

5 STRATEGIES
UNLOCK
YOUR GREATNESS



SEX ADDICTION RECOVERY



ROBERT J
LOPICOLA

Addiction Recovery Life Coach and Life Transformation Specialist Robert J Lopicola



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Academy of Life Change Coaching & Consulting, LLC

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There are several of Rob's personal stories included, from his personal perspective, and he has put every effort to represent events as faithfully as possible. There are statistics included which were gathered from various online sources.

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By The Sex Addicts Recovery and Transformation Accelerator Program Course Creator Robert J Lopicola

It is imperative that you not only completely change your mindset, but that you unlock the greatness within you. It is time to tap into your inner power which will lead you to a life of success, financial stability, and one of peace and serenity. The goal of this course is to give you all the tools necessary to eradicate active sex addiction out of your life for good and help you thrive as a healthy individual. As you read and study these books, you are gaining a tremendous amount of knowledge; the key is ***applying the knowledge that leads to your life transformation***.

There is greatness within you that you haven't touched on yet, but you will. The techniques in this book will help you get there. This book will provide you with the necessary techniques and strategies that will change and transform your life to one that is extraordinary. It is imperative that you read this book, and each corresponding book throughout the course thoroughly, take notes, highlight what you believe is important to you, and meditate on the information you receive.

Included in this book, as in all the others, are years of experience, lessons, and strategies that will work for your sexual sobriety. One of the most difficult strategies to learn for the sex addict, is self-forgiveness. This book will guide you to begin the process of forgiving yourself and finding compassion for the man you are today. There are many strategies you will discover in this book that will provide you with a huge leap forward into sexual sobriety. Get ready for what you are about to experience, as in growth comes change. When you started this course, you needed radical change for sexual sobriety. Radical change is here. You will experience a more significant change showing up in your life at this time if you are applying and practicing the strategies offered.

As I stated before, leave your judgments aside and read this book with an open mind and a spirit of readiness to change. If you are willing and ready and apply what is in the following pages, you will transform your life on a deep level, and develop the skills of self-mastery. Yes, you are on the road to eradicate active sex addiction out of your life for good.

Transformation Specialist and Course Creator, *Robert J Lopicola*

FIVE STRATEGIES TO UNLOCK YOUR GREATNESS

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STRATEGY #1

FORGIVENESS



“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and to discover that the prisoner was you.” – Lewis B. Smedes

Forgiveness! I believe this principle is one of the most important for self-mastery and unlocking your greatness. What a gift it is to be forgiven. An even greater gift is in forgiving. Have you hurt someone terribly and asked for forgiveness? How did it feel to ask? When you were forgiven, did it not lift a burden off your shoulder that was quite heavy to bear? How about when you were not forgiven? Did you feel sad and heavy as you walked away? Forgiveness is a powerful strategy as you transform to a life of sexual sobriety. To forgive and to be forgiven. Many forget that to be forgiven; one must forgive. The Lord’s Prayer which has been said for millenniums in churches, homes, and in many 12-step recovery meetings, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” You may have said this prayer many times without realizing its meaning. If you want forgiveness, you must also give forgiveness.

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

Psychologists generally define forgiveness as a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they deserve your forgiveness. Experts who study and teach forgiveness make it clear that forgiveness does not gloss over or ignore the seriousness of the offense. Forgiving does not mean forgetting, or condoning, or excusing the situation. Forgiveness can help repair a broken relationship; however, it certainly does not oblige you to reconcile with the individual.

Forgiveness brings you, the person forgiving, peace of mind. It will free you from poisonous anger and resentment, which will, in fact, keep you unhealthy and spiritually sick. Experts agree that forgiveness will help you let go of deeply held negative feelings weighing you down. Forgiveness will help YOU go on with your life. It is not about the person being forgiven. In essence, you can forgive a person for what he or she did to hurt you simply so you can let it go and move on with your life. It encourages the idea that another person no longer has any power or control over your life. You are the one freed once you forgive.

“I can’t forgive him for what he did,” you may exclaim. Ok. You have the freedom to hold onto it if you choose. Holding resentments close to your heart will have a consequence on you alone, no one else, and likely not even the one who wronged you. The person you hold resentment toward has likely moved on, remarried, has no clue, forgot, or could not care less. You are the one stuck. If you choose to be stuck, so-be-it. Until you let it go and forgive, you will bear the heaviness.

Let it go by forgiving simply because it is over, the person is no longer in your life, and it is time for you to live your life. Why would you burden yourself holding resentment against someone who likely has absolutely no thoughts of you whatsoever? Why are you allowing that person to rent space in your head? Perhaps this has more to do with you than you think, rather than the other person?

Keep an open mind. Allow me to explain what I mean.

Perhaps you hold resentment toward another person BECAUSE YOUR LIFE has been limited by what that person did? Maybe the resentment is toward yourself. Perhaps the truth is harder to bear, so you would rather blame the other person for where you are today. The truth may be that you have not lived your dreams and potential. Why? You feel the person who harmed you is responsible. Are you alone today because he cheated on you 15 years ago? Yet he has remarried, and happily, for the last 10 years. Do you hate your reflection in the mirror because he verbally abused you 7 years ago, and you feel inferior today? Do you suffer from low self-esteem because he betrayed you last year? Who are you angry at today? Are you angry at the other person, unknowingly, because you believe it is easier that way on a conscious level?

The hardest thing for a person to hear is the truth. You are not a victim today. Do not volunteer as one! Forgiveness is your responsibility if you want to live a life of self-mastery and unlock the greatness in you. It is not about the other person as much as you may think. Although the other person may have harmed you in a significant manner, the lingering resentment in you only keeps you mentally and/or spiritually sick. It is your responsibility to forgive, move on, and be healthy of mind and body. There are many ways to forgive, and one way is to forgive and let

that person go. There is no need for that person to ever be a part of your life again. Forgive, good-riddance, and live your life. Be Free!

RESENTMENTS AND YOUR HEALTH

Holding onto a grudge can significantly impact your mental and physical health. “When we hold onto grudges and resentment, it’s like drinking poison and expecting the other person to get sick,” says Angela Buttimer, MS, NCC, RYT, LPC, a licensed psychotherapist. “It causes us to carry negative, tense energy in our biology. Living in a chronic state of tension disables your body’s repair mechanisms, increasing inflammation, and the stress hormone cortisol in the body,” she explains. “Forgiveness engages the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps your immune system function more efficiently and makes room for feel-good hormones like serotonin and oxytocin.”

When you dwell on the offense repeatedly, remember what you are doing to your body week after week, month after month, and maybe for you, year after year. “Your brain doesn’t know what is real and what is imagined,” says Buttimer. “When you replay in your mind an experience you had six months ago, your body reacts as if you’re having the same experience over and over again.” This is a sad way to live, and it is time you choose to live differently so you will live a life of Self-Mastery.

Interestingly, as a sidebar thought, the brain doesn’t know the difference between what is real and imagined when watching pornography or sexually fantasizing. Yes, the brain – the subconscious mind – believes on some level what you are watching or fantasizing about repeatedly, and intensely focused on, is in fact real. In this manner, when you watch

pornography, have cybersex, or sexting, or deeply entrenched in sexual fantasy, you may after orgasm experience fatigue, depression, anxiety, stress, self-loathing, and inferiority because of your subconscious judgement of what it believes you acted out in the real world. The subconscious judgement that is felt in the conscious mind makes you suffer the consequence.

Back to forgiveness: I have exercised the use of forgiving others with a simple formula I learned. It has been said that hurting people will hurt people. Another point of view is that broken people hurt people. If you were to look at everyone as though their heart was breaking, you would have more empathy toward them. After all, most people have had a broken heart at one time or another. Additionally, many people who hurt others are damaged on some mental, emotional, or spiritual level. They could be suffering simply from selfishness or self-centeredness, which are strong character defects and cause great harm. They may have a distorted view of themselves, the world, maybe even of you, and if they do, that is ok. I suggest you forgive someone who has hurt you because they are damaged, broken, or “sick” on some mental, emotional, or spiritual level.

You certainly would not be angry at a man for getting sick with cancer or the flu, would you? I suggest you look at a man or woman who has hurt you in a similar manner. “Hmm, he does not deserve it,” you may think. Well, if you want to hold onto the grudge, feel free. This Program, however, is about gaining self-mastery. If you want self-mastery and unlock the greatness in you, you can forgive with this premise; ‘He is sick with selfishness, self-centeredness, self-hatred, ignorance, distorted perception, etc.’ or any other word(s) which suits you and the situation. Remember, this IS for YOU to move on, grow, and become the best version of yourself.

If your childhood was infected by someone who hurt you and “took away your youth,” and you hold a deep grudge, that person also needs to be forgiven. Why? For You!

Here are three suggestions you can use to forgive solely for your well-being:

1. **Forgive that person.** Let the grudge go. Release it to the Universe. Realize he was spiritually sick or “clouded” mentally and was unable to build a healthy relationship with you. He was moved by selfishness, self-centeredness, and distorted perception. Therefore, he hurt you because he was hurt, angry, resentful, or disturbed on some level. It is time you released him and the resentment so you can live happily, fulfilled, and healthy.
2. Most importantly, and this is important. After you have released the grudge (perhaps reluctantly), you need to **go have a talk with your child within**. Talk with your child and explain he is safe now, taken care of, and he can go on and live his life. Tell your child you love him. Explain to your child why what happened occurred and let him listen to understand. He must know it was not fair this happened to him, and it was wrong, but he can be ok and rise from the experience. He has the power to be a Champion. Be a champion and gain self-mastery because you deserve it.
3. **If you want to be forgiven, you must forgive.** No one ever said forgiving was easy. The act of forgiving does not come easily for most of us. Our instinct is to recoil in self-protection when we have been injured. We do not naturally overflow with mercy, grace, and understanding when we have been wronged.

However, keep in mind and remember the benefits you receive when you forgive.

THE BENEFITS OF FORGIVENESS

- a. Healthier relationships
- b. Improved mental health
- c. Less anxiety, stress, and hostility
- d. Lower blood pressure
- e. Fewer symptoms of depression
- f. A stronger immune system
- g. Improved heart health
- h. Improved self-esteem

Therefore, be kind and compassionate with yourself and let it go. Forgiveness is one great strategy to unlock the greatness in you! Forgiving another is difficult and certainly needed for self-mastery. Still, there is one forgiveness that is a fundamental asset to your greatness and one I am compelled to address here: **Self-Forgiveness**.

SELF-FORGIVENESS

This was one of the hardest lessons I had to learn. I believed I was capable of forgiving others, however, self-forgiveness seemed impossible. I gave away a 16-year career, my health, reputation, and life for my sex addiction. I was a rising star as a television weatherman and fitness model, became meth-addicted and homeless, and later went to prison. I gave away five years of my life behind bars. I gave away two years of my life and my career because of alcohol, sex, and drug addiction. I gave away my dog, Jake, my best friend of 10 years, to foster care. I was

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handcuffed and thrown in a cell for 60 months. There I was, my first week on a bunk, locked in jail, facing many years in prison. I hated and loathed myself. I hated who I became and what I had done. How could I ever forgive myself for all the people I betrayed, hurt, and disappointed? I hated myself so deeply that I prayed to God to let me sleep and never wake up. How could I possibly forgive myself? I had no one to blame. There were no fingers to point, except at the man in the mirror. I was disgusted with myself. Self-forgiveness was Impossible, I believed.

However, it is not impossible. It took years for me during my “Spiritual Retreat” to process self-forgiveness. I had to change one thing to unlock my greatness: **my perception**. I needed to think outside the parameters of my limited view. It was, after all, my thinking which needed changing. If I change the way I look at a thing, the thing which I am looking at will change. I had to change the way I looked at myself.

It is time for you to do the same. Change the way you look at yourself. You are on your journey of change and transformation. Let it all go.

Here are 10 steps of how to forgive yourself and let your self-resentments go:

1. **Separate what you have done with who you are:** You are not defined by what you own, what you wear, or what you look like. You are not defined by your mistakes, poor choices, nor your past. If you are different today and would not do the things you once did, you are convicting an innocent person. ‘You are’ is defined by how you live. You live with a new code of conduct. If someone had known you 10 years ago, they would not know you today. Why? Because you are not the person you were. Your past does not define who you are today. Others have the option to hold you accountable for your past. That is their prerogative. You, however, no longer need to carry their opinion of you simply because

the former version of you died. If they are unwilling to see it, it is on them. Remember, no one can see the greatness in you if they cannot see the greatness in themselves. Similarly, most people will not forgive you if they are unable to forgive themselves. You are a new man today.

2. **Understand why you did what you did:** Knowing why you did what you did will help you never to do those things again. If you acted out sexually that was harmful, or if you were drug or alcohol addicted, or were in a situation that made you behave destructively to yourself or others, know why. When you know why, you then take full responsibility for your life and live with different morals and values. It is your responsibility to practice sexual sobriety, get sober from alcohol or drugs, leave the old neighborhood, friendships, or environment to be the new person you are striving to be with a new mindset. Take full responsibility to have new reasons to live, act, love, and be. For me, I was dependent on sex, drugs, and alcohol. It was, and is, my full responsibility to be sober and clean today. In that, I will never do what I did. I must take full responsibility. So do you!

3. **If you knew better, you would have done better:** Most people change and transform their lives when they are sick and tired of being sick and tired. Others change when they experience the gift of desperation. That gift came to me when I was arrested. It was in this great pain of desperation when I finally opened my eyes to needed changes. With time comes experience and wisdom. There are three types of people: the dumb, the smart, and the wise. The dumb will never learn. The smart will learn from their own mistakes. The wise learn from other's mistakes. Still, many live a life of denial. They simply do not see what they are doing. It could be their faulty belief system, their faulty

perceptions, or as simple as they are caught up in selfishness and self-centeredness. In time, one begins to know better. I believe, for the most part if you knew better, you would have done better. You, however, were blinded by an illusion, false hope, or once again were simply in denial of the truth. You did not know better or perhaps were unable to apply what you knew for you to have done better. Most people struggle to apply what they know. It is time to move forward. Now that you know better, it is time to do better.

4. **Today you know better, so do better:** It is your responsibility to do better when you know better. It is more than knowing, it is applying what you know. How do you apply what you know? There are many “I Know” people. You ever tell someone what they need to do, and they respond with “I Know.” I have had many “I Know” clients in my coaching. The fact you may know what you need to do may be true, however, you have no idea how or no interest in applying your knowledge.

- A. The “no idea how” people: These people have a higher probability of doing better.

The solution is easy. Knowing what to do is great, but if you do not know how to apply it, the knowledge is futile. If you do not know how to do a thing, you must practice doing it. Practice makes improvement. If you practice, you will get better. In fact, you may fail on your way to success. Application of your knowledge is key for self-mastery and to unlock your greatness. It will take practice to learn how. You will learn through practice what works and what does not. In this, you will ultimately succeed.

- B. The “not interested” people: These people need to suffer a while and experience the Gift of Desperation to do better for themselves. Unfortunately, many people are not interested in putting their knowledge to practice. Perhaps this is you. Why not apply

the knowledge? Many people fear change, are comfortable with mediocrity, or feel change will be more painful than their status quo. These “not interested” people generally build a case against themselves to change and do better. Here are some examples of these types:

- a. I know I need to get out of this relationship, but I am afraid of being alone.
- b. I know I need a new job, but what if leaving this one is a mistake?
- c. I know I need to lose weight, but I never seem to lose weight, so why try?
- d. I know I need to join the gym, but I will probably never go.
- e. I know I need to stop drinking, but who will I be without it?
- f. I know I need to stop hooking up, but it feels good.
- g. I know I need to stop watching pornography, but that’s what sex addicts do.
- h. I know I need more money, but I am afraid to ask for a raise.
- i. I know he hits me and is abusive, but he loves me.
- j. I know my marriage is loveless, but who will want me if I am alone?

5. **Make amends for yourself and others:** Making amends is imperative. You must make right your wrongs. This is taking full responsibility for where you wronged another person or yourself. An amend is “correcting a mistake.” Making amends is not being sorry for what happened, it is correcting what happened. Think of amends as action by demonstrating your new way of life, your new personality, and your new mindset. It is the action of personally addressing people you have harmed by your behavior or treatment of them. It is also an inward reflection of how you harmed yourself and addressing changes needed to correct that harm. The best amends to offer yourself and

another is to commit to never again doing “those things” which caused the harm. Amends to another allow them the opportunity to heal from the hurt you caused. I have made numerous amends in this manner, “I have wronged you, and I ask you to please tell me how to make right where I was wrong.” If I owe them money, I offer to start making payments. If I did another painful act, I would allow them to tell me how I can right the wrong. Amends means you are no longer the same person you were when you did the harm. Amends means your life pattern today has changed.

6. **Never do again what you did before:** “If I had known better, I would have done better. Now that I know better, I do better. I am no longer living in self-denial nor hiding with shame. I make an oath to myself to continue my journey of healing, growing, and maturing spiritually and mentally. In this manner, because I am a new person, I will never do again what I did before.” Can you say this of yourself? Are you creating a new personality and a new mindset? You cannot live in the solution with the same mindset that caused the problem. You must change how you think.
7. **Help others:** One part of living life fully and well is giving to others. Why? Evidence shows that helping others can benefit your mental health and wellbeing. For example, it can reduce stress as well as improve mood, self-esteem, and happiness. Helping others triggers impacts to your brain in many positive ways. When you help others, your brain release oxytocin, serotonin, and dopamine. These hormones have the effect of boosting your mood and counteracting the effect of cortisol (the stress hormone). If you want self-mastery and unlock the greatness in you, reach out and help others. It is in giving that one receives.

8. **Be honest:** The truth will set you free! The truth sets you free from undoing anxiety and stress. Brain imaging experiments conducted by Tali Sharot at University College London show that the brain adapts to dishonest behavior. Participants showed reduced activity in their limbic system as they told more lies, supporting the idea that each lie makes lying easier. If you cannot trust someone with a little, it is likely you cannot trust them with a lot. Symptoms of anxiety arise because lying activates the limbic system in the brain, the same area that initiates the “fight or flight” response that is triggered during other stresses. When people are being honest, this area of the brain shows minimal activity. But when telling a lie, it lights up like a fireworks display. An honest brain is peaceful and relaxed, while a dishonest brain is frantic and anxious. Be honest with yourself and others. People will have increased respect for you. Your life will be more peaceful. Research has found that honest people feel better about their relationships and social interactions. Most importantly, be honest with yourself. You will have a better relationship with the man in the mirror. Remember, you will spend the rest of your life with him.
9. **Live with a new set of morals and values:** With the newness of mind comes a new set of morals and values you live with. If how you have been living is not bringing what you dreamed, you must change how you live. You must take on a new personality with new beliefs and behaviors. You must change what you think about and focus on. This can begin with practicing the wise prophetic words of a man named Paul published over 2000 years ago, *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever*

is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

10. Never stop progressing: The journey must continue. Albert Einstein stated, *“failure is success in progress.”* Here are some others: *“Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything,”* George Bernard Shaw. *“If there is no struggle, there is no progress,”* Frederick Douglass. *“Progress is not in enhancing what is, but in advancing toward what will be,”* Khalil Gibran. *“Always be a work in progress,”* Emily Lillian. *“Slow, steady progress is better than daily excuses,”* Robin Sharma. *“Make measurable progress in reasonable time,”* Jim Rohn. *“Whatever you do you have to keep moving forward,”* Martin Luther King. *“All progress takes place outside the comfort zone,”* Michael John Bobak. *“Delay is the enemy of progress,”* Eliot Spitzer. Now consider how far you have come and keep moving forward. Do not compare yourself today to where you think you should be. Compare yourself today from where you once were.

I have an attitude of Forgiveness because it relieves me of undue stress and anxiety. I have learned that when I hold a grudge, I am the one carrying the toxicity and poison inside of me. It keeps me sick. I only have this one life to live, and I am obligated to let go and move on if I am to live well. Before my mother passed away in 2016, we made a promise to each other. The promise was that we forgive each other everything. It was that simple. Why? Because carrying it did no one any good. I am free today. Join me in this freedom, and you too will achieve self-mastery and unlock the greatness in you.

STRATEGY #2

GRATITUDE



“The struggle ends when the gratitude begins.”– Neal Donald Walsh

There is a great secret to joy: gratitude. There is a difference between happiness and joy. Happiness is temporary, while joy is permanent. A new relationship or a new car can bring temporary happiness. After a while, the excitement of the relationship wains and may come to an end. The new car loses its thrill, and soon enough, the payments become a hassle. Happiness is short-lived and intermittent. Joy is permanent, something which comes from within and is born from gratitude.

E.G.O. (Easing God Out) is the part of the brain which is responsible for personal identity. It tells you all the things you need to be happy are “out there,” outside of yourself. You strive for a bigger house, nicer car, sexier body, hotter boyfriend, etc. The EGO is insatiable. There never seems to be enough. Those living in EGO are seeking more money, power, and success. The sex

addict takes the EGO to the extreme, and life becomes unmanageable and destructive. Insatiability is the greatest defect of the sex addict. There can be no joy if there is never enough. EGO is the terrible inner voice telling you lies, such as you are not good enough, pretty enough, strong enough, smart enough, and talented enough. The EGO is that inner voice reminding you how weak you are and screams FEAR into your daily existence. Fear you are not enough, so you must purchase more, get more, and be more. There is no joy here. Perhaps there are brief spells of happiness. Certainly, little to no gratitude. How can you be grateful if you simply are not, or do not have, enough? True joy eludes you. Happiness seems to be fleeting when it arrives.

My mentor made this noticeably clear to me. If I were to experience joy, “the EGO must die.” I had not a clue what that meant. The only thing I knew about EGO was that Freud had something to say about it. Well, if the EGO must die, then what? My mentor added, “when the EGO dies, then the spiritual part of you will awaken.” He explained, “it is the part of you that awakens with the knowledge and awareness that everything you need is already within you.” I was confused. I could not understand how all I needed was within me – “ALL” I needed? Years later, I would understand. People have Spiritual Awakenings at times during their life. These awakenings are times when the scales fall off their eyes, so-to-speak. They see more clearly. What they could not see with their ‘eyes of understanding’ suddenly became obvious. As these Spiritual Awakenings progress, the EGO dies further, and that place within becomes alive. In this manner, a new life is born. A new mindset. A Transformation. It is here in the newness of mind where gratitude becomes a new principle to practice. It is in this new spiritual way of life where joy is one of the great spiritual fruits.

It has been said that joy is an inner feeling, and happiness is an outward expression. Joy endures hardships and trials and connects with meaning and purpose. It could be said that Joy is a deep-rooted inspired happiness. How do you get this deep, inner feeling of happiness? How do you transform from a negative, diminishing mindset to a positive, upbuilding mindset? How do you transform from a person of mediocrity, with feelings of inferiority and unhappiness, to one filled with joy and prosperity – even against all the odds?

The answer is simple: Gratitude.

GRATITUDE

Gratitude is a powerful principle. One desperately needed to practice and master to unlock the greatness in you. It is a healing agent that will detox your mind, body, and spirit. Gratitude will reshape your thinking, life, and future. There is growth that takes place with a change of perception. Your perception is your reality. Gratitude can change your perception and make your reality peaceful and joyful.

Today, your mental world and belief system are an accumulative product of everything you experienced up to this moment. Simply, you are who you are because of the accumulation of your memories, experiences, and perceptions. Having Gratitude can change who you are. Gratitude can change your past. If you change your past, your present will change as well. How? By changing your perception. If you look back at the dark and fearful road you traveled with the eyes of gratitude, that place will transform. The darkness turns to light. The fear turns to courage. The pain turns to power. How is this possible?

Look back at a time in your past when you were hurt or crushed or disappointed greatly. See yourself there. Remember how you felt. Your thoughts. Your fears. Your pain. Come back to where you are right now, safe and protected. Now, look back with a different perspective. See the truth. Until now, you have only seen with limited vision. Open your eyes wider and see with a different lens. What you had was immense strength to pull through, and you gained more strength from it. There were challenges no college education nor psychology book could teach you. That type of strength can only be received from your experience. Look at your courage. It took courage to survive the ordeal, and that courage brought you here today. Look at the pain you survived. It is that pain that allows you to empathize with hurting people today. You are a person with great emotion and empathy. You are a survivor, courageous and strong. Congratulate yourself as you review your survival skills. You are courageous. You are powerful. What a gift you have! Thank goodness for your past.

Today, you have the power to guide and lift another person who is suffering as you once had. You have the survivor gift. Give it away. Be grateful you survived because you learned endurance, perseverance, and fortitude. It is in your gratitude of what you survived that will give you fruits of the spirit such as joy and peace.

Much like forgiveness, gratitude has its benefits too. Interestingly, Forgiveness and Gratitude are free of charge. They cost nothing. It is simply a free choice. They come free and produce numerous rewards. Psychologists agree that there are no medications that can provide the mental and health benefits of gratitude.

BENEFITS OF GRATITUDE

- 1. Improve physical and mental health*
- 2. Supports deep, restful sleep*
- 3. Boosts job satisfaction*
- 4. Reduces materialism*
- 5. Strengthens relationships*
- 6. Strengthens immune system*
- 7. Increases overall happiness*
- 8. Improves work performance*
- 9. Improves social interactions*
- 10. Enhances empathy and reduces aggression*
- 11. Improves optimism*
- 12. Lowers the rate of depression and stress*
- 13. Relish good experiences*
- 14. Improves skills to deal with adversity*
- 15. Express more compassion and kindness toward others*

Gratitude is fundamental if you want a life of self-mastery and to unlock your greatness.

You must be grateful consistently. Gratitude must live in, and through, you 24 hours a day if you want to live with joy. Unfortunately, many do not feel grateful until they lose something. It is in loss that one finds gratitude. *“If I only knew what I had,”* you may exclaim. *“You do not know what you have until it is gone,”* someone may have told you when you lost something or someone. Gratitude eludes so many. Why?

GENETIC DESIGN AND THE BRAIN

It has been studied that there are genes people have which play a key role in whether they will be a grateful person or not. There are two genes that appear to influence your level of

gratitude. They are called “COMT” and “CD38” gene, which are involved in recycling the neurotransmitter dopamine, neuropeptide, and oxytocin, respectfully in the brain. Everyone has one of two versions of these genes, depending on the version you may have may determine your level of gratitude. Similar studies have added that the differences may be the result of nature and nurture or a combination of the two. Does this mean you are predetermined to be a grateful or ungrateful person? It is interesting, but I think it is not a predetermined factor. Gratitude is a skill that is well worth cultivating, a skill you need.

Studies of brain scans have shown that an individual can create new neurons in the brain dependent on what he thinks about. This is an amazing fact recently discovered. These new neurons fire up when you consistently have a thought, whether the thought is forced or not. This is in line with the ‘fake it to make it’ concept. In other words, thinking you are an amazingly successful person consistently, for an extended period, will not only make you believe it to be true, but you will make it true. In this manner of repeatedly forced thoughts, new neurons will be created. They will fire up new neurotransmitters and neuropathways. The result is a new mind and a new mindset. Yes, you are recreating your mind by recreating your thoughts. The gene idea may be true, but your thoughts are more powerful. Yes, thoughts do create matter.

YOUR CAN CREATE A NEW BRAIN

Interestingly, the sex addict consistently, over a long period of years for many, thinks about sexual behaviors that are mentally and physically stimulating. The years of continuously thinking about sex, watching pornography, cruising, and going on Grindr produces neurons in the brain. This neurological development plays a key role in reinforcing your sex addiction. The fact

that your brain has now been molded to act out sexually neurologically, makes it more challenging to stop those behaviors, change and transform. The neurons will be in your brain forever, but in time, as you practice new behaviors and new ways of thinking, develop a new habit of positive self-talk and positive affirmations, new neurons will develop, and you will reinforce sexual sobriety and a new way of life. The path that brought you deeper into your sex addiction is the similar path that will bring you out of your sex addiction.

Your thoughts have the power to create a new brain. Sharon Begley published a book called “Train your mind, change your brain.” In her book, she shows factual scientific evidence that the brain creates new neurons, neurotransmitters, and neuropathways through thoughts. In this manner, simply by thoughts, a “new brain” is created. Neuroplasticity is the mind's ability to change the brain. Extensive studies by neuroscientists confirm that our mental machinations do alter the physical structure of our brain matter. So yes, your thoughts have immense power to change your brain and life!

Therefore, regardless of your situation, environment, or genetic design, you have the power to recreate your mind. If you are a grateful person, you will reap many rewards. What a man sows, he too shall reap. You must sow Gratitude to reap the benefits. With gratitude, your life will improve dramatically. In fact, if gratitude lives in and through you 24 hours a day, you will live life on a much higher spiritual plane than most others. You will be different. You will shine above the rest. People will be drawn to you. They will want what you have. With gratitude, it will be your calling, then, to teach others how to get it themselves.

“Change your thoughts and you change your world.”

STRATEGY #3

SELF-NURTURE



“When you say, ‘yes’ to others, make sure you are not saying ‘no’ to yourself.”
– Paulo Coelho

The most sacred gift you have is your life and what a gift it is! Think about it. You are alive. There is a small window of time you are here to experience this thing we call life. A mere 70, maybe 80 years, perhaps for some a bit longer. A blink of an eye. Nothing but a drop of dew in the early morning, soon to be gone. Although it is only a short time, life is a grand gift to use as you wish. You can choose to live happily, sadly, miserably, or wonderfully. You have a choice to fulfill your dreams and passions or sit on the sidelines and witness others doing so. You can meander on the fence of life, not committing to anything. A life of mediocrity is a life unlived. You can live your dreams or live your fears. Sadly, you can run into the future with excitement or be stuck in the past, missing out on the present.

You can stand erect and boldly walk through your life with a determined effort to win. Or you can hunch over, looking at the dirt, fearing every obstacle before you. There is a world of

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goodness for you to experience or a world of misery for you to endure. There comes a time in your life when you must firmly stand your ground despite where you come from. There is a time when you must act and create the life you desire. There will be a time in your life when you must realize no one is responsible for you but you. You can be a volunteer victim or tell yourself you are better than that. You can get up and start running or remain stagnant and wallow in misery.

A child is powerless over much until he matures and grows into adulthood. Some people have experienced excruciatingly painful childhoods. Misfortune poisoned their souls at a young age. Many share the pain of childhood and its troubles. As you read this, you can undoubtedly remember sometime in your childhood when you were alone, scared, and suffering. Times you fear rehashing. Memories you wish you could eliminate. They seem to haunt you, at times, regardless of your wishes. Perhaps you have lived a life of mediocrity or less because your childhood was difficult, painful, and challenging. Some blame their upbringing as the cause of their adulthood despair and struggles. I am sure some have suffered trauma during childhood. Today, however, it is time to get power back. Reclaim your life and your dreams. Learn a new design for living and recreate your story. Include in your new design for living the principles of forgiving and gratitude. Power will be found through these principles. Another principle to reclaim your self-empowerment is Self-Nurture.

Today is the time for you to begin a journey of self-mastery by nurturing yourself. Self-Nurture means doing things you do not want to do and choosing to do them anyway because it is good for you. It means accepting disappointments and failures and re-strategizing them. Self-Nurture means not giving in to urges and cravings, nor giving up on long-term goals. It is to be steadfast and bold as you progress closer to your goals. Self-Nurture means doing what makes

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you joyful and happy to be alive. This is your responsibility. No matter where you came from, no matter what occurred in your childhood, and no matter who believes in you or who does not, you are responsible for living your life fully. There is a short 70 or 80 years of life in your hands to do with as you wish. Live these years full, so when you die, you die empty. Do not die with your dreams still in you. It is your responsibility to live them!

SELF-NURTURE

When you are transforming your life and changing how you live and think, self-nurture is one of the most important factors to practice. You practice behaviors until you are good at them. Then you practice them more. Practice makes improvement. Practice saying no. Practice walking away. Practice letting go. Practice keeping your word. Practice honoring yourself.

Self-Nurture means self-care. Care keenly about yourself and your well-being. No one will take better care of you than you will. Care how others treat you. Care about what you accept in your life. Be warned, you teach others how to treat you. Hold fast to your boundaries, and do not allow anyone to break them. If they do, protect them by boldly reclaiming your boundaries. You may need to eliminate certain people from your life, including family members. Trust with love but trust cautiously. Remember, there are wolves in sheep's clothing. Judge carefully. Judge a tree by the fruit it bears, not the fruit it says it bears. Pay attention to the fruits of people around you and see whether you are willing to eat with them. **Self-Nurture is about your boundaries.**

Self-Nurture involves the village of friends and family you surround yourself with. As an adult, you can create your own village. Sometimes friends become your family. You have the power today to choose your family. Blood is blood, but you must be aware that a friend can stick

closer than a brother. There may be friends who you consider your family. This is your village. Choose your village wisely. The type of person you are largely depends on who you surround yourself with. Choose friends who have what you want, friends you can learn from. If you are the smartest person in your group, you need a new group. **Self-Nurture is about your village.**

There is a huge epidemic of hopelessness and obesity. Many suffer the pain of eating their lives away and loss of purpose. The trend of our culture today is lack of exercise, fearing the future, and addictions to sex, drugs, booze, and the internet. Families sit around the table on their phones. Friends post everything they do on Facebook for show, rather than enjoying the moment. Many are more concerned with their appearance than matters of the heart. The family structure is fading, and social skills are declining. You, however, have a responsibility to live differently if you want to unlock the greatness in you. You are responsible for living with integrity and dignity if you want self-mastery. Be a person who produces fruits of love, peace, kindness, and self-control. Be one who keeps your word, can be trusted, and relied on, a person with morals and values. The choice is yours. **Self-Nurture is about producing fruits of the spirit.**

Nearly 20% of all teens experience depression before they reach adulthood. There has been a 50% increase in the rate of unhappiness worldwide since 2012. 85% of people are unhappy with their jobs. In 2016, 1.9 billion people were overweight, with almost an astronomical 40% of Americans obese. Australian researchers have released the first-ever report on worldwide addiction statistics. They found about 240 million people worldwide are dependent on alcohol, more than a billion people smoke, 1.6 billion people around the world are sex addicted, and about 15 million people use injection drugs, such as heroin. Unhappiness and hopelessness seem to be a new world pandemic.

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Regardless, there are inspirational people who have different experiences. You can be one of them. Let us take a different perspective on the numbers. 64% of people globally report being happy. In fact, 14% of people say they are incredibly happy. Why only 14%? Most people lack positive thinking. A 2010 study found that five key items contribute to positive thinking, which, in turn, results in happiness: being grateful, being optimistic, practicing acts of kindness, relishing how lucky you are, and using your strengths. Research has also found happy people to be energetic, decisive, creative, social, trusting, loving, and responsive. Positive thinking is a significant ingredient for Self-Nurture. Mental well-being is imperative.

Here are a few thoughts to ponder:

Jim Rohn stated, *"Happiness is not something you postpone for the future, it is something you design for the present."* Robin Sharma added, *"What you focus on grows, what you think about expands, and what you dwell upon determines your reality."* An anonymous writer penned these words, *"If you are depressed, you are living in the past. If you are anxious, you are living in the future. If you are at peace, you are living in the present."* There is no soul on earth responsible for your thinking, perceptions, moods, behaviors, and actions but you. Many may be suffering from depression, hopelessness, and unhappiness, but you can be different. Take full responsibility for your life. Take full control of what you think about, meditate on, and what is acceptable in your life. It is your duty to develop and master the skills of optimistic thinking and thoughtful gratitude. **Self-Nurture is about caring deeply and giving attention to your psychological well-being.** *"It is so important to take time for yourself and find clarity. The most important relationship is the one you have with yourself."*— Diane Von Furstenberg

STRATEGY #4

SELF-ACCEPTANCE



FROM THE AUTHOR

I started forecasting weather at 20 years old on Long Island, New York. My childhood dream came true. All I wanted was a life as a weatherman. Only 8 years later would my radio broadcasting lead the way to an on-air weather anchor position at an NBC affiliate in West Palm Beach, Florida. I have been an avid gym lover since my mid-teens. At 29 years old, my fitness lifestyle would carry me into the world of fitness modeling. All my passions and hard work paid off greatly by the age of 30. I was climbing the ladder of success in record time. Success would continue for a few more years. I earned the Dandy Don Award in 2005 for being a “true voice in the community.” My talent won me the title “Best Weathercaster” in south Florida in *New Times Magazine* and “Best Looking Anchor” by *Palm Beach Illustrated*. I was featured in magazines as the “Mighty Meteorologist” due to my lean, muscular physique, and weatherman status. I owned a home and a sweet car, and I also had an extra vehicle, a Jeep Wrangler, and a jet ski, for fun. Between my success and other aspects of my promising life, it seemed I had it all.

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My sex addiction, along with alcohol and Methamphetamine addiction, progressed, and by the age of 35, they had me under full control. At 36 years old, my career was lost, home foreclosed, cars repossessed, and I gained over 50 pounds from drinking. By 40, I was managing a gay bar and strip club, I was deeply entrenched in my sex addiction, smoking crystal meth daily, and had cybersex with a high school teenager I met on Craigslist. I also was employed short-term at a telemarketing company that was a scam and illegal. At 42 years old, I was arrested, convicted, and sentenced to prison for 60 months. The community lost hope in my recovery, my destructive behavior hurt many people, my mom and dad were in pain, my friends were surprised, the media had a field day twisting my crimes, adding further demise to my character, and I too lost hope in myself and prayed to die in my sleep.

How do I accept my demise and carry on? How does my soul accept the fact I crushed my potential and ruined my life? How do I accept it for what it is and get back up? How do I accept the fact I climbed the ladder of success with hard work and diligence and gained relative power and success to allowing my sex addiction, drug use and alcohol abuse to ruin any vestige of happiness and hope for my future? How do I accept this demise? How do I accept what others see in me? How do I accept the pain I caused others? How can I accept the consequences and begin rebuilding my life? How do I accept that I am labeled a registered sex offender, a criminal, and possibly no longer maintain the reputation I once had? I gave everything away for one thing, and that one thing (sex addiction as my core addiction) nearly killed me. How do I accept that I lost everything I worked so hard to build? The answer will come.

NOW ABOUT YOU

Have you acted in ways you regret? Do you have secrets you are ashamed of? Have you behaved in ways during your life you are grateful only God knows? Are there skeletons in your closet you pray get buried with you? Have you hurt others so much you hope never to see them again? Do you walk down the street and look over your shoulder sometimes worried? Are you ashamed of yourself but wear the mask of confidence? Do you walk in a room and smile warmly, laughing loudly, yet you feel inferior? Have you wronged someone and did not take responsibility for it? Do you wonder how you can accept yourself despite all this? Have you sat down with yourself and thought about how good it would feel if you could forgive yourself and accept yourself fully? Would not full acceptance be wonderful?

Imagine a world where everyone accepted you. Imagine if all your secrets were known, and you were completely forgiven and accepted. What if you no longer had to carry any guilt or shame because the world has accepted you for who you are? What if you were warmly welcomed at home and with friends and co-workers, fully exonerated of all your sins, and lovingly accepted you? Loved, accepted, and all sins are forgiven. Can you imagine such a place? Probably not, right? Unfortunately, we do not live in a world like this.

JUDGEMENT AND ACCEPTANCE

People are quick to judge and misunderstand. Most live with limited lives and limited belief systems. Many are angry and unhappy and use that to justify their hatred and judgment for others. According to science, people judge your character in one-tenth of a second. According to a new study published in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, the brain immediately determines how

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trustworthy a face is before it is fully perceived. This supports the fact that we make amazingly fast judgments about people. Our binary view of the world around us necessitates us to be either right or wrong, so we tend to judge. No one understands everything about everything. Therefore, our brains take a shortcut to make us feel better, and we oversimplify things into general categories, resulting in binary thinking. It is hard to be accurate when you are thinking with just one bit of information. Therefore, it is natural and normal for people to judge others. The problem is most people judge with limited knowledge and information. Knowledge is power and a crucial component for accurate judgment. The more you know, the better judgment you can make.

Judgment can be positive and healthy. Be careful how you choose your friends. You want to “judge” those you associate with. You must weigh whether they will be of good influence or otherwise. Stay away from those who use and abuse you or who are not seeking your best interest. If it were not for your inner, natural inclination to judge, perhaps you would put yourself in dangerous situations or associate with destructive people. If it involves accurate and accumulative knowledge, judgment can be a significant safeguard for Self-Nurture.

Acceptance eludes those who judge. Our motivation to judge another is to feel superior, and we see them as inferior. This is called prejudice. Interestingly, many who judge others harshly carry the same principle of harsh judgment toward themselves. Here is an example regarding homosexuality, *"Sometimes people are threatened by gays and lesbians because they fear their own impulses, in a sense, they 'doth protest too much,'"* said Richard Ryan, a professor of psychology at the University of Rochester. *"In addition, it appears that sometimes those who*

would oppress others have been oppressed themselves, and we can have some compassion for them too, they may be unaccepting of others because they cannot be accepting of themselves."

YOUR INNER VOICE

Far too many people invest valuable time listening to their inner dialogue of negative self-talk. This inner conversation, invariably, is the voice of belittling, attacking, judging, and scrutinizing. Have you heard your inner voice tell you how unlucky you are? Or that you are inferior to another? Perhaps your inner voice tells you how weak you are. You hear yourself screaming inside to give up because you will not win. How about that voice telling you how unlovable and unwanted you are? Your inner voice will go as far as "proving" these things by building a case as to why they are true.

Your inner voice becomes the great prosecutor of you! Judgment. Judgment. Judgment. Sometimes you probably hear several voices and several arguments within the inner voice, confusing you, so you decide to do nothing. Status Quo. It is estimated that inner monologue is a frequent thing for 30 to 50% of people. So, if you talk with yourself, you are not alone, and you are not crazy.

Unfortunately, most people experience an inner voice that is degrading and self-punishing. This likely increases feelings of self-hatred and leads to making unhealthy decisions. It is time to change that! You are a powerful being and can change and alter your inner voice. Self-Acceptance is about taking control and getting power back. You can guide, direct, and produce a new inner dialogue. One which will alter and change your life forever.

If you change your inner voice, here is what you will change:

1. Your life
2. Your energy
3. Your focus
4. Your self-worth
5. Your morals
6. Your values
7. Your self-confidence
8. Your self-esteem
9. Your health
10. Your choices

A life of self-mastery and unconditional acceptance is in the tongue of your inner language. It is time now to change the words you say within. You must create a new inner voice, a new dialogue, and a new pattern of thinking. Before creating this newness, you must be keenly aware of your thinking and self-talk pattern. What is your pattern? What are the arguments you create within yourself that produce limits in your life? That negative inner voice seems to repeat like an old recording. How often have you heard yourself say you are ugly, fat, unlovable, unwanted? How often have you said you are not special, will not get that job, or never have a good relationship? How often have you repeatedly told yourself you will never get that house or car? Or you tell yourself you will always act out sexually and you will always be a dirty loser? Is there a pattern here? The same record seems to never end. It must get boring!

Perhaps when a positive opportunity is available, your inner voice pulls out that old file with the same old argument. As if there is a small man in your thoughts locked in an office with files everywhere, and when an old file is needed, he knows exactly where it is. He pulls out that old file and loudly announces an argument against your success. He is the great prosecutor of you! Does this sound familiar? That voice which seems to whisper sweet nothings into your life. I have news for you, you have the power to get rid of that little man and change your inner voice.

OWN YOUR INNER VOICE

If you judge yourself harshly, you will be unable to accept yourself unconditionally. If you continue listening to the old pattern of thinking, you will continue living the old pattern of living. If you allow the old design, which is not working, to run your life, you will not be living, you will be existing.

Keep in mind, your life has been designed by your thinking; your thinking, beliefs, and perceptions all have designed your life and have become a significant part of your inner conversation. Who you are begins with your thinking. If you change how you think, you will change what you believe, and if you change what you believe, you will change how you perceive. The result will be a new refreshed inner voice. If your inner voice changes, you change!

You must take power back and own your inner voice. Pay attention to the words you use that limit you. Listen to negative self-affirmations which degrade you. Hear yourself when you argue as to why you should not do a thing, making you quit before you start. It is time to stand up to yourself within yourself and tell yourself to shut up! It is all lies! You have been lying to

yourself all these years and believing them. You have been telling yourself lies for so long you are convinced they are true. No wonder self-acceptance eludes you.

I started this chapter by telling you my story of all I sacrificed, the harm I caused, and the pain I experienced because I was mentally, emotionally, and spiritually sick with sex addiction. My mind was altered because of my addiction, and I was quite sick. For years I degraded myself, feeling inferior and worthless despite the show I put on for the world to see. I was an egomaniac with an inferiority complex. I lived with shame, guilt, and insecurity since childhood. This inner voice that dragged me down progressed. My belief system and design for living failed me during my career and adult life. I believed the lies. I believed them so explicitly I was willing to die because of them whether it be high on drugs and sex or oblivious from alcohol. My thinking failed me. My thinking convinced me that living a promiscuous lifestyle addicted to sex is who I am and always will be.

When all was gone, and I was shackled and handcuffed all by myself along with my thinking and self-judgements, it was time to change. My mentor led the way to a changed mind, a changed inner voice, a changed belief system, and a new design for thinking. This led to a new design for living. When all of this changed, I experienced self-acceptance for the first time in my life. I was ok no matter what. I was capable of self-forgiveness. I had the ability to make amends for my wrongs and do whatever was in my power to make life right. I was given the gift of desperation and changed the course of my life. My mentor and his guidance saved me. My life was saved, but it was saved when I was ready to be saved. Self-Acceptance is a power that eludes many, but it does not need to elude you anymore!

SELF-ACCEPTANCE

It will take time to recreate your mind. You can change your mind which will change your brain. You have the power to create a new design for thinking. Knowledge is power, but only if you apply it. So, I suppose you can say, knowledge is the power of potential. Remember practice makes improvement. Practice makes progress. Most importantly, this is about progress, not perfection. Never aim for perfection, it is impossible. Perfectionism is the worst enemy of progress. In fact, most perfectionists are the most judgmental of themselves and others.

As discussed earlier, being judgmental toward others is a common psychological defense mechanism: we reject in others what we cannot accept in ourselves. For perfectionists, there can be a lot to reject. Perfectionists are highly discriminating, and few are beyond the reach of their critical eye. Additionally, perfectionists are as judgmental of themselves as others. When they cannot reach their own mark of perfection, they self-abuse, self-judge, and self-degrade. This leads to anxiety and stress. This can be addressed by learning balanced thinking, noticing personal progress, and realizing all you can do is your best.

Self-Acceptance will take you to self-mastery. You cannot attain self-mastery without Self-Acceptance. This acceptance begins in your thinking. So then, how do you change your thinking? Well, it is not for those who want it. It is not for those who need it. It is for those who are willing to do what it takes to get it and to do it. If it were easy, everyone would be doing it right? Not necessarily. Many who may be willing to do it may not know how. I will share the great secret recipe which has worked for me. I do not **think** this process will work for you; I **know** it will:

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR THINKING

1. Find a mentor who has what you want,
2. Who was where you are,
3. Do what he did,
4. And you will get what he has.

However, there is a catch.

1. You must let go of all you believed to be true
2. You must be open to practicing new behaviors
3. You must start speaking a different language within
4. You must practice positive affirmations
5. You must practice gratitude

Self-Acceptance is understanding you are imperfect. Knowing that if you knew better, you would have done better. Self-Acceptance is about looking at yourself realistically from a different vantage point. It is about surrounding yourself with people who influence you positively. You must have conversations that build up and encourage. Surround yourself with a village of power whether it is the music you listen to, books you read, or what you watch. Remove yourself from toxic situations and envelope yourself with people you can learn from. Self-Acceptance comes from learning the truth. The truth will set you free. When you wake up spiritually and your eyes of understanding open, the truth will open the way for you to grow and improve. Sometimes growth comes through pain.

Allow people who challenge you to be your teachers. Allow people who are difficult to endure, teach you patience and tolerance. Allow situations that are difficult, teach you endurance and perseverance. Allow circumstances that challenge you, teach you courage and faith. Change how you look at things, and the things you look at will change. Come to learn your own personal value by who you associate with. Grow your own personal value by the choices you make for self-nurture and self-improvement.

- Self-Empowerment comes when you say no and do not feel guilty about it.
- Self-Mastery comes when you say no and have dignity in respecting your own personal boundaries.
- Self-Acceptance comes when you say no and are ok with what others think and the outcome.

Releasing judgment and discovering your own self-acceptance will change your life in ways you cannot imagine. The fruit of the spirit of self-acceptance will bring you to a new design for living that will amaze you. I paved the way in this chapter for the process to begin for self-acceptance. Once you begin the process laid out here and you trust the process with relaxed belief, I guarantee you will discover a new design for living that works, and even you, yes you, will have self-mastery. Self-mastery will lead you to a life of peace, serenity, and prosperity.

STRATEGY #5

KNOWLEDGE



KNOWLEDGE IS (POTENTIAL) POWER

One of the first books I read that changed my life was *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne. In those pages, I read about the power of energy and vibration within the Universe, and it resonated with me. I knew long before I read that book the power of thought. I had a long history of creating a vision for myself and sending it out to the Universe, and invariably, it would return with success. It seemed I had a knack for tuning in with the Universe. When I learned religion, it was as if – as they say – I was in line with *God's will* for me. Taking in the knowledge of *The Secret* confirmed what I already believed, and there was no stopping me. It encouraged and motivated me to forge ahead against all odds. Albeit I read this book long before I fell from Grace and plummeted into my sex addiction, I was later able to apply it firmly into my life. It was as if the knowledge I gained reading it years prior was filed away in my brain to be used and applied when I was ready. Indeed, I became ready!

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You are limited by your beliefs, perceptions, ideas, and experiences.

1. **Limited beliefs** are false beliefs about yourself that prevent you from reaching your goals and passions. *“If you accept a limited belief, then it will become a truth for you.”* – Louise Hay. *“You cannot escape from a prison until you realize you are in one. People who have chosen to live within the limits of their old beliefs continue to have the same experiences. It takes effort and commitment to break old patterns.”* – Bob Proctor
2. **Limited perceptions** are false viewpoints on a matter which prevents you from growing and expanding your potential. *“We limit our success when we mistake the limits of our perception for reality.”* – Bill Crawford. *“It is one of the commonest of our mistakes to consider that the limit of our power of perception is also the limit of all that there is to perceive.”* – Charles Webster Leadbeater
3. **Limited ideas** are ideas that you falsely believe are possible for you and others. *“As long as your ideas of what’s possible are limited by what’s actual, no other idea has a chance.”* – Susan Neiman. *“The only limits you have are the limits you believe.”* – Wayne Dyer
4. **Limited experiences** are all you have. You are confined by your experiences, and this may prevent you from progressing out of your “box,” so-to-speak and seeing matters of life differently. *“The critic is a prisoner to his own experiences and perspectives, erroneously believing his limited experiences are the sum of all truth.”* – T.D. Jakes. *“Do not judge everyone else by your own limited experience.”* – Carl Sagan

THREE STRATEGIES TO GAIN PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Glean from your experiences.

Your experiences are the most important for a perspective you can offer that no one else on Earth can. You are the only person in existence who has experienced exactly what you have. No other human has walked exactly your path. Yes, some experiences are similar, maybe a few share the same, but the accumulation of all you experienced is yours alone. This is powerful! You have something to offer the world which is yours alone to offer.

Many people fear the past. Many suffer from anxiety and unrest when they think of their childhood, marriage that ended, a loss of a loved one from death, loss of a career, or any other seemingly negative experience. It is too painful to look there. If it is painful, you have not dealt with it. The fact you have been “running” from those memories limits your life. You hold on to guilt, anger, resentment, and sadness. You have not let go.

Change your perception of the past. Within the realm of your experiences, you have fantastic and great lessons, achievements, teachers, and skills. You have overcome, you are a champion, and you are a survivor. You KNOW how to get through. You KNOW what it takes to survive. You have something to offer others who struggle and battle similar feelings of fear and anxiety. You have a light within you. This light you gained from the past can light the way for others living in darkness. Use your light. Give away your power and strength. Others need you.

“You’re not a victim for sharing your story. You are a survivor setting the world on fire with your truth. And you never know who needs your light, your warmth, and raging courage.”

– Alex Ellie

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Avoid accepting your experiences as all there is. There is much more. Over 8 billion people on earth walk their journey, collect their experiences, and have different perspectives. Who is right? No one and everyone, depending on perspective. Be open to possibilities, there are other perspectives that may be more productive and more improved than yours. Perhaps someone else's "different" experience may benefit you and save your life.

"Life is a beautiful collection of temporary experiences. Treasure your unique collection and enjoy sharing it with others."

– Matthew Kahn.

2. Glean from others' experiences.

It has been said there are three types of people: the dumb, the smart, and the wise. The dumb never learn. The smart learn from their mistakes. The wise learn from others' mistakes.

Learning from the mistakes of others is a powerful key to self-mastery. Many, however, live with a limited belief that what another person experiences are exclusive to them and not one that can be adopted as their own. This is the typical experience when a father tells his son what not to do, but his son does it anyway, believing it will not happen to him the way it happened to his father. When all is said and done, the son comes crying to dad. If he had only listened.

For some reason, many people would rather be smart. Unfortunately, some are dumb. Many make the same mistake repeatedly and continue suffering the same consequences. This has been said to be the definition of insanity. It takes a lot of pain and loss for someone to wave

their white flag of surrender and ask for help. The E.G.O. prevents people from taking suggestions and asking for help. E.G.O. tells you to do a thing because of what you believe, with your limited experience and perception. You believe it will be good for you even if someone more qualified tells you otherwise. It is with age we realize how little we know.

Be wise and take suggestions from those who are more experienced, qualified, and have your best interest at heart. Be aware of your limits and be open-minded to another perspective. Awareness of your limitations is key for you to be wise. Be open-minded and maybe someone who has been where you are knows more than you and can offer you a new perspective. Remember, you don't know what you don't know. Change how you look at asking for help. **You do not ask for help because you are weak; you ask for help so you can stay strong.** Asking for help is a sign of intelligence. Taking help is a sign of wisdom. Go pick someone's brain who you trust and has ample experience. Meditate on the suggestions they give for a day or two. Take your time making decisions. Use your experience as well as theirs. Accumulation of knowledge is a powerful strategy for self-mastery. Be wise and succeed. Remember, anything is possible when more than one mind is involved.

***"If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples than you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each one of us will have two ideas."** – George Bernard Shaw*

3. Learn to Listen.

We naturally want to be heard. An infant will cry loudly when hungry, lonely, or scared. He will cry louder and louder until he gets a response. When he gets a response, he has learned to scream and cry for attention. This learned behavior carries on throughout life. When we are adults, we learn that we will be understood and cared for when we talk. We feel the natural urge to have someone understand us and “know” where we are coming from. Many feel more powerful when they are heard; they may feel as though they have something to offer. Speaking, rather than listening, can make someone feel more confident. It is motivated by a selfish desire to be heard, “what I have to say is more important than what you have to say.” It is driven by the E.G.O. and prevents personal growth and gaining knowledge. You already know everything you already know, so the more you speak and the less you listen, the less you will gain. Gaining knowledge is based on the premise of listening.

“Listening and being curious and wide-eyed in the world, I think, is what allows us to move forward, progress, evolve and learn and alter our behavior and become more self-aware. I think that listening is kind of what it is all about.” Andrew Zuckerman

Many must be given the “gift of desperation” before they are ready to listen. Many must come to realize their way is not working, and a new design **MUST** be adopted. There are many designs for living. Some are destructive, some constructive, and some are in the middle of the fence living a life of mediocrity. For you to change, transform your life, and Unlock your Greatness, you must listen. **Listen to learn and learn to listen.** In listening and hearing, you will grow, change, transform, and learn. Your mind is great at taking in data and learning. Your mind

has the capacity to learn and store 2.5 million gigabytes of memory. Do not limit the knowledge of your potential by only speaking; make sure listening is a significant part of your repertoire.

You must be careful what and whom you are listening to. As discussed, be aware of your internal conversation. You will witness the old lies you listened to for years fade away during your transformation. With a new design for living, you can decipher the lies from truth. Today you can discard the lies. Surround yourself with a village of positive people who have what you want. If they have what you want, all you must do is what they did to get what they have. Ask them to give you suggestions and ideas. Listen to them. Listen then act. Apply the knowledge. There is no greater gift than the knowledge of someone before. Remember, learn to listen, and listen to learn.

“We must be silent before we can listen. We must listen before we can learn. We must learn before we can prepare. We must prepare before we can serve. We must serve before we can lead.” - William Arthur Ward