

# **A Workbook to Enhance Personal & Professional Effectiveness**



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# About the Author



Alisa Blum began her career as a clinical social worker in 1984. For twelve years she provided individual, family and group psychotherapy, clinical supervision and directed a training program for graduate social work students. In 1996 she started a corporate training and consulting company, creating programs that: enhance employee retention; help employees feel more valued, motivated and productive; and help managers develop strategies to work effectively with a multi-generational workforce. She has developed and facilitated programs such as: *Managing Across Generations, Improving Personal & Professional Effectiveness, Motivational Strategies to Retain Talent and Improve Performance, Giving and Receiving Performance Feedback, Mindfulness at Work, Positive Customer Relations, Identifying & Appreciating the Strengths in Your Team, and Managing Change Effectively.*

Alisa graduated from Towson State University with a Bachelors Degree in Psychology. She graduated from The University of Maryland with a Masters Degree in Social Work. She has served on the adjunct faculty of Augsburg College, Clark College, Portland Community College and Portland State University.

# Introduction

For a number of years now, research from neuroscientists has demonstrated that our brain actually expands when we have positive thoughts and constricts when we have negative thoughts. Success at work and personal satisfaction has been shown time and again, to increase when we give ourselves positive messages about our own contributions, develop affirming relationships with others and integrate self-care into our daily lives. I have developed this workbook as a way to take these essential components critical to individual and organizational success, and create exercises that are easy to implement into our daily lives.

This workbook is divided into six areas: *A Daily Accomplishments Log, Developing a Positive Vision of the Future, Understanding Where Messages About Ourselves Come From, Changing Your Negative Self-Talk, Leveraging Your Strengths, Seeking Out Positive People, Valuing & Others and Self-Care Strategies*. I have also included an excerpt from the book, Smart Is Not Enough.

Although this workbook can be used as an individual self-help guide, it will have the greatest impact when used by a business or organization, in conjunction with a customized program, to accelerate employees' success and develop a healthy organizational culture.

“Even in such technical lines as engineering, about 15% of one’s financial success is due to one’s technical knowledge and about 85% is due to skill in human engineering, to personality and the ability to lead people.”

- Dale Carnegie

# Daily Accomplishments

It's easy to automatically focus on the tasks we haven't had time to accomplish or berate ourselves over the mistakes we make. Often, though during a typical workday, we have a lot more accomplished a lot more than we give ourselves credit for. A major component to developing and maintaining a positive attitude is to track your accomplishments.

Make multiple copies of the following page. As you go through your day, make a list of all of your accomplishments.



# Daily Accomplishments Log

**Date:**

**Accomplishments:**

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# Developing a Positive Vision of the Future

Develop a clear image of where you are working, whom you are working with and what type of work you are doing. Imagine the sights, sounds and smells associated with this vision. In the box below, write or draw your vision of the future.

## Vision of the Future



*"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing; the last of the human freedoms-to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."* Viktor Frankl



# Understanding Where Messages About Yourself Come From

The messages we have internalized from our childhoods have come from a variety of sources such as our families, the media and school. These messages can unconsciously affect how we feel about ourselves. In order to develop a more positive attitude, it is important to become aware of these messages and work on letting go of the negative messages.

Our most powerful messages have come from our **families**. Because our families influence us in our most formative years of development, the messages we receive during childhood can have a major impact on us throughout our lives. For example, if you heard a lot of criticism as a child and internalized these messages, you may be excessively hard on yourself. If you can remember moments when family members expressed pride in your accomplishments, you will start feeling pride in your accomplishments.

We are living in a **media** saturated culture. We have grown up under the influence of T.V. and now are also impacted by social media. Our media sends us powerful messages regarding beauty and success and often plays into our culture's gender and racial stereotypes. For example, a former student of mine hung posters of beautiful models in her bedroom because she thought this would inspire her to become more physically fit. This only sabotaged her efforts, because she was holding herself to an impossible standard. When she let go of her desire to look like a model, and became more self-accepting, she was easily able to meet her goal to become more physically fit.

The messages we received about ourselves in **school** still reverberate as adults. These messages may include whether we are smart enough or too smart; or whether we fit in or not. Teachers that were demeaning may have caused you to doubt your ability to be successful. Inspiring messages from teachers may have made you feel like you can reach for the stars. Focusing on the messages from your inspiring teachers can help give you the motivation to succeed. Feeling accepted or rejected by peers when we were in school can influence how we feel about ourselves as adults. Try to focus on the messages you received from peers that accepted you, rather than the peers that did not accept you.

# Where Do Your Self-Messages Come From?

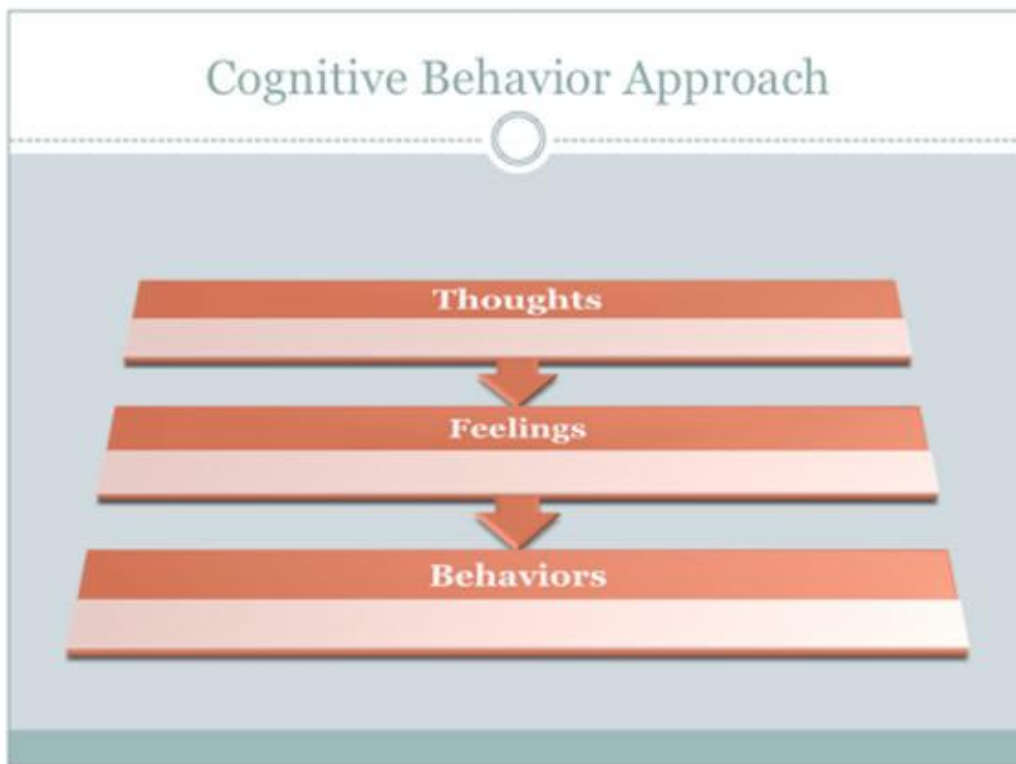
In each column write the positive and negative messages you have received from your family, the media and school.

	<b>Positive Messages</b>	<b>Negative Messages</b>
<b>Family</b>		
<b>Media</b>		
<b>School</b>		

**Beginning today, make a commitment to focus on the positive messages  
and discount the negative messages!**

# Changing Your Negative Self Talk

Dr. David Burns popularized the cognitive behavioral approach in overcoming depression and anxiety in his best selling book, the *Feeling Good Handbook*. A central point to this approach is that our thoughts affect our feelings and our feelings affect our behavior. Therefore, if you want to change your behavior you need to first change your thoughts. The way to accomplish this is by changing your self-talk.



Negative self-talk is frequently automatic and tends to occur outside of our awareness. Additionally, our brain is wired to focus on the negative. As explained by neuropsychologist Rick Hanson in the book *Hardwiring Happiness*, "to survive and pass on our genes, our ancestors needed to be especially aware of dangers, losses, and conflicts. Consequently, the brain evolved a negativity bias that looks for bad news, reacts intensely to it, and quickly stores the experience in the neural structure". He describes the brain as having Velcro for the bad and Teflon for the good. Therefore, we need to consciously work hard to become aware of our negative self-talk and to consistently provide ourselves with more positive messages.

Here's an example of how you can turn negative self-talk into positive self-talk: Imagine you make a mistake at work and you say to yourself, " I always screw things up. I'm such a loser." What if, instead, you said, "Everyone makes mistakes – I'm only human. All I can do now is try to fix the situation and learn from this experience".

To begin the process of changing your negative beliefs, you will need to pay attention to your automatic negative thoughts and substitute them with positive self-talk. Use the worksheet on the following page to assist you. You will find that as you practice turning your negative self-talk into positive self-talk will start to become more automatic the more automatic, and soon your positive self-talk will begin to stick to you like velcro.

"Human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes."

Norman Vincent Peale

# Changing Negative Thoughts to Positive Thoughts Worksheet

Negative Self Talk	Positive Self Talk

# Leveraging Your Strengths

The Gallup Organization has done a tremendous amount of research showing that employees are the most successful when their work encompasses their strengths. By focusing on your strengths you will become clearer about how to focus your work so you are building on your strengths.

What are the specific skills that have given you the most success at work?

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Which of these skills have given you the most satisfaction?

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What feedback have friends, family and former co-workers given you as to where they see your areas of strengths?

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What aspects of your job that would need to change so that you can better focus on your strengths?

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If so, who can you talk to at work to discuss these possible changes?

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For a comprehensive analysis of your strengths, take the assessment found in the book, Strengths Finder 2.0 by Tom Rath.

# Seek Out Positive People

The people we spend time with have a tremendous impact on our ability to maintain a positive attitude. When we are with others who have an optimistic outlook and support our efforts to stay positive, we can easily stay on track. When we are with people who are negative, manipulative and needy, our efforts at staying positive can become derailed in an instant. To evaluate your relationships, ask yourself:

Which of my relationships are affirming and supportive?

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What can I do to create more relationships that are affirming and supportive?

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Which relationships I need to let go of?

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# Valuing Others

The ability to stay positive is greatly impacted by the affirmations you provide to others. In the book, *How Full Is Your Bucket*, the authors cite research from marriage therapist John Gottman that marriages are significantly more likely to succeed when a couple's interactions are close to a range of 5 positive interactions for each negative interaction. They also describe a study that found that "workgroups with positive-to-negative interaction ratios greater than 3 to 1 are significantly more productive than teams that do not reach this ratio".

To put this into practice:

1. Think about someone you frequently interact with.
2. Notice a specific way this person has positively impacted you.
3. Talk to this person about the behavior you noticed and the impact of this behavior.
4. Pay attention to the impact your feedback has on your relationship.

"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us."

Albert Schweitzer

Ask yourself, “How have the positive affirmations I am giving others impacting our relationship? Write what you notice on this page.

# Taking Care of Yourself

We can easily feel depleted when we spend all of our time taking care of others and thereby, neglecting our own needs. Implementing self-care techniques can improve brain functioning, increase productivity at work and decrease stress.

Check which of the following ways you take care of yourself:

- Physical Activity
- Rest
- Relaxation
- Healthy Eating
- Positive Social Contacts

List the activities you can do more of every day to take better care of yourself.

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# Positive Self Talk

An excerpt from “Smart Isn’t Enough: How Developing Your Emotional Intelligence Can Transform Your Life and Career”

By Kenton R. Hill

Management Consultant and Work Performance Coach

Glen Winter, a fifty-two-year-old certified public accountant, found himself overwhelmed by his workload and the mountain of paperwork that had piled up. He needed to develop his self-motivation skills to reclaim his self-respect and to retain his clients.

...Practicing his goal of following his daily plan, coupled with his efforts to temper his perfectionism, helped Glen in his ascent of the mountain of backlogged projects.

Just as Dave, my Mount Hood climbing guide, had from time to time stepped to my side and reminded me to “Keep a steady pace.” “Improve the step for the next climber.” “Drink plenty of water.” “Fuel up – eat something.” And my favorite, “Don’t forget to breathe.” Positive self-talk reminders like these were part of Glen’s development plan as well.

Early mantra-type reminders that helped guide Glen up his mountain include “First things come first.” “Being perfect isn’t all it’s cracked up to be.” “Good enough is good enough.” But the most powerful was the one he posted in bold letters on the wall, visible each time he looked up from his computer” **REMEMBER ROGER WILKINSON!**

Glen arrived at this one through his experience of multiple procrastinations. He had picked up this file many, many times in previous months only to put it back on the pile, believing it was “too tough a case” and besides, “Roger is dishonest.” But a day came when Glen and Roger’s file met up. This was a day when Glen was sticking to the plan he had committed to in his efforts to catch up. It was the day Roger’s file was pulled and placed at the center of Glen’s desk. The first item for the next day.

When Glen applied his newly developing discipline to Roger Wilkinson’s file, he found to his surprise that it was much easier than he had feared, and also he was able to complete it within his own ethical standards. The

project he had stewed about for several months, the file dreaded more than any on the pile, was quickly resolved. By reminding himself to, “Remember Roger Wilkinson!” Glen was becoming his own guide – his own coach. He also added reminders, “I have a plan. I am working my plan. My plan is working.”

This technique of positive self-talk, which I originally experienced on my climb of Mount Hood, also proved effective in helping Glen reach his professional development goal of self-motivation. This tool helped him find ways to face and overcome what he had previously labeled the three Ps of his predicament: procrastination, prioritizing, and perfectionism.

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