

3 Foundational Lessons to Ease Everyday Living

An Introduction to Building Personal Power®

Welcome. Thank you for your interest in learning how to live easier! Also, take a moment to thank yourself and acknowledge your inner strength; it takes courage to say, “I want to learn.” Many people succumb to fear of new things but you are showing what a little curiosity can accomplish. Today we are going to learn about Foundational Lessons that assist with easing everyday living and the beginnings of building Personal Power for Success. These are lessons that I have learned the hard way: daily practice - weeks without any practice- struggle after struggle. Heed the advice: it works! You will find benefit in everyday living with these Lessons as you begin your adventure.

First, let’s take a look at what is the Personal Power? It is moral and ethical power - a focus of mind - that resides deep within the seemingly intangible world of the psyche, inside the essence of our being; it is that source of innate energy that drives our actions. Our daily life is full of all sorts of events – waking in the morning, going to school or work, the daily grind of life, until the head hits the pillow (or maybe long after that, drifting through thoughts until sleep occurs). The perceptions we have, the truths we define in each situation, are colored by our present beliefs and past experiences. Our actions and reactions – thoughts and emotions – are all based on our filtered beliefs and experiences. When we exercise our willpower, Personal Power, to think and mobilize our bodies, we do so through these filters. The ease of our daily lives and the successes we experience are directly related to our perceptions of the world and ourselves.

How aware are you?

FAULTY PERCEPTIONS

We are born into this world raw, unfiltered and unrefined. From this raw state, our families and friends, society – our spheres of influence – over the course of years, shape and influence - a process known as socialization - which has refined and filtered us, took and helped us to learn about the world - how to function, how to survive. Many good lessons come like: how to tie our shoes, dress properly, care for ourselves. Unfortunately, not everything we learned has been to our benefit. Maybe we had substance-dependent parents or siblings, abusive interpersonal relationships, or experienced deep hardships such as insufficient resources (money, housing etc) or physical disabilities. We may look back on these events or people in our lives and make the false assumption that this is normal, that it is okay to behave in certain manners which cause us and others pain. We learn life is hard, you can’t always get what you want and you will experience some sort of suffering.

NOBLE ICONS

If we step back and take a moment to look at iconic figures or role models throughout history we begin to recognize a subtle theme that unites their stories of success, stories which hold them high within our minds and, with personal aspirations, our desire to emulate them; **They all have dedicated themselves (knowingly or not) to a higher standard of life, or righteous cause that they found worth their efforts which culminated into their success.** Plato, Aristotle - the pursuit of truth; Mother Theresa - the pursuit of Divine Compassion; Martin Luther King, Jr. - the pursuit of racial/ social equality; Steve Jobs, Elon Musk, Sir Richard Branson - the pursuit of technology and societal advancement. In our personal lives, the family and friends we admire, upon closer look, have these hidden pursuits as well, passions or convictions that give them a foundation of strength and tangible substance to which our admiration towards them longs to hold.

COMPARISONS AND EXPECTATIONS

What happens if we look at our own lives - making comparison - perhaps we are met with feelings of inadequacy, weakness, or failure - struggle and despair? Sitting back, looking, we try to understand their power and our weakness, their success and our failure. We struggle against destructive tendencies, negative thinking, and feelings of stagnation, stunted growth or indecision. We hold ideas of success and use other people we deem successful as the yardstick to measure our lack of achievement. By comparing ourselves to others, we are selling ourselves short by failing to take responsibility for the uniqueness of our life. They have their own struggles and we have our own. So drop the comparisons, drop the expectations to be like someone else. Rather, let us recognize that struggle is the catalyst for change. We need to focus on our unique life and our unique struggles.

The invisible tool(s) that our role models use are their own shortcomings and failures. They were able to recognize that they were experiencing suffering, they defined that suffering by asking deeper questions of why - why do I suffer when X happens? Some role models have suffered because of limiting physical conditions (Michael J. Fox - Parkinson's or Stephen Hawking - Lou Gehrig's disease) others have suffered through life circumstances (Tony Robbins, Oprah Winfrey - abusive or neglected youth) and many others suffered just from the passion to express/ create (Salvador Dali, Steve Jobs, Nicolas Tesla). Making comparisons and having unreal expectations furthers our daily suffering so we must find an appropriate, lasting solution to ease everyday living and feel fulfilled with the lives we live. There is nothing wrong with having role models - as we can learn how to turn struggle into success.

CONCENTRATE

Now, for us to find success, to begin living our truth, to live vibrantly, we need to define our values, identify our shortcomings and live accordingly. Seems simple enough. However, only with strong focus of mind, determination and right actions do we produce ideal results. For the vast majority of us, help is needed to cultivate the focus of mind and disciplined behavior necessary to see positive changes. The inability to adequately focus and the lack of will power to change is not 100% our fault. Instead, these are skills that need development. Neuroscience has

shown that our brains want to operate efficiently. Evolutionary, that helps, we learn a skill and we can easily refine it and be better hunters, basket makers and foragers. However, this brain efficiency can be detrimental in the modern day. Once we learn a pattern of behavior or thought process, it can be hard to let go of because of constant neurological programming. The neurons in our brain form connections with other areas once we have an experience. These neurons have little tails called dendrites, which grow stronger and longer with increased usage. For example, we learn from a young age to write using either the right or left hand. There is a natural tendency to favor one side, left or right – however that is not to say we cannot learn to use the opposite hand. IF you were to try now, you will immediately see how hard it is. BUT – if you were to continue to practice, results of improvement will be inevitable. So, in behavioral psychology we learn that behavior is learned and can be changed, our responses and reactions changed, but with practice. The majority of the time we, ourselves, can be the solution we are actually looking for. We just need more practice.

“We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. This is the divine mystery supreme. A wonderful thing it is and the source of our happiness. We need not wait to see what others do.” – Mahatma Gandhi

RESET

In order to change our brains, our emotional and thought patterns, we need to be aware of what is going on in the first place. I recall a story told to me by Bryan Kest during a workshop for Power Yoga. He talked about a bad habit he had of picking his nose, a habit that happened so frequently it became unconscious. Apparently he would pick his nose at inappropriate times and completely disgust those around him. Without a clue, and to his amazement, people would immediately become disinterested in him and the conversation. To help curb the booger mining, he decided to dip his fingers into hot sauce, which would cause him to be immediately aware of when he started to pick his nose. Needless to say it created opportunities for him to become aware – a subconscious act that now became conscious.

The “hot sauce” I recommend that we use is a mindfulness-based practice called “Breath Awareness” meditation. We use the breath as an anchor to focus the mind, which then allows us to cultivate **introspection**. This is the method of going in and observing - this method, however, will have no success without the help of **dispassionate non-attachment** (and the honest effort of daily practice) – were we observe what is happening at any given moment/situation and ask:

“What is really happening; How do I feel; Do I have filters/ biases/expectations?”

Introspection and **Dispassionate Non-attachment** benefits, which show their effects over time, for example are: increased self-awareness, increased empathy, clearer thoughts, and less reactive

responses. With these benefits, we are slowly uncovering our faulty perceptions and learning more about our shortcomings (in regards to our values).

WE ALL NEED HELP

I needed help. Sometimes I still need help. I struggled with many years of social pressures liked partying and substance abuse in college, lack of direction, and misconceptions about relationships. It was only when I started practicing introspection and dispassionate non-attachment was I able to begin noticing my patterns, my habitual suffering (my shortcomings), my misperceptions. The tools and techniques in the 10 Week Personal Power Series are comprised of the knowledge I gained when learning how to help myself - and still use today. There is a latent tendency to revert back to habitual patterns when we have not totally offset them properly. If I can find more vibrancy in my life, if I can learn to quiet my mind, then let me share that with others. So the fruits of my efforts have resulted in this Series. The effectiveness is in daily practice, group support, and potency of the concepts.

To review, 3 Lessons to Ease Everyday Living are:

- 1) Introspection – look inside, try to resolve faulty perceptions
- 2) Dispassionate Non-attachment – looking inside as a friend, non-judgmental, forgiving
- 3) Living your Values – defining and living by universal values makes life more vibrant

Personal Power Series – Format and Guidelines

The only way to make sure we work effectively these 10 weeks is to be 100% committed to introspection - cultivating a higher state of internal awareness. It is only when we become aware of something that we can begin to affect its change. *“Where attention flows, energy goes.”*

Over the next 10 weeks, our format will generally encompass emailed discussion of week’s theme (review of prior week) and your daily practice. I am accessible via email for questions. (For groups, online access to a special Facebook group for communication and support will be available).

It is your responsibility to maintain daily practice with the minimum requirement being: 15 minute Meditation/ Contemplation + workbook/journal. Those overachievers (all of you!) will incorporate precise daily focus of the week’s theme, striving to have the majority of the day dedicated to its observation and practice. For example: Week One: Harmlessness - utilizing non-violent communication within our self-dialogue and with others.

Ideally, you will commit each week to the daily meditation and journaling, as well as striving for a healthy routine for yourself. What is a healthy routine? Each one of us is different in our needs for optimal functioning, so it is up to you to experiment and find out what works best. There are general guidelines that can help with inspired living:

Daily Meditation/ Prayer	Moderate Physical Exercise	Healthy Eating (80/20)*
Moments of Silence	Sufficient Rest	Clean Air/ Environment

**80% Fruits/Veggies 20%Meats/Dairy and H2O consumption etc.*

Tools and Techniques for Practice

Key Technique:

Breath Awareness Meditation – Simply as it sounds, being aware of the natural breath.

How to practice: Sitting comfortably in a chair, sit up tall. Close your eyes and bring awareness to the triangulated area consisting of the bridge of the nose to the corners of the mouth. This is where we attempt to hold our concentration – observing the sensations that arise as we breathe in and out. Over time, your awareness may fade – or grow more sensitive. If your awareness fades, simply breathe in and out more forcefully to create sensations you can feel and follow them; if your awareness increases, you can reduce the size of the triangle to a more consolidated area on the nose.

***Tips and Tricks**

*The mind is and will always be active. If you find yourself repeatedly drawn to thoughts, this is o.k. Simply notice and acknowledge the thought, labeling it as “thinking”, regardless of how ridiculous the thought might be, and come back to the technique.

*You may become sleepy. This is o.k, too. Learning to concentrate is a demanding mental activity. Acknowledge that sensation, close out the meditation, and try again later after you have some rest.

*Above all, do not become discouraged. The practice itself teaches us many things: how to be compassionate and patient with ourselves; how to remove ourselves from the erroneous wanderings and ramblings of the mind; how to notice patterns. All of this cultivates **dispassionate non-attachment**. With patient, persistent practice, you will notice a stronger, calmer mind.

Key Tools

Dispassionate Non-attachment – a manner of observation; is the removed perspective we take when practicing meditation. It requires us to create gentleness and space inside ourselves as we learn to observe the contents of our minds and the sensations of our bodies without prejudice, expectation, or desire – simply observing “as it is” rather than as we would like, or prefer otherwise. This allows us to observe how we create false perceptions and misconceptions.

Introspection – the process of turning our attention inwards towards our inner states, rather than externally in the world. We spend so much time analyzing, processing and reacting to external stimuli that we often remain disconnected from our truer nature. In this process, we “turn within” to a point of focus – the observation of thoughts, sensations – to focus the mind.