THE Simple Truth

The High Achievers Guide to Peace and Prosperity

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Introduction

We have all heard it said that “less is more.” In the complex world we live in today, this truth needs to be revived and embraced in many of our lives.

We are often confounded because we attempt to live an unnecessarily complex existence in opposition to the very simple truths that ultimately dictate our lives and our destinies.

Albert Einstein once said, “Everything should be made as simple as possible...but not simpler.” Einstein’s conclusion particularly resonates because here was a person who is well respected and acknowledged, yet someone to whom we refuse to listen. Why is it that we don’t pay attention to his words, and the words of many great men and women who have discovered that, by deconstructing our perceived views of the world into simple terms, we will eventually be able to achieve the peace and fulfillment we are all looking for?

Consider how often you have personally wrestled with the meaning of life. How many times in your quest have you started down a path only to be tormented once again with questions that have no answer? I know I have, and I’ve reached the conclusion that, until we are willing to let go and accept the Four Simple Truths that govern the outcome and consequences in our lives, we are destined to be frustrated and unfulfilled in our pursuit of meaning and achievement.

An unhappy and unfulfilled life is often the fate of the people I consider to be High Achievers.

To better introduce my purpose in writing this book, I’ll first describe High Achievers as individuals who are in a constant state of dissatisfaction – never pausing to enjoy the fruits of their labor or savor the essential moments of their lives. Instead, they continue an unfulfilling and unending pursuit of the next big thing. For High Achievers, successes cannot live up to their lofty anticipations of “true success” or satisfy their ultimate ambitions to achieve “greatness.” In many situations, they are all but blind to the good in their life, focusing instead on negatives and shortcomings.
As a result, High Achievers often put tremendous pressure on themselves and are even reluctant or unwilling to accept praise or recognition for their achievements. Haunted by a personal conviction that they are destined to fail, obsessing over the inadequacies in their lives and in those around them, yet driven by an overwhelming desire to achieve greatness, they have no time to live life. High Achievers are consumed by visions of the future while, in the present, negative perceptions of the world and themselves control their thoughts and actions.

The High Achiever comes from all walks of life. Contrary to what the term seems to imply, a High Achiever is not necessarily successful. In fact, many never do achieve the success or status associated with the world’s stereotype of “achievement,” which includes money, power, and love. They are often called Type A Personalities, but that term is too limiting, for not all Type A’s are mired in the self-defeating cycles I associate with the High Achiever Syndrome. Type A Personalities often have spiritual resources beyond their agitated personality quirks.

The person I am describing may stumble on successes of one sort or another. But mostly they are enslaved, and will never achieve satisfaction, peace, and joy.

Life is a learning experience. Every day we are presented with opportunities to grow and change for the better. I have personally experienced the peace, joy, and contentment that come from attending to and attuning my attitudes and perceptions to the Simple Truths, which I will talk about in these pages. I have felt the despair, loneliness, and discontent that result when these Truths are unacknowledged, and I have seen my life turn around once I was able to, not just embrace them, but apply their lessons to my life.

This book is not scientific in nature nor is it based on extensive research. Instead, it is a work inspired by my experiences and observations of human behavior. The very same experiences and behaviors have been documented and discussed for centuries. My purpose is to present insights to help stimulate thoughts and reflections based on your own life: on your successes and failures, strengths and shortcomings. It is my hope that my own beliefs will be personally renewing for you, and inspire you to move past whatever may be holding you back from a fulfilling life.
believe our lives can be grouped into three major phases. The first is the development phase, characterized by experimentation with, and exploration of, basic questions about who and what we are in relation to the rest of the world. In this phase, we are forming our thoughts and opinions as they relate to choosing a future path to follow in life.

During this phase, there are conscious and subconscious experiences that shape our view of ourselves, the world, and how we perceive and relate to both. Many standard psychological theories correlate self-esteem – as well as the ability of an individual to develop intimate relationships or attachments – with the experiences that people have as infants with their primary care-givers. As we grow, our self-perceptions are highly influenced by our need to receive love from our parents. As these standard psychological theories maintain, the core issues that keep us stuck in negative self-defeating behaviors and situations as adults can be traced back to this need, and how it was or was not met.

Second is the accomplishment phase. During this phase, we put to work the ideals, thoughts, and experiences developed in the first phase in order to attain specific objectives. This phase is typically characterized by life-defining endeavors, such as building a career, a family, or establishing a significant place in a community. It is the period when we move from dependence on our parents and support systems to a self-sustaining sense of control over our own destiny.

Third is the self-actualization phase. At this point, the individual starts to ask the great philosophical question: “What is life all about?” In most cases, this phase comes after the accomplishment or pursuit of some ideal as the individual now questions if all the legwork, heartache, and headaches were worth it. Depending on the answers, we then determine how to proceed with the rest of our life.

While this overall pattern may not define everyone’s experience, it appears to be consistent with
those who fall into the High Achiever category. In my experience, there were very clear demar-
cations between these three phases as a result of life-altering events. For others, the transition
from one phase to the next may not be clear. There may not be recognizable delineations until the
whole is viewed in retrospect.

I, for one, was unable or unwilling to accept the Simple Truths until I reached the third phase,
while I experienced the transitions between phases quite dramatically. Phase One lasted until I
was twenty-two years of age. I then radically transitioned to Phase Two, where I remained through
age forty.

I am currently in Phase Three. Here is my story.
CHAPTER TWO
MY STORY

Phase One: The Development Phase

I was born in Houston, Texas to parents who were both High Achievers. My father was a
High Achiever in academics and business, my mother in church and homemaking. I grew up in
an environment that supported, rewarded, and demanded achievement. It’s irrelevant whether
this demand was actually made by my parents, or was simply an inference on my part. It was the
impression that was made on me and therefore the one that shaped my world view, sense of self-
worth, and attitude.

From the earliest age I remember associating the feelings of love and acceptance with doing some-
thing well. Whether it was behaving correctly, excelling in school, or performing athletics, there
was a clear sense of reinforcement for what I perceived to be achievement in any category. It soon
became clear that the one area of my life that was crucial to constant positive reinforcement was
sports. Here I excelled at a very early age, and received attention and praise for my achievements.
Whether on the court or the field, I was clearly dominant compared to other kids my age.

It is all well and good to get praise for athletic prowess and feel pride as a result. But when that
drive to excel begins to dominate your thoughts, you focus entirely on this one area. When you
begin to associate love and acceptance as obtainable only through superior athletic endeavor, you
have the makings of an adult disaster.

My family moved to California when I was twelve. There I continued to excel in sports and found
even more opportunities to stand out as an athlete. But the insurmountable challenge I ultimately
faced was that my genetic athletic abilities were simply not supported by genetic physical traits.
As a senior in high school, weighing in at 165 pounds and standing five-foot eight, I was convinced
a career as a football player must some how be in my future. Yet with so much natural talent, there
was no way to control my size to fit my ambition. My dreams fell short (no pun intended) and I
reached a tragic conclusion: based on my inability to change myself physically, I concluded that failure is completely out of our control. Determined, and headstrong, I continued to play football through college, with little team success. The frustration mounted.

By my senior year in college I was an internal wreck. I had just completed my final year of football as team captain with a losing record, my fiancé had just broken off our engagement, and my grades were anything but stellar. I found myself slipping into extreme escapist mode, seizing any opportunity to get drunk and disappear from my current reality. As this destructive behavior continued, the people close to me became concerned. Ever stubborn, I ignored their comments, certain that I was not only ok but that I could figure out my life without their help.

Until the night my life would change forever.

I was playing a drinking game with a couple of fraternity brothers in a remote house off campus. We were about three hours into the game and fairly wasted when there was a frantic knock at the door. The voice behind the door I recognized as my girlfriend’s, but she sounded unusually distressed. When I opened the door, and she told me I needed to call home immediately, I knew something was terribly wrong. She would not tell me what.

Intoxicated and confused, I called my parents. My dad answered the phone in a tone of voice I had never heard before. He asked if it was really me he was talking too. Of course, I told him, who else would it be? He told me not to move and he was on his way to get me. When he told me why, I dropped to the floor and began to scream uncontrollably.

Earlier that day I had lent my car to my best friend. He was headed to his old neighborhood to meet up with some buddies and they were going to circle back with us later that evening. In my present condition, I hadn’t realized they were way over due. Apparently they were also highly intoxicated and, while speeding, missed a turn. They ran head-on into a telephone pole at 100+ miles per hour. Everyone was killed instantly, including my best friend who had been driving.

My father’s particular distress began after the accident when the sheriff informed them that their son had just been killed in an automobile accident. My friend had forgotten his wallet, and my wallet was in the glove compartment of the car. We look similar, and they assumed he was me.
The days and months that followed were a blur, filled with drunken nights that had no beginning or end. I was in so much pain and so confused that I am still not sure how I managed to graduate from college. Once I did, I went straight into rehab.

**Phase Two: The Accomplishment Phase**

My whole world changed when I went through treatment. I realized the root of my destructive behavior and grew to accept and understand that I didn’t have to live that way anymore. It was a rebirth and I was given a new chance at life. I could now achieve the things I knew I was destined to accomplish. Most important, I was no longer encumbered by the alcohol and other mood- and mind-altering substances that had been holding me back. I had experienced pain but had learned to heal and was determined to stop escaping. I was ready to embrace the world as a new and exciting adventure.

With this new lease on life there came a new way of behaving. I became kind and optimistic in stark contrast to the deceitful and manipulating person I had been while under the influence. I learned to treat people differently, which led to more positive opportunities in my life. Eventually I went back to school to study psychology.

I spent the next five years working with people in health care and received my master’s degree in psychology. I got married and, to support my new family as well as pay for my studies, I worked three jobs. To be sure, I was altogether over-extended. But I didn’t mind for the most part because I was on the road to success. In my mind I was living the life I thought I was meant to live.

Things changed when I was unable to make enough money to cover the bills. I was always under pressure, often self-imposed, to make more money so I could live the life I thought I was supposed to want. Ambition drove me away from working with people to the more lucrative side of health care, growing the facility as a business.

I became involved in a venture backed start-up company that implemented psychiatric treatment programs in hospitals. I came in on the ground floor, originally as a clinician, but quickly moved into operations to help build the organization. My desire to achieve, combined with my need for money, proved a very powerful motivation propelling me to success in this enterprise over the next four years.
By now I was completely committed to business and creating wealth. I became interested in running my own show and, in 1994, found an opportunity to buy a business, taking a strong ownership position with a group of investors. I had no idea what a toll it would ultimately take on my life. I spent the next six years obsessed with the success of this enterprise. Initially it was exciting and invigorating. The thought of turning a distressed company into a vibrant and dynamic organization was compelling.

But as I achieved financial success and security, my marriage failed, my relationships with close friends soured, and even my health deteriorated. I could not realize it at the time, but I was slowly slipping back into the same destructive and self-centered behavior that I thought I had eradicated years earlier.

I was miserable and it showed. But I was unaware of how my personal misery was harming myself and those I cared for most. It was another negative cycle, disguised and undecipherable, but it would have to be confronted and overcome if I were to ever experience peace in my life.

Ultimately I sold the business, creating the wealth I had so desperately desired and sacrificed so much for. But the divorce (soon after the sale) created tremendous heartache in my family. I was a broken man yet again.

So I began once more the process of healing and self-awareness that drives my life today.

**Phase Three: The Self-Actualization Phase**

It is easy to get distracted from the things that are important in life. Even when they seem to be so clear in our heads, it is very difficult to actualize the positive thoughts that lead to a more fulfilled life. During the divorce, my whole world was in turmoil. I was on an emotional downward spiral, reeling from years of neglecting my personal and emotional needs. Simply put, I was suffering because I could not grasp or live the Four Simple Truths.

This painful time was made worse by my inability to think clearly and deal with the tremendous amount of hurt and emotion that shadowed every corner of my life. Most staggering of all was to realize how unhappy I had become, even though I’d been on the path to success and fulfillment. How could all my values been so askew? How could I have simply been wrong about everything?
Financially I had momentary security but I knew I’d eventually have to work again. I just had to find a new way that wouldn’t take such a toll in the future.

During this time of healing and self-realization, I began the spiritual and emotional exploration that has led me to the beliefs and understandings I have today. These values have been forged through time and experience, through trial and error, and, most important, through honest self appraisal. It is something I could not have done on my own – and, I believe, neither can you. To reach a meaningful level of self-actualization, and to determine the steps that will take your life in the right direction, you need the personal support and understanding of those High Achievers – people just like you who have been similarly tested and who have ultimately embraced the Four Simple Truths of life.

There are those who have lived your pain. Now they live in a world of both personal peace and prosperity. These people can help guide you so that you too achieve that precious harmony.
CHAPTER THREE

SIMPLE TRUTH NUMBER ONE

As We Think In Our Hearts, So We Are

Simply put, our lives are shaped by our minds. What we think deep inside, where no one is looking, is who we are and who we will continue to be, unless we learn to alter these thoughts. This Simple Truth is certainly not a revelation made to me alone. It has been discussed for centuries. Leaders of major religions and philosophical schools have returned to this idea, this Truth, time and time again in their teachings.

What we think, how we think, and what we choose to nurture in our minds – and subsequently in our hearts – define who we are at a fundamental level. As such, you are the maker of your own fate. The life you lead is dictated by the thoughts you choose to encourage. We do not mean passing thoughts; we mean the kind of thoughts that penetrate the core of your being and shape your character. The thoughts that dictate what you love, hate, cherish, and admire. The thoughts that shape your unique perception of the world. The thoughts you nurture and justify.

The precept is universal, resonating not only in the Judeo-Christian tradition but through most of the major religious and philosophical beliefs that continue to exist today. In the Dhammapada, Buddha is quoted as teaching, “...the thought manifests as the word, the word manifests as the deed, the deed develops into habit, and habit hardens in character...As we think, so we become.” Or, as Confucius put it, “the superior man thinks of virtue, the small man thinks of comfort.”

Some, like Buddha, call this Karma. In the philosophy of Karma, life is likened to a field and Karma represents the seeds. Our harvest at the end of our lives is a direct result of the seeds – the thoughts and actions – that we have sewn throughout our lives. For those who follow the philosophy of Karma, everyone is held responsible for who they are and who they are going to be.

Modern thinkers continue to immerse themselves in this ancient wisdom. For me, it was James
Allen who best articulated this Truth in modern philosophy. Allen’s 1902 work As a Man Thinketh is all about how human beings can make or unmake themselves by the thoughts they keep and cultivate. Proverbially, man is his own worst enemy.

Overall Allen’s work is meant to help us take responsibility for our actions and to show how our thoughts directly mold our character. As Allen put it, “The soul attracts that which it secretly harbors, that which it loves and that which it fears. It’s not just what your desires are, but your greatest fears will also create your reality in your mind.”

As the Simple Truth teaches, your thoughts and actions must be in harmony with your desires in order for you to attain those desires. Thinking negatively will only help you achieve negative outcomes, while thinking and acting with kindness and consideration will result in positive experiences.

William James, a prominent American psychologist of the nineteenth century, was also shaped by this Simple Truth. He claimed once that the greatest discovery of his generation was that human beings can alter their lives by altering the attitudes inherent in their minds. Likewise impressed was the great Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson, who was deeply influenced by Indian philosophy, wrote in his essay Compensation, that “every act, every work, every thought plants a seed.” For Emerson, the idea that “as we think in our hearts, so we are” was tantamount to the scientific notion of cause and effect.

In 1952, Norman Vincent Peale unleashed The Power of Positive Thinking on modern America. Peale claims he developed the notion of positive thinking as a child. He says he had “the worst inferiority complex of all” and began to develop a method of positive thinking and positive philosophy in order to help himself. He then came to accept the Simple Truth, which he elegantly encapsulated as, “Change your thoughts and you change your world.”

All these examples, over time and distance, across religions and philosophies, show that this Simple Truth is universal and therefore indisputable. Looking back on their lives, those to whom this Truth has been revealed see its influence stamped on every major aspect of their experience.

Most clearly, I see this Simple Truth at work during my dramatic transformation at age twenty-two. Presented with positive information during rehab, I learned to change my way of thinking to
take a positive path in life in direct opposition to the negative one I had been on. The new insight and correction in my way of thinking was profound and struck at the core of my very being even if I would need to re-learn the lesson later on.

As a result of learning to change my thoughts, I was also able to change my actions. As my actions began to change, the world around me opened up and a new realm of possibilities presented themselves. I developed a more positive outlook and in turn made better decisions.

People can experience this Simple Truth both through observation and by practicing certain techniques to enhance self-awareness. Embracing and actualizing this Truth to change your life requires discipline, which many do not have, and which may be best achieved through outside assistance. With such encouragement and discipline, you can – as a High Achiever driven to achieve but never taking the time to examine your true motivators – confront the future with confidence.

“Life without goodness, good thoughts, good actions, and good words, is like the sky in the night without the moon or stars,” according to the Hindu text, Athara Veda.

To begin living a more fulfilling life, to have that sense of the moon and the stars, as the Athara Veda so poetically phrases it, begin to find ways to incorporate this Simple Truth into your life. One way to help your mind embrace this Truth is to inspire yourself by repeating daily a few inspiring phrases.

\[ I \text{ can choose my own thoughts and actions.}\]

Your thoughts and actions are your own, and therefore they are your choices to make. Stop making excuses for the negative thoughts you have and the hurtful actions you take. Instead, own your thoughts and actions and, in doing so, learn to be proud of them.

\[ Good \text{ thoughts and actions will produce good results.}\]

As you embrace the knowledge that you are responsible for your thoughts, you will recognize the importance of thinking positively. Each time you think a positive thought in place of a negative one, you will begin to feel more exalted and confident in your abilities.
My choices matter.

Our choices guide us toward love or hurt, contentment or depression. If you don’t embrace the fact that your choices are determined by your thoughts, and that your negative thoughts will produce negative choices, you will be perpetually trapped in a negative situation. Instead, realize that every choice has a repercussion. If you make positive choices, you will never want to avoid their consequences.

Believing this in my heart will make the difference.

The key is, and always will be, to accept these things in your heart. If you only take a surface level approach, you will not be able to truly progress.

As Buddha once stated, “All that we are is the result of what we have thought.” Thoughts are at the center of every move, word, and choice. Learning to change those negative thoughts can be difficult, so begin with a simple exercise. For the next 30 days, make the following changes in your life:

Choose one area of your life with which you are not happy. It can be a belief or behavior that you hold but would like to change.

It will be more difficult than you think, especially in the first 10 days, so start simple. For instance, let’s say your area of unhappiness involves a constant feeling of resentment toward a sibling, friend, or co-worker. You have made all of your excuses for why you harbor this resentment. You have built a case for it in your head. Breaking down and discrediting your own “case” will be the primary challenge during your first 30 days.

Each day, recognize the negative belief or behavior when it occurs, and turn your mind against it in a conscious effort to act differently.

You know that feeling you get in the back of your throat or the pit of your stomach when this person does something that just drives you crazy? Recognize this negative feeling for what it really is – a negative thought interfering with your own life – and learn to turn the feeling into a positive. Think of something nice that person has done for you. Learn to experience a sense of thankfulness in place of that resentment.
Affirm your new action in your heart as your new belief.

By the end of the 30 days, if you’ve made an honest effort to maintain this exercise, you will discover warm thoughts about this person. More important, you will have released yourself from resentment, so you can move forward without its weight dragging you down.

Replicate this exercise with other thoughts and beliefs that negatively affect your outlook. Whatever they are, no matter how big or small, internalizing a positive antithesis to that negative for only 30 days will help create a lifelong habit that can lead toward a profound sense of release and peace as you lose the unkind and unpleasant thoughts at long last.

“When the mind is pure, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves.” So says the Buddha.
CHAPTER FOUR

SIMPLE TRUTH NUMBER TWO

We Attract Who We Are

We attract the people and circumstances that reflect who we truly are as a person. I’m not talking about how we appear as a first impression, who we think we are, or even the person we attempt to project to the outside world. I am talking about who we intrinsically are – the aggregate of the motivations and desires that drive us and constitute our character. These internal forces compel us to make the conscious and subconscious decisions that ultimately shape our experience. The concept may seem obvious but most people do not live by or accept this Truth.

To see this Truth at work, simply go to your local high school. Cliques are formed based almost entirely on how similar each person is to the next. It is a Simple Truth in action, easily discernible here because teenagers willingly categorize themselves into just such concrete social groups: jocks, nerds, skaters, metal-heads, emo kids, outsiders, bullies, etc. If you look deeper, it’s not just similar activities that cause these teenagers to flock together – that they play sports, or act, or listen to the same music – but more importantly the similar emotional traits associated with each group that binds them. Teenage athletes with a highly sensitive, artistic side often hide it if it does quite fit with the rest of their chosen group.

Perhaps the most difficult part about coming to terms with this Simple Truth is that there must be a willingness to accept the shortcomings, missed opportunities, miseries, and failures in our lives as the product of our own behavior and, therefore, of our own creation. Aside from those circumstances that are indeed out of our control, we are responsible for the events that occur every moment of our lives.

If we objectively review our histories, we can identify how our core values, beliefs, and motivations manifest themselves in our lives both through our actions and their consequences. This dynamic, in turn, shapes the most important areas of our lives: our relationships with others, our
careers, and our physical health and mental wellbeing.

Our relationships are sometimes the easiest place to trace the impact of this Simple Truth. We constantly seem to befriend or become romantically involved with the same type of people. After an unsuccessful relationship, we quickly turn around and find ourselves in a relationship with a carbon copy of the last. It’s because of who we are inside. We keep making the same subconscious decisions and are attracted to the same types of people because we have not changed ourselves. We have merely changed the superficial circumstance.

We often go through many of the same motions in our careers as we do in our relationships. We are attracted to a job path based on the driving forces inside us. If those driving forces are negative, we can be drawn to this career for the wrong reasons. On the flip side, we may find a perfect career choice, but manage to find a way to be dissatisfied based on the negative opinions and thoughts ruling us.

In choices that affect our health and personal wellbeing, we likewise shape our world as a consequence of our core beliefs. If you consider yourself overweight or unhealthy, or if you see yourself as inherently depressed, the prophecy will be self-fulfilling. Instead of pursuing healthy ways to lose weight or remedies to end depression, you remain attracted to the core causes of the problem. Perhaps you blame the problems on family members who are also overweight or depressed, or on situations that caused you to become insecure. By accepting those causative forces as beyond your control you simply perpetuate them.

It can be incredibly difficult to move away from life decisions that subconsciously reflect who we are inside, because doing so requires us to identify our shortcomings and accept ourselves as flawed. It’s always easier to pass the buck.

During my youth I was driven by negative thoughts and motivations. Even though I wanted a better life for myself, I continued to allow my thoughts, and therefore my behavior, to get me into trouble. For the life of me, I could not understand why. In my head, I thought of myself as a good and responsible person, but my life was one of instability and chaos. I attracted people into my life who were unstable like me, thus perpetuating my situation.

It wasn’t until I went through a major transition that I finally learned to be the good person in my
heart that I always knew I could be. With my change of mindset, and with the reshaping of who I was on the inside, my behavior evolved. The effects were felt in my life. Where I’d previously been engulfed in negative circumstances, I found positive opportunities popping up in their place. At last, the good things I always thought I deserved were actually happening because I was making good decisions, and attracting new kinds of people into my life who reflected this change of mindset. Importantly, those people were themselves also looking at life with positive and healthy mindsets.

By accepting that your inner nature needs to change before your life can change, you take a crucial step in the right direction. All Simple Truths are easy to follow once you fully understand the impact that embracing them will have. As a High Achiever, it can be hard to change because, along with being driven and motivated, we are also headstrong and resistant to change. Often as High Achievers, we think introspection is a waste of time, and we always focus on some goal, the “what’s next?” in life. It is exasperating for people like us to press pause, but a moment to breathe and discover our inner motivations will help refocus our lives in a positive direction. The investment of time and energy is amply justified.

“Find thoughts that feel good, because it is inevitable that you are going to always be moving toward something, so why not be moving toward something pleasing?” explains Esther Hicks in The Law of Attraction.

As with the first Simple Truth, the way to begin to see this Truth at work in your life is to repeat daily thoughts so that they can soon take root in your life.

*I will attract who I am.*

It’s been said that people think about what they don’t want and attract more of the same. Instead of thinking of ways to change themselves, they try to will their circumstances to change without putting forth any effort. But we do not have the power to will the world to change. We only have the power to change ourselves. If by changing ourselves, we can change the world, all the better! But the focus must be to change who you are. To that end, you must accept that you always attract who you are.

So who are you? What kind of situations are you attracting in your life? And how can you change that?
If I want something different, I must be something different.

You must be the force changing all the circumstances in your life. No one else can do it for you. The good news is that, once you decide to be something different, you have already made a pivotal life-changing choice.

The laws of attraction are real, and they do apply to me.

As Abraham Hicks explains, “…you are a creator. You create with every thought. You often create by default, for you are getting what you are giving your attention to, wanted or unwanted. You know how it feels if what you are getting is what you are wanting or if it is not what you are wanting.”

I believe this in my heart to be true.

As with the first Simple Truth, there’s an exercise to help you realize and embrace this Truth. For the next 30 days, do the following:

Choose one character flaw that you dislike in others, and look for it in yourself.

It’s been said that what we hate most in others is something that exists in ourselves. What pet peeve of others drives you crazy? Is it that he or she always has to top your story or present an opinion as the really important opinion? Does it bother you so much because you know your story is better and your opinion truer? Their behavior drives you crazy because it is your own behavior, and you don’t like it in yourself once it’s reflected in others.

Each day spot the flaw as it reveals itself and make a conscious effort to observe it in others and yourself.

Has a co-worker told a story that you know you could add to, and make it that much better? Hold back. You are only acting out of vanity. It’s not a self-repressive exercise but rather one designed to help differentiate between doing things in your own self-interest versus doing the right thing.
**Respond to the world in the opposite of that flaw.**

Kindly support that co-worker in his or her story. Defend them if someone else feels the same need to “top it” and be generous about that person’s fault as well. After all, you have recognized the flaw in yourself and are ready to move past it.

Repeat this process with other flaws that you recognize in yourself and that you wish to improve upon. Are you impatient? Are you sarcastic? Can you deliver a put-down that scathes and wilts your target? Do you really want to continue hurting others in your life or are you ready to see the light in their faces when you bestow sincere and heartfelt compliments? Are you ready to feel the joy in your heart that comes from knowing you chose the higher ground and did the right thing?
To deal with the suffering in our lives, we need to look deep inside and acknowledge that we might in fact be the cause of our own suffering. As James Allen pointed out in As a Man Thinketh, “suffering is always the effect of wrong thought in some direction. It is an indication that the individual is out of harmony with himself.”

What does this mean in our lives exactly? How can our thoughts be the root of our failures when we are trying so hard to succeed? I too was confused by this idea. I was working hard, trying to build my own path and provide for my family, and I thought I was doing everything right. But my thoughts were not in the right place: I had become a workaholic, was neglecting my family, and my actions were reflecting my selfish nature. My actions then became destructive and led to a devastating divorce.

When it finally became apparent that there was no turning back the clock and correcting my mistakes, I had to suffer the consequences and learn to rebuild myself. This time, though, I learned how important it was to pay attention to how my thoughts and feelings were guiding my life. I needed to recognize that the “me” – the “me” I wanted to convince myself and others was real – was not always what I felt or what I was at the core of my being. I needed to make sure that what I endeavored to do in life directly reflected who I really was so that I could succeed in a much more positive manner.

You may have seen similar circumstances in your own life or in the lives of your peers. For instance, there are those who go to church every Sunday but seem to do so for appearances only, because they do not live the Christian life beyond one hour a week. Or there’s the family down the street with the white picket fence and perfectly manicured lawn that harbors deep secrets of abuse, alcoholism, or depression. How about the businessperson with the fancy car, the lavish wardrobe, and the high-end condo who’s riddled with fear and insecurity?
There are countless examples of people who aren’t even able to keep up appearances, but who con-
tinue to fail time after time in their personal and professional lives. They have goals and dreams of success but can’t seem to get it right – for the same reason that the businessperson is depressed or the dysfunctional family hides behind a picket fence or church tithe. Their lives are reflecting who they are on the inside, which is negative and morally unstable. They suffer even if only behind closed doors. They are powerful examples of how our thoughts and moral underpinnings truly dictate our actions.

Each of us has the power within us to transform our circumstances, so long as we are able to accept that it is not our circumstances that dictate our lives but who we are on the inside. Despite our almost childlike wish for fortune to smile upon us, our lives are not controlled by luck or chance. When we fail and continue to fail, it is because we are unwilling to improve ourselves from the inside out, not because we are unlucky. We do indeed reap what we sow.

As Allen put it, “A man only begins to be a man when he ceases to whine and revile, and com-
mences to search for the hidden justice which regulates his life. And as he adapts his mind to that regulating factor, he ceases to accuse others as the cause of his condition, and builds himself up in strong and noble thoughts; ceases to kick against circumstances, but begins to use them as aids to his more rapid progress, and as a means of discovering the hidden powers and possibilities within himself.”

Changing from a negative to a positive way of thinking is not easy and, after you have begun to make your way down the path of change, you will encounter pitfalls. But as easy as it is to blame our circumstances on others, it is truly empowering to accept them as controllable within ourselves.

Our feelings can be a major hindrance in our attempt to change perspectives. We often think of our feelings as knee-jerk reactions that cannot be controlled. Perhaps, we tell ourselves, they are even biological. My father was a pessimist, you say, or my mother was sarcastic and jaded, and that is why I am too. Yet once you are able to change your feelings, you can truly change your ac-
tions, promoting more positive choices leading to a more fulfilling and peaceful life. As you begin to change the way you think about things, and the way you intrinsically respond to the world around you, you will start to see the world around you respond in kind to your changes. As the negative, self-deprecating, and selfish thinking and perceiving is overcome by a more positive
outlook, you will discover that the people and circumstances of your life suddenly become more positive as well.

Watch how this process unfurls in others in order to clarify how it operates for your own life. Think of the people in your life who are angry, sneaky, and self-centered. How do they make you feel? How do you react to their attitude? Then think of the people in your life who are kind, grounded, and giving. How do you respond to them? Their positive attitudes cause you to respond more positively to them than you do toward those with negative attitudes. The trick is to become the kind, grounded, and giving person who triggers just such positive reactions in others.

The adjustment is particularly difficult because of our current existence in a negative place where we have already surrounded ourselves with like-minded, negative-feeling people. Remember, we attract who we are. These negative influences in our lives are certainly not going to support our decision to make a positive change. We feed off each other’s negative attitudes. And, when we are feeling negatively already, we are on edge, constantly waiting for someone to set us off, to make us angry. To irritate, frustrate, and completely drive us crazy. Learning to control these negative reactions can go a long way toward reshaping our attitude.

One way to begin thinking positively is by defining and identifying a purpose for yourself and your life. However, unless you are able to link your innermost thoughts and emotions with that purpose, it will be a meaningless endeavor. Your overall purpose and specific goals are profoundly linked. If you go through life without a larger purpose, you can be easily sidetracked from your goals or even have difficulty establishing goals. You can spend a lifetime dreaming up lofty aspirations but have no guiding force to draw you to them. A person without purpose lives a purposeless existence.

In my personal life, I went through a complete transformation at age 22. I made the transition from a manipulating and self-serving individual, with a constant “what’s in it for me” attitude, to become a kind, honest, respectful, and humble individual interested in helping others before myself. Painfully, I would have to recreate myself again after my divorce as deep-seeded behaviors can take decades to change. The important thing is to start the journey now.

The tipping point was when positive behavior and thoughts began to come naturally to me. This attitude adjustment helped drive the negative actions and thoughts away, allowing positive and
considerate thoughts and actions into my life. I truly believe, and have seen it happen in other lives too, that, once you honestly and sincerely change your attitude, the rest will follow.

Embracing this Truth in your heart is the single most important concept for you to work toward as a High Achiever in search of peace of mind. Without it, you may achieve success but pay the ultimate price as the quality of your life deteriorates. What good are your successes if they only look good to you on paper but mean nothing to you inside? If they do not bring you joy and peace?

To truly alter your thoughts, start small. Establish a simple goal, such as engaging in simple acts of kindness for 30 days. Then see what happens in your life by the end of these 30 days! You will be amazed at how these acts of kindness, small and simple as they are, begin to reshape your world view and your character, to create within you a more virtuous sense of self. As your actions are reflected in the lives of those around you, people will respond to your kindness with kindnesses of their own. Amazingly, these 30 days instigate lifelong habits.

The circumstances in your life will change for the better but what that specifically means for you is an entirely personal thing. It could mean you will achieve greater success in your career, more happiness in your personal life, or a combination of both.

Further implementation of this Simple Truth can lead to a more balanced existence. As William James explains, “the greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes.” It was the truth 100 years ago when James said it, and it is the truth today.

Repeat daily the following maxims to help guide your life in this Truth:

\[ I \text{ can choose to be kind} \]

Winston Churchill once said that “attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.” Kindness is such a simple act. Looking at people instead of above them or down on them. Recognizing them and sharing a smile. That is kindness. You don’t have to buy gifts to be kind. You simply have to treat human beings like human beings, and listen to them when they speak. It’s so simple, yet so hard for many of us.

\[ People \text{ react negatively because of their own hurt. As do I.} \]
We have all been hurt. We’ve been hurt by our families and by our friends. We have faced betrayal in many forms. Think of all the hurt you have in your life. You are not alone. When we are wounded in our hearts, we often react negatively in order to protect ourselves from being hurt even more deeply. When someone acts negatively toward you, look at the pain behind their eyes. What have they been through that causes them to lash out so? Can I even begin to understand the hidden shadows in their lives? If it is anything like your own, or if it is worse, do you have any room to judge them?

*My attitude does make a difference.*

You cannot entirely change the negative reactions of some people. Some people will strike out at you over and over again, no matter what you do. But if you remain kind in your heart, then at the very least they cannot bruise you. Gaining and maintaining a positive attitude when the whole world seems jaded can be a very daunting task. But as modern writer Katherine Mansfield explains, “Could we change our attitude, we should not only see life differently, but life itself would come to be different.” You can change your world with your thoughts. The negative people will either turn toward you in a more positive light or you will learn to move away from their influence in favor of like-minded kindred spirits. You will see solutions to problems instead of causes to blame.

*I believe this to be True.*

Believe in your heart that you can change your world, and you will.
We don’t question material laws at work in the world around us that dictate the speed of light or sound. We don’t wonder if what goes up really will come down. We accept these natural and fundamental laws of nature. But there are other natural laws at work in our lives that are just as fundamentally true, but for some reason we do not consider them as significant as those that are more scientifically measurable.

In Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Steven Covey introduces something called the principle-centered paradigm. The principles Covey speaks of include fairness, integrity and honesty, human dignity, quality, potential, growth, patience, nurturance, and encouragement. Examined closely, it is clear that these principles are at work in our lives to help us achieve successes, a sense of purpose, and ultimately, fulfillment. The important thing to remember is that, if you work with the laws of nature and follow those principles, you can achieve success. But if you fight against them, it would be like fighting against time or gravity. There is no way you can win.

Fairness is sometimes more easily recognized when we feel we have been slighted or not treated fairly. Why is it that when we read or watch the news and hear a terrible story about something that happened to someone whom we will never know, we still find ourselves deeply concerned about their situation? It is because we can sympathize with someone who’s not been treated fairly, because the notion of justice, while it may differ from culture to culture, is a natural law palpable even in our childhood. To fight against fairness and justice only hurts us. When we see or hear about governments abusing power to create a false self-serving justice, we are likewise upset and indignant. Again our very nature fights against injustice. It is born in us so that, when we are not fair, we know it. We can try to make excuses but deep down we recognize that we have done something wrong. We then suffer the guilt that results.
Integrity and honesty often go hand in hand. Honesty can be one of the easiest of these principles to ignore, but doing so can have the most severe ramifications. Sometimes our dishonest behavior never gets called out in public. In most cases, dishonesty pays for itself with inner turmoil, guilt, and a great sense of conflict. It starts to affect your outer life as inner turmoil eats away at you and your life becomes self-contradictory. Soon these negative feelings begin to break into your relationships and your experiences in the world.

I had two periods in my life where I experienced this truth first-hand. The first was in my youth prior to my first life change at twenty-two. My dishonesty and deceit led me down a vicious spiral that was fed by alcoholism and eventually forced me to change or continue down darker paths.

The second instance was actually a more profound experience. In my adult life, my circumstances were looking very good on the outside. I had the job, I was succeeding in my career, I was in my prime. But I was not adhering to the principles of honesty, integrity, and strong character, and ultimately I began to experience intense inner conflict and external chaos in my personal relationships.

When we act instead with honesty and integrity, we may endure temporary setbacks but we will ultimately experience a much less burdensome world unimpeded by internalized turmoil and chaos. There will be no need to worry about explaining how or why something happened. We can then make those good decisions that have a positive impact on our lives as well as those around us. Thinking and acting with integrity, being honest with yourself and with those around you, can never produce bad results.

Human dignity is another definitive principle of natural law. In fact, human dignity is an integral enough part of our nature to have guided Thomas Jefferson when he wrote the Declaration of Independence: “All men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The last fifty to sixty years have seen innumerable fights for human dignity in the U.S. and abroad. Civil rights movements are nothing more and nothing less than a fight for the dignity of mankind.

Patience is harder for a lot of people, especially the High Achiever who wants to continually move forward and spare no time for the present. But impatience is truly painful at many levels and can lead to physical maladies like ulcers and headaches. In today’s hustle-and-bustle world, even
those who are not High Achievers find their patience taxed and also forget to take a moment to breathe and relax.

You can look closely at each natural law identified by Covey, or others who have done similar work, and recognize their intrinsic rightness for our lives. We all have the desire to strive for and achieve quality or excellence. We all want the ability to believe in our own potential and to grow intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, as professionals and as biological beings.

As children, all we want is to be nurtured and encouraged. We live for it. The need does not disappear as we reach adulthood; we simply learn that it doesn’t come as easily. Other people are too wrapped up in their own lives to give us the encouragement and nurturing we crave, and we are likewise too concerned with ourselves to encourage and nurture others. But we still feel the void when we haven’t had the good words and pats on our backs that we so deeply need.

These principles dictate our nature. They are fundamental Truths that have universal application across cultures and across time. When you fight against them, you create only hurt and angst in your life. But when you learn to project these principles in your daily life, and transform them into habits, you create a much more open and positive world for yourself. You will build strong relationships with those around you and you will be respected by your peers for your honesty and compassion.

As Robert F. Bennett put it, “Your life is the sum of all the choices you make, both consciously and unconsciously. If you can control the process of choosing, you can take control of all aspects of your life. You can find the freedom that comes from being in charge of yourself.”

Bennett’s words ring true for your life whether you’ve admitted it to this point or not. Now make this Truth resonate in your life by repeating the following:

*I can choose to be honest.*

It may seem easier on the surface to tell a white lie but even white lies weigh on us. Being honest is not always easy, but it can lead you down surprising and wonderful paths of intimacy with your loved ones and even in the context of your career.
There are consequences to my behavior, even if I don’t experience those consequences today.

“While we are free to choose our actions, we are not free to choose the consequences of our actions,” explains Covey. We are responsible for every choice we make, good and bad. Each of those choices, no matter how small, will have some repercussion on our lives. Not all repercussions are visible. Some come in the form of the guilt and anguish that we carry inside ourselves for years until we are finally able to own up to our choices and learn to forgive and be forgiven. We cannot, in any event, escape them.

My choices DO matter.

Each Simple Truth is really about owning your life. If you own your own life, you can come to realize that every choice you make is going to take you down the path that determines the final sum of your life. What do you want your life to add up to at the end?

I understand that natural spiritual laws are just as real as material scientific laws.

Accepting the importance of honesty, integrity, character, and regard for humanity as not just good practices but actual Laws of Existence makes them easier to live by – and teaches you to be truly accountable. When we are truly accountable, we learn the importance of good actions.

You can put this Simple Truth into action by performing the following steps over the next 30 days:

Choose one area of your life that you are not happy with, a belief or behavior that you would like to change.

Which of the natural laws do you find yourself breaking most? Are you unfair? Do you only look out for Number One in complete disregard of those around you? Are you dishonest? Does telling a lie sometimes come easier than the truth? Whichever defines your personal battle, zero in on it now. Fight against it so that you might live a more fulfilling life in the future.

Each day make a conscious effort to act differently.
Think of the needs of others, tell the truth, and respect your fellow human. Take control of whatever is holding you back, and act in a more upright manner.

*Affirm your new action in your heart as your new belief.*

Feel the peace enter into your life as you embrace this fourth and final Truth.
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE APPLICATION OF THE FOUR SIMPLE TRUTHS IN YOUR LIFE

It is hard to properly articulate the incredible difference that will be made by living in harmony with the Simple Truths. In many ways, accepting these Truths – and turning your life around in order to live with them instead of railing against them – can be likened to a spiritual experience. Until you actually undergo the transformation of accepting these Simple Truths, you cannot comprehend the differences you will experience in your life.

It can also be hard for doubters to comprehend that you are the only one holding you back. We so often want to blame others for our shortcomings and failures, but it is impossible to succeed in life and find a sense of balance if you constantly blame others and never take the necessary steps to actually changing your life for the better.

Look at the numerous examples of individuals, past and present, who have something about them that makes them special and wonderful to be around. That something can be intangible but, no matter “why,” you know that their positive energy cannot but bring joy to others. Those people are living in harmony with the Simple Truths. Their thoughts and their actions are positive influences on your life. You know you can trust them. You see them succeed in life and love because they aren’t fighting life. They are living it and are at peace with it.

You can look to famous people in history who lived by the Simple Truths: Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Theresa, and Mahatma Gandhi. The peaceful nature and positive spirit of these people live on because they knew and understood the power of their thoughts. They too were High Achievers, no less so than the most successful businesspersons. They had goals, and they were driven to succeed. But their goals were not selfish, or at least not entirely so. They fought against injustice, they worked for peace. And they understood that all individuals are in charge of their own destiny.
When they were faced with adversity or were told no, they were not deterred. Negativity did not stop them because they were positive-acting and positive-thinking individuals.

But embracing the Simple Truths does not mean that you too must go out and change the world, unless, of course, that is what you seek to do. There are many examples of humbler people who live by the Simple Truths. We encounter them daily and have an opportunity during each of these encounters to embrace the peace and positive change that they project.

Remember the teacher who encouraged you when you were young? Whose class you actually enjoyed going to? Maybe he or she taught you how to read or perhaps it was that chemistry teacher who took an incredibly difficult subject and made learning fun. That person faced an onslaught of whining, crying, yelling, poking kids each and every day. Yet they somehow managed to come into the classroom, and into your life, with a smile and a positive word of encouragement. Those teachers patted your back when you excelled and listened to your complaints with an open and honest heart. They made such an impression that even now you remember their names. They may not have changed the world, or made great business deals, or live now in mansions, but I bet they’re still happy and contented persons, proud of their accomplishments and happy with the lives they live.

Perhaps that motivational figure, that hero, was a neighbor or parent, an aunt or uncle or grandparent, or a religious leader. Whoever you looked up to when you were growing up – because their honesty and integrity made such an impression on you that you now remember them so vividly and so fondly – was living proof of the impact that the Simple Truths have already had and will continue to have on your life. This man or woman had something about them that you couldn’t quite name or put your finger on but, if you think of the Simple Truths and imagine them at work in that person’s life, perhaps you can see the living convincing proof of how positive thoughts and actions lead to peace and joy.

Very few people are born embracing the Simple Truths and most of us must endure negative times in our lives. But you can undergo this transformation in the pursuit of a better, more meaningful existence at any point in your life. The best day of your life is the one when you decide your life is your own. No apologies or excuses. No one to lean on, rely on, or blame. The gift is yours. It is an amazing journey, and the day it begins is the day your real life begins.
I have talked about my personal experiences with these Simple Truths throughout this book. The benefits of accepting the changes I needed to make were almost immediate, but constant reminders and affirmations have also been needed as I continue on my journey.

I know there are some out there who may find it difficult to accept these Simple Truths at the level needed for action. You may be so emotionally distraught that you are unable to think clearly on your own. If that is so, you may require some assistance to reach the level where you can begin to practice and embrace these Simple Truths and to reap their benefits.

For me, it has taken twenty years of on-again-off-again self-examination, combined with personal trials and tribulations, to fully understand and embrace the reality of these Simple Truths and why they are so important for those who want both personal achievement and inner peace. My journey is not over. It is just beginning with a more committed view of the Simple Truths, a better sense of what happens when you ignore them, and a deeper appreciation of the abundance at hand when these truths are respected, embraced, and practiced in everyday life.

It is my hope that you will embrace in some small way what I have shared with you. I hope you will begin the journey of true peace and ultimate prosperity based on a sincere understanding and implementation of these Simple Truths.
Martin Hubbard is the Principal of Core Advisors, an organization that specializes in assisting individuals with achieving success and significance in their personal and professional lives.

He has combined his personal experience, educational background and professional success as a business leader to develop the Core Process™. The Core method is uniquely designed to systematically help others accomplish their goals in life.

His work and passion is to develop the tools and method of delivery that translate into meaningful and life changing experiences for others.

Martin has been a member of the Young Presidents Organization International for the past twelve years and is currently a member of the World Presidents Organization. He is an active member of the Social Enterprise Network within this organization and is committed to supporting the values and purpose of Corporate Social Responsibility within the world community.

He resides in Southern California with his lovely wife Lisa and enjoys spending time with her and his kids, painting, golf, snow skiing and exploring the great outdoors.

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Martin Hubbard heads a successful consulting practice, Core Advisors, LLC, located in Southern California. His practice is dedicated to assisting individuals and organizations with their personal and professional challenges. He is the architect and developer of the Core Process™, a systematic approach to assisting his clients achieve personal awareness, renewed focus and enhanced personal and professional freedom.

For more information regarding Core Advisors, please visit: www.coreadvisorgroup.com.

“Martin Hubbard knows through personal experience what successful people are looking for beyond the material trappings – True and sustainable HAPPINESS. Through Mr. Hubbard’s personal story, consulting and research he shares why high achievers as a group generally don’t experience true happiness, but more importantly he tells us all how to discover fulfillment on our own personal journey through life.”

Greg Palmer Former CEO RemedyTemp Inc and currently CEO GPalmer and associates