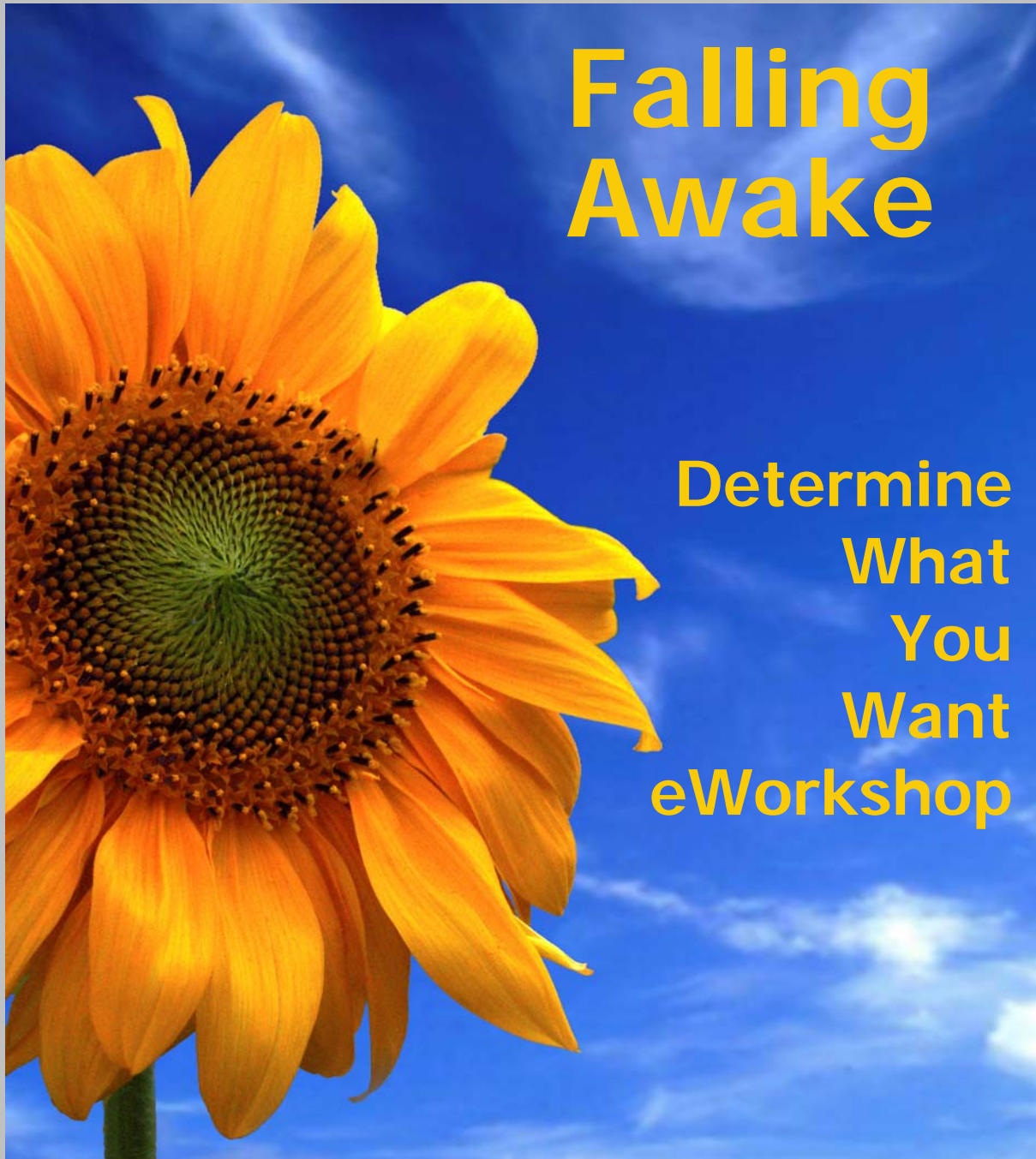


by David B. Ellis and Stan Lankowitz



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THE POWER OF VISION

Imagine a person who walks up to a counter at the airport to buy a plane ticket for his next vacation.

"Just give me a ticket," he says to the reservation agent. "Anywhere will do."

The agent stares back at him incredulously.

"I'm sorry, sir," he replies, "I'll need some more details. Just minor things—such as the name of your destination city and your arrival and departure dates."

"Oh, I'm not fussy," says the would-be vacationer. "I just want to get away. You just choose for me."

Compare this to another traveler who walks up to the counter and says, "I'd like a ticket to Ixtapa, Mexico, departing on Saturday, March 23 and returning Sunday, April 15. I'd like a window seat, coach class, with vegetarian meals." Then ask yourself which traveler is more likely to end up at a place he would enjoy.

Knowing where we want to go increases the probability that we will arrive at our destination. This is especially useful in achieving our goals to experience happiness, health, love, and wealth. Once our goals are defined precisely, our brains reorient our thinking and behavior to align with those goals. Once we know where we want to go, we're well on the way.

Ask two people what they want in life. One says, "I just hope to be happy, somehow." Another says, "I want to become financially independent in 10 years so that I can devote my time to writing a novel and working with homeless people." It's not hard to guess who is more likely to realize her goals.

You can begin now to bring your dreams into sharp focus. You can take actions that define your overall direction in life. Completing the exercises and Discovery/Intention Statement that follow will get you started.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

CONSIDER THE ROLE OF GOALS

After considering the role that written goals have played in your life, write a Discovery Statement. Complete the sentences below:

Regarding my own history of putting goals in writing, I've discovered that I . . .

Regarding the practical value of putting goals in writing, I believe that . . .



E X E R C I S E

Write your life purpose

The American Heritage Dictionary defines the word purpose as . . .

1. The object toward which one strives or for which something exists; an aim or goal . . .
2. A result or an effect that is intended or desired; an intention . . .
3. Determination; resolution.

(From The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, Mass.)

Having a succinct statement of your overall purpose in life can be an immense aid in determining what you want. An effective purpose statement tells you when goals or behaviors are off track. With your purpose firmly in mind, you can make moment-to-moment choices with real integrity.

Right now, spend five minutes drafting a one sentence statement of the purpose of your life. As you do, keep the above definition of the word purpose in mind. If you like, prompt yourself with questions based on the above definition: "What am I striving for?" "What is the aim or goal of my life?" "What is the main result I want in my life?" "What am I determined or resolved to achieve with my life?"

You can write several different versions of your life purpose during these five minutes. After the time is up, spend another 10 to 15 minutes revising your purpose statement. You might choose to combine several versions of your purpose statements.

Repeat this exercise several times. To gain more insight and creative juice, do this exercise with a group and give people the option of sharing their statements of purpose with the group.

Following are some sample purpose statements:

My purpose is to live, learn, love, and laugh.

My purpose is to have a wonderful life and to dramatically contribute to the quality of life on earth.

I intend to become financially independent and raise happy, healthy children.

I will live in harmony with all creation.

My purpose is to be a healing presence in the world.

My purpose is to promote the well-being of my family.

In my life, I seek to release suffering and serve others.

My life purpose is to become an accomplished, famous pianist.

The purpose of my life is to serve.

The purpose of my life is to be loved and loving.

I aim to promote evolutionary change and be a catalyst for growth.

My purpose is to have a great time and laugh a lot.



E X E R C I S E

Write your eulogy

Imagine that you get to attend your own funeral. (In our imaginations, we can do anything; just play with the idea.) Now write down what you'd like people to say about you. Describe in detail what you would like to have had your life stand for. Describe what you did that other people value even after you died. Describe who you were and what you valued most in life.

Write your eulogy below:

Now describe what you learned from this writing. Consider what new light this exercise sheds on your values. What did you learn about yourself and the things you consider important? Put your answer in writing.

I discovered that I . . .

Finally, decide what changes in your present life are called for as a result of your discoveries. Describe what you will do to bring your daily activities more in line with your "eulogy." Set any long-range or short-term goals that seem appropriate.

I intend to . . .



EXERCISE

Create your lifeline

One powerful way to determine what you want is to consider what you'd like to see happen during your entire lifetime. You can even look beyond your lifetime if you choose. Creating a lifeline offers one way to do this.

To get the most out of this exercise, be willing to let it move you. Among the thousands of people who've done this exercise, many have reported it to be a life-changing event. Some have even wept. (Know, too, that the lifeline exercise can be effective even if it does not raise this level of emotion in you.)

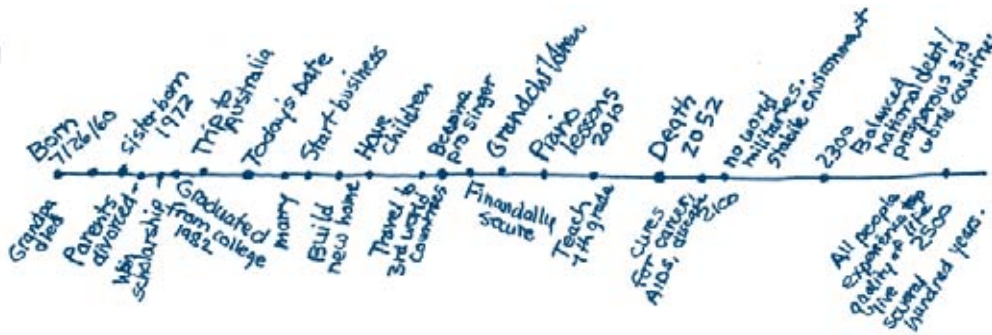
1. Begin by taking a blank sheet of paper and orienting it horizontally. For ease in writing, you might want to use a larger-than-notebook-size sheet, such as an 11x17.
2. Draw a horizontal line across the middle of your paper. This is your lifeline. It represents the approximate number of years you'll be alive.
3. On the far left end of the line, draw a dot and label it with your date of birth.
4. Estimate how long you might live. Then place a dot somewhere near the far right end of the line and label it with your projected date of death. As you project the length of your life, take

into account the relative factors, such as your health habits (exercise, nutrition, seat belt use, and so on). Also consider the average life span of your family members.

Note: Do not place your date of death at the extreme right-hand edge of the line. Leave some space on the line for goals that exceed your life span. Give yourself a few minutes to complete this step. Allow a few moments for the reality of your death to sink in.

1. Next, place a dot on your lifeline that represents today's date. Label it.
2. At appropriate points to the left of today's date, plot some significant events in your life. Examples include graduation from school, marriage, career changes, birth of children, deaths of relatives, and so on. Take at least 10 minutes for this part of the exercise.
3. Now set goals for the future. Do this by adding dots to the right of today's date. These points on your lifeline represent what you'd like to be, do, or have in the future. Take at least 10 minutes for this part of the exercise.

During this step you might find yourself drawing a blank. Consider this to be a temporary "planner's block." It's a signal that your creative juices are just about to flow, that great ideas are getting ready to explode to the surface. For most of us, reflecting on the meaning and scope of our lives is a new experience. Allow some time to let the process work.



8. Finish your session by considering what you want to have happen after you die. You might include goals for your family, friends, workplace, city, community, state, country, and world. Be willing to set goals that extend far into the future—50 years, 100 years, and beyond.

One of the advantages of this exercise is that it allows you to set goals in the context of your entire life. You get to consider the whole span of your individual life and even beyond. You might also find that remembering significant events in your past prompts you to make certain choices for the future.

For instance, you might choose to renew an old relationship or finish an uncompleted project.

You can repeat this exercise many times, at intervals ranging from once a month to once a decade. Each time you create a lifeline, you can gain new insights into the past and create a new vision for your future. Look at your lifeline as a living document—one that changes as you learn and grow.

As you do this exercise, you can allow the artist within you to emerge. Add colors to your lifeline. Draw pictures that depict significant events. Also color-code the events on your line. For example, you might choose different colors for different categories of goals.

DISCOVERY / INTENTION STATEMENT

REFLECT ON YOUR LIFELINE

After you've completed your lifeline, think about it for a few more minutes. Consider what you've learned from this exercise and what your lifeline reveals about you. Complete the following sentences:

While doing my lifeline, I was surprised to discover that I . . .

Doing my lifeline taught me that the things I most value in life include . . .

Of the goals I've selected for the future, the three most important are . . .



E X E R C I S E

Add details to your lifeline

After listing your three most important goals in the previous Discovery Statement, plan how to achieve them. Following is one way to do so. Draw a separate lifeline for each goal. On the far left end of each line, put today's date. On the far right end, write your goal and assign it a date. Between these two points, note the sub-goals you might set. For example, if you want to hire a coach by a certain date, be in a new career before the New Year, make more money, be financially independent and so on.

EXPERIENCE THE FREEDOM OF PLANNING

Planning allows us to live with more freedom, and if we want to start enjoying new results in our lives, planning helps produce them. If we want to start enjoying more happiness, health, wealth, and love, making concrete plans moves us in that direction.

Planning is about being precise when it comes to the overall thrust of our years on this planet. Talk to some people about this and they'll recoil at the very thought. "I want to be free and spontaneous," they object. "Planning is too restrictive. The very thought of it makes me uptight."

Consider the possibility that planning and spontaneity go together. With a plan, you know what needs doing today, this week, this month, and this year. You know the contours of your schedule—the times when you can relax and play and the times when you're committed to being on task.

Planning can help us find the surest path and the shortest route to our dreams. With the time we save as a result, we can actually gain breathing space and the freedom of spontaneity.

Planning allows us to be proactive

A plan is a scheme for doing something. It is a draft for achieving some result, a map for reaching some destination, an outline for taking some intended course of action, or a design for creating something new.

Many people have desires and many never satisfy them. When goals remain general and vague, they often remain mere wishes. When wishes are translated into plans, they turn into clear intentions to act. Translating our goals into specific steps helps us shift our thinking from “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if . . . ” to “Here’s what I want and this is what I intend to do about it.”

Many of us are so busy with crises and other urgent matters that we spend little time planning. The furnace isn’t working, the kids need a ride to the game, the report is due on Monday, we’re out of milk, the insurance payment is due this month—the list goes on and on.

In the midst of our hectic lives, we might plan for short-range goals—what to serve for dinner or where to go on vacation. Yet we may seldom get around to the big picture of our lives. We miss out on finding a quiet, relaxing place and thoughtfully inquiring into what we want, who we are, and where we’re headed for the rest of our lives. Without that inquiry, life can seem shallow and aimless.

When we react only to immediate demands and plan only for short-range goals, we can end up drifting. We are attracted to this, repelled by that, pushed here, pulled there. While we bounce from project to project in random fashion, we can fail to make significant progress in any one direction.

Planning presents a powerful alternative. When we plan, we are not simply reacting to whatever life throws at us. Planning makes us proactive. We create a path, channel our energies, and tap slumbering potentials. Rather than merely reacting to circumstances, we are preparing to take advantage of them and use them in ways that further our goals.

Planning makes opportunities clear

Life offers countless opportunities and resources for achieving our aims. When our goals are explicit and clearly defined, we can hone in on the relevant stimuli.

Say that you read a newspaper article about the increasing number of two-income families. If you’re without a comprehensive plan for your life, you might conclude the idea has little meaning or use.

This can be different if you read the article with a plan in mind. Perhaps you’re dissatisfied with your current job and have been thinking about starting a new business. When you read the article, you might wonder if there is a need for more daycare facilities in the community. You could explore the possibility of starting a new daycare center. You might even expand this idea and wonder if there is a market for a nationally franchised daycare business.

As you continue to think about a daycare business, you might notice a group of retired people sitting on lawn chairs in front of their home. Some of them might adore children and make wonderful daycare employees.

With a plan, circumstances that would otherwise appear meaningless can become opportunities to improve the quality of our lives.

Planning renews us

Sometimes it seems that there is not enough time to plan. It might even seem irresponsible to take time for planning.

When working hard to handle pressing issues, we often feel as if we're on task and accomplishing something. Tangible results are being produced, and we experience a sense of satisfaction. Planning can seem intangible, failing to offer the same sense of accomplishment.

This line of reasoning is flawed. It's much like saying that we are too busy chopping wood to sharpen the axe.

Once we have planned, we can dive into our work knowing that we are making the most effective use of our time. When we have a plan, it can actually take less time and energy to reach a goal. Charging thoughtlessly into activity with the vague hope that we'll get where we want to go can be highly inefficient.

Planning allows excitement

Some people see planning as a dreaded, dry activity that stifles creativity, eliminates spontaneity, and destroys excitement. They envision tedious charts, boring meetings, and constraining schedules.

There is an alternative. Planning can be seen as a way to help ensure happiness and enhance excitement. Planning is a creative adventure during which we design our lives. We can mentally rehearse the future, avoid costly errors, and increase the odds that our visions will become reality.

Planning stamps out resignation

It's easy to fall into the trap of resignation. We are told that many areas of life are complicated and that it's best to let the experts handle them. We're often told that it's smart to let others make decisions for us. We trust our cars to mechanics, our bodies to physicians, our children to educators, and our spiritual lives to

members of the clergy. These choices often make sense. The problem begins when we become resigned and then delegate blindly. Many people allow daily choices about everything from foods to furniture to be determined by advertising.

Our resignation is reinforced when we witness events that seem beyond our control. Faced with global catastrophes, inefficient bureaucracies, and unresponsive governments, we can discount our ability to make much of a difference. We give up. We resign. This mentality easily seeps into our personal lives: "Well, there's not much I can do about this job (or this relationship or this problem). I'll just make the best of a bad deal."

Many people fail to reach goals for the simple reason that they have no goals. And even when they do have goals, they might not have concrete plans to reach them. Resignation and a "why bother" attitude are a natural result.

There are probably several antidotes to resignation. One of them is planning. It is difficult to plan and be resigned at the same time. Planning invites exploration of purpose and inquiry into possibilities. It helps us generate energy that can be used to create new ideas.

Where there is a plan, there are possibilities.
Where there are possibilities, there is hope.
Where there is hope, there is energy and enthusiasm.
Where there is energy and enthusiasm, there can be action.

Planning is already a part of our lives.

We already know how to plan. We do it all the time. Consider how we take a vacation, buy a car, clean a house, or shop for groceries. Each of these activities involves forethought. They call for some preparation to take actions in a certain sequence. Many of our activities, from getting dressed to making a business investment, require some level of planning. We make hundreds of plans every day. By refining and improving the planning skills we already have, we can increase our chances of reaching significant goals.

Warning: Planning can be overdone

Like most of the other strategies in this eWorkshop, planning can be used inappropriately. Sometimes it's fine to be totally spontaneous and not plan a thing. At times it is appropriate to say, "OK. Enough planning. It's time to move into action. Let's go." Balance is the key.

In general, most of us spend too little time planning. We have a long way to go before needing to worry about planning that is getting out of control.



The secret of success is constancy of purpose.

—BENJAMIN DISRAELI

IF YOU WANT TO REHEARSE

Mentally rehearsing with affirmations and visualizations can help us align our behaviors with the outcomes we desire. This process can be compared to how an invisible magnetic force aligns iron filings into a precise pattern.

Suppose that we want to organize randomly scattered iron filings on a piece of paper into an oval-like pattern. We could get a magnifying glass and a pair of fine tweezers and manually position the filings, one at a time, in the desired pattern. It makes more sense to put a magnet under the paper. The iron filings will respond to the magnetic field and align naturally into the desired pattern. Similarly, if we want to make a change in our life, rehearsing mentally is like creating a force field that helps us align our behaviors with the change we want to make.

Assume that a woman becomes interested in playing tennis and chooses to make this activity a regular part of her life. One of the most effective strategies she can use to make this change is to mentally rehearse playing tennis. She can picture what she will look like out on the court in her new tennis outfit. She might smile as she remembers the smell of opening new tennis balls. She can imagine the feel of the racquet in her hand and the warm breeze in her hair. She might repeat a daily affirmation that she is alert and responds quickly to her opponent's swing. She can remember the sound of the racquet hitting the ball as she serves powerfully and accurately. She can rehearse returning the ball with a strong, graceful backhand. And, she can imagine taking a shower and enjoying the wonderful feeling of having played well and exercised hard.

Another example: A bank employee is no longer satisfied with being a run-of-the-mill bank teller. He decides to transform himself and set a matchless standard for customer service. He affirms his new intention by repeating to himself, "I am now one of the most courteous, efficient, and productive bank tellers in the entire world." In his mind's eye, he pictures customers walking away from his window with broad smiles and high satisfaction. At any given moment, he can ask, "What would a world-class bank teller do at this moment?" When he asks this question, he usually thinks of an answer almost immediately.

This person allows his affirmations and visualizations to drive him so that he generally knows what to do next. At both conscious and unconscious levels, he is operating in ways that are consistent with being a truly great bank teller. As a result, he gains a promotion and has more money and prestige. He is also far more satisfied and fulfilled in his new career.

The more details we can use in our mental rehearsals, the more our emotions are likely to get into the act and the more effective this strategy will be. Details can be enhanced by using all five of our senses—seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling.

Mentally rehearsing, repeating affirmations, and visualizing success are powerful ways to enhance our progress in making changes and accomplishing anything we choose to do.

The idea behind mental rehearsal is simply to have a rich and complete internal experience of already having what we're after. We can experience any goal in our hearts and minds first. We can visualize the desired result and affirm our abilities to achieve it.



E X E R C I S E

Stage a mental rehearsal

Think of an activity in which you will soon be involved. It could be anything that you would like to do well. Some possibilities include hosting a dinner, giving a speech, going dancing, playing bridge, playing racquetball, interviewing for a job, or taking a test.

Rehearse performing that activity extremely well. Mentally rehearse in great detail. Imagine everything you want to see and hear. Imagine whatever physical feelings you want to experience. There might even be tastes or smells involved. Get an image of those too.

Now, in the space below, write a detailed description of your excellent performance:



E X E R C I S E

Say that you've arrived— for a minute

Imagine that you woke up this morning as the person you always wanted to be. All the personal problems that used to get in your way are now resolved. You have developed new and powerful skills for handling whatever challenges life sends your way. Your life is full, rich, and satisfying.

Now, from that imaginary place, choose how to spend the rest of your day. What will you do? What commitments will you make? What will you focus on? How will you use your time and money today? Where will you go? What people will be present in your life?

Write your answers to these questions in the space below.

Now come back to the present and consider what you've written. Circle any activities that you actually can do today; add them to your to-do list.

Perhaps something still blocks you from doing an activity that you described. In the space below, state that activity along with the obstacles that get in your way.

Finally, list one thing you can do immediately to begin removing these obstacles. Then consider taking that action today.

Keep coming back to your list of obstacles. As you chip away at them, you get closer and closer to becoming the person you want to be.



E X E R C I S E

Do this eWorkshop again and raise the stakes

The message behind every line in this eWorkshop is that each of us can have a wonderful life. What we can do is to look at how to create such a life, moment-by-moment. If we want to create effectively, it helps, if we have a plan . . . a vision . . . a dream. For example, if you asked a building contractor to build your dream house, the contractor would first go to an architect. The architect's job is to take your vision, your dream and turn it into a specific design—a set of blueprints. The process needed to create a house also works for creating a eWorkshop, a car, a computer, or even a life.

The cover of this eWorkshop listed two authors. That was merely a convenience for the publisher—a trick, really. What you bring to this eWorkshop is far more important than what the authors put on the page. You bring something to this eWorkshop that an author can never bring: your visions, your dreams, your choices. What you get out of this eWorkshop ultimately depends on your choices—how well you absorb its message, and what you do in response to that message.

Right now, the people whose names are listed on the cover of this eWorkshop—the “authors”—are asking you to make a commitment. Please be willing to go through this eWorkshop several times and commit to getting a lot out of it each time. Make this a eWorkshop a force that you use to raise the quality of your life, forever.

One of the first exercises in this eWorkshop asked you to write your own testimonials for this eWorkshop—and then to act in ways that would make your testimonial come true. It's time to repeat this strategy. As you write your testimonials for your next reading of Human Being, consider that you create this eWorkshop, and every eWorkshop you read. In a real way, the author of this eWorkshop is you. Some possible testimonials include:

Every hour I use the ideas in this eWorkshop to make the choices to have my life continue to be outstanding.

I read this eWorkshop several years ago and made remarkable changes in my life. I continue to use the strategies.

After I read this eWorkshop, I transformed the quality of my life—dramatically—in just a few days.

After reviewing parts of this eWorkshop, I realized that I totally missed many tremendous ideas. My life continues to get better and better as I go through the whole eWorkshop again and find even more ways to be happier, healthier, more loving, and wealthier.

Now, write your testimonials.

Caution: There are people who don't believe they can create the life of their dreams. They don't believe their lives can change. They don't believe that they can co-create a eWorkshop. This is a typical, reasonable, and sensible thought. Please suspend it.

LIFE CAN WORK.

YOU CAN EXPERIENCE as much happiness, health, love, and wealth as you choose. You can feel happy and fulfilled no matter what your current circumstances.

Each of us can be essentially free from insecurity, depression, fear, worry, jealousy, aggression, turmoil, anxiety, boredom, vanity, hostility, irritation, resentment, anger, disappointment, and frustration.

Within a short time, and with some new skills, you can experience vitality, satisfaction, joy, serenity, health, contribution, fun, confidence, happiness, pleasure, love, peace, effectiveness, and security far beyond your current expectations. These positive experiences are always available and can be developed when you tell the truth about your current experiences and when you practice creating new ones. You are invited to use the techniques in this eWorkshop to create a life filled with happiness, health, love, and wealth.

Need Assistance?

If you wish one-on-one coaching to assist you in applying the suggestions within this eWorkshop for your personal situation, email coaches@coachingcircles.com and let us know how we can support you in living your best life.

MEET THE AUTHORS

David B. Ellis

David B. Ellis is the author of several books, including the world's best-selling college textbook, *Becoming a Master Student*, which has been translated into French and Spanish. It is designed to promote student success inside and outside of the classroom. Ellis is also a nationally-known lecturer and workshop leader. He has facilitated four-day workshops on topics ranging from "Becoming a more effective college instructor," to "Creating individual life plans." These workshops have attracted over 10,000 people.

Dave taught computer programming at the college level. He counseled students and worked as Assistant Dean of Student Services. He also did accounting for an engineering research and development firm and founded a nonprofit foundation, through which he has given away millions of dollars.

One of the reasons Dave wrote this eWorkshop is his love for his family: "When creating my life plan, I discovered a major goal was to communicate to my family (my parents, my four sisters, their spouses and children, my children, and my wife) the ideas that thousands of people report make a huge difference in their lives. I wanted to communicate these in a way that would be easy to understand and implement."

Stan Lankowitz

Stan Lankowitz is a licensed professional counselor in private practice. He taught high school, counseled students in all grade levels, and consulted with hundreds of colleges and universities about promoting student success. He has assisted businesses and other organizations in designing and implementing programs that improve morale and increase effectiveness. His other experiences include being a newspaper paste-up artist, a dishwasher, a cab driver, a waiter, and a horse wrangler at a children's camp in Colorado.

Stan's interest in writing this eWorkshop stems from the purpose of his counseling practice:

"When I left the security of the educational and corporate worlds several years ago, I was both frightened and excited. Following my passions, I intended to improve my skills in assisting others to get what they want in their lives and to become a successful entrepreneur. Writing this eWorkshop has been a wonderful way for me to promote all of my professional goals."

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