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SELF-FORGIVENESS





STEP 2

SELF-FORGIVENESS

Many of you will have had a tough time with the work from the last step. The key to remember is that forgiveness allows us to let go of past attachments. You may have to repeat the exercise several times before you are really clear of the past. The most important thing is that you have begun. As Confucius put it, 'the longest journey begins with the shortest steps'.

JUST KEEP TAKING THE STEPS AND YOU WILL COMPLETE YOUR JOURNEY

There is good news; it does get better from here on. The bad news is that you may find that you will need to revisit the law of forgiveness several times in your life before you have truly let go of the past. If you have shifted a good chunk of it, or maybe all of it, you will be getting ready to move into, and to take positive control of, your life in the present; a step nearer to achieving a life in the present and not the past.

When I am running Live in the Present as a face-to-face programme,

one thing that becomes obvious is that very few people have a positive self-image. This is almost always because they have been given negative feedback from other people ever since they were an egg and they have made the mistake of believing it.

My father continually told me that I was an idiot, that I was thick and stupid. My mother and my sisters took up the same task as well. With daily repetition, day in and day out, from every quarter and with no alternative positive message, I ended up absorbing it into my paradigm. I began to believe it and then live it. I failed all the time, I was bullied at school, failed the eleven plus and failed just about anything that I attempted. I was living proof that thoughts do become things.

All these negative messages that I responded to were emotional. I had no idea of cognition; there were no thought processes within me that could counter these negative emotions. If I had known, I would have realised that there was no real evidence to support the assertion that I was an idiot. What happened was that as I learned to believe it, it became a part of my inner paradigm, and then I played it out, and the more I played it out, the truer it became. It took me until I was twenty-five years old to question this assumption and then I began to change my life.

Because these triggers are emotional, they bypass our cognition. Let us assume that you have a negative self-image and feel yourself to be an idiot. If you were in a room full of people and someone enters announcing, 'I'm looking for a clever person!', your immediate reaction would be to turn off and look away because they could not possibly be looking for you. If, on the other hand they came in and announced, 'I'm looking for an idiot!', the chances are you would put your hand up and shout, 'I'm over here!'

We all respond to emotional triggers and that is how the law of

attraction works. Attraction is emotional. To be successful you need to feel it. You need to be able to visualise and feel what you want, to think it alone is not enough.

Think about how you feel about who you are. What are the feelings that other people have given you? In your journal, write down some of the things that other people have called you or accused you of that could have contributed to your negative self-image.

As I explained, my father took delight in referring to me, and introducing me, as:

*“This is Sean; he is a f***ing idiot.”*

Throughout my childhood and adolescence, I believed him and lived my life in ways that supported and enhanced this view of who I was. I failed at many things before deciding that I was not what he told me I was. Eventually, I realised that I was able to be whomever I chose to be.

SELF-HONESTY

Being honest with yourself is not easy because so much of the way that you see yourself comes from other people. For most of us, most of the time, our inner self-image or paradigm is negative, which is why we have not fulfilled our self so far in life.

However, some people have an equally deluded paradigm or self-image in an unfounded belief that they are wonderful. This delusion may also have come from other people in the paradigm-building phase of childhood.

The princess brought up in a luxurious castle where she does nothing, is attended to all the time, and is continually treated as though she is

a deity, may believe that she is 'special' when she is actually very, very ordinary. It is only when the paradigm is tested in the world outside of the castle that the true person is revealed.

The Buddha suggested that to be either positive or negative is an imbalance and that to simply be in a state of being, neither positive nor negative, is the surest way to sanity and enlightenment. For me, I much prefer the concept of being positive and I am firmly on the happy side of neutral. One very powerful question is:

'How can you get a true and realistic view of yourself when your own opinion of yourself is biased by your own negative paradigm?'

The answer is to view yourself as *others* see you, rather than yourself. To be able to see yourself the way that others see you is a step into the unknown. It is unknown because other people's experience of you is not weighed down by your own negative paradigm, is not burdened by your past and is not tainted by the negative things people have said about you and/or to you. Because of this, it is strange but true that other people's experience of you may be more accurate than your own.

If you wanted to understand what, and who, you are truly like, you would need to get everyone in the world to line up in a never-ending queue and have all of them file past you, each giving you the feedback: 'The way I experience you is...' Well, this is unlikely to happen and would take several lifetimes to complete.

If you would like to understand your real manifestation, you might like to try it.

TASK

Get some blank sheets of paper and either write or print, '[Your name], the way I experience you is...', and then give them to some

people whose opinion you respect. You will be surprised at the result and it will help you in rebuilding your paradigm into a more positive frame. Obviously, you need to consider who you give the sheets to. If you only give to those that don't like you, they will all be bad. The same is true of all those that think you are wonderful. If you give them to a variety of people you will sit somewhere in the middle; most of all, people who you know will be honest with you.

Once you begin to understand how your paradigm has dictated your life up to this point, you will be in a very strong position to change it. Once you realise, not intellectually, but deeply and emotionally, that you have been totally responsible for creating your life as it is, you will become the most powerful person you could ever possibly be. You will be the **active creator** of your own life.

Up to the point when you accept this responsibility, you are, or have been, the passive creator of your life. You have allowed yourself to be 'done to' by other people, and have been the victim of other people's ideas and images. Your life has happened and developed by default, not by design.

DO YOU LOVE YOURSELF?

Just stop a minute and think about this. Does it not seem strange to you that of all the people on this planet, the one who should be able to offer you the most love and positive unconditional regard would naturally be yourself? How is it that you have developed a relationship with yourself, where the one person you will not support is yourself?

THE DANGERS OF HINDSIGHT

Looking backwards is fraught with problems. We review all things in life from the myopia of our present. For example, if there was a group of us all sitting around drinking some wine and talking about funny

situations we had experienced in life, we would each go back down the funny line of memory and have things and examples to share that would fit with the mood or the feeling of the evening.

If, on the other hand, we were all talking about sad times, we would think back down the sad line of memory and we would have our sad story to tell. The same would be true if we were talking about accidents, scary moments, horrors or shock, or the most wonderful places we have ever seen or visited, or the best meal we have ever tasted. You see, we all make sense of the past from the point that we are currently at in the present.

THE HAPPINESS/SADNESS EFFECT

If we are feeling sad, it is easy to follow a line of memory in which I tell my life story from the point of view of all the bad things that have happened to us in our lives.

If, on the other hand, we have just got a wonderful new job and started a relationship with a fabulous person, we might see all the good and wonderful things that have happened in our lives. In that sense, sadness of the past is always dependent on sadness in the present. If we are feeling good in the present, we will not connect with the sadness from the past because it no longer fits our life script. Sad present, sad past; happy present, happy past.

Our past is always dependent on our view from our present

THE MOANING EFFECT

Do you know anyone who moans? Consider this. Someone who moans in the present is connected to the 'memory line of moaning'. As they review their life, they can see that they have plenty to moan

about, and always have had. ‘Life’s a bitch and then you die’ they tell us. ‘We all have our cross to bear’ and ‘Whoever said that life was supposed to be happy?’

Always remember this,

WHAT YOU FEED GROWS, AND WHAT YOU STARVE DIES

The person who practises moaning has become very good at it, they are the expert. They could pass a degree in moaning and get first class honours. The magic is the more they moan, the more they have to moan about, and their lifestyle becomes self-fulfilling. For them, life really is a bitch, and then they do die.

THE ILLUSION OF PERCEPTION

You can probably begin to see that it is what we are thinking about at any one time that begins to dictate our experience of the past, present and future. It is probably more accurate to say that our feelings dictate our experience. How we feel about what is happening around us now is directly affecting our experience of our self and our perception of others.

The illusion of perception comes in our relationship with our senses. When we walk down the road, our senses pick up all and everything that is going on around us. We can see everything, hear everything, we can smell everything, and so on. However, our conscious mind, our awareness, cannot cope with, or process, all that information, so we filter out the things that are important to us, the things that we can cope with or understand. These are the things that fit our paradigm. They are the things that are meaningful to us.

For example, if I am tuned into Italian restaurants, I may never see all the wonderful Chinese or Indian restaurants around me. They simply pass me by. Our perception is selective and we only experience what we are tuned into. In this way, we will always confirm our paradigm as being true. If you have a negative paradigm and therefore feel negative, you will then filter out all the information that confirms your belief and reinforces your negative paradigm with negative experience. We predict and create our experience ahead of time, guaranteed.

If we believe that we will fail, we will use our perceptual filter to filter the information to ensure that it happens. Failure is the assured outcome. If you believe that you will succeed, you will use your perception in the opposite way to filter the information so that your success is assured. This is how the law of attraction really works. All possibilities are always available all of the time. Our ability to see them and take advantage of them is purely down to the perceptual filter in our brains. This is always true, for all people, in all situations, all the time. Even if you believe that this is not the case, then you are simply reinforcing this law! What we believe will always be true.

This process of creating our experience is happening to us all the time, whether we are aware of it or not. Just like all universal laws, it is constant. The law of gravity will always function, belief has nothing to do with the outcome: in the end all things will hit the ground. The law of attraction is the same: whatever we focus on will come to pass. All universal laws are also neutral. It does not matter whether we focus on good or bad, right or wrong, the things that we focus on will grow as we feed them.

THE POWER OF THE LIE

It follows that if we want to change our perception and our experience, then we need to change the filters. If we go back to the moment of birth, remember that your slate was blank. The filter was neutral and

you did not filter anything, everything went in. It was the experience of being alive, and the process of learning that created the filters. There is a fundamental truth here: 'I am what I have learned to be.'

This, then, ties in with Joe Vitale's issue about our own responsibility; if I can accept that I am the product of what I have learned and I can take responsibility for my own experience, then, by definition, I can relearn, change my paradigm and my perception, and change my experience of life; this leads us to the lie.

TASK

Go and look at yourself in the mirror. Take a good, long look at yourself, at your face, hair, eyes and teeth, nose, chin and ears, look yourself in the eyes and say, 'I love you'. Seriously, go and do it right now!

What happens?

Some people will look in the mirror and say the words but the voice in their head says, 'You're a liar, you don't believe that'. Some look in the mirror and can't say anything; some just laugh and some can't even look in the mirror at all. There are a few who can look them self in the eyes declare self-love and believe it.

If we go back to the moment of our birth and consider that we were born without self-dislike, if we look at ourselves positively that is what we have learned. When we look at ourselves negatively, that is what we have learned. What we see in the mirror is the result of how we have learned to view our self. Now, this is where the lie comes in.

If you go to the mirror and declare self-love and the inner voice tells you that you are a liar but, despite that, you continue to do it every day, you will re-train your brain, your mind and your paradigm so

that you begin to see yourself positively. You may need to say “I love you” a hundred times, four hundred times, or four thousand times, but in the end it just simply becomes the way that you look at yourself in the mirror. From then on, you will not be able to pass a mirror without having a wink and a smile of self-admiration, simply another learned response. But this time, it is a response that is positive and supports your self-development.

EVERY DAY LOOK IN THE MIRROR

I have suggested to many thousands of students and clients that they look in the mirror and acknowledge a state of self-love. I know from their feedback and from their texts and emails. For many of them, this task is difficult or for a few it may even be impossible. The important thing to remember is that the way your mind and your brain work with repetitious learning you can rebuild your paradigm and become whatever you want.

POSITIVE MIND, POSITIVE FEELING, POSITIVE PERCEPTION, POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Neuropsychology is wonderful. It has taken psychology from a set of well-meaning theories to a set of known facts. Accepting that psychology has been side-tracked by limitations of Western cognitive approaches, neuropsychology has done nothing but good. We now know how we learn and how we create our paradigm.

THE APOLLO MISSION

When the astronauts were being trained for the moon landing, no-one was sure how to do it as no-one had ever been to the moon before. The team was put through the usual disorientation in gyroscopes and

so on. Then one clever wag came up with an idea that changed our understanding of the brain and became sports psychology. His plan was to put the astronauts in sealed goggles for one month. The only problem was that they were fitted with a prism that turned the world upside down. The point being that if these guys could survive in total disorientation, then whatever happened to them they would be ok.

Between day twenty-five and day thirty something happened to them that was completely unexpected. The neural net in their brains, the neurons and the dendrites, rewired and flipped the world the right way up. When the goggles were removed, the world was upside down and it took a further twenty-five to thirty days for the neural net to rewire to flip the world the right way up again.

As you might expect, everyone was a bit confused. So the experimentation began. The next was to get the astronauts to wear the goggles for sixteen days, take them off for day seventeen and put them back on the following day. It turned out that day eighteen then became day one and it took a further twenty-five to thirty days for the neural net to rewire again.

“Your system requires 25-30 days of persistent activity to effectively change”
The Answer, John Assaraf & Murray Smith, 2009

The first realisation from this work is that it takes thirty days of persistent, consistent repetition to accomplish a neural rewire. It doesn't matter whether we are attempting to incorporate a new thought, feeling, behaviour, attitude or skill. If you are consistent and persistent for one month, then your brain will create new circuits that incorporate the new learning.

We also now know that if we carry on for a full ninety days, the information will become embedded in the higher cortex as long-term

memory. We also know that this process of learning actually changes the DNA in the cells of the brain so they produce new peptides that create new proteins that are the chemistry related to the new learning.

This knowledge tells us two useful things. The first is that memory, learning, brain chemistry and emotional states are all connected. The second is that every time we learn something, cognitively, emotionally or physically, our DNA changes. So that our DNA at the moment of death is different to our DNA at the moment of birth. Each life is, therefore, a small drop in the ocean of evolution and over many, many lifetimes of many people, the DNA pool changes and evolution takes place. We are all evolving through what we learn.

The next experiment takes us further. The same team that trained the astronauts went on the train the USA Olympic team. In their experiments, that took athletes connected to very sophisticated biofeedback equipment, they then got them to visualise performing their event while in a state of relaxation.

The result showed that even when visualising, every nerve, sinew and fibre of the muscles fired off as though the person was actually performing their events that they were visualising. The brain cannot tell if we are actually doing something or simply visualising it. The imagination is a very powerful tool that will create either positive or negative experience, depending on what we feed and what we starve.

This has huge implications for you, me, and the advice laid out in this book. It shows that you can either create, or inhibit, a neural rewire through visualisation alone. You do not have to act, perform, or do anything in a practical way, your imagination is enough on its own, once you use it appropriately.

Wind back a bit. When you wake in the morning what is your first thought? If what we think about, or visualise, has the power to rewire

the circuits in our brain so that what we think about predetermines our experience, then we need to be aware of what our mind is doing when we leave it unattended.

If your first thought in the morning is one of positive joy, then you are programming your system to experience your positive expectation of the day. If, on the other hand, you are full of angst and apprehension, then that is what you will have tuned into and that is what you will experience.

And the thing that we know is that there doesn't actually even need to be anything for you to be concerned about, all you need to do is imagine that there is and visualise it, and you can create whatever feeling you desire, happy or sad.

Try and get your head around this one:

The things that you focus on are the basis of what you feel and what you experience, whether they are real or not. If you believe that someone likes you, then you will interpret all his or her actions in that way. If, on the other hand, you believe that they hate you, then you will interpret their actions in another way. In this way, we are all creating our own experience. And in many ways, the truth never exists, it is just the way that we see it.

If twenty people witness the same event, there will be twenty versions of the truth that each person will believe. It is just that each person sees all that takes place from their own point of view.

Now, when you come to do this next exercise, bear all this in mind. Remember that it is all in your experience and may not be true for other people in the same way. Just as you did before, when looking at other people and the effect that they had on you, and how they had contributed to your paradigm and your current self-image, it is now

time to look at you, to look in the mirror. What effect have you had, or do you believe that you have had, or continue to have, on other people?

TASK

From whom do you need to seek forgiveness? To whom have you done things for which you now feel ashamed, embarrassed or responsible? Think about it and write the list.

So, now you will need to write your letters seeking forgiveness; letters that you may or may not send. There may be some people that you need to talk to face-to-face. You must keep in mind that their experience of what you were or what you did may be very different to your own. It may be better or worse. Things that you feel might have hurt them may have had no effect at all, it is just in your imagination, and that is the point. However it works for you, the time has come for you to let it go. This is you clearing out your cupboard and letting go of all your attachments to the past, your time to move on.

In the work of the last step and this step, you are letting go of all the things that have held you back. Once you have done this, you will be getting closer to stepping into your present and creating your future.

The key that turns the lock of self-forgiveness is self-love. For many, the idea of loving yourself can sound like arrogance; yet love, like charity, begins at home. If I do not love me, how can I ever allow you to love me? If I do not love me, and you tell me how wonderful I am, how can I believe you? To allow you to love me, I must first love myself, in a real and sensitive way.

The law of self-love is the key to self-forgiveness and is the final part of letting go.

First, you use the law of forgiveness to let go of attachment that you have to what you experience other people to have done in your life. You then free yourself to move forward. In enacting the self-forgiveness through the self love, you give yourself the worth that means you are allowed to move on; you are worth doing things for, you deserve to be happy and fulfilled, you have a real value.

Chances are that you have a lot of pieces of paper from Steps One and Two. The final part that will allow you to step through the doorway into your present, into your 'NOW' is to let go of it all, in a real sense. How will you let go of these letters?

It needs to be ritualistic. Human beings mark the passing of time and new states of being by rituals, such as marriage, birth, death and so on. It may be that to welcome yourself to your present deserves a bottle of champagne. You might want to burn it all and deposit the ashes in the river Seine. You might want to shred it all and stuff it into helium filled balloons and let it fly to the stratosphere. It may be that it all becomes good firelighters for an amazing barbeque.

However you do it, make it count, make it memorable and do it soon. Don't allow the negative feelings on those sheets of paper to stay in your life any longer than you need to. Let go of them at the earliest opportunity.



CHAPTER 2 TASKS

Daily Task

Each morning, look at yourself in the mirror

**Take a good, long look at yourself, at your face,
hair, eyes and teeth, nose, chin and ears**

Look yourself in the eyes, and say:

‘I LOVE YOU’

Seriously, go and do it right now!


Thoughts

Get some blank sheets of paper and either write or print, *‘Your name], the way I experience you is...’*, and then give them to some people whose opinion you respect.

From whom do you need to seek forgiveness? To whom have you done things that you now feel ashamed, embarrassed or responsible? Think about it and write the list.

From your list, **write your letters of apology.** It is your choice whether or not you send them, just realise that this exercise is for you and the people that you might wish to communicate with may not wish to communicate with you.

Let go of all of your negative past. Feel lighter and less encumbered as you move forward to the next step.



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for more downloads, resources and links

