions about her condition.

## ■ STARTING OVER

Eventually, she went home, her memory a complete blank. Determined to understand what had happened to her, she began reading medical textbooks and studying in the specialized area of amnesia and memory loss. She met and spoke with specialists in this field. Eventually she wrote a paper on her condition. Not long afterward, she was invited to address a medical convention to deliver her paper, answer questions about her amnesia, and share her experiences and ideas on neurological functioning.

During this period, something amazing happened. *She became a new person completely.* All the attention in the hospital and afterward made her feel valuable, important, and truly loved by her family. The attention and acclaim she received from members of the medical profession built her self-esteem and self-respect even higher. She became a genuinely positive, confident, outgoing woman, highly articulate, well informed, and very much in demand as a speaker and authority in the medical profession.

All memory of her negative childhood had been wiped out. Her feelings of inferiority were wiped out as well. She became a new person. She changed her thinking and changed her life.

## ■ THE BLANK SLATE

The Scottish philosopher David Hume was the first to propose the idea of the *tabula rasa* or blank slate. This theory says that each person comes into the world with no thoughts or ideas at all, and everything that a person thinks and feels is learned from infancy onward. It is as though the child's mind is a blank slate that every passing person and experience leaves a mark on. The adult becomes the sum total of everything he or she learns, feels, and experiences growing up. What the adult does and becomes later is the result of this early conditioning. As Aristotle wrote, "Whatever is impressed is expressed."

Perhaps the greatest breakthrough in the field of human potential in the twentieth century was the discovery of the *self-concept*. This is the idea that each person develops a bundle of beliefs regarding oneself, starting at birth. Your self-concept then becomes

the master program of your subconscious computer, determining everything you think, say, feel, and do. For this reason, all change in your outer life begins with a change in your self-concept, with a change in the way you think and feel about yourself and your world.

The child is born with no self-concept at all. Every idea, opinion, feeling, attitude, or value you have as an adult you learned from childhood. Everything you are today is the result of an idea or impression you took in and accepted as true. When you believe something to be true, it becomes true for you, whatever the fact may be. “You are not what you think you are, but what you think, you are.”

## ■ FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE LASTING

If you were raised by parents who continually told you what a good person you were, who loved you, encouraged you, supported you, and believed in you, no matter what you did or didn’t do, you would grow up with the belief that you were a good and valuable person. By the age of three, this belief would *lock in* and become a fundamental part of the way you view yourself in relation to your world. Thereafter, no matter what happens to you, you would hold to this belief. It would become your reality.

If you were raised by parents who did not know how powerful their words and behaviors could be in shaping your personality, they could very easily have used destructive criticism, disapproval, and physical or emotional punishment to discipline or control you. When a child is continually criticized at an early age, he soon concludes that there is something wrong with him. He doesn’t understand why it is that he is being criticized or punished, but he assumes that his parents know the truth about him, and that he deserves it. He begins to feel that he is not valuable or lovable. He is not worth very much. He must therefore be worthless.

Almost all personality problems in adolescence and adulthood are rooted in what psychologists refer to as *love withheld*. The child needs love like roses need rain. When children feel unloved, they feel unsafe and insecure. They think, “I’m not good enough.” They begin to engage in compensatory behaviors to make up for this inner anxiety. This sense of love deprivation is manifested in misbehavior, personality problems, bursts of anger,

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depression, hopelessness, lack of ambition, and problems with people and relationships.

### ■ YOU ARE BORN UNAFRAID

The child is born with no fears, except those of falling and loud noises. All other fears have to be taught to the child as he or she grows up.

The two major fears we all develop are the fear of *failure* or *loss* and the fear of *criticism* or *rejection*. We begin to learn the fear of failure if we are continually criticized and punished when we try something new or different. We are shouted at and told, “No! Get away from there! Stop that! Put that down!” Physical punishment and the withholding of love, possibilities that scare us and make us feel insecure, often accompany these shouts and criticisms.

We soon begin to believe that we are too small, too weak, incompetent, inadequate, and incapable of doing anything new or different. We express this feeling with the words, “I can’t, I can’t, I can’t.” Whenever we think about doing something new or challenging, we automatically respond with feelings of fear, trembling, and a churning stomach. We react exactly as if we are afraid of getting a spanking. We say, “I can’t” over and over.

The fear of failure is the primary reason for failure in adult life. As the result of destructive criticism in childhood, we hold ourselves back as adults. We sell ourselves short. We quit before we even try the first time. Instead of using our amazing minds to figure out how to get what we want, we use our reasoning ability to create reasons why we can’t, and why the things we want are not possible for us.

### ■ THE NEED TO BE LOVED

The second major fear that holds us back, undermines our confidence, and destroys our desire for a happy life is the fear of *rejection*, and its expression, *criticism*. This emotion is learned in early childhood as the result of our parents expressing disapproval of us whenever we do something they don’t like, or don’t do something that they expect. As a result of our displeasing them, they



become angry and withdraw the love and approval we need so much as children.

The fear of being unloved and alone is so traumatic for a child that she soon conforms her behavior to do whatever she thinks her parents will approve of. She loses her spontaneity and uniqueness. She begins to think, “I have to! I have to! I have to!” She concludes, “I have to do whatever Mommy and Daddy want me to, or they won’t love me, and I’ll be all alone!”

## ■ CONDITIONAL LOVE

As an adult, a child raised with what is called “conditional love” (as opposed to unconditional love, the greatest gift one person can give to another) becomes hypersensitive to the opinions of others. In its extreme form, he cannot do anything if there is the slightest chance that someone else may not approve. He projects his childhood relationship with his parents onto the important people in his adult life—spouse, boss, relatives, friends, authority figures—and tries desperately to earn their approval, or at least not lose it.

The fears of failure and rejection, caused by destructive criticism in early childhood, are the root causes of most of our unhappiness and anxiety as adults. We feel, “I can’t!” or “I have to!” continually. The worst feeling is when we feel, “I can’t, but I have to!” or “I have to, but I can’t!”

We want to do something, but we are afraid of failure or loss, or if we are not afraid of loss, we are afraid of disapproval. We want to do something to improve our lives, at work or at home, but we are afraid that we may fail, or that someone else may criticize us, or both.

For most people, their fears govern their lives. Everything they do is organized around avoiding failure or criticism. They think continually about playing it safe, rather than striving for their goals. They seek security rather than opportunity.

## ■ DOUBLE YOUR RATE OF FAILURE

The author Arthur Gordon once approached Thomas J. Watson Sr., the founder of IBM, and asked him how he could succeed faster as

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a writer. Thomas J. Watson, one of the giants of American business, replied with these profound words: “If you want to be successful faster, you must double your rate of failure. Success lies on the far side of failure.”

The fact is that the more you have already failed, the more likely it is you are on the verge of great success. Your failures have prepared you to succeed. This is why a streak of good luck seems to follow a streak of bad luck. When in doubt, “double your rate of failure.” The more things you *try*, the more likely you are to *triumph*. You overcome your fears only by doing the thing you fear until the fear has no more control over you.

### ■ YOUR MENTAL HARD DRIVE

Everything you know about yourself, all your beliefs, are recorded on the hard drive of your personality, in your self-concept. Your self-concept precedes and predicts your levels of performance and effectiveness in everything you do. Because of the law of correspondence, you always behave on the outside in a manner consistent with your self-concept on the inside. All improvement in your life therefore begins with an improvement in your self-concept.

You have an *overall* self-concept that is made up of all your beliefs about yourself and your abilities. This bundle of beliefs includes all the experiences, decisions, successes, failures, ideas, information, emotions, and opinions of your life up to now. This general self-concept determines how and what you think and feel about yourself, and measures how well you are doing in general.

### ■ YOUR MINI-SELF-CONCEPTS

You have a series of “mini-self-concepts” as well. These mini-self-concepts combine to make up your overall self-concept. You have a self-concept for every area of your life that you consider important. This mini-self-concept determines how you think, feel, and perform in that area.

For example, you have a self-concept for how healthy and fit you are, and how much you eat or exercise. You have a self-concept

for how likable and popular you are with others, especially with members of the opposite sex. You have a self-concept for what kind of a spouse or parent you are, for how good a friend you are to your friends, how smart you are, and how well you learn. You have a self-concept for every sport you play, and for every activity you engage in, including how well you drive your car.

You have a self-concept for how well you do your work, and for how well you do each part of your work. You have a self-concept for how much money you make and how well you save and invest it. This is a critical area. The fact is that you can never earn much more or less than your self-concept level of income. If you want to make more money, you have to change your beliefs about yourself relative to income and money. This is an important part of this book.

## ■ CHANGE YOUR BELIEFS

In every case, if you want to change your performance and your results in any area of your life, you have to change your self-concept—or your beliefs about yourself—for that area. Fortunately, your beliefs are largely subjective. They are not always based on facts. Instead, they are based largely on information you have taken in and accepted as true, sometimes with very little evidence or proof.

The very worst beliefs you can have are *self-limiting beliefs* of any kind. These are beliefs about yourself that cause you to feel somehow limited or deficient in a particular area. These beliefs are seldom true, but if you accept them as valid estimates of your ability, they become true for you, exactly as if they were correct.

The starting point of unlocking your potential, and accomplishing more than you ever have before, is for you to *challenge* your self-limiting beliefs. You begin this process of freeing yourself from self-limiting beliefs by imagining that, whatever they are, they are completely untrue. Imagine for the moment that you have no limitations on your abilities at all. Imagine that you could be, do, or have anything you really wanted in life. Imagine that your potential is unlimited in any way.

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For example, imagine that you could be earning twice as much as you are earning today. Imagine that you could be living in a bigger house, driving a better car, and enjoying a more expensive lifestyle.

Imagine that you have the ability to be one of the top people in your field. Imagine that you are one of the most popular, powerful, and persuasive personalities in your social and business world. Imagine that you are calm, confident, and unafraid of anything. Imagine that you could set and achieve any goal you put your mind to. This is how you begin changing your thinking and changing your life.

The starting point of eliminating your fears, and releasing your potential, is to reprogram your mental hard drive with new, positive, constructive, and courageous beliefs about yourself and your future. Throughout this book, you will learn how to do this.

### ■ THREE PARTS OF YOUR SELF-CONCEPT

Your self-concept has three parts, like a pie divided into three wedges. Each is linked with each of the others. All three elements together make up your personality. They largely determine what you think, feel, and do, and everything that happens to you.

Your *self-ideal* is the first part of your personality and your self-concept. Your self-ideal is made up of all of your hopes, dreams, visions, and ideals. Your self-ideal is composed of the virtues, values, and qualities that you most admire in yourself and others. Your self-ideal is the person you would most like to become, if you could be a perfect person in every way. These ideals guide and shape your behavior.

Great men and women, leaders, and people of character are very clear about their values, visions, and ideals. They know who they are and what they believe in. They set high standards for themselves, and they don't compromise those standards. They are men and women that others can look up to and depend on. They are definite and distinct in their interactions with others. In everything they do, they strive to live up to their ideals.

## ■ THE WAY YOU SEE YOURSELF

The second part of your self-concept is your *self-image*. This is the way you see yourself and think about yourself. It is often called your “inner mirror.” It is where you look internally to see how you should behave in a particular situation. Because of the power of your self-image, you always perform on the *outside* consistent with the picture you have of yourself on the *inside*.

The discovery of the self-image, pioneered by Maxwell Maltz, is a major breakthrough in understanding human performance and effectiveness. By visualizing and imagining yourself performing at your best in an upcoming situation, you send a message to your subconscious mind. Your subconscious mind accepts this message as a command, and then coordinates your thoughts, words, and actions so that they fit a pattern consistent with the picture you created.

All improvement in your life begins with an improvement in your mental pictures. Your internal images influence your emotions, your behaviors, your attitudes, and even the way other people respond to you. The development of a positive self-image is a vital part of changing your thinking and changing your life.

## ■ HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOURSELF

The third part of your self-concept is your *self-esteem*. This is the emotional component of your personality, and is the most important factor in determining how you think, feel, and behave. Your level of self-esteem largely determines much of what happens to you in life.

Your self-esteem is best defined as *how much you like yourself*. The more you like yourself, the better you perform at anything you attempt. And by the law of reversibility, the better you perform, the more you like yourself.

Your self-esteem is the “reactor core” of your personality. It is the energy source that determines your levels of confidence and enthusiasm. The more you like yourself, the higher will be the standards you will set for yourself. The more you like yourself, the bigger the goals you will set for yourself and the longer you will