



**SPECIAL REPORT**

# The Self-Help **MYTH:**

The paradoxical secret that keeps self-help techniques from actually *changing* your life in a permanent way... and what you can **DO** about it!

by P.J. Eby

## THE PROGRESS PARADOX

A funny thing happens with powerful self-help techniques: people learn them, and then they don't *use* them.

No, it's not just you, and it's not just me. My "instant motivation" video has been viewed over 14,000 times on YouTube, and even though I get regular emails and comments from people who've used the technique to clean their desks, or even their entire houses, there's one thing I never hear:

"I started using this technique for everything I do, and now I'm super-motivated in every area of my life."

Why is that?

Now, bear in mind, it's not just *that* technique. It happens to nearly everybody, with nearly every self-help technique in existence!

Virtually every powerful technique I've ever learned or discovered, I started out being really excited about... right before I proceeded to **not use it**.

In fact, here's the really weird thing about it: the more powerful the technique, the *less likely* I was to use it!

The first such technique I discovered was while I was running in place, exercising, about a decade ago. I just happened to be thinking about how good it would be to be healthy, and how much easier this exercise would be. And in the process, I had sort of visualized this fit future self, and then stepped into it...

And I started running **faster!**

Not because I intended to, or was trying hard, but because it was like I was running with my *future body*.

I was amazed and stunned. Wow! This is so cool. I'm going to do this every time!

And then I promptly forgot about it for about 3 years.

Three years.

And it's only in the last six months or so that I've finally made it a

habit to **use** that technique when I run. (And until I typed the sentence you just read, it hadn't even *occurred* to me to try use it during any other sort of exercise!)

Now, if you're thinking here that I must be a complete idiot, and that if **you** discovered something like that you'd have used it, every single time, for every possible form of exercise, then there are two possibilities here.

Either you're a **naturally successful** person...

(That is, the sort of person who takes everything they find useful, and puts it to work in their life immediately, consistently, and without hesitation...)

OR...

You're **fooling** yourself.

Again.

Let me ask you something a little personal. How many self-help techniques have you learned, and didn't use more than once or twice? How many organizational systems do you have on your shelf? How many books, videos, or courses gathering dust in the corner?

How many tips and techniques and "life hacks" or productivity tricks have you read about? And how long did you manage to **stick** with any of them, if you actually did them at all?

And finally, here's the real mind-bender I want you to consider.

Think back to how long you *stuck* to any of those things that you tried, and ask yourself how long you stuck to the things that were *effective*, versus the things that weren't working so well, if at all.

Now... Which things did you stick to longer? The ones that worked? Or the ones that *didn't*?

And don't be too surprised if you realize that you gave up on some of the things that **worked**, much sooner than the things that didn't!

In fact, I'll bet that you – like me – have actually read or heard about things that sounded *so* good... *so* much like they were exactly the **perfect** thing you needed to do...

That you never even tried them in the first place!

Now of course the general idea of self-defeating behavior is nothing new. So if I had nothing more to say about it than, “naturally struggling people usually find ways to fail”, I wouldn’t be writing you this report!

But no, what I’ve found, and what I’m writing about, is the paradoxical reason **why** this self-defeating behavior exists, **how** it works, and what we can **do** about it.

And it’s something that turns most of the classic self-help ideas completely **upside down**.

Because...

## YOU CAN’T ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS BY TAKING ACTION

**N**ow, that idea maybe sounds a little stupid, as well as **obviously** false. But as Obi-Wan might say, it’s still **true**... “from a certain point of view.”

I mean, *obviously*, action is how goals get accomplished, right? At least, it is if you only look at things from a **close-up** point of view.

But in the bigger picture, there’s something *else* going on. A mysterious force that we almost never pay any **attention** to, and is therefore usually *invisible* to us.

A force that scientists and engineers only noticed when they tried building **robots**.

You see, decades ago, roboticists thought it should be really easy to make a robot that could walk around and pick things up. They just needed a camera and a computer, and they’d let the robot compute where things were, and send out some commands to its limbs in order to move around or pick the desired things up.

But boy, were *they* surprised!

Because the first “robots” they built, simply **didn’t work right**.

No matter how carefully they computed the *actions* the robot should take, there were always **errors**.

This motor didn’t respond as quickly as it did last time, or as strongly

as the motor on the other side. There was less friction in the gears because somebody oiled them. The camera wasn't put back on the head 100% straight. The sun moved and changed the shadows in the room, or somebody pulled the curtains.

Errors, errors, errors. Everywhere you looked, the real world was a vast source of discrepancies, that laid waste to *any* precomputed plan of action.

And before too long, they had to abandon the idea that you could really think of "action" as consisting of discrete steps, that could be determined in advance.

Any half-way decent attempt at pre-calculating steps used enormous amounts of computing power, and had to take *way* too many factors into account... factors that even the simplest animals and insects handle easily, without even thinking about it!

And if you think about it, the very fact that insects and other lower-order animals can solve these kinds of problems automatically, is an indication that there has to be a **simpler** way to do it.

Surely nature couldn't have evolved highly-complex multi-factor computing systems before insects and animals could even **see, walk around,** and grab things.

Heck, think about it. If your brain had to precompute specific commands to your limbs in order to walk around, how could you ever manage to walk on a swaying boat or a lurching bus or plane? For that matter, what happens if your arm is sore today, and you go to pick something up? What if it's **stronger** today than yesterday, simply because you worked out a few days ago?

Hell, just try standing up straight for a while, and notice what happens in your body as you breathe... the way the muscles in your legs automatically compensate for the swaying.

Better still: ask a friend to hold their arm out straight, and tell them that when you push down on their hand, they should lower their arm. And what you'll generally find is that when you push down on their hand, the arm will spring back **up** before they lower it... and the harder you push *down* on the hand, the harder the arm will pop back up!

So something *else* is going on here.

Something that happens in living systems, but *didn't* happen in the early robots.

Something that shows our most cherished ideas and assumptions about accomplishment and self-help to be utterly and completely **false**.

And that something is “negative feedback”.

Or as I prefer to call it, the **law of subtraction**.

Because what's happening in your arm – or your legs, or any other part of your body or mind – is a constant *subtraction* of where you are...

From where you want to be.

Our bodies have what might be called “regulators”, with each one determining the position, speed, angle, and other qualities of our movement. Each has a setting – just like a thermostat – that tells it what you currently want to be doing, or where you want the limb to be.

And then – just like a thermostat – the regulator automatically generates actions that move the actual body part closer to the desired “setting”.

Now, so far, that probably sounds blindingly obvious. After all, how *else* would you do it?

Indeed, nowadays, robots are built using “servos” – motors that have feedback circuits to tell them which way the motor is currently pointing, so that the motor can speed up, slow down, or move back the other way to match the desired position. And our cars have cruise control, so that they automatically brake or accelerate in order to maintain the speed they're set for.

But there are some very **non-obvious** things about how this “subtraction” process works in humans, that have some rather *dramatic* implications for self-help.

Sure, self-help authors have talked about **some** of this thermostat-like behavior before. *Psycho-cybernetics* and the concept of “self-image” are based on it, as are some of the ideas in Tony Robbins' *Awaken The Giant Within*, and T. Harv Eker's *Secrets of the Millionaire Mind*, among many others. People talk about “wealth thermostats” and “comfort zones” and “personal standards” and all that kind of thing.

But these ideas *still* fail to change people, because they're still **missing**

a few important pieces.

For example, most of these self-help systems assume that you only have **one** inner thermostat or regulator, when in fact, we have thousands or maybe even *millions* of the bloody things. In fact, every time you learn a new skill, you literally **grow new ones**.

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### Principle #1: Every Skill or Value Has A Regulator

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Scientists have found that if you teach someone a new, complex skill using a particular finger, the part of the brain corresponding to that finger will literally begin to grow new neurons and pathways.

But what *are* these new pathways? Are they new and specialized machines that behave differently from the circuits that were there before?

No. They're just **more** of the same *kind* of regulator.

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### Principle #2: Regulators Can Regulate *Anything*

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See, while different kinds of regulator *do* exist, all regulators of a given kind work in basically the same way: they subtract one thing from another to find out how far off they are, then send signals out to correct the difference. And it doesn't matter what the input is, or what the thing is regulating, all the regulator *ever* does is **subtract**.

So the regulator that determines how curled your fingers are when you try to pick something up, are in principle no different from the regulator that tells you how humble you should be in a given social setting, or how close of a relationship you should allow yourself to have with somebody!

In either case, the regulator simply subtracts where you are from its own "setting", like a thermostat checking the temperature. And then it issues commands to other, lower-level regulators, to change *their* settings.

So, as long as you can **perceive** it, your brain's regulator circuits can *control* it... without even needing to "know" what it is they're controlling. After all, does a thermostat "know" it regulates the temperature? No. All

it does is subtract two numbers, and set the furnace or air conditioning controls to “on” or “off”.

Heck, for all the regulator in a thermostat knows, it could really be the cruise control in your car, monitoring your speed and turning the brakes and gas on and off! Which leads us to...

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### Principle #3: Regulators Regulate *Perceptions*, Not “Reality”

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Regulators don’t actually “know” anything about reality. Your arm’s regulators don’t know how strong your muscles are, or how long your limbs are, or how strong the pull of gravity is. All they know is what position the arm is being asked to go to, and what position the arm is currently at. If there’s a difference, they do something about it.

That’s why, if you push someone’s arm down, it bounces back up at first, even if you’ve asked them to lower it. Once the position of the arm no longer matches where the regulator was set to hold it, the regulator notices a discrepancy and increases the force of the shoulder muscles to compensate.

Now, the arm-position regulator doesn’t “know” the arm is being pushed, and it certainly doesn’t know *why* you’re pushing it! It just automatically responds to keep things where they’re “supposed to be”. A fraction of a second later, your friend notices that you pushed his arm, and consciously lowers it....

By changing the regulator’s **setting**.

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### Principle #4: Regulators Control *Other* Regulators

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Imagine this: you’re driving along in your car, on a crowded street. Traffic slows, and you find yourself getting closer to the back of the car in front of you, so you slow down a bit.

You don’t necessarily do it *consciously*; you could be completely lost in thought, and it still happens automatically.



Because at one level of your brain, a regulator has been assigned to monitor and control “distance to the next car”. If it drops below a certain level, it fires off a command to another regulator: reduce speed!

More specifically, it sets your “speed of the car” regulator to a value that’s *less than the speed of the car in front of you*, until the **distance** goes back up far enough.

Of course, your “speed of the car” regulator immediately notices that you are going **faster** than the new desired speed, and that you are not already slowing down enough due to coasting. So it sets the “braking” regulator’s level somewhere between “gentle slowdown” and “emergency stop”, and the braking regulator in turn sets **position** regulators on your feet to carry out the maneuver.

Your foot regulator then observes that your foot is not where it’s supposed to be (i.e. on the pedal), so it sends requests for the leg to be positioned appropriately. The leg regulator sees the leg is in the wrong position, and requests movement, by changing the leg-speed regulators’ settings. The speed regulators notice the leg isn’t moving, so they request a higher setting for muscle force.

And so on, and so on, all the way down the control hierarchy, so that your foot seems to simply find its **own** way to the brake pedal, all in a fraction of a second.

And it all happens **effortlessly**, without even a moment of thought being required in the whole process, let alone a “plan” or any deliberate “actions” occurring.

And that’s because...

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### Principle #5: Action Is A *Side-Effect* Of Subtraction

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None of the regulators in your body really took any “action”, in the way we usually think of it. At no level did any regulator perform any “action steps” - they all simply monitor the *discrepancy* between its **desired** setting, and its **perception** of the way things currently are. In other words, they *subtract*.

And if you’ve watched my Instant Motivation video, you should be

very familiar with this idea.

Because it's the *exact same process*.

In the video, I had you create a **desired setting** for how you wanted the desk to look, and then to monitor your perception of how it *actually* looked.

This comparison then generated an internal *discrepancy* – the difference between the two states – which in turn caused your brain's regulators to start "hunting" for ways to reduce the discrepancy.

Or, to put it in a formula, we could say that  $D - P = E$ . That is...

### **Desire minus Perception equals Energy**

Now, a control systems theorist would say that "E" actually stands for "error", and they would be technically correct. However, for our purposes, I prefer to call it "energy", because "error" has negative emotional connotations that don't really apply here.

After all, if you did the instant motivation technique, you probably didn't experience your motivation as "error"! If anything, it probably felt like **energy**.

Now, you may remember that in the video I said not to try to actually *do* anything – to just hold the image and feeling, while observing the state of the desk. In other words, not to initiate *action*, but to...

Focus On *Subtraction!*

Because when you do this, the energy comes **automatically**, almost as a side effect.

### **ACTION ACCOMPLISHES NOTHING; SUBTRACTION ACCOMPLISHES EVERYTHING**

**N**ow, it may seem like we've come full circle, back to where we started, no wiser than before. After all, if the Instant Motivation technique is based on subtraction, and that's what our entire brain and body are based on, then why don't people **use** it?

And the first response to this that comes up in every self-help guru's

head – even mine – is to think, “I’ve got to **convince** people to do this.”

But think about this for a second. If I try to talk you (or myself) into **doing** something, what am I actually *doing*?

Am I using subtraction, or **action**?

Because, by the *very process of telling you* that you *ought* to use this technique, I am **going against your basic nature**.

I am asking you to perform an action, *without* doing any subtraction.

And our brains flat out **don’t work that way**.

This is why, when we blindly copy the actions of successful people, we don’t always get the same results. Because all we can see from the outside is the action – *not the subtraction that produced it*.

We don’t know what settings that person’s regulators had, nor what perceptions those regulators were receiving. We’re just taking the energy equation,  $D-P=E$ , and looking *only* at the **output**.

And when somebody tells you what **actions** they took in order to succeed, it’s like they’re telling you that the ultimate answer is the number 42...

Without telling you what **question** it’s supposed to be the answer to!

And, because our brains have to do subtraction in order to take any kind of action, we have to **back-figure** the equation, to *make up our own question*. And more likely than not, it’ll be the **wrong question**.

For example, let’s say I tell you that you need to use the motivation technique, because it’ll get you results. And let’s say you actually get yourself to perform that action.

Well, in order to do it, your brain will have to perform some subtraction. And when you’re first learning the technique, your regulators are probably set to things like “learn something”, with a subgoal of “follow instructions”. So the first time, you literally do it **because I told you to**.

However, in order to do it *again*, you have to set up your regulators to perform a **new** subtraction that will produce the *same* action.

And this is where things start to go **wrong**. At least for some people!

Because, if you happen to already *be* a successful person, you probably

already have a regulator circuit that can be set to something like, “practice a useful skill”, that then triggers “remember and carry out instructions”. And this will do just fine as a stopgap until you get new regulators grown in to automatically perform the steps.

However, if you’re someone who really **needs** a technique like this, then you might not *have* such a regulator! And in that case, you’d have to find some other regulator to do it with.

Like, say, your “try hard and struggle” regulator.

Or your “are you sure you’re doing it right” regulator.

Or your “don’t get your hopes up” regulator!

(Of course, I’m being a little **imprecise** here. It would be more technically correct to say something like, “your ‘hopes’ regulator, which is set to a low position in order to keep your ‘disappointment’ regulator from registering too high a setting.”)

But you don’t even need such general regulators to **stop** you from using the technique. All that really has to happen, is that you have a regulator that *objects* to you being motivated in that situation, because it’ll throw off something else you’re regulating.

For example, if you’re afraid you’ll never finish writing your thesis, and that it’ll be trash anyway, then your “rejection” or “frustration” regulators will try to set your “work” regulator to zero whenever you think about the thesis.

But now here’s the kicker. Just like your friend’s arm popping back up in proportion to how hard you pushed it down...

Your high-level regulators can kick back, too.

In fact, they can kick **forward**, to stop you before you even start!

Because, unlike your lowest-level regulators (that just manage a simple positioning of the arm), your high-level regulators are **predictive**.

That is, they don’t just respond to things as they are, they respond to how they *expect things to become*.

So, if on some level, you really *don’t* want to work on your thesis, and you also know or have reason to believe that the technique will actually **cause** you to work on your thesis...

Then your brain will learn to lower your motivation to do the *technique*, too!

And that's why, as soon as you know how **well** a technique like this one works, the more you resist *using* it.

Now, most of the techniques I teach to Mind Hackers' Guild members have at least some degree of immunity to this phenomenon, because they're usually directed at cutting the "wires" between regulators, so as to stop considering a particular kind of event as threatening some regulator's desired level, or to set up more effective subgoals for a regulator's output.

Thus, as long as they're targeted at the right thing(s), they only have to be done **once** to get the desired result. The control connection is cut or altered, so the "right" behaviors then become automatic.

But even these techniques are not *entirely* immune from the influence of existing regulators. Sometimes, I have to more or less **force** people to do a technique even **once**, using situational social pressure to override their other regulators long enough to get all the way through to make the desired change, so it can become automatic.

And the trouble is not that the person doesn't know the steps or can't do them, it's that he or she can't do them without a good enough **reason**.

Because within the control system they've got set up, simply *wanting to* isn't a good enough reason!

And in retrospect, this should be pretty obvious, but I completely missed it for a *long* time... largely because I had the **exact same blind spot**.

Think about it: if simply "wanting to" were a good enough reason for you to do something, *you'd already be motivated!*

Sure, maybe you don't want to do the *work* of the thesis or whatever, but obviously you want it **done**, right?

So if you could *really* make yourself do things **just** by wanting to, you should have no problem!

But that's not the case, is it? I know this now, because in the last month or so, I've been struggling to identify my "top-level" **master control circuits**.

And you know what I found they were regulating? Things like:

- Being “good”
- Doing the “right” thing
- “Fairness”

But don’t be fooled by how harmless or even “good” these phrases *sound*.

Because, when I broke them down to what subregulators they were actually **driving**, it turned out that “being good” meant “do things for others while ignoring your own needs and being resentful”!

“Fairness”, meanwhile, meant, “accumulate resentment and injustices in order to be able to justify being selfish later.”

And “doing the right thing” translated to, “don’t do anything unless you can come up with a logical justification for why it’s **right**, so you don’t get in trouble, and no-one can criticize you.”

Ouch!

Now, if you look at that list, nowhere on there is something like, “go after what I really want and make it happen”. Actually **doing** anything – in fact, even *deciding* to do anything! – was *entirely* conditional on being able to justify my decisions as “fair” or “right” or “good”, within some extremely **twisted** definitions of those words!

And in all the years I’ve been studying and teaching mind hacking, it’s only *barely* occurred to me that I never really “do what I want”, so much as I “do what I want, within the scope allowed by my regulators.”

And if you *haven’t* studied mind-hacking, it might not’ve occurred to you at all!

So, the entire time I was working on writing *Thinking Things Done* – both versions – I kept going through a nasty little loop, where I’d keep getting stuck on the same issues, over and over. I’d find some way to mindhack out of them, and then they’d reappear a few weeks later.

Each time, I thought it was because I’d missed something on the previous go-round, but in reality, it was just that my mind was **regenerating** new blocks.

Why?

Because trying to do things based on positive motivation was *against my basic nature*. Or at least, the basic nature of my top-level regulators!

So every time I found a way to increase my positive motivation, or ditch a negative motivation, it was ironically **stressful**. My “fairness” regulator was detecting too low a level of suffering (to be able to *justify* getting what I wanted later), and thus began emitting chronic error signals.

And one of the things I recently learned about from PCT (Perceptual Control Theory, the theory I've been explaining a bit of in this report), is that when a regulator emits chronic error signals, your brain automatically begins **reorganizing** to find a way to deal with it.

This process can take days or weeks, because essentially your brain tries to evolve a new segment of your regulator network, and it does so in a rather blind fashion, connecting and disconnecting existing regulators, and perhaps generating new ones, until the chronic error goes away.

So in this case, I'd go and write a blog post or newsletter about how I'd **finally** conquered the block that was keeping me from working on the book, and then a few weeks later, *I'd be stuck again*.

And it was utterly **humiliating**.

Here I was, a mind hacking instructor who couldn't fix his own mind. Writing a productivity book, and not being very productive about it.

I did make some progress, of course; many of the changes I made didn't conflict with my top-level regulators, and stuck just fine. So, during the time periods I was working, I kept getting more and more productive, and having more fun with it. But on the big picture level, I kept oscillating wildly, between productive and not-productive.

And of course, the more productive I got during the **good** times, the *faster the blocks kicked back!*

Of course, now that I understand PCT, it all makes complete sense. But without an understanding of the way my actions were generating “equal and opposite” reactions, or knowing what to *look* for, I just kept beating my head against each new wall... **same as the old wall**.

Because the factors our brains regulate are mostly **invisible** by nature. We usually only notice them if we are *specifically* paying attention, or when they are so greatly thrown off balance as to require conscious

attention to resolve an issue.

And without knowing it, many of the mind-hacking techniques I learned or developed were actually methods for identifying **conflicts** between regulators, using higher-level regulators to cut connections between lower ones, and so forth.

But I just didn't *think* of them that way, until relatively recently.

Because even though a lot of self-help books talk about comfort zones and success thermostats and stuff like that, not one of the ones I'd read had ever explained *all* of these control system principles.

Law-of-attraction books (and Psycho-cybernetics) talk about desire. Eker's got his "wealth thermostat". Tony Robbins has "standards and values" (high-level control values). Robert Fritz talks about subtraction ("structural tension") and a little bit about perception ("current reality), and hierarchy ("primary, secondary, and fundamental decisions"). So everywhere you look, there are *pieces* of the puzzle, strewn around.

And yet, they all still tell you to take *action* in order to apply them!

But this can't possibly work, so long as you are **conflicted**.

That is, as long as your regulators are trying to apply two different settings to a lower regulator at the same time – like "work" and "don't work".

So even when self-help gurus actually **tell** you to apply the energy equation or "law of subtraction" (Desire minus Perception equals Energy), they're still ignoring some *critical* puzzle pieces.

And I was missing those pieces, too, when I first set out looking for my top-level control systems. In fact, I didn't even know I was looking for control systems or that there was a top level. The first one I discovered was by accident, as I was trying to work through a motivation problem.

Because what I noticed was this: every time I came up with a plan for action, I sensed a moment of hesitation, that felt like some part of me was looking over my choice and **validating** it. I had come up with a plan I was consciously satisfied with, but it was as if I was having to submit the plan for approval from my unconscious before I could go ahead with it.



So I started paying closer and closer attention to what was happening in the back of my mind during that “approval” step, to find out what it was *checking* for.

And when I listened closely, I found it was verifying whether my plans would fit with me being “a good boy”!

Now, once I had identified this, it was only a matter of a few minutes to get rid of it, using a standard Guild mindhacking technique (the Gateway of Desire, to be precise).

And that one simple change then made a **huge** difference to how I interacted with my wife, as well as making me a bit more relaxed generally. I stopped being quite so concerned about certain kinds of things, I became more generous, and quite a few other things.

And it lasted for about a month, before **some** of my old behaviors *regenerated*. (Specifically, the ones that overlapped with the “fairness” regulator, although I didn’t know that yet.)

Now on the whole, I’ve been pretty used to this sort of two-steps-forward, one-step-back approach to change. It’s still frustrating, though, because there are some parts of nearly every change that would stick for the **long run**, but other parts of a change would often only stay a few weeks before “coming back.” – often in some new, mutated variation.

And for a couple of years now, I’ve been devouring material on any sort of other self-help or mindhacking or therapy method that seemed like it might offer a more repeatable way to either predict what things *would* come back, or better still, to identify all the drivers of a given kind of behavior **in advance**, so they could be rooted out all at once, without having to wait for something to come back first.

And after I discovered the “good boy” regulator (though again, I didn’t know yet that it *was* a regulator), I began my search again from a slightly different angle. I wondered whether the key to change was perhaps “going straight to the top” – specifically hunting for those back-of-the-mind unconscious approvals and disapprovals, beyond whatever the superficial, *immediate* problem might be.

Re-reading Tony Robbins and others about “personal standards” and “values” gave me some ideas, and I began trying to use Robbins’s methods to establish new ones. This, too, worked for a week or two,

before grinding back to a halt.

Using his “values”-establishing methods, I successfully created some new regulators and adjusted the settings on some existing ones. However, adding these new regulators simply threw me into more violent conflict with my existing ones!

So the thing that **really** turned it around, was finding out about PCT – Perceptual Control Theory. I just happened to be in the right frame of mind when I saw a reference to it on lessWrong.com, and I took a look at it.

The idea sounded very promising, specifically the parts about regulators controlling other regulators, and the brain automatically reorganizing to correct chronic error signals. It explained perfectly why things were happening the way they were, and especially, what I was doing **wrong**.

From my studies of NLP — not to mention my computer programming background, I had learned that you were always supposed to make the **smallest possible change** that fixed a problem. That is, that one should only modify the *specific* parts of a mental structure that were directly contributing to a problem, in order to minimize any side effects.

So the entire way I performed and taught mindhacking had been based on identifying single, **specific** behavior patterns, and using various ways of “cutting wires” to remove the *immediate* source of conflict that kept someone from doing something.

However, if you understand principle #4 (regulators control other regulators), then it becomes obvious that working at the same level as the problem – that is, working only on the regulators at the top of the chain that’s **directly** producing the action or problem – is ignoring the fact that...

### *Some Other Regulator Probably Set The Whole Thing Up!*

And that regulator may have some issues with you **changing** things.

Now, one principle of PCT that I didn’t mention earlier, is that the higher the regulator level, the *longer* the time scale it typically operates on. When you get really high up, it can be measuring something as an average over days or even weeks, like how much work vs. play you’re getting, or something like that.

And that means that if you work on the direct regulator involved in a problem, you can get a short-term test that shows everything's just fine... even though, in a few days or a couple of weeks, your newfound success is going to start yanking on another regulator's chain... and throwing you into **reorganization**.

Now, it's not always the case that there's a higher-level regulator driving things, but now that I know this, it's a lot easier to make sure that I check for this ahead of time. We actually already **had** various Guild techniques that could be used to do this, I just wasn't using or teaching them in a systematic way.

And we may need to develop some new procedures to correct that, and to get ways of doing it **faster**. But now that the PCT connection has made it clear what sort of things we're *looking* for, I think we'll be able to do a much better job of finding them in the first place, before they become a problem. And, even if a problem comes *back*, we'll know better how to handle it when it does.

Because before, when problems came back, I usually tried to fix them again on the *same* regulator level!

But the PCT model shows why this is a **mistake**: if you have another problem on the same regulator level, it can only mean that reorganization was triggered on behalf of a higher-level regulator, to set up a new "block" at the problem level.

In other words, as Einstein once said, "the significant problems we face **cannot be solved at the same level of thinking** we were at when we created them."

So, since I learned the basics of PCT, I've been taking all my fixes *up* a level – which is how I identified the "fairness" and "right thing" regulators, and decommissioned them. (In some cases, multiple Guild techniques (Forgiveness plus Claiming Your Territory) were required, but identifying the things to be changed was now **much** quicker, because I knew where to *look*.)

And having gotten rid of those conflicts, I've now been able to write this special report in just two days...

A rate of writing that roughly corresponds to one chapter of the old *Thinking Things Done*, **per day**.

A rate of writing productivity that, to the best of my knowledge, I have *never before achieved*.

And in the last week, I've made major progress on a bunch of projects I'd been putting off, due to not being finished with the book. Some of these projects are things that many Guild members have been looking forward to for a while, and I'm really excited about being able to unveil them soon.

And although I cannot predict the future, and I cannot say with absolute certainty that I have taken care of every top-level regulator that's been interfering with me... I can say this:

If this new level of productivity should mysteriously fall off in the next few weeks, I'll know **exactly** what to do about it: the same things I did in the last week.

(Only I'll be better at it, because I've now *practiced*.)

And I'll be right back where I am now: the level of *effortless* results.

Which is why I'm now going to share with you, something I call:

## THE EFFORTLESS RESULTS FORMULA

**W**hat if you could *really* do everything **effortlessly**? Get your robot brain to do whatever you want, on command, just like I promised in the first chapter of the first version of *Thinking Things Done*?

What would you do with your life, if everything was **easy**? If you weren't stressed out or drained by everything you try to take on?

You could, you know, if you didn't have any *conflicts*. Because it's only the conflicts between regulators that drain your energy and make you feel stuck in the first place.

Because if you have regulators that overlap jurisdiction, they can end up fighting over the settings for how you're going to respond, like a couple sharing a house and fighting over the thermostat!

Because the higher one person bumps it **up** to make it warmer, the lower the other person bumps it **down** to compensate.

And pretty soon, the temperature starts fluctuating wildly, or, in the

limit case, both people stand there pressing the up and down buttons at the same time.

So it stays **stuck**.

And your inner conflicts work *exactly* the same way. That's how you end up frozen and frustrated, or wildly fluctuating between being super-motivated and utterly depressed, about the **exact same task**.

So how do we fix this? We expand and reframe the “energy equation” or “law of subtraction”, thereby creating the **Effortless Results Formula**. Specifically:

**(Desire + Awareness) - Conflict = Results (Effortlessly!)**

In order to achieve a goal, you have to desire something. But your regulators can't generate action unless they are also *aware* of that something.

You see, even if you **know** what you desire – and often, you *don't!* – you have to be able to perceive where you are in *relation* to that desire, in order to get your regulators to get it for you. And often, before you can desire a particular quantity of something in the first place, you have to be able to *perceive* it as a quality!

And even if you say, “well, I want to lose 30 pounds”, it's not like you can directly **perceive** how much fat you're burning during the day. You can maybe weigh yourself daily, but is that a perception your brain can actually *use* as a control signal?

So inspirational writers and speakers focus on the first two terms of this equation: creating **desire**, and instilling **awareness** of how your actions *relate* to your desires. This is important, because without this awareness, your brain doesn't see anything to *subtract*, and so can't generate the energy for action!

In short, “inspiration” (i.e., desire plus awareness) helps you to develop new regulators, or to create links between existing ones. For example, if you become aware of how your actions are hurting someone close to you, this *may* create an output link from the regulator that monitors “well-being of your loved ones”, to the regulators that drive your other actions, causing them to be set differently.

However, if those other regulators are also being set by still *other*

regulators at a higher level – perhaps by an “addiction” regulator maintaining a certain level of drugs in your system – then it may not make any difference to your actual behavior!

So to make a real change in your life, it frequently takes more than just inspiration and motivation, or even action. Choosing a particular weight loss plan, for example, is just choosing one action, and it is not guaranteed to bring you your goal.

Because if you have regulators set for certain levels of hunger-avoidance, or social conformity, or any number of other things that might be disrupted by change, then you’re in for some **conflicts**. And in many cases, those conflicts will be directly proportional to your degree of (short-term) success!

For example, if you’ve put on weight because you’re afraid of intimacy, that regulator’s not going to sit still while you make yourself more attractive. It’ll either sabotage the diet, or find some other way for you to make yourself unattractive or avoid relationships!

And it’s not because you have some sort of inner demon or inner child or a malevolent “unconscious mind” or some other crap like that. regulators are not people, nor are they minds. They’re just **circuits**.

However, when certain signals are triggered in the brain – like pain, fear, and frustration – your brain begins a process called “reorganization”.

This process basically tries to grow, remove, or re-connect the wires between your regulators, in order to stop the pain. And that means that, even if you seem to be winning one of your battles at first, the regulator you’re in conflict with is going to keep screaming at your brain, “do something!”... until your brain figures out a way to *give* that regulator some control over the situation.

So if you’ve ever wondered how you can get so devious at talking yourself out of things, making excuses, and “changing your mind” about diets or exercise or anything else you started out with an iron will to achieve, you now know **why**.

And that means the only way to get lasting change, is to get rid of the conflict.

Because without the conflict, your regulators aren’t putting out pain signals requesting a rewire. And they won’t put you into seesawing and

paralysis, either.

And instead of fighting yourself, things will be **easy**.

For example, writing this has been an absolute breeze for me, compared to all the writing I did before I switched off that one regulator's need for me to be "right". So I just walk in, sit down at the keyboard, and write. When I get tired or my mind wanders, I go off and do something else for a bit, then come back, sit down, and pick up more or less where I left off.

Before, I used to put off the break as long as possible, spend a lot of time worrying about whether I'd be able to continue, and then fuss over continuing, spending a bunch of time going back over things to make sure they were "right", and being upset that I couldn't get back into my train of thought.

I'm not being "disciplined", I'm not "making an effort", I'm not forcing myself to do anything. I just think I'd like to finish the writing, and voila... there my fingers go.

If I make a mistake, that's cool, I'll fix it when I edit. Worried I might be repeating myself or that things don't flow? Oh well, I can always delete some of it later, or shuffle it around a bit.

So much more mellow than before . I must say I rather **like** it.

What's that, you say? This sounds a lot like stuff I've said before? And I haven't said yet **how** to resolve conflicts or switch off regulators?

Oh, of course, how silly of me. Let's take care of that next!

## PUTTING THE FORMULA TO WORK

**T**he key to understanding the Effortless Results Formula is that it's not something you **do**. It's something you *are*.

Because, if you are perceiving what you want, and where you are in relation to it, the "law of subtraction" means you are already generating the energy to do something about it. All you have to do, is make sure it's not **blocked**.

Now, if the thing you're trying to do is not some simple task like cleaning your desk, but rather some vague or ill-defined thing like "making more money" or "being more confident", then you need to be able to reduce it to smaller pieces, things you can specifically *perceive*. And you may need role models whose beliefs or viewpoints you can study, in order to find out how *they* perceive things.

In many ways, this is by far the most important part of the process (well, except for getting rid of conflicts, that is!). And unfortunately, it's also the easiest one to get **wrong**.

Since our regulators are the way we get information about the world, we usually don't see our own point of view as a point of view – it just seems like "the way the world is". And until we learn to question that – or are exposed to different points of view! – we're not going to be able to set our regulators to monitor the right things.

And if you're not monitoring the right things, you will expend too much **effort**.

For example, consider an automobile's cruise control. If it can't sense *hills*, then it will accelerate up a hill, and then brake on the way down, wasting gas both ways!

In the same way, we often regulate the wrong quantities when we try to achieve our goals. For example, measuring how hard you're *working*, instead of how well you're doing! Or how well you compare to *others*, instead of how well *you* personally like your results.

And the tricky thing is, we often don't even **know** we're using these less-useful measurements, or else we think they're *good* measurements, even though they're not.

This is one reason why people form support groups and clubs and masterminds, by the way. Getting together with other people who are successfully doing what you want to do is a good way to find out whether the variables you're regulating are actually **useful**!

That kind of interaction was critical for me as a writer/speaker/entrepreneur, as I had all kinds of crazy/wrong ideas about what was important in a business like this. In the same way, Guild members often cite the importance of being able to get "second opinions" on the way they're perceiving things.



Of course, you don't necessarily have to meet with others in person. You can read blogs, and newsletters, join in Guild teleconferences and forums, etc. The key is just that you regularly get exposed to the thought patterns of people who are doing what you want to do.

For example, my wife has been watching HGTV a lot lately, where they have all the design and landscaping shows... and as a result, we've started learning to perceive certain things about design and color and whatnot, that have been making a difference in how we keep the place.

So, you want to build Desire and Awareness by tuning in to the right qualities to perceive. Then, you need to eliminate any conflicts that come up.

Now, a lot of times, you can do this by simple negotiation with yourself. Just sit and write down all your objections or issues about something, and then go through them one at a time, to figure out how you can either work around the problem, or find another way to get your other needs met.

Of course, you have to enter this process in good faith; if you judge yourself for say, wanting lots of chocolate, and decide that you shouldn't want it, that's not going to work.

But it might work, to be *willing* to give up chocolate for a while, in order to lose weight. The key is that you need to actually imagine what it would be like to give it up, and then find out whether you can be "okay" with that.

Now, sadly, about 97% of the people who read this are going to take that last paragraph and go, "yeah, sure, I'm going to give up [whatever]", but without actually *considering* what it would be **like** to do so.

And those people are going to **fail**.

And I kind of debated whether or not I should even mention this method here, because frankly, I don't trust most people's regulators any further than I can reprogram them (so to speak).

See, I know from bitter experience that my own regulators for things like "being smart" used to make me **rationalize** this sort of thing, skipping the actual mental work involved in a technique, because "clearly I'm smart enough not to need to do all that."

And so I'd assume that just "thinking" about it was enough, without

really going through the **mental experience** needed to make it work.

So, most of the people who read this, are going to take that paragraph above where I explained the deep, dark, master-level mindhacking secret, and find a way to ignore it.

They're going to say things like, "Is that all?" "Oh, I already knew *that*." And they're not going to really sit down and consider all the things that might conflict with what they say they want.

If they want to be wealthy, for example, they're almost certainly not going to sit down and consider whether they'll lose their friends by doing so, or end up having strained family relations. They're not considering whether they're going to feel guilty for making a lot of money when other people in the world don't have any, or for doing it easily when other people are working so hard.

They're not going to consider whether being wealthy or fit or confident will make them like the people they hate, or whether maybe they're really only afraid of being broke!

But all of them will read everything I've just written, and assume it doesn't apply to them, or that they've already taken all that into account.

Only they haven't.

Because if they had, they would have **already changed**.

Meanwhile, the other 3% are the naturally successful people, at least some of whom have probably **already** changed something about their life *while they were reading this*, God bless 'em.

One of those guys, my good friend Josh Kaufman, called in to my last Guild workshop on the "Jedi Mind Trick" (a more advanced form of the instant motivation trick), and he actually cleaned his entire apartment, while on the call, starting before I'd even finished giving the full set of instructions!

But if you're more like me than like Josh, I feel for you. Change can happen in an instant, and it can make things easy. But actually **taking** that moment of contemplation, so you can get to that instant of change, is not always easy. And there is no shortcut for actually paying attention to what you want.... or don't want.

Sometimes, of course, there are shortcuts for *getting* what you want,

especially if the only thing stopping you is a badly-configured regulator!

And that's where the Mind Hackers' Guild comes in. We can't make your decisions for you, or do the work of understanding what it is you want. But we can help you find out if the things you're paying attention to are actually getting you what you want, or whether the things you're afraid of are actually worth being afraid of. And we can help you to turn off or disconnect the things that are no longer serving you, in a systematic way.

But to do that, you have to **participate**.

For example, in our upcoming 3-part "Personal Regime Change" workshop series, where we'll be diving deep into PCT, and discovering just how much *simpler* it is to do mindhacking from this perspective.

Already, the Guild forum is abuzz with chatter from the members who – although they haven't even read this report yet – have been digging up info on PCT for themselves and getting very excited about the insights, and the implications for increasing our personal mastery.

Now, up until this very moment, I haven't been teaching the Effortless Results Formula or all this "regulator" stuff as part of the Guild curriculum. It's all brand new.

See, before I heard about PCT (Perceptual Control Theory) I knew a lot of the same things I've written about here, but I didn't have them all put together in such a nice neat way, or have a systematic approach to identifying and modifying high-level regulators.

So even though I was already been teaching a vast array of specific techniques for building perceptions, shaping desires, and detecting and eliminating conflicts, I was not teaching them as part of a framework, system, or formula. Instead, I was – like most any other self-help guru – just teaching techniques and urging people to apply them.

And some people did... and some people didn't.

Now, I realize that was a **mistake**. I can see why techniques, by themselves, are *never* going to change anybody. Pushing someone to take action – even if it's the best action in the world and has helped thousands of other people – is simply not going to change them.

What I see now is that I can only create **inspiration** – desire and awareness – and provide the tools to assist people in removing whatever

conflicts they have...

That they're willing to **face**.

Because not everybody is willing to do that. Not everyone is willing to face their "demons", even if it means their problems would go away. Some would rather keep their problems, and their identity as a victim.

And sadly, there is nothing I can do about that.

But there is something **you** can do.

You can take the formulas and the "secret" I've revealed to you, and you can use them to reconsider your life.

You can look at what you're currently doing, and compare it to what's important to you – creating links between the regulators for your ultimate values and standards as a person, and the regulators that are driving your actual day-to-day existence.

And you can ask yourself, "Is this *really* how I want to live my life?" Is this what it's all about?

Or is there something **more**?

Something **better**.

Someone I want to *be*.

Some way I want to live.

Something I want to create, to contribute, to believe in.

Now, some self-help authors would stop right here, on the high note, to leave you feeling inspired.

But now, I'm going to ask you something else.

Are you *willing* to change?

Are you willing for it to be **uncomfortable**?

Now I'm not talking about your "comfort zone", or saying you have to get "out of it". Because change isn't about getting **out** of your comfort zone – hell, your regulators will push you right back *in*!

No, change is about *expanding* your comfort zone, by being **okay** with the downsides of your choices.

Not toughing it out, not using willpower. Not gritting your teeth and being a martyr.

Just being willing to **experience**.

Because if you're not willing to *be here now* – to see what you don't necessarily want to look at, about yourself and about the world...

Then even the mightiest techniques in the Guild's arsenal can't help you.

So it's really up to you.

Do you keep on living the life you have, or do you make something else with it?

Desire what you want. Be aware of it. And then decide what you're truly **willing** to give up.

Not grudgingly give up. Not martyr yourself on the altar of toughness for.

But willingly, lovingly, gently **let go of**, in order to get what you want *most*.

It's not always easy... but it *is* simple.

Yours in mastery,



P.J. Eby, Founder  
The Mind Hackers' Guild

P.S. This report is only the tip of the iceberg on how control theory interfaces with mind hacking. I'm just about to kick off a three-month workshop series for Guild members, called **Personal Regime Change**. In the process, we'll be doing all sorts of cool things, like identifying as many of our "top-level" regulators as possible, and learning how to tweak their settings. We'll be practicing IDOC - a simple procedure for

walking your way through regulator conflicts, and making sure you get them all taken care of, without getting stuck dead or flailing wildly back and forth.

And there'll be all sorts of other handy stuff like how to identify what conflicts or regulators you should be tackling first, along with other standard Guild stuff like some better time management techniques that are (eventually) coming out in *Thinking Things Done*. I'll also be sharing a few "war stories" about the battles I fought with my own regulators over the progress of the book, and the victories that led me to decide to do the Personal Regime Change series.

Now, in order to attend the workshops, get the newsletters and CDs, and be able to shoot the breeze with other members in our private forum, you need to be an Associate or Insider member of the Guild.

Currently, signups for Insider membership are closed, but **next week only** I will be temporarily re-opening applications for Associate membership. So if you're not currently a member, keep an eye out for for my email about this next week!