



# UNLEASH YOUR STRENGTHS

TAKE THE TEST, KNOW YOURSELF, & GUIDE YOUR CHANGE

RICHARD N.  
STEPHENSON

## Awesome Testimonials

"I'm a team member of a very small art school in Thailand. The students benefit a lot from your tests as they help them get to the right direction while we can focus on the right perspective to improve. Our opportunity had been strongly blocked up until we found your site – all by chance. On behalf of the school, I'd like to show our gratitude here. Thank you very much."

**-June**

"I teach high school civics and my seniors are VERY ready to graduate, but very UNMOTIVATED for life. I've had them all take the [RSWAT] test and motivation tests, we've discussed it, and it's given us great direction for the rest of the year and (hopefully) as they begin their lives as young adults. They've been astonished at the results. What you do is great! Thank you!!"

**-Dan**

"While reading your blog posts, using your thinking tools, taking all of your various self tests, and visiting the websites you have linked, I have without doubt found self improvement within myself. Your ideas are equally as fascinating as they are helpful and applicable to the real world. Most importantly, your ideas are extremely helpful for improving the individual, and by extension society itself. Thank you for giving me the tools and motivation to improve myself.

Keep up the great work!"

**-Chris**

"I would like to say thanks for providing free tests and if they help people evolve it helps us all evolve as separatism is an illusion, in my opinion. So thanks for helping yourself and me and the entire universe! That is an amazing achievement!!"

**-Maxine**

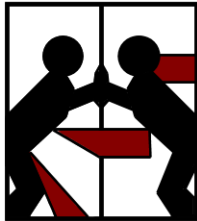
"I am in the process of working towards a masters in management and have found many of the self help tests incredibly beneficial. I have also shared your web site with many of my classmates and co-workers, so they could also share in the benefits of the information you have made available. Continue the great work!"

**-Brad**

# Unleash Your Strengths

Take the Test, Know Yourself, & Guide Your Change

**Richard N. Stephenson**



RichardStep.com Publishing

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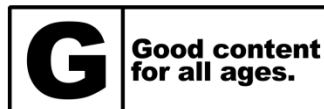
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There's no foul or lewd language, no crudeness, and nothing you wouldn't want to share with your grandma. The content is all-around positive, inspiring, useful, and practical. I take a conversational approach and minimize the usual self-help "fluff."

Read easy and share confidently as this book will give you something to talk about.

## Acknowledgements

To the hundreds of thousands of folks that found my website & helped make me a better dude.

To the tens of thousands of folks that took my tests & shared how much they've benefited.

To the thousands of folks that have helped shape the content of this book, one chunk at a time.

To the hundreds of folks that helped refine the book's title, subtitle, & overall structure.

To the tens of folks that suffered through all of my revisions & associated happy dances.

To my two kids, the best gifts the good Lord could ever give anybody.

To my wife, forever gracing my life with awesomeness.

Thank you.

## What to Expect From This Book

I know no one reads the instructions that come with their new phones, lawn-mowers, or toasters. Most folks are good at figuring that type of stuff out. But just in case, hang in there, this is the "how-to" on reading this book. I'll keep it short.

### **PART I:**

It's important for you to experience the first part of the book. It'll build your motivation by giving you knowledge of what's coming and what you'll get out of it. Here, I'm not asking you to make any effort to modify your personal view of yourself. Though you will notice a number of things about yourself soon.

### **PART II:**

The middle of the book is where we get down to business on your strengths. You can take the free RichardStep Strengths and Weaknesses Aptitude Test (RSWAT), but it's not required. You don't have to go through each strength right away, though I do recommend giving them all a chance.

They're all about the same short length and contain valuable insights. Do what you know you want first, and remember the others on your next read. Know that the strengths are in a meaningful order.

### **PART III:**

The closing section will take us through what personal growth means and what's to come. When you're done with the book, you're not done with you. It's just the beginning. I'm asking if you'll join me for a meeting on paper to guarantee your success.

Lastly, the back section of the book has recommended reading, extra goodies, useful links, and other little surprises. It's worth the look, but don't skip ahead just yet.

## **GET READY TO UNLEASH YOUR STRENGTHS**

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# PART I - PRE-STRENGTHS

# Chapter 1 - My Story

## A Different Class

"See you later mom. Love you!" I had an Electronics Circuits class to be at in an hour, with thirty-five miles of Houston's morning traffic to wade through.

"Hold on, Richard." Mom, ever so good at stopping me in my tracks, pulled me back in with motherly love. "Did you schedule an appointment with the dermatologist, yet?"

"Uhhh... I really gotta' go now. I'm late!" The beads of sweat on my forehead are giving it away aren't they?

"That's a no. Please, Richard, I'm concerned about that bump on your shoulder. It's been bugging me for too long. It's been put off for too long and it's past time to get it checked out."

"Speaking of bugging..."

"Son. Please. Make an appointment soon." Mom's don't make puppy-dog looks. But you know that one that's pretty dang close? It just grabs your heart and gives it a big hug. How am I supposed to say no to that?

"Alright. Tomorrow. I'll do it." And with that, I sighed my way to the car.

## Waiting for a Sign

How many magazines about pop stars and motor cars can you read when you're in one of the most nerve-racking places known to mankind? Turns out, about three. So I have to give the doctor's office some credit for getting me back quickly.

"Hello Mr. Stephenson. What brings you in today?"

"My mom." Seeing that strained smile the doctor must give 800 times a day begged me to clarify. "Okay, well, I've got this bump on my shoulder that looks kinda funky. It's been there since I was a little kid and it's no big deal."

"Let me see."

The doctor runs her hand across my shoulder, letting out a mysterious mumble here and there. I think they do that just to make you squirm.

"It looks a little abnormal. I'd like to run a few tests and see what we come up with."

"What kind of tests are we talking about?"

"A biopsy. Basically a small punch of skin from the area that we can further analyze."

I gave a nod of approval and she headed my way. She pulled out what looked like the meanest metal McDonald's® straw I've ever seen. A quick shot went in to numb the area. Oh how I love those things.

"This is our biopsy punch. It's going to feel a little weird as I collect the sample."

Weird is an interesting choice of words. It felt like a number two pencil's empty eraser end being twisted into my back. Sure I was numb, but talk about a funky feeling.

"That's it. I'll get this sent off to the lab and we'll get it checked out soon."

"Okay. Sounds good. Thanks, doctor."

## **Not Your Ordinary Day**

"Hello? Mr. Stephenson? This is Jane at the doctor's office. The doctor would like to speak with you, if you have a moment. "

It's funny how one moment, when spent waiting for the status on something as important as your life, can seem like eternity.

"Mr. Stephenson? I have the results of your biopsy."

"Oh, great! It's been a while and I was beginning to think that no news was good news," I said, letting out a nervous chuckle. The irony didn't hit me until the words left my mouth.

"So it looks like the biopsy indicates a nodular melanoma with ulceration."

"Umm... not exactly sure what you mean."

"Skin cancer. You have a very dangerous melanoma that needs to be addressed further."

My heart dropped through my stomach.

Why is this happening to me? I'm only twenty years old for goodness sake! Isn't this supposed to be an old person's thing? Maybe she's wrong. Maybe I should get some more opinions. Should I just skip it all like I've done all my life?

"I recommend going to the appointment we setup with the good folks at MD Anderson Cancer Center for the full round of tests. These tests will help determine the next steps."

What exactly am I supposed to say now? Thanks? "Oh. Okay. Um. Yeah. I guess I'll get that information from your folks and do that. Um. Oh and just so I'm clear on this, what's the outlook?"

Understandably, the doctor was silent for a while. "Not usually a good sign, Mr. Stephenson. Please, be sure to go through with the next appointment."

"Oh okay. Will do." I don't even remember if I said goodbye, but I was definitely done with that conversation.

## **No Turning Back Now**

There I am, bored and cold in my green back-drafted apron, sitting in a waiting lobby. I take a slow look around the room and begin to notice I'm at least a third the age of everyone in here. In sync, it seems as if each person looks at me as my eyes sweep around the room. Such knowing and charitable eyes.

They speak volumes, but the loudest that makes it out is pity. At least, that's what I hear. I've been through so many tests in the past few weeks. Even CT scans with fire-hot barium pumped

through my veins for fun. I know it's all necessary, but I can't wrap my head around why the heck I'm here.

This is the second time I've been at the Cancer Center in the last three weeks. It turned out I was confirmed for having a large melanoma on my shoulder. And a few more on my back and leg. Bonus points.

Today was the day I would get forty-eight square-inches of skin removed from my body. That's about half a sheet of 8.5" by 11" paper. And I wasn't even sure it would help. But whatever. Here goes.

I let out a couple of funny little jokes, as I often do when I'm nervous, a few extra prayers, and kiss the lights goodbye. Over seven hours later, I was still staring at the back of my eyelids. This wasn't good.

## **Where's My Second Chance?**

It took several people a very long time to wake me up. Thankfully, I was up and about only a few days later, though with a bit of a stiff neck. The fact that I was recovering physically wasn't doing much for my mental health. I kept diving into books, websites, and doctors that made me believe I was a goner.

Why is it, knowing I've been given a second chance, I can't seem to jump out of this gaping rut in my path to growth? Why do I keep turning my head down to the ground of 'what was' instead of up to 'what is to come?'

The melanoma turned out to be 7.2 mm and very much over the safe-zone numbers. Thank God nothing had spread out to my lymph nodes, but I would still need checkups on a monthly basis for years to come. I had been thereby dubbed a "high-risk patient" and would be under watch for the foreseeable future. Good times.

I was convinced my chances for survival were too low. My grades were slipping, my work was lagging behind, and I pushed those closest to me further and further away. I was low. I was real low. I started experimenting with drinking to ease the pain of the unknown. It was getting bad.

## **Now is the Time to Do**

Until that day. That day I was stopped in my tracks by questions I couldn't ignore.

Do I go on like this, accepting what science, society, and medicine has deemed my future? Do I just give up and be bound by these boxes people keep putting me in? Is this what I was put here to do?

I was given another chance by God to turn my life into something more. Something more meaningful for the world, my family, and me. Something that would show I appreciate why I was put here and show my desire to give back.

Now is not my time to go. Now is my time to do.

That started my thirteen year journey through unleashing the strengths in me. And now I'm here to help you.

Are you waiting for a sign? Take the opportunity, now, to give yourself permission to have a second chance.

Are you ready to unleash your strengths?



# Chapter 2 – Can You Grow?

## What Does it Mean to Grow?

Your idea of what it means to grow is probably different than mine. It's probably different than your neighbor's thoughts, your friends' thoughts, and your own thoughts of growth from a year ago. You're not a brick wall, setup one time and made to stay in one place forever.

As a baby, you tried to figure out what these big, loving people were trying to say to you. You once thought “drink-a-wa-wa” meant to get a drink of water. There is a language you don't understand, though once you did. If you stay in the same spot you were last year, you will be where you've always been.

I've complained of being upset when I hit a sticky situation in my life. In my earlier days, "I'm having a bad day" was a darn good excuse to keep having a bad day. Now, I realize that I'm in control of myself. I know that everything I do is my choice on some level.

*I'm where I am today because of the choices I've made.*

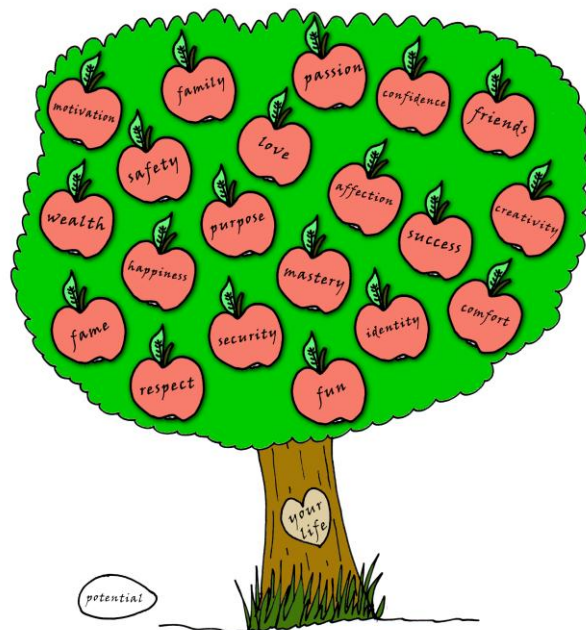
*I'm not where I want to be because of the choices I haven't made.*

*I wouldn't try to grow if I were content with where I am.*

Does this sound like something you can believe?

Growing means to search for a better you. To want to change because you know there's more you're capable of. Not because you feel obligated to meet someone else's standards. You know there's a better you ahead, it's just a matter of taking the steps to get there.

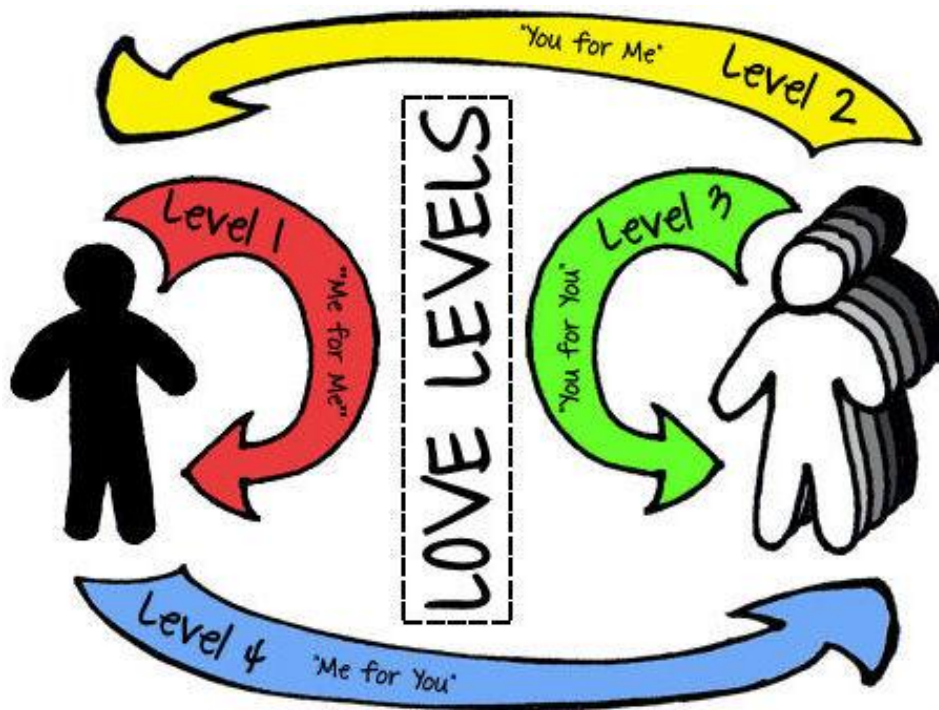
Growing is about making the choices needed to get where you expect to go. An apple seed



feeds no one. An orchard feeds many. The difference is growth.

## True Growth and Levels of Love

There are four levels of love you can experience. Look around and you'll find influential people saying which type of love is greatest. But the key is knowing each type of love shows different levels of living life. Each one is greater than the last for helping yourself and others. Your quality of life depends on which level you choose.



**Level 1: "I love ME for MY own benefit."**

- You focus on your own needs and desires.

**Level 2: "I love YOU for MY benefit."**

- You focus on others, but you expect something in return.

**Level 3: "I love YOU for YOUR benefit."**

- You focus on others without expecting anything in return, but usually at your expense.

**Level 4: "I love ME for YOUR benefit."**

- You focus on growing you so you may help others. You transform yourself into a more capable person so your ability to help others is multiplied.

Saint Bernard felt love level four was the greatest of all and I agree. Think about it for a bit. If you can't take care of your family, what should you do about it?

Should you keep dragging along, day after day with no end in sight, only to come home too tired, too grumpy, and too upset to share love with your family? Or should you keep at it and look for ways to grow in your free time?

Keep growing, inch by inch, closer to a better version of you. Become a version of you with more time, talent, and treasures to share. A version of you that takes care of yourself because you truly desire to take care of others – only better.

{ Work on your development off the clock to break free of the clock. }

## 5 Steps to Guide Your Growth

Your journey in growing is like other interests you want to follow. You have to know about the steps to get something done. You'll need to know why you're taking a step, how to pick the next step, how to actually take the next step, and how to learn from that step's lessons.

### 1. Why take a step?

Knowing why acts as fuel for your inner fire. When you find your base reasons for doing, then you can use them as a jumping point for action. You'll have a focused start instead of beginning from scratch.

### 2. How to figure out the next step?

Knowing the end results of your plans makes it real inside. But too much thinking about a big goal, without a clear path, leads to no action. Spend your time and effort figuring out the next steps you need to take. Climbing a mountain is safer when you watch your next step. Climbing is deadly when you only stare at the peak.

### 3. Take the next step

Now take the next step. Your journey of 1,000 miles begins with your first step. You'll get there in time, but you have to start somewhere. Do you know what you need to do on the 800th step? The same thing – take the next step.

#### 4. Learn from your steps

Progress means moving forward by doing something. It doesn't mean each step moves you forward but that the net direction is forward. Two steps back and three steps forward is one step toward progress. Learn from your steps back and transform them into leaps forward.

#### 5. Share what you learn

Give the gift of knowledge. Sure, you'll misstep from time to time. But it's what you do with the outcome that'll either make or break you. Your desire to share your lessons will help people grow. Become a source of learning for those in need. Blaze a trail and tell the tale.

You have to follow a roadmap for growth to get anywhere. It's through action you'll get things done. Guide your actions with the purpose and planning you need in order to have a good journey.

## Self-Improvement Math: Will + Work = Change

I'll guess you've probably read a self-help book or two before. I'll also go out on a limb and guess some books gave you advice like, "if you believe it, it will be so!"

And I agree, kind of.

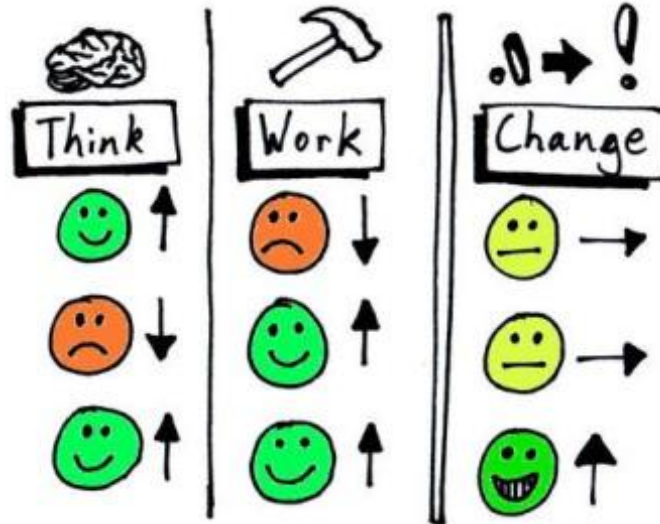
I'd like to add that the "thinking part" is only the first step to growing. Making up your mind to change gets you in the right frame of mind. It doesn't actually change anything outside.

{ You get more done making yourself better, instead of wishing life were easier. }

Do you like cake? For the sake of the argument, let's say it's a German chocolate or red velvet cake. Well, do you like sugar? How about eggs? Vanilla? Flour? Salt? Milk? Or do you just like cake? You'd probably be upset if a bakery only sold boxes of ingredients, right?

You want a finished product. You want something you can digest. You want something you can sink your teeth into and use right away. You already made up your mind about getting a cake, picking the one you want, how you're going to get it, and what you're going to do with it. You did all of the thinking, but now you want to eat it.

Do get your ingredients in order, and know that you have to actually do something before you can eat it. Imaginary cake tastes like nothing. Real cake tastes yummy. Here's a graph to help visualize the idea:



Think right, do the work, and be the change.

{ "I've always believed that if you put in the work, the results will come." –Michael Jordan }

### What Comes With Change?

Here's the big "what's in it for me?" part of the story. This is the overall 'why' when it comes to your personal change journey.

Change basically means "something different." In other words, something is going to be something else, sometime soon. A whole lot of something else and not what you're used to right now. Small stuff and big stuff alike.

You can expect to see gradual changes once you get started. Changes in what motivates you, what job you want, the friends you hang out with, how your family members interact with you, your personal hobbies and interests, and your growth.

You will begin to think and act differently. You will begin to see the world in a whole new light. It's like seeing the white arrow in the FedEx logo. Once you've seen it, you'll always see it. But

if you don't know about it, you probably never will. Here's an example of a similar hidden arrow from an imaginary, overnight mattress delivery company.



There are some rough spots you'll need to be ready for. Other people don't like change, and not everyone will like seeing you change. Get ready for it as some will push back. You should expect this from some family members and you'll have to be patient when you work with them. They're with you for life.

Friends, coworkers, neighbors, and acquaintances are a different story. You might have to distance yourself from those holding you back.

Your growth is in your hands. Only you can make yourself do anything. It's a choice you consider, make, and then bring to life. Other people are just talking. You'll have to make it work, while you do the work.

You've got to be ready to change. If you're genuinely interested in making your life better, your environment will eventually support you.

Work on patience. Work on giving. Work on being a better you, by being a better you.

## **Is Self-Help the Right Thing for You Right Now?**

You go through different stages in life. You start out wondering if someone is going to feed you regularly. Then, you learn some words and start wondering how far you can go before someone tells you to shush. Shortly after, you're zipping around in a car and there are no parents in sight. Then you move on and get a desk-job. Life happens.

All along these stages, your expectations change. You ask yourself different questions and live your daily life with different rules.

A psychologist named Erik Erikson studied these stages and came up with a useful summary. His results tell the age ranges, the biggest troubles for each age, what life questions are asked, and how society plays into it all. The following chart captures the gist of his work. If you're really curious, the full Erikson Psychosocial Development Chart is available on my resources and tools page (<http://richardstep.com/tools/>).

Group	Age	Virtue	Crisis
Infants	0 to 18 mo	Hope	Trust vs. Mistrust
Toddlers	18 mo to 3 yrs	Will	Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt
Preschool	3 to 6 yrs	Purpose	Initiative vs. Guilt
Childhood	6 to 12 yrs	Competence	Industry vs. Inferiority
Adolescence	12 to 18 yrs	Fidelity	Identity vs. Role Confusion
Young Adults	19 to 40 yrs	Love	Intimacy vs. Isolation
Middle Adulthood	40 to 65 yrs	Care	Generativity vs. Stagnation
Seniors	65+ yrs	Wisdom	Ego Integrity vs. Despair

These are the things the world expects of you. This is the mold that was made to help you with issues and guide your actions. See how this applies to you for planning, understanding, and overcoming challenges. It's not the rulebook, but it is a good guide.

### Age Stages and What You Can Expect

You'll want to focus on what this book has to do with you right now and not at your next stage of development. I've taken Dr. Erikson's information and turned it into what you can expect from this book. Ask yourself how the lesson from this chart fits your life right now.

Group	Age	Growth Stage	How this Book Applies to Your Life
Childhood	6 to 12 yrs	Curiosity	Planting the seeds and paving the road
Adolescence	12 to 18 yrs	Direction	Finding your strengths and focusing
Young Adults	19 to 40 yrs	Purpose	Reevaluating and aligning with passions
Middle Adulthood	40 to 65 yrs	Foundation	Focusing stability and giving back
Seniors	65+ yrs	Legacy	Mentoring and sharing your legacy

What does it all mean? No two people will have the same expectations for this book. Folks in the prime of their lives aren't looking for huge changes. Those folks exiting high school aren't looking for advice on how to leave a legacy, yet. You'll get something from the information inside and by doing the exercises.

Focus your expectations on your place in life. Narrow your learning to what suites you best - nothing more and nothing less. Optimize your time with this book. You will get the best out of this if you want to. So want to already.

### **Age Stages and Not Being Bound**

Of course, this brings up an important point. This age stage chart doesn't mean squat if you want to be more. You aren't bound by someone else's research. Statistics are just a bunch of numbers. You can break the mold, be the outlier, and achieve as much as you're able, can't you?

The information is here to help, so allow it to set you free. You're smarter, more capable, and more passionate about your life than anyone else. This is just a start. This is the beginning of your journey.

Learn Teach Be Do Grow  
**Be the trailblazer**  
**We need you**

### **Personal Change is a Life-Long Process**

My wife might disagree with me, but I've grown a lot since I was a kid. I can look back and see I had a certain personality then. Sure, some of it has stayed, but a lot of me has matured and transformed.

I've come to understand that the only constant in life is change. You're born trying to figure out the world, then you focus on following others in your younger years, and eventually you try to figure yourself out. You begin to notice there's more to life.

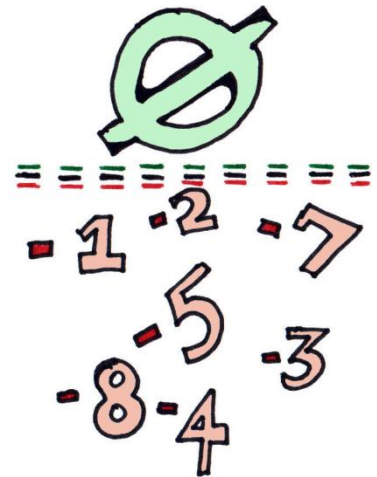
{ You can't become a doctor or lawyer overnight; don't expect the same for self-growth. }

You already know change is a life-long process. It's one of those ideas that's so obvious you don't pay attention to it anymore. Did you know your hair grows half a foot every year? Probably not, if you get regular haircuts. Recognize and accept that change is necessary for life. If it wasn't, then you'd still be in diapers. Change happens. You might as well make sense of it and gain.

{ "Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there." –Will Rogers }

### **Not Everything Will Make Sense Now, But It Will Soon**

I remember when I first learned about negative numbers. I was at a friend's house, admiring his huge Lego city, when he started talking about his older brother's math class. His brother was learning about positives, zero, and then some mysterious thing I've never heard of. He said his brother was learning about numbers that were below zero. What?



I immediately went into denial mode. I told him he wasn't telling the truth and I didn't want to hear any more of it. This information was so outside my understanding I was paralyzed. I went home the biggest doubter of higher math this side of six years old.

A few years later, it all made sense. What I didn't understand then, though it was deeply planted in my brain now, meant a whole lot later. That seed of a thought was nurtured into my project engineering tree for NASA.

Some things you experience on your personal change adventure will be unclear the first time around. That's perfectly fine. Commit to experience it with an open mind. Accept all that you can, as much as you're able.

You're free to open your mind and let the rest follow.

## What's Your Approach to Self Help?

I've gone through a bunch of self-development books. There's great stuff out there and I've included some in the recommended reading section in the back of this book. With this large library to reference, I noticed some real differences.

Some self-improvement methods seem to strike a chord with me more than others. I enjoy details, technical jargon, and tons of research. But it's not something I want to read over and over again and I know you don't either.

The approach I take with this book is a combination of what's worked for me and what will work for most folks. There are three main points self-help must address for it to be useful. Self-help must be accessible, practical, and applicable.

### It's Got to Be Accessible

I like to give you cake. I take the self-help ingredients and turn them into something you'll digest. Not something only the scholar, psychologist, biochemical engineer, rocket scientist, or geospatial intelligence analyst will enjoy. It's hard enough to figure out your self-discovery journey. The last thing you want is technical jargon to get in the way.

I make the information accessible so you can put it to use right away. So you can begin to focus on making yourself better, instead of finding a dictionary. I enjoy learning when the information comes across smoothly and I trust you do, too.

### Practical is as Practical Does

"All you need to do is stop watching TV, and your time issues will be fixed!"

"Stop doing what holds you back and you'll be awesome by tomorrow!"

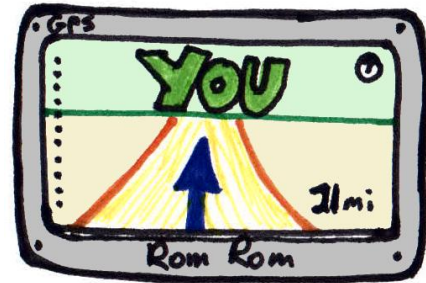
"Focus on the good in your life and the good will focus on you!"

And so on. The ideas behind these quotes are great and they strike a chord with most folks. But it's hard to do anything with them. You read them over, digest them a bit, and then say,

"okay... and?" They're great for reminding you of a good path, but they don't give you much on how to travel it.

I'll give you directions, maps, and details to make your journey clear. It won't be personally tailored to your life, but it'll be useful for things you can work on. I won't send you off alone, wishing you well in your life, without giving you tools you can use.

I'm going to supply you with a backpack full of food, tools, sleeping gear, GPS, and the knowledge to use them. I'll give you information you can use. I'm a regular guy on a mission and I want to help you on yours.



This is your journey to Unleash Your Strengths.

### **Make It Directly Applicable or I'll Ignore It**

There's another thing I want to point out about self-help books. Have you run across advice that sounds almost too good to be true? Advice that seems like it only fits people who are:

- ❖ already successful
- ❖ already know what they want to do in life
- ❖ already have a network of super-powerful people
- ❖ too far removed from regular folks to understand life

I have. And, again, I can see truth in the bird's-eye-view advice given, but I know you want more. You want help, advice, and information that's directly applicable to your life. You as a spouse, brother, sister, parent, teacher, lover, neighbor, friend, and life-explorer.

The advice, exercises, and information in this book are tailored to match everyday life. They're made to be directly useable in the roles you're working in. Made to be useful in any situation in your life. I'll give you tools you can use in more than just the perfect situation.

I'm giving you a belt and suspenders, not a yacht and a personal bodyguard.



# Chapter 3 – Change is Good

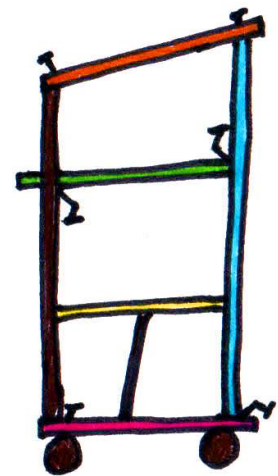
## Want to Know Why Personal Change is Simple?

Over the past few years, I've learned a lot about writing. I was very interested in writer's block, and this brought up some interesting thoughts. After all, something scary enough to stop professional writers deserves some attention.

Do doctors get doctor's block? How about meteorologists - do they get meteorologists' block? Do gardeners get gardener's block? Accountants get accountant's block? Cooks get cooker's block? See where I'm going here? You can begin to see professional performance requires a professional mindset. Just doing it, so to speak.

I'm okay admitting my woodworking skills are at the amateur level because it's just a hobby. I'd be crazy to tell myself I can slack off raising my kids. I can't, it's part of who I am. I have a duty, a service, and a commitment to raise my kids and help my family.

By being committed to a duty, a promise, and a path in life, you do what it takes to get stuff done. Sure, some days are harder than others and you're not producing at tip-top. That's okay, it happens to us all. On average, you do the best you can and you do fine.



### What It Will Take

The story's the same for personal development. When you want to make yourself better, you'll commit to change. You'll choose to do more, be more, and grow more. Not because you're doing it as a hobby, but because you know it's what you're meant to do.

Work on yourself because it's your future and you control it. What happens when you stop caring about your job and not controlling what gets done in the office? You get some negative attention and that can turn into a lost job. Choose to win, put in the work, and your part is taken care of.

## **Simple, But Not Easy**

Changing your life for the better is simple. Think I've gone off the deep-end with this one? Bear with me.

Change is simple. There's nothing complex about committing to doing things differently. You know smoking is bad for you, you decide to change, and you're interested in doing it. See? That was really simple. No detailed math problems here.

But, personal change, or quitting smoking, is definitely not easy. Simple, easy, what's the difference? Think I'm splitting hairs? I'm not.

## **Personal Change is Very Simple, But Not Easy**

- ❖ It will require dedicated effort on your part.
- ❖ It will take time - sometimes a whole lot of time.
- ❖ It will take support from the people around you.
- ❖ It will take dropping some habits you enjoy.
- ❖ It will take structure, direction, and thinking.
- ❖ It will take work. A lot of work. Simple, not easy, work.

Writing a book is a simple process. You put words to paper. No problem. But it sure as heck ain't easy. The planning, the writing, the research, the rewriting, the editing, the advice, the review, the rewriting, the more rewriting, the formatting, and the confidence to get it all done.

The confidence to stand by your work and stay strong no matter what the critics say, no matter how rainy the day, and no matter how many times you get rejected by Oprah for a review. You keep at it, putting a whole lot of simple work into focused effort.

It might not be easy, but we'll make personal change simple.

## **Personal Growth Comes With Change**

Change can be a scary beast. By definition, it's not what you're used to. It takes you out of your comfort zone, throws you on the tracks, and doesn't tell you when the next train is coming. You're on your own, conductor of your world.

{ "Minds are like parachutes. They only function when they are open." –Sir James Dewar }

There are three important tools for self-improvement you'll master as you go on your personal-development journey. You've got to know you're allowed to change, you've got to be more proactive, and you've got to take more responsibility for your actions.

## 1. Give Yourself Permission to Change

This sounds funky at first, but I've got a secret I know about you. You're waiting for someone to give you permission to do what you need to do to change your life.

Who'll grant such awesome permission to you? Do you file a request with your county officials? Does your fourth grade art teacher need to write you a letter?

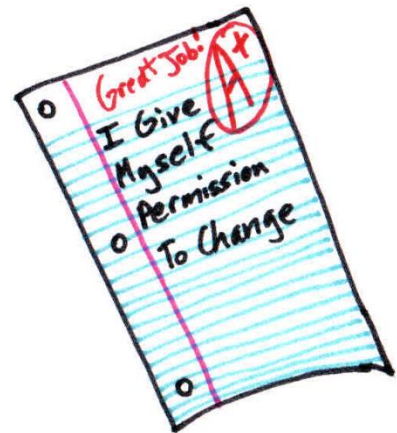
Grow now! You don't need anyone's permission to change your life. You might find it hard to believe this permission thing is a real problem. Take my word for it – belief is irrelevant here.

What's relevant is you use this time, right now, to give yourself permission to change. You don't get off the hook that easily. Say it with me out loud. This is very important.

"I give myself permission to change."

"I now have permission to grow."

"My growth journey has been approved by me."



Consider repeating these three lines regularly for a while. This will make a difference. Plan to notice the coming changes in your life. Since you bought this book, I give you permission to change, too. There. Now, you've taken the first step to self-change and growth. Congratulations!

## 2. Choose To Make a Move

Did you know waiting around for the "right time" stops a lot of people in their tracks? So does waiting for the "right thing" to happen. Too often, you'll wait for some other thing to happen

**THIS IS A PROMO SAMPLE** - I'm skipping ahead a few pages here to tease... I mean... give a bit more without giving away too much.

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# **PART II - STRENGTHS**

# Chapter 7 - Faith

## Build Your Foundation on Rock

“It is idle to talk always of the alternative of reason and faith. Reason is itself a matter of faith. It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all.” -G. K. Chesterton

**Definition:** “a strong belief in a supernatural power”

You've had one heck of a day. You bumped the curb on the way to work and got a flat tire. Your boss got mad and asked you to come in for the weekend. Your computer crashed while you were deep in an unsaved Word document. And the coffee machine broke. What else could go wrong?

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# Chapter 8 – Curiosity

## Enjoy the Ride as the Child Inside

“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.” -Albert Einstein

**Definition:** “a state in which you want to learn”

I was constantly beat-down by numbers, formulas, and fancy calculators in my days as an engineer. What's the big deal, that's what these folks do, right? I stuck to the conscious mind, being totally logical, rigid, and time-bound.

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# Chapter 9 - Risk Taking

## Risk is a Choice, Not a Chance

{ "Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore." -Andre Gide }

**Definition:** "a possibility of incurring loss or misfortune"

See that? Right there in the definition. That's one of the big problems with risk taking. Risk is often defined as the possibility of loss. No wonder you're so afraid of risk, you're told to believe it guarantees negative results.

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# Chapter 10 – Optimism

## The Glass is Always Full of Something

“Between the optimist and the pessimist, the difference is droll. The optimist sees the doughnut; the pessimist the hole!” -Oscar Wilde

**Definition:** “expecting the best”

You know that person at work? The one who’s always wearing a smile no matter what. The one who always seems on the up-and-up without a care in the world. Just when you think you caught them in a sour mood, they smile real big and you see the lemon slice in their mouth.

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# Chapter 11 – Focus

## Do What Will Matter Tomorrow

“Concentrate all your thoughts upon the work at hand. The sun’s rays do not burn until brought to a focus.”

-Alexander Graham Bell

**Definition:** “maximum clarity of an idea”

I have wonderful children. I didn't know what focus meant until they came into my life. Focus is important for these breathing, eating, screaming, and absolutely lovely human beings. They look up at you and know you care for them. They know nothing else in the world is more important than them. They have your full attention and you love it.

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# Chapter 12 - Self-Motivation

## Light a Fire in Your Belly

“If you want to accomplish anything in life, you can’t just sit back and hope it will happen. You’ve got to make it happen.” -Chuck Norris (that’s right!)

**Definition:** “that which gives personal purpose and direction to behavior”

It was raining outside and my car’s air conditioning crapped out. This is in 100°F, 300% humidity Houston, Texas and the windows quickly fogged up. My house was infested with blood-thirsty fire ants that aren’t supposed to be in the United States. My list of chores grew with no end in sight. Through all of this mess, I could only think about crashing and letting the day slip by.

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# Chapter 13 – Vision

## To See the Future You Have to Open the Present

“Visionary people face the same problems everyone else faces; but rather than get paralyzed by their problems, visionaries immediately commit themselves to finding a solution.” -Bill Hybels

**Definition:** “unusual powers of foresight”

I was a lonely nerd in middle school. Off on my own little table eating my Salisbury-steak and mashing my fork into powdered potatoes. Never really looking up at anyone, I waited for the time to go by so I could get back to learning.

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# Chapter 14 – Purpose

## Aim and Make it Count

“Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.” -Helen Keller

**Definition:** “having meaning through aim”

Often times, you don't get to see the world the way it was meant to be seen. Only as a child did you focus on what interested you the most. You couldn't pry me away from my Lego building adventures if you tried.

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# Chapter 15 – Integrity

## Live Every Action Aligned

“It’s not what we eat but what we digest that makes us strong; not what we gain but what we save that makes us rich; not what we read but what we remember that makes us learned; and not what we profess but what we practice that gives us integrity.” -Francis Bacon, Sr.

**Definition:** “an undivided completeness”

I know you follow guidelines to help you get through your day. For example, how you live at home, at work, in the stores, on the road, when something goes bad, and when things are going well.

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# Chapter 16 – Balance

## Harmonize the Parts and Be Whole

“So divinely is the world organized that every one of us, in our place and time, is in balance with everything else.” -  
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

**Definition:** “harmony of parts within a whole”

When is the last time you felt nothing seemed to be working out? Or maybe when there were mood swings between “holy moly that's awesome” and “could this be any worse?” Or maybe you're stuck on the extremes of something in your life instead of the more useful middle?

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# Chapter 17 – Innovation

## Be a Spork in a World of Spoons

{ “When all think alike, then no one is thinking.” -Walter Lippman }

**Definition:** “creating something in mind”

You know the ground beneath you is hard, cool, and ready to support you. It teams up with the gentle blades of grass that bend as you walk across the fields.

Stretching out, a caressing breeze glides over your skin, while the rustling leaves cling to their branches. You crack your eyes open to see the midday sun beaming over you. Your vision is flooded with a gentle yellow light. The rays of warming sunlight hug your entire body.

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# Chapter 18 – Communication

## Taste Your Words Before Speaking

{ “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” -George Bernard Shaw }

**Definition:** “exchanging information or ideas”

You’ve probably seen it before, the 7%-38%-55% rule of communication. It's the idea that the meaning of your communication is broken down like this:

- ❖ 7% is in the words you use
- ❖ 38% is in your voice’s tone, pitch, and speed
- ❖ 55% is in your body language

This is called the Mehrabian Theory of Communication, since I know you’re a curious person.

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# Chapter 19 - Strategic Thinking

## Turn a Game of Chance Into an Advance

“All men can see these tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved.” -Sun Tzu

**Definition:** “having systematic plans of action”

Yes, I’m the kind of guy that waits three hours to do the Empire State Building tour. “A couple of tickets for the Observation Deck, Mack!” After the attendant Steve gave me a funny look, I headed up the tower with a gleam in my eye.

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# Chapter 20 – Adaptability

## Make Change You Can Bank

{ “You could not step into the same river twice; for other waters are ever flowing on to you.” -Heraclitus }

**Definition:** “the ability to change”

Dodgeball. A game I used to both love and loathe. I still have some strong memories of that time and I know you can relate. You sit there in front of the wall, you know what's about to happen, and you know the point of the game. You know you mustn't get hit at all costs.

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# Chapter 21 – Salesmanship

## Be in Their Shoes

{ “The true secret of happiness lies in taking a genuine interest in all the details of daily life.” -William Morris }

**Definition:** “persuading people to accept what you offer”

It’s been a while, but I remember the last time I bought a new car. I don’t think I can convince you that car shopping is always a fun thing to do.

You show up, looking to replace something that's a part of your life and you put yourself on the line. You’re super vulnerable and you want the deal done already. And then comes the trained, enthusiastic, and heavily motivated go-getter salesperson. You’re toast.

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# Chapter 22 – Determination

## A Mind Made-Up Goes Places

{ “Some are destined to succeed, some are determined to succeed.” -H. H. Swami Tejomayananda }

**Definition:** “the act of making up your mind”

Doesn't it seem like some people have everything figured out? It's almost like they had things figured out for them. It's as if they've been handed the answers on a platter. Do you think that happens in real life? Can you do the same for yourself? Absolutely!

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# Chapter 23 – Leadership

## Adopt the Platinum Standard

“Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower

**Definition:** “the ability to empower and enable others”

It’s a life or death situation on this unknown island. 257 people escaped the crashed Boeing plane. They’re all relying on three would-be leaders to make the next move before a giant storm devastates the sandy coast. Who do they choose? Who will bring them out of the dark cloud overhead?

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# Chapter 24 - Problem Solving

## Solve Rubik's Cube or Swap the Stickers

“One thing is sure. We have to do something. We have to do the best we know how at the moment... if it doesn't turn out right, we can modify it as we go along.” —Franklin D. Roosevelt

**Definition:** “the thought process involved in settling a difficulty”

Problem solving is a great skill to have. It opens so many possibilities for success, friendships, and helping people. Yet, I meet people every day who don't believe they're good at it.

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# Chapter 25 – Resourcefulness

## What Would MacGyver Do?

{ "Because a thing seems difficult for you, do not think it impossible for anyone to accomplish." -Marcus Aurelius }

**Definition:** “able to cope with difficult situations”

Think of the last time you felt the weight of the world on you. Tons of projects on your to-do list, you’re low on funds, and you’re too late to buy a pair of tickets for that thing you love. In other words, a dang rough day.

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# Chapter 26 – Teamwork

## No Duck Swims Alone

{ “The reason why rivers and seas receive the homage of a hundred mountain streams is that they keep below them.”  
-Lao-Tse }

**Definition:** “working with others for a common purpose”

You burn with the desire to get stuff done, right? Your inner fire is so strong and powerful, others know you're up to something great. They can feel nothing will stop you.

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# Chapter 27 – Ambition

## Beat the Drain, Be the Gain

“Keep away from those who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you believe that you too can become great.” -Mark Twain

**Definition:** “a strong drive for success”

Sometimes it feels like the world around you is keeping you down. It’s as if a sidewalk is on top of your body and the world is walking on it. Almost as if there’s no future in sight and no chance to grow, no? No!

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# PART III - YOUR FUTURE

# Chapter 28 - Your Next Steps

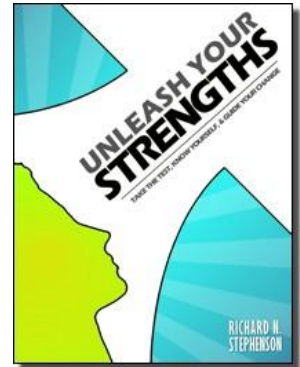
You've got to believe to achieve. Learning has to "feel right" in order for it to stick. And you have to get it to stick if you'd like to grow in your personal development journey. You know when learning feels right – you get that feeling in your gut that it's true and meaningful. Until then, it's only data and it's meaningless.

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# Ready to Unleash Your Strengths?

This new book will help you learn more about yourself, get key insights on what makes you tick, and gain practical next steps you can take today.

This isn't your grandma's fluffy self-help. This is personal development for you and me. This is:



## UNLEASH YOUR STRENGTHS

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PS) I'd love it if you'll share your growth story with me. If you [grab the book](#) and make it through, my email address is in the back. Please email me your story and how your life has changed. I can't wait to hear it!