

7 Thoughts to Live Your Life By: A Guide to the Happy, Peaceful, & Meaningful Life

Master Your Mind, Revolutionize Your Life, Volume 10

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7 Thoughts to Live Your Life By: A Guide to the Happy, Peaceful, & Meaningful Life

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An Introduction to the 7 Thoughts to Live Your Life By

“We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think. When the mind is pure, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves.” –
Buddha

What are the Ultimate Goals of this Book?

The goal of *7 Thoughts to Live Your Life By* is to transcend the goals of self-improvement books. What does this mean? Whether your goal is happiness, peace, finding your purpose, spiritual healing, productivity, success, wisdom, sociability, clear thinking, or something else that involves improving yourself, I believe you will find what you need here. Ultimately, this book will provide you with a unifying framework to help you maximize your potential.

Let’s consider what separates this book from the many others which you may have read.

You may have heard that in warfare, or in strategy games, that there are *tactics* and there are *strategies*. Tactics are generally seen as concrete actions you can take to solve a specific problem. Self-development books generally focus on this. A focus on tactics can be helpful because often, you have a specific problem, and you need it solved. For example, if you want help with making new friends, then you may find a book that deals with this specific issue.

In contrast, strategies are built around *not* solving one particular problem, but in planning and putting yourself in the best position to deal with *any* problems that may arise. Although this book does include tactics and concrete tips, it includes them in a way that is ultimately strategic, and that will help you put yourself in the best position to deal with the primary obstacles of your life. *7 Thoughts to Live Your Life By* may not show you how to solve your immediate problem, but it will be your toolkit for understanding how to make the best use of your mind, and to use it to its full powers to solve your everyday problems. This approach should ultimately be more effective.

A further goal of this book will be to help you attain clarity and focus of the mind. We live in a world overloaded with information – which can be found via the internet, books, news, television, radio, gurus, and so forth. With so much information available, and so much new information being made available daily, it can be difficult to create a calm and focused mind. Our minds tend to go in all directions and accomplish little in the end.

The fundamental idea of *7 Thoughts to Live Your Life By* is that if we could calm the mind and focus on what truly mattered, then we would be much happier, more at peace, and ultimately able to live a life full of meaning.

As a final point, I would like to mention that I have occasionally received emails from people who will explain to me what their life problem is. I have noticed that typically their misery comes from *not* having applied the *7 Thoughts* in their lives. In many cases this

is simply because they are not aware of their existence. I have observed this quite often, in fact, and I have found it frustrating to know that their issues could be resolved in a straightforward manner if only they had the same insights that I have had – with this book, now of course it is possible for you to gain those insights.

Before delving into the Thoughts, allow me to share some of my background with you in the following section.

A Destructive Force Within...

Now, let's begin with my life, and what drove me to write this book in the first place.

I spent, or perhaps *wasted*, years of my life. I spent that time in a negative haze, with a dark cloud hanging over me. I had problems with being sociable, so I assumed that people didn't enjoy being with me and that they did not like me. It was a great struggle for me to be around people, because I felt that they were thinking negatively about me. I didn't sense it at the time, but my issue was more with my internal negativity, rather than any true negativity on their part. Sometimes, people even asked me, "Why are you so negative? What is wrong?" But I never had a good answer. My belief was that reality actually was negative and terrible, and that I simply had to deal with it. I didn't understand that I was being consumed by my own negativity at the time – and that my way of seeing life didn't represent reality.

However maladaptive my negative way of thinking was, by my early twenties I was getting used to it. I thought that the negativity was a part of who I was – that it was in my personality. My life had evolved into a bad habit of seeing, thinking, and doing in a negative way. Of course, I was not happy about this – but at the same time, I didn't see any other options. I didn't know any other way to be. I felt entrapped, but I couldn't grasp any way out of the reality that I had created for myself.

This way of being lasted for many years, and then came the toughest period of my life. I had applied to a graduate school

program in industrial-organizational psychology. I had a deep doubt within me, realizing that I would be tested beyond what I could even imagine. A part of me knew that I was not ready for this program, but I applied anyway. On paper, I was an excellent student, but my communication skills were quite poor, and I was worried about this. Nonetheless, I was accepted into the program.

In the first week, I realized that this would be the biggest challenge of my life. However, the work itself wasn't overly difficult, intellectually. Rather, there was so much work that needed to be done, that there appeared to be no end in sight to it. For example, there was a heavy load of course work, multiple research projects, learning to use statistical programs, management of undergraduate researchers, many administrative tasks, and a variety of meetings per week on research topics, all while I was adjusting to living in a new state.

My biggest battle at the time, however, was not the work itself, nor in adjusting to the new location. It was in learning to deal with my own overwhelming negativity. The force of it was becoming greater and greater, as it gained in power under the increasing pressures and stresses of my life.

Even in the first few weeks of the program, I did not think that I could deal with all of the work. I felt like I was being suffocated under all of it. I had so much to do and learn that it was overwhelming, beyond anything I could have expected. I had begun to lose confidence that I would be able to do all the tasks

required of me. Failure was often on my mind – I sensed that it was inevitable.

After several months in the program, I felt defeated. I was keeping up with the work demands, but my mind was telling me that I was going to fail, over and over, and I was not happy. Work occupied my mind all day long, and when it was time to sleep, I could not stop thinking about it. Generally, I would only sleep a few hours per night. I was also losing weight, and I was already thin when the program had begun. A big sign that my mind was malfunctioning was that I was forgetting very simple things. I would forget meeting times and sometimes I could not recall what someone had said to me only moments earlier.

At my worst, my mind was occupied with incessant negative thoughts about myself – which is clearly counterproductive. I may have been sitting in a meeting, and my mind would wander into negative thoughts. I couldn't focus on anything else but this negativity. Eventually, I did not want to be in the program any longer. But I continued with it nonetheless.

After a few more months it was winter break. I should have been happy, but instead I found myself bedridden. I spent most of the days in bed, not because of a physical ailment – but because of a mental one. The negativity inside of me was on permanent full throttle now. Imagine getting into your car, putting it in neutral, and then putting your foot down on the gas all the way. The engine is revving so hard that it sounds like it could break, but the car isn't going anywhere. This is what my mind and my life had

become. My mind was working in overdrive to the point of self-destruction, but I was not making progress. The fact that I was in bed, unable to do much of anything, only reinforced the negative thoughts I had had – that I was truly not going to be able to continue with the program.

As a simple example of just how bad things were, I found it difficult to do a basic task such as brushing my teeth – even this took all of my energy to accomplish. Sometimes I would feel good that I had managed to do this on my own, and then I would go back to bed and wonder:

If this is what I have stooped to, how will I ever continue with this graduate program? How will I ever finish my degree? If brushing my teeth is difficult, how can I learn advanced statistics and manage undergraduate students, or even show up to meetings or classes?

I thought seriously about whether it was even worth it to continue. But I somehow realized that my mind wasn't working properly, and I didn't feel qualified to make such a big decision in that state of mind, so I didn't quit.

In reality, the program was becoming less of a concern – my life itself was now my biggest problem. If I continued to deteriorate at this rate, I would have much bigger problems than just finishing a graduate program.

After this lowest of lows, spending most of my days in bed, I decided to finally get some help and I went to my doctor. I was given some tests, and he explained that I had major depressive

disorder *and* dysthymia. He prescribed some antidepressants and he told me to start seeing a clinical psychologist to receive some counseling. He said that in my deeply depressed state, it was critical that I take the medication *and* attend the counseling. Either one alone would not be sufficient.

After a few weeks of following the treatment, I was well enough to function again. I could do basic tasks, but it was still a struggle to operate at the higher level that the graduate program required. After a few months, I was doing fine. I was no longer overwhelmed by a self-created negativity, and I was able to do all of my work without much trouble.

The true healing would take many years, however. The medication and therapy helped to reset my mind and body, but I was not truly healed. I still needed to learn to control my mind to prevent this from ever happening again. After a couple of years on the treatment plan, with the aid of my doctor and therapist, I stopped taking the medication and I stopped going to counseling. I felt the need to do this so that I could control my own destiny fully. I wanted to be sure that *I* was the master of my own mind, and that I didn't need to rely on either medication or counseling. I intuitively knew that I didn't need it – my biggest problem was a self-created negativity, and therefore I could learn to control it.

In the months after stopping treatment I didn't feel worse, but I still didn't feel happy, or like I was on a path that I looked forward to pursuing. I wasn't overwhelmed with negativity, but I didn't view this alone as a true success. It's as much of a success as you

would say being absent of pain is a success. The achievement of not being profoundly empty or sad just wasn't enough. There needed to be more to life than just this. *I wanted something more.*

As an important note, if you want to stop taking a medication or stop a counseling program, be sure to discuss this with your medical and counseling professionals first. There can be great risks with stopping either one suddenly, depending on your situation.

The Path to True Healing

Realizing that my life was not yet on its proper course, I reflected on why some things had gone so wrongly. In fact, I often reflected on this. Clearly, my focus on everything negative had not helped. It seemed as if my natural focus on the negative had spiraled out of control, and I was unable to tame it after it had gained a certain degree of momentum. However, I felt like there was something more that I was missing, so I continued to reflect, day after day. Ultimately, this was not bringing me any new insights, and so I realized that I needed to change my approach.

Then I began meditating. I believed that doing this could help me to control my own negativity, which it did. But ultimately, what surprised me was that I sometimes had deep insights into myself or about the world that arose through these meditations. My system was that I would enter a peaceful meditative state, and in a deep focused state I was often able to perceive lucidly. Then, I would ask myself a question on how to live a better life, and how to overcome my problems.

One day while meditating, these Thoughts all flooded into me:

- 1. Focus on what you can control, *not* on what you cannot control**
- 2. Focus on the positive, *not* the negative**
- 3. Focus on what you can do, *not* on what you cannot do**
- 4. Focus on what you have, *not* on what you do not have**
- 5. Focus on the present, *not* on the past and future**

6. Focus on what you need, *not* on what you want

7. Focus on what you can give, *not* on what you can take

I believe my mind had synthesized *all* of the mistakes I had made in my life. It had examined the numerous mistakes and missteps that had led me into a life of growing negativity, to the point that this negative force had become greater than the force of my own true self. In meditation, my mind realized that it was itself, *my own mind*, which had become the enemy. Thus, through an intuitive and synthetic process, I came up with these Thoughts to help prevent the mind from becoming a destructive force, and to allow it to flourish and become a constructive force – a force for good rather than a force for bad.

Essentially, in my personal life, I had been focusing on the opposite of these Thoughts, and so intuitively, my mind must have realized that this had been the source of my problems. I needed to have a dynamic shift, a shift of the mind into the opposite of what it had once been. It would be a transformative process. My challenge would be to flip my focus completely – and to turn everything around. I wrote down the *Thoughts*, and I began using them as a guide post. I started living my life by the 7 Thoughts, and from then on, my life was never the same. True change didn't happen overnight. It took years, in fact, but every time I repeated these thoughts to myself, as if they were a mantra, I felt at peace sensing that I was moving along the right path. Things would be alright in the end.

Why are These Thoughts So Important?

I find that when I stray from these Thoughts, and I allow myself to go with the crowds and fall into negative patterns and worry about what is outside of my control and dwell on the past, that things start to fall apart. Depression and anxiety are not far off. Often, I diverge from the Thoughts just a little bit, then a little bit more, and then I find that I am quickly becoming lost at sea – surrounded by a turbulent storm. Luckily, when I have noticed this, I have been able to navigate myself back to safety. This has happened several times, and I am only more convinced that to live a good life, it is critical to follow these Thoughts *every day*. Following these Thoughts forces me to be fully conscious about my thoughts, so that I can learn to attract the good thoughts and to let the bad ones flow out of me. When I stop giving fuel and energy to those bad thoughts, they tend to go away in time.

I am aware that sometimes authors get excited about an idea or a system that they have only used briefly, and they want to write a book about it. I would like to be clear that the background of this book is nothing like that. I originally had these Thoughts 7 years before the publication of this book. In that time, I have reflected on these Thoughts deeply, and incorporated them into my life. At times, I would briefly forget about them, but every time I did I realized that I had made a big mistake, and I would incorporate them into my life once again.

Our true task, which this book shall help with, is to *turn the destructive mind into a constructive mind*. This isn't to say that your

whole mind is destructive, but perhaps parts of it are. Then, wouldn't it be best to flip those parts of your mind around and make them work for you in a positive way?

Of course it would.

Before continuing, I need to mention that since coming up with the Thoughts in meditation, I have realized that they are everywhere. They appear in religious texts, philosophical works, fables and parables, psychological studies, and in everyday maxims or sayings that people say. The fact that they appear over and over in a wide range of important texts, and in the words of a wide range of gurus throughout a span of millennia, shows just how important these Thoughts are. As you can see, I did not discover these Thoughts. They were always there, and I simply rediscovered them for myself. They are common and yet hidden away, because most of us don't follow them since we are bombarded by thousands of thoughts and pieces of information daily. It is time for us to clear the clutter, and to prioritize the Thoughts in our lives.

The Top Three Ingredients to Living the Good Life

A key aim of the *7 Thoughts to Live Your Life By* is to help you to live a good life. Here, I will discuss the top three ingredients that you will need for this: Purpose, Success, and Happiness.

Purpose

What is your purpose? Do you know? What is your WHY? Why do you do anything? Only you can figure this out, but if you have not, I would urge you to view this as the central issue of your life until you do figure it out. Understand that your purpose is not limited to a field of study. For instance, your purpose is not to be a doctor, it is to save lives. Your purpose is not to be an architect, it is to build the most beautiful or the safest building that ever existed. Your purpose is not to be an artist, it is to make the world come to life with beautiful art that makes people wonder about what is possible. The book *Mastery* by Robert Greene helped me not only to realize my purpose, but to have the courage to pursue it wholeheartedly.

Create your own *life purpose statement*. Think about what you truly want to get out of life, and how you can get to that point. What do you want to provide for others? What is the most personally fulfilling thing you could do? If you feel like you need more experience or knowledge to figure out your purpose, acquire it. For example, you may contact an expert and interview him or ask how you can be of help. An expert is more likely to help you learn

if you commit to helping him, rather than if you focus on what he will give to you. Through helping, of course, you will learn greatly.

Make your life purpose statement short and direct. I would recommend that it be either one sentence or two short sentences if possible. When you have crafted it, put it in a prominent place where you cannot forget about it. Also, it does not have to be static. In time, you may choose to modify it or even start over from scratch.

Success

“Your level of success will seldom exceed your level of personal development.” – Jim Rohn

Ultimately, we all need to define what success means for us. However, I believe most people have a limited view of what success is, and I would urge you to consider my definition below.

Success = Energy + Morals + Purpose

A foundation of your success will be your energy levels. We tend to take this for granted, but you need to be feeling good and have a strong vitality to be in the best position to succeed. Even for those of us who appear to be in great general health, we should always dedicate some time to keeping ourselves healthy and energetic. As we know, this involves a combination of eating healthy, exercise, sleeping well, and stress management. In general, I would also recommend that you do things that make you feel more energized and avoid those that do not. For instance, if driving aggravates you

and drains your energy, it may be better to find someone who can drive you, or to ride a bike.

Next, success is about sticking to moral principles, because if you don't, then any "success" you achieve is tainted by misdeeds you may have committed to meet that achievement. At its core, morality is about treating others as you would like to be treated, and about being truthful with yourself and others. There is not a specific moral code that you must follow, rather, it will be important for you to do what you know to be right on your path to success.

Also, success ultimately happens when you are living out your life's purpose. You may be in a life situation that makes it difficult to live out your purpose – but I believe it will be worth pursuing with all of your heart and might. If you don't, you will always wonder what could have been. You must understand that true success comes when you find a way to live your purpose, even if that purpose is not defined by your job. The two do not always overlap. A key way to live out your purpose is to make the most of any special skills you may have, or your gift (See 7th Thought). But ultimately, only you can decide your true purpose.

Happiness

To me, happiness is being free to express yourself, it is being as healthy as you can be, alert, energetic, and able to feel at a full range of emotion and not restricted to always being rational or emotional. Happiness is to be in sync with your morals, to be in the pursuit of meeting your purpose, and to be your true self, not a false created self that you feel other people want you to be. Of

course, happiness is to have love in your life, which could come from family or a spouse, or with other people that you develop close connections with. To be happy, it is not required that you have a favorable life. It is possible for a dying person to be happy, or even someone who is in prison to be happy. Happiness is doing your best, but ultimately accepting yourself, people, and situations as they are. It means being able to control your mind (See 1st Thought) so that you can be in a positive state (See 2nd Thought), regardless of the situation or environment.

The ancient Greeks believed that happiness was something that could not be fully judged about a person until their death. Someone may be happy in one moment or another, but to know if they were truly happy, we must look at their full life.

Your Thoughts Will Rule Your Life – Choose them Carefully

“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.” – Mahatma Gandhi

I present the quote above as a reminder. Many of us have thoughts that are completely incongruent with the person that we truly want to be. But rather than change those original thoughts, we learn to justify our actions. Instead, we should go back to square one and examine the thoughts that we choose to have, because from there, they have great influence over what we say and do.

Many of us think of thoughts as *just thoughts*. They are harmless, perhaps even meaningless, you may think. I will show you that this is far from being true.

In reality, the sum of your thoughts leads to the sum of your actions, which leads to the sum of who you are. Many people understand that they are the sum of their choices and of their actions. What they don't always fully understand is that they are also the sum of their thoughts. Their thoughts lead to their actions.

Allow me to elaborate.

Your thoughts will become manifest in your expressions (e.g., such as facial expressions) – and your expressions are contagious. If you have a sad expression, it is much more likely you will make others feel this too. If you smile happily, you may have this effect on those around you as well.

Your thoughts will become what you say – and what you say is mimicked by others. Just as your expressions are contagious, so is what you say. Have you ever noticed that you may hear a new phrase, and soon after this you start to hear it all of the time? A catchy expression is mimicked by many and it quickly becomes the go-to catch phrase of the public.

Your thoughts will become your actions – which model behaviors for others. Actions are also contagious. If you spend a great deal of time with someone, you may find that you start to do some of the same things. Even if this person has strange or unique habits, you may find yourself mimicking this person, perhaps unconsciously.

Your actions will become reactions in others – and those reactions will mimic the original action. For instance, aggression tends to create the reaction of aggression. Love tends to create the reaction of love. Fear in one person tends to spread that fear to those who are nearby. It does not always work this way, but if you perform an action, you are much more likely to create that same reaction in someone else.

In summary, your thoughts will become contagious in others – in the form of expressions, words, actions, and reactions that will pass on as if an echo. When you speak in a small room, you will hear your own echo. Similarly, everything you think, say, and do forms a sort of echo reaction in the world around you. You will not be able to perceive that echo, because unlike an echo of sound that reflects back at you almost immediately, the echo of your thoughts and actions passes through the world slowly, but it ripples through

the universe for eternity. In fact, much of what we are doing today is the result of the echoes of prior generations – what they thought, what they said, and what they did.

Have you ever noticed that there is truth to the saying that we become our parents? Of course, we get to choose our own actions and we are not limited to being who our parents are, but in times of stress or when we are tired or don't have time to think, our default actions are likely to fall back to what we have seen our parents do. You may find yourself repeating phrases that your parents would say, in the same situations that they would have said them. This is an example of the echoes through time, of people's thoughts, words, and actions. Perhaps your children will feel the same, and use the same phrases at those same moments, and perhaps their children too. Our thoughts, words and actions transcend ourselves, spreading as if a virus – this can be a good thing if they are positive and bad if they are negative.

Understand that what you think ends up creating the entire world around you. Of course, this effect is hard to see because of the slow echoing, but also because we are all playing a role in the thoughts, words, and actions that get passed on, and which ultimately become contagious. Since we are one person of many billions in this world, we feel like what we think, say, and do does not matter. But it does. Your thoughts can propel you forward or drag you down, and they can do the same for countless other people – having a big impact on the people who you surround yourself with.

The implications here can run deep. The world becomes influenced by what you think, and it reacts to you based on what you think of the world. What you think is reflected back onto you. If you are in love with the world, you receive a loving energy back. If you are angry at the world, you receive an angry energy back. Thus, you must mind your thoughts. Be careful what you think, because what you focus on and what you think will take up a bigger space in your life.

Remember this: Mind your mind. Mind your thinking. What we think has a way of manifesting itself into reality.

The 7 Thoughts that Help Us to Live the Good Life

The following are the 7 Thoughts which will be the focus of this book:

1. Focus on what you can control, *not* on what you cannot control
2. Focus on the positive, *not* the negative
3. Focus on what you can do, *not* on what you cannot do
4. Focus on what you have, *not* on what you do not have
5. Focus on the present, *not* on the past and future
6. Focus on what you need, *not* on what you want
7. Focus on what you can give, *not* on what you can take

While I came upon these thoughts during a meditative session, I have thought about them deeply and I would like to explain the logic of these Thoughts, and why they are ordered in this way.

By focusing on **what you can control**, you immediately prevent yourself from wasting your time, life, and energy on matters that are out of your influence and control. With this focus, you will realize that the #1 thing that you can control is your mind, and your mind performs much better when you **focus on the positive** instead of on the negative. However, if there is a problem in front of you, perhaps one that you have negative feelings about, then you must **focus on what you can do** to resolve this problem. Your focus will be on what is within your power. Just remember that what you can do is limited by what you have, or your resources.

Thus, you must **focus on what you have**, because this is all that you can work with to resolve your problems. Logically, if you focus on what you have, then you need to **focus on the present moment** in your life, because this is all that you truly have. The past is done, and the future is uncertain. The present is where you influence the world around you and where you have control. In the present moment, you must keep perspective and prioritize what truly matters in your life – thus, **focus on what you need** above what you want. What you do not need, you may give away, to **give back to the world** which has given much to you.

Inspirational Figures

I always find it helpful to keep some inspirational figures in mind, to remember that we are capable of much more than we think we are. Here are just a few brief stories of people who have triumphed even when the odds were against them. I hope they inspire you as much as they have inspired me.

Malala Yousafzai

Malala is a young woman who stood up for the rights of girls like herself to pursue education, even when she was still a child living in Pakistan, a place where this was not a freely given right. What did she get for saying that all girls should have the right to education? Sadly, she was attacked, *receiving a bullet to the head*. Suddenly, Malala was fighting for her life. This attack proved the great dangers that any girl in Pakistan may face just for speaking her mind. Luckily, she did survive and recover from this horrible attack. Despite the incident, Malala never wavered in her message. Ultimately, she went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014, where she was commended for her “struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education.” Malala along with her Malala Fund – a nonprofit organization, has helped rebuild schools and is active in helping girls to have the right and the path to pursue 12 years of “free, safe, quality education.”

William Kamkwamba

William was a young boy who grew up in extreme poverty in Malawi, Africa. His family was very poor and at one point he was unable to afford \$80 that was required for him to attend school. Incredibly, this boy living in immense poverty was able to build a windmill to bring electric power to his village with a bare minimum of resources. Some materials that he used to do this were blue gum trees, bicycle parts, and other materials he had gathered from a local scrapyards. Importantly, he had often visited the village library and discovered books with pictures of windmills in them, which ultimately helped him to build his own. In 2014, he graduated from Dartmouth College and according to his *About* page on www.williamkamkwamba.com, “He is now working with WiderNet to develop an appropriate technology curriculum that will allow people to bridge the gap between ‘knowing’ and ‘doing’.”

Cruz Robledo

Cruz was a young man with a 7th grade education growing up in Mexico – making him the most educated person from his village at the time, in the early 1960s. His dream was to go to the US to pursue greater opportunities. In the small village where he was raised, education beyond around the 3rd grade level was considered a luxury that generally could not be afforded. However, Cruz showed a promising aptitude in school, and his father supported him financially so that he could reach the 7th grade. Unfortunately, the pressures on his father with raising a large family made it infeasible for him to continue funding Cruz’s education beyond this point.

At 17 years old, Cruz decided to go to the US to pursue greater opportunities. He learned English and went to night school, and then he applied to Purdue University. They offered him admission, and he was immensely grateful for this opportunity. Being a student there was the greatest challenge of his life, as he realized that his educational background left him far behind the other students. By this point he was working full time, taking a full load of courses, and he had a family to support as well. Ultimately, despite the high level of challenge, he did graduate with his B. S. in agriculture. After working in his industry for a decade in the US, he started his own business in Mexico, where he provided and continues to provide research services for leading universities, companies, and institutions around the world. This man is my father, as you may have noticed that we have the same last name.

In all of these stories, we have individuals who were far, far behind everyone else. They had *fewer opportunities*, not more, and yet they managed to lead successful and fulfilling lives. Ultimately, they surpassed the majority of people who would have had many more advantages. I find it important to always keep these types of stories in mind. Whenever you doubt yourself and your situation, understand that many people have thrived even when having come from practically nothing.

Now that you know what is possible when you put your mind to it, I believe that you are in the right frame of mind to begin learning about the 7 Thoughts to Live Your Life By.

Before You Continue . . .

As a thank you for reading, I want you to have this free guide:

Step Up Your Learning: Free Tools to Learn Almost Anything

Although learning tools may appear to be a completely different topic than the one this book covers, I believe strongly that we should *always* be learning something so that we can meet our full potential as human beings. Remember that you are always able to learn about any topic that is important to you. I recommend that you focus on areas you are curious about, or that can help you to get one step closer to your dream job or dream life.

This guide stems from my own experiences of using a variety of learning sites and resources. In it, you will discover the best places to go for learning at no cost. Also, I'll explain which resources are best for you, depending on your learning goals.

You can download this free guide as a PDF by clicking [here](#) or by typing this website into your browser: <http://mentalmax.net/EN>

Now, let's get back on topic.

THOUGHT #1

Focus on What You Can Control, Not on What You Cannot Control

“You have power over your mind – not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength.” – Marcus Aurelius

The Most Important Thought in This Book

When people approach me for advice with their problems, at least half of the time, the problem lacks focus. A problem can only really be a problem if there is something you can control to meet an objective, and if you have a clear goal. However, examples of the problem types I tend to hear about are: “I can’t believe my wife still wants us to go to Las Vegas even though I told her that I hate it there.” “My kid wants to study art, and he doesn’t understand that there just isn’t much money in it – he should go into engineering.” “I’m sick of feeling alone. Why don’t people ever give me a chance?” The common issue in these problems is that there is a desire to control someone or something that is in fact out of our control. Because we are social creatures, we badly want to have control over others’ beliefs, thoughts, and actions, but it doesn’t work. This desire leads to misery.

At its core, this Thought is critically important because it is about making sure *not* to waste your time, life, and energy on pursuits that will lead you nowhere. In order to properly live your life, you

first have to conserve it against the things that you are *not* able to influence. Even if something is very important, if you cannot influence it, then you should find a way to put it outside of your mind. You will be much better off focusing on the things you *are* capable of having some control over.

I believe this is the most important Thought in the book because it is quite easy to waste much of our time and energy on pursuits that lead nowhere. If we had just thought at the beginning about whether we could control something in the first place, it could have saved us the heartache. The principle seems simple, but if applied well, it will prove highly effective in helping you to live a better life.

What is in Your Power to Control?

Control means that you are able to create an outcome of your choosing in a highly reliable way. Many of us feel that we have control, but often what we mean is that we have influence. We can guide people or events in the direction that we please, but “control” would be too strong of a word to use in such cases.

Consider what you actually have control over in your life. Here is a list:

Your mind – You have control over your thoughts, your beliefs, your desires, and your expectations.

Your words – You have control over what you say and don’t say, and how you say it.

Your actions – You have control over what you do with your time, what job you perform, and how you spend your money. Also, even when you are in a negative emotional state such as being angry or sad, it is ultimately up to you to decide which actions you will take.

Your emotions – Emotions are not easy to control, but this does not mean that they cannot be controlled. It just means that it takes practice. William James, the father of American psychology, has expressed that by controlling our actions we can control our emotions. For example, to feel happy, act as if you were happy. In this case, you may smile, laugh, and talk in a more animated way. However, trying to control an emotion directly through telling yourself to feel a certain way, is unlikely to work.

Your relationships – You have control over what types of relationships you enter, what types of relationships you choose to invest your time and energy in, how you treat others, and how you allow other people to treat you. But of course, you cannot control another person.

What is Not Within Your Power to Control?

The things we *can't* control

The reality is that there is much more that is *outside* of our control than there is *within* our control. Here we will see all that is *not* within our power to control:

The consequences of your actions – No matter how much you think you have something figured out, and how perfect you think your predictive abilities are, there is always something outside of your control that can create a different result than what you expected. We must expect the unexpected, because even under seemingly perfect conditions, we cannot control outcomes.

Other people's minds – We are not able to control other people's thoughts, beliefs, or their desires.

Other people's words – We are not able to control what other people say, don't say, or how they say things.

Other people's actions and reactions – What someone else chooses to do, or how they react to something that you choose to do, is ultimately outside of your control.

Other people's emotions – Many people have a difficult time controlling their own emotions, so clearly you will be unable to have control over someone else's emotions. You may do things that influence people's emotions, but ultimately, you cannot control them.

Nature – We are not able to control wild animals, the weather, earthquakes, tornadoes, or other natural phenomena.

The universe at large – We are not able to control the way the planets or the stars move, or the rules (e.g., mathematical formulas) that the universe operates under.

The past and the future – The past has already happened and cannot be changed, and the future is uncertain, and not something that you will be able to predict, let alone control. Of course, we can take actions that influence the future, which is well-advised, but we do not have control over what will happen in the future.

You control little, yet you do it with great power

Understand that you are only in control of yourself in this massive universe. The more that you realize this, the smaller you may feel, knowing that your level of control is quite minute. However, you should be aware that you still have great power in what you are able to control. As a person, wherever you go, you will always have some level of control over what happens to you. And this is the most important type of control that you could want to have – as it gives you great power over yourself and your immediate surroundings.

Sometimes you have partial control, or what we refer to as influence

As you can see, the level of control that you have is not black and white. Obviously, you may have influence over other people's minds, words, and actions, but you cannot truly control how other

people think, what they say, and how they act. Even for the most agreeable person that you meet, who appears to agree with everything that you say – you do not control him. There is always a chance that this person doesn't agree with you at all, but that he enjoys the attention that you give when he appears to agree. Or perhaps the person does not like any kind of conflict, and so he agrees with everyone publicly on matters that he may disagree with privately. It is true that you may have some influence over others, but in the end, you cannot control them.

Let go of those things you cannot control – liberate yourself

I would like you to now release yourself from the responsibility of the things you cannot control.

Just take a deep breath and let it all go, right now. Go ahead. Don't overthink it. Just do it.

Of course, I cannot force you to let it go. You must do it for yourself. The more you have clung to a pattern of feeling the need to control that which cannot be controlled, the harder it will be for you to learn to let these things go. It may not happen immediately for you – it may take time, and that is okay.

The human mind can be perplexing because we trick ourselves in two contradictory ways. We think we have more control than we do – and that we can control things that are in fact uncontrollable, such as other people. And we don't seem to realize that through the power of our own minds and thoughts, we can create the life and reality that we would like to have. There is no need to control

all of those things that are outside of our power to control. Knowing how to control ourselves is *more* than enough. We can control our thoughts, our desires, what we say, the actions that we take, and how we respond to setbacks. This is all we need.

We must learn *not* to agonize over what we cannot control, and instead to focus on controlling fully that which is in our power to control.

When you free yourself from this unnecessary weight, it may feel like a literal weight off of your shoulders. You will be liberated. You will then be able to say what you think, and influence events to the extent that you are able, but you will accept the final outcomes as they happen, because you will be aware that those outcomes are outside of your control, and therefore they are not worth worrying about.

For anything outside of your control in your life, even though you may not want it there, you must learn to move along with it fluidly, as if you were swimming with a current and not against it. Fighting what is outside your control is like swimming against the strong current of the sea. You will work quite hard, working up a sweat, crying, screaming, yet getting nowhere. Instead, if we can learn to swim, dance, or roll with the things we cannot control, we will be much better off.

Remember this: Resisting the things we cannot control does not change them or make them any easier to deal with.

“Humans won the lotto. We control the planet.” – Gary Vaynerchuk

Gary Vaynerchuk is the founder of VaynerMedia, author, and podcaster who freely gives advice to aspiring entrepreneurs. He likes to remind us whenever we are complaining and feeling like there is no way to make progress in life, that as a species we are at the top when it comes to having dominance and freedom on this planet. If you put the quality of life of all species on a hierarchy, we would be number 1. This is because we are creating or rearranging the environment as we like to have it. We planted the forests, selectively bred animals guiding them to become what we wanted them to be, and we created civilizations and organizations to meet our wants and needs. And despite the problems that humanity has created, we are the only species that is in the position to fix those problems.

Gary’s point with saying “Humans won the lotto. We control the planet,” is that there are such a massive number of creatures and lifeforms on this planet, that to be human is a truly special occurrence. He estimates that the odds of being human are 400 trillion to one. You could have been a dog, a rock, a plant, a blade of grass, or a bacterium, for example. Keep in mind that unless your parents are both from the same small town, they could have quite easily never met, which would have made your existence impossible. The point here is for us to remember that life is all a great gift. Estimating the true odds of our existence as human beings is perhaps impossible, but the 400 trillion to one figure is a good reminder that the odds must be incredibly low that we were

ever going to be here in the first place. Therefore, we must be grateful.

As human beings, we are in control of our lives. In fact, as mentioned above, we are also dictating how the Earth itself operates – as much as is possible for us to do so. Yet, many of us still sit back and complain about all that is going wrong. Some people will say, “With mega-rich people such as Donald Trump who were born into wealth, how can I compete?” Or they will say, “With being born in a neighborhood filled with violence and poverty, what do I have to look forward to?” Or they will say, “I’m just not enjoying life. I get up, go to work, go home, watch TV, and go to sleep. What else is there?” In all cases what there is, is the fact that you are human and have a great amount of control over yourself, and therefore over your immediate situation. Of course, there are obstacles and it is not easy. But what option does a dog have? What option does a blade of grass have? What option does a bacterium have? You have options, which is a special thing, although we tend to forget it. Don’t forget it.

Are you Giving Them Too Much Control?

Computers, smartphones, tablets, etc.

Often, I will go out, and I will notice that a family of husband, wife, and a few kids are out to dinner, but they are all glued to their devices. Sometimes they even have a special colorful tablet to give to their young children. Seeing this sometimes makes me question, are we controlling these devices, or have they begun to take control over us? Are they making us feel like we need to have them at all times?

The issue isn't that we are using these devices. After all, they are tools that serve a purpose – often for entertainment or for work. But when we feel that we must always use these devices, and we lose the ability to live our lives without them, this means that we are no longer living life on our own terms. We are being controlled by something outside of ourselves.

We are used to thinking about addictions to drugs, but people can become addicted to anything. It is only in recent history that we have had constant access to our small computer devices – tablets and smartphones, and perhaps we have not yet had the time to see how much they are influencing or controlling us. It is also only in recent times that we have had access to virtually all known information in our pockets, at any time of day. This is also something we become addicted to, and that tends to influence us.

Keep in mind that the apps that we use are typically designed to be addictive. Often, they will use gamification – having game-like

features to make you want to engage with them more and more. And any apps you use will present you with important news and notifications, making you feel the need to open them again and again. It is up to us to be aware, and to be more cautious about what types of apps, software, devices, and products we allow into our lives. We must control them, not the other way around.

Parents and family members or friends

Is there someone in your life who you look up to, who means well and always seems to help you when you have a problem? If so, this can be good, but there may be a point where you are giving up too much control. Be aware that you could end up being guided in the direction that this person wants you to go in, rather than feeling free to go in the direction that would truly be best for you. We must be careful in these situations, because people often mean well, but if we allow it, they may become too controlling over our lives.

Of course, the younger you are, the more helpful it may be to follow the guidance of your parents or older siblings. But as an adult, at a certain point you need to make your own choices and live with them. This is the only way you can be sure that you are fully in control. Ultimately, it is you who lives with your choices and their consequences, not anyone else. It is perfectly fine to listen to feedback or suggestions, but always understand that the final choice of what you do with your life is yours only. The path of doing what someone else says, then blaming them if something goes wrong is not a fruitful one. You must own your actions and

live with the results that they produce. Remember that helpful feedback and suggestions are good. It is when people order you with authority, or when they attempt to manipulate your thoughts and feelings, that you will have a problem and need to break free of their hold on you.

The news

Is the news shaping the way that you think more than it should? Marilyn vos Savant, recognized as former Guinness world record holder for the highest IQ, (a category which has been retired) has made an interesting point in her tweets, stating that news apps tend to show us more of the types of news stories that we prefer to see. This makes sense, until you think of the consequences of such a thing. Because news apps do this, you are likely to see more and more stories with a similar perspective or bias, which are then likely to reinforce your viewpoints more and more. Unfortunately, this can make you feel *less open* to new possibilities and ways of seeing the world. In effect, your news app will be controlling you into perceiving the world through a narrow lens, because of your original preferences.

Savant has also stated that the news is becoming more about commentary and persuasion rather than just straightforward reporting of the daily events. I fully agree with this. Often when I have seen the news, it has involved pundits arguing their viewpoints. This is fine, but if the purpose of the news were to inform the viewer of worldly events, then it would be more reasonable to make an attempt at unbiased reporting of the facts.

Instead, often a news agency will actually have an agenda that they are trying to convince the viewer of. For instance, most news outlets lean toward a political party – and everything that they report on may have this bias.

Do not be fooled into thinking that you are receiving objective, truthful information from the news. You must remember that the information is biased, and so allowing it to shape your whole view of the world would be a great mistake. At the very least, seek your news from different outlets to make sure to compare different viewpoints and then make up your own mind as to what the reality is. Or perhaps tune into the news less – and spend that time living your life instead.

Your heroes and role models

I used to have role models. I think everyone has had them at some point in their lives. But there are some inherent problems with having role models. For example, they tend to be able to manipulate you easily because you look up to them, which of course could put you in a vulnerable position. I would advise you not to allow a model to have direct control over you, and do not assume that everything they do is right. It is a mistake to follow your models without thinking critically about what it is that you are doing. You must think more deeply about how you live your life. Don't perform your actions automatically, without thought, for this will create many problems for you.

When it comes to models, no one meets a perfect standard of morality and excellence in every way, and in fact the two can be

inversely related. The more excellence one attains, the more power usually, and the more power, the more chances to abuse that power. This doesn't make powerful people immoral necessarily, but having power does tend to corrupt the people who are not disciplined enough to wield it properly.

Understand that having role models is a setup for disappointment. Often, you will start to see the person who is your model as bigger than life, as the epitome of all that is good, and this rarely reflects the reality. We all have our faults, and a much more useful strategy is to have *role actions*. Find the actions that you believe in which could benefit your life in some way and adopt those for yourself. Be willing to explore the *role thoughts* that are beneficial as well. This will mean having deeper conversations with people you may admire to figure out not just what they do, but how they think through problems. In exploring their thoughts, you will learn to adopt their way of thinking when it suits you. Also, you may learn general principles that you can use to help solve many different types of problems.

Commercials and advertisements

Turn on the radio, ads. Go online, ads. Go out on the streets, ads. Look at the bumper stickers of a vehicle, ads. I have even seen ads tattooed onto someone's neck. Ads are everywhere, and even with so many competing ads, they still appear to be a profitable investment for the companies that use them. If it wasn't worth it, they wouldn't put the ads in the first place.

With every day that passes, there are more and more of them. We don't find the presence of ads to be too strange or uncomfortable in the present day, but perhaps if they get to the point of invading our personal space, or guiding our every thought, we will notice.

I know that you may think that all of these ads don't influence you. But they are likely having a greater effect on us than we would like to think. If nothing else, they are filling our minds with junk in the background all of the time. Even if you are not interested in any of the ads, then your mind is always busy filtering them out. With your mind constantly preoccupied, this could wear you out and then lead you to make poor decisions later. Every time you see an ad, you have to make a decision – to buy or not to buy. You probably make thousands of decisions every day just because of ads, without realizing it. This wears you down, perhaps causing you to give in to impulses and buy things that you didn't need.

We tend to think that ads have no control over us, but what if they do? What if we have seen some ads from certain companies so often that we develop personal connections to them? They make us comfortable. Perhaps we do not enjoy the product that the ad mentions any more than other similar products, but with a lifetime of associations built around a particular product, our minds build deeper and deeper connections with it. The mind may eventually form more connections with a product than we have to some family members – such as an aunt, uncle, or cousin. Do we enjoy the product because we enjoy the product, or do we enjoy it because we have been manipulated into enjoying it, by having a great wealth of mental or neural connections created for us

occasionally by this point. I had reset my mind and body to where I didn't feel the need to eat too much of it.

You may be wondering about how you could quit something that is bad for you so quickly. Everyone is different, but what worked for me was thinking rationally. I knew that I did not want to become diabetic or suffer any other health issues – so I decided to mostly remove unnecessary sugars from my diet. When I saw sugar, instead of thinking about the great taste, I reminded myself that this leads to outcomes that I don't want. I wanted to be free from illness more than I wanted to taste something sweet, so the choice to stop eating sugar was rather simple. But perhaps even more importantly, I banned myself from buying sugary snacks – I banned myself from even going through the “candy and sweets” aisle in the supermarket. How can you ban yourself from something? It's simple. Just remember that you are truly in control. Anytime you decide to do something that is harmful to yourself and you know that it is harmful, you decided to do this and no one else. Similarly, only you can decide *not* to do something, and then stick to it.

Remember this: Be careful with who or what you are giving up control to. Once you have given up control to forces outside of yourself, it can become difficult to reclaim it for yourself.