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Lifestorming

Creating Meaning and Achievement in Your Career and Life

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

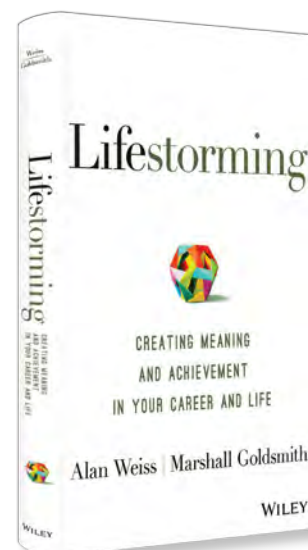
Lifestorming is your practical guide to becoming the person you want to be. You will discover what it takes to redesign your life, friends, behaviors and beliefs in order to move closer to your goals.

While change is not easy, it is possible. You will discover a new way to think about your goals — why you chose them, how you can achieve them and (critically) how they can evolve over time to reflect your changing priorities.

Lifestorming will help you assess your current state in concrete terms and determine your ability to change and adapt. Then, you can purposefully identify the people, actions, habits and beliefs that either support your personal and professional growth or hold you back from reaching your goals. Outlined here are six building blocks of *character* that will help you to challenge your belief system, develop a leadership mindset and overcome the stumbling blocks that keep you from success. You'll map out an action plan and learn how to continually move forward at work, at home and in everyday life.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to set the course of a personal evolutionary journey while being aware of outside forces that can influence the journey along the way.
- To recognize when changes in your behaviors are needed and how to evolve them into aspiration-appropriate behaviors.
- To build character in a way that allows you to reach your full potential and create the future you desire and deserve.
- To understand that legacies are created day by day, and how your behaviors and decisions are building that legacy.



by Alan Weiss and
Marshall Goldsmith

CONTENTS

Setting Our Own Aspirations

Page 2

The Importance of New Friends

Page 3

Behavioral Metamorphosis

Page 4

Believe It or Not

Page 5

The Importance and Evolution of Character

Page 6

Critical Abandonment

Page 7

Sustaining the Journey

Page 8

THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: LIFESTORMING

by Alan Weiss and Marshall Goldsmith

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Setting Our Own Aspirations

Our natural human tendency is to think of ourselves as independent and authentic — authors of our own destinies. But that's a tall order and much tougher than it seems. Bombarded by external triggers and expectations, we can easily fall into roles and patterns established for us by other people.

We often unconsciously become programmed to believe we are someone and then proceed to live our lives trying to fill that role. However, it's often the wrong role — not right for us and sometimes even harmful.

A great many people follow their parents into a profession even when they don't feel any passion for it themselves. This pattern can also be influenced by siblings. Brothers and sisters are highly influenced by their sibs, and tend to play the same sports, become cheerleaders or join the band (and play the same instrument) — or do just the opposite to escape the comparisons. These are roles that have been established as successful, drawing praise from others and creating a precedent to follow or from which to flee.

Thus, unseen by the naked eye, we, without thinking about it, may do our best to become the people we were programmed to be rather than the people who, in our hearts, we want to be!

An Evolutionary Journey

We're talking about taking an evolutionary journey through life. A journey without a "there." The evolving you is not a moving target but pursues a moving target. Be careful that your "there" is not created by someone else or some external force, such as Facebook. Your "there" can, and often should, be constantly moving as

your experiences, successes and perspective change. Our bar may well become higher and higher as we journey through life.

An initial question becomes: To what extent is your journey one of internal control, and to what extent is it one of external control? Do social and normative pressures have a legitimate role in who you are to become?

Control is the power to influence. *Internal control* is the power that is believed by the performers to be theirs, within their purview. *External control* is the power that is believed by the performers to be wielded by others or by random events.

Many people arise each day simply awaiting what occurs without the intention of exerting themselves on the world. We see this in circumstances in which external direction has been removed advertently or inadvertently, and no one chooses to step forward into the vacuum. People mill about or drift away. Nothing productive occurs. This is much rarer among entrepreneurs, who realize (and are gratified) that they must make their own plans work and must achieve their own aspirations.

The Impossible Dream

The fundamental work of changing our behavior for the better is ultimately our own responsibility. Today, we might cringe at the spinning wheel of social media, which is constantly gaining speed. We may feel as if we don't exist if we're not a part of this spinning wheel of information. The centrifugal force threatens to throw us off, so we cling with all our might trying to follow and be a part of a thousand issues for a second each. The inertia is bizarre: The more you get, the more you get! So, we



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SUMMARY: LIFESTORMING

become overwhelmed with examples, advice and claims that are never vetted, validated or verified.

Today, the phenomenon is multiplied a zillionfold with the unceasing, untiring, always increasing speed of the wheel of information that constantly spins in front of us. We don't *really* know what makes sense and what does not, what's real and what's a lie. If we are not careful, instead of becoming highly skeptical of most things, we tend to accept almost whatever is in front of us.

Our aspirations and goals are seldom purely our own. They are tainted or even created by the furious pace, noise and general uproar around us. Why else would people watch scripted "reality" shows of little consequence? We've lost our sense of perspective.

Life's Detours

We know that the road of life is filled with unexpected twists and turns that can be terrific opportunities or harmful detours. It's easy to wander down interesting paths and alleys only to find that we don't know the way back. We end up in a career, a location or a relationship that is far from ideal — and struggle to get back.

Family. Families are our first and strongest influences. They can help us become the people we want to be, but they can also send us on detours even when they mean well. They model roles and behavior that we choose to adopt or reject later in life.

Media. Social media presents unprecedented opportunities. It's given birth to inspiring social movements and empowered individuals to do great things. But, it comes with huge challenges, too. Given the pervasiveness of our media culture, how do you make a smart decision about what dreams and aspirations are really best for you? It can be hard to find time to stop and think.

Our main institutions — family, media, religion, business and government — are in flux. While some of those changes are good, all of this volatility makes it hard for us to set aspirations and metrics for success. Without major institutions to guide us, where can we turn? The answer may be toward each other — to our friends. ●

The Importance of New Friends

We tend to become the people who are our friends. It's never a good bet to expect people to change a habit if they are surrounded by people voluntarily and happily engaged in that same habit. The default position is pretty clear: We tend to hang with people who are like us and live near people like us.

Breaking Out of the "Good Enough" Trap

Negative social pressure can play out in different ways when we try to change our behavior. This is referred to as the "good enough" trap: We look around at the situation and say, "There's no need for me to keep trying so hard when the people around me are perfectly happy with mediocrity." Four environments trigger "good enough" behavior:

1. We lack motivation: If we don't really believe that the goal is worthy or we believe that we lack the skill to do a task well, then we shouldn't take it on. Find something that you care about, and go after it with gusto.
2. We're working pro bono, volunteering or getting paid less than we think we should be: Doing substandard work only reflects badly on us in the long run.
3. We refuse to acknowledge our weaknesses: We tend to see our strengths as our real qualities and our shortcomings as aberrations that don't really define us. We grow when we take responsibility for the whole package — good, bad and in between.
4. We have compliance issues: No one likes to be told what to do, even (and sometimes especially) when the person telling us what to do is right. Saying we're good enough the way we are is a way to thumb our noses at authority.

Now, to be clear, "good enough" sometimes really is good enough. But, when it comes to our interactions with others — how we treat each other — "good enough" sets the bar too low. Not only that, the payoff for *not* settling is tremendous. Pouring all of our energy into behavioral change means that we start to change our environment rather than be changed by it. Our forward progress is exciting and contagious, as others start to make changes in their lives, too.

The Best Relationships Grow with Us

Maintaining old friendships is a wonderful thing. Keeping in touch with the people who knew us as children adds dimension to our lives and softens the passage of time. However, we don't recommend having *solely* childhood friends. The new (and newer) people in our lives reflect our changing selves, and they are a valuable part of our personal growth.

While it's often quite difficult to retain friendships in a peripatetic world, social media makes it a simple task. We

SUMMARY: LIFESTORMING

are contained within a peer group in virtual perpetuity. That can be constricting if we forget that on social media, as in real life, we are free to engage with or avoid people as we see fit. The problem comes when we let these old associations constrain our sense of identity.

Another huge challenge of our media-dominated environment is the way it encourages us to vicariously lead the lives of other people. Scroll through your social media feed, and you'll probably see a number of people exploiting their lives for attention or profit. They invite you to live vicariously through their ever-unfolding personal dramas, but beware of subordinating your own life to theirs.

Letting Go to Reach Out

You have to let go before you can reach out. Contrary to what most people believe, money and time are not resources; they are priorities. We all have time and money, but the key differentiator is where we invest them. That means we don't have to gather more resources but instead change our priorities as our conditions change.

It's generous to belong to organizations and associations and invest our time, help others and help good causes. However, even these have to be examined as candidates for change. Some people remain part of an organization and become officers and board members and never leave, which means instead of raising the standard of the organization, the organization slows them down. It's recommended that you consider moving on from — or at least review your membership status in — mastermind groups and similar mutual-help arrangements every two years.

We are close to many of our old friends, and we believe strongly in the value of loyalty. We also believe we should be honest in assessing our friendships. There is such a thing as a toxic relationship, whether it's professional, between friends or romantic. The closer you are to that person, the harder it is to disentangle yourself. In some cases, it really is for the best to leave that person behind and move on.

Why We Halt the Journey

Our journey is sometimes halted, suspended, detoured or even abandoned. We may think there's someone in our way, but usually, we've created the obstacle in our minds.

Another obstacle is the rut we're in. Or we find someone else ahead of us moving slowly, and there's no way to pass unless we leave the track and create our own path around the obstacle, which requires strength, stamina and, most of all, intention. A third factor is procrastination (which is largely fear based).

The evolutionary journey from surviving to thriving requires a sort of global positioning system. You have to identify the next steps, recognize the next level and understand how to seal the doors behind you. We are often slowed because we're expecting people to keep up with us rather than finding friends who force us to speed up. We take our time because we're comfortable, having feathered a nest that we're not willing to leave. ●

Behavioral Metamorphosis

Sometimes we don't know that we need to change. We are in denial, convincing ourselves that others need help, not us. We are a culture that is adept at rejecting help in the pursuit of change.

When change takes so long, we tend to miss the best opportunities or solutions. We don't obtain the travel plan we most desire, we miss the tickets for the big event, we find someone else has beaten us to market, or we spend more time on the issue than we really needed to. That's why abrupt change may make sense in some situations, but a metamorphosis might be right for others.

Metamorphosis is not a guarantee of a brighter and better future. The following are five questions to ask yourself to ensure that you methodically create a better future:

1. What behaviors do I seek to change?
2. What behavior will I substitute?
3. What assistance do I need to help with the change?
4. What metrics will tell me I'm making progress?
5. What will I do to sustain the change?

Change for its own sake makes little sense, for organizations or individuals. The key is to determine the salutary results that make the change worthwhile. In our journey of change, of lifestorming, we need to constantly examine our belief systems before we engage in arbitrary behavioral change. The best route to behavioral change is an appeal to rational self-interest by appealing to and/or changing one's belief system.

Metabehavior

Our behaviors need to change on our journey, both for the long haul and in the short term. We need help with both. Acknowledging that need and obtaining that help are signs of health and internal control.

The shortest period of needed change is situational, in the moment, now. Our reactions here are often the

SUMMARY: LIFESTORMING

wrong default: We become angry and lash out, we blame ourselves and become despondent, or we are shocked and retreat from the situation. These behaviors are all dysfunctional. They exacerbate a deteriorating situation. They include many bad assumptions and attitudes, for example: “This person can help me but won’t.” “I have to radically change my plans and expectations.” “I’ve been misled.” “I’ve failed.”

Situational change can be the most difficult because there often is no precedent for a given situation. It’s usually a surprise and unanticipated, and it’s very dependent on environment and the dispositions of the people involved. That’s why situational change tends to be so different in the office versus at home. And so, a brief digression follows. To progress from rejection of change to positive acceptance of change to deliberate creation of change is a healthy evolutionary journey.

Aspiration-Appropriate Behavior

Our aspirations shouldn’t be static. They are a moving target, not something to be accomplished and done with. As we move through our evolutionary journey, our aspirations change. The options that pertain to most of us look like this:

1. Change is discretionary and deliberate.
2. Change is acceptable.
3. Change is resisted.

At the lowest level, we’ve feathered a nest and don’t want to budge. Change is threatening, so we resist external influences. In business, and in organizational culture more broadly, change is a constant — especially now, at time when disruption and volatility are rapidly becoming the new normal.

We can’t merely expect to retrain and reskill. We need to change our beliefs about accepting change. That leads us to level two. Here, we are receptive to change. The key to success here is an A+ attitude:

Accept: Accept the change without resistance or argument so long as it doesn’t threaten your ability to perform and succeed.

Adjust: Make the required changes in your habits and activities.

Adapt: Now, your behaviors can change appropriately.

Once we’ve accepted that change happens, we can begin to think about how to bring about the changes we want. Thus, level three is about initiating change and exerting more internal control. When we talk about aspiration-appropriate behavior, we mean adjusting behavior to deal

with the moving target of enhanced aspirations. And that means adjusting our belief systems to support those newly desirable behaviors. ●

Believe It or Not

There is a belief that might be stated as, “Good work should speak for itself.” Maybe, but not usually. When credit is due, if you don’t claim it, someone else will. This isn’t a question of bragging or selfishness but one of recognizing what you’ve accomplished.

A belief in positive self-promotion can actually be helpful in professional settings — when it prompts us to realize that we are always selling our ideas. Not only that, it is our responsibility to sell them, not others’ responsibility to buy.

Challenging and Evaluating Your Belief System

One important aspect of examining our beliefs is understanding our own *identities*. We often perceive our “real” selves as inferior to the people others see and with whom they interact. We think we have to play a role to gain social acceptance.

Instead of living our real values, we adopt the values we think we’re supposed to have. When we hear that charismatic people are successful, we try to seem charismatic (even if that’s an awkward fit for our personality). Some of us try to hang onto our authenticity by describing ourselves how we *want* to be seen.

There’s no harm in a little positive self-deception. But too much of it sends our lives off track. That’s because it’s difficult to be authentic if we identify with someone we haven’t become and who is actually not visible to others.

Your belief system needs to be adjusted to what is so that you can make decisions and take actions in the present that reflect the real you and what you’re actually doing — authentically.

Here’s a quick test to challenge and evaluate your beliefs:

1. What are your basic beliefs about yourself, e.g., what you are great at, what you just can’t do, how you respond and so forth?
2. What merits reconsideration and/or change?
3. What actions and behaviors should be modified, created or abandoned in light of those changes?

The Creation of Attitudes for Growth

Attitudes are the connectors — the synapses — between beliefs and behavior, a self-comforting way of thinking

SUMMARY: LIFESTORMING

or feeling about someone or something that is typically reflected in a person's behavior. Attitudes can be paradoxical, widely shared and vary tremendously across cultures.

So what of your attitudes? If you change your beliefs, your attitudes should commensurately change, and your behaviors should follow suit. Attitudes for our own growth would include statements and observations such as these:

- I need to acquire my own developmental resources.
- There's nothing wrong with failure if I learn from it.
- I can take prudent risk without serious threat to the family.
- I must accept the inconvenience of travel away from home.
- I need to be honest and vulnerable to be coached properly.

The objective, periodic review of our attitudes is vital because they are the directors of how we act, the behaviors that manifest our belief system. Therefore, it's best to focus on the wisdom of our intentions before we actually demonstrate them.

Beliefs Manifest in Behavior

Our behaviors can be influenced by a constructed reality, which is then reciprocally influenced by our behaviors. How is this possible? We behave consistently with our beliefs and attitudes, and those beliefs and attitudes can be heavily laden with assumptions. Individuals and organizations can make poor decisions based on invalid assumptions.

Beliefs form attitudes that are manifest in behavior. Investigate the assumptions you're making about the world around you, and don't simply believe what you're told. Observations can also be used to dispel assumptions.

When we constantly question our beliefs, rethink our attitudes and evaluate our behavior, we stay awake and aware on our journey through life. ●

The Importance and Evolution of Character

A shift in your identity doesn't make you a phony. You are allowed to fill new roles and take on new responsibilities. Character evolves. Your circumstances change. Here are six elements of character:

1. Intelligence: the ability to apply critical thinking skills to problems and challenges.

2. Drive or assertiveness: the ability to identify the need for and create urgency.
3. Happiness: Seeking and achieving well-being on our own terms is an essential aspect of character.
4. Empathy: Part of a strong character and virtuous life is the ability to put yourself in others' shoes and understand how they feel.
5. Reciprocity and friendship: The ability to give as well as take, to contribute as much as benefit is a strong element of character.
6. Intimacy and trust: Strong character demands the ability to form loving bonds and allow for vulnerability.

To build character, you need to build these six elements. To evolve character, you need to evolve these elements:

1. Intelligence: Read widely and diversely, including fiction, history, biographies, science and philosophy.
2. Drive: Create short-term deadlines. Don't rely on others or wait for others; take control of your route to your goals.
3. Happiness: Convince yourself that failing is a learning experience and that failing is far better than never trying.
4. Empathy: Think about similar circumstances you've experienced as you listen to someone else.
5. Reciprocity: Identify how you would like to be treated if you were the other person (not necessarily as you've been treated in the past).
6. Intimacy: Be willing to talk about defeats and setbacks. Make an effort to stop being embarrassed by personal questions and expressions of personal feelings.

Self-Assessment

Unless you have metrics for success, it's almost impossible to assess whether you're doing well. Here is an example of some questions you may ask yourself to serve as a self-assessment: To what extent are you sharing credit and accepting blame? Are you able to create common ground and goals for a variety of diverse viewpoints, bringing them together into a common purpose? Do you make tough decisions, or do you procrastinate or ask someone else to make them?

SUMMARY: LIFESTORMING

Character is vital as a gyroscope for our behaviors and worldview. The elements of character are clear and can be learned, mastered, improved upon and sustained as your journey progresses. Character determines ethical behavior in a world where ethics are the bedrock for capitalism and honest, effective market transactions. It provides consistency in even turbulent times and supports both formal and informal leadership.

Lifestorming is about the journey you've embarked on to prepare the future you desire and deserve — admittedly a moving target, but a target in any case — so that the world doesn't make you into something else entirely. And it can do that readily if you're not paying attention, taking charge and utilizing the internal control that is reciprocal with external influences. A strong character is all the help you'll need for yourself and for others. ●

Critical Abandonment

When we talk about relationships to eliminate, we are talking about relationships that are consistently, poisonously negative and are extremely unlikely to change. It also represents relationships with groups that are bringing us down. If quitting them cold turkey is hard to do, realize that you can achieve just about the same effect by drastically restricting your time with them in frequency, duration and intensity.

While preserving old relationships sustains us, creating new relationships enables us to grow. We need people who can stretch us, provide new viewpoints, supply differing perspectives and challenge our beliefs. Creating new relationships can mean joining new clubs, taking up new pursuits, becoming more involved in the community, introducing yourself to others or identifying with whom you'd like to hang out.

Adjustments and Accommodations

Many of us seek out new relationships or behaviors because we think they will make us happy in the future. But, realize that happiness is a choice, always attainable in the present. Let your new relationships and personal transformations add to and reinforce that happiness as opposed to trying to fill a well of sadness and disappointment.

Instead, aim for evolutionary reinvention. Your journey should be one of continually becoming a new, improved person in part by assertively and proactively creating your new world.

Staying the Course

Change is exciting if you allow it to be, and controllable if you prepare for it. Avoiding a systems failure and providing for the retention of the valuable and abandonment of the obsolete is a guiding principle.

The new you is an ongoing phenomenon. Most of us experience success in some areas of life and find it elusive in others. To achieve our full potential, we should take time to grow in every aspect of our lives.

The evolutionary journey has to be holistic. An effective exercise is to ask ourselves what kind of people we wish to be in a year — as we proceed on our journey — and what's required to arrive there. But these can't be ambiguous goals. They should be specific and related to where we are today, improving on our current conditions.

This is how you stay the course on your evolutionary journey. You create specific goals and metrics understanding that the factors on the axes might change over time, your ratings may change, and/or your ultimate goal may become more challenging. That's a part of growth. *As we grow, the bar gets higher and higher.*

So, this is how you abandon what's not needed; gain traction, torque and speed; decide what to eliminate, accept, retain and create. This puts you on the right road and enables you to stay the course. ●

The New You

Negative emotions and misplaced priorities can still sabotage our accomplishments and reverse our hard-won progress. We're especially vulnerable to these mistakes when we're in a new situation — a new job, a new relationship, or even a new state of awareness or understanding. If you know the potential pitfalls, you can avoid them.

Overcoming fear is much easier when you know the causes of your fear and can eliminate them or rationalize them. The ability to laugh at yourself is an important component — not so much when you've panicked underwater but certainly when you've missed the ball with everyone watching.

Maintaining High Self-Worth

An important aspect of self-worth is believing in the worth of others. Thus, acceptance and forgiveness are the reciprocals of our apologies and recognitions of error that we noted earlier. Remember that it's the *intent* that's important. We need to honestly confront the motives of

SUMMARY: LIFESTORMING

the other person. If we extend grace and good will to other people, we will feel its reflected glow on ourselves.

Gaining and Sustaining Leverage

Leverage is power. For most people, leverage means moving on down the road expeditiously with minimal effort and friction. Journeys don't have to be difficult, and when they are, it's usually because we've made them so by focusing on the unpleasant and unrewarding aspects. Leverage helps us move forward by focusing on the positive and rewarding aspects.

When we encounter difficulties at the outset of a new venture, we have two options. One is to express our discontent, confusion or uncertainties. Another, healthier reaction to difficulties in your journey is being resolute, facing problems head on and solving as many of them as you can.

The idea is not to avoid the ambiguous zone nor to be hesitant about what may reside therein but rather to boldly enter it knowing you have the skills and resources to effectively deal with whatever you find. ●

Sustaining the Journey

One of the more important elements in sustaining your journey without sliding back is having a spirit of generosity, and being generous is about more than donating money. Many people are generous even as they themselves struggle. Conversely, some people remain ungenerous even after reaching high levels of success. While generosity is about more than just money, bear in mind that the idea of it is really based not so much on what you give but rather what you have left after you give.

The most precious gift is one of time and attention. Anyone can write a check. Time, after all, is a priority, not a resource. Since we know we have 24 hours every day no matter who we are or at what level of success we are, how we distribute our time is vital. We are telling the world (and others) what our priorities are.

Hence, donating our time is a huge act of generosity whether by volunteering, serving on committees, coaching or by whatever other means. It's easy to be generous by changing our priorities about how we spend our time.

Evolution Through Exploration

Our journey demands exploration. The road that others used may not be your road. It's not a question of the road more traveled or less traveled but perhaps of building your

own road where none has existed. This demands some prudent poking about, looking around the next corner, shining lights in the darkness and feeling our way. To explore, you can't merely *think* outside the box. You have to *be* outside the box.

Exploration involves risk, which for someone people draws them to it mightily. These risks emerge from fear of rejection and fear of damaging our egos — the fear of perceived failure. Yet, no journey is flawless. There will be risks that need to be accepted and undertaken.

Legacy

This is your life, your dream and your chance to be happy. When you get old, it will be your legacy. Legacy is often thought of as something left behind or handed down by a predecessor. While that may be true and common, what's not so commonly understood is that legacies do not appear upon retirement, departure or death.

Legacies are created daily. Every day you're writing the story of your life. You can consciously create your legacy starting now. Too many people are unaware of this opportunity or ignore it at their peril. Think about it: If you are consciously thinking about *contribution* and what you provide for others, not just for your lifetime but for theirs, might that not color and influence your behaviors and decisions today?

The decisions and behaviors you choose to engage in every day are the woof and warp of your legacy. What are you doing now, today, to build your legacy while on your evolutionary journey? It will seldom be one grand gesture, and will more probably be a continuing series of positive actions that not only help you and help others but provide a lasting guide for others to use along their own journeys. Lifestorming is about taking on life and enjoying it immensely by contributing to it enormously. ●

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Summary: *Triggers* by Marshall Goldsmith. Marshall Goldsmith shows how we can overcome the unappreciated triggers in our lives that lure us into behaving in a manner diametrically opposed to the friend, parent, colleague we imagine ourselves to be. Learn six engaging questions that can help you enact meaningful change in order to become the person you want to be.

Webinar: *The Path to Extraordinary Productivity* by Kory Kogon. Kory Kogon offers powerful insights drawn from the latest neuroscience and decades of experience and research in the time-management field to help you master your attention and energy management through five fundamental choices that will increase your ability to achieve what matters most to you.