**Supplemental Material**

**for**

**Dr. Michael Pariser, Psy.D.**

**No More Mr. Nice Guy:**

**The Hero’s Journey**

**A Step-by-step Guide**

**to**

**Becoming an**

**Integrated Male**

***No More Mr. Nice Guy: The Hero’s Journey: A Step-by-step Guide to Becoming an Integrated Male***

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First Edition: 2020

Published by Michael Pariser, Psy.D.

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# 

# Chapter 0

# Preparing for the Journey

**Exercise 0.1**

**Defining your mission**

**Step 1.** Ask yourself: what has being a Nice Guy cost you? What price have you paid for always putting other people’s needs first? For not standing up for yourself? For hiding your authentic thoughts and feelings? For backing away from engagement with others? And what are you hoping to get in the future by changing? How do you want your life to be different, and in what ways will it be better?

**Step 2.** Now complete the following sentences. By being a Nice Guy…

In my romantic relationships, I have lost: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

…but I’m going to have: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In my profession I have lost: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

…but I’m going to have: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In my family and friendships, I have lost: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

…but I’m going to have: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In my creative and recreational endeavors, I have lost: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

…but I’m going to have: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In my sense of self, I have lost:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

…but I’m going to have: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In my general sense of purpose, I have lost: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

…but I’m going to have: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Now resolve: I will do my damnedest to get what I’m after, and I will never pay that price again!

**Exercise 0.2**

**Feeling Feelings**

**Step 1.** Body sensations. Sit or lie down in a quiet place, preferably not too brightly lit. Uncross your legs and let your hands relax on your knees or by your side. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for at least a minute until you feel yourself relax. Take your time with this. What feels like a minute in this state is usually only half of that.

As you continue to breathe, put your attention into your body. Go body-part by body-part. As you do, ask yourself two things: (1) which body parts[[1]](#footnote-1) are experiencing sensations; and (2) what is the nature of those sensations? Be specific. Was it tightness, agitation, queasiness, hardness, heaviness, lightness, or something else? Was the feeling painful or pleasurable?

Don’t forget your face. It’s almost always involved in emotional experience. Even if you try to mask your emotions from others, you can still feel the impulses toward expression in your facial muscles.

**Step 2.** Cognitions. These are the thoughts and beliefs that go along with your felt sensations and emotions. They are generally appraisals of the situation in which you find yourself. What thoughts come to your mind right now? For example, if you’re happy, your thought might be, “This is good. I hope it never stops.” By contrast, if you’re ashamed, you might be thinking, “I’m a really bad person, no one likes me, and I don’t belong here.”

**Step 3.** Action tendencies/desires. This is what you want to do, based on the feelings you have. If you’re angry, you might want to obliterate your perceived enemy. On the other hand, if you’re sad, you might want to be alone and grieve.

If you’re having trouble, here is a chart that might help you.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Emotion** | **Body Sensations** | **Cognitions** | **Action/Desire** |
| Happiness, Joy | * Swelling in the chest general lightness, * Overall rising feeling * Upturned eyes and mouth | * This is good * I like this * The world is a good place * Things are getting better | * Let’s keep going * I want more |
| Excitement | * Buzzing sensation * Slight smile * Eyes wide and looking around * Rising feeling * Difficulty staying still | * Something’s happening * I feel alive | * Things are about to happen * I want to get there |
| Sadness | * Weight in the chest * General heaviness, * Overall sinking feeling * Downturned eyes and mouth | * I don’t like this * Things are not going well * I’ve lost someone or something important | * I want things to change * I need to mourn this loss |
| Disappointment | * Body slumped or sagging * General heaviness * Sighing * Sad shaking of the head | * I expected better * This isn’t what I was hoping for | * Get the other to do better * Walk away |
| Hurt | * Sharp, stabbing feeling in the heart * Sad eyes | * This is painful * I was treated badly (or unfairly) * I didn’t deserve this | * Make the pain stop * Get redress |
| Anger | * Rigid body * Jaw set * Clenched fists * Focused eyes * Hot face | * I’ve been violated * I’ve been attacked | * Kill or be killed * Eliminate the irritant |
| Surprise | * Slight backing away or straightening * Head back * Eyes wide | * Whoa, I didn’t expect this * This is different | * I need to figure this out |
| Disgust | * Wrinkled nose * Mouth drawn down * Stomach contracted * Throat closed | * I hate this * This is gross, icky, filthy, toxic, unclean * This is morally repugnant * This offends me | * Keep my distance * I don’t want to be contaminated or poisoned |
| Contempt | * Arched back * Sneer, curled lip * Downward look | * This is beneath me * He is unworthy | * Get away * Stay above |
| Shame | * Slumped shoulders * Heaviness, defeated collapse * Head down * Flushed face * Gaze averted | * I am a bad person * No one likes or loves me * I don’t belong with other people | * Redeem myself and make it all better again * Run away and hide |
| Guilt | * Slumped shoulders * Grimace of remorse * Shaking head sadly | * I screwed up * I hurt someone | * Undo do the damage * Make amends |
| Fear | * Eyes wide, fixed on source of danger * Queasy stomach * Fight or flight responses (clammy hands, racing pulse) | * I’m in danger now, and I can see it in front of me. | * Get out now! * Get to safety. |
| Anxiety | * Tightness in the chest and shoulders * Shifting eyes * Beating heart * Agitation in hands and/or feet | * There is danger around here, but I’m not sure where or what it is | * I want to get away, but I don’t know which way is safe. |
| Stress | * Weight on the shoulders * Furrowed brow * Serious demeanor | * I’m under a lot of pressure * I don’t know if I can do it all * I can’t afford to fail * Win or lose – it’s all on the line * I’m all alone in this | * Don’t give up * Keep going * Don’t fail! |
| Depression[[2]](#footnote-2) | * Heaviness * Lifelessness | * I’m a loser * I’m all alone and I always will be * No one loves me, and no one ever will | * Give up * Commit suicide |

Figure 1. Emotional elements

**Step 4.** See if you can identify the situation that triggered your feelings. It can be something that just happened or an event from a few days ago. When you’ve located it, ask yourself what your emotions are trying to tell you about that situation? Go forward? Get out? Roll up your sleeves and resolve the problem?

As an example, use your current quest. Ask yourself: what do you most hope, and what are you dreading about the journey? What are you looking forward to, and what obstacles do you think will give you the most trouble? Your answers to these questions will provide you with useful knowledge about yourself, so that you can better anticipate the potential opportunities and pitfalls on the path ahead.

**Step 5.** Putting it all together. Write down what you discovered in the steps above.

Body sensations:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Cognitions: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Action tendencies/desires: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Context: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Now turn it into a summary sentence. Here are some simple examples of summary sentences:

I am hurt and angry, because Jane was supposed to have dinner with me, but she cancelled at the last minute. It makes me think that she doesn’t respect me very much, and I’m tempted to end my friendship with her.

Or, I’m feeling happy and grateful right now, because my boss just gave me a raise and a promotion. I get the sense that they really value my work here, and it makes me want to commit to this company for the long term.

Now you try it.

Summary:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 0.3**

**Spending Time…And Taking It Back**

**Step 1.** Name three things you do that use up time without providing a lasting reward.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2.** Ask yourself whether you could cut them down, and how much time you would gain each week by doing so.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Hrs.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Hrs.
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Hrs.

Total hours gained per week: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Step 3.** Write down three things you could do with the time you’ve saved.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 4.** Look at what keeps you doing these things. Then do your best to reduce or eliminate them from your weekly schedule.

**Exercise 0.4**

**Building Energy, Strength, and Stamina**

**Step 1.** Name three areas of physicality you would like to improve. Rather than superficial goals such as “bigger biceps,” or “lose my love handles,” try for deeper goals. Focus on what might help you with endurance and stamina. Try: getting fitter, dealing with unresolved medical issues, eating healthier, or getting better sleep.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2.** Name one thing you can do to improve in each one of those areas.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3.** Make a timeline for your process. For instance, if you have chosen to lift weights, how often will you do it, and for how long? If you want to eat healthier by cutting out carbs, what will be your carb count, and how long will it take you to get to that level?

**Step 4.** Now that you know what you want to do and how you want to do it, get started. Join a gym. Get a workout buddy. Get a dog and take him for walks. Make an appointment with a dietician or a doctor. Do what you need to be healthier and fitter for the rest of your life. You will look better and feel better about yourself. Potential partners will be more attracted to you, and you won’t have to work so hard to get them. You will stand a greater chance of finishing this journey. Best of all, you will most likely live a longer, happier, healthier life.

**Exercise 0.5 [BFA-1]**

**Emotional Support**

**Step 1.** Write down three possible safe people that might be able to provide support for you in your recovery from the Nice Guy Syndrome. Think about your family and friends. If no one comes to mind, do an internet search for therapists, counselors, or support groups. If you are employed by a company with an Employee Assistance Program, this is another resource. If you know someone who has been to therapy or a support group, ask them for a recommendation.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2.** Call your support team members to discuss your plan. You’ll want to tell them:

* What you’re trying to accomplish. Discuss the aspects of your Nice Guy persona you’re trying to change, and the specific goals you’ve set for yourself.
* Why you chose them/what they have most to offer. What are their respective strong suits?
* How they can help you. Here, you will want to be as specific as possible. Ask for regular meetings, honest feedback, direct observation, or whatever might be most helpful at the time. Having said that, there is much that will emerge in your journey that will be unpredictable, confusing, and in no way possible for you to anticipate. Let them know that as well.

And if you have a partner:

**Step 3.** Ask yourself if you believe your partner to be supportive of your journey. Some partners will do what they can to help. Others are too threatened. They think you’ll turn into an asshole or make some other change that will end the relationship. They may even be happy with the Nice Guy dynamic just as it is: with you serving them. You’ll need to determine in which camp your partner falls, and to do so, it’s best to talk to her. Here’s how:

* Announce your intention.
* Share your hopes and fears.
* Ask your partner to read the book and/or the guide.
* Ask for her/his advice and feedback. When you get it, let it guide constructive discussions. Try to understand it and look for its value.
* Check in along the way as you move along in the process.
* If need be, go for couples counseling.

# Chapter 1

# The Nice Guy Syndrome

**Exercise 1.1**

**Identifying Your Biggest Demons**

**Step 1.** Examine the list above. Identify the aspects that cause you the most pain and/or give you the greatest interpersonal problems. Choose two or three for each of the following areas of your life:

1. Romantic relationship
2. Work
3. Friends and family
4. Artistic and creative endeavors
5. Hobbies and recreation

**Step 2.** Get honest feedback about your self-perceptions from Step 1. We all have blind spots, so we may underestimate the magnitude of some of our flaws and thereby overlook significant ways we create problems for ourselves and others. Interestingly, we also overestimate some of our issues and try to compensate, when less extreme corrective action may need to be taken. Utilize members of your support team to provide you with feedback.

* What have they noticed about you?
* What problems do they see you creating?
* What do they like/dislike?
* What do they say that surprises, excites, or scares you?
* In what ways would they recommend that you change?

**Note:** In getting feedback, I have found that if I simply ask, “What do you see?” or “What don’t you like?” I will get a lot of hemming and hawing and answers such as, “Well, you could be a little more of this or a little less of that.” If you’re like me and don’t always read people accurately, you won’t know if “a little more” really means “just a little more” or “a whole Hell of a lot more.” So, here’s how I ask for feedback:

“Hey (support team member,) remember I told you I was working on becoming less of a Nice Guy? Well, as part of that process, I’ve been trying to take an honest look at myself, and I’ve noticed several things I do that might be giving me (and other people) problems. For example, I believe that I do X and Y and Z. It’s important for me to get your observations on this. I trust you. So, you can be kind, but please don’t pull your punches. It can only help me to hear the truth. If it gets to be too much, I’ll let you know.”

Then, when the support person responds, listen closely to his/her tone of voice. Does it sound genuine? Forthcoming? Direct? Clear? If not, push for greater honesty until you are sure you are getting that person’s truth. Then, based on the feedback you’ve gotten, revise your list.

Keep these issues at the forefront of your mind. They are the demons you’ll need to slay. They are also the signposts by which you’ll measure your progress along the way. If these issues lessen in intensity or frequency, you’re probably moving in the right direction. If they get worse, you might be heading off on a side road, and it will be worth examining what might be going wrong, perhaps with professional help.

Important note: sometimes things get worse before they get better. They certainly can feel worse for a while as you open yourself up to painful feelings, self-evaluation, and authentic criticism. Stay the course and see if things get better for you in the long term.

**Exercise 1.2 (BFA 2)**

**Fess Up**

**Step 1.** Take a piece of paper and divide it into three columns. Label the first column “Hidden/Secret,” the second “From Whom” and the third “Because…” Then number several rows. You can have as many rows as you’d like. So, your paper should look something like this:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Hidden/Secret | From Whom | Because… |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Etc. |  |  |

**Step 2.** Fill it in. Think of some things you don’t share with other people. It could be:

* You really don’t like something(s) about your partner…or her mother.
* You use porn or visit massage parlors
* You cannot manage your use of substances
* You steal from the cash register
* You hate your job and your colleagues
* You lust after your girlfriend’s sister
* You find your best friend annoying sometimes.

Once you’ve written what you’re hiding, add the person or persons from whom you’re hiding it and what you fear would happen to you if the truth were to be revealed.

**Step 3.** Go down the list and, taking the items one by one, out yourself. Start slow, taking the easier ones first. Find people to tell your secrets to. They can be members of your support team or your therapist. However, it will probably be most effective if it is the person from whom you’ve been keeping that secret…at least within limits. You probably don’t need to call the IRS and explain how you’ve been cheating on your taxes. And you won’t benefit much by walking into your boss’s office and describing in detail what you and his daughter did last night at the Christmas party. On the other hand, you’d be surprised at the benefits of opening up to the people you love.

Let’s take one of the most common and scariest scenarios: you’ve been cheating on your partner, either with another person or by using professional sexual services. You may be convinced that revealing that information would guarantee the end of your relationship. However, research shows that most partnerships survive infidelity. Moreover, coming clean about your behavior can lead to perhaps the most productive conversations you and your partner have ever had about the issues bedeviling your relationship.

**Exercise 1.3**

**Going to Hell**

**Step 1.** Look at the list above of Hell’s characteristics and check off all of those that fit your experience. Add any others that come to your mind.

**Step 2.** Share your list with one or more of your support team. See if they can help you illuminate aspects of your Core Pain. They might even be willing to relate some of their own.

**Step 3.** Think about going deep into your Personal Hell. Write down your fears about doing so. Share those fears as well.

**Step 4.** (And this is the big one.) Lie down someplace quiet. Imagine yourself in your dark world. Let your mind go wherever it wants to go with the dark world. While you’re there, observe everything you can. Take the time to let this wash over you. Breathe. Stay as long as you can before getting out. Let yourself feel what it is like to be down there. Open yourself to these painful feelings as deeply and as completely as you can.

**Step 5.** Write out in explicit detail what your Personal Hell looked like, sounded like, felt like. Allow yourself to describe it using as many of your senses as are relevant.

**Step 6.** Describe your Personal Hell to someone you trust. Ask that person if he/she has ever had a similar experience. Compare notes on one another’s dark world. (Note: you can combine steps 4 and 6 by doing the imaginative work in the presence of another. That’s what I did in my therapy.)

**Step 7.** Repeat. You will need to do this exercise quite a few times before you’re fully comfortable going into your darkness. Just keep trying. Eventually, you’ll understand that Hell is a feeling, not a collection of facts about you. But that takes time and effort. What will make the difference between success and failure here is your willingness to keep trying, no matter how hard things seem at the beginning.

# Chapter 2

# The Making of a Nice Guy

**Exercise 2.1**

**Tracing Your Emotional Trajectory**

**Step 1:** Try to answer these questions with a brief description.

* What was your role in the family? How did that work to create stability harmony, or unity in the family? How did that work to get you what you wanted or needed? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* How are you the opposite of your father? Name three ways you tried to be different from him.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* How did you take care of your mother? What would you do to ensure that she was OK? What were you afraid she would have done if you didn’t? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* What were the messages you got in childhood that showed you it was not OK to be who you were inherently? Think about experiences of rejection. For instance, when you:
* Were scolded or punished unfairly.
* Were only valued for your accomplishments.
* Were neglected, felt lonely, and no one paid attention to you.
* Were picked last for the team or not chosen to be in the club or the clique.
* Heard critical statements from parents, teachers, siblings, classmates, such as “You’re too loud,” “too shy,” “too selfish,” “not nice,” “ugly,” “fat,” “a crybaby,” “a wimp,” etc.
* Had your feelings ridiculed, disregarded, or told were not acceptable through statements such as: “Stop crying or I’ll give you something to cry about.” Or: “Anger has no place in our family.” Or: “You’ll get over it.”

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**Step 2:** The Past Meets the Present

Take a piece of paper and draw a table like this (or simply draw a vertical line down the middle. Number the left side. You can have as many numbers as you want.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Past | Present |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

On the left side, write down the qualities or characteristics you learned about yourself in Step 1. Once you have, ask yourself: to what extent do these messages still operate? On the right side, give an example of how that message impacts you in your current life. It can be a limiting belief, a sense about yourself, an incident from your life, a role you play at work or with your partner, or anything else you can think of. Once you have all that done, look at the ways the past is still alive in your life today.

**Exercise 2.2**

**Identifying and Altering Your Organizing Principles**

In this exercise, we will identify those rules that still operate in the different spheres of your life. You can hear them when you use words like must, should, have to, need to, always, never, every, etc.

**Step 1.** Complete the following sentences.

In my romantic relationships…

* I must always: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* I must never: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

At work, or with my professional colleagues…

* I must always: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* I must never: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In my friendships and family relationships…

* I must always: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* I must never: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In my creative/recreational life…

* I must always: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* I must never: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2.** Replace the words “must always,” with “prefer…” and “must never” with “prefer not to.” Then add: “But sometimes…”

In my romantic relationships:

* I would prefer to: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

…but sometimes: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* I would prefer not to: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

But sometimes: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

At work, or with my professional colleagues…

* I would prefer to: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

But sometimes: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* I would prefer not to: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

But sometimes: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In my friendships and family relationships…

* I would prefer to: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

But sometimes: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* I would prefer not to: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

But sometimes: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In my creative/recreational life…

* I would prefer to: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

But sometimes: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* I would prefer not to: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

But sometimes: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3.** Say the sentences out loud, both the old ones and the new ones. See if they feel different to you. Say them to a friend or a partner. Ask that other person if they are experienced differently by that person.

**Step 4.** Practice wherever you go. Whenever you tell yourself that you must or must not do something, replace the problematic commandment with something softer and more flexible. I think you will be pleased by how much better you feel and function and how different will be the responses you get from other people in your world.

**Exercise 2.3**

**Rewriting the story**

**Step 1.** Think about the ways you continue to tell yourself the same story and utilize events in the present to confirm that childhood belief. For instance:

* Do you see yourself as inherently bad in some way (defective, alien, sub-human, rotten, not-good-enough, ugly, stupid, etc.)?
* Do you imagine your badness makes you unacceptable or unlovable to others?

More specifically:

* When you get rejected by a woman, do you label yourself as an “unlovable loser”?
* If your boss discovers a mistake you made, do you drop into a shame spiral and foresee nothing but professional failure?
* When you’re alone at night, do you imagine it’s because no one wants to be with you?
* Do you have a punishing Inner Critic, who constantly reinforces your conviction that you can’t do anything right?

You get the point. Any time you see yourself as mythically bad and all alone, or you imagine the future as bleak and hopeless, you’re stuck in your historic childhood narrative.

**Step 2.** Think about what you know now that you didn’t back then. What was really going on? Ask yourself:

* How old were your parents when you were born?
* What was their cultural background?
* What was their educational level?
* What did they know about parenting before you were born?
* What were their emotional issues?
* Was either one or both of them using drugs and alcohol?
* What was your parents’ relationship like? Were they happy with each other, or was there friction between them?
* How much did one or both of your parents work? Were they out of the house a lot?
* What were the family’s financial circumstances? Did financial needs put stress on your parents?
* Were emotions talked about in the family? Suppressed? Acted out?
* Were you and the family isolated emotionally, or did you have support from friends and extended family members?
* Was there someone you could go to for help, or did you feel alone?

With this new information, rewrite the story and try to explain your parents’ actions and reactions in a different way. See if you can describe the family’s emotional dynamics as complex interactions. Try to avoid having heroes and villains, abusers and victims. Just make them flawed human beings struggling with problems that may have been too big or complex for them to handle.

**Step 3.** Take this new story for a mental test run. Imagine facing a situation that would trigger your old story. This may be facing rejection from a woman, or being reprimanded by your boss. Allow yourself to react with your new narrative in mind. How might it differ? How do you feel?

**Step 4.** Try the new story on for size in the real world. Walk around the world and see your interactions through this new filter. If a woman doesn’t want to go out with you, try replacing the feelings of depression and shame with a more complex understanding. It’s not that you’re a universally unlovable loser, it’s that this particular woman isn’t available or isn’t finding you desirable this particular night. There are other women and other nights. You will find them.

# Chapter 3

# Learn to Please Yourself

**Exercise 3.1 [BFA 4; BFA 8]**

**Giving Up Approval-Seeking**

**Step 1.** Look at the following list of approval-seeking behaviors (also found in the text.) In which are you most engaged? Add to the list. You can ask others for feedback on the things you do to please people and get brownie points. Write down examples of the activities to which you are most attached.

* Being smart
* Having a hot girlfriend
* Having a pleasant, non-threatening voice
* Appearing unselfish
* Making other people happy
* Being different from other men
* Never getting angry
* Being a good worker
* Being nice
* Respecting women
* Never offending anyone
* Staying sober
* Being in good shape
* Having one’s hair just right
* Being a great dancer
* Being the best at a sport
* Being a good lover
* Being the most sensitive
* Having a clean/hot/fast car
* Dressing well

**Step 2.** Now pick two of the activities you do the most. Take one thing and stop it; take another and increase it. Do that for 30 days.

**Step 3.** Evaluate the results. Compare what you gave up with what you increased and examine the results. Address it with others. Ask them if they noticed any difference in your approaches. Examine how each one made them feel, and if they preferred one to the other.

**Exercise 3.2 [BFA-6]**

**Methods of Hiding**

**Step 1.** Here is a list of methods you might use to hide (also in Chapter 3 of NMMNG.)

* Lying – telling complete falsehoods and partial truths, omitting information, glossing over negative aspects.
* Drawing on one’s account – claiming credit for good deeds to offset bad ones.
* Fixing – avoiding responsibility and instead working to make the other person less upset.
* DEER responses – defend, explain, excuse, rationalize.
* Turning the tables – shame dumping, shifting the focus to the other person’s actions.
* Walls – withdrawal, addictions, distractions, humor, sarcasm, intellectualism, perfectionism, etc.

In which are you most engaged? Add to the list. It may be helpful to first recognize that these ways of relating are happening constantly in even tiny ways. Take a week to simply notice when they are happening. Write down as many as you can. You can also ask others for feedback on the things you do. As you do, ask yourself what you were afraid would have happened if you allowed the information to become known.

**Step 2.** Just as with the approval-seeking habits in Exercise 3.1 (above,) pick two of the activities you do the most. Take one thing and stop it; take another and increase it. Do both for 30 days.

**Step 3.** As above, evaluate the results. Compare what you gave up with what you increased and examine the results. Address it with others. Ask them if they noticed any difference in your approaches. Examine how each one made them feel, and if they preferred one to the other.

**Exercise 3.3**

**Get Down with Your Bad Self**

**Step 1.** Make a list of as many bad qualities as you can. Don’t hold back. Put in the evil thoughts, the dark desires, the disgusting bodily functions: all the ugly parts of you. But don’t stop with the overtly bad. Make sure you include your human limitations, the qualities that make it difficult for you to achieve what you want in life and with other people. Think of being not good enough at science to become a doctor or not having the pipes to become a professional singer. In my case, I’m just not tall enough to be the power forward for the Los Angeles Lakers.

**Step 2.** Take each item on your list and put it into the following sentence: “I am too…/am not enough… \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and I wish it were otherwise, but there’s nothing I can do about it, so I accept it. And from now on, I will not hide it from myself or from anyone else.” Then smile broadly and take to heart the words of Michael Jackson: “I’m bad. I’m bad. I know it. I’m bad.”

**Step 3.** Here’s a fun one. Share your list with someone else and compare notes. See who can come out worse!

**Exercise 3.4 [BFA 5; BFA 7]**

**The No-Lose Situation**

**Step 1.** Ask yourself: what would you do if you were not concerned with gaining approval or avoiding disapproval? How would you act if you knew that the people who care about you would never leave you or stop loving you, no matter what? Make a list of all the things you can think of.

**Step 2.** Choose one thing on your list, and, assuming it will not hurt someone seriously (including yourself) and is not against the law, do it. Pay attention to the feelings you have as you do it, both pleasurable and painful, and see whether your actions impact the love that others have for you.

**Step 3.** Report your experience to your support team members and other friends. See how bad others thought it was. Ask them if your actions reveal you to be a bad person.

# Chapter

# 4A

# Wantless, Needless, and Loveless

**Exercise 4A.1 [BFA 13]**

**Dispensing with Covert Contracts**

**Step 1.** Identify at least one covert contract that is active with your partner (or close friend.) If you have trouble doing so, look for the following:

* When you think of doing something for someone else, you look forward to the other’s reaction and the reward you will get.
* Once you’ve done something nice for someone, rather than a sense of completion, you have a lingering, anxious expectation until you get the reward you were hoping for.
* You have a sense of “rightness” if you receive your desired reward and disappointment if you don’t.
* Over time, you may have developed a festering resentment that you are unappreciated for all you do and/or that you do more than your partner does.

**Step 2.** The Overt Contract. Say the deal out loud to your partner: “When I do \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for you, I want you to do \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for me.” For instance, “Baby, when I cook dinner, I want you to wash the dishes and clean the kitchen without me having to ask.” Do this even if it seems as if the two parts are unrelated or completely out of proportion. “Honey, if I change the oil in your car, will you give me an erotic massage.” Ask your partner how it feels to hear that. You may be surprised to learn that it’s a bargain she’s actually willing to make.

**Step 3.** The Non-Contractual Approach. This is a very different approach from both the covert and overt contracts. Just say what you want as a stated desire without making it a quid-pro-quo agreement. Rather than, “Honey, when I put the dishes in the dishwasher the way you want me to, I expect you to reward me with appreciation and sex,” try, “Honey, you look so beautiful I want to make passionate love to you right here and now.” Forget the dishwasher. See how it feels to say that without trying to earn it in advance.

**Step 4.** Ask your partner if she experienced a difference between the covert contract, on the one hand, and either the overt or the non-contractual approach, on the other. Listen to her feelings. Then commit to giving up covert contracts forever. This, of course, is a tall order. Nonetheless, you can try your best. If you find yourself falling back into covert contracts, look at what it is about this particular thing that prevented you from being open and honest. Use your screwups as navigation points to better understand your inner emotional world and change for the future.

**Exercise 4A.2 [BFA 14]**

**Stopping Compulsive Caretaking**

**Step 1.** Identify two or three automatic caretaking behaviors from the list above or add your own.

**Step 2.** Pick one caretaking behavior and stop it. [Note: Because Nice Guys have a difficult time differentiating between caring and caretaking, stop giving completely (except to young, dependent children.)] Tell people what you are doing, so they won’t be confused. Observe your feelings and other people’s reactions.

**Step 3.** Pick a different caretaking behavior and do it as much as possible. Again, tell people what you are doing, so they won’t be confused. Observe your feelings and other people’s reactions.

**Step 4.** After a week or so, compare the difference in the outcomes of steps 2 and 3. Which worked out better for you? In what way? How did it feel afterwards? What approach did your partner prefer? Why?

**Exercise 4A.3a [BFA 15]**

**The Victim Cycle**

**Step 1.** Make a list of your covert contracts, compulsive caretaking behaviors, and ways you give to get.

**Step 2.** Watch yourself work these Boy Scout routines on your partner. Pay attention to your feelings of excitement and hope as you do, along with your thoughts, such as, “She’s really going to love me for this,” or “She can’t possibly be upset with me when I do this for her!”

**Step 3.** Observe your acting-out behaviors (or the ones you’re tempted to enact) if things don’t go the way you want. Do you:

* blow up in a fit of rage?
* retreat into isolation and sulk?
* make cutting remarks and hurtful “jokes?”
* embarrass your partner in public?
* arrive late or miss appointments?
* “forget” to do things you’ve agreed to do?
* criticize your partner or comment on her shortcomings?
* withdraw from contact or threaten to leave?

**Step 4.** Keep a record during the week. Count the number of times the cycles occurred. At the end of the week, show the record to your partner and ask her for her feedback. See where she believes she fits into the narrative and how the cycle plays out for her.

**Exercise 4A.3b**

**The Victim Triangle**

**Step 1.** Identify a way that you and your partner play out a victim triangle scenario. With each one, notice who played what role. Who was the Victim, the Perpetrator, and the Rescuer?

If you were the Rescuer, pay particular attention to your feelings of inflation when you succeeded and were rewarded or deflation when you failed or weren’t acknowledged for your “heroic” efforts.

**Step 2.** Talk to your partner about your interpersonal dynamic and show her how it is playing out. Work together to take responsibility for meeting your own emotional needs.

**Step 3.** Monitor progress over time, and if need be, have a consultation with a couples counselor. There is no shame in getting professional help.

# Chapter 4B

# Want, Need, and Self – The Power of Desire

**Exercise 4B.1**

**Reanimating Desire When Alone**

**Step 1.** Think about a decision you might be struggling to make. It can be what you want for dinner or which movie do you want to see. Make a rough list of the alternative choices. As you do, throw out the obvious losers, until you’re down to two or three.

**Step 2.** Do a cost-benefit analysis. Look at what you get and what you lose in each case. Make sure you have something on both sides (cost and benefit) for every choice, because let’s face it : if there were only good or bad, you wouldn’t be struggling with the decision. In the words of The Clash, “If I stay there will be trouble. If I go it will be double.”

**Step 3.** Close your eyes and, one at a time, imagine that you’ve made the different choices. Take your time and really see yourself taking the first chosen action. Then do the next and the next until you’re out of choices. With each one, pay close attention to your emotions. What does it feel like in your body? Your breathing patterns? Your sense of yourself? Which choice feels best in your heart and in your gut?

**Step 4.** If you’re still having trouble, try asking yourself:

* If this were my last day on earth, what would I choose?
* If there were no possible negative consequences for my actions, what would I take?
* Can I reduce the cost or increase the benefit of one of the choices?

**Step 5.** Don’t second-guess yourself. Act on your felt “best choice,” and see how it works out for you.

**Exercise 4B.2 – Reanimating Desire**

**with Another Person**

**Step 1.** Imagine or, better yet, plan an activity with your partner or friend. Don’t make it too big and important. Where to go for dinner is a good starter, or what movie to see. Under normal circumstances, as a Nice Guy, you would defer to the other. “What do you want to do?” But this time is going to be different. This time, you’re coming in with what you want.

**Step 2.** Go off by yourself! Doing so is key, especially in the early stages of the learning process. If you don’t, you will likely move into automatic agreement and accommodation. So, to get hold of what you want, find a quiet space. Take a walk, lock yourself in the bathroom, or go sit in your car. Whatever your choice, do not, under any circumstances, engage in a discussion with your partner until you have determined what you want.

**Note:** One trap is to think about what that other person would want, rather than what *you* want. Don’t do that. Pretend that person doesn’t exist. Ask yourself: if she weren’t there, what would I want?

**Step 3.** Now brace yourself. Then go and announce your desire. Make sure you are straightforward and clear. Don’t beat around the bush, hem and haw, or apologize. Just say what you want.

Of course, there are better and worse ways to do so. One worse way is to be overly passive, tentative, or apologetic, like, “Gee, Baby, do you think it would be OK if we, um, sorta, maybe, um, went to see the new *Avengers* movie?” This approach is all about what she might want and downplays what you want.

Another worse way is just the opposite: overly aggressive. “Get your coat on. We’re going to see the new *Avengers* movie.” That’s all about what you want and steamrolls over her desires.

The better way is not passive or aggressive, it’s assertive. Don’t apologize, don’t order, just express your desire and leave it to her to respond in her own way. Try, “Honey, I’ve been dying to see the new *Avengers* movie. Let’s go tonight.” Or: “How would you feel about Nobu tonight. I’ve been craving sushi all day.” If you get an agreement, great. Get your coat on and go. If not, move on to Step 4.

**Step 4.** Assuming your partner doesn’t agree to your wishes, it is now up to her to express hers, at which point, the two of you can negotiate with clarity and honesty. A key is to not limit your choices to just the obvious “mine” or “yours”. Let’s use an example.

**Exercise 4B.3**

**Reanimating Desire in Higher Stakes Issues**

**Step 1.** As with Stages 1 and 2, take the time to determine what you want. Make sure to do a thorough cost-benefit analysis. Carefully think through all the choices. Get feedback, if need be. Ask friends or support team members not only what they think of your desire, but how they imagine your partner might respond.

**Step 2.** Announce to your partner that you would like to talk about this issue. Try to go into detail as little as possible, saving that for the discussion itself. That might be difficult, because your anxious partner may try to initiate discussion before you’re ready to do so; and you may be drawn to respond. Don’t do it. Announce the subject and schedule the discussion. If she pushes for more, stand your ground: “I don’t want to start talking about this until we have the time and space to do it right.”

**Step 3.** Make sure the two of you have plenty of time and space to do so, then sit down together and discuss the issue. Lay out your hopes, fears, and desires. Remember, it is not a crime to want anything.

In your conversation, look to make your partner a team member, so the two of you are working together to solve a shared problem. Take in your partner’s hopes and fears. Don’t dismiss them, honor them; not by agreeing to them, but by giving them time to come out, listening to them closely, and recognizing that they are your partner’s legitimate desires. Look for areas of commonality and difference, problems that might arise. Be creative. Try to come up with novel solutions that recognize the struggles you’re each facing and meet the needs of both partners.

**Step 4.** Agree on a plan. Make it the best one possible. It probably won’t be perfect, because nothing in life is. And let’s face it: if there were a perfect solution, one or both of you would have thought of it already. Hopefully, however, it gets both of your important needs met, even if you don’t get everything you wanted in the bargain.

**Note:** Even after the decision has been made, keep your mind open to new information, emerging alternatives, and changes of heart. Keep the discussion going, if needed. When the time comes to implement your decision, do a final review of your agreement, then take decisive action. As the outcome emerges, along with any feelings you or your partner have as a result, adjust your decision accordingly.

**Exercise 4B.4 [BFA 16]**

**Putting Your Own Needs First**

**Step 1.** Decide to put yourself first for a whole week. Try to do it with everything, but if you can’t, try selecting specific areas of your life. Tell the people around you what you are doing. Since being selfish runs counter to your entire way of being, you might ask a support team member to help and encourage you in this process.

**Step 2.** As you put yourself first, pay attention to your tendency to revert to old patterns, such as caretaking and automatic altruism. If you see them, remind yourself of your commitment to honor your desires. Renew your determination and try again. If your wants are in conflict with another’s, announce your intention and stick to it as best you can. Remember, as Dr. Glover advises, you don’t have to do it perfectly. Just do it.

**Step 3.** At the end of the week, ask yourself what it was like. Did it affect how you interacted with others? What type of thoughts occupied your mind? How did it feel? Now, ask the people around you what they noticed. Compare the areas in which you put yourself first with those in which you remained an afterthought. Hopefully, the differences will be abundantly clear.

**Exercise 4B.5**

**Accepting Getting without Giving**

**Step 1.** Think of something you want from your partner. It can be a massage, an errand, help with a project, or even something sexual. This may be difficult to do, but come up with something even if it seems inconsequential.

**Step 2.** Ask your partner to give it to you or say yes to the offer. Do not offer anything in exchange. Tolerate your anxiety until you get an answer.

**Step 3.** Assuming the answer is yes, sit back and enjoy the experience. Do not repay it in any way. Just accept it as a gift and say thank you. See how it makes you feel.

**Step 4.** Do it some more and get used to it!

# Chapter 5A

# Reclaim Your Personal Power - Part 1

# Staking Your Claim

**Exercise 5A.1**

**Your Personal Power Bill of Rights**

**Step 1.** Say to yourself (silently or out loud): “I have power, and I have the right to exercise my power to get what I want in life.” Say that every day until you really start to believe it.

**Step 2.** Take a pen and a piece of paper. At the top of the page, write: “I have the right to…,” then list those actions you have the right to take. It might be difficult at first, but just keep at it. Ideas will come to you. You might ask friends and family what might be on their list. Here are some to help you get started.

I have the right to…

1. Feel whatever I feel.
2. Think whatever I choose.
3. Care about what I care about and not what I don’t.
4. Speak my truth to whomever I choose.
5. Walk away from relationships or engagements that don’t work for me.
6. Act in my own best interest
7. Do the things that please me, so long as they don’t infringe on the rights of others.
8. Not apologize for who I am.
9. Make mistakes in the course of learning and life.

You get the idea. Now make your list. Make it as specific and personal as you can. If you would like, you can record this as you do it and listen to it each morning for a week.

**Step 3.** Look for opportunities to exercise your power in the world. Again, you don’t want to hurt or subjugate others. Just live your life freely. As you begin to achieve your goals, notice how you feel powerful. It will probably begin as a vague sensation, but your repeated experience of efficacy will increase that feeling over time. Use it to act with strength in the future, setting up an adaptive spiral of feeling powerful and exercising power.

**Exercise 5A.2 [BFA 18; BFA 19]**

**Take off the Blinders**

**Step 1.** Pick one problem you face in life. It can be a single emotionally unresolved situation or a repetitive dynamic.

**Step 2.** See if you can unearth the part you play. Ask yourself, “What is my specific contribution? What am I doing that keeps making this happen?” Look for patterns in your behavior, thoughts, and feelings. Examine your expectations and how they led you to act in non-constructive ways. Ask yourself what you believe others may be thinking and feeling. Ask friends or team members to give you honest feedback on the problem and your ways of thinking about it. See if they have suggestions for improvement. Then make a list of what you discovered.

**Step 3.** Once you have all the information, turn it into an action plan. How can you address the problem better in the future? Use this formula: “From now on, in this situation, I will do the following things differently:

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 4.** It’s time to talk the talk and walk the walk. When that situation arises again, do what you have committed to doing. Own your part, speak your truth, and take responsibility for the impact of your actions. Be a leader, not a victim. And stick with your plan, even if it’s a struggle. This is not just an exercise. It’s what you want to do for the rest of your life.

**Exercise 5A.3**

**Being a Man of Your Word**

**Step 1.** Know that nothing will happen unless you will it, so, declare that from this moment forward, your word will be your bond. You will commit to always say what you intend to do and do what you say, unless urgent circumstances prevent you.

**Step 2.** Take the action you announced. If you can’t, make sure you give the other person as much notice as possible. We often hesitate, thinking that the unwelcome news will be met with some form of punishment or disapproval, but that only compounds the problem instead of solving it. Be open and transparent about your intentions and actions, and do it in a timely manner.

**Step 3.** The next time a situation arises, and you are tempted to lie, hide, “color” the truth, or make up a convincing story, just stop. Remember your commitment. Then tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If you can’t bring yourself to do that, perhaps you’re doing something you’d be better off not. You might want to look more closely at that.

# Chapter 5B

# Reclaiming Personal Power - Part 2

# Cutting Fear Down to Size

**Exercise 5B.1**

**Lowering the Bar**

**Step 1.** Ask yourself: if you could do anything you want in life, what would it be? For instance, you might:

* Ask for a raise or a promotion
* Quit an unsatisfying job
* Start your own business
* Go back to school
* Confront a conflictual situation
* Pursue a lifelong goal
* Spend more time with a hobby or interest
* End your marriage
* Move to another place

Look at the list above and choose the most important one. If the most important one is not on the list, add it. Set it as your goal.

**Step 2.** Turn your big goal into a graduated series of smaller, achievable goals. Write them down. Make these steps very small, at least initially. You may find that you have to fight the desire to create big goals instead of small steps.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, etc.

**Step 3.** Do the first task. Reward yourself for clearing that hurdle.

**Step 4.** Take each goal in succession. Reward yourself every time you clear the bar, then set the bar just a little bit higher, until you finally achieve your original goal.

**Exercise 5B.2**

**Learning to Leap Higher**

**Step 1.** Think about the problem you’re trying to solve and the reasons you haven’t been able to solve it. Analyze your weaknesses. Ask yourself:

1. What don’t I know that I need to learn? (How to approach without appearing nervous or needy? How to avoid making her feel uncomfortable in front of her friends?) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What equipment/resources don’t I have that I need to use? (Am I in shape? How am I dressed? Can I afford to buy her a glass of wine?)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Who is a good role model to follow? (Mark Manson? Corey Wayne? Neil Strauss? Mystery?) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

As with so many questions that require clear-eyed self-evaluation, outside feedback can help you.

**Step 2.** Identify the solutions. Learn what others have done. What is it they know that you don’t? Ask yourself:

1. Where can I find helpful resources? (The internet, audio books, workshops?) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What can I do to acquire the necessary skills? (Study, take classes, get coaching, practice?) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Who might be your best mentor or a guide? (A successful friend, a mentor, a professional dating coach?) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3.** Utilize feedback from your successes and failures. What did you do that worked? What failed? What adjustments can you make to do better next time.

1. I learned: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. I succeeded in: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. I now need to: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Use the steps you just created. Then practice, practice, practice.

**Exercise 5B.3**

**The Inner Critic and the Internal Father**

**Step 1.** Think about three different but complimentary qualities you would want in an internal father, perhaps wisdom, strength, and compassion. Think about one person you know who embodies each one of those attributes. If you don’t know anyone personally, think of historical figures, world leaders, fictional characters from books or movies, or even the actors who portray them. List them here.

* Compassion\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Strength\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Wisdom\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2.** Put them all together into one person or envision them as a kind of team. Try to really take in the personalities and feel them as a part of you, so that you can really hear him/them speak with compassion, strength, and wisdom. If you’re having trouble, imagine you speaking to your son (even if you don’t have one.)

**Step 3.** Have your Internal Father talk to you before, during, and after anything you attempt that scares you. Rather than “you,” have that voice use “we,” and “us” as much as possible. That way, you might have a better sense that you’re not alone in your anxiety-provoking endeavors, but that you have solid backup. You might consider recording this voice as you imagine him helping you with different problems. Then listen to the recording each day for a week. Really internalize that voice.

**Exercise 5B.4 [BFA 43]**

**Asking for help**

**Step 1.** Go back to the goal you developed in Exercise 5B.0. Ask yourself what aspects of the process are most difficult or frightening. Name three for which you could use someone at your side to encourage you or to provide some function you can’t do yourself. Think about what you would like to feel as a result of this help.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2.** Choose teammates for those functions. By the way, there is no set number or specific function. It’s what you need to get the job done. If you’re picking up a girl in a bar, it could be a wingman. If you’re applying for a job, you’ll want several people to write you letters of reference. If you’re running for public office, you may need an entire army of volunteers.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3.** Contact your potential teammates and enlist their support. Tell them exactly what role you want each of them to fulfill and the details of that role. Think about:

* The function of the role and its specific requirement
* The amount of time or resources entailed
* Specific dates and times when your teammates will be needed
* Any reward you are offering in exchange.

Assuming they fulfill their part of the bargain well, don’t forget to acknowledge them, no matter the outcome.

**Exercise 5B.5 [BFA 40, 41]**

**Facing Your Fear**

**Step 1.** Think again of the goal you set earlier in this chapter, the one that triggers the most fear. Create a blueprint for achieving that goal. Make your plan as simple or as elaborate as it needs to be

**Step 2.** Focus intently on the fears you feel, not just when you visualize your goal and create your blueprint for action, but as you prepare to take your first step. List three different ways your ambition could end in disaster:

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3.** Talk to a trusted friend or a member of your support team. Announce your plan, then ask for two things: (1) to help you when your courage flags; and (2) to hold you accountable.

**Step 4.** Feel the fear and do it anyway. Start with your first step and as the fear wells up, let it fill you. Then take the time to let it subside on its own. Breathe into it, even imagine creating space around the physical sensations associated with the feeling. Do this so that it lessens enough to keep moving forward. If it doesn’t, tell yourself you are brave enough to go forward anyway.

Proceed along the steps of your blueprint until you have achieved your goal. As you go, do whatever you need to bolster your courage. Talk to a friend. Listen to an inspiring podcast or watch a heroic movie. Above all, take heart that you have made it this far. Oh, and read the example below.

# Chapter 6

# Reclaim Your Masculinity

**Exercise 6.1**

**Reconnecting to Your Masculinity**

**Step 1.** Look at the list above. See how many of those qualities apply to you. Add more if you can think of them.

**Step 2.** Pick one thing from the list, and for the next week, do the opposite. Talk loudly, smell badly, be decisive, have a good belly laugh, assert yourself. Swagger a bit. See how it makes you feel to do so. If this feels out of reach, think of role models and the qualities you most admire in them. Try to embody their traits as you walk around the world.

**Step 3.** Look at this list of longer-term ideas. Pick (at least) one and commit to it. Tell others, so they can help hold you accountable. See how you feel as you’re doing it. Make it part of your life.

* Increase your physical strength, health, and fitness. Join a gym and/or hire a personal trainer or start your own exercise regime. Make it one where other men are involved. Not yoga, spinning, Pilates, or any other class predominately populated by women.
* Give up the overuse of drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, pornography, compulsive masturbation, and other anesthetics and distractions.
* Find safe, fun, healthy places to be aggressive and competitive. Join a softball league, a chess club, go do paintball, take up martial arts, etc.
* Face your fears. Do something that frightens you. Try skydiving, scuba diving, speaking in public, telling a joke. Whatever scares you, do it.
* Embrace male sexuality. Announce yourself as a sexual being. Talk about sex more openly. Explore your different desires. Initiate sex more frequently with your partner. Buy a book on interesting sexual activities and positions. Tell a dirty joke or two.

**Exercise 6.2**

**Breaking the Monogamy with Your Mother**

**Step 1.** Look at the list above. See how many of those qualities apply to you. Add more if you can think of them.

**Step 2.** Pick one thing from the list, and for the next 30 days, do the opposite. Don’t make any women happy. Don’t spend time with platonic women friends. Don’t look for the One True Love. Take care of yourself.

By the way, 30 days is a long time, so this exercise might be hard to do at times. Give it your best shot, and take note of what makes you want to go back to your old patterns.

**Step 3.** Look at this list of longer-term ideas. Pick (at least) one and commit to it. Tell others, so they can help hold you accountable. See how you feel as you’re doing it. Make it part of your life.

* Avoid taking care of anyone but yourself (or small, dependent children.) Whenever you feel the urge to do something (unasked) for a woman, just turn in the other direction. See if she notices that things aren’t being done for her. See if she loves you any less.
* Look at the ways you interact with women. Ask yourself if you behave this way because you really want to or because you just think she wants you to. Do something different for a week. See if anything changes. Ask yourself (and her): is it better or worse.
* If you don’t have a partner, do this as you date. Don’t try to impress a woman. Don’t try to show her what a good guy you are or prove that you’re lovable. Just lean back a little and don’t smile too much. Then, as you look at her, remember that in the long run, this woman cannot change the way you feel about yourself. Now ask yourself: “Is this one really worth it?”

**Exercise 6.3**

**Reconnecting with Other Men**

**Step 1.** Look at the list above. See how many of those qualities apply to you. Add more if you can think of them.

**Step 2.** Pick one thing from the list, and for the next 30 days, do the opposite. Don’t call your women friends. See yourself as a man among men. Admit to your male “faults,” for instance liking to curse, knowing the names of all the cars on the road, or hating to cook or clean your apartment.

**Step 3.** Look at this list of longer-term ideas. Pick (at least) one and commit to it. Tell others, so they can help hold you accountable. See how you feel as you’re doing it. Make it part of your life.

* Attend personal growth workshops or weekend retreats for men, where you can open up your definition of healthy masculinity so that it includes both strength and sensitivity, feelings and action.
* Join a men’s therapy group
* Start your own men’s group
* Call your male friends and go have dinner or drinks.
* Mentor other men.

**Exercise 6.4**

**Rapprochement with Your Father**

**Step 1.** Think about your father differently. Look for aspects of his personality that you admire. In particular, explore the ones you most emphatically rejected. Are there qualities that can be useful to you in your life? Note that you don’t need to be Pollyanna-ish about this. If your father beat you and your mother, there is no good side to that. However, with regard to his more ambiguous actions, if you can see your father less as a total villain and more as a flawed human being, could you find a silver lining to his boorish behavior? Here are some examples.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The dark side | The light side |
| He was never home | He worked hard to support his family. |
| He fought with your mother | She’s no day at the beach. You’d probably have fought with her, too, if you were married to her. |
| He yelled a lot | He was open with his feelings. He was not afraid to let others know what he was thinking. |
| He drank too much. | He was trying to cope with the stresses of work and family when mental health treatment was not a choice for him. |
| He was aggressive. | He was decisive. He took charge. He went after what he wanted. |
| He was depressed and shut down. | He had a very challenging life and did not have the skills to seek help. |

**Step 2.** Break down the all-or-nothing split. See if you can take on any of the positive aspects of your father without going too deeply into the negative. Own a bit of your own aggression.

If possible, sit down with your father and talk to him about what life was like for him when you were growing up. Ask him about his growing up. Explore his values and share yours with him. See if you have any common ground. You’re both adults now. Reconnect as men. Carry him with you as a more positive presence. Have him help you be the man you both wish he could have been.

# Chapter 7A

# Get the Love You Want - Part 1

# Starting a Relationship

**Exercise 7A.1**

**Partner-Potential Assessment**

**Note:** OK, I admit. This approach can seem calculating. However, while it appears mathematical and cold, it has certain benefits for recovering Nice Guys. Thinking about a wide range of her qualities, not just her beauty, forces you to make more detailed, nuanced, and granular assessments. And the cold, hard numbers will allow you to cool your heels just a bit, rather than rushing headlong into a relationship with someone who might appear wonderful at first blush but reveal less attractive qualities over time. Try it.

**Step 1.** Make a list of 10 qualities you want in a woman. Feel free to use those I noted above. Put the important ones first. For each of these qualities, you will be using a scale of 0-10. So, with 10 qualities, each 0-10, you will have a potential total score of 100.

After 2 or 3 dates, rate your new potential partner’s different qualities using the measuring scale, above. Obviously, the closer she is to 100, the better, and the closer to 0 the worse. For practice and as a control, use this scoring mechanism first on one of your problematic past partners. It will be fun to see how low the score can really go.

**Step 2.** Use the overall score to decide whether she is different from the troubled women you’ve dated in the past, and whether you want to see her again. You can triage the results. Anyone from 10 to 30 or 80-100 gives you an easy decision to make: very high scorers are potential partner candidates, while you will readily move on from those in the bottom tier. Women in the middle present more difficult decisions, and you may need to do more assessment to make your ultimate choice.

**Step 3.** Continue evaluating and modifying your assessment over time. All people have strengths and weaknesses. As you get to know her better, is she getting better scores or worse? Does she have serious deficiencies in one particular area? Can you live with that? Remember: you’re thinking of spending the rest of your life with her. Make sure she’s different…and better! So, keep thinking as you’re dating. Take your time, keep asking questions, and eventually, you’ll figure it out.

**Note:** There are two traps you will want to avoid. The first I will call the Beautiful Woman Trap. If your date is particularly attractive, you may evaluate all her other qualities higher. In psychology, this is known as the Halo Effect. Her one spectacular attribute makes you want to give her other (perhaps lesser) qualities higher marks than you would otherwise. Just remember that you don’t know her yet. Take your time. If need be, ask yourself: if she were a lot less beautiful, would you think the same thing about the other facets of her personality?

The second possible snare I call the Nice Girl Trap. This woman is more of a Nice Guy than you are, a real Goody Two-Shoes, who will let you walk all over her. She will express no original thoughts or opinions, and she will want you to make all the decisions. While this might be good practice for a recovering Nice Guy, she is simply the flip side of the bitchy, demanding, unhappy women you’ve dated before. She is no more emotionally intelligent, and she has no “stuffing.” Pretty soon, she will bore you to tears, and, worse yet, drive you back into the arms of that angry, reactive fixer-upper you’re trying so hard to avoid.

**Exercise 7A.2**

**Learning to Lean Out**

**Step 1.** On your next early-stage date, lean back in your chair. Literally. Don’t convey over-eagerness and scare her away by looming into her personal space or staring down her décolletage. On the other hand, you don’t want to slouch back into a posture of disinterest. Just a slight lean back. Hopefully, it will prompt her to lean into you.

**Step 2.** From time to time, lean in and make contact, either physically or emotionally, then lean out again. It doesn’t have to be a big thing, just a touch on the arm or the shoulder when she laughs at a joke or has an emotional moment. Make sure to lean back after the moment has passed.

**Step 3.** While leaning back physically, lean back emotionally as well. Use your (slightly) reserved position to both enjoy the situation and evaluate your date. Rather than reading her your resume, try to get to know her. Ask a lot of questions.

Don’t think about the future. Focus on the date at hand. Do you like the way you are together? Are you interested in what she has to say? Does she make you laugh? Most importantly, do you find it easy to be the integrated male you aspire to be, or do you find yourself sinking back into Nice Guy default mode?

Look carefully for significant red flags. Does she avoid difficult topics? Talk non-stop? Is she very reserved? Overly touchy? Is every conversation about her family? Her unresolved emotional issues? And if you suspect that something is a problem, see if you can discuss it. A big red flag is if she can’t talk about the red flags.

By the way, before trying this approach on a real date, it might help to practice this exercise with a friend. A platonic female friend would be best. Get as much feedback as you can on the feelings your behavior triggers in her.

**Exercise 7A.3 [BFA 33]**

**Getting into the Driver’s Seat**

The following is a list of actions you can take that put you in the driver’s seat. Many of these are skills you’ve learned in earlier chapters of this guide, but now you will put them together to get the love you want.

**Step 1.** Listen to your heartfelt desires, take responsibility for your own needs, and put yourself first. Ask yourself what would make you feel good? Rejuvenated? Excited? Full of life? Once you know what you want, go for it, and when you do, just announce your plans. Don’t ask her for restaurant recommendation or date ideas. Figure it out yourself. If you have some question about whether the particular activity or type of food would be a problem for her, you can ask for the information, but not for permission. Then set the time and place and ask her to trust you. On the night of the date, take charge. Pick her up and take her where you want to go. Have a good time. Treat the waiters well. Pick up the check.

**Step 2.** Embrace your masculinity. In interacting with your date, assert yourself: express your thoughts and feelings freely and spontaneously. Eliminate covert contracts; say what you want her to give you. Be in integrity. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Be a man of your word.

**Step 3.** Resolve to continue taking the lead throughout the course of the relationship. Learn to like the feel of the wheel in your hands. You will ultimately feel manlier and stronger for having done so.

# Chapter 7B

# Getting the Love You Want - Part 2

# Ongoing Relationships

**Exercise 7B.1 [BFA 31]**

**Relationship Assessment**

**Step 1.** Identify ways in which you and your partner work together to make your relationship painful and dysfunctional. Look for repetitive patterns that create arguments, fights, and other forms of interactional conflict. Use one of the following structures:

I do this: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and my partner does this: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, so together we create this: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Or:

I’m afraid that if I did this: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, my partner would do this: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, so together we remain stuck in this: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Step 2.** Share your thinking with your partner and get her feedback. See if she agrees. Ask her to do her own description of the relationship problems. See if you agree with her. Assemble the complete list. Figure out which you want to work on first.

**Step 3.** Ask yourself, for each of the issues:

1. Can I solve it alone?
2. Can she and I solve it together?
3. Do we need professional help?

**Step 4.** Based on your answer to the questions in Step 3, take the appropriate action.

If you can solve it alone:

* Commit to change, but don’t just announce a vague emotional goal, like “be more empathic” or “don’t feel so resentful.” Make your stated objective concrete and observable.
* Take action and monitor yourself along the way. Are you doing what you said you would? Are things improving?
* If necessary, get help from friends, support team members, or a professional therapist.

If the two of you feel you can solve it together:

* Sit down and make a plan. Make sure the plan is specific and operationalizable. Don’t leave it vague or overly broad.
* Stick to your end of the agreement. Do your part.
* At the same time, monitor your partner’s contribution as well. You both need to be working on the problem to resolve it.
* If things don’t improve, don’t give up. Seek professional help.

If you need professional help…

* Agree on what professionals: couples counselor, individual therapists (for both of you) or some combination. Don’t procrastinate and let the problems fester. Make appointments quickly. Hold yourself and each other accountable in doing so.
* Go to your appointments regularly. And keep going. Nothing will happen if you give up or dismiss the process as useless.
* Keep assessing whether the counseling is helping the situation. If not, find another. But in any case, keep going until you have the problem resolved.

**Exercise 7B.2**

**Cleaning Up Your Side of the Street**

**Step 1.** Determine your contribution to the problem. Visualize yourself at your most Nice Guy moments. What types of behaviors do you engage in? What does your role look like, feel like? For help, look at the following list. Ask yourself which of the issues is most relevant to you. Add to the list as other ideas occur to you.

* Monogamy to mother
* Look at what you’re getting, not what you need to give
* Familiar childhood dynamics
* Covert contracts
* Secretive behaviors
* Compulsions and addictions
* Passive-aggressive behaviors
* Accepting/reinforcing behavior you don’t like
* Unable to say no. Having porous boundaries, or no boundaries at all
* Putting your partner’s needs first and feeling resentful
* Hiding your feelings

**Step 2.** Make the changes you need. Do what’s necessary to get the job done. Here is a list of skills you’ve already acquired along the path of this journey. Use one or more of them to resolve the specific issues you want to resolve

* Take the lead
* Express your feelings
* Put your needs first, or at least on the table
* Accept only love, not love substitutes
* Reveal yourself to safe people
* Replace covert contracts with overt contracts or asking directly
* Take responsibility for your own needs
* Practice assertiveness; set and hold good boundaries
* Avoid happily-ever-after fantasies; face reality
* Develop integrity
* Embrace your masculinity

**Step 3.** Observe the changes. Reinforce the ones you like. Don’t reinforce the ones you don’t. Do this incrementally over time. As you do, discuss the shift with your partner. See if she likes the difference as much as you do.

**Step 4.** See if the relationship improves the way you hoped. If not, begin a conversation with your partner about what still has to change, this time with her contribution in mind as well.

**Exercise 7B.3**

**Behavioral Reconditioning for All**

**Step 1.** Triage her behaviors. Get in touch with your feelings about her actions and divide them into three groups: (a) I like it, (b) I wish she would do it but doesn’t, and (c) I don’t like it.

**Step 2a.** If her actions are desirable to you, look for ways to reinforce them more. Praise her, thank her, and reciprocate. So, if she cooked you a beautiful dinner, compliment her cuisine and give her a long, sensual massage. Who knows? Good things might come your way…very soon.

**Step 2b.** If you want her to do something she isn’t doing, you’ll need to ask. As nervous as it might make you to do so, you stand a far greater possibility of getting what you want by asking for it than by simply waiting for it to occur. As you probably know, this fact is particularly salient (and anxiety-provoking) in the sexual arena, where the chances of her doing something she’s never done before, and without your asking, are basically zero. So, man up and say what you want. You just might get it. By the way, once she is doing what you want, go back to Step 2a. Reward and reinforce. A lot.

**Step 2c.** If you find her actions undesirable, look for ways you have been reinforcing them. Sometimes these will be subtle or unconscious on your part. It can be as simple as paying attention, or as overt as active enabling. Nonetheless, if the behavior is repetitive, you are necessarily providing some reinforcing activity.

Once you identify your part, you’ll need to change what you’re doing. You may wish to discuss your decision with your partner, or you may simply implement your plan. In either case, you’ll want to stop reinforcing the behavior and observe the impact. Hopefully things will change right away, but if they don’t, stay the course. As a rule, unreinforced behaviors disappear with time.

**Extra Credit Exercise**

**Checking In**

And here’s something else you can do to improve your relationship. This is an exercise I used to do as part of a men’s emotional support group to which I belonged. It promotes openness, empathy, and emotional honesty. You can do it daily, weekly, whatever. The more frequent, the better. To do it, you will need a quiet space and a timer that makes a sound.

* Person 1’s check-in: Person 1 has 10 minutes to say how (s)he is feeling without interruption of any kind.
* Person 2’s check-in: Person 2 has 10 minutes to say how (s)he is feeling without interruption of any kind.
* Person 2’s reaction: Person 2 has 10 minutes to provide emotionally honest and caring feedback to Person 1’s check-in.
* Person 1’s reaction: Person 1 has 10 minutes to provide emotionally honest and caring feedback to Person 2’s reaction.
* Follow-up: Both people can now engage in an open dialogue about important emotional issues that arose during check-ins and reactions. This discussion can be time limited or open-ended.

# Chapter 8

# Get the Sex You Want

**Exercise 8.1**

**Changing your Mind About Women and Sex**

**Step 1.** Pick three of the ideas from the list above. Make them the ones you hold most strongly, the ones you’re absolutely sure are true.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2.** Take a poll of the women you know; not just your partner, but all the women in your life (OK, you can skip your mother, if you want.) Ask them if they agree with your convictions. If not, what do they believe?

**Step 3.** Revise your notions about sexuality, and, use your new perspective to express your sexual desires and get what you want from your partner.

**Exercise 8.2**

**Eliminating Anti-Sexual Behaviors**

**Step 1.** Look at the list above. As with earlier exercises, choose one behavior to eliminate (or do the opposite of) and one other to increase.

I will eliminate: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Do this for a week or a month. See what happens.

**Step 2.** Again, as with previous exercises, find one behavior to increase.

I will increase: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Do this for a week or a month as well. See what happens.

**Step 3.** Discuss the impact of your behavior on your partner. See what felt better to her (and to you!)

**Exercise 8.3 [BFA 37]**

**Your Sexual Being**

**Step 1.** Take a notebook or a computer and detail your sexual history. Think about all you’ve done.In particular, pay attention to those things that trigger the greatest fear and shame. Find a supportive, caring person (or people) in your life with whom you can safely discuss these topics. Share your sexual history with that person, including:

* Successes and failures
* Likes and dislikes
* Ongoing erectile and ejaculation problem
* Nice Guy behavior in the bedroom
* Fantasies and fetishes
* Masturbation
* Use of pornography, prostitutes, chat rooms, etc.
* Favorite pornography
* Acting-out or offensive behaviors
* Other sexual secrets (homosexual experimentation, etc.)

By doing so, you will learn that what you do is no more shameful than what other men (and women) have done for thousands of years.

**Step 2. *[BFA 38]***Taking matters into your own hands and feeling your way into the present. This is about who you are now. Taking matters into your own hands entails learning to please yourself.

Lie on the bed. Put on soothing music. Touch yourself. You may feel silly or ashamed at first, but after a short time, you will hopefully find yourself relaxing into the sensations. Take your time. Do it the way you like it. Experiment. The point here is not trying to reach orgasm as fast as possible, if at all, but rather to explore and discover what you really like. What kind of touch? Of what parts of your body? What really turns you on?

**Step 3.** Your burning desires. Be honest with yourself. What do you really want? What would make you feel charged, empowered, excited, connected, scared (in a good way)? Is that deeply moving emotional-sexual engagement with a loving partner? Promiscuous sex with random partners? Threesomes? Foursomes? Orgies? Tantra? Role play? Dominance? Submission? Bondage? Some unique fetish? Whatever it is, own it. You’re never going to get it otherwise. You have to do you, or you’re never going to be happy.

# Chapter 9

# Get the Life You Want

# Discover Your Passion and Purpose in Life, Work, and Career

**Exercise 9.1 [BFA 42]**

**Don’t Do It Right, Just Do It**

**Step 1.** Choose a task like cleaning the garage, doing your taxes, or sorting the clothes in your drawers. Give yourself a certain amount of time to work on the task. Set an alarm, and when it goes off, walk away. Or…

Choose a task and a friend who will be the referee. Do the task until the referee says, “Good enough.” Then walk away. Or…

Do something you’re bad at. If possible, do it around other people. If you can’t hit the side of a barn with a tennis racket, do that. If you’re horrible at singing, get up on stage at the local karaoke bar. If you’re bad at word games, try a crossword puzzle.

**Step 2.** With all of these (and any other humbling activities you can think of,) take things slowly, feel your own anxiety, shame, or fear, and sit with it until it passes. Notice your tendency to want to overcome your limitations and do the task perfectly. Then let those fantasies go and live in your messy, imperfect humanity.

**Exercise 9.2 [BFA 44]**

**Sabotaging Self-Sabotage**

**Step 1.** Choose a goal, preferably a small but somewhat difficult one. It could be losing ten pounds, going to the gym regularly, getting to work and other places on time, or anything you’ve tried more than once in the past and failed to accomplish. Begin as usual trying to accomplish that goal.

**Step 2.** Make a list of your normal means of self-sabotage. Include all the devious ways you’ve undermined progress in the past.

**Step 3.** As you make headway to your goal – or don’t – pay attention to the moments you feel impulses to self-sabotage. Try to connect the impulses to the fears you might have about disapproval or rejection. Admit that you’re scared. Work on tolerating the fear without acting on the impulses. If need be, get help in holding yourself back.

**Step 4.** Announce your discoveries aloud, preferably to a member of your support team. Say something like, “Right now, I’m tempted to go after this other goal, even though I know it might sabotage my project.” Or, “I’m doing well, but I’m nervous that I can’t keep it going. I don’t want to wait for the other shoe to drop, so maybe I’ll just throw it down. That’ll bail me out.” Then work with your support team member to stay the course.

**Step 5.** Keep going until you achieve your goal, repeating the first four steps as needed.

**Exercise 9.3**

**Clearing Up Your Self-Image**

**Step 1.** Write down three truth propositions about yourself. With each one, make sure it’s more than a simple fact. Make a real, hard unshakable conviction. For instance, rather than saying, “I’m 25 pounds overweight,” make it more like, “I’m a fat slob and no woman could love me until I lose 25 pounds.” Or, instead of, “I was let go from my job last month,” try, “I got fired because I’m no good at what I do, and I’ll never find another job again.” Go to town. And for added effect, video or audio record your statements.

Proposition 1: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Proposition 2: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Proposition 3: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2.** Go to three people you know and trust. Ask them to evaluate the “truths” you wrote in Step 1. Write down their alternative propositions.

Proposition 1:

* Person A: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Person B: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Person C: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Proposition 2:

* Person A: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Person B: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Person C: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Proposition 3:

* Person A: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Person B: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Person C: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3.** Compare the results. Look for the truth in all the viewpoints. See how the eye of the beholder influences the way you are experienced by others and by yourself.

**Step 4.** Really try to see yourself as others see you. For the next week (and perhaps for the rest of your life,) whenever you experience yourself in the way you originally did, substitute one of the ways your friends experience you. See how that makes you feel.

**Exercise 9.4**

**Getting Out of the Rut You’re In**

**Step 1.** Choose an area of your life that you find stressful and in which you are in ongoing interactions with a consistent person or group of people. The obvious choices are your primary romantic and professional relationships, but it could also be a club, a team, or any group of which you are a part. Identify the role you play within that system. Are you the worried leader, the irreverent joker, the silent resentful outsider, the frustrated martyr, the overworked do-gooder?

**Step 2.** Compare the dynamics of the above system with those of your childhood family system and look for the similarities. Are you playing a familiar role? Are there parallels between significant figures in the present system and those in your childhood? Was your mother emotionally reactive and rageful, for instance, and do you work for a boss like that? Take the time to write out what these dynamics looked like in the past and now.

Interestingly, you might be in a mirror-opposite version of your past, which is fundamentally the same system, only reversed. So, for example, instead of you being the neglected child of an overworked father, you’re the overworked father not paying attention to your own children. Instead of living with a depressed mother locked up in her room, you’re depressed and alone in your room.

**Step 3.** Try to change the dynamics. Figure out which ones are within your power to change and focus on those. Get ongoing feedback from others and adjust your behavior accordingly. Notice shifts in the dynamics of the system. Notice pushback from the system when you attempt to make a change. Pay attention to your feelings as you and the system change.

**Step 4.** If you can’t change the dynamics, you might decide to leave the system. As I am fond of telling my patients, “When they say you’re too big for your britches, it’s time for bigger britches.” If you need, refer to Chapter 11 on endings.

**Step 5.** Beware of “rinse and repeat.” Yes, you’ve solved the problem in the immediate time frame, but watch out for the tendency to become part of the exact same kind of system again. You need to pay attention to your ongoing issues, so your past stops repeating itself, and the future has a chance of looking different…and better.

# Chapter 10

# Assertiveness

**Exercise 10.1 [BFA 20, 22, and 23]**

**Assertiveness in Action**

**Step 1.** Think of a situation that causes you emotional distress, something that really upsets you. Resolve to take an assertive approach to dealing with the situation.

**Step 2.** Do the prerequisites. Lie down and get clear about your feelings. Then decide what you want to change and what a viable alternative might be.

**Step 3.** Get a piece of paper and fill in the formula:

* I understand that you feel/want/think/ believe\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* However, when I see/hear you say/do\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* I feel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* Because I think that\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* So, I would like you to do or stop doing\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* And if you don’t, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* will happen, or I will do\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 4.** Set a meeting with the other person and speak your truth. Use whatever parts of the formula you feel to be helpful and/or necessary.

**Exercise 10.2**

**Overcoming Obstacles to Assertiveness**

**Step 1.** Think of an issue for which you want to take an assertive approach.

**Step 2.** Make a list of the three obstacles you expect to encounter.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Step 3. For each obstacle, have a plan. Use this formula: “When (this obstacle) occurs, I will (take the following action.)”

1. If \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_occurs, I will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. If \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_occurs, I will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
3. If \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_occurs, I will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Step 4.** Try it out in real life. See if your predictions were correct about which obstacles you would face and if so, note whether your interventions worked. Keep trying until you become good at handling even the trickiest of situations.

# Chapter 11

# Being a Good Ender

**Exercise 11.1**

**What Color Are the Flags**

**Step 1.** Identify the problem areas. What are the red flags you’re seeing? Make a list of all the negatives that you experience.

**Step 2.** Determine the level of incompatibility. How red are the flags? Sometimes very. Your lover wants children, and you don’t, or vice versa. Your company is moving to another city, but you’re unwilling to uproot your family. You’ve decided to get sober, but your friends are continuing to drink.

On the other hand, sometimes the incompatibility is more of a felt sense. You can’t really put your finger on the exact nature of the problem; you just know things don’t feel right to you. It’s still an issue, though, and needs to be addressed. Work to identify it.

**Step 3.** Try to resolve the issue(s). Work on it together. Keep at it as long as it takes, assuming the problem is getting better. If need be, go to the HR Department, a trusted advisor, or a couples counselor. Set boundaries if you need to. Negotiate.

**Step 4.** Assuming it doesn’t work out, you’ll need to end things. How? In the famous words of Paul Simon, “There must be 50 ways to leave your lover.” Of course, “Slip out the back, Jack,” is not a particularly nice way. Since we’re talking about the beginning of the relationship, however, you’re not obligated to offer an elaborate process. Just a phone call to say, “I like you, but I just don’t feel the kind of chemistry I need to take our relationship to a more committed level.” Then go. Don’t hang around out of guilt, asking if she’s OK. “Just drop off the key, Lee, and get yourself free.”

**Exercise 11.2**

**Getting Ahead of the Curve**

**Step 1.** Pick an area of your life in which you’ve been engaged steadily for more than six months. It can be personal, professional, or recreational. Identify three key aspects of that relationship that would describe the level of its quality. In the professional sphere, they might include pay, job satisfaction, position, peer relations and respect, or future prospects. In a romantic relationship, you might look at warmth and closeness, sexual satisfaction, time spent together, or emotional support. Choose the most meaningful ones for you.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2.** Graph the level of relationship quality. Take a piece of paper and draw a horizontal line and a vertical line that meet in the lower left-hand corner. The horizontal line will be time. Divide it into useful intervals, like 1-year or six-month periods. The vertical line will be the quality level on a scale of 1-10. Then, thinking about the three key aspects you selected from step 1, draw graphs of each one separately.

**Step 3.** Examine your graph. Are all three heading in the same direction or different ones? How would you sum up the combined trends? Close your eyes and picture your graph and the situation itself. Then add a fourth graph line: the overall level of relationship quality. Is it up, level, or down?

**Step 4.** Based on the direction of the line, you know what to do next. If it’s up, relax and enjoy. If it’s flat, keep your eye on it and see if it takes a definitive direction. If it’s down, get ahead of the curve.

**Exercise 11.3**

**Walk Like a Man**

**Step 1.** Consider the situation and the issues that make you want to leave. Be clear with yourself about what makes those issues so emotionally intolerable or logistically untenable. Write them down, so you won’t forget them when it comes time to lay them out. If need be, ask a friend to help you prepare. Assume you will be anxious as Hell.

**Step 2.** Plan to talk face to face. You can do it in private or with others present (a couples counselor, if personal; HR in the professional sphere,) but don’t chicken out and opt for a text or email. An in-person discussion will make you feel better about yourself in the long run, and if the job or woman has meant something important to you, that person deserves the courtesy of personal engagement and the chance to state their desires as well. Besides, if you do leave a voicemail, they’ll probably ask for a meeting anyway.

**Step 3.** Lay out the problems and your history of attempted solutions. Acknowledge your failure in fixing your problems. Don’t blame the other person or the situation. Discuss the issues as co-created, not individual. At the same time, don’t slip into the old cliché, “It’s not you, Honey, it’s me.” No, it’s both of you and your repetitive painful interactions.

**Step 4.** Listen respectfully to the other person’s reactions. Engage directly. However, assuming your mind has not been changed, make it clear that you are *unwilling* to try further. This is a critical attitude. If you say, “I can’t,” you will get arguments, like “If only you would…” or “If only we could….” If you say, “I won’t,” then you are setting a boundary. Be assertive and hold that boundary. The other person may beg and plead, and you will need to be strong, but you can do it. Announce that, once and for all, it’s over. Stick to your guns.

**Step 5.** Work on the necessary logistics. If it’s a six-month dating relationship, you might not need to deal with more than a few pieces of underwear and a toothbrush. If it’s a marriage with children, you will need attorneys, living arrangements, and financial settlements. In that case, do your best to find a working relationship that doesn’t involve you in her life to a greater degree than necessary. Get off her email account, separate your finances, unfriend her on Facebook. Don’t look at her page, don’t send her cute notes, and don’t “like” her pictures. Remember, you *chose* to leave, and you did so for good reasons. Now move on with your life.

The same considerations hold in a professional situation. If you’ve been with the company a short time, you’ll probably just need to pack up your computer and your LeBron James bobblehead doll. On the other hand, if you’ve had a long history with the company, and you hold a position of some responsibility, then you’ll need to provide them with time to find and train your replacement. While it may be difficult for you to continue there, knowing your time is limited, unless you truly hate the company, it’s the grown-up thing to do.

**The Fire Ritual**

There aren’t a lot of fun things that go along with the ending of important relationships, but there is something that I’ve found helpful in my life. It helps bring me comfort and allows me greater freedom to move on. It’s a fire ritual. It can be done alone or with others. Here’s how it works.

* You will need to build a fire. Find materials to do that: wood, charcoal, paper, lighter fluid, matches. Make sure you have enough for a long ceremony.
* Find a *safe and private* place. For the purposes of the ritual, it must become a sacred space. Make sure you won’t be interrupted or set something unwanted on fire.
* Plan the elements of the ritual. Apart from the burning, you might want to read a poem, play music, wear certain clothes, etc.
* Choose significant items that relate to the situation you’ve just ended. Love letters are perfect, as are pictures, mementos, job or award certifications, etc.
* Adopt a high-minded attitude. You may be nervous, but don’t treat it like a joke. The more serious you can make it, the more successful it will be.
* Take your time. Don’t rush the process. You’ll need to slow down to allow yourself access to deeper, more powerful emotions. To that end, schedule plenty of time for the process and its aftermath.
* Perform the ritual. Read the poem. Play the music. As you do, allow yourself to feel all the feelings related to the situation. Remember the good times and the bad. Soak yourself in the memories.
* When you’re ready, burn the items. Take your time. Put them in the fire one by one and watch them disappear. Feel the loss, the pain, the relief. Howl, weep, scream, jump around, or do anything you feel like doing. It’s your ritual, your release. Exhaust yourself completely.
* Collapse. Sleep long, on the ground if need be.
* Wake up. Take a deep breath. Go home.

I hope this helps you as much as it has helped me.

# Chapter 12

# Where Do I Go from Here?

**Exercise 12.1**

**Looking back and forward**

**Step 1.** Take a piece of paper and draw three evenly spaced vertical lines, so that you have four columns. You might want to do this with the paper horizontal, so you have room to write. Label the columns:

* Quality
* Past
* Present
* Future

So your table should look like this:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Quality | Past | Present | Future |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Etc. |  |  |  |

**Step 2.** In column one, write down different Nice Guy qualities you set out to change. In the following columns, write down a brief description of where you started (Past,) where you are now (Present,) and where you still want to go (Future.) If you already have travelled as far as you want to or as you are able to go, then write “Here” in the Future column.

For instance:

* Past: I set out to be more honest with my girlfriend about what I want.
* Present: I am more honest, but I still get scared sometimes and when I do, I hide my real feelings.
* Future: I want to keep working on this issue and become radically honest.

**Step 3.** Compare the past, present, and future for each quality. Have you made progress? Congratulations! Have you gone as far as you want? Celebrate! Do you want to travel farther? No problem. Circle those items on which you still want to work and consider what steps you can take to do that.

**Step 4.** If you were to take one step today what would it be? Now take it.

# Recommended Reading

**Of Special Note**

These books are essential reading material for your journey…but you probably already knew that.

* Robert Glover: ***No More Mr. Nice Guy*** Running Press (2000)

The source material for this guide. It would be hard to imagine taking your journey without it.

* Joseph Campbell: ***The Hero with a Thousand Faces***New World Library (1949/2008)

The work that launched a million hero’s journeys. Campbell lays out all the steps of the quest in detail, connecting them to many of the world’s greatest myths, legends, and fairy tales. He then ties everything to the psychological growth of the human being.

* Robert Bly: ***Iron John*** Perseus Books/Da Capo Press(1990/2004)

The seminal work of the men’s movement, it utilizes a mythic narrative to address the psychological growth of a boy into a man. It is, in its essence, the Hero’s Journey.

* Neil Strauss: ***The Truth*** Dey Street Books (2015)

A very personal and autobiographical journey of painful self-examination. A successful pickup artist now has to wrestle with the fact that he has what he’s always wanted, but he still isn’t happy. And he doesn’t know what will make him so.

**Other Recommended Reading**

* Julie de Azevedo-Hanks: ***The Assertiveness Guide for Women*** New Harbinger Publications (2016)

Originally created for women, it works just as well for men. A smart, well-written book that goes into useful detail on the various facets of assertiveness, including the assertiveness formula and setting boundaries. Real-life examples help flesh out her ideas.

* Angela Duckworth: ***Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*** Scribner (2016)

Takes you through the whys and hows of sticking with a project, facing the obstacles, and getting to the end of the journey.

* Aziz Gazipura: ***Not Nice*** B.C. Allen/Tonic Books (2017)

For Nice Guys and Goody Two-Shoes. It combines advice with exercises. A little wordy, but helpful.

* Robert Glover: ***Dating Essentials for Men*** Tantor (2019)

A great book for all stages of dating. Solid advice on touch, teasing, and turning her on.

* Mark Manson: ***Models*** Mark Manson (2011)

Dating advice from a very smart, direct, and honest man. He advises honesty and openness and shows you how to go about it.

* Mark Manson: ***The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fuck*** Harper Collins (2016)

An Existentialist-Buddhist examination of life’s big questions, focusing on paring down your vision to what you really care about.

* Neil Strauss: ***The Game*** Harper Collins (2005)

A personal psychological journey disguised as a pickup manual. A nerdy Nice Guy writer becomes a successful Casanova, confronting his demons along the way. A true story.

* Corey Wayne: ***How to Be a 3% Man*** Corey Wayne (2013)

A smart dating book that teaches the principles of effective relating. An excellent book when beginning dating.

1. It can be only one body part, but generally, more than one is involved. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Depression is not a simple emotion. It’s a complex affect state that can last for days, months, or years. It is comprised of feelings, cognitions, expectations, and felt senses. I will be looking at it in more depth in Chapter 1.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)