

What Are You Going To Do About It?



'Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of the Earth. Your playing small does not serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do ... And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.'

Marianne Williamson

This is your opportunity. You can decide right now whether you want to want to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous, or not. If you decide not to, please close this book right now and give it to someone else who might decide to go for it and have no regrets or thoughts of what might have been. You are free to choose to continue as you are and be content with that.

If you do decide you want to face the challenge and to know more, we are going to go on a journey. Firstly we will look at four preparations and then eight actions to do something about it:

- Preparation 1: To tell the truth
- Preparation 2: Perception and reality
- Preparation 3: Finding your 'natural language'
- Preparation 4: What is my point in life?
- Action 1: Eating your energy
- Action 2: Exercise your mind
- Action 3: Taking control of your life
- Action 4: Avoiding distraction and inspiring change
- Action 5: Editing your address book
- Action 6: Changing habits
- Action 7: Making your plan
- Action 8: Coming out and being yourself

PREPARATION 1: TO TELL THE TRUTH

As children we are often told not to lie but we are seldom taught how to tell the truth. Not only that, but many of our teachers, parents, TV personalities and politicians are role-models of dishonesty. It is not that these role-models lie or are particularly dishonest, but that, from the point of view of an innocent child trying to make sense of the world in a very literal way, any discrepancy between words and deeds is very confusing.

The truth is, of course, a rather abstract concept. It is intensely personal, which makes it rather difficult for anyone else to know whether you are telling it or not. Which is where the problems start.

The only person who knows if you are telling the truth is you. Unless you are prepared to be the one who keeps an eye on it there is rarely any direct comeback on you for not telling the truth and so it often seems easier to lie.

As children we are often told not to lie but we are seldom taught how to tell the truth.

An even more common and insidious dishonesty is the dishonesty of silence, where we fail to mention crucial truths often to those closest to us. I was in a relationship that was not founded on honesty for a long time, there was so much that went unsaid. We have said it now. It only took an evening, but not saying it for all of those years certainly contributed to our separation.

In reality, telling the truth is similar to lying in that it is just about technique. If you think about whatever you have to say, there is an honest way to say it that will not cause needless pain. Most of us learn an adversarial system where we feel we need to enter conversations already knowing the outcome and that the purpose of the conversation is to bring our interlocutor around to our point of view. It turns out that it is far easier and more honest to enter into conversations unprepared and allow a new solution to emerge through collaboration rather than confrontation. Frequently this means not imagining you already know the answer, but asking questions and discovering that a truth emerges that is quite different to the one you may have been trying to hide.

Unsurprisingly, for many of us, it is not quite as simple as that. Many of us started lying at an early age. Lets take a typical parents lesson to their children in lying.

The threat. If you do that one more time I will ... The problem here is that the threat is often hard for the parent to carry out and so they don't. The child, instead

of learning not to do the thing in question, learns that their parents do not always tell the truth.

It is not just parents who teach us how to lie – teachers, TV advertising (remember the first time you persuaded your parents to buy you something you saw advertised on TV and were disappointed by it?) and later employers and politicians are all influential in teaching us dishonesty.

So what does telling the truth involve? And do we really want to anyway?

The first person that we need to learn to be honest with is ourselves. Until we can trust ourselves there is little chance of us being honest with others. We need to understand the myths that we create for ourselves to justifying doing things or not doing things.

Many of us create one or more alter egos behind which we live most of the time. These alter egos are defined by second guessing how we think others want us to behave. We spend much of our time flipping between our work selves, our home selves and, if we are lucky, our real selves.

All of this sucks away at our energy and leaves us confused, unhappy and prey to the distractions of consumerism. It becomes easy for marketers to persuade us that we are too weak to resist temptations and that we will be happy if we buy that soft drink, beer, make-up, camera, car, whatever.

By learning to be honest with ourselves we create possibility to be authentic and free up all of that energy we were previously using to maintain our alter egos. Unfortunately this is as difficult as it sounds. Many of us have spent years developing convincing alter egos and sub personalities that behave in particular ways with particular people and in particular situations. Persuading yourself to come clean is hard.

Once you have learned to be honest with yourself you will find it pays off in every area. Life and relationships become easier. Which brings us to the next person you need to be honest with – your significant other.

A great many relationships are based on unspoken truths, exaggerations and outright lies. These relationships develop a set of unwritten and unspoken rules of what is and is not discussed and done. Although our role-models, of parents, TV and movie relationships, seldom reveal it, our significant relationships must ideally be based on unconditional reciprocal love if they are to be fulfilling for both parties.

Unconditional reciprocal love.

Nothing else is acceptable if you want to be your authentic self and to be all that you can be.

In the summer of 2000 I commissioned a training session called Authentic Leadership for my team at Razorfish. The session was run by Paul Wielgus, a sublime facilitator of personal development sessions. Thirty-five business strategists from all over Europe and North America discussed authentic leaders and authenticity. We delved into ourselves, in some cases for the first time. Nine months later a third of the participants had separated from the partners and spouses we had at the time.

If the relationship you have is not the right one and cannot be made to be right you must act and act soon. To be your authentic self you can only be with someone who loves you for who you truly are and not someone for whom you have to be one of your alter ego personalities.

Although marriage vows in most of Europe have moved on to some extent, they still have their basis in a promise to God or state. To have an authentic relationship you need something which is very much team based and is a commitment you make to each other. Whether or not you choose to get married and whether or not you choose to make a commitment to God, I think it is worth making this kind of commitment to one another, publicly or privately. This is the commitment that I wrote

for the relationship we have now and we used for our marriage. It may be helpful to see if you and your partner can make such a commitment to one another.

- To share in unconditional love and support
- To live in absolute integrity and authenticity
- To enjoy mutual challenge and inspiration
- To embrace constant personal change and development
- To give unequivocal space alongside absolute security

If you cannot make this kind of commitment to each other over the long term you may be able to agree with one another that you would be better off not being together.

If you are in this situation this is perhaps the toughest part of coming out and being honest with yourself. You may have spent years developing a life and a lifestyle, which would all be thrown away by taking this step. All I can say is that I did it and, although it was probably not handled perfectly, and certainly generated a great deal of anguish for four people, it was better in the long run for all concerned because neither of the two relationships that were broken up were founded on honesty.

PREPARATION 2: PERCEPTION AND REALITY

'How do you define real? If you are talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste and see then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain.'

Morpheus – The Matrix

As was mentioned in the first section, reality is an intensely personal thing. Our senses perceive sound, light, texture, taste, odour, colour but we have absolutely no way of knowing whether your experience of A minor, dark, rough, strawberry, Chanel no 5, or blue is the same as mine or not. We absorb information through our senses, which our mind then filters and interprets.

The way we interpret information is affected by all sorts of things – circumstance, mood, age, gender, past experience. But, crucially, it is conditioned by belief. There are many people in the world who will regard the ideas in this book as ridiculous or dangerous or will not even notice them. This is because the ideas simply do not fit within their current belief system.

Remember there was a time when people were killed for saying that the Earth revolved around the sun and that it was round. The idea that we were descended from apes was so heretical that it took Charles Darwin years to pluck up the courage to tell us. People find it extremely hard to have their fundamental beliefs altered and, given such radical revelations of the not-so-distant past, who would bet that our current world-view is the only true one?

Perhaps we can go further. Maybe my perception that the world is dangerous and dysfunctional is only a reflection of my own state of mind. Maybe, once I complete my journey and reach peace or nirvana or transcendence or whatever you like to call it, the world (or my experience of it) will resolve to a happy heavenly place.

Certainly, you perceive the world differently to the way I do. Perhaps you already think it is an entirely safe and happy place and wonder what on earth I am on about.

How can you tell the difference between what is real and what is imagined?

Our beliefs derive from our experiences and our conditioning. If your beliefs are not aligned with your natural language (see Preparation 3: Finding your ‘natural language’) you are likely to have a distorted idea of their value to the world and of

your own capability. So the next step is to adjust your world-view to accommodate your natural language.

Once you begin to understand your natural languages you may need to be prepared to rethink your world-view. To do this you will first need to understand what your world-view is and where it comes from. Your world-view is how you see yourself, society and your place in it.

Ask yourself these questions and then ask why you answered that way and what other answers there could be.

- How would it be if you really did control events?
- Do you think that you have the choice about how you direct your energy?
- Why do we consistently fail to eradicate poverty?
- What motivates the choices that are made in the world?
- What is control?
- What is success?
- How would it be if we did not live in a hierarchy?

In many cases our conditioning has lead us to believe that our natural language is not valuable or important. Open your mind to the possibility that your unique brilliance is valuable to the rest of the world and therefore to you. This will lead you to asking: what is my natural language?

PREPARATION 3: FINDING YOUR 'NATURAL LANGUAGE'

The good news is that you know what your natural language is. The bad news is that it may be very well hidden.

Firstly, what do we mean by natural language? Language is about communication. Your natural language is the way that you most easily communicate with your surroundings. Your natural language could take almost any form and you will have more than one.

For many of us our natural language is buried because during our education we were obliged to learn a number of other languages regardless of whether they had any meaning for us personally or not. For most of us, our natural language was not included in our education and most of us were persuaded to quietly forget about it.

We hear about people being described as 'gifted'. In reality we are all gifted. In the case of the people being described as gifted their natural language happened to coincide with one of the languages they were being taught at that time. It happened to be spotted by someone and supported.

In 2002 the BBC in the UK screened a TV show called *Fame Academy*. Out of thousands of applicants a lucky few were selected for ten weeks of intensive coaching and mentoring in their natural language of singing and performing. The students who survived the first selection rounds had their lives changed and went from being good singers to being outstanding performers of tremendous character and confidence.

For the rest of us we are told, by implication, that we are not gifted. This is not true. You are gifted. All you need is to identify your natural language and to go with your flow rather than the flow imposed by society.

Imagine if, rather than being the exception, the level of coaching seen in *Fame Academy* was available to everyone. Imagine if, instead of being distracted by years of indoctrination, we were given the space to discover our natural language, and then offered intensive support and coaching.

Finding your natural language is about identifying the languages you intuitively understand. At some level you know what they are; it may just be a question of looking at the things you find easiest to do or the things you dream of doing. This is your opportunity and your responsibility. If you wait for someone else to do it for you, it simply will not happen.

Finding your natural language is about identifying the languages you intuitively understand.

The search needs to focus on the inside not on the outside; in the same way that many tribal cultures have rites of passage that involves sending adolescents out into the wilderness to be on their own without distraction. In our society, finding any time without distraction can be quite a challenge in itself.

I believe that our natural language is strong within us and will surface if we give it a chance. If you consciously search for it, you will be able to find it. Whatever you are doing, be conscious of how you feel, be conscious of the tension you are feeling, and focus in on the areas where you feel less tension and feel more at peace with yourself.

We are conditioned to feel that introspection is a rather selfish and anti-social thing to be doing. To make time for empty contemplation is a real challenge. The time I do most of my contemplation is while I am out cycling. I spent seven years commuting by bike across London for about an hour each way. I also went on long training rides of three hours or more. This is intensely valuable thinking time with the potential of few distractions.

Of course, cycling is not for everyone. Meditation is highly recommended by some, others have found Buddhist chanting an enormous help. Other options are walk-

ing, running or swimming. There are any number of techniques. All you have to is to find one that suits you. The vital, and yet most difficult thing is to make time. I made the time by having cycling as part of my daily schedule. As with everything in life it is about priorities. You need to decide what is important in your life and focus on this, while doing less of what is not important.

While you are working to understand your natural languages you need to find wise people with whom you can discuss what you are feeling and learning. The natural languages you identify could take many forms. I happen to be comfortable with exploring, understanding and articulating. This makes me good at technical subjects like making and fixing things, cooking, navigation, understanding people and society. None of this was fostered or supported during my education, in spite of the wide range of schools I sampled.

In my work I find that a focus on inspiration and discussion is effective for most people given enough time. However, if you feel particularly confused or have been traumatized even in what may seem to be a very minor way during your childhood you may have some more work to do.

Like the world's wisdom, help and assistance is widely available. Counselling or therapy can be very effective but be careful about who you choose – if you can, go with someone who is personally recommended. I found that 80% of the value was in the first session, but none of the subsequent sessions had the same power. Many alternative therapists of different sorts seek to create dependence rather than independence, so be careful to judge how long you want to continue for.

It is very important to distinguish between functional and dysfunctional natural languages. We are the product of evolution. It has taken literally millions of years to evolve to our current state. By definition we are the product of generations of ancestors who were good at propagating their genes. Our ancestors discovered that the way to be genetically successful was to live in tribes and to collaborate for both individual, tribal and species success. Functional behaviours might be described as those that promote the overall long-term success and well-being of our genes, those of our tribe and those of our species. Native American Indians defined their long-

term responsibility as being seven generations. In contrast dysfunctional behaviours are those which focus on the narrow and short term to the detriment of broader and longer term considerations, including those of the next seven generations.

One of the questions that people often ask is; ‘yes, but what if someone is authentically a paedophile (or whatever)?’ I believe that these pathological behaviours are simply more extreme forms of dysfunctionality generated through more extreme lifetime and childhood traumas. Underneath it all there is a functional person who is screaming to get out, though they may never be able to.

The other question this raises in our still prudish society is that of homosexuality and how that can be in the long-term interest of our gene pool and therefore functional. I don’t know. What I do know is that homosexuality is entirely natural and is consistent with what happens in every other species. In our society homosexuals have one significant advantage over others – they have already had to go through the process of ‘coming out’ and, perhaps as a consequence, are often more in touch with who they are.

I believe that every one of us has a natural language within which we are uniquely brilliant. By living in that language you will be able to enjoy an easy success in whatever you choose to do. The next challenge is that not every natural language is highly valued in our society. We will address the question of how to make a living by being yourself later in Section III.

PREPARATION 4: WHAT IS MY POINT IN LIFE?

Native American Indians believe that everyone (and everything) has a special and unique purpose in life.

What a great idea.

I like to call this our ‘point’, after all if we do not have a point to our lives then we are pointless and that would be very disappointing. In our society the forces of

conformity and distraction conspire to disguise our point from us almost entirely. Many of us live our entire lives without ever working out why we are here, while others stumble across their point almost by accident.

Every day I hear stories about how people have found a new meaning in life, how they have shrugged off the shackles of their old life to dedicate themselves to their purpose. Often this discovery seems to be made through crisis, but I do not think that crisis is necessarily required. I believe that crisis is only a catalyst for people to take stock of their lives and begin to think more deeply about who they are and what they are doing. The crisis shakes them out of their passivity rather than actually being the cause of change.

How can you start the process of identifying your true purpose without waiting for a crisis?

Perhaps through the previous two steps you have been able to identify your natural language and your beliefs. If you have you are well on the way to identifying your purpose.

Natural languages and beliefs are assets, tools that you can direct in any way that you please. However, once you find it – your point – it will be easy to recognize since it will not be an option for you whether you pursue it or not. Your point will make such sense to you, be so easy for you to apply yourself to and be so natural for you to do that you will seriously wonder why you wasted all of those years doing anything else.

Your point has a gravitational pull for you. Once you stop fighting it and learn to trust yourself far from having to find your point you will not be able to stop if from finding you. In fact, it might be so obvious to you that initially you mistake it for something quite mundane. It may even be quite an anticlimax when you find it, but once you engage with it you will not be able to return to carrying out someone else's dysfunctional purpose.

The challenge here is that we are not generally conditioned to wait for things to happen. We are conditioned to search, strive, try and, above all, to be busy. It seems counter-intuitive that the search for our deepest meaning should involve sitting around and doing nothing. Our society likes us to do stuff and to buy stuff if we want to achieve anything. When dieting for example it is not enough to simply eat less and go for a walk. Our society has created several industries around dieting; diet food, diet exercise, diet clubs, diet publishing and so on.

Soul searching is about introspection and quiet contemplation, avoiding distraction and existing as a human being for a while rather than human doing. It is interesting that many of our wisest leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Aung San Suu Kyi, Vaclav Havel and Mahatma Gandhi have spent time in prison where they have had time for contemplation without distraction to develop their thinking and identity. We also need to remember that the power of figuring out your natural language and your point during contemplation can go the wrong way if it is founded on a dysfunctional world view; Hitler also spent time in prison. The force, as Obi Wan might say, does truly have a dark side.

I remember a constant impression of white noise in my life; I remember feeling that it would be really nice to be in prison or hospital for a bit, just to get the chance to figure things out. I've never been to prison although I did spend a week in hospital. As I mentioned earlier, I create my space on my bike. When I started cycling I found that I could not go as fast or as far as I thought I should. I identified my nutrition as a limiting factor and set about learning more about food and diet. Once I had made the necessary changes to my diet and eating habits I still found myself more limited than I felt I should be, and identified my mind as the limiting factor. I then went on a journey of understanding enough of my own psychology to successfully remove that limit.

In the course of a few years I went from being slightly overweight and heading for a fairly predictable 21st century lifestyle – of overeating, over drinking and being overweight – to cycling 700km over the Pyrenees in four and a half days.

There is no shortcut to identifying your point in life. However, there are a few questions that you might like to ponder on what might help you to find and articulate it.

- 1 What is your natural language?
- 2 Who do you want to do it for?
- 3 What is the outcome for them?
- 4 How are you going to do it?
- 5 Why?

*It seems counter-intuitive
that the search for our
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doing nothing*

Take your time. This is a big question and you will need to work hard at it. Give yourself permission to take the time to figure out the answer, this is a big chunk of your life we are talking about and it is well worth getting it right.

Making your point happen will be far, far harder if not impossible without good health. However you interpret it, success means very little if achieving it makes you sick. The following 'Actions' offer no guarantees that you will never get sick, but they tell the story of my journey to caring about my health, which facilitates my work today.

ACTION 1: EATING YOUR ENERGY

If you are going to do anything amazing you will need strength and endurance, a strong platform from which to do it. To do this you will need to make the most of your mind and body by feeding yourself with good fuels and preparing yourself with good exercise.

The saying goes ‘You are what you eat’ and it is true in a very literal sense. Only 2% of the atoms in your body are more than one year old. Every year our bodies are 98% rebuilt, cell by cell. This process is managed and regulated, by us, with mind-boggling dexterity without even noticing.

Clever filtration processes evaluate whatever you ingest, whenever you eat, drink and breathe. The bad stuff is expelled and the good stuff is sorted into fuel and building blocks. The fuel is used to power us through our chosen activities and the building blocks are used for building and maintenance.

Who manages all of this? You do. Somewhere in your mind there is active control of all of the wonderful systems that keep all of these systems functioning. So, as Deepak Chopra says in *Perfect Health*, the process of aging or getting sick is fundamentally a process of forgetting how to put ourselves back together again properly.

However, this miraculous subconscious system relies entirely on what our conscious mind chooses to put into the system in the first place. We can really help our building and maintenance system to do its job well by ensuring that what we put in is the best stuff for the job.

In my simplification of this massively complex process, fuels are things like oxygen, water, sugars and fats, in descending order of volume. Building blocks are the important minerals and proteins that should be in our food and drink.

A complete guide to nutrition is beyond the scope of this book. The intention of this section is to spark your interest and encourage you to take more care over what you buy and eat. There are plenty of good nutrition resources on the market. If you are serious and especially if you are taking up exercise, I recommend *Optimum Sports Nutrition* by Michael Colgan.

Here are the fuels in descending order.

Oxygen

If it was only available bottled, marketed and sold I am sure that we would take a great deal more care of our oxygen than we do. The quality of the air that we breathe is crucial to our health. Sadly most of us, including those living in the countryside, breathe very poor quality air. It is not easy to do anything about this but it is certainly worth bearing in mind when you choose where to live and when thinking about how much time to spend in or near heavy traffic.

You are not entirely subject to where you live, although Colgan says ‘You cannot hope to be a serious athlete and live in a polluted city!’ One easy step you can take is to practice breathing more deeply and actually using the full extent of your lungs.

Clients find it highly embarrassing when I require workshop groups to start the session by standing up and doing a couple of minutes of really deep breathing. But it has a serious point. Try it now. Stand up and really fill your lungs deeply and breathe. Can you feel the blood rushing to your head? Do you get a little buzz as if you had just had a really strong shot of coffee? That is your brain and body being properly oxygenated.

Any time you are feeling a little tired and lethargic or are about to embark on something complex or challenging, straighten your body as much as you can and breathe deeply. Give yourself the best instant hit you can and feel the power.

Water

This is the easy one. Drink loads. Because you need to drink so much of it, ideally your water should be clean – not just filtered but actually distilled. You can buy home distillers, which sit under the kitchen sink and give you plenty of really clean water. However, this may be taking things a little far for most people, including me.

If your lips, hands or the skin around your eyes are ever dry it may mean you are badly dehydrated. It takes several days of drinking too little for these symptoms to show, so if you have them regularly you may be chronically dehydrated.

The amount you need to drink is affected by circumstances:

- *The amount of exercise you do.* Heavy exercise requires about a litre per hour plus a litre in the hour before and another litre within the hour after you finish.
- *Humidity.* Humidity is a greater influence than heat. Air-conditioning also extracts moisture from the air, so if your workplace is air-conditioned you will need to drink more. In the tropics, where humidity is high, dehydration is much less of a problem than in a desert area at the same temperature.
- *The amount you drink.* When you drink too little your body adapts to some extent to cope with being dehydrated. The cost of this coping is that your body will constantly underperform. When you drink enough your body uses more water to make things work better. So one of the things you will notice as you drink more is that you need to drink even more.

As with most things there is a great deal of advice about how much water to drink and it is often contradictory. The best understanding that I can divine is that we need about one and a half litres per day as an absolute functional minimum – depending on body size. At this level your body is on the edge of compromising on performance, especially if you actually do anything physical. I weigh around 80kgs and on a normal day without exercise I will drink three litres of water.

It is important to note that we are talking about water here and not beer, tea or coffee. Nothing, except possibly some isotonic sports drinks, hydrates the way that water does, and many of our favourite drinks actually dehydrate us by being diuretics and making the water pass through faster. So the three litres is in addition to diuretics such as tea coffee or beer.

The other important element is timing. If you drink your three litres of water all in one go your system will be flooded and you will pee most of it out. Your body can only absorb about one litre per hour so more than that is pointless. And if you add anything to the water like sugar or juice it is likely to slow that absorption down.

And I said water was the simple one ...

Sugars

Strictly speaking, sugars are simple carbohydrates that only give very short bursts of energy and play havoc with our insulin system by constantly engaging it to manage the sugar spikes in our modern diet. In fact our modern diet, high in simple sugars is responsible for the huge growth in the incidence of diabetes. So actually simple sugars/carbohydrates are not really what you want at all.

What you really want are complex carbohydrates like rice, cereals, potatoes, fruits and vegetables, pasta and bread. These give you energy and are the primary fuel for regular activity, and especially for endurance exercise. Your reserves will usually see you through one to two hours of exercise at which point, if you have not taken some more on board, you will hit what runners call 'the wall'.

'The wall' is also something you can experience in a busy day at the office, and many people who routinely skip breakfast find themselves lethargic after lunch, because their body is prioritizing digesting lunch because it urgently needs some fuel.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day from an energy point of view. Make sure you have a good one of fruit, cereals and bread to power you through your day. From an energy point of view it is generally better to top up with snacks (fruit, not biscuits!) and have smaller meals so that your blood sugar never dips.

Complex carbohydrates should make up about a third of your diet, or more if you are doing endurance exercises like running, cycling, swimming or walking and the less modified or tampered with they are the better. Processed foods and refined wheat lose their energy and minerals and can play havoc with the stomach. Wheat allergy is incredibly common these days. What people usually mean by wheat allergy is intolerance to refined wheat and, often, the symptoms are the feeling of being bloated, and flatulence. So wherever possible go for the unrefined, whole-grain breads, wholewheat pasta, brown rice and so on.

Fats

We need fats in our diet; what we do not need are saturated fats. Saturated fats are the bad fats found in dairy products, meats and fried food. Good fats are found in extra virgin olive oil and fish.

I have lived for years without buying butter or margarine. Try spreading your jam or whatever directly onto your toast – you will be surprised at how little you miss the butter. Use extra virgin olive oil in your cooking – the ‘extra’ means it is unprocessed.

For meat, stick to low fat options such as chicken and turkey. Game can also be a good alternative – things like venison and rabbit. Pork, beef and lamb are all much higher in fat, unless you go for the very highest quality, lowest fat, lean cuts or mince.

Learn to read food labels. If you want to have less than 20% of your body made up of fat you should aim for a diet which is less than 20% fat BY CALORIFIC INTAKE. In the UK and most other places fat is labelled as a percentage of weight – not of calories.

For example a soup might be only 1.2 grams of fat per 100grams – only 1.2% fat you think? Wrong. As a rule of thumb you should multiply the fat content by ten and then calculate as a percentage of the energy in calories (usually labelled kcal). In our soup example, 1.2 grams of fat multiplies into 12 calories of fat and as a percentage of the total of 57 kcal, that is more like 21% – not bad, but not as good as you thought.

20% body fat is a good target for men but is too low for women. Women have a higher percentage of body fat than men and 20% would be seriously low for a woman where 22–25% is more suitable.

Building blocks

Minerals and proteins are the building blocks. You need to have minerals and proteins to maintain the annual atom replacement programme. Without them, the programme is compromised and you age and get sick.

Good sources of protein are meat, fish, nuts, pulses and eggs – but remember to balance the fat when choosing meat. The best way to get your minerals in is through fruit and vegetables with as little preparation or processing as possible. The more fruit and vegetables are cooked or peeled, the more of the vital goodness is lost.

Not all fruit and vegetables (or fish or meat) are equal

Minerals in plants are absorbed in the microscopic quantities that we need from the soil. It takes about three years for crops to deplete soil of minerals if the same or similar crops are grown on the same land.

I remember when I was brought up in Suffolk, in a wonderful place surrounded by fields. At school I was taught about crop rotation and fields laying fallow every third year. I thought this was a great idea, because I would be able to go and play in the cropless fields. I waited and waited. It seems that in the breadbasket of England, education had yet to catch up with intensive agriculture.

When chemical farming was popularized just after World War II it seemed like a miracle. It was found that if you poured nitrogen and phosphates onto the soil you could dramatically increase yields and get rid of that unprofitable fallow year. The crops looked great, bigger than ever, it was truly a miracle. In addition, the chemical companies had found someone to buy all of those chemicals that they had just lost their biggest client for – the armaments factories. Since then many more chemicals have been developed for farming.

The problem is that after three years or so the minerals in the soil are still gone and the only minerals going into the crops are the ones in the fertilizers. The only way to get all of that good stuff back into the food is to care for the soil properly taking the time to plough in manure, rotating with different crops each year and letting the soil rest every third year.

The only commercial food that you can be confident is grown using these methods today is organic food. Which is why if you want to do the best for your health you have to choose to eat organic wherever possible. It is worth noting that the Soil Association believes that it takes two years for the soil to recover from the damage done by intensive farming, which is why it takes so long to gain organic certification.

For meat and fish the arguments are, if anything, stronger. An intensively farmed chicken puts on 2 kilos of weight on only 2.5 kilos of feed in its pathetic 42-day life. Chickens, other livestock and farmed fish are routinely injected or fed with antibiotics – not to keep them healthy but because it makes them grow faster. In the 1950s a farmer in the US, who was feeding his chicks on a waste material from the production of an antibiotic called aureomycin thinking it might offer disease prevention benefits, noticed that the chicks were growing far faster than normal. The use of antibiotics as growth promoters rapidly created a new industry and spread around the world of intensive agriculture.

All of this is supposedly to make food cheaper, but of course the massive cost of BSE, foot-and-mouth, salmonella, e-coli etc. are not reflected in supermarket prices. We still pay the costs, indirectly, through our taxes. If these costs (plus the costs of cleaning up polluted rivers and the healthcare costs) were internalized to intensive farming it would be massively more expensive than organic. Unfortunately they are not. So organic foods still appear to be more expensive.

Cost and availability are still issues for organic food in many areas. However, your health, and that of your family, must be one of your absolute baseline priorities. And for most people reading this book it is not a choice between food or shelter. It is a choice to buy slightly more expensive food or that CD/pint of beer/pack of cigarettes/cinema ticket. My recommendation is stay healthy, have more energy and spend the extra on buying organic.

If any of those reports that say ‘traditionally’ (how can they use that word when referring to intensive, industrialized agriculture) farmed food is just as good for you as organic food, just remember to ask – who is paying for the research? Ten-to-one

it is one of the vested interests. As John Humphrys says in his book *The Great Food Gamble*, ‘The Thoughtful Sceptics say there is not enough evidence (that organic food is better for you). They have a point; much more research needs to be done. But there is a powerful lobby opposed to organic farming who have no interest in evidence or research (which shows that organic food is better for you). That lobby includes the vested interests: the agrochemical companies who sell the pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, the biotech companies who want to sell their genetically modified seeds; the Barley Barons who have made small fortunes from farming subsidies; the politicians who are afraid to admit they have got it wrong over the years and are afraid to upset the big vested interests.’

Supplements

Most nutritionists say that for the average person a balanced diet is all that is required and that supplements are not necessary. However, if you have got this far I hope that you have absolutely no ambition to be average. I hope that your ambition is to be extraordinary and exceptional. I believe that a few supplements can help you achieve this.

When you are buying mineral supplements it is worth bearing in mind that these are building blocks and, as such, it will take six months of regular consumption for them to be fully effective. After some experimentation I have come to what I believe is a good compromise.

Each day we take:

- 1 gram Vitamin C (for the immune system, take up to 4 grams when you have a cold);
 - 1 multi-vitamin and mineral supplement;
 - 1 gram fish oil; and
 - 500mg glucosamine (for joints, especially if you are exercising a lot).
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It is also worth bearing in mind that it is not possible to patent vitamins or minerals. The pharmaceutical companies hate the way that they are sold as health products but do not have to go through the same stringent testing as their chemicals. It is also worth bearing in mind that the pharmaceutical companies fund many of the nutritionists – either directly or via research grants – who are put in front of the media to say that supplements are unnecessary.

All of this might lead you to question why the EU are so keen to change the laws on the sale of vitamins and minerals and drastically reduce the quantities in which they can be sold. According to British MEP Lord Stockton in a letter to Prime Minister Tony Blair ‘This directive has nothing to do with safety and everything to do with the commercial benefits to a few big European pharmaceutical companies.’

You will notice the benefits of good fuelling right away, you’ll have more energy, a greater ability to deal with situations and, after six months of taking good building blocks, you will know that your body is ready to take on more, and is more reliable when you push it hard.

However, vital as it is, physical fuel and exercise is not enough. We need to nourish and exercise both our mind and our body.

ACTION 2: EXERCISE YOUR MIND

Finding and living in your natural language and knowing and living your point in life is fresh, organic breakfast, lunch and dinner to your mind and soul. The energy you recover by simply being yourself rather than pouring energy into maintaining an ego is startling and that energy can be used to multiply itself and give you even more.

In our evolutionary upbringing for three million years we developed to be highly active. Our bodies have developed highly sophisticated systems for turning our fuels into three basic energy systems for different levels of activity.

You might characterize them as stroll, steady and scramble.

When we are in stroll mode our body is working at a very low level and can use its most efficient slow burning fuel – fat. Fat is used to fuel us while we walk or sit around the TV/camp fire. In our evolutionary upbringing fat was highly prized by our bodies as it is the fuel that will keep you going if there are long gaps between successful hunts. It is no coincidence that high fat foods, such as chocolate, are the ones we crave when we are feeling low.

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When we are in steady mode such as running, cycling or swimming, the energy source shifts progressively towards using sugars and carbohydrates. The sugars are stored in our blood and kidneys and combine with an increasing amount of oxygen – breathing becomes heavier as exercise intensity increases, which is why it is known as aerobic exercise. This energy source can be used for one to two hours, depending on intensity, before it is exhausted, when you ‘hit the wall’.

In scramble mode we need our muscles to access fuel fast, and our stored fat and sugars cannot get there quickly enough. This is for very short bursts of extreme effort lasting only a few seconds. Here, we use energy stored in our muscles and do not even need oxygen to use it, which is why it is known as anaerobic exercise. When you lift something heavy you will often hold your breath as you do it and catch up on the breathing later. Working at this level is extremely stressful for your body. Before you can do this with any regularity you need to be very fit and to include significant recovery afterwards.

In modern life there is less call for sprinting after prey or away from predators or even for long walks in search of food or water. Much of modern life is led with our minds at full stretch and our bodies passive. This is not how we have evolved to be. When our bodies are passive for any length of time they tend to go into decline. Our ability to use our fuels, muscles and organs diminishes. To keep ourselves at optimum performance it is vital that we exercise several times a week and stay fit.

Ideally this exercise should be in the steady mode probably taking the form of fast walking, running, cycling or swimming, some sport or gym activity. Doing something largely on your own has the advantage that you can combine it with your introspection, but it can require a higher level of motivation to keep it going.

If you are not fit it can take a great deal of motivation and persistence to get fit in the first place. Once you have got fit you will be very reluctant to let it slip and have to start again from scratch.

When I talk to people about regular exercise they often say that I must be very lucky to have the time to exercise, implying that if they had the time, they would. This is nonsense. Like so many other decisions in life it is about priorities. If you make exercise a priority you will make time for it. I spent seven years using commuting time as exercise time, going from one side of London to the other by bike. At its most extreme I did Twickenham to Orpington (21 miles each way) for three months.

Today, although I no longer live in London, I use a folding bike on my weekly visits there to make sure I do not waste the opportunity for exercise. I also save money by avoiding tubes and taxis and now with the advent of congestion charging, Londoners have no excuse at all not to get out on their bikes. Although it does still take some practice to get used to the traffic and find the best routes.

How many journeys do you make that could be done on foot or by bike? How much time do you spend sitting in front of TV or in the pub which could be spent exercising? How much ineffective time do you spend at work which could be spent getting fitter so that you would have more energy to do your work better? If you prioritize exercise you will make time for it. If you do not feel that you can make those choices then you need to ask 'who is in control of your life?'

ACTION 3: TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

As we have discovered, much in our upbringing and our societal conditioning is about encouraging us to conform and to be lead rather than to lead our own lives. In the 'Age of Empire' it suited the leaders of the country of industry and of the military to educate the masses to be followers and not leaders. The elite would be educated to be leaders and thus the class system would be maintained.

As *The Hitch-Hikers Guide to the Galaxy* says on the subject, 'In these enlightened days, of course, no one believes a word of it.'

Finding your natural language, learning to be honest with yourself, understanding the difference between perception and reality, identifying your point, eating your energy and exercising your mind are all steps along a journey of discovery and they are preparation for making the change.

The change is when you decide to 'come out' for yourself, and only be who you really are in all circumstances and situations. In practice, the change will probably take the form of a growing confidence over a period of weeks or months, but at some point you will realize that you have the confidence to be yourself in more and more situations, and that the time is coming to close off the situations in which you still feel uncomfortable being yourself.

It is time to come out as yourself.

ACTION 4: AVOIDING DISTRACTION AND INSPIRING CHANGE

A great deal of the mass media consumed today seems like distraction at best; at worst, some kind of remotely administered mass anaesthetic. The concept of weapons of mass distraction first occurred to me on a truly awful charter flight. Throughout the flight the cabin crew kept the passengers largely distracted by constant messages, entertainment, food and drink; anything to keep us from complaining.

Having identified this phenomenon once I began to realize that it is in fact all around me. TV entertainment (particularly soap operas), newspapers, fashion, magazines, restaurants, many films, sport and so on. All of these can be distractions designed to keep us from thinking too deeply and asking too many difficult questions, challenging our leaders, or actually doing anything to change the situation.

Your tolerance to distraction and your ability to identify inspiration will change as you travel this journey. To start with, inspiration will be harder to find and most things will be distractions. As you learn and begin to become more aware so inspiration will start to leap out at you from quite unlikely places.

We pay more to be distracted than we do to anyone except the government and the bank. Compare the amount we pay sports and pop stars with the amount that we pay to educators or healthcare workers, for example.

In *The Matrix*, Neo feels that the world is not quite as it seems and spends his time searching cyberspace for answers. His search leads him to Morpheus who shows him that the world he experiences is, in fact, a computer generated dreamworld designed to distract humanities minds while the computers milk their bodies for energy. An analogy for our times, perhaps?

Once you start to look at distraction a bit more carefully you realize that it is actually far more highly valued in our society than almost anything else. We pay more to be distracted than we do to anyone except the government and the bank. Compare the amount we pay sports and pop stars with the amount that we pay to educators or healthcare workers, for example.

The government are tremendous distracters in their own right and will often use distraction as a way of diverting attention from things they would prefer that we did not notice. Whenever a 'scandal' is clogging up media time you can bet that something more interesting is going virtually unreported.

The alternative to distraction is inspiration, and although some distraction is perfectly justifiable I suggest that there is often a good deal of opportunity to introduce more inspiration into our lives and reduce the amount of distraction.

There is plenty of inspiration in films and books and if you are selective there is also a surprising amount of inspiration on TV, radio and even in newspapers. It is just a question of being conscious of the difference. In order to facilitate your journey, consume as much inspiration as you can get your hands on and avoid distraction.

I love to find wisdom in movies, even some quite unlikely ones. Good examples are:

- *Dead Poets Society* is about freedom of thought.
- *Shawshank Redemption* is about persistence in the face of the establishment when you know you are right.
- *Groundhog Day* is about the way life throws lessons at us.
- *The Matrix* is about the nature of the system and about our unlimited potential if we choose it.
- *Fight Club* (if you are feeling brave) is a harsh wake-up call and reality check with a great deal of wisdom.

Books that have inspired me include:

- *Ishmael, My Ishmael* and *The Story of B* by Daniel Quinn. Reading *Ishmael* really encouraged me to look at the world differently and to keep asking questions.
 - *The Alchemist* by Paul Coelho reminded me that I already have what I am searching for and the best place to start looking is inside.
 - *And We Are Doing It* by JT Ross Jackson helped me to understand the nature of the system and that there are alternatives.
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- *The Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams covers just about everything.
- *Perfect Health* by Deepak Chopra helped me to understand that my health is my responsibility and my problem.
- *Optimum Sports Nutrition* by Dr Michael Colgan includes all of the nutrition education I should have had at school.
- *The Invitation* by Oriah Mountain Dreamer – check with yourself and see how you are doing.
- *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* by Richard Bach reveals the nature of conformity and the battle for individuality.

Once you start to focus on it you will be able to find wisdom and inspiration almost everywhere. Even on trashy TV and the in the news.

Finding inspiration is the search for new ideas. In spite of appearances there is no one right way to do anything. There are always options and alternatives (including not doing it at all). When you are looking for inspiration you are looking for alternatives to the current way that you do things, like make a living. Finding alternatives that work for you will mean that you no longer have to do things that create a tension for you.

Taking conscious control of the media you consume is an important step. Whilst you are anaesthetized by the distraction and accepting the solutions offered by the media you will find it difficult to come up with your own solutions.

ACTION 5: EDITING YOUR ADDRESS BOOK

We pick up friends as we pass through life, at school, in jobs and so on. Very often we maintain friendships out of habit and out of a need to be liked that stems from our lack of self-confidence. However, our friendships can become limiting and hold us back.

When I was facing up to changing my life I made absolutely certain that the only person I discussed it with would support and contribute to my thinking. I did not mention it to anyone else until it was a *fait accompli*. Afterwards it became clear who my friends were. Although it can be a bit scary to edit your address book if your friends do not support you in being yourself, you may want to ask yourself if they are really your friends.

Taking conscious control of your friendships, especially during your time of change, ensures that you minimize the confusion of conflicting messages and that you spend your time and energy moving towards your point rather than being deflected from it.

ACTION 6: CHANGING HABITS

If you have spent years not truly being yourself, starting to be yourself will involve changing your behaviour. I often think that there is a difference between doing and being, for example the difference between dieting and losing weight. Dieting is a process of reading books or magazines and being fussy about what you eat. Losing weight is about eating less and doing more exercise.

In every situation you have a choice. It may not always seem like it but you are in control of your life and you are the one who chooses to do this or compromise on that. The first step to change is to understand that you are already making choices, even if those choices are not always conscious.

By bringing all of those decisions up to a conscious level and challenging yourself as to why you do, or do not do, certain things you can begin to understand yourself and the decisions you take and to start making conscious choices.

Whenever you are facing a decision your answer will be within you. Knowing your point and your natural language gives you some easy criteria:

- Will this help me to realize my point?
- Is this within the scope of my natural language?

If it passes this rational test you can then listen to your intuition and interpret your feelings and the clues that are around you. You should find that the business of making balanced decisions becomes easier.

With good balanced decision making comes the opportunity to change things in your life. Most of us will make resolutions that we fail to keep at some point or another. There are a number of reasons for this failure: it was not the right resolution, or time, or you set yourself a target that you knew you were unlikely to achieve to reinforce your self image of inadequacy, or it was down to simple peer pressure.

Do not beat yourself up for failing to stick to resolutions, it is all part of the searching process as you search for things that you can stick to. It is far better to keep trying new resolutions than to give up and stop making the effort. As long as you keep at it you will, at some point, start to find that you can do what you commit to.

When you make resolutions using balanced decision making you are far more likely to stick to them because they are taken wholeheartedly and with a meaning and place in your life. This means that you can make real change happen.

It can even be good to make changes just to test this theory, to prove that you can and build confidence. Try giving something up – coffee, TV, whatever. This is good preparation for making real changes as part of a coherent plan, rather than in isolation.

ACTION 7: MAKING YOUR PLAN

'If you don't design your own life plan, chances are you'll fall into someone else's plan. And guess what they have planned for you? Not much.'

Jim Rohn

Frequently when I talk about life planning with people their initial reaction is that planning your life is rather cynical and precludes the possibility of serendipity.

My response is that the difference between planning and not planning is like the difference between going for a walk and going on a journey. When you go for a walk you can enjoy your surroundings and be guided by the path but it is no good if you actually want to get somewhere specific. If you want to get somewhere in your life it is like a journey. You will need to understand your starting situation and your destination and need to identify the critical points in between. Although a life may contain many walks, overall it should be a journey and not just a series of walks.

Enjoying yourself involves being where you want to be, with the people you want to be with, doing what you want to be doing as much of the time as possible. I do not believe that this can be achieved without planning.

The other response to planning is more worrying. Many people I have spoken to about this see planning in the context of mortality. They see planning as futile because we cannot predict when we will die. They believe that rather than wasting energy and emotion planning we should simply enjoy the time that we have now and not worry about tomorrow until we are there.

I believe that this is not only a fundamental misconception but it is also potentially self-fulfilling. With no purpose and no plan, what would be the point in having a long and healthy life?

Enjoying yourself involves being where you want to be, with the people you want to be with, doing what you want to be doing as much of the time as possible. I do not believe that this can be achieved without planning.

In any case planning is very simple.

- 1 Know where you are.
- 2 Know your destination (at least roughly).
- 3 Plan the general route.
- 4 Plan the initial part of the route in detail.

In the course of reading this book I hope you have started to understand your current situation and that you have been able to identify your ultimate destination – your point.

Now it is time to get the hang of planning and work out how you are going to achieve your point. One of the other concerns that people raise about planning is to ask what happens when something occurs that invalidates the plan? Easy. You modify the plan to take account of the changed circumstances, or you make a new one.

Start by writing your starting situation and your destination down on Post-it notes and stick them on a large empty wall, with a significant gap between them, where you can see them every day. Put the beginning on the left and the end on the right. Think of the gap between the two as time and divide it by the number of months or years over which your plan lasts.

Identify some of the critical points between the two. Write them on more Post-its and stick them up on the wall in between the beginning and end and try to put them into a sensible order with a reasonable time gap between them.

Now go to the first gap between the start and the first critical point and do the same again. Fill in the gap with actions and critical points. Keep playing with this, moving the notes around, putting new ones up and taking others down, over hours, days or months, as long as you feel you need to (or can bear having your wall covered in sticky paper). Once you feel it looks like a plan take the notes down in order

and put them somewhere you can refer to. I like to copy each note to a PowerPoint slide so that I can still see them in order, add new ones easily, or delete them or move them around. If you prefer not to use a computer you could achieve the same effect by writing each one on a sheet of A4 and putting them into a ring binder.

Play with the medium. Use different coloured notes to identify targets or dependencies (things that have to be done before you can do the next thing). Use different coloured pens to denote conditions that will have to be achieved or ideas and so on. You can also identify dependencies and dependents (things that cannot be done until after a particular action has been completed) by writing them in the top left and right corners respectively so that for each given action you know what needs to be done before and after it.

I find that once I have made a plan I rarely need to refer to it. I keep the critical points in my mind and generally do them or adapt them. Others prefer to track their plan diligently, entering dates when they achieve goals or keeping it up to date to reflect changes that occur. Do whatever works for you. In the first place, the important thing is to have a destination and a plan for how to get there. The next most important thing is to act on it.

ACTION 8: COMING OUT AND BEING YOURSELF

At some point on this journey you will come to a point where the cohesion that holds your old life together is no longer strong enough to hold back your energy. When you reach this point you will have to consider how you are going to tell the world.

To me, telling the world felt like a huge challenge to overcome.

In reality, it was a bit of an anticlimax.

The world did not end; there was no huge earthquake. Everything continued pretty much as before except that I knew with a quiet confidence that I would never, ever feel the need compromise my soul for anyone.

As I wrote in the Preface, the way I told the world was in an e-mail to 4000 people, many of whom I did not know. I don't think it is necessary to be that public, although I will be very happy to publish your story on the Authentic Business Web site – www.authenticbusiness.co.uk.

However I do think it is important to make some sort of public commitment to say this is who I am and this is what I stand for.

There will be those who criticize you. This is their problem, not yours. I received criticism from both friends and some of the 4000 people I had written to. I realized that those people are totally entitled to their opinion but it did not need to have any effect on me because for each one who did criticize there were twenty who offered total support.

I quickly learned not to take criticism personally and realized that generally their views were born out of their own fears, insecurities and regrets. I realized that when people criticize it is usually as a result of something that they identify, consciously or subconsciously, in themselves, rather than a problem that they have with you or what you are doing.

The reason it is important to make the public statement is that once it is out there, you no longer need to feel apologetic about who you are. You can be proud. Proud of who you are and what you are good at. Proud of your past, your future and your now. You can state, with openness and pride, what you are good at and what you are not good at. You no longer need to compare yourself to others, or wonder or worry about what people think of you.

You are you. Proud. Unique. Brilliant.

'This is not the end. This is not the beginning of the end. This is the end of the beginning.'

Winston Churchill
