

STEP 5 – SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL:

## OPTIMAL SELF-LEADERSHIP

Self-leadership refers to our responsibility to be active managers of our lives. The five steps of the [Life Values Inventory](#) are intended to provide a foundation for optimal, responsible living. The purpose of *this* supplement is to build upon that foundation and apply values-based strategies to enhance self-leadership.

The challenge of these strategies is that they do not naturally come to us and are often counter to what we are taught about success and fulfillment. The good news is that once you understand the concepts and actively commit to them, you quickly internalize them.

### Topics Covered:

- Motivation & Self-Improvement
- Performance & Life Enhancement:  
Strategies for creating The Zone Mindset
- Procrastination & Perfectionism



## MOTIVATION & SELF-IMPROVEMENT

### WHY WILLPOWER FAILS US

When we strive to make positive changes in our lives, we are asking our bodies to bridge an unnatural gap.

Human beings are hard-wired to respond to crisis and regulation. When a crisis occurs, our sympathetic nervous system prepares our body to respond. When we are not in crisis, we will most naturally move back into regulation of our normal state. When we strive to make positive changes in our lives, we are asking our bodies to bridge an unnatural gap. We are striving to move away from regulation and the status quo, but not when we're in crisis. **That's why positive change is so hard. It is also why we will often wait until things get to a "have to" point in our lives to enact positive change.** We are essentially creating our own mini-crisis to enlist our body's nervous system to help motivate us. The problem is we cannot sustain that level of crisis for long periods before the body's desire to move back to regulation takes over. **At this point, we fall into one of the biggest traps of self-motivation - a reliance on willpower.**

Willpower, as it is most commonly understood, is a very well-intended concept but usually gets in our way. When asked what they need to do to make positive changes in their lives, most people will respond with "I just need to have more willpower or be more self-disciplined."

Actually, relying on willpower as a motivational strategy is not consistently effective because it fosters a *passive* mindset.

It's a paradox. Even though we are trying to use willpower to foster action, it slips us into a more *passive* mindset:

The belief that just by telling ourselves that we want to do something, we should be filled with a surge of motivation to act at the appropriate time. We keep waiting for the surge.

Unfortunately, that doesn't work very often with self-motivation because, with most things that are important to us, we feel ambivalent. That's because **we don't completely control everything that goes into the important things in our life and because we will often have competing priorities.**



So, what are people doing when they appear to have great willpower and self-discipline? They essentially are following *three* strategies.

1. **They don't try to be motivated; they try to understand the factors that are affecting their motivation.** Motivation is a function of our thoughts, feelings, skills, and energy. When all four of those factors are moving in the same direction toward a goal, we don't even have to think about being motivated; it just happens. If we have to try to motivate ourselves, that means that one or more of those factors are moving away from that activity. We may be tired, we may have ambivalent feelings toward it, we may be afraid to fail, we may be distracted by competing activities. **The important thing is to understand the factors that are moving you toward an activity and the ones that are moving you away from it.** From there, you have a clear picture of your challenges and how to address them.
2. **Self-motivated people commit to using their values each day as a guide to their behavior, and they commit to the fight.** They go to the second level of “why” and really search for the important reasons behind a commitment to this activity. There is no magic result from this step but it's critical. **It reminds a person that the key ingredient of motivation is values, and most important, a commitment to the values.** It fosters a sense of acceptance and respect that anything that's important to us is hard, period. It requires active commitment and active acceptance of the challenges.

You'll know what the challenges are after [Step One](#) and you will need to devote your energies toward that fight. Instead of getting upset and resentful because it's not easy, or criticizing ourselves because we don't feel naturally motivated toward something that we believe is important, we need to remember that it's about staying with the truth. Everything that is important to us will have some factors that will complicate our motivation toward it, be it fear of failure, exhaustion, uncertainty, etc. Values are the best source of motivation but they are not sufficient to overcome all challenges. Motivation must include values plus a dedication to the fight.



3. **Self-motivated people try to find some time each day for “wants” in the midst of all of their “shoulds,” and they don’t feel guilty about it.** We all need to feel like we are more than a “to do” list. Devoting time to our “wants,” reminds us that life is more than just “shoulds” and restores us mentally and emotionally. We need to do a little something each day that is just for us, a little something more each week, and then have something even more expansive planned on a monthly or quarterly basis. This keeps us fresh and able to devote full energy to the things of importance. Yet, much of the time when we take a break, we feel guilty because we see it as wasted time or time that “should” be spent on our chores. In such situations, we are not truly taking a break; we’re still “working” mentally and will get no restorative effect. If we’re honest with ourselves, we know the difference between when we’re avoiding and when we are taking a restorative break. When we get busy, we usually let go of our “wants” because we see them as luxuries. Individuals who are successful with self-motivation treat these periods as critical to their ability to strive for excellence. They keep them as requirements in their lives; even if they have to scale them down during crunch periods, they still keep them active.

## SELF-IMPROVEMENT

There is no getting around the fact that self-improvement is hard work. Insight and understanding are necessary, but they are insufficient for lasting change.

Insight must also be combined with **willingness, readiness, a plan based on insight, and practicing that plan** in order to internalize the change.

Once internalized, the fight gets easier during routine situations; you also have the tools necessary for difficult times. On days when it’s easy, appreciate it. On days when it’s hard, accept the fight, and do extra things at the end of the day for self-care.



## PERFORMANCE & LIFE ENHANCEMENT:

### STRATEGIES FOR CREATING THE ZONE MINDSET

Self-leadership includes the ability to manage our mind so that we tap into our full talent. Most people have experienced times when they have performed at a very high level. Everything fell into place and it seemed almost magical how things flowed.

This occurrence is often described as the **zone or flow experience of optimal performance**.

This section describes *four* values-based strategies that help create a zone mindset for optimal performance.

- View Outcomes as “**Life-Enhancing Want To’s**” instead of “**Life-Critical Have To’s**”
- Rely on **Volitional Confidence** instead of **Experiential Confidence**
- **Managing Fear of Failure**
- Strive for **Expression Instead of Potential**



STRATEGIES FOR CREATING  
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## VIEW OUTCOMES AS “LIFE-ENHANCING WANT TO’S” INSTEAD OF “LIFE-CRITICAL HAVE TO’S”

Outcomes are important in our lives. They essentially serve *three* purposes:

- To **motivate** us during periods when our work or training is unpleasant or hard;
- To **help us adapt** our work by using outcomes as feedback about our performance;
- To **reward** us for our hard work. This one is the most important.

When we work hard for something and we get the desired outcome, it is a great feeling. It makes the work feel worthwhile, it’s an emotional boost, and it makes us feel good about ourselves.

*Two* factors determine outcomes:

- Our performance or behavior
- Factors beyond our control

The truth is we never completely control everything that determines outcomes. We can have the best performance of our lives and still not get an outcome because of the influence of other factors.



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› PERFORMANCE-BASED MINDSET

People mistakenly see great performers as completely outcome-oriented. Actually, they use outcomes as motivation; **but when it’s time to perform, their focus is on their performance, the one thing they completely control.**

People who consistently perform at their optimal level view outcomes as icing on the cake or life-enhancing experiences.

Continuing with the cake metaphor, great performers view themselves as having all the necessary ingredients of making a good tasting cake and use their effort as the baking process. **Their whole goal is to stay focused on making the cake, expressing their own talents and energy.** When they get a desired outcome, they view it as icing on the cake and savor the enhanced flavor that it provides. This approach is one of many significant contributions that the field of sport and performance psychology has provided in the research into distinguishing characteristics of consistent elite performances.

› OUTCOME-BASED MINDSET

The *alternative* perspective is to:

View outcomes as absolutely critical to one’s sense of self-worth and personal definition of success - viewing outcomes as “**life-critical have to’s**” instead of “**life-enhancing want to’s.**”

**This perspective actually interferes with one’s best performances.** The difference between these two perspectives is felt in the form of *internal intensity*. **People feel greater anxiety when outcomes are critical because they have to worry not only about their performance but also about all of the other factors that can influence the outcome.** These people’s fear of failure is much higher because of the truly threatening nature of failure to them. And they are equally stressed about succeeding because of the additional expectations that others may have of them if they succeed. They are very control-oriented and focused on the future so they try to manage everything in their lives to increase the likelihood of getting the outcomes they need.



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Conversely, when people are more performance-based, the intensity associated with full expression of their talent is exhilarating. **The distinction is between everything being a *test* of self versus an *expression* of self.**

People feel greater anxiety when outcomes are critical because they have to worry not only about their performance but also about all of the other factors that can influence the outcome.

Imagine one of your hardest tests that you prepared for and worried about.

Remember how draining it was. Now imagine everything feeling like that same kind of test, every goal, every performance, every relationship, everyone’s opinion of you. Eventually, something has to give and it usually is in the form of impaired motivation, concentration, and performance.

	PERFORMANCE BASED MINDSET	OUTCOME BASED MINDSET
ACTIONS ARE:	Expressions of Self ( <i>VERB</i> )	Tests of Self ( <i>NOUN</i> )
GOALS ARE:	Expressions of talent and energy	Must-Have Results
OUTCOMES ARE:	Life-enhancing want to’s - Icing on the cake - Life-enhancing experiences	Life-critical have to’s - Critical to one’s sense of self-worth - Personal definition of success
PRODUCES:	The exhilaration that comes with the full expression of your talent  A higher likelihood of attaining “icing on the cake” outcome  Savoring the outcome	Impaired motivation, concentration, and performance  Greater fear of failure, and success  Greater anxiety





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HOW TO FOSTER AN OUTCOME-ORIENTED MINDSET?

It’s easy to see the messages that society sends regarding how success is defined. And as competition for opportunities continues to increase, outcomes will continue to be important realities and indicators of moving forward in our lives. However, this mindset also gets internalized during a critical developmental period of adolescence and young adulthood. The normal course of adolescence and young adulthood naturally fosters an outcome orientation. Very few adolescents feel completely “enough” or secure with who they are. So during that period, they will attach part of their self-worth to something outside themselves. They may feel good about themselves because they are a good student (*self-worth based on grades*), a good athlete (*based on wins*), a good friend (*based on the approval of others*), a good performing artist (*based on awards or judges’ ratings*), etc.

SELF-IMAGE:	SELF-WORTH BASED ON:
A good student	Grades
A good athlete	Wins
A good friend	Approval of others
A good performing artist	Awards or judges’ ratings

This perspective will usually carry into college or a first job. This is particularly difficult for individuals who have had great success at achieving outcomes and are often defined by others as successful based on those outcomes. However, as people get older, the demands and the competition to attain outcomes in all the areas of personal importance become more difficult and require a much greater investment of our time, energy and talent. **It is during this time that, to perform at our best, we must shift to a more performance-based focus so our concentration is less distracted by things beyond our control.**



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HOW TO FOSTER AN OUTCOME-ORIENTED MINDSET? (CONT.)

This concept requires *two* important points of clarification in the areas of goal setting and motivation.

- Is it wrong to be motivated by outcomes?
- Is it wrong to use outcomes as goals to strive for?

› IS IT WRONG TO BE MOTIVATED BY OUTCOMES?

**Absolutely not.** Outcomes are not bad; they are wonderful rewards for our hard work. But we simply can’t control everything that goes into outcomes. So the more we invest ourselves in them, the more we will worry about everything that goes into them and focus less on the expression of our true talent.

› IS IT WRONG TO USE OUTCOMES AS GOALS TO STRIVE FOR?

Again, no. However, from each outcome goal, you must develop “positioning goals.” For each outcome goal, you must identify all factors that influence that outcome and distinguish between those that are and are not within your control. **You then must develop goals that are completely within your control in order to best position yourself to attain that outcome.** For example, you have no control over whether a professor will grade your paper fairly or how well the other students will perform on their papers. But you know that putting the time into studying to learn and then expressing what you’ve learned at the time of the test will best position you for a good grade.

The bottom line distinction between being performance – rather than outcome-oriented is to be more “verb” – than “noun” – focused.

The more you **focus on learning, relating, and performing** instead of on grades, relationships, and “the win,” **the better you will perform.**



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THE PARADOX OF SUCCESS

This brings us to the biggest paradox of success.

The more **performance-based** you are, the more outcomes you will attain; whereas, the more **outcome-oriented** you are, the more you get in the way of your best performance and, as a result, attain fewer outcomes.

So do the unnatural work of seeing yourself as absolutely “enough” because you can clarify what is important to you and act on those things. From there, apply your energies and talent toward those important things and let that process serve as your personal definition of success. From that expression, when you get an outcome, take the time to appreciate the enhancement of the experience. When you don’t get the outcome you wanted, it’s natural to be upset and disappointed, but it shouldn’t take long before you bring things back into perspective and appreciate that you worked hard on everything that was within your control. As long as you continue to see outcomes as “want to’s” and not “have to’s,” you have things in the proper perspective for optimal self-leadership.

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**Striving for excellence through full expression of our talents and energy leads to greater outcomes.** Striving for outcomes only gets in the way of excellence. It can benefit us only by providing motivation for training *before* a performance or an additional reward *after* a performance. To the degree it is part of our thinking *during* a performance, it only gets in the way.



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## RELY ON VOLITIONAL CONFIDENCE INSTEAD OF EXPERIENTIAL CONFIDENCE

We typically view confidence as something based on experience. Experience builds confidence; success builds success. This is called **experiential confidence**. We train to develop confidence and when we go to perform, we hope for the best and use the first few minutes of our performance to ascertain whether we have our "A" game that day. This is the most natural thing for us to do. When things go well, we increase our confidence based on our experience. There's nothing wrong with riding that wave of confidence when it happens. The damaging part of this perspective comes when things don't start out well. Self-doubt, over-thinking, and trying too hard usually results in worsening performances.

There is another form of confidence, called **volitional confidence** - confidence that we choose. Optimal performers push the envelope of their comfort zone when training in order to increase their zone of confidence.

<b>EXPERIENTIAL CONFIDENCE</b>	Confidence based on experience
<b>VOLITIONAL CONFIDENCE</b>	Confidence that we choose

They train to increase trust in themselves. But when it's time to perform, they focus on staying within a confidence level of "can." In other words, they stay within a performance level that they know they can do. That's confidence by choice.

Interestingly, whenever we perform and our "B" game shows up, and we believe we must have our "A" game to succeed, we usually push too hard and become overly self-conscious. Our performance deteriorates. However, if we try to continue to stay within a level that we can completely trust when we begin a performance poorly, our performance usually improves. In fact, many elite performers comment that some of their best performances followed an average start that they managed well psychologically and that then elevated to a flow experience. Choosing confidence and staying within a zone of "can" gives us the best chance to fully express our talent, rather than allowing over-thinking and self-doubt to interfere. This is relevant for athletic, artistic, or academic performances, and even for relating with others.



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## MANAGING FEAR OF FAILURE

Two components are always associated with things that are important to us: **uncertainty and cost**. Anything important has some risk of failure or loss, which in turn entails a real cost to us. When we act on important things, we will always experience these two factors emotionally. The most common term for this is called "**fear of failure**." It is the emotion associated with the thought of "What if I fail in this thing that is uncertain, risky, and important?" This fear can be felt in a variety of ways, from slight discomfort to reduced motivation to intense anxiety. How we manage these emotions will play a critical role in how we behave toward important things.

The most common reaction when we experience fear of failure is to process the emotion as negative. Most of us are trained growing up to see fear as something negative, and we are also predisposed to view fear as an emotion associated with threat. How many times have we been told, "Don't be afraid" when we exhibit nervousness before we act on something important? This well-intended comment only reinforces the notion that fear is a bad emotion.

When we perceive fear of failure as bad, we will try to manage this emotion in one of *two* ways:

- **Avoidance** – "If I *avoid* or *escape* acting on this important thing, then I don't have to feel the fear" (Procrastination).
- **Over-Control** – "If I do this important thing *perfectly*, then I have nothing to fear" (Perfectionism).

These responses result in chronic, excessive worry by trying to control too much until we develop unhealthy coping patterns. Or we avoid until we have to act, known as the "have to" model of fear management. The "have to" model of functioning is not a bad model per se. It provides two advantages: **increased motivation and concentration**. That's the rationale you will often hear from fear-based procrastinators: They wait until the last minute because they work better under pressure.



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## MANAGING FEAR OF FAILURE (CONT.)

What they are actually feeling is the fact that the “have to” nature of urgency dampens the importance of fear and heightens their concentration and motivation.

Unfortunately, there are *three* disadvantages of the “have to” model of fear management.

1. **We lose our error buffer.** If something goes wrong that we did not anticipate during this “have to” period, it moves from stress to crisis.
2. **We don’t think as critically or creatively** compared to our optimal capability.
3. **Even though we may finish things on time and feel the satisfaction of completion, the richness and fulfillment of the task is dampened** because we know that we waited until the last minute. Our guilt can lessen the richness or meaning of our acting on something important to us.

So how do we disrupt the natural cycle of avoidance or over-control in managing fear?

People who manage fear of failure well to optimize their performance tend to follow *three* unnatural and conscious steps:

- Learn to emotionally accept **fear**
- Learn to emotionally accept **failure**
- Ask themselves: “What is something that I can do toward this important thing *while* feeling afraid?”



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## MANAGING FEAR OF FAILURE (CONT.)

### › LEARN TO EMOTIONALLY ACCEPT FEAR

**First, they learn to emotionally accept fear.** They retrain themselves to view fear of failure as an emotion that’s associated with importance, not threat. They see this emotion as confirmation that they are really engaged in things that are important to them and truly appreciate the courage they are displaying by acting on something that has no guarantees. **This starts to shift their perception of fear from negative to positive, which disrupts their natural tendency to avoid or over-control.** The internal statement has to be, *“This is my body’s way of reacting to something that is important to me, which confirms that I am engaged in something meaningful - and how great is that?”*

### › LEARN TO EMOTIONALLY ACCEPT FAILURE

**Second, people who manage fear of failure learn to emotionally accept failure.** This sounds awful and against everything we’re taught. But to put fear in proper perspective so it doesn’t get in the way, we have to remove it from the “awful, unacceptable” category. **When failure is not an option, we become too preoccupied with it and we become too focused on not losing instead of being motivated to succeed.** As human beings, whatever comes under our personal category of “awful” consumes too much of our attention. We have to remove the failure from the awful category to free us up to focus on fully going for it.

- In essence, it’s about developing an emotional acceptance and embracing of fear as a confirmation that you are courageous enough to engage in things that matter to you.
- It’s accepting the possibility of failure for the opportunity to succeed.
- It’s an emotional movement forward, of going for it, instead of retreating to safety.



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## MANAGING FEAR OF FAILURE (CONT.)

This can be illustrated by the great athletes in critical situations who accept the possibility of missing that last shot for the opportunity of making it. Most people find the thought of failing in a clutch situation as too threatening and, therefore, retreat psychologically back to safety. In clutch and important situations, fear is naturally primary and faith is secondary in our focus. **The primary reason this different perspective leads to excellence is that it shifts our mindset so that faith in our abilities becomes primary and fear becomes secondary.**

### “HURT”

*To genuinely internalize the first two steps, we have to change the way we think about hurt.* People who effectively manage fear of failure have faith in their ability to deal with hurt. **Debilitating fear of failure comes from the intolerance or unwillingness to be hurt.** The only consequence of failing with something important is that it is emotionally painful. But if we know we can manage that emotional pain, we won’t fear it.

We don’t have to desire getting hurt, in the same way that we don’t have to desire failing. But we must develop a healthy confidence in our ability to manage uncomfortable emotions so we don’t fear them.

Strategies for how to manage upsetting emotions are described in the supplement, [Stress and Emotional Management](#).





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MANAGING FEAR OF FAILURE (CONT.)

> ASK THEMSELVES: “WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT I CAN DO TOWARD THIS IMPORTANT THING WHILE FEELING AFRAID?”

Third, once these people accept the emotion of fear as an emotion associated with importance and adopt a “going for it” mentality, they ask themselves, “What is something that I can do toward this important thing while feeling afraid?” Optimal performances occur when we commit to doing something toward that important thing even when we’re in touch with the fear of failure. Shifting one’s perspective to view fear as a positive emotion and committing to doing something toward that important thing while afraid is a strategy that gradually changes one’s perception and reaction to fear of failure. But the critical point here is doing something. No matter how bad our day is, no matter how busy or how bad we feel, we can always do something.

We all know that the key challenge with important activities is to get started. By committing to doing something, you are shifting to being more values-based instead of fear-based.

Notice how this third strategy for performance enhancement, managing fear of failure, incorporates the two previous strategies. It emphasizes focusing on behavior (instead of outcome) and finding a level of volitional confidence by committing to “can.” When we understand that most of our fear is associated with things of importance, we can manage that fear by bringing our focus back to doing something toward that important thing. Think of a time when you have broken through fear: You focused intently on something that was more important than the fear itself and used that importance to pull you through. The other important aspect about this perspective is that it doesn’t desensitize us to situations where our fear response is a detection of something truly dangerous.

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## STRIVE FOR EXPRESSION INSTEAD OF POTENTIAL

It is natural for us to use our values and a mentality of striving for potential as our guide to success. It seems like a great approach. Unfortunately, it can actually get in the way of our best performance and quality of life. It can lead to negative procrastination and perfectionism, excessive anxiety and stress, and at times, symptoms consistent with depression.

How can something that sounds so good work so negatively?  
Because it creates a **"chronically evaluative mindset."**

We never shut off our mind. We're constantly asking, "How am I doing now?" in everything that matters to us. The reason is that we can't turn the volume down in our head because of our values. We're acting toward things of importance to us. And if we are striving toward our potential in everything that's important to us, we're never feeling that we're quite enough. In fact, potential is a concept that is fear-based. We are afraid that if we don't strive for our potential we will become complacent. "Potential" is a basic lack of trust that we can motivate ourselves.

So what does work? Well, we're halfway there. It is important to use our values as a guide to our behavior because, as you have learned from your values assessment, values are critically important to our fulfillment. But instead of striving for potential, you must tap into one of the important determinants of success in adult life, **energy management**. If we use our values as the primary source of motivation and approach our values with sensitivity to energy management, we tap into our optimal behavior. Why? Because this approach fosters an **expressive mindset** rather than an **evaluative one**. An expressive mindset is what defines the zone or flow experience of optimal behavior. Most of us have experienced the zone or flow experience, in which everything clicks and feels almost magically effortless. Most of us believe that we can't control the zone experience. However, we can more consistently experience this state when we foster an expressive mindset.

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## STRIVING FOR EXPRESSION INSTEAD OF POTENTIAL (CONT.)

How do the principles of values and energy management work to foster an expressive mindset?

- **First, values can motivate us to act in ways that have meaning to us.** But acting on our values also makes us vulnerable to accepting any opportunities that can fulfill those values, leaving us over-committed.
- **Second, energy management keeps us honest with one of the most difficult truths to accept in adulthood. We will always have more demands and opportunities than we have time and energy.** Optimal performers accept and respect this fact and try to work with it.

So how do you use these principles to foster an expressive mindset?

The following is a *five-step* process that helps internalize this principle and takes only a few minutes a day.

1. Values
2. Acceptance and “Can”
3. Expression
4. Appreciation
5. Analysis



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“Life-Critical Have To’s”

Rely on Volitional  
Confidence Instead of  
Experiential Confidence

Managing  
Fear of Failure

Strive for Expression  
Instead of Potential

## STRIVING FOR EXPRESSION INSTEAD OF POTENTIAL (CONT.)

### › STEP 1: VALUES

At the beginning of each day, ask yourself:

“What is the most right way for me to devote my time and energy today?”

The word “right” is intended to tap into the values you have clarified, but in the context of a day. The answer on one day may be about balance, doing something in all the things that are important to you. One day it may be more singular and focused on an important project. On another day it may be about rest. Whatever it is, use the concept of “rightness” to tap into your values. This process doesn’t have to be long and structured. It can be short and intuitive, while you are getting ready for your day.

There will be *three* dimensions to the right devotion of time and energy:

1. Right things that are **natural and of interest**
2. Right things that are **perceived as necessary**
3. Right things that are **unnatural and unnecessary**

The first two dimensions have the extra motivational aids of being natural and necessary. Appreciate those additional aids and run with them. The third dimension is the area associated with positive change and will require courage and commitment. **These tasks must be seen as acceptable fights.** In addition, you can’t take on too many fights in a day without being overwhelmed. Clarify how many self-improvement goals you currently have and commit to only 1-3 per day. Each day, ask yourself, “What fights are most right for me today?” You may find there is a fight you choose almost everyday, others on a periodic basis.



## STRATEGIES FOR CREATING THE ZONE MINDSET

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## STRIVING FOR EXPRESSION INSTEAD OF POTENTIAL (CONT.)

### > STEP 2: ACCEPTANCE & “CAN”

Usually, you will react to the answer from **Step 1** with uncertainty as to whether you can get it all done. If you feel a twinge of doubt, you’re probably right. Reduce the activities until you feel a sense of confidence and a mindset of “I can do this.”

### > STEP 3: EXPRESSION

Once you have your “can do” list of values-based behaviors, you focus on expressing those activities the rest of the day. The day is about being fully engaged in the expression of your talent and energy, with courage and commitment.

### > STEP 4: APPRECIATION

At some point near the end of the day, spend a couple of minutes appreciating what you did and why. This may sound a little touchy-feely for some. However, there is a very practical reason for doing this. At the end of the day, we most naturally think of the things that didn’t get done and what we need to do tomorrow to make up for it. This triggers an overly evaluative, or judging, mindset and negatively affects our motivation and stress level. **Taking a couple of minutes to appreciate what you did and why counters this negative process.** We already know what didn’t get done. In addition, this step allows us to see how unexpected events provided opportunities for values-congruent behavior.

For instance, we may have planned to devote time to an important project but ended up devoting time to a friend who unexpectedly called in crisis. It is important to appreciate the values that are behind that behavior.

This is not intended to be a self-love fest, but a moment to take time to appreciate the courage you exhibited by committing to values-based behavior. Martin Luther King, Jr. often spoke of the heroism associated with living congruently with our values on a daily basis. This step is intended to be a form of self-management and self-encouragement for our difficult efforts.



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## STRIVING FOR EXPRESSION INSTEAD OF POTENTIAL (CONT.)

### › STEP 5: ANALYSIS

After spending time appreciating what you did during the day, ask yourself **“What is one thing I can learn from today that will help me tomorrow?”** This helps us continue to grow and improve. This process is analysis – which is not the same as evaluation.

- **Analysis** is an authentic way to learn and self-improve.
- **Evaluation** is too personal - we process it as good-bad or success-failure.

For example, we may look back at the day and realize that we fell short of a particular goal. **Evaluating our actions may cause us to conclude that we were lazy (or some other very negative, personal label).** This process only serves to negatively affect our motivation and make us vulnerable to repeating the same behavior. **Thinking analytically, we can look at the situation, try to understand the factors that influenced our behavior** (e.g., we took on too much today, we let fear get in the way, something unanticipated happened that was more important), and try to learn from the experience.

After you have appreciated and learned from your day, you can mentally flush the stress of the day with a clear conscience. In addition to fostering an expressive mindset and optimizing your performance, an expressive mindset helps you sleep better and fully restore your body and mind for the next day.



## PROCRASTINATION & PERFECTIONISM

Making  
Procrastination  
& Perfectionism  
Work for You

Negative,  
Fear-Based P&P

Values-Based  
Procrastination

Values-Based  
Perfectionism

### MAKING PROCRASTINATION & PERFECTIONISM WORK FOR YOU

The vast majority of information about perfectionism and procrastination portrays these concepts as negative. Most people will describe feeling very guilty about their procrastination and describe perfectionistic demands as excessively stressful. Actually, there are both healthy and unhealthy forms of procrastination and perfectionism (P&P). People who consistently function at their optimum utilize the helpful, facilitative forms of P&P; people who stay at their average tend to utilize unhelpful forms. The primary distinction is between **fear-based** and **values-based** P&P.

### NEGATIVE, FEAR-BASED P&P

It is important first to clarify that we are using “negative” as relative to your optimal capabilities. **Negative, fear-based P&P isn’t an awful thing; most people can live productive lives with it.** However, it can harm our productivity, fulfillment, and resilience. As we noted in the section about fear of failure, negative P&P occurs when we try to cope with fear of failure through avoidance or over-control. That section describes how to manage fear in a manner that reduces the negative effect on our behavior.

### VALUES-BASED PROCRASTINATION

Once we put fear into its proper perspective, we can consider values-based procrastination:

Psychologically accepting the reality that we will always have more demands and opportunities than time and energy to give to them.

This is especially true if we are living according to our values. Any opportunities that can fulfill our values make us vulnerable to saying “yes” to them without properly estimating the time they will take, leaving us over-committed. With values-based procrastination, we respect this truth and manage it appropriately.



VALUES-BASED PROCRASTINATION (CONT.)

Making  
Procrastination  
& Perfectionism  
Work for You

There are **three** steps to accomplish this task.

Negative,  
Fear-Based P&P

- > **COMMIT TO TAKING A 24-HOUR PAUSE BEFORE ACCEPTING ANY OPPORTUNITY, EVEN IF WE KNOW WE'RE GOING TO DO IT.**

Use that 24 hours to do an honest assessment of the time and energy it will take for you to accept the opportunity. **You must assume that your time and energy are already 100 percent committed and that to take this new thing on, you must give up something.** If you are unwilling to give up something for the new opportunity, you must have the courage to say “no.”

Values-Based  
Procrastination

Values-Based  
Perfectionism

Most of our stress comes from over-commitment due to an unwillingness to deny opportunities we think would be meaningful or from underestimating the time we think it will take to do something (people tend to naturally underestimate the time to accomplish tasks).

Once we are overcommitted, we have signed on for chronic stress - constantly juggling highly valued opportunities and giving them less time than they deserve, resulting in guilt.

- > **IN TERMS OF PLANNING, PRIORITIZE YOUR GOALS AND OPPORTUNITIES ACCORDING TO IMPORTANCE AND VALUE TO YOU**  
Accept that you will always have more on your plate than time to give to them - and **procrastinate on the things that have less importance.** Accept and embrace waiting until the last minute on things of less importance, and do not feel guilty it. It's all a part of your plan for doing the courageous act of devoting most of your time to the important things.
- > **FOR DAILY MANAGEMENT, IMPLEMENT THE FIVE STEP PLAN DISCUSSED IN THE “STRIVE FOR EXPRESSION” SECTION ON CREATING AN EXPRESSIVE MINDSET**  
By focusing on these five steps, you will be expressing your energy in an optimal manner and will be better able to maintain a healthy perspective in managing a daily world of too many demands.





Making  
Procrastination  
& Perfectionism  
Work for You

Negative,  
Fear-Based P&P

Values-Based  
Procrastination

Values-Based  
Perfectionism

## VALUES-BASED PERFECTIONISM

Individuals who use perfectionism in a facilitative manner commit to an active approach to their values, rather than being passive about them. They don't take their values for granted. They're not perfectionistic about accomplishing their tasks of the day, but they are perfectionistic about taking the time to clarify the values that drive their tasks.

Your mind and body begin to respond to the motivational power of values reflection.

Clarifying one's values doesn't take much time, but many people do it only periodically. They don't tap into the motivational power of their values. Instead they rely on fear, striving for potential, or deadlines as their primary source of motivation.

Healthy perfectionists realize that values don't have motivational power passively. These people know they must be dedicated to taking a few minutes a day to reflect on aligning their behavior to what feels most right on that day.

Using the five step program "[Strive for Expression Instead of Potential](#)" [[Pages 18-22](#)], especially taking the time to actively commit to [Step 1: Values](#) [[Page 20](#)] (determining the most right way to devote your time and energy), your mind and body begin to respond to the motivational power of values reflection.



## SUMMARY

As we said at the beginning of this topic, these perspectives are not natural and they are paradoxical. Internalizing them requires a focused commitment. But they accomplish much. These perspectives foster a level of resilience that helps you feel centered in the midst of great stress. Embracing fear while chipping away at the traps associated with striving for potential changes our natural perceptions. By staying within yourself, committing to your values, and managing the reality of your time and energy, you will tap into more consistent optimal expression of your talents.

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### SUPPLEMENT NOTE:

This educational supplement is intended to be a brief, practical guide to complement your results from the Life Values Inventory. The information stems from clinical and research experience, and professional literature, but is not reflective of all theories and viewpoints on this subject. We encourage readers to search professional literature and self-help resources for more expansive information. We also encourage readers who want to make positive changes in their lives to consider the additional support of a qualified, licensed professional. Professional support can help provide an objective, honest perspective within a caring, trusting environment. Fortunately, such support is more widely accepted today and is viewed as a means toward greater self-sufficiency, resilience, and personal responsibility.

