

## **How it all began, and what it's all about**

### **The power of one**

*"All my life I wanted to be somebody.  
I should have been more specific."*  
Woody Allen

When a customer asked the bookstore clerk for directions to the Self-Help section, he was a bit surprised at the answer he received: "To tell you would be self-defeating." And so it is with this book.

When it comes to having a more productive and fulfilling life, there are no easy answers. This book is simply a guide to what is possible, based on the work we have done in public and corporate seminars with hundreds of thousands of people. There is no list of ideal habits, or a 'ten steps to success' program here. Only you and you alone can create the kind of life you want to have.

So let's be clear. This book alone cannot:

- make you happier
- raise your self-confidence or self-esteem
- cause you to be more positive about life
- make your life more purposeful, productive or exciting
- help your relationships work better
- make you more effective

It can't. Only you can change your life.

This is only a book, a bunch of words on a printed page. If it could change your life, that would make it – and me – responsible for your success and well being, with no control over your own life. Thank goodness, changing your life is your job. Even if I could do it, I don't wish to be responsible for your life or anyone else's; it's a full-time job handling my own life.

And this is how it should be. There is no way to find personal power without taking control of your own life. In fact, that's what true personal power is: being in charge of your own life. We call this responsibility, the ability to respond to one's own life situations. To imagine that another human being, even one with some useful ideas, can somehow take responsibility for your life, is to stumble around begging for trouble. It leaves you like Nasrudin, the character in the Sufi Tales who lost his keys in front of the door to his house, but was looking for them out under a street lamp. When someone asked him why, he said "Because there's more light out here."

Looking to someone else for the answers is like that. It may seem easier and less work, but you're looking in the wrong place. To find the answers for your own life, you need to look where the answers are: within yourself.

So as this book's author, independent of your active involvement, I am absolutely unable to make your life better. However, I do know how you can. The first step is to begin looking in a completely new way at your life; to consider the full range of possibilities that being human represents; in short, to begin to entertain the possibility that the life of an ordinary person – you -- could be extraordinary.

Daniel Goleman, in his wonderful book Emotional Intelligence says

*"What factors are at play... when people of a high IQ flounder, and those of modest IQ do surprisingly well? The difference quite often lies in the abilities called here emotional intelligence, which include self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself. I can foresee a day when education will routinely include inculcating essential human competencies such as self-awareness, self-control and empathy, and the arts of listening, resolving conflicts, and cooperation."*

Chance or luck may play a part in living an extraordinary life. Yet waiting around to "get lucky" is analogous to your chances of winning the lottery. My research, my personal life experience and the privilege of working with over 500,000 clients during the past twenty years, demonstrate that ordinary men and women who create outstanding results – regardless of age, nationality or education – exhibit remarkably similar language patterns, behaviors and ways of being. In other words, knowing how to live an extraordinary life is not a mystery. There are established, proven things you can speak, do and ways to be that will effectively support you in creating the results you want, in your career, your relationships, your finances, your health, your spiritual growth – in every area of your life.

The purpose of this book is to share what I've learned about this most important subject – how you can live an extraordinary life. It is organized around what we have learned to be essential "building blocks", some ideas, principles and methods that will assist you in doing the real work of creating a brighter future for your self.

Remember, getting what you want in life is simple; however, it is often not easy.

When people ask me about the work I do, sometimes there is an opening to get beyond the simple, trite expressions like "experiential education for adults and organizations that want better results." When that opportunity exists, my simplified answer is to say, "We assist people and organizations in becoming aware, understanding and learning from their past experiences so that they leave those experiences where they belong – in their past. Then we assist people and organizations to get responsible, to "tell the truth" about their current reality, free of any "spin," guilt or discomfort, so that they can recognize their strengths and areas that need attention. Finally, we assist people and organizations in creating new communication abilities based on consciously choosing a new future.

We give them useful tools for reaching their goals, contributing to others and for living an extraordinary life.”

That’s also the purpose of this book and you’ll notice woven throughout is a framework for you to follow if you truly want to leave your past behind (Awareness), to accurately describe your current reality (Responsibility) and to choose a great future (Communication) – in short, this book is about how to create an extraordinary life.

The book’s framework is Awareness, Responsibility and Communication. These concepts are at the heart of the work we’ve done with hundreds of thousands of people. These ideas have changed those people’s lives for the better and they can do the same for you – assuming you are willing to do the work of bringing greater awareness, responsibility and communication to your life.