

YOUR WORKBOOK

(VISUALIZE / "CAN DO")

Survive first and then thrive



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DISCLAIMER

"Your Workbook" (Visualize - Can Do) is based on my life journey and experiences and is not provided as a scientific text but as a storybook with lessons that can be very useful in anyone else's journey. It is intended to present ideas that excite and incite your imagination as a work of art that would allow anyone to develop their life skills.

My goal is to provide mentorship and this book is not a substitute for medical, psychological or psychiatric treatment or counselling.

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FOREWORD

If I had to fill a swimming pool with a bucket I could debate the fairness of it or realize my options:

- 1) Whine about it
- 2) Shut up and fill the swimming pool with a bucket
- 3) Fill the swimming pool with a bucket while I whine about it

My adaptation to Canadian life involved choosing option 3. Although it is important to fight unfair situations, it is more important for me to do so in a manner that allows me to survive and then thrive.

Many times, I found myself unable to fully grasp or understand what was going on in my new environment, I remember sometimes feeling completely overwhelmed, angry, frustrated or just giving up. What I discuss in "My Handbook" influenced my life. Looking back I can see that I did not lack desire, drive or ability but the right tactics.

I adapted because I had to and not always because I wanted to. It was necessary to do this if I wanted to **survive first and then thrive**. I learned that what I had to do always took precedence over what I wanted to do and I became skilled at understanding what was relevant and what was important.

I grew up in an African culture that exposed me to the art of story telling as a form of therapy and the use of proverbs and analogies to illustrate and stimulate the imagination. I have used this as an effective tactic in my medical practice. I was often surprised by how unfamiliar my "North American" patients were with this method, but very gratified by how quickly they responded to it. The feedback from these many patients, friends and strangers whom I have shared these experiences with convinced me that a book like this is worth writing.

PROLOGUE

WINNERS & LOSERS

I am told that there are about forty million to one billion sperm cells in every ejaculation, each one of those guys hoping to be the one that wins the favour of a little egg, sitting at the end of what can only be described as a precarious journey, through a very hostile birth canal, designed to separate the strong sperm from the weak. Only less than a hundred make it to the end and then the timing had to be just perfect because fertilization is never guaranteed.

You have been taking care of yourself since you were a 2 celled organism, something told you to leave the fallopian tube and start to implant in the uterus, the same mechanism had you start to replicate cells and create the complex structure you now inhabit. Your very ability to survive and make survival decisions definitely pre-dated your brain.

Possibly 50% of pregnancies are lost with the mother never knowing she was pregnant. The trimesters (every 3 months of pregnancy) all present their unique challenges, each of which you manage to scale some before you even had a brain. With every breath, with every metabolism cycle, you fought to be here realizing that the only thing guaranteed without much effort is death.

Everywhere you turned there was always something trying to kill, you even your mother's immune system could turn against you if you made the mistake of getting close and yet like a cellular ninja you negotiated your way through this battle of survival.

You spent nine months in an aquatic environment, instinctively drawing food from your maternal source before you even had awareness of self. You accomplished one of many critical events by successfully transitioning from an aquatic environment and taking

your first breath at birth. All these amazing things, accomplished without your awareness of any thoughts or conscious sense of your existence.

You negotiate your way through the early hours, mostly blind and deaf and yet you instinctively know to reach for the nourishment of your mother's milk. While in the womb, you have developed unique systems designed to help you survive the rocky road on the outside.

There are so many things out of your control, like what environment you end up in, whether you are surrounded by factors that will enhance your survival and yet you do not focus on this, but simply focus on surviving the next sixty seconds to the next minute, the next sixty minutes to the next hour, the next twenty four hours to the next day, the next seven days to the next week and the next fifty two weeks to the next year and as you maintain your focus you continue to grow, you continue to adapt and you continue to learn. You continue to live and to survive.

You had survived some of the biggest threats to your very existence long before you even knew you were here, all around you, at every stage, countless perils on your way. The lottery of life is the biggest lottery you ever played, with the odds constantly stacked against you and your unique abilities constantly making lemonade out of lemons and finding a way to hang around.

You stand before me now, you have a brain and conscious awareness of what you have always been unconsciously aware of, that nothing was ever guaranteed but death, you call yourself a loser and tell me that you are helpless. Look around you my friend for in this moment and every moment that exists for you, does so because you won.

So my winning loser who continues to win even though you perceive you lose, continue to enjoy the gifts you are giving to yourself, because your sense of losing, is your fruit of winning, but remember all the eggs and sperm cells that didn't make it here.

VISUALIZE - CAN DO

At the end of this module I want you to have a very good and clear understanding of the concept "Visualize" and the tactic "Can Do Method" as these 2 are very key to getting the results that we want.

Where you want to go is determined by you but to get there your:

- 1) Imagination (Thoughts)
- 2) Words (Verbalization) and
- 3) Actions (Activity) need to be aligned in the direction that you have chosen. If you can align 2 of them in that direction the last one will always align itself with the other 2. In other words if your words and thoughts are aligned in a particular direction your actions will line up with them. For example if I want to be brave if I can think brave thoughts and say brave words my actions will be of a brave person.

The process of aligning these 3 elements is what I call "**Visualize**".

To succeed have a healthy imagination and a stubborn will.

Use your imagination to find your direction and use your will to focus on reinforcing this direction through the repetition of the required action. The life that you experience is always directly related to the choices that you make and the actions that you reinforce through repetition.

The purpose of the imagination is imagery, to provide direction, it allows a person to appreciate what they want, to see where they are going and where they want to go. The "will" is the machine that gets the person there, it lacks imagery, as this would distract it from its task of making you do the same things over and over again until you achieve the result that you want. Avoid negative imagery and remember when there is a contest between the will and the imagination the imagination always wins.

The imagination and the will should always be working as a team, together and not against each other and so it is important to be aware of the things that stimulate the imagination. It is almost impossible to will yourself to imagine anything, as the act of imagining itself is a form of letting go of reality and visualize what you want reality to be. Verbalizing the intended direction is a very important tactic for stimulating the imagination.

Hoping not to fail is not the same thing as trying to succeed. When you are hoping not to fail your imagination is engaged with failure because you are trying to avoid it and inadvertently thinking of all the many ways that you could possibly fail. Most of your energy is focused on avoiding failure with very little left to try and succeed therefore lowering the probability of success.

When you are trying to succeed you are focused on success and all the things you have to do to get there, although you are aware failure is a possibility, you are not consumed by it and if at first you don't succeed you keep finding ways to get the results that you want.

If you are trying to prevent someone from dropping an expensive vase, "hold on to it" is more likely to produce a positive result than, "don't drop it". In the first case the person imagines holding on to it while in the second case the person imagines dropping it. Action words are a very important stimulus for the imagination so how you define things and verbalize your actions are an important step in taking control of your imagination.

Practice makes perfect, the more you visualize a situation the more familiar it becomes. The will is responsible for making you imagine the same situation repeatedly. Imagination hates boredom and repetition is boring but necessary to achieve results through action. The will on the other hand thrives on repetition and in fact the more able you are to repeat and stick with an action the more willful you are.

The following steps are useful in helping the imagination and the will work as a team:

- 1) Self-affirmation statements
- 2) Appropriate verbalization
- 3) Appropriate action

Émile Coué de la Châtaigneraie (February 26, 1857 – July 2, 1926) who was a French Psychologist and Pharmacist who developed a method of psychotherapy and self improvement based on optimistic autosuggestion.

He used the phrase in French, "Tous les jours à tous points de vue je vais de mieux en mieux" that translates in English to every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better. It was a form of conscious autosuggestion repeated as much as twenty times a day usually at the beginning and end of each day. Coué maintained that curing some of our troubles requires a change in our unconscious thought that can be achieved only by using our imagination and this in turn creates physiological changes through autosuggestion.

I modified it slightly:

Every day

In every way

Getting better and better

More capable, more able

The expression of the idea or intent engages and excites the imagination the most. Each line presents a particular idea that the unconscious mind can connect with the above saying in any way it deems fit but the end results would be consistent with the idea presented by the words.

Every day: Visualize time

In every way: Visualize all actions possible

Getting better and better: Visualize direction of getting better
More capable, more able: Visualize ability

What you say influences your imagination, which in turn influences what your actions. Verbalizing the words out loud and saying it like you mean it (even if you don't fully understand what they mean) surprisingly is more effective than when you just think about it and don't say it out loud.

Visualize is a form of purposeful fantasizing where we may indulge in grandiose ideas but don't distort reality. It is a form of "self-programming" with expectations that are consistent with reality, even though the probability may be low, the likelihood of occurrence of the results that you want is possible as opposed to "self-delusion" when the expectations are not consistent with any form of reality and the likelihood of occurrence of the results that you want is impossible.

It is important to verbalize statements and to say things in a manner consistent with what you want, for example rather than say you hope you don't fail, say you hope that you succeed or instead of you don't know if you are good enough, say you hope that you are good enough.

You are not pretending to be something that you are not, you are simply hoping to become something you know that you can be. In the same manner saying you are in your happy place in an attempt to make yourself happier is not as effective as visualizing going from sadness to happiness. "Visualize" is not about denying reality, it is the 'mind process' of transforming reality from one state to another following a natural progression.

When you are trying to stop or change a habit you consider undesirable, you should make sure that your imagination is engaged with the change you desire and not the habit that you are trying to change. Visualizing does not guarantee that you will get the result that you want but it makes it more likely to occur.

It is a good assumption that the reason why you are not getting the results that you want is because you are not doing the right things. Although this assumption is accurate it does not clarify for you what the right thing are.

Trying not to fail is not the same thing as trying to succeed. In the first instance you spend all your energy trying to figure out the different things that could make you fail and how to prevent or avert them and your imagination, words and actions are engaged with failure.

On the other hand when you are trying to succeed your energy is focused on what you need to do to succeed and your imagination, words and action are aligned in this direction.

If your plan is to go up north, it makes perfect sense to make sure that your steps are headed in that direction rather than down south. If circumstances beyond your control force you to go in a direction we don't want to rather than spend energy trying to stop it spend the energy focusing more on the direction you want.

When trying to succeed make sure that your words express this desire on a regular basis, engage your imagination in all the different ways you can succeed. It is important that you do not lose sight of the things that could jeopardize your success but make sure that when you consider these things that you also considered an exponentially more number of things that would help you succeed.

In other words when you review the things you "can't do" also make sure you look at the things you "can do" so as not to lose your perspective. Maintain a ratio of "can do" to "can't do" and the more difficult the task the higher the ratio i.e. the harder the challenge the more reinforcement you need to stop you from panicking and losing your focus for success.

You can only make withdrawals where you have deposits so if you

don't put any deposits in the bank of "goodwill" why are you trying to make withdrawals from there? The life that you experience is always directly related to the things that you reinforce through repetition. Although this "can do" tactic does not guarantee success it makes it more likely to occur and so it is very useful.

Do not to forget the importance of balance. You can cool hot water either by waiting for it to cool down (this takes a lot of time) or (speeding up the process) by adding cold water until you reach the desired temperature.

Another example would be stress, I always hear talk about stress reduction and the need to live a less stressful existence but for someone like myself who is stress dependent trying to reduce stress is stressful. I realize that it is the lack of balance with non stressful activities that was creating a problem. So I now like to use the term balance stress as opposed to stress reduction. A balance philosophy encourages you to spend your energy incorporating stress free activities without any conscious attempt to reduce the number of stressful activities (although more often than not a reduction in the number of stressful activities occurs as a result of introducing the stress free activities).

The "can do" method uses a ratio to make you "Visualize" the direction you want to go and results that you want more often than the direction you don't want to go and the results that you don't want. You should learn to accept the things you can't change or do anything about and focus your energy where you have the best chance of getting the results that you want. You can achieve this by consciously reinforcing the things that you "can do" in a manner that far exceeds the things that you "can't" and maintain a ratio that increases proportionately with the complexity of the task ahead. I want to emphasize that you do not practice denial or avoidance but allow yourself to be completely aware and acknowledge your "can't" and then remind yourself of your "can" in such a manner that say a 3:1

ratio you review three "Can" for every one "Can't" that you become aware of.

It is important to verbalize "can do" statements more often than "can't do" and to say things in a manner consistent with what you want. For example rather than say I hope I don't fail, say I hope that I succeed or instead of I don't know if I am good enough, say I hope that I am good enough. Avoid false statements like I know I will succeed or I know I am good enough because your unconscious mind is aware that you are unsure. In other words, do not pretend to be something that you are not, instead hope to become something you know that you can be. In the same manner saying "I am in my happy place" in an attempt to make yourself happier is not as effective as visualizing going from sadness to happiness.

Points to remember:

Make sure that your imagination (thoughts), your words (verbal expressions) and your actions (deeds) are consistent with the results that you want.

Repeat the above process as often as possible in order to get the results that you want.

The tactic of Can Do is best achieved using the concept Visualize. Consciously reinforce the things that you "Can Do" in a manner that far exceeds the things that you "can't".

Maintain a ratio that increases proportionately with the complexity of the task ahead.

Do not practice denial or avoidance but allow yourself to be aware of your "can't" but remind yourself of your "can" in a ratio that allows you to get the results that you want.

DAILY EXERCISE

EVERYDAY

IN EVERY WAY

GETTING BETTER

AND BETTER

MORE CAPABLE

MORE ABLE

Repeat the above phrase aloud (quietly) 10 (ten) times (one after the other) = 1 (one) set

Do 1 (one) set every hour for 10 (ten) hours - 10 (ten) sets a day

Record the time whenever you do a set

Keep a daily journal of anything you consider important that happened on that day.

QUESTIONS

WHAT IS VISUALIZE?

WHAT DOES YOUR IMAGINATION DO?

WHAT DOES YOUR WILL DO?

IF THERE IS A CONTEST BETWEEN YOUR IMAGINATION
AND WILL WHO WINS?

WHAT ARE THE STEPS USEFUL IN HELPING YOUR
IMAGINATION AND WILL WORK AS A TEAM?

WHAT IS THE MODIFIED ÉMILE COUE PHRASE?

WHAT IS THE "CAN DO" APPROACH?

ANSWERS