THINKING *things* DONE!

The EFFORTLESS WAY *to* START, FOCUS, *and* FINALLY FINISH Everything You've Been Putting Off (Or Only *Dreamed* of Doing!)

by the author of "You, Version 2.0"

P.J. EBY

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CHAPTER 4

4

The Secret Of Your Success

There is nothing mysterious about success or failure. What happens in this world can be understood because nothing happens without a reason. All that is necessary is to find the reasons why things happen....

*Success does not come from putting your trust in an idea that has not been proven to you. It comes instead from proving to yourself that only **one** course of action could possibly be the right way.*

– Harry Browne

THE TURNING POINT

There are two fundamental ways of looking at the way things work in this world.

You can believe in **magic**: that the world is full of mysteries, that it can never truly be known, and that you should never even *try* to understand it too deeply, for fear of spoiling it.

Or, you can believe in **reason**: that every effect has a cause, and that (at least in principle) every cause is *knowable*. And potentially, *changeable*.

Now, before I made my "brain = computer" discovery, I *thought* I believed in reason. But for some reason, when it came to *people*, I still had a bit of magical thinking going on.

The human mind used to seem so mysterious and confusing to me, that the very *idea* that you could reduce human joy and suffering to simple questions of mechanical functioning seemed **unreal**, if not down-

right **offensive**!

But at the same time, I secretly longed for *answers*.

Now, by reading this far, you have come to a certain **threshold** in your understanding of the mind. And it is up to you, whether or not to go forward from here.

Up until now, I have been merely showing you insights that *hint* at the mind's simple, mechanical nature, without actually piercing the veil of shadows surrounding it.

Thus, if you wish, you have the choice of closing this book, and hanging on to a worldview where "people are complicated" and "life's not that simple".

Of course, your life won't get any *better*, but you'll at least have the comfort of knowing there's **nothing** you can do about it. After all, "it's not that simple!"

But if you keep reading now, that option will be closed to you. Because *insight is irreversible*.

Once you have seen a thing to be true with your own eyes – outer or inner – you cannot un-see it. An insight can be replaced by a new and *improved* insight, but it cannot be **expunged**.

And there is no bigger insight for humanity, than the mechanical nature of mind.

In truth, I do not believe or expect you will *really* turn back now. I'm only bringing this up because I want you to realize that you are now at a **turning point**, like I was three years ago.

Before reading that other programmer's joke, I had *exactly* the same knowledge and intelligence as I did afterwards. So in principle, I could have figured out all of this stuff **much** sooner.

But I *didn't*.

Why?

Because I hadn't realized it was **possible**.

The insight the joke gave me was that it was truly *possible* to view the mind in mechanical terms, rather than mystical ones. And if I could

view it that way, then I could apply mechanical **troubleshooting** techniques to understanding my mind, and improving my life.

Not just *physically*, on the outside. But mentally – and *emotionally* – on the **inside**.

Up until now in this book, I've danced around that point, hinting about dropping emotional baggage, and using the "horse" analogy to avoid talking directly about how my "mind hacking" techniques will affect your emotions and personality.

Because even back when I desperately *wanted* to change, there was another level on which I expected that I could somehow "change everything" in my life, and yet still be the **same person** on the inside!

Because in some ways, the idea of actually *changing* your emotions and personality is considered taboo in our culture. We tend to associate it with drugs and cults and brainwashing, because we fundamentally believe that **people don't change**. Therefore, anyone who actually *does* change must really be faking or brainwashed or something.

What's more, we expect that any change that does take place in our emotions or personality must first come from changes to our outside circumstances. We think that first you get the money or fame or success on the outside, and *then* you get the happiness and fulfillment on the inside. Doing it the other way around sounds ridiculous, if not some kind of scam or mystic mumbo-jumbo!

However, if you're the sort of person this book was meant to appeal to, then you believe – or at least *want* to believe – in a *lawful* universe.

A place ruled by *reason*.

And to you, the fact that human beings – yourself included – often seem irrational and inexplicable, is probably an annoyance and a frustration, rather than a comfort!

And if that's the case, then the rest of this book will be a *blessing* to you.

Because it will give you the freedom and **confidence** to apply your intellect to *yourself*, in a way you've never done before.

You will see that there is no problem in life – not one! – that cannot be solved by *changing your mind*. No sorrow or grief, no rage or pain, no

disappointment or frustration, that cannot be *eliminated* by changing the beliefs that are their **cause**.

True, you won't become an overnight superhero. But you *will* discover that, when trouble strikes you, you will only be a few hours – or sometimes *minutes* – away from finding a **permanent** fix for that problem, such that your robot will never trouble you in the same way again. *Ever*.

And when you change your life on the **inside**, the outside *cannot help but follow*.

Because your outside circumstances are only an *effect*.

And what's inside you, is the **cause**.

So, this is the turning point. Right here, right now. Because from this point on, I will be breaking down everything in purely **mechanical** terms.

Your mind, body, and emotions. Creativity, spirit, fulfillment. Intuition, planning, and balance. Desire, belief, commitment.

Every seemingly sacred miracle that makes us human... or makes you, **you**.

But if you believe in a **lawful** universe, then knowing how the miracle *works*, changes nothing. The beauty of a sunrise is not diminished by knowing what the sun is made of, or that it's the earth's turning that makes it "rise".

And in the same way, knowing that you can achieve fulfillment or creativity or commitment through a mechanical process, will not in *any* way diminish your enjoyment of them. In fact, the enjoyment will be *increased*, by your sense of self-mastery and personal accomplishment!

But before you can master these miracles, you'll have to **let go** of the myths and the magic. And be willing to see through the **lies** your own mind tells you, about *why* you make the choices that you do.

And, like a scientist, you must always put your *own* ideas and beliefs to the **test**.

But unlike a scientist, who wants their tests to *succeed*, you want **your** tests to *fail*.

Because the reward for busting your own beliefs – your personal myths, as it were – is **freedom**.

You see, apart from the laws of physics, your only *real* limitations...

Are the ones your **robot brain**...

Believes you have.

WHY YOU MUST GIVE UP "HOPE", NOW!

Most people view their own goals in the form of hopes or wishes. "I hope I succeed in this business," or "I wish I would earn a million dollars..." Here is the rest of the unfinished thought, whether conscious or not, that usually lies after those three dots: "...but I bet I won't."

– John Assaraf, The Answer

If you're a naturally struggling person, it's important to realize something:

You weren't **born** that way.

Otherwise, when you were learning to walk, all that falling down would've made you **give up**!

But "giving up" is an *acquired* skill. You have to **learn** how to do it.

And healthy kids just don't know **how** to give up. They can't conceive of a future in which they don't eventually learn to walk, in which the pain of falling keeps going on forever. Heck, they have trouble conceiving of the idea that they're going to fall again, even **one** more time!

Oh sure, they may cry for a minute or two, but then they get **right** back to it.

And naturally successful people are *just like that*.

Before I became naturally successful myself, I used to use Josh Kaufman as an example in talks to my self-improvement group. Josh is the creator of the Personal MBA, and about as natural of a naturally successful person as I know.

To illustrate naturally successful thinking, I'd ask him questions like,

"If you didn't achieve that goal you're working on, what would you do?"

In a puzzled tone, he'd start explaining what he would do *instead*… to make sure he'd get the goal *another way*.

I'd then point out – sometimes to his embarrassment – that he hadn't actually *answered* my question.

Because I'd always phrased my questions so as to presuppose **failure**: that is, what would he do if he *failed*?

But Josh simply couldn't **conceive** of a future in which failure existed, except perhaps as a normal, temporary setback on the way to ultimate victory. Failure, to him, could only ever be a fleeting and momentary thing.

Now, if you're currently a naturally struggling person, this attitude might seem unrealistic, unhealthy, or even downright insane!

But technically speaking, it is the naturally *struggling* mode that represents a failure of mental health.

It could even be described as a form of "learned helplessness" – a psychological **disorder**.

Success – and the mental health that goes with it – actually require that you **be** an "unrealistic optimist". Because optimists *take more action* than pessimists, and they enjoy life a whole lot more. They don't give up, and they don't give in, even if it might seem "reasonable" to do so. Which is why they **finish** more, and get better results.

Now, you don't have to give up your intelligence or your ethics to become an optimist. You don't have to lie to yourself or pretend you believe in something you don't. *Faking* a positive attitude simply doesn't work in the first place, so there's no point in **trying**.

That's why all the "positive thinking" literature out there can be **worse** than useless: successful people *already* think positively, and struggling people can't fake it!

You see, it's your "horse" that needs to be optimistic, not "you". When you fake it or try to "hope" that things will turn out well, it doesn't change your robot brain's **predictions** about how you expect things to *actually* turn out. Which means that:

**When you're *hoping* to succeed,
you're *expecting* to fail!**

And as we saw in chapter 2, it is this *expectation* of failure that triggers the "pain brain", along with all the disastrous consequences thereof:

- risk-avoidance

- low energy/desire/motivation

- procrastination

- suppressed creativity

- etc.

So, despite what the self-help books imply, you can't just smile and positive-attitude your way to being a naturally successful person. You **must** get your robot brain to *expect* success – or at least, to not expect any unacceptable failures!

And to do that, you must find – and **fix** – the "bugs in your brain".

That is, you must **identify** and **update** the *specific information* in your brain's stimulus-action-emotion database, that's causing it to *predict* unacceptable losses.

Now, this process is both easier *and* more difficult than it sounds!

In the traditional approach to change, what you're supposed to do is **obvious**, but the execution is long, slow, and painful, with no way to ever be sure you've *really* changed in a permanent way.

In contrast, the execution part of removing bugs from your brain is actually quick, easy, and *instantly* **permanent**.

And if you think about it for a moment, you'll see why that's so...

I mean, have you ever had a belief about something, that you suddenly saw was completely and utterly **wrong**?

For example, maybe you used to believe in Santa Claus. And then, one year you figured it out: it was just your parents pretending.

But from that point forward, did you ever have to *try* to convince yourself that there was no Santa Claus? Or did it just never even **occur** to you to think that way, ever again?

Well, fixing the bugs in your brain is usually *just like that*. There's:

- A few minutes of contemplation and questioning...

- An **instant** of realization...

- And a *permanent end* to that pattern of thinking!

Which is why *fixing* the bug, is the **easy** part.

While the hard part... is *finding* the bug in the first place!

And that's for **two reasons**.

First, if you believed in Santa Claus, then you **never** thought of that belief *as a bug*. You didn't even see it as a "belief"! It was just the **truth** to you.

It was your *reality*!

And that's why it's always easier to find the bugs in *someone else's* brain, than in your own. (And it's also why many kids don't even **consider** disbelieving in Santa, until they first hear the idea from another kid!)

By the way, this is **also** why I still read self-help books, go to workshops, and listen to people who are more successful than me in areas where I'd like to improve. That way, I can compare and contrast their thoughts and beliefs with my own. (And any place where I don't feel I can even *consider* adopting their thoughts or beliefs, without a **negative emotional reaction**, I know there's a **bug** there!)

You see, no matter how smart I am, I can't see my own mind's distortions from *inside* those distortions. I have to have something **outside** me, even if it's just writing my own thoughts down (i.e. journalling), or talking things out with a friend, coach, or counselor.

So that part is pretty easy to work around: you can deal with your mind's systematic distortions by:

1. Getting outside input (to compare and contrast your thoughts and beliefs), and

2. Outputting what's inside of you (so you can see your beliefs **as** beliefs!)

But as I said, there are **two** reasons why finding bugs is harder than fixing them.

And the second one is this: when any complex system misbehaves – whether it's your car, your computer, or your brain – there is always some chance that either the problem is **not** where you think it is, or that there are **multiple** problems involved.

For example, when I bought my first clunker of a car, it kept having a problem with overheating. Turned out there was a radiator leak, so I got that fixed.

But it still overheated!

Aha, said the mechanic, your water pump's not working either. We'll fix that, too.

Now the car worked on the freeway, but overheated in traffic!

It took a good bit more troubleshooting to find that the final problem was the radiator fan, or more precisely, the thermostat that was supposed to turn the fan on. When I drove on the highway, the air flow over the radiator was enough to keep things cool, but when I sat in traffic, it couldn't shed heat fast enough without the fan blowing air over it.

So, there were **three** "bugs" behind that **one** symptom.

And more often than not, this is *precisely* how things work with your brain.

You see, the self-help field has all these **words** for our problems, like "procrastination" and "low self-esteem" and what-not. But these words really only describe *symptoms*.

So saying that you've got "procrastination" is really no different than saying that your car has "overheating". It's not an actual **diagnosis** of the problem, and *it doesn't tell you what to fix*!

What's more, just because you've found and fixed one bug, it doesn't always mean you immediately become super-successful in that area of your life. It just means you have *one less problem* in that area. But until you've fixed *all* the problems in that area, you may not quite reach that

blissful state of natural success just yet.

The good news, however, is that each problem you do fix will make things somewhat better, **right away**. If you fix a motivation problem in one area, then it's definitely fixed… at least in that area.

Some bugs, however, have more global impact. You might have one broken belief that affects your life in **dozens** of areas, and so fixing it might give you more motivation and success **everywhere** in your life!

This happens to me quite a lot, in fact. You just can't always predict in *advance*, which beliefs are localized, and which are more global in their effects. (There are always a few surprises.)

But **every** negative belief or piece of emotional baggage you throw out will still give you an *immediate and permanent* improvement in at least **one** area, just like my radiator started working on the highway once the leak and pump were fixed.

So, you'll get a bit further down the road to success, and you'll feel better about yourself (and your life!) without that bit of emotional baggage dragging you down.

In addition, you'll feel a **growing confidence** that life is a *lawful system*: that the source of every problem is knowable in principle, and changeable in *practice*.

And you will replace vague wishes and hopes, with the *specific knowledge* of what your mind and body need, to function in a successful way.

An **effortless** way.

WHAT IT REALLY TAKES TO SUCCEED

*We tend to seek easy, single-factor explanations of success. For most things, though, success actually requires **avoiding** many separate possible causes of **failure**.*

> – *Jared Diamond,* Guns, Germs, and Steel

I used to get really confused by all of the different "secrets of success" that self-help and productivity gurus offered up in their books.

One guru might say that the secret was commitment, while another insisted it was courage. Others talk about planning, or hard work. And

still others claim the Secret (with a capital "S", no less!) is focusing on your heart's desire.

But asking which of these things is the "true secret" of success, is like asking what's the "true secret" of **automobiles**. Is it the engine? The wheels? What about the transmission or the gas tank?

In real life, success is like a car: it has to have **all** of its **relevant** parts in order to work. And if any of them are broken, the car won't work.

Of course, what's "relevant" depends on what you want to **do** with the car! If you want to use it to get somewhere, it might not be that important for the radio or air conditioning to work, but you're going to need most everything else. On the other hand, if all you want is a place to make out, then you'll only need the back seat. And if you want to use the car as part of a sculpture, you might not need anything but the shell!

So the reason that every success guru focuses on *different* relevant parts of the "success automobile", is because of the specific kinds of **failure** they either personally learned to avoid, or realized their *clients* needed to avoid... in the context of their specific goals for *using* the "automobile".

If a guru and his or her clients have every piece needed for their goals *except* commitment, for example, then that's what the guru's work will focus on. And then, their work will be useful and helpful for people who have that same problem, when they're going after similar goals.

And it's this process that leads to the myth that "different things work for different people".

Sure, on one level, it's *sort of* true. But on another level, it misses the *key point*:

For any given kind of success, there are *many* things needed to achieve it...

And you have to have *all* of them!

If you're lucky enough to have all but **one** of the things you need, then your search for "the answer" might eventually yield something that works for you.

Unfortunately, what this "all" consists of can vary considerably, depending on your goals! A simple task might need only enough

commitment to get started, but a lifelong dream might take months or years to accomplish, and therefore require a higher level of focus. (Just like with an automobile, where a feature like 4-wheel drive might be unnecessary for going to the grocery store, but critically important for an off-road trip in the mountains.)

That's why it's a mistake to think of success as a "system", or as a series of "steps" – instead of as a collection of **obstacles** to be overcome, or a set of **required conditions** to be maintained... *each* of which needs steps or systems to manage them!

Think about it: you can't even write up a predefined sequence of steps to fully cover something as simple as **driving**!

After all, it has no real *sequence*: you just move towards your goal, and handle potential failures as they come up. If the road's blocked, you change routes. If the fuel is low, you stop for some. If the oil pressure light comes on, you do something about that. And so on.

In order to reach your destination, in other words, you must make sure that all of the **required conditions** (fuel, oil, traction, etc.) are met and maintained. And under normal circumstances, the way you do that is simply by noticing when one of these conditions is *missing*. (For example, via the fuel gauge or other dashboard warning lights.)

Now, if you didn't know what the fuel gauge or warning lights *meant*, you might get really frustrated when you tried to drive somewhere, and the car just stopped working for no apparent reason!

Unfortunately, that's **exactly** what the traditional self-help paradigm is like: when your car breaks down, you have to keep taking it to different mechanics... only *they* can't read your warning lights, either! So you've got to just keep trying different "mechanics" until you happen to stumble across a new "secret" that makes your car seem to work again.

At least, it works until you run out of some *other* important fluid, or the battery goes dead, or something else happens. And then it's back to the gurus... er, garages... for another tune-up of some random part.

Wouldn't it be nice, though, if you could get **rid** of all this guesswork?

Well, you can.

Because *real* mechanics don't work the way self-help gurus do!

THE NINE STATES OF NATURAL SUCCESS

The best way to get and maintain the attitude is to remember that it is a mathematical certainty that you will solve any reproducible problem in a system for which you have knowledge or system documentation.

— *Steve Litt*, The Universal Troubleshooting Process

Unlike self-help gurus, good mechanics don't have to guess what's going on "under the hood". They not only know how all the pieces of a car go together, and what function each piece has, but also how that function contributes to maintaining a **required condition** of its operation.

So, when they see a warning light or other symptom, they're not limited to reacting to that one thing. They know the many possible causes behind that single effect. And they can begin making *tests*, to narrow the causes down.

Thus, if you want to become your very own "life mechanic", you will need the same two things:

First, to have the mechanic's *attitude*: the belief that you can find and fix **any** problem by *systematic testing*.

And second, to have the mechanic's *knowledge*. Specifically:

1. An understanding of the **required conditions** for success and fulfillment,

2. Knowing what **functional systems** are necessary to *maintain* those conditions, and

3. What those systems look like when they're *working*... or **not**.

So in this section, I'm going to give you an an overview of these "required conditions". Then, the rest of the book will essentially be your "service manual" for fixing and maintaining them... or building them in the first place!

You'll learn to produce and maintain both simple conditions like motivation and commitment, as well as complex ones like adequate project planning, and total life balance. You'll be able to tell whether something is what you *really* want, and what it really takes to create and

maintain useful habits. (And so, **so** much more.)

But, just as a mechanic needs to learn the difference between an engine and a transmission before learning all the parts of each, you'll need to get the big picture before we dive into the details. And that big picture, is something I call:

THE BLUEPRINT FOR 3D LIVING™

Required Condition	Supporting Brain Function	Component States
Dare	**Prediction**	Desire, Belief, Commitment
Dream	**Planning**	Vision, Definition, Strategy
Deliver!	**Performance**	Action, Priority, Consistency

You see, for any goal, there are three major **required conditions**. You must:

- **Dare** to go after it,

- **Dream** what you want (and possibly how to get it), and

- **Deliver** the actual result.

Now, despite the colorful names I'm using for these conditions, I have very specific, *mechanical* definitions in mind for them.

Each condition is driven by a corresponding *automatic* function of your robot brain. And each condition is composed of three individual *states*, like "Belief", "Commitment", and so on, for a total of nine states in all: the Nine States of Natural Success.

And all nine states – even ones with names like "Desire" and "Vision" – have similarly specific, *mechanical* defintions.

Each state will have a detail chapter devoted to the specific mental *skills* you'll need in order to create, maintain, and troubleshoot that state.

And each condition will have an overview chapter explaining how the corresponding brain function works, and showing how its component states fit *together*.

The first of these conditions, "Dare", is defined by **emotional readiness**, and it's driven by your robot brain's ongoing *predictions* of your likely results. To have this condition, your robot brain must be predicting a **win**, or at least an acceptable loss. Conversely, any sensation of effort, resistance, difficulty, or hesitation is a "warning light" indicating you've **lost** this condition, and have entered the "pain brain" instead.

The "Dream" condition, on the other hand, is having **clarity and specificity** about what you want, including how you will *get* it, and how it will fit into your life (both in space and in time). Sensations of confusion, indecision, and uncertainty are all possible "warning lights" for loss of this condition.

Finally, the "Deliver" condition, is **ongoing, automatic action**, and managing the process of delivering a result *over a period of time*. The "warning lights" signaling a loss of this condition include:

- Sensations of urgency, burnout, or overwhelm;

- Frequent conflict between your goals and responsibilities,

- Failing to take consistent action towards your goals, and

- Doing things that are inconsistent with your desired or expressed priorities.

Now, each of these "3 D" conditions is to a large extent dependent on the ones before it, which means that you must always *troubleshoot them in the same order* as I've listed them above.

The "Dare" condition comes first, because without it, *none of the others will work*. When you enter the "pain brain", any nonessential functioning (e.g. long-term planning and motivated action) is **suppressed**, as your brain goes into its crisis management mode.

Thus, even if you are seeing "warning lights" for the other two conditions, you must always first investigate whether the issue is *really* being caused by a problem in the "Dare" condition. Because although you might not have done adequate "dream" preparation or "deliver" execution, the *reason* you might not have done those things, could easily be an unhandled bug in your "dare" subsystem!

For example, at one point while I was writing this book, I was cruising along fine on all 3 "D"s... until I happened to notice how little time was left before I needed to finish it and get it to the printers! Then, I suddenly started finding myself doing other things instead of working on the book – i.e., "doing things that were inconsistent with my desired or expressed priorities."

But I began by troubleshooting the **Dare** condition first, not the "Deliver" one. Because, sure enough, the issue was that my brain was predicting an imminent, unacceptable loss! (Missing the deadline.) So once I fixed that *fear*, the "Deliver" problem went away on its own.

And the same relationship is true for "Dream" versus "Deliver": a lot of times, a failure in the "Deliver" condition is caused by not having gotten sufficiently **clear** yet about what it is you're supposed to deliver!

So the "earlier" conditions support the later conditions, and are generally more important. If you have "Dare", then you can muddle through almost anything *eventually*, even without much "Dream" or "Deliver". (It'll just take longer and be more of a hassle, because you'll run into more dead-ends, be more likely to unbalance your life, and less likely to finish at a consistent pace.)

"Dare" is so critical, in fact, that it is essentially the **only** difference between naturally successful and naturally struggling people. That's why naturally successful people can often get *better results* than people who are **more talented** than them! (And, it's why most self-help books have such a gung-ho, "you can do anything if you put your mind to it" attitude: they're usually written by naturally successful people.)

Conversely, when you're naturally *struggling*, any talents you do have can just seem like a mocking reminder of how much you're **not** doing with your life and your dreams!

So that's why I've focused these first four chapters on explaining the problems of the "pain brain"... and the *next* four chapters on how to create, maintain, and troubleshoot the "gain brain", instead!

After that, the "Dream" and "Deliver" conditions will also have four chapters each, explaining how to use your brain's automatic planning and performance systems to get **effortless** results.

Of course, your goals may vary considerably as to how much demand is placed on each of the three major conditions. Thus, we can also look

at the 3 "D"s as **dimensions of demand** on which a goal can be *measured*. For example, here are some ways a few typical tasks might measure up, by how much each condition is needed for its achievement:

Desired Task, Goal, or Result	"Dare" Level	"Dream" Level	"Deliver" Level
Taking out the trash	Low	Low	Low
Asking someone out	**High**	Low	Low
Relocating a business	Low	**High**	Low
Getting physically fit	Medium	Low	**High**
Writing a Ph.D. thesis	**High**	**High**	**High**

Of course, where you *personally* rate each of these goals might vary. For example, if you ask a lot of people out, you might not need much "dare" any more. On the other hand, if you've *never* asked someone out before, you might need a bit more "dream" to make sure you know **how**!

And, if you really hate exercising or are afraid of how much time it's going to take, your "dare" level might need to be higher, versus a lower level if you already enjoy exercising. Heck, you might even have "dare" issues with taking out the trash, if you're mad at your spouse for not doing it!

Most likely, though, you have a **mix** of goals, requiring a mix of *skills*. If you're a naturally successful person, you probably need very little help with the "Dare" condition, but you'll still find many useful techniques in Part 2 of this book for enhancing your motivation and commitment. (You're just somewhat more likely to find the "Dream" and "Deliver" techniques useful for enhancing your clarity, efficiency and consistency.)

Conversely, if you're naturally struggling, you'll probably find yourself mostly focusing on the "Dare" condition at first, with occasional

forays into the other sections on an as-needed basis, until you start to become more naturally successful in a given area of your life, and begin taking on larger ambitions there.

Now, as important as all the knowledge of these conditions, states, and functions is, the **attitude** with which you approach them is really *far* more important than the knowledge itself.

You see, before I had the attitude of a "life mechanic", it never even occurred to me to *look* for the knowledge. But once I had the attitude, *getting* the knowledge was only a matter of time.

However, if I'd been just *given* the knowledge, *without* the attitude, then it is **very** unlikely that I would've succeeded in **applying** any of it.

It would have just been another mass of "self-help techniques" to me, that I'd have abandoned at the first sign of difficulty, because, "it didn't work for me!"

And I don't want that to happen to **you**.

So, before we start looking at all the details of the conditions and systems, let's take a closer look at the mind of the mechanic...

So you can become the mechanic... of your **mind**.

SUCCESS IS NOT A GUESS

> *Try this simple test. Ask your people what progress they've made toward a solution. If they say something like "we've narrowed it down to the second DNS server in Chicago", they're probably facing a tough problem and need more time.*
>
> *But if their answer is "I'm just having trouble finding the problem", or "it's a murderous problem", or "we hope to solve it soon", or something equally vague, time is the symptom, not the cause. In fact, the cause is that they have **no process by which to troubleshoot**.*
>   – *Steve Litt*, The Universal Troubleshooting Process

Most people think of psychology and self-help as "soft" skills or sciences - meaning that they're not all that *predictable*, when compared to "hard" skills like mechanical engineering.

Unfortunately, this leads people to expect *less* from their psychologists and self-help gurus, than they do from, say, auto mechanics!

After all, if you take your car to the mechanic, complaining that "every time I accelerate, there's this weird noise", you would expect them to *test* your car.

First, you would expect them to test the car *before* changing anything, so that they know how to get the noise to occur. And then, after fixing the problem, you would expect them to test a *second* time, to make sure they've actually *fixed* the problem, and not just something unrelated, or only a **part** of the whole problem.

A psychologist or self-help guru, on the other hand, might not test you *once*, let alone twice!

Mind you, I'm not saying there aren't *any* effective psychologists and self-help gurus out there. All I'm saying is, we as consumers don't always hold them to the same standard of professionalism. And that means the only ones who **do** test, are the ones who hold *themselves* to that higher standard.

But now, I want **you** to hold **yourself** to a higher standard as well.

So, promise me you won't let yourself off the hook with vague excuses as to why something "doesn't work for you". If you have trouble, don't sit around blaming yourself or me or the book; instead, take a **troubleshooting** mindset.

In other words, you must always, always, *always* assume that:

1. There is something *specific* that is **causing** the problem,

2. That specific "something" can be **found**, and

3. You can **fix** it once you find it!

You see, when I do troubleshooting on computers – or anything else – I've **always** had these three assumptions in mind. No matter how irritatingly inconsistent some *individual* problem might be, I still had "faith" in these general principles of troubleshooting.

Yes, I know I said in chapter 1 that I wouldn't ask you to believe or have faith in anything. And you don't *have to*, in order to use this book. However, you *do* have to act **as if** you believe these three things, or you'll give up way too soon on looking for the cause of your problems!

Some things, you'll find and fix in minutes. Some will take hours of searching, perhaps spread over days or weeks. In general, your results will be faster when you either externalize your thoughts by writing them down or speaking them aloud, or have some other kind of outside assistance. Assistance like:

- Coaching from another trained mind hacker (such as myself),

- Listening to or reading about the beliefs of people who are already succeeding at what you want to succeed at, or

- A sympathetic listener (as long as they don't do anything but *listen*, and maybe make sympathetic noises like "I see", or "Hmm")

Your results will also be faster when you *observe* your problems in action, and then **test** whether your attempted "fixes" worked, instead of trying to analyze or **guess** what your problem is being caused by. Because:

Only *amateurs* guess. Professionals *test*!

And when professionals test, they define their tests in **advance**, being very specific about what will be considered "success", and what will be considered "failure".

So in this book, I'm going to clearly define success and failure for each technique, so that you will know whether it is achieving the intended result, **immediately**. Not in 30 days, not in 30 minutes, I mean, right the hell *now*.

A mathematician doesn't just get an answer and say, "OK, I'm done." He tests his answers carefully, because if he doesn't, other mathematicians will! That kind of rigor has always been missing from therapy and education. People try something and then do a two-year follow-up study to find out if it worked or not.

*If you test **rigorously**, you can find out what a technique works for and what it doesn't work for, and you can find out right away. And where you find out that it doesn't work, you need to try some other technology.*

– Richard Bandler, Using Your Brain For A Change

But clearly-defined success and failure aren't just important for techniques: you need to clearly define success and failure for **yourself**, too.

Remember, without feedback, there is *no learning*, and *no skill*. Thus, the reason you need to be **specific** about your goals is *not* so you can cause some sort of mystical "attraction" to take place, but because unclear goals produce *unclear feedback*, thereby making it more difficult for your robot brain to learn, prioritize, and make decisions! (What's more, unclear goals also prevent you from making full use of your robot brain's ability to **automatically** generate plans and predict outcomes.)

In part 3 of this book, by the way, you'll be learning how to get **ruthlessly** specific about your goals and priorities, even if you've never gotten any benefit out of writing lists of your goals, "roles", or values before. And, you'll also discover how to **activate and use** those automatic planning features I just mentioned.

But let's take a moment now, to get *specific* about what you want from this **book**. Is there a particular project you're behind on, or a dream you've been putting off? Is there something specific that demotivates you, every time you try to start work on it?

Write it down here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

I hate writing in books, myself, so if you're like me, feel free to use your journal, a notebook, or even a 3x5 card instead. But you'll be writing a lot of stuff through the course of the book, so decide *now* how you're going to handle it. You can always change your mind later (it won't kill you to have stuff written in two places, after all), but the fastest way to get action is to get *specific* about what that action will be!

Naturally-struggling people often have blocks about getting specific,

by the way, so if you find yourself resisting the idea of picking just **one** thing to write... or fretting over exactly how you should record your answers... then congratulations! You've just identified one of the blocks you'll be fixing later. ;-)

In fact, feel free to write that down as the specific issue you'll be working on first, e.g. "When I think about picking just one thing, then I feel ...", followed by whatever you see, think, and feel.

Similarly, if you feel like you should wait until later so that you have a better idea of what kind of thing to pick... then write **that** down, too! Same thing for any other thought or feeling that keeps you from picking something, right now, because that means it's a "Dare" failure, and you'll want it to be the first thing you **fix**.

By the way, this "when-then" pattern ("WHEN I think X, THEN I experience Y") is the **fundamental pattern** for finding and fixing bugs in your brain. Just like when you tell the mechanic, "WHEN I do X, THEN I hear/see/feel Y", it forms the basis for **testing** whether you've *fixed* the bug.

In fact, this "X leads to Y" pattern is not just fundamental to trouble-shooting, it's the fundamental basis of *everything* your brain does:

- In the "Dare" condition or "Prediction" function, it determines how you will **feel** about your goals.

- In the "Dream" condition or "Planning" function, it determines how you will **obtain** them.

- And in the "Deliver" condition or "Performance" function, it determines what you will **do**, *when*.

So now, by deciding what to work on first, you'll have a clear basis for defining your tests across **all three** conditions.

And in the next chapter, you'll discover how to do just that.

For the first – and **most important** – condition of all.