



Case Studies

By Barry Borgerson

Discover the journey of Jake, Penny, Jerry, Johnnie, George, Mick, Bruce, Morry, Ron, Don, Gary, Maria, Rich, Cecilia, May, Stan, Mack, Lois, Alan and Brad.

Let us look at some common and difficult problems they can help you overcome. See if you recognize challenges in someone who reports to you, in your life, or the life of someone you care for.

1. Jake's Abusive Behavior

"I still believe I don't have a problem." - Jake

Jake knew his company would not promote him to the regional manager position. This was the third time he was passed up and he was not getting any younger. His career, or non-career, was moving forward without him, which frustrated him. He did everything his boss asked in a timely manner, had good performance reviews, and thought he got along with everybody. He could only conclude that his boss didn't like him or that someone in upper management had it in for him. He now felt that he had to leave the job he loved and find something that would advance his career.

However, Jake had done this before. The last job he had as a manager took him only so far. He could not advance to regional manager, so he left the company. He was used to receiving rapid promotions, but then his promotions suddenly stopped as if he had reached the peak of his career. He was depressed. He didn't want to leave his current job; with his oldest daughter about to start college and the expenses growing, advancing his career was imperative.

He decided to check his email and saw a dreaded message from the company HR director, Lori. She wanted to meet with him at 1 pm. He had no idea what this could be about, and could only think of the worst.

After Jake choked down his lunch, he reluctantly went upstairs to Lori's office. When he opened the door, his heart sank. Sitting there was his boss and another man he knew was not an employee of the company. *"I'm being fired!"* he thought.

"Hi, Jake. Have a seat. We have a lot to go over," his boss said.

Assuming the worst, Jake immediately reacted. "How could you do this to me? I've been a loyal employee for six years!" he said, raising his voice.

"Jake, please hear us out. We're trying to help you," Lori said. "Now listen..."

On the defensive, Jake resisted. "I don't know if I want to."

Lori gestured to the seat with a stern look, and Jake finally sat down.

Lori looked at Jake and he seemed to cower - waiting for the expected bad news. Then she spoke, "We want you to have the next open regional manager's position, but the reviews from your direct reports are not good."

Jake was relieved that the company was not firing him, and he managed to create a weak defense. "What do you mean? I've always had good performance reviews."

"Yes, your performance has been extraordinary, but Jake, you're a hard ass."

"Excuse me?"

"A hard ass," Lori repeated. "You don't have enough compassion for your direct reports. You do not give them appropriate slack when they make mistakes or need time off. You don't empathize well with your employees."

"I don't think so," Jake countered. "I always have their needs in mind when making a decision. Haven't our sales doubled since I took over?"

"Yes," Lori acknowledged. "Sales have doubled, but at what cost? Your direct reports are miserable and leave the first chance they get."

Lori raised her hand to hold off a response from Jake.

"Haven't you noticed that a lot of your employees put in for transfers to different departments or leave the company? Why do you suppose I rarely find replacements internally when people bail out on you?"

"I don't know," Jake said reluctantly, starting to consider Lori's statements.

"So Jake, we've hired a leadership coach, Cyril, to help you improve your leadership abilities because we really want you to have that regional manager's position. Go through the coaching and let's talk again when it's done."

Feeling ambushed and threatened, Jake turned to Cyril and said, "So you're the expert."

Seizing the opportunity, Cyril, a coach from my company, responded, "Jake, from watching you for the past few minutes, I'll bet that you have issues with getting people to do things for you."

"Ah...I don't know. I get people to do what I tell them."

"Yes, but they probably do it because they have to, not because they want to," Cyril said. "And that means they fail to achieve peak performance. You see, Jake, we base our techniques on a concept that the mind operates in two modes. We all have a thinking, conscious mode and we have an automatic mode that directs our behavior without our knowing it."

"What's that got to do with the price of cheese?" Jake quipped.

"It has a lot to do with your current predicament. Your automatic mode generates your disruptive behaviors. That is why you don't realize you do it. I would also bet that this is not the first time you have been passed over for a promotion."

This assessment seemed to hit home for Jake. His shoulders slumped a bit and he became pensive. After a few moments, he looked up.

"I get done what the company asks of me, using my people."

Jake was still in avoidance mode. Cyril pressed the point further. "Your automatic mode prevents you from being sympathetic because its agenda is to get people to do what you want no matter what the consequences."

Jake thought some more.

"I don't understand what you mean by my automatic mode," he said. "But I still believe I don't have a problem."

"As we go through the coaching process, I will help you understand more about the automatic mode we all have and the impact it has on your success."

"Great. When do we start?" Lori asked.

"We already have," Cyril replied.

In our continuing narrative of Jake, he displayed disruptive behaviors that he failed to recognize, and this leadership deficiency kept his organization from achieving even greater success; it also stalled Jake's career growth.

Both doing consistently and behaving non-disruptively are examples of the *auto-behavior* mechanism of the auto-self. Thus, in business and life in general, success falters when we fail to execute needed actions or we behave in ways that adversely affect those around us. We maximize our success and ultimately our happiness when we overcome any uncontrollable performance deficits and behavior excesses.

Jake provides an excellent example of an inability to make a needed auto-context switch so he can change his self-image about some of his leadership abilities.

Instead of facing and dealing with the issues that blocked his previous promotions, Jake reacted this way:

"I get the feeling they really don't recognize what I did for the company. Well, if I don't get this regional manager's position, I'm leaving and it will be their loss."

Jake would rationalize that when an employee left his team, the employee was not good enough anyway. In fact, many were star performers and left because of his obnoxious behavior.

Interestingly, in our narrative so far about Jake, he has not engaged in an unfair fight. He has not created an explicit intention to change his behaviors, so he has not yet launched the effort to change himself that creates the internal reality wars that underpin the unfair fight. Jake is stuck at a different point; he is in denial. He cannot escape the

auto-context change level that normally must precede an auto-behavior change. He has a deeply embedded self-image that runs counter to the feedback he has received from Lori, his bosses, and his coach. This creates an internal reality war because external information is impinging on an auto-self belief. If Jake manages to reconstruct his auto-context regarding his self-image, he will then encounter a struggle to change his auto-behaviors just as everybody else does.

Jake struggled to accept his personal deficiencies. Once he overcomes that barrier, with considerable help, he will face another challenge of trying to curtail his counterproductive behaviors. Jake would have only a miniscule chance of changing his disruptive behaviors on his own. In our ongoing narrative of Jake, we had reached the point of terminating his coaching program if he did not soon recognize his counterproductive auto-self issues. Because this method requires significant time from an expert coach, it usually entails a corresponding investment by the client.

Does Jake Accept His Behavior Feedback?

"This is crunch time, Jake." - Alex

"I'm a self-made man," Jake said during one of our hour-long sessions. "I made myself everything I am today. I run on gut instinct and do what works."

"Are you sure that following your gut instinct is always the right thing to do?" I asked, knowing it was not a rhetorical question for him.

"It has always worked for me," Jake said. "I don't make bad decisions."

"Well, Jake," Cyril, his coach, pointed out, "it seems your gut instinct does not work all the time because you repeatedly can't get promoted beyond District Sales Manager. What do you think might be holding you back?"

He sat back for a moment, his face a mask of thought.

Rather than considering the uncomfortable possibility that he was doing things that undermined his own success, Jake looked

outward, saying, "I don't know. Maybe, someone doesn't want me to get ahead."

Having interviewed Jake's superiors, Cyril challenged his defense. "That sounds like a lame excuse to me because your HR director, your boss, and your boss's boss want to promote you to upper management. Do you fear success?"

"Hell no! I live for it!"

Preparing the ground to test Jake's beliefs about himself, Cyril said, "All right, Jake, let's pretend I'm one of your employees. Pick a name."

Jake picked the name, "Dennis."

Cyril continued, "OK. I'm Dennis and I come into your office on Monday morning. Alex, the Vice President of Sales and Marketing needs a complex financial analysis report by Wednesday morning and Dennis is one of the few employees with the skill and expertise to get it done. Now, I'm Dennis and here is what I say, 'Jake, my father is having emergency surgery tomorrow and I need...'"

"Whoa. Wait a minute. Who will complete the financial analysis by Wednesday?"

"I thought Karen could do it. She's done it before and..."

"I've seen her work and she's not that good. I cannot let you take tomorrow off."

"But, this surgery is important and..."

"I don't want to hear it," Jake said and put his hands up. His face scrunched up a bit.

"But, Jake...I need this day off!" I said, raising my voice a bit.

"I don't care," Jake said, digging in his heels. "You have got to get your priorities straight. The company always comes first, and if it didn't, we may not have jobs."

Switching out of my role-playing, Cyril commented, "You have become so focused on taking the best path to short-term results that you have lost sight of the big picture. First of all, Dennis would not do his best work if he was worried about his father and feeling guilty he was not there to support him and help his mother through the ordeal."

"In this circumstance, Karen would probably do a better job. Also, you would lose Dennis's respect - you would probably end up with grudging compliance rather than his enthusiasm and energy, which you need to succeed in the long run."

Stepping up the intensity of my feedback, Cyril said, "Your repeated aggressive behavior and your cold-hearted approach to short-term results at any cost alienates you from your team and causes many of them to request transfers out of your department and some star performers to leave the company in frustration."

I then began to give Jake an overview of what he could do to address these issues. "I am going to help you understand that it is not just the results you achieve but also how you achieve them that will lead to long-term success."

"Some of your behaviors run counter to this company's management philosophy and core values. If we can get you through your counterproductive behaviors, the company will likely promote you to fill the next regional manager opening."

"I'm afraid that if you dig in and refuse to change, you may face having to take your involuntary dysfunctional behaviors to another company."

Jake looked pensive and for a second we thought we had gotten through to him, but then he said, "I'm still not convinced I have a problem."

Undaunted by this familiar form of denial as a defense mechanism, Cyril explained, "Well Jake, you're in a state of denial about your auto-self. Two properties of the auto-self are that our actions take place outside of our awareness and they take place independent of our intentions. If we don't

intend to do something and we don't notice when we do it, it certainly appears to us that we do not do it."

"However, we should pay attention to consistent feedback from several people who work closely with us and who know us very well. Before we start the transformation process, we must get you to a point where you recognize you have negative involuntary behaviors you need to change."

Later that day, Cyril reported his progress with Jake to his HR director, Lori, and they initiated an escalation plan to help Jake get through his aversion to accepting his shortcomings.

The following day Lori called Jake into her office and asked him, "Well, Jake, how is it going with the transformation coach?"

"OK, I guess," Jake replied noncommittally.

"Well, let me tell you. Your coach says you are resisting this like a stubborn mule. We don't want to think of you as a mule, but if you don't get through this program successfully, if you don't open up to it, you won't get that promotion," Lori bluntly explained.

Confronted with this coordinated challenge, Jake became jittery.

"Jake, you need to open up to your issues immediately. A coach's job is to help people change when they want to but cannot do it on their own. Your coach will terminate this engagement soon if you don't show a desire to change," Lori warned.

"You're serious about this?" Jake said with a tone of resentment.

"Damn right!" Lori immediately and unabashedly replied. "So if you don't straighten up...well you know the consequences."

Jake frowned. "I lose a handful of bad apples and I have to put up with this crap!"

"There were no bad apples, Jake," Lori countered, refusing to indulge his rationalization. "You had top-notch employees and some of them left the company because of you. You see, Jake, your behavior has not only hurt those employees, it has also hurt the company."

We cannot eliminate the discomfort associated with discovering and changing undesired habits, but we can employ techniques to counteract our natural resistance to self-discovery in order to enhance our chances of success.

Upping the ante, Alex, the Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing, entered the room. Jake's stomach churned and he started to sweat. Alex was Jake's boss's boss and he looked serious. Alex asked Lori how things were going with Jake's coaching.

Lori responded, "Jake's at a crossroad because he still is in denial about the behaviors we want him to improve. His coach is about to terminate Jake's coaching engagement because Jake hasn't yet accepted that he has habits he needs to change."

Alex then turned to Jake and laid it on the line for him. "Jake, we all appreciate your hard work and dedication to the company and the results you have achieved. I would like to promote you to a regional sales manager reporting directly to me when the next opening comes up, but you will have to correct a few of your undesirable behaviors including two showstoppers - your all too frequent anger outbursts and your lack of empathy and support for your team."

Alex continued, directly confronting Jake's problematic behaviors, while simultaneously offering him support. "I want to be as clear with you as I possibly can, Jake, so you understand the choice you face now. I don't believe we can build a long-term successful organization using aggressive behaviors or lacking empathy for our employees' occasional personal issues. Beyond that, our CEO and executive staff have articulated a set of core values that some of your behaviors violate. Because we appreciate your considerable talents and would like to leverage your abilities in a higher-level position, we are willing to invest in a coaching program for you to help you overcome your bad habits. However, you have to

acknowledge the behaviors that your management, the 360° (boss, peers, and subordinates) leadership survey, and interviews consistently identified.”

Alex continued to play out the counteracting scenario he had rehearsed. “This is crunch time Jake because you will not just miss the promotion that you and the company would like to see happen, but I’m afraid we will have to out-place you if you don’t immediately accept the feedback on your unacceptable behaviors.”

Lori later told us, “At this point, Jake’s face contorted and he turned pale. I got nervous; he seemed to stop breathing. I thought he might scream at Alex, throw up, or pass out. However, to Jake’s credit, he maintained his composure, but he couldn’t seem to make eye contact with either Alex or me.”

Alex then pivoted to the reward side of the counteracting principle. “However, if you recognize the issues we want you to change and engage actively with your coach, your promotion will be a slam-dunk. You cannot change what you don’t recognize and acknowledge. We have worked with this coach before and he always transforms behaviors in people he coaches who want to change. Spend a day or two looking over your feedback and dealing with the discomfort of acknowledging some shortcomings. When you decide whether or not you can accept the feedback, let Lori know and we will all know where we go from there.”

At our suggestion, Alex applied strong techniques to counteract Jake’s barrier to accepting his feedback. He pushed Jake by creating huge discomfort by threatening termination, which we anticipated would cause Jake to accept his deficiencies as the path of least discomfort.

Alex also pulled Jake through his blockage by essentially offering him a promotion if he acknowledged his issues and engaged in coaching to correct them. This used pleasure to counteract self-discovery discomfort.

We normally avoid using such strong counteracting techniques, but repeated warnings to Jake that he would probably not

achieve his promotion had not caused him to accept that he had serious deficiencies.

This strong technique, executed effectively by Alex, worked as expected. Jake came into Lori's office the next morning and told her, "Wow, did I spend a tough night last night. Fortunately, my family was supportive but they also told me they agreed with most of the assessments of my behavior. It is difficult for me because I don't really notice myself doing these things, so it doesn't seem to me that I actually do them. However, my coach explained about the automatic mode we all sometimes work in, so I guess I don't have to feel like I was deliberately acting like a jerk because it was all unintentional.

"Now I'm worried that I won't be able to change these behaviors even though I acknowledge them, because I don't really notice when I do them."

Lori responded, "Jake, I'm delighted you decided to get on board and proceed with your coaching. Don't worry about noticing your behaviors. That's why we engaged a coach for you; he will coach you to notice and change them."

You can magnify the velocity of advancement by exploiting your unique strengths and capabilities, and you can avoid the trauma of derailment by overcoming any undesired behaviors and barriers to needed actions. However, these benefits require awareness.

Achieving static self-awareness of counterproductive behaviors is the opening bid in the transformation process.

The next step is for the client to determine what he or she wants to achieve beyond what would have been currently possible. Then, the client identifies behaviors to change that will enable achieving these new goals.

Jake Declares His Anchors

"Now you're rolling, Jake."

The next time Cyril met with Jake, he appeared a lot different from previous meetings. He looked vulnerable and open to solutions to his problems.

Even his body language had changed - he no longer sat in the chair like a king on a throne.

Cyril took advantage of this critical opening and said, "Jake, Lori tells me you have accepted the major issues identified in your leadership survey and that you are ready to dive into your coaching program. I'm delighted. With your obvious talents and ability to deliver results, you will be a true star performer once you transform your undesirable behaviors."

"We can now focus on your grand goals. You previously identified achieving the promotion to regional sales manager within one year. The goal is already in the correct form of having a verifiable result and a specific date. What other grand goals would you like to achieve during our one-year coaching engagement?"

"I've been thinking about that," he replied, "and I would like to become better and more comfortable at public speaking. You probably wouldn't guess it from my strong personality," Jake courageously confided, "but I get extremely nervous when I speak before large audiences, so I avoid it like the plague. Also, since I rarely speak publicly, I don't think I have developed very good presentation skills. I don't understand why I get so nervous in front of large crowds. I have no problem at all speaking in front of a few customers in a small conference room. I think that to perform effectively at the next level I will need to do more public speaking, so I want to get better at it."

"Jake, the public-speaking phobia is very common," Cyril told him. "I suspect it's an evolutionary maladaptation to retreating in the face of a large, hostile group. To make this one of your grand goals, you need to formulate it with a measurable or verifiable result in a fixed timeframe."

Cyril paused to allow Jake time to figure out a powerful formulation.

"How about this? By the end of one year I will have given four presentations in front of large crowds."

"That works, Jake. Do you have any other grand goals for yourself at work?"

"I've tried to think of other goals, but nothing occurs to me now. Is it possible to add another grand goal if I think of one later?"

Cyril was happy to accommodate Jake's request. "Of course - clients often come up with additional goals as we work our way through intense discussions on what it takes to succeed."

Shifting gears, Cyril asked, "How about any personal goals outside of work?"

"I've been thinking about that also," Jake disclosed, "but I'm afraid the company would not like spending money on improving my personal goals. Although I apparently have many faults, acting unethically is not one of them. I think I would need to ask them for permission, and I really don't want to discuss my personal issues inside the company."

Jake's concern was understandable, but his coach was able to offer reassurance because the overall coaching process is helped, rather than hindered, by addressing goals in different aspects of the client's life (as discussed in Chapter 19: Leveraging Auto-Self Experiences).

"Don't worry about that, Jake. Lori knows we have helped other leaders accomplish personal goals such as stopping smoking and losing weight and keeping it off by establishing healthy eating and exercise habits. We will interact twice a week for the next year. During that time, we will have opportunities to fit in a personal issue for you without negatively affecting your progress on the company issues. Besides, a healthier, happier employee is usually a more effective employee, so achieving a personal goal will likely also help the company."

"Depending on the nature of your personal goal and your feelings about it," Cyril noted, "we can either tell Lori and Alex or not. You make the decision. In addition, we will not disclose any personal or business details we discuss that you want to keep private. As you know, we will give quarterly progress reports to Lori and Alex. However, we report on progress in general terms and usually avoid specific instances. We promise you confidentiality on any issues that you identify as sensitive, and we will use our judgment to avoid discussing other potentially sensitive issues even if you don't flag them."

Put more at ease by those safeguards, Jake opened up, saying, "OK, here it goes. When I met with my wife, son, and daughter to discuss issues identified in my leadership survey, they suggested that if I needed to be more sensitive to the personal lives of my team that maybe I could work on becoming more sensitive to the needs of my own family. That was painful to hear. However, if I'm going to dive into this coaching thing and struggle to change myself, I guess I should listen to my family's feedback as well."

Cyril then reinforced Jake's brave disclosure of this vulnerable information. "Now you're rolling, Jake. You have become more open to feedback on your involuntary behaviors and you seem determined to maximize the benefits of your coaching experience. There will be times during the next year when you face uncomfortable changes, but by the end of the year you will feel exhilarated and empowered because you will have much greater control over your life and be surrounded by happier people." Easing him forward, I then said, "Now try to formulate your personal goal in the standard format."

Jake had already thought about this because he immediately responded, "I pledge to attend at least one school event every month for both of my children and to take my wife out somewhere once a week."

"Those are great pledges Jake," Cyril encouraged, "but they are your intentions for behavior changes, not your goal. How would you like to formulate your personal goal?"

After a long pause while he tried to formulate an effective goal, Jake finally stated, "How about this? At the end of one year, I will sit down with my family again and ask them if I have met their expectations for improving my participation in our family life. The verifiable result will be that all three of them say 'yes.'"

"That's a wonderful and brave goal for you to take, Jake," Cyril replied enthusiastically. "Now you not only have your personal goals but you also have three specific intentions related to that goal - if you count your participation in each child's activities as a separate intention."

Switching back to Jake's professional aspirations, Cyril urged, "Now let's work on your intentions for your two business grand goals." Jake summarized his progress and challenges, saying, "I've done some work on my intentions related to getting promoted to regional manager. However, I don't have a clue how to formulate intentions for my public speaking goal."

"Here are my intentions for my promotion goal:

1. Avoid anger outbursts except in the most egregious situations.
2. Show more empathy for my employees.
3. Get to know my team better on a personal level."

"That's a good start Jake. Your first intention is clear and you should be able to monitor success or failure. You are on the right track with Intention #2, but it is not yet in a usable form. It would be very hard for you to log whether or not you were showing empathy - the formulation is too vague. Your third intention is more like a goal. It usually takes a few sessions to hone the goal statements and intention declarations for maximum effectiveness." Cyril then asked him to think about his goals and intentions some more between sessions and told him they would discuss them again when they met next.

Cyril then gave Jake a suggestion to facilitate his thinking on the issues they had identified. "One intention I recommend

you consider for your presentation goal is to join and actively participate in a Toastmasters International group near you. You will find a friendly environment where you can get practice giving formal presentations in front of a group that will give you support and constructive feedback on how to make improvements. With lots of practice, people normally begin to overcome their fears of presenting to groups. If, after you alleviate your fear of speaking, you want to develop further skills, I know of an excellent professional workshop series I can recommend to you." Cyril then encouraged Jake to think of other intentions that they could work on during their coaching sessions.

Looking ahead, Cyril told Jake, "The next step in the coaching process is for you to log successes and failures of enacting your intentions. We have you do this so that you will begin to notice how you do with your intentions and so that we will have these events to discuss at our coaching sessions. Between now and our next session, please focus on logging how you do on your first intention for your promotion goal. If you get angry, log it. If you feel yourself starting to get angry but you avoid it, log that also. In these cases, as with all occurrences of behaviors associated with your intentions, do your best to feel great when you enact your intention and to feel poorly if you fail to enact your intention. Experiencing these feelings may challenge you at first because they go opposite to your normal feelings, so I will help you work on those feelings during our sessions. Repeatedly experiencing discomfort with the old behavior helps to extinguish it. Repeatedly experiencing pleasure with your new behavior helps to establish it."

Jake was off to a great start. As we anticipated, once Jake cleared the enormous hurdle of accepting his shortcomings, he threw himself into the coaching process with the same gusto that he throws himself into succeeding at his job.

Jake's Results

Jake's biggest challenge was to get through his inability to accept his shortcomings. Everything about Jake's style indicated that once he overcame his resistance to accepting the broad-based feedback, he would do well in coaching. As expected, he approached his coaching experience with the same gusto he approached most everything else in his life.

Halfway into our coaching engagement, it was clear to us all that Jake was going to make the needed changes, so when an opening came up for a regional manager position, Jake got it. Retaining that position was contingent upon him staying with his coaching, but none of us doubted that would happen. Although Jake did not get as relaxed as he would like to at public speaking, he did readily accept opportunities and he acquired sufficient skills to do a credible job. Happily, Jake also reported that at the end of his one-year coaching program, his family unanimously agreed he had made significant changes at home.

2. Penny's Failures to Achieve Her Dreams

"Nothing I've tried has worked." - Penny

Penny had been divorced for over a year - all for the better, in her mind. Her former husband, she learned later, started cheating on her a month after they were married. She often wondered why he got married in the first place if he wanted to be with other women.

She was over him and now she wanted to find that special someone - someone whom she could trust, who was faithful, and who would love her as much as she would love him. She was ready for a permanent trusting relationship.

She was afraid to try, however, because of a significant challenge - she was 50 pounds overweight. Intuitively, she had suspected her former husband was cheating on her, but she didn't want to believe it. When the evidence became obvious, she would block it out by eating, which was her favorite comfort escape.

Penny was determined to lose the extra weight and find that special someone. She searched the Internet and found several books on "successful" dieting, which she devoured as aggressively as junk food and followed their techniques tenaciously. She joined a gym and exercised as much as possible, but she felt out of place. As she put it, "Most of the people there looked like models out of magazines rather than people struggling with their weight like me."

Penny also tried many other approaches to losing weight. She told a friend, "I have enrolled in dieting courses, dieting programs, and dieting webinars; I've purchased countless CDs, DVDs and self-help programs. I would lose weight but then put it right back on as soon as something frustrated me. After several months, I lost only a few pounds; the main thing I lost was my enthusiasm. "

She decided to call her best friend, Kristen, to ask her for advice. They made a lunch date.

At lunch, Penny talked about her frustration and failure to lose the extra 50 pounds she put on due to her terrible

marriage in spite of so many self-help attempts. She told Kristen of all the programs she had read and watched, as well as the countless diets and deprivation of her favorite foods.

Kristen suddenly realized she might have a way to help Penny. "You know, maybe Jeremy can help you."

"You mean your boyfriend Jeremy? How can he help me?"

"Jeremy helped me stop micromanaging at work. I could not seem to stop telling my direct reports how they should do their work, which frustrated them and held me back. My boss was getting frustrated with me."

"Then Jeremy helped me understand that we have two mental modes: one creates the conscious, thinking, planning self; and the other creates an automatic self that regulates our behavior unconsciously. It's that involuntary behavior that causes most of our failures."

"Really? That's interesting."

"Jeremy said I had to reprogram my automatic behaviors so I could get past the micromanaging. I thought he was crazy at first, but he had this whole series of exercises that he put me through, and it helped me discover that I had a fear of failing at work and some really wacky urge to get involved in all of the details instead of trusting my subordinates to handle them."

"How did he know all this stuff?"

"His company retained a transformation coach to help him overcome his anger outbursts at work. Even though he's not an expert coach, he learned enough about the automatic mode from his coach that he has become what he calls a 'transformation guide.' Since he helped me, I'm thinking he could also guide you to establish appropriate health habits to achieve and maintain your desired weight."

"He would do that for me?"

"I bet he would do it happily. He loves it. He's been helping some of his friends, and it's working. They all love what he's done for them."

"Ok," Penny sighed. "At this point, I'll try anything because nothing I've tried has worked. I have tried the famous Corey Banks diet, Weight Reducers, and countless others. I guess self-help doesn't work very well - at least for me."

Penny's Internal Reality Wars

"Shoulda, coulda, woulda."- Penny

It was the start of a new day in early spring several months before she met Jeremy, the transformation guide, whom her friend Kristen introduced to her. Penny's alarm clock was buzzing. She opened her eyes and was feeling good about everything - she had not slept that well in months. She looked in her closet and decided to wear her new designer jeans with the flowered pockets that she purchased on sale the previous fall. She showered, put on the brand new pants, pulled them up, and found she could not bring the zipper all the way up.

"These fit perfectly last fall. Did I gain that much weight?" she thought. Her day was turning darker.

She stepped onto her white bathroom scale and glanced down at the number. Her heart sank. She realized that she had gained an additional 10 pounds since last fall, and now she could not squeeze into her favorite jeans.

"I've got to lose weight," she thought, "and right away."

It was the start of a new day in early spring several months before she met Jeremy, the transformation guide, whom her friend Kristen introduced to her.

On the way to work, Penny drove so recklessly that she nearly caused an accident twice. She was angry and disappointed with herself for gaining ten additional pounds. It was not what she wanted. She had tried to lose weight all along. Now she couldn't wait to get to work at the post office and talk to Samantha, who worked at the customer-facing station and who lost quite a bit of weight in the past few months.

It was busy that morning at the post office and Penny could not talk to Samantha right away. Her frustration grew.

Later, she waited in the break room a few minutes before Samantha took her break.

"Hi, Sam. You look great!" Penny said rushing towards the middle-aged woman as she entered. "I wanted to ask you what diet you were on to lose all that weight."

"Hi. You will just love it! I could eat what I wanted and I still lost the weight. It's the Corey Banks diet. You order a monthly meal plan, follow their exercise regimen, and stay away from the list of "No No" foods and it works. I lost about three pounds a week."

"Exercise?" Penny's face soured. "Gosh, I'm exhausted when I get home."

"It's not that bad. Fifteen minutes a day. They give you a DVD to follow."

"Oh."

Samantha dug into her purse and pulled out a coupon.

"Here, use this to sign up. You can go to their website or call the 800 number. Make sure you put in my code number so I can get a discount on my next order. You will get a free week of meals using the code."

"Is it expensive?"

"Depends what you order and you can pay weekly."

"Thank you so much." Penny hugged Samantha and went back to work feeling relieved, happy, and burden free.

That evening Penny called the 800 number on the coupon and ordered the diet program. The day did not turn out so bad after all, she thought.

Three weeks later, Penny awoke to her alarm energized and ready for her day because she was supposed to have lost nine pounds.

She stepped on the scale and she saw that she lost only one pound! Again, she was angry with herself, disappointed and instantly in a bad mood. "I should have put more into the exercise program. I shouldn't have cheated a few times thinking it wouldn't matter," she thought. "Maybe this diet doesn't work after all. Maybe Samantha was lying. Shoulda, coulda, woulda."

Her internal reality war was in full swing again. She had strong desire and solid determination to lose weight and keep it off, but she also had what she called, "something inside me that drives me to eat things I know I shouldn't and fail to exercise when I know I should." Penny's struggle is typical of what people encounter when they try to change undesired habits - an internal reality war between desires and intentions of the thinking-self warring with compelling and repelling drives of the auto-self. She felt terrible, disappointed, and frustrated. She had one more week left of the food she ordered from the Corey Banks diet. If she did not lose more than a few pounds by next week, she was giving up on Corey Banks, she decided. Besides, she hated the exercise. It was just too painful. Stay tuned for the solution to her dilemma.

Penny robbed herself of the energy to engage effectively in the change process when she rationalized:

"I really didn't think it was a good diet anyway. I'm sorry I wasted my time on this one, and I know there are better ones out there."

Here is how Penny would blow off the importance of exercise: "I know exercise is important, but I've joined a gym and only felt like a freak there. I have tried to exercise on my own, but I just cannot seem to drag myself out there. Besides, I don't know what the right exercise is for me. I don't really have to exercise now that I'm on this new super diet program."

Penny also used this gimmick (evasion gimmick) many times. When she realized she had to change her diet and exercise more because she was not losing weight, she just purchased another diet book or program. Her action alleviated her discomfort of

failure at losing weight and at the same time it made her feel that she was doing something beneficial to lose weight.

Penny encounters an unfair fight when she attempts to diet. Her thinking-self repeatedly creates an intention to manage her food intake. However, her auto-self relentlessly compels her to eat because that creates a source of pleasure that serves to mask whatever difficulty she is encountering in her life. Penny also encounters an unfair fight at work when she tries to avoid micromanaging all of the details of the assignments she gives to her subordinates. Even though she knows (a thinking-self activity) she needs to trust them and she sometimes gives them general directions and lets them figure out how to carry them out, she repeatedly falls back to managing all of the details (an unintentional auto-self driven activity). In addition, because Penny finds exercise boring and tedious, her auto-self blocks her ability to enact her thinking-self goal. These aspects of Penny illustrate well the pernicious way the unfair fight plays out. We sometimes succeed at individual attempts, which create hope for sustained success, but in the long run we almost always fail because auto-self-based feelings have greater lasting power than thinking-self-based intentions even when augmented with dogged willpower.

Penny Gets Support

Penny agreed to meet with Jeremy, her best friend Kristen's new boyfriend, on a Saturday afternoon to discuss this new concept about the two selves that would help Penny lose and keep off the 50 pounds of extra weight. The three of them met at Penny's house at 1:00 pm.

"I know you work at the Post Office, but I really don't know what you do there," Jeremy began with Penny.

"I'm the team supervisor for international mail. What's this have to do with me losing weight?" she replied timidly

"You'll see," Jeremy said. "Now how many people do you supervise?"

"I lead three others, and we make sure mail going to different countries is routed to the correct airlines."

Digging deeper, Jeremy asked, "Do you get along with everyone on your team?"

Penny frowned. "Why do you need to know that?"

Jeremy watched her closely.

"Do I need to tell him this?" Penny asked Kristen.

"You need to trust him," Kristen offered, calming her friend's resistance. "I know that may be hard for you right now, but believe me, what he does worked for me and it can work for you."

Penny looked very uncomfortable.

"Listen, Penny," Kristen went on. "You are a very attractive woman with a very pretty face, but you could be more attractive - a knockout - if you lost that extra weight. You and I both know this."

"I've tried everything to lose weight," Penny said, becoming emotional. "I attended seminars and I would leave absolutely positive that I was going to lose weight in the next month by steadfastly following what they said. The first week it was great and then as the weeks wore on and nothing seemed to happen I eventually lost my enthusiasm and went back to my old eating habits."

"That's because change is uncomfortable," Jeremy began to explain. "When I worked with my transformation coach, the hardest thing for me was to control my anger outbursts - especially when I had a bad day or we didn't finish a project on time. It was extremely uncomfortable for me. I had to learn to counteract those painful feelings by telling myself that my outbursts were holding me back and bad for my career."

Penny took a deep breath; her whole body seemed to heave. Jeremy's observations and questions were touching sensitive areas for Penny - ones he strongly suspected were integral to her obstacles to losing weight.

Penny decided to follow Kristen's advice and give Jeremy the benefit of the doubt, saying, "All right. If you really want to know, I don't get along with everybody at work. This one guy on my team is a real jerk. Always pushing the envelope to do things his way; always in my face. The two women are OK, but I feel I'm doing most of the work while they just take up space."

"And what does your boss say about this?" Jeremy inquired further.

"I haven't got around to telling him yet," Penny admitted.

Jeremy put his hand on his chin and his eyes became distant.

"And your husband? What was he like?"

"Former husband!" Penny said with a clear note of indignity.

"A lot like this guy at work - a jerk. Always putting me down, getting into my face, telling me what to do."

"And what did you do?" Jeremy asked, gently pressing further.

"Not much," she confided. "He was a lot bigger and louder than me. I always wanted to shout back at him, tell him off, but I never got the chance."

Jeremy now thought he had enough information to offer a tentative observation about Penny's auto-self issues. "Here are my initial impressions. You either procrastinate or eat when faced with a hard decision. You struggle to deal effectively with aggressive people and you are afraid to hurt the feelings of your team by pointing out their inadequacies, so they use you and don't do their share of the work."

"You can't effectively lead people and you can't manage your weight. Your auto-behavior causes both issues. You do them habitually and unknowingly."

Penny put her head down and Kristen got up and sat next to her.

"This is the hard part, Penny - finding out the cause of your problems and then accepting it."

"If you feel this is the cause of your problems, then we can work to 'reprogram' your habits to make sure they're not working against your desires," Jeremy added.

Penny looked up at Jeremy, her eyes rimmed in red.

"I'm not upset at what you said. I'm upset because I'm starting to see the real problem that you pointed out - my avoidance of tough stuff. This feels real to me, and now I'm starting to see how I sabotage my life."

"This is the first step in the right direction - recognizing your barriers to action," Jeremy said.

Penny was contemplative, staring at the ceiling and thinking back to situations in her past.

Then she said quietly, "This is like someone turned on a light. I can go back to many situations and see where I could have acted differently. It always seemed like something inside of me kept me from doing what I really wanted to do." She looked at Jeremy and said, "I wish I knew this earlier."

Jeremy alerted Penny to the difficulties associated with auto-behavior change. "Penny, understanding the scope of your undesired behaviors and getting an idea of what underlying issues may cause them is a good start. However, your real challenge lies ahead of you as you know from your attempts to lose weight. Changing habits is so difficult because it creates discomfort, which causes most people to quit. I commit to you that as long as you keep working on your habit changes I will stay with you for a whole year and provide repeated support to help you work your way through your changes."

"I can't believe you would do that for me," Penny exclaimed. "I have repeatedly failed to change on my own. I am really looking forward to trying this with your help. How can I ever repay you?"

Jeremy chuckled. "You're Kristen's best friend, so now you're my friend too, and this will get me lots of points with

Kristen. Besides, I really enjoy helping people who have tried but failed to change on their own.”

When Jeremy worked with Penny, he guided her toward declaring a health goal and a goal to improve her leadership ability at work. As a result, Penny created a grand goal to lose 50 pounds in one year and keep it off permanently and she decided she would improve the performance of her team at work by 20% within one year.

Grand goals create the framework and motivation for change. However, transformation coaching focuses on behavior change, so we must close the gap between goals and behaviors that impact achieving those goals.

Penny's Results

Whereas Jake was all motion with a lot of collateral damage, Penny was mostly lack of execution. Jake had the benefit of a professional transformation coach while Penny had a nonprofessional guide helping her. However, Jeremy was conscientious and patiently guided her for the prescribed year. Penny stepped up easily to learning how to hold her one troublesome employee accountable, and she learned how to get more work out of the two women who reported to her by getting them to give commitments and holding them accountable if they failed to achieve them.

As might be expected, Penny struggled more with her health habits. Her inability to exercise regularly was just another example of her failure at disciplined execution. When she got better at executing at work, she also demonstrated more discipline in her exercise routine (an example of leveraging auto-self experiences discussed in the previous chapter). She established a new exercise habit that will likely stay with her. Her ability to create healthy eating habits was more difficult for her to conquer.

There was more than lack of discipline at work in Penny's inability to control her unhealthy eating habits. Indulgent eating was Penny's go-to escape ritual. Whenever something frustrated her, whenever she got anxious about something,

whenever she felt disappointed in herself, she would turn to eating for comfort.

Penny and Jeremy struggled to find a substitute activity to make her feel better when she was having difficult times. They never really found a satisfactory substitute, but the repeated celebration of her steady progress seemed to give her enough good feelings to counteract the drive to eat recklessly. She ended up losing 45 of the 50 pounds she wanted to take off by the time their agreed-to one-year transformation guidance arrangement ended. The good news is that she entered into what appeared to be a wonderful relationship with a man much different from her former husband. Jeremy and Penny were both optimistic that the new relationship would provide both the motivation and the mechanism to help her stay on course with her new healthy habits.

Success results not just from what you know but from how you automatically respond to situations.

Jake's and Penny's stories are typical of the automatic mode in action, where involuntary disruptive behaviors or debilitating barriers derail the best intentions without the person even noticing their undesired habits.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could step into someone else's shoes for a while and observe ourselves and everything we do just as others see us? We would clearly see all the things we do poorly - not even knowing we do them - and then we could have a chance to correct our negative or inhibiting behaviors and to get more out of those things we do well.

We rarely notice our automatic activities because habitual behaviors operate outside our normal awareness.

The auto-self also appears ubiquitously in the workplace. Have you ever noticed somebody who is very effective at persuading people while somebody else who seems to be smarter and have more knowledge does not do as well? Our thinking-self controls verbal communications using our intelligence and knowledge, but effective communications entails much more. Our auto-self controls our nonverbal communications including gestures, facial expressions, and voice intonation and pace. Nonverbal

communication often plays a decisive role, so people who have this auto-skill, either naturally or learned through practice, often persuade effectively.

3. Road Rage – A Powerful Insight into Our Auto-Self

"Who's in charge here?"

One way to recognize the differences between the thinking and automatic modes is to experience and recognize a conflict between the two. Other people's stories can bore us, but some stories of internal experiences create insights into our own inner workings. Here is a personal story of gaining insight into my automatic mode of behavior. Perhaps this will help you recognize similar internal encounters in your experience.

When I was 20, I noticed that when people cut me off in traffic, I would become enraged, scream at them, and attempt to retaliate by cutting them off as soon as I could. I grew increasingly concerned about my uncontrollable anger and my unsafe retaliatory driving. One day it could either get me an expensive ticket or cause an accident.

Finally, I decided I would no longer react that way when someone drove rudely. When the next person cut me off, how do you think I reacted? ...

I retaliated! After I recovered from losing control, I was flabbergasted, and I was painfully disappointed that I had not done better.

This experience drove me into reality vertigo that made me wonder, "Who's in charge here?" I had created a clear intention to behave differently, yet something "inside me" compelled me to behave badly, as if my intention did not matter. This is similar to the conflict Penny experienced in her quest to lose weight. Although she consciously intended to control her eating, she rarely managed to do it.

I refused to accept my inability to stop my road rage. I resolved that, no matter what, I would not attempt to reciprocate when the next impolite driver aggressively squeezed his or her car between mine and the one in front of me. Since I commuted in city traffic during rush hour, I did

not have to wait long for an opportunity to test my resolve. The next time a driver cut me off I did not make aggressive gestures or retaliate.

However, what happened internally astonished me. An almost overwhelming impulse to strike back surged through me. I still felt the driver had trespassed on my rightful territory, and I needed to teach him a lesson. That was the first time I experienced so vividly a struggle between my intentions and my automatic thoughts and actions. It felt like a bewildering internal war over control of my behavior.

This traumatic internal conflict launched an epiphany for me. I suddenly realized I had two distinct aspects of myself competing for control of my thoughts and actions, and "I" didn't have a clue how to control which competitor won.

I learned another valuable lesson during the following months. I continued my determination to avoid retaliatory driving behavior. My internal struggle persisted as my compulsion relentlessly challenged my commitment, but I persevered. After a while, the urge to seek revenge receded.

After a few months, it became comfortable to avoid agitation and to resist retaliation. I overcame my need to strike back by telling myself stories, which was fortuitous because I was two decades away from understanding the automatic, uncontrollable mode and its properties.

I told myself that I was not responsible for reforming rude drivers and that my emotional health, my safety, and the safety of other drivers were more important than avenging someone else's inconsiderate behavior.

Finally, avoiding retaliation became easy for me. In my current terminology, I transformed myself - I became different by reprogramming my auto-self. My new automatic behavior was consistent with my intentions. I no longer had to focus my attention on the problem, and avoiding retaliation no longer required the greatest willpower I could muster.

4. Jerry's Promotion

Jerry leads the quality assurance department of an engine manufacturing company that operates in a matrix organization. Jerry's intelligence and deep knowledge about his area of responsibility make him very effective at most aspects of his job. However, he routinely failed to attain adequate results from colleagues who did not report to him. Trying to persuade people to execute needed activities created unrecognized discomfort for Jerry. As a result, to his own detriment, he uncontrollably failed to move them to action because he could not meet his commitments if others did not deliver to him on time.

This barrier to action stymied Jerry's career. His previous boss had left the company, and Jerry very much wanted a promotion to his former manager's job. A senior executive in his company told me, "We are not going to promote Jerry and see if he can step up to greater responsibility. Instead, we are going to provide him a coach, and if he learns to perform at a higher level, we will promote him. If he cannot step up, we will hire a new manager for him."

Jerry's management engaged me to coach him to overcome his performance deficit. Jerry summed up his experience with coaching as follows, "When I first entered coaching, I have to say I was skeptical. As I reflect on it, I simply didn't know what I didn't know. I could not understand why the company did not promote me earlier; I thought I was executing extremely well. As I learned to recognize and manage automatic activities that had eluded me, I understood my previous limitations that had blocked my promotion. I was letting barriers to actions undermine my effectiveness in spite of what I thought were my best efforts. I no longer whine to the bosses of people who don't work directly for me that they won't cooperate. I now have a new ability to obtain commitments and to hold people accountable, which enables me to achieve excellent results from people outside of my organization."

When we started our coaching engagement, Jerry was so skeptical that he bet me a dinner that the company would not promote him before our one-year coaching program ended.

Shortly before our coaching engagement concluded, Jerry received the promotion he longed for but had feared he would never achieve. Jerry happily bought me the dinner to pay off his bet and to celebrate his promotion, and he enthusiastically told me, "This process worked so well for me that I now use it on people who report to me. When they come to me complaining that they can't get actions from people outside our organization, I apply some techniques you used on me and send them out to try again." Jerry now works effectively as a transformation guide for members of his team. He leads them and he develops them.

Similarly, Penny suffered from debilitating barriers with regard to her weight management. That is why she needed the support of a transformation guide to enable her to change her auto-behaviors regarding eating and exercising.

Jeremy picked up enough techniques during his engagement with an expert coach that he could now effectively guide friends to transform many of their counterproductive behaviors, as he was about to start with Penny.

Jerry, the head of quality assurance for an engine manufacturing company, changed so much in ways he had not imagined that he went on to leverage his experience by guiding some of his team members. He guided them to overcome similar barriers to those he had suffered when attempting to attain consistent results from people outside of their organization.

5. Johnnie's Dread of Not Being Liked

Some people are so much in need of having everybody like them that they become unable to make tough decisions. Johnnie was a client who exhibited this characteristic. He had been a high-level staff person reporting to the COO of a large corporation. He sought and was given a line role in an effort to launch a new career path. In this case, I was overseeing another coach from my organization who was coaching Johnnie. One of the exercises we take clients through is to list those aspects of themselves they would like to change and those aspects of themselves they do not want to change. Among those characteristics that Johnnie listed that he did not want to change was any aspect of his personality. We understood this, because he has a most pleasing personality and we did not notice any undesired behaviors. That served him very well when he was doing staff work using the authority of the powerful COO whom he was representing. However, we challenged Johnnie on his lack of desire to make a fundamental change in his personality. He was not limited by errors of *commission* but rather by errors of *omission*.

Johnnie was not going to succeed in his new line responsibility if he did not transform himself beyond his uncontrollable need for having everybody like him. One of the transformations we guided Johnnie through was to switch his guiding principle from having people *like* him to having them *respect* him. That transformation enabled him to go from a nice-guy staff person to a more tough-minded line executive. If you are highly respected, most people will actually like you. However, you should not have that as your goal. We emphasize fairness in making tough decisions and using assertiveness as opposed to aggressiveness. With the help of his coach, Johnnie successfully navigated through this and other transformations with excellent results. He now leads a department with many professionals spread around the globe.

6. Moderating George's Excesses

George, a senior manager in a manufacturing company, has no blockages to getting into action. In fact, he is all action. However, he used to think so poorly of others who did not share his drive that he would become enraged and aggressive when they did not meet the high standards he set for them and himself. This caused colleagues and subordinates to avoid contact with him whenever they could. Far from spurring greater action, aggressive behavior blocks the creativity and drains the energy from those exposed to it. Although repeatedly warned to rein in his dysfunctional behaviors, George made little headway. Self-help to overcome aggressiveness rarely produces the desired results. To capitalize on his deep knowledge and consistent execution, his company engaged me to coach George to curtail his overbearing behaviors. Within a few weeks, colleagues began to notice and comment on how pleasurable it had become to work with George. For the first time, others could appreciate his outstanding talents and value to the company. Although it takes a long time - we usually plan for a year - to make these changes permanent, some behavior change normally becomes evident quickly.

Fortunately, once people recognize how much their behavior demotivates others and lowers their sustained output, they can change successfully through coaching. For long-term success, leaders must focus not only on achieving results but also on how they achieve those results.

7. Mick's Story - When Intentions Fail

"My bullying behavior controlled me; I could not control it."

- Mick

Mick is the third-generation CEO of a family-owned mid-size automotive supply company. His intelligence, technical expertise, and business acumen all enabled him to excel at managing the measurable aspects of his company, but he faltered when it came to leading his employees.

"I could perform most of my activities well, but I couldn't control my temper," he explained. "When anyone screwed up, I exploded and attacked them - often humiliating them in public."

"My HR Director persuaded me that my behavior was sapping my employees' energy and undermining their creativity, so I decided to change. What a traumatic experience! Sometimes I did not even notice my aggressive behavior. When I did notice, I still could not control my rages. My bullying behavior controlled me; I could not control it."

We return to Mick later, after introducing some transformation techniques, to show how I coached him through his disruptive behaviors.

Mick's story is similar to many people's attempts to fix what they know is negative or detrimental behavior, but who fail miserably. Penny's weight management difficulties demonstrated another example, and failed New Year's resolutions provide ubiquitous examples.

With the help of his HR manager and a leadership performance survey, Mick, the CEO of the automotive supply company, was able to reconstruct his self-image and create an intention to moderate his behaviors. However, when Mick attempted to manage his abusive behavior, he was astonished to find out he could not control it. Mick came face-to-face with the debilitating unfair fight. He could not change his behavior even though he

really wanted to do it to improve the performance of his company.

Mick could not control his anger outbursts even after he became acutely aware of the negative effects they were having on his employees.

Earlier, I talked about my success at overcoming road rage through a self-help effort. Although excruciatingly difficult for me, that transformation was in a limited and easily noticed area. Self-help can work in some circumstances, but it is ineffective when faced with more-difficult challenges.

Mick summed up the problem of changing his own disruptive behaviors: "Even after I recognized my abusive behavior, and even after I learned to notice it while I was doing it, I could not change my dysfunctional behaviors on my own no matter how hard I tried."

Behavioral transformations create unfair fights because the auto-self relentlessly induces discomfort that normally overpowers the success priority of transforming to a new desired behavior.

Recognizing the existence of this unfair fight and learning how to overcome it is a crucial breakthrough in our quest to maximize performance and to achieve sustained success.

Revealing and Reconstructing Dysfunctional Attitudes

Mick, the CEO of the auto supply company who we discussed earlier, moved past some of his rages by recontextualizing the hidden assumptions that created his attitude.

We uncovered the auto-context that created his attitude when I asked him why he raged at his employees. With some probing, and after considerable reflection, Mick said it was "because they deserve it."

As we continued to pursue this investigation to make our understanding of the details of his auto-context more specific, he said, "They make a lot of money, so they should not make mistakes."

Mick also complained about the lack of innovation and initiative; everybody came to him for all decisions. He had not yet learned to recognize that he was causing the avoidance behaviors that he disliked so much.

At this point, I recalled a story Mick had previously told me about his skiing experiences, and I decided to use his description of his skiing "zones" as a metaphor to help him understand why the assumptions that underpinned his attitude were not serving him well.

Here is the story Mick previously told me. "I ski in three zones. The green zone is very easy, but I never get any better when I ski there. The red zone is near a cliff, and I am so frightened that I never take any chances, so I also never get any better when I ski there. I have the best fun and I improve the most when I ski in the yellow zone. This zone is difficult for me so I sometimes fall, but it is also safe and I can get up and try again. This making mistakes and getting up and trying again enabled me to ski at the level I do today."

I pointed out to Mick that his anger when his employees made mistakes had taken away the yellow zone in his company. Instead, there was a large complacent green zone and a huge frightening red zone.

Mick's rages created a red zone cliff that caused everyone to retreat to the safe green zone of grudging compliance with little or no risk-taking that independent decision-making and innovation require.

Mick needed to define for others and for himself the boundaries of the red zone where mistakes could have devastating effects on the company.

After that, he needed to open a vast yellow zone where his team could take initiatives and make mistakes without fear of receiving humiliating punishments.

Mick was to point out the mistakes politely so his employees could get back up, brush themselves off, and try to do better next time. That way they would grow and innovate.

Mick got it. His employees did not need punishment when they made a mistake; they needed guidance and encouragement along with boundaries that define the business red zone.

At first, he struggled because he had to remember to apply this new context explicitly, but due to the marvels of the dual human mind, this context eventually migrated to become an auto-context.

Mick no longer rages because his attitude changed, and his company has vastly improved because of it. At the time of this writing, Mick's company was the last remaining Michigan supplier in his niche of the automotive market. Mick led his company to out-execute all of his competition to achieve growth and profitability while still in an economic recession.

If you lead an organization or otherwise have responsibilities for the performance of others, you probably have encountered "Micks" that you would like to improve.

You likely have told them that they need to change. Unfortunately, people usually cannot transform their auto-self *characteristics* on their own.

It's difficult to help other people change without understanding the nature of the underlying mental processes that drive uncontrollable behaviors and thought patterns.

This is where one needs a *transformation guide*, in the form of a trusted friend, colleague, or family member, who actively commits to helping the person "reprogram" their troubling automatic behaviors into enabling behaviors. If the trusted guide cannot help, then one may need the services of a professional leadership or behavior-change coach.

8. Bruce's Transformation

"It horrifies me to discover at this stage of my career how much of my success has been accidental."

- Bruce

Bruce, the CFO of a \$100 million West Coast industrial manufacturing company, relied too much on his own technical excellence and did not develop his team sufficiently.

Although his company required annual performance reviews, Bruce avoided them, or when pressured, provided superficial reviews.

I asked him about the feedback he had given to members of his team and his satisfaction with their overall performance.

"I prefer the indirect way to improve their performance rather than devastating them by ramming their deficiencies down their throats. I sent them to technical and leadership training seminars, and although I have seen improvements, some of them still are not performing at the level I need."

Bruce misunderstood why he was not giving adequate performance reviews. Fortunately, Bruce decided to engage a coach for other issues, and during his coaching activities, he soon recognized how he had been fooling himself about why he did not provide candid performance reviews.

Here's how Bruce, with some embarrassment, described his new insight, "I thought I was protecting my employees. Actually, I was depriving them of the frank, constructive feedback they needed to overcome their deficiencies and create new proficiencies. I finally understood that my own discomfort at providing corrective feedback blocked my needed actions. I thought I was giving real reasons when I claimed I was protecting them. I now understand I was just rationalizing by giving feeble excuses because I couldn't overcome my own discomfort."

Bruce failed to take needed developmental actions with his direct reports because he had competing internal priorities.

His success priorities, controlled by his thinking-self, dictated he should give feedback to his employees that would help them grow; but his comfort priorities, driven by his auto-self, repeatedly blocked those needed actions. To avoid further discomfort by acknowledging he was failing to take needed actions, he rationalized his actions (an "evasion gimmick" he told himself he was acting compassionately when he avoided giving them honest and constructive feedback.

Bruce looked at other automatic activities that were hampering his performance and lowering the performance of his team, and he went on to transform the critical ones.

"It horrifies me to discover at this stage of my career how much of my success has been accidental," he told me. "Some of my involuntary activities, including my assertiveness and energy, served me well, but others, such as my inability to make unpopular decisions or to resolve conflicts quickly, were increasingly lowering my effectiveness."

"Discovering the existence and nature of the auto-self has created a major transformation in my professional and personal life. I have known for a long time that we poorly understand many success factors in business, including leadership, internal motivation, procrastination, and other so-called 'soft' issues. I read books and attended seminars to learn how to manage these elusive issues, and I think I made some progress. However, it always seemed that I was viewing this topic through a foggy lens. Now I understand this other dimension of succeeding and thanks to what I learned in my coaching, I have some explicit tools for conquering it."

Bruce then started to connect the dots with concepts he learned from the literature. He observed that in their excellent book, *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done*, [Larry Bossidy](#) and Ram Charan identify what they call the "people process" that seems to encompass what others call "soft success factors." They state that the people process is not an intellectual exercise. Then, they give many examples of problems associated with the people process - including emotional blockage, micromanaging, attitude change, inability to act decisively, and behaviors that drain others. However, they never seem to get to the foundation of what aspect of

human nature controls these processes nor do they give organized techniques for managing them.

These wise, experienced authors assert, "The people process is more important than either the strategy or operations processes." Even with the little bit Bruce knew about the two-selves theory, he began to understand that the thinking-self controls most of the strategy and operations processes (and therefore our explicit success priorities) while the auto-self controls the people process (and therefore our comfort priorities). This makes the auto-self and our comfort priorities of paramount importance for effective execution in the workplace (and in our personal lives!).

Bruce got it. He connected what he learned and experienced in his coaching activity to troubling issues that had eluded him in the past and to some aspects in the business literature. The authors of *Execution* also claim, "If you don't get the people process right, you will never fulfill the potential of your business." Using the two-selves theory we describe in this book, we could paraphrase their quote as follows "If you don't get the comfort priorities right, you will never fulfill the potential of your business." Bruce leveraged his new insight to make still greater improvements within his organization.

"Now that I understand this automatic mode of activities, I lead more effectively by changing my own counterproductive auto-self characteristics. I also have helped my team members to overcome some undesirable aspects of their automatic modes. I intend to continue to help them improve; if I fail to help them transform some of their involuntary behaviors, I know I can always bring in a professional coach to make that happen."

"I have more confidence now that I have control of the levers of my own performance as well as the success of my finance department. Oh yes, as a serendipitous byproduct, I now understand the behavior of my teenagers better and I am taking actions to help them grow into adulthood more effectively."

Bruce, the CFO of the industrial manufacturing company, became so concerned about the gaps he had in effectively leading his organization that he decided to take action on his own. He put it this way, "When I realized I did not understand the

significant impact my automatic activities have on my performance and the success of my organization, I decided to transfer some of what I learned and experienced through the coaching process to my team. I contracted to have leadership surveys performed on my direct reports and, as I expected, many auto-self issues emerged for all of them, and they were mostly unaware of their counterproductive auto-behaviors. After I got them to recognize and accept their behaviors that were undermining our further success, I decided to coach them on my own because our budget would not accommodate an external coach this year. I am pleased, and so are they, that I was able to help some of them change undesired behaviors, which resulted in improving their performance."

Bruce became a transformation guide.

Like Jerry (the quality assurance director) and Jeremy (the friend who agreed to guide Penny), Bruce leveraged his coaching experience to become an effective transformation guide.

When we try to change a habit or auto-context, we usually experience painful internal reality wars.

Penny, Mick, and I experienced what we call internal reality wars when we unavoidably encountered two forces pulling us in different directions. Jake has not experienced this tug of war yet because he refuses to accept that he has a problem with his leadership skills. The concept of internal struggles between competing realities appeared powerfully in the seminal book, *Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, by Leon Festinger.

My road-rage story that I described earlier provides a graphic example. I had my thinking-self success priority - my decision that I was not going to engage in road rage - and I had my auto-self comfort priority that was impelling me to avoid my discomfort by acting out and teaching those rude drivers a lesson. I experienced a traumatic reality war between these two internal driving forces when I decided to stop driving outrageously.

When we try to change a habit or auto-context, we usually experience painful internal reality wars. Try to re-experience

what it felt like if you tried to quit smoking, avoid indulgent eating, exercise regularly to improve your health, or give corrective feedback to one of your subordinates. You no doubt experienced reality wars between your success priorities - your intention to change - and your comfort priorities associated with overeating, smoking, sedentary behavior, or avoiding giving critical feedback to members of your team.

Have you ever tried to stop an annoying habit using a New Year's resolution or a promise at home or at work? If so, I suspect you can re-experience the personal reality wars you faced, whether you succeeded or not. You may have experienced frustration, anxiety, feelings of defeat, or bad moods when you fought these internal reality wars.

Besides the reality wars associated with changing habits, we also have thought-based internal reality wars. A mild form occurs when two people provide contradictory assertions as "expert" witnesses in trials.

Much more disturbing internal reality wars occur when information from the outside world challenges our beliefs or fundamental assumptions embedded in our auto-contexts. This happens, for example, when we encounter information that contradicts our self-image, someone we trust lying to us, the death of a loved one, or the looming failure of our business plan.

Internal reality wars inherently create discomfort. Most attempts at fundamental change create internal reality wars and therefore discomfort, which is the fundamental reason most people give up on the change process, including to stop procrastinating on important actions and to stop displaying undesired behaviors, if they do not have external help.

9. Morry's story

Morry had a Ph.D., had been a full professor at a young age, and was widely published. When he came to me he was a high-level individual contributor in a top-end New York change management organization. He was extremely frustrated that he could not deal with aggressive people - especially ones in high authority.

Morry's inability to stay engaged when confronted with aggressive behavior was inconsistent with his desires and intentions to help CEOs of large companies. In his company, the most prestige and the highest income went to those who worked with CEOs.

Consistent feedback from performance reviews spanning several years had created in Morry a solid self-awareness about this issue. He tried repeatedly to overcome this crippling blockage on his own, but always to no avail. As he put it, "Something inside of me always forces me to retreat in the presence of powerful CEOs."

Morry's blockage was similar to Penny's inability to exercise regularly even though she was well aware of the consequences of not exercising.

As a guide, if you question clients (for simplicity, we will refer to people we help as "clients," even for unpaid guides) who want to overcome barriers at work, you will usually find that they have blockages to actions that cause them to fail in other aspects of their lives.

Penny's guide, Jeremy, probed and found out that besides her inability to exercise regularly or eat a healthy diet, she had an employee who would not meet commitments, and she was unable to hold him accountable.

When Morry and I explored other areas where he failed to take action, we identified two more.

His wife repeatedly got upset with him when his ex-wife dropped off their children at random times and without prior arrangement, which he allowed because he could not stand up to his ex-wife and insist that she agree to and abide by a

drop-off schedule. He also created trouble for himself when he could not say "no" to speaking invitations and overbooked his time.

As we searched for a common behavioral cause for all of his issues, we concluded that he had a pattern of capitulating in the face of assertive people. Morry was used to figuring everything out but as he lamented to me, "I know what I need to do, but I can't do it."

Morry's coaching had a better ending than he had expected when he approached me. He went on to work effectively with CEOs and he also worked out an arrangement with his ex to reach agreement when Morry would have their children and he learned to accept only the most beneficial speaking engagements.

Morry and Penny experienced their own particular forms of action barriers. However, all of us fail to execute some items important to our success and well-being. Common examples in organizations are failure to conduct developmental performance reviews, inability to engage and resolve conflicts, avoidance of public speaking, failure to hold people accountable when they miss their commitments, and tenacious resistance to discovering our own uncontrollable actions - the problem that Jake has encountered.

Master Coaches will succeed upwards of 90% of the time; the major exceptions being people who were forced into the coaching process rather than those who embraced it. Transformation coaches help their clients change when the clients want to but cannot do it on their own. Once a coach determines that a client does not want to change, it is best to terminate the engagement.

10. Ron - The Power of Declarations as Anchors

"Barry, stop working on your agenda. Focus on what I want to do!" - Ron

The following case study illustrates the power of declaring grand goals and intentions for keeping the coaching process on track. It also demonstrates the efficacy of understanding the counteracting principle by employing the path of least discomfort in a manner other than using deadlines.

Ron entered coaching due to excessive control issues and an unrelenting drive to win personally at everything - often at the expense of colleagues and his company.

Following our normal course for creating transformation anchors, Ron declared four *grand goals*. Consistent with his bold, winning style, he chose tough but doable goals to achieve by the end of our targeted one-year coaching engagement.

As usually happens, Ron struggled with the results he received from his leadership performance feedback that included an online 360° survey (his boss, peers, and direct reports) and interviews. To his credit, after working through the agony he experienced with some of the challenging feedback, he identified five auto-behaviors that he wanted to change in order to achieve his grand goals. He then declared explicit *intentions* to change each of his five undesired behaviors.

Ron embraced the coaching process and made steady progress. He became increasingly adept at noticing occurrences of the auto-behaviors he wanted to change (overcoming the natural barrier imposed by the auto-self, which operates outside normal awareness). With his new dynamic self-awareness, Ron was increasingly able to substitute his desired behaviors.

Ron diligently kept a log of his successes and failures related to his intentions. During our sessions, we focused on how he felt about enacting his intentions, and his strong pleasurable feelings would reinforce his ability to continue with the new behaviors. As normally occurs at the beginning of a coaching engagement, Ron also had quite a few misses. Because he took his declaration of intentions seriously, and

because he believed enacting those intentions would enable him to perform at a higher level and achieve his grand goals, he faced up to his missed intentions and genuinely felt bad about them.

My coaching was working as intended.

However, one day we hit a critical point in our coaching engagement. Ron had gone through his successes and failures with his intentions, and we had moved on to discuss other activities that had taken place since we last met.

While Ron was recounting a frustrating meeting he had on Tuesday, he casually mentioned that he called Hank, one of his direct reports, "stupid" during a meeting. As soon as I found a break in Ron's monologue, I seized the initiative and said to him, "Ron, I want to go back to your meeting on Tuesday and your encounter with Hank. You said you called him 'stupid' in front of his peers."

"That's right, he said something really boneheaded. Now I want to go back to the meeting I felt really good about on Wednesday."

This time I did not wait for a pause in Ron's discussion. "Whoa, Ron," I interrupted. "I want to go back to your meeting on Tuesday. How do you feel about what you said to Hank?"

"I feel fine," Ron defended. "Hank deserved it." Ron then attempted again to shift the conversation to a more comfortable subject, saying, "Now can I continue telling you about how well I did on Wednesday?"

I responded: "I want to hear about your Wednesday meeting, Ron, but right now I want to focus you on the Tuesday meeting with Hank."

"Barry, stop working on your agenda. Focus on what I want to do!" Ron barked at me.

Such aggressive behavior creates discomfort, even for an experienced coach, but seasoned coaches have conditioned themselves to avoid the normal auto-self-driven fight-or-flight response to aggressive behaviors from their

clients. It obviously will not do to hang up or scream back at your coaching client.

Although I experience discomfort, I have no problem remaining outwardly calm with aggressive clients; yet plotting a powerful next move in real time while under duress can create a challenge. However, I had seen this evasion pattern many times and I knew exactly what I wanted to do next.

"OK, Ron," I said, "Take out your list of intentions and explain to me how your behavior was consistent with Intention #3 - 'I will treat everybody with respect.'"

As I normally do after asking an open question, I went silent. As the excruciating silence crept along, I could visualize exactly what Ron was doing. Even though this was a telephone session, I had been with him face-to-face on enough occasions that I knew in such situations he looked up at the ceiling with a serious look on his face while he pondered what to do next.

While waiting for Ron to resolve the internal reality war I had trapped him in, I wondered which path he would take to resolve it and I plotted some next moves depending on how he responded. Frequently, clients will resort to an evasion gimmick by creating elaborate excuses or rationalizations as to why they had not really violated an intention. I figured Ron was too perceptive to go down that path. As one former client said to a coaching prospect of mine who interviewed him as a reference, "One of the powerful techniques that Barry uses to force us to face our dysfunctional behaviors is to strip away our rationalizations relentlessly."

After what seemed like an eternity, Ron finally said, "I guess it is not consistent."

To his credit, Ron avoided rationalizing the behavior. Was he now ready to face the counterproductive behavior he had exhibited and work on changing it?

I continued to push the point. "So what are you going to do about it?"

After struggling for quite a while to find a way to escape the internal conflict in which he found himself enmeshed, he finally growled, "I will just drop Intention #3."

I have clients declare explicit intentions so that they will experience pleasure when they enact them and discomfort when they violate them. This process eventually leads to transforming their counterproductive habits. Unfortunately, the discomfort of addressing this counterproductive behavior was too great for Ron, so he chose to drop one of his intentions.

I responded by leading him into a follow-up dilemma. "It is not for me to determine your intentions, Ron, so drop Intention #3 if you like. Now please pull out your list of grand goals. How likely is it that you will achieve Grand Goal #2 regarding having a motivated and energized team if you delete Intention #3?"

After another pregnant pause, his well-honed rational calculations took over and he admitted, "It is unlikely."

I now had Ron where I wanted him and I said, "All right Ron, what is your next move now?"

I had escalated the consequences for Ron. If he continued to justify his dysfunctional behavior, Ron would have to abandon one of his grand goals, which I knew was vitally important to him.

After another long, agonizing delay, he said rather meekly, "I want to keep Intention #3. Yes, I violated it, and darn you for trapping me so I couldn't skate by this one."

As the tension eased a bit, we discussed what had just happened, and Ron agreed that avoiding that particular behavior was his agenda, not mine, and I was just making it difficult for him to rationalize ("Hank deserved it") his counterproductive behavior that he found difficult to stop.

This exchange also illustrates why self-help behavior changes normally fail to produce the desired results. Most of the time people use evasion gimmicks to fool themselves in a reflexive effort to avoid the inevitable discomfort of transformational

change. They tell themselves anemic stories that enable them to quit their self-help effort without feeling bad about their failed attempts at improving.

During our next coaching session, Ron said he had reviewed some of the material I previously sent him. He asked if I deliberately led him into a trap that would force him to admit he had behaved poorly because that was the path of least discomfort out of his internal reality war. I affirmed his suspicion. He asked why I did not tell him during the session that was what I was doing.

I explained that discussing the auto-self and various transformation techniques *at the beginning* of a coaching engagement could help a client understand auto-behavior and auto-context activities, some techniques that can transform them, and the discomfort that normally accompanies the transformation process.

In addition, a *retrospective* discussion, such as we were having after Ron successfully resolved his internal reality war in favor of positive transformation, can help clients understand what happened. This can help them leverage the process for future personal changes or possibly use it while serving as a transformation guide for others as happened with Jeremy who was guiding Penny.

However, *during* the process, one must experience it, not think about it, for it to create the desired result.

Ron got it. He volunteered some appreciation, "It really helps me to understand the existence of the auto-self. I don't think I could make sense out of what happened to me without those insights."

Ron also offered his observations about our last session. "The previous coaching session was a turning point for me. I struggled with it the last couple of days. I had to face the fact that I was rationalizing a deep-seated behavior that I found difficult to change, and I came out feeling confident I now can change all of my unwanted auto-behaviors."

Ron then made a good-natured parting observation. "Although the process helped me greatly, I hope we never have to repeat

it because it felt like crap." Such is the nature of transformational change.

The situation with Ron is similar to many others I have encountered. Declaring grand goals and intentions puts stakes in the ground for anchoring transformational change. Grand goals provide the reason to change and produce a backstop if sliding occurs on fulfilling intentions.

Explicit declarations of intentions for new behaviors can create both positive and negative feelings to counteract the normal human tendency to avoid the discomfort of transformational auto-behavior change.

Ron went on to transform the five counterproductive behaviors that he indicated in his intentions. He also achieved three of his four grand goals on time, and he completed the fourth one just one month late. Understandably, Ron is extremely proud of the improvements he made to some of his counterproductive habitual behaviors. As a result, Ron is confident he will move soon to the next level of management.

I also take great joy in having helped Ron achieve his goals by changing his dysfunctional habits that blocked his way to greater success. Helping people to perform beyond what they or others thought possible, such as happened with Ron and many others, makes me happy that I chose to retire my executive role to become a transformation coach.

You, too, can enjoy the fruits of this effort, both through your improved performance and in the form of satisfaction of guiding others to overcome their barriers to success.

11. Don - Chain Smoking Stopped

"Wow, now I realize what you mean by virtual consequences." -
Don

While helping clients establish their businesses-related grand goals and intentions, I routinely ask them if they have any personal habits they would like to change while we spend a year working together.

Many people select a health habit such as to eat more sensibly, exercise regularly, or stop smoking.

One client, Don, was a long-term smoker in his early fifties who wanted to stop smoking but failed on all previous attempts (the unfair fight again). I decided that the best way to coach Don to overcome his smoking habit was to apply intense virtual conditioning.

While transformation coaching works well over the phone for most issues, instilling a heavy dose of virtual consequences to break a tough habit works best face-to-face.

Don worked halfway across the country from me, so I waited until my next monthly on-site coaching session. I showed him some heart-rending stories and horrific pictures of people suffering from the results of smoking.

One particularly moving picture showed an emaciated man nearing death from lung cancer with his wife and young son tearfully hugging each other at his hospital bedside while the man held a picture of himself playing with his son just a few weeks earlier.

I placed a pack of cigarettes next to the stories and pictures and I caused Don to experience feelings in the present that were realistic for him in the future if he kept smoking.

As I passionately described the real consequences this man and his family were experiencing, I watched Don grimace as he felt the effects of smoking and observed the man's family suffering. After inducing virtual penalties for quite a while, I switched to virtual rewards and focused on experiencing how

much more stamina he would have and how he would be able to play with his grandchildren when they came if he stopped smoking.

These virtual consequences transformed a story about the hazards of smoking that might happen in the future into a powerful feeling experienced in the present.

After this intense experiential session, Don explained how it felt.

"Wow, now I realize what you mean by virtual consequences. I really felt the agony of that man's wife and son as they watched him wither away into a painful death. I experienced what it would feel like to put my family through such torment, in addition to my own excruciating pain. I also felt great about having improved energy and stamina. I think I will take up racquetball again."

It does not take many of these sessions to induce virtual consequences that break a bad habit. Don quit smoking! When I contacted him one year after our coaching engagement, he reaffirmed that he no longer smoked. While all of his previous attempts failed, virtual conditioning transformed Don's tenacious smoking habit.

Virtual conditioning provides a powerful tool to enable coaches (and guides) to transform dysfunctional habits in their clients. A fortuitous aspect of virtual conditioning techniques is that we can apply a minimum level of virtual penalties to break the old habitual behavior.

If the behavior is not too deeply ingrained, moderate virtual penalties suffice. Cases like Don's, of breaking an ingrained smoking habit, and Alan's (described later), of curtailing uncontrollable anger displays, require intensive use of virtual penalties.

Virtual conditioning is unique to humans and works most effectively when induced by a transformation helper. Virtual consequences help people change so they can avoid real consequences later. Virtual conditioning is just one of many

auto-self change techniques that result from a clear understanding of the dual mind.

12. Gary - Revealing and Reconstructing Dysfunctional Expectations

Gary was a bright, knowledgeable, likable, and well-connected solopreneur (owner of a single-person company). In spite of all of these assets, he was not achieving a level of income he desired and could not break out of this dilemma in order to grow his business. Gary engaged me to coach him with a goal of doubling his income from the previous year. I leveraged my business experience to guide Gary into focusing his offering and repositioning his target market from smaller companies to midsize companies.

My main focus, however, is always on behavior change. We established discipline for Gary by focusing on a hierarchy of quarterly, monthly, and weekly goals. Each week, Gary would set tasks on his calendar to enable him to achieve his weekly goals. I noticed Gary failing to execute his tasks for one particular client. I generally assume that when people do not do what they say they intend to do, hidden discomfort blocks their execution. I focused Gary on the fact that he kept failing to execute for one client and I asked him what was uncomfortable about his work for that client. As normally happens, Gary could not identify any particular discomfort or even notice that discomfort blocked his execution.

I started down a path of proposing possibilities through closed questions. "Is the work very boring for you?" "Do you feel that the work may be too difficult for you?" "Is your client very difficult to work with?" Gary considered each question, and then answered, "No."

I next switched to some open questions and probes. "What does it feel like when work for that client appears on your calendar?" "What do you experience when you work with this client?" "Try to identify what you don't like about working with this client."

After this type of give-and-take over a couple of sessions, we finally zeroed in on what was bothering Gary. Gary was used to having his clients accept the work he delivered to them. This particular client was very bright and challenged Gary's work products. Once we finally discovered the auto-context that was blocking Gary's actions, we were able to work on a recontextualization.

As I kept probing, I discovered that Gary's real fear was that his client would not consider him competent if he did not produce work that was immediately acceptable.

It turned out the client was not abrasive. He just wanted to question Gary's work product to make sure he understood it and to attempt to find improvements.

When I pressed Gary, he admitted his client actually did find some improvements. I then asked Gary what it would be like if he expected this client to help him improve his work product. After struggling a bit, Gary finally realized it would probably create a better result. We finally agreed that Gary would visit his client, tell him how much he appreciated the feedback he gave, and create a working relationship where Gary would bring a draft solution to start the discussions and they would jointly refine the results. After that, Gary readily jumped into his work for this client. He had changed his expectation, so he no longer felt bad when the client worked with him to improve the results.

Many auto-context reconstructions, including self-image changes and business culture realignments, normally produce significant discomfort. Fortunately, most attitude and expectation reconstructions do not create much discomfort. The challenge is to make explicit (i.e., to the thinking-self) the implicit (i.e., buried in an auto-context) assumption that causes an undesired behavior. The persistent use of closed-question suggestions and open-question probing from the transformation guide often uncovers the content of an auto-context that causes the undesired behavior. This is often the easiest path to eliminate an undesired behavior or to overcome a barrier to consistent execution.

12. Maria - Evocative Questions Get Results

Maria was a director of software development whom I coached. Maria had strong technical abilities and was a good project manager. However, she was not able to get the best out of her team. One of her intentions for a new behavior was to give balanced performance reviews to her direct reports that noted their strengths but also pinpointed their weaknesses and identified actions to improve their performance. Maria previously had sugarcoated the reviews of her team members. I worked with Maria to develop balanced reviews on her next round. When she kept postponing delivering the reviews, I got her to commit to do two of them before our next coaching session.

At our next coaching session, Maria admitted she had not given the performance reviews. I started with an open question, "Maria, why didn't you conduct those two performance reviews as you intended?"

As expected, Maria replied, "I really wanted to do them, but the week was just so hectic I couldn't hold the schedules."

I could have just told her that this sounded like an excuse and not a reason to me, but I knew she was struggling to give the developmental feedback and I wanted to create some stronger feelings to counteract her discomfort with the performance reviews. I started with what I assumed would be a series of evocative questions as she tried to avoid facing her barrier to action. "What happened to make you so much busier than you thought you would be when you committed to doing the performance reviews?"

Maria rattled off a list of activities that she had not anticipated when she made the commitment.

I continued, "How does that number of interruptions correspond to a typical week?"

Maria answered by repeating the interruptions that kept her from conducting the performance reviews.

I pressed on. "I realize that each week you get interrupted on different issues, but I want you to notice how your interruptions this week corresponded to the amount you should have expected."

Maria was starting to get the point. She finally admitted, "Yes, the amount of interruptions was about normal."

Maria was now running out of wiggle room as I continued to press her. "I assume you plan for your normal amount of interruptions when you schedule important tasks, so tell me again why you didn't do the two performance reviews this week."

This is the crucial point that transformation guides must embrace. Most people find the delay uncomfortable and interrupt the process by asking further questions while the client is still struggling with the previous question. Maria went silent while she tried to think up a way to escape the reality war into which I had led her. I stayed silent and let her grapple with her dilemma.

Maria finally confessed, "Yes, I could have done those interviews. I guess I was just looking for an excuse because I know they will both get upset when I point out their weaknesses."

I now pushed forward to the conclusion of the evocative questions. "Now that you realize what happened last week, what are you going to do differently this week?"

Maria thought a little longer and said she would schedule specific times for the reviews and hold them. This type of evocative question usually gets the desired result. Maria completed the reviews and they went better than she had feared. If I had just suggested that she was offering up excuses, she may have disagreed and not changed her behavior. However, after a series of evocative questions, most people find it preferable to execute their intended behavior than to take another stroll down Evocative Questioning Lane with their coach or guide.

Another powerful use of evocative open questions to change behavior is to apply them while holding somebody accountable who has missed a commitment.

13. Rich's New Ability to Drive Results

Rich was the national sales manager for a midsize manufacturing company in the Midwest. He had a technical degree and knew the products and their underlying technologies extremely well. Rich was exceptionally bright and could easily think through complicated scenarios. In spite of his obvious assets, Rich's CEO was considering replacing him because he was not getting needed results out of his sales force. The company decided to try to retain his expertise by hiring my company to coach him to get better results out of his team.

A coach I was training performed the actual coaching, but I attended most sessions as a "shadow coach" to provide feedback to the coach trainee. When we did the performance survey, Rich's shortfalls were obvious. Rich lived in an intellectual world. His keen mind and deep knowledge (i.e., his thinking-self assets) had enabled his previous successes. However, the feedback identified huge gaps in his ability to lead (his auto-self deficiencies). More specifically, he kept telling his team what to do while frequently allowing them to fail to enact his directions. Even his own team identified that he was not leading them effectively.

The first thing we did with Rich was to suggest he transfer to product development or even possibly head up product development for the company. Rich had been a sales executive before in a different environment that enabled some successes for him. He stressed that he was totally committed to succeeding as a sales executive and was prepared to engage fully in the coaching process to overcome his leadership deficiencies.

Rich viewed himself as a nice guy and indeed everything we saw about him concurred with his self-image. We all like nice people, but sometimes in business you have to be tough-minded to get results. Leaders must hold people accountable when they do not achieve results.

We coached Rich to solicit commitments from his team members and then hold them accountable for meeting those commitments. He was to praise them and make them feel great when they achieved their commitments and firmly hold them accountable when they missed them. We role-played with Rich to train him how to ask evocative open questions such as "What does a commitment mean to you?" "What do you think it says to others about your character when you make commitments and fail to keep them?" "Why should we keep you here if you can't do what you promise you will do?" Rich gradually established accountability skills, but he still had a barrier to executing them consistently with his team.

Not surprisingly, Rich gave rosy performance reviews in spite of the fact that most of his team members were missing their numbers. For his next round of performance reviews, we focused Rich on identifying developmental areas in addition to the strengths of his team members. A breakthrough came when Rich decided to rate his top salesperson an "A" on selling the current products but a "D" on selling new products that the company desperately needed to grow revenue. Rich managed to deliver that performance review. This sales person was used to being the star, and now Rich was telling him he was coming up short. This interaction had the desired effect on the sales representative and on Rich. It shook the self-image of the sales person so dramatically that he started focusing on and selling the new products. Rich finally experienced the process and saw the value of applying "tough love" to his salespeople to get them to perform.

As time went on, we kept focusing Rich on learning to hold his people accountable. When, during one of his coaching sessions, we identified a failure in Rich to hold one of his salespeople accountable, Rich retorted that he just could not become a person that slams his fist down and chews people out.

This is the point where we were able to leverage Rich's experience with his star performer. Rich did not shout at him, did not slam his fist down, and did not get aggressive. In order to instill the discomfort needed to create needed actions, Rich calmly told his star that he was coming up short on selling new products. Rich now had an internal experience he could use in other situations. He could ask tough open

questions in a calm but firm manner to force his team members to experience the fact that they were not meeting their commitments. Rich went on to leverage his previous experience to become increasingly effective at getting commitments and holding his team accountable. The expected results followed. The company's revenue started growing significantly and the new products took off.

14. Cecilia's Inability to Lead Effectively

Cecilia was Vice President of Supply Chain Management for a high-tech design and manufacturing company. She had worked her way up the ranks of the corporation to reach the executive level. However, her management had become concerned that while she was a star contract negotiator, she was not getting the best out of her team. The 360° survey and interviews indicated that she lacked the leadership ability to hold members of her team accountable. Like Rich in the previous story, Cecilia lacked the ability to give penetrating developmental performance reviews and to take strong enough actions to get the best out of her team. The fact that Cecilia had worked alongside many of the people she now led compounded her barrier to action.

The breakthrough in Cecilia's coaching came when we identified an auto-self characteristic she had developed in order to succeed in the purchasing world. She could handle the most manipulative and forceful salespeople with a tenacious but calm demeanor in order to get good procurements for her company. What we did was to focus Cecilia on what it felt like when she trained herself to interact effectively in the difficult purchasing environment and what it felt like when she was able to withstand a contentious environment that others would try to escape. This was an "ah ha" experience for Cecilia. She was able to leverage her insights and experiences regarding negotiating good deals out of salespeople in order to "negotiate" better performance out of her team.

Owning Up to Inevitable Setbacks

Even professional coaches do not achieve 100% success. The disappointments my organization has incurred were obvious early in the coaching engagements and we terminated them quickly.

For all transformation coaches and guides, please remember that the habit change process focuses on enabling clients to change behaviors that they want to change but cannot succeed on their own. Our job is never to impose change. We may need to help our clients to recognize their shortcomings, as previously illustrated successfully with Jake and later shown unsuccessfully with May, but ultimately they need to own the transformation agenda.

A list of our setbacks may help you understand what to look for when guiding someone to change.

15. May's Inability to Face Shortcomings

May was a bright, technically strong, high-level manager in a large software company. The HR vice president asked me to coach May to help her overcome excessive control needs and relentless micromanaging. May only agreed to enter a coaching program after considerable persuasive efforts on the part of HR and with some restrictions. We conducted a 360° survey and I interviewed several people including current and former direct reports. The feedback was consistent and identified overwhelming behaviors on May's part that were stifling her organization.

I had started coaching May prior to completing the organized performance survey based on the feedback from the HR VP. After May received her leadership performance feedback, she refused to accept it. We tried several approaches over a few weeks as we did with Jake. Jake finally got through the discomfort of discovering his behavioral shortcomings. Unfortunately, May never could do that. The coaching process serves to help people who want to change but cannot transform on their own. Since May was totally convinced she had no issues, there was obviously no point in continuing, so I terminated the engagement. The last time I checked on May's status she had

transferred to some limited activity that used her personal talents and avoided her shortcomings. I felt sorry for May because she had enormous talent and could have emerged as a top leader in her company.

16. Lois Has Trouble with the Truth

Lois was a Ph.D. chief technologist for a high-tech company. She was also a coach's worst nightmare because she was duplicitous - she sometimes had trouble speaking truthfully. The sad thing about some duplicitous people is that they do not even realize they are telling lies. Some people just cannot stand to admit they do not know something or that they have made a mistake, so they make up a story in the hopes that other people will buy it. I think some people do this so often that they start to believe their own fabrications. Sometimes people around them do buy their stories, but over time, many people start to notice their lapses in truthfulness.

I was following my normal process of having Lois log her successes and failures with respect to her intentions for behavior change. I began to suspect that Lois was not reporting accurately about the times when she failed to enact her intended behaviors. It is not a good idea to accuse somebody of telling untruths. I would just express my surprise that she was having so few lapses when I knew how difficult it was for her to make the changes.

As time went on, I started coaching two of her direct reports, who were also friends and supporters of Lois. During my sessions with them, sometimes they would both report activities that were consistent with each other's stories but were inconsistent with reports I was getting from Lois. Now, I no longer just suspected she was not telling the truth, I had solid confirmation.

The next phase of coaching Lois was tricky because I wanted to be as polite as I could and not jeopardize the two people who had reported, quite innocently, different events.

Lois got angry, agitated, and continued to refuse to admit she was not telling the truth and that she was failing to enact her intentions. I knew I could not help Lois change if she

could not speak honestly with me when reporting her behaviors, and she did not want to admit and address her duplicity issue, so I terminated the coaching engagement.

17. Stan and Mack - Not Fully Engaged

Over the years, we terminated two other coaching engagements early due to lack of desire to change on the part of the client. Stan was head of sales for a venture-backed high-tech company. His management forced him into coaching, and he never wanted to change. He thought his persuasion skills were sufficient to fool us regarding his seriousness to change, but it is quite difficult to fool an experienced coach. His management and I both tried to get him engaged, but to no avail. We terminated the coaching arrangement and his company let Stan go. As they put it, "We really like Stan's sales skills and would like to keep him if he would overcome the issues we identified. We were willing to invest in a coach to help him change. However, when it became clear he didn't intend to change the behaviors that we identified were unacceptable to us, his termination was a no-brainer."

Mack was head of quality assurance for a subsidiary of a high-tech global company in the health industry. He was smart, technically strong, and driven to achieve results. His company engaged me to help him overcome anger and abuse issues. We made some good early progress but then we hit a wall. When he would fail to enact an intention, I would ask him how he felt about it. His usual answer was that he did not feel anything. He thought he did not have any feelings. I tried to help him understand that feelings were driving his behavior, but he could not get it even when he was displaying enormous feelings while stating that he did not have any feelings. We tried engaging another coach who would use a different process from mine, but he hit a similar barrier to a desire to change. Unfortunately, his management ended up terminating Mack because he just did not want to engage fully in the habit-change process.

It is important to persevere with a client even in the face of pushback and disappointments. However, it is also prudent to recognize if the client has given up on the process. The good news for transformation guides is that their clients will

normally have a high desire to change, unlike Stan, May, and Mack discussed above.

18. Alan's Case - Putting It All Together

"I realize I had no chance in the world of ever making the changes without your unwavering help and support." - Alan

Alan's case and the one following illustrate the richness of the transformation techniques described in this book.

Alan, a consultant at a high-end professional services business, had two difficult issues he wanted to transform. His case illustrates the use of most of the techniques described in this book. As such, it goes beyond what we should expect from a transformation guide, but it displays additional examples of habit-change techniques that transformation guides can employ and illustrates the coordinated use of many techniques that professional transformational coaches can employ.

Establishing the Anchors for Change

Alan's company conducted robust performance reviews and had conducted 360° surveys on all of their senior consultants, so when he approached me, he already had a clear static self-awareness. of two troubling issues he wanted to address. He sometimes became visibly angry at work, which was intolerable to his management. He also seemed to have periods where he would perform at a very high level and then would encounter other periods where he struggled to get things done. He did not understand why, but he knew he needed to overcome his down periods in order to continue to prosper in his company.

In Alan's case, his intentions preceded his grand goals. To lock-in the anchors, I invited Alan to declare his intention to curtail his anger outbursts at work and at home and to execute consistently on his projects at work. Alan eagerly declared those intentions.

To make sure Alan did not waver when the going got tough, I also asked him to declare his grand goals for the coaching process. Alan declared that by the end of our one-year coaching engagement he would have reduced any anger displays to an acceptable level at work, as verified in his next performance review, and at home, as measured by feedback from his family. The second grand goal he identified was to receive praise from his boss in his next performance review regarding his consistent performance.

I also made sure that Alan constructed his declarations of intentions and grand goals so that they were unconditional.

Uncontrollable Anger Outbursts

When we started Alan's coaching program, he was eager to eliminate his anger outbursts, which he had repeatedly failed to accomplish on his own. Alan had a solid static self-awareness (he knew he had anger episodes) of his anger control issue, but his dynamic self-awareness (noticing his anger outbursts while displaying them) was spotty. This is common with anger episodes; sometimes people notice while they display them, but other times they erupt without creating solid awareness.

Even as Alan began to read responses from his environment and therefore increase his dynamic self-awareness, he was still not able to control the behavior. As we always do, we had Alan keep a log of any anger outbursts and of the times he felt anger welling up inside him but he maintained his composure. As Alan logged anger "events," he reported a high number of anger outbursts at home. This did not surprise me because behaviors people uncontrollably display at work often appear in other parts of their life. However, Alan was frank about his behavior at home, and he was rightly concerned about the potentially devastating impact he was having on his family. Unfortunately, although his awareness and his honesty in reporting about his anger outbursts at home were laudable, we were not making good progress on curtailing his anger displays.

Alan's Anger at Appliance Store

In a telephone coaching session one week before my next trip to New York for a face-to-face session, Alan presented me with a crucial opening to apply intense virtual conditioning to break his anger outbursts around his family. Alan started out, "Barry, I really messed up two days ago. My wife did some things at a store that I didn't like, and when I got into the car I blasted her in front of our children."

"What did you do in the car, Alan?" I asked.

"I lost control so badly that I can't remember exactly what I said, but it went something like this, 'What do you think you were doing embarrassing me in front of the sales clerk? I had already told him what we wanted to buy when you started asking him a lot of questions about other items.'"

"Whoa, Alan - where were you shopping and what did you want to buy?"

"We were at the local discount appliance store and we were buying a new washer and dryer," Alan replied. "I had done my research and I knew what I wanted to buy. I just needed to negotiate the best possible price. When my wife started asking the sales clerk questions, it just interfered with my negotiations."

"Who does the laundry at your house, Alan?"

"My wife, but that doesn't mean she knows the best washer and dryer to buy."

I was tempted to pursue the line of why Alan did not think his wife should have any input into the decision, but instead I opted for a different approach, asking Alan, "Tell me why you were able to control your anger inside the store but then blew up as soon as you got in the car."

Alan thought for a while and then responded, "I guess I didn't want to make a scene in the store."

Alan had walked into the trap I set for him and I sprung it with a follow-up evocative open question. "Please tell me, Alan, why you find it more important to avoid screaming in front of strangers than in front of your family."

Alan's voice went soft as he responded, "I guess I just didn't want to embarrass myself in front of the salesman and the other people in the store."

I continue my pursuit. I was going to keep pushing the point until his behavior in the car really stung. That is how one instills virtual penalties. "Why is it more important to you to avoid embarrassing yourself with an anger outburst in front of strangers than it is in front of your family?"

There was a long pause while Alan grappled with that question. Even though this was a telephone coaching session, I could tell he was struggling with the reality that he had shown more courtesy to strangers than to his family. Alan finally said meekly, "I don't know why."

I had made my point and I decided to stop that line of questioning for this session. However, it was clear this was a serious problem for his family and I intended to pursue it vigorously when we met face-to-face in a week.

Escalating the Intervention

Several months into Alan's coaching engagement, we had not yet succeeded in curtailing his anger outbursts. I always try to apply the minimum amount of counteracting discomfort to break a bad habit. However, in this case, it was clear he was destroying his marriage, causing damage to his children, and probably harming his career at work, so I decided to escalate my intervention during our face-to-face session.

I do not want to narrate the details of this difficult session, but I did focus him on the possibility of a divorce and the probability that he was raising his children to be screamers just like him because they would probably mimic his behavior when they had families. I pressed the point so hard that I brought him to tears. This is one of the hardest

processes for professional coaches to train themselves to do. It feels terrible to inflict that much discomfort on another person, but my job was to break his anger outbursts and nothing short of a tough session was going to create the transformation. I had to use my coaching techniques on myself to draw counteracting pleasure from the fact that I was coaching him to a point in his life where he desperately wanted to be but could not achieve on his own.

Fortunately, people engaged as a guide to help others should never have to lead such a tough session. If moderate interventions do not work, it is probably better to bring in a professional.

The focus on the impacts to the family was the initiating stimulus to create discomfort. As he was experiencing intense discomfort, I repeatedly focused him on his anger outbursts. This process had the desired effect. Alan's anger outbursts became increasingly uncomfortable. This started to inhibit the auto-self activity that was driving the anger and opened the way for Alan to enact more-appropriate behaviors with increasing frequency. By guiding Alan to celebrate internally every time he succeeded in enacting his new behavior, he gradually became comfortable with his increasingly calmer responses.

A Problem with Two-Selfs Theory?

As Alan logged anger events, I noticed an unusual pattern. The vast majority of events Alan reported came from his home life. Our auto-self acts involuntarily, so its actions normally occur in all parts of our lives. Alan's behavior appeared to run counter to part of the two-selfs theory. I expected a proportional number of anger episodes at work.

As expected, Alan did not really understand why he was able to avoid anger outbursts at work better than he was at home. In order to find out why Alan was not having anger outbursts at work as I expected, I employed the probing/suggesting technique.

As I probed into his activities at work, we determined that Alan would escape from situations when he felt his anger

rising. He feared he would lose control and create a career-impacting conflict at work. Without fully realizing it, Alan avoided potentially contentious encounters most of the time, but at a high price. He fled when he should have interacted with his colleagues to add value. His fear of losing control resulted in a barrier to certain types of action, which in turn decreased his effectiveness.

As we worked on Alan's anger outbursts at home, which were most of the anger events we had to work with, we also needed to find a way to help him overcome his blockage to engaging in potentially contentious activities at work.

Our two-selves theory held. Alan wasn't controlling his anger in one venue and not another. Alan avoided situations at work that he felt might cause his anger to overflow.

The Loss of Gusto

In addition to Alan's uncontrollable anger outbursts, which created direct problems for him at home and mostly indirect problems at work, Alan wanted to address a different problem of inconsistent performance.

Alan described this problem as follows. "I have enjoyed many outstanding successes in my career. During those successful endeavors, passion for what I was trying to accomplish always seemed to drive my actions. At other times, I felt I really knew what I needed to do to create another success, but I had to mount a tenacious effort to accomplish all of the needed tasks. However, the worst times of all were when I could not seem to execute all I knew I needed to do to accomplish my goals. I felt so helpless. Moreover, I did not understand why I was not succeeding as I often did, and worse, I was not able to do anything about it. My job remained secure for the time because I often did produce outstanding results, but my management made clear to me their dissatisfaction about my periodic failures to execute at a high level."

Alan's barrier to motivated action at certain times almost certainly came from discomfort he felt. I explained to Alan the distinction between success priorities and comfort priorities and suggested that we start searching for his

source of discomfort that blocked his peak performance at times.

Alan explained how that felt to him. "I felt a great sense of relief when I learned about the dual, independent priorities that drive our thoughts and behavior. This new distinction enabled me to understand what was driving my puzzling inconsistency in performance. When I was most successful, my comfort priorities aligned with my success priorities. My comfort priorities drove me to accomplish the actions that I knew I needed to execute to succeed. It was as if it did not matter if these actions were required or that others might find some of them difficult to accomplish. I just seemed to do them automatically. The results materialized, and management and colleagues viewed me as a hero because I accomplished so much. I now understand that the pleasure I felt in accomplishing tasks others found very challenging drove me to overcome all barriers to success. I was leading and others were following my lead. I felt unstoppable.

"Unfortunately, sometimes I faltered and my boss even went so far as to accuse me of 'choosing to fail.' I was not 'choosing' to fail. I wanted to succeed. I knew what actions were required, and I did many of them, but I was taking way too long to handle some of them no matter how much I committed to myself to do them. Neither cajoling nor threats from my boss, nor my own determination to succeed, seemed to get me into effective action. My auto-self was blocking my actions in spite of my repeated efforts to execute them."

This was clearly the point where I needed to apply probing/suggesting techniques. I kept asking Alan what specifically it felt like when he could not take a needed action. We do not normally have direct access to the auto-context, often in the form of an attitude or expectation, that blocks an activity. When Alan could not pinpoint what was bothering him, I started suggesting possibilities and watched his responses. "Was the task boring?" "Was it too difficult for you?" "Did it seem like others were taking it in the wrong direction?" This is often a tedious process spanning several coaching sessions.

After a few sessions of probing and suggesting, Alan finally identified what was blocking his actions. Here is how he put it: "A hidden aversion to conflict was keeping me from performing at the necessary level. As we penetrated into the nature of the barriers that were preventing me from executing on some assignments, we found that the issue actually cut two ways. I had an aversion to dealing with aggressive and intimidating people. Apparently, the discomfort was so great that I was avoiding certain people who I needed to interact with to accomplish my assignments. After considerable probing, my coach and I also determined that I had a fear that I would cause conflict when I was interacting with very aggressive people. I unknowingly felt that if I had to deal with aggressive people, I might not be able to control my own temper and might end up embarrassing myself by screaming at them. This also kept me away from certain situations that might lead to potentially contentious interactions."

Exposing Alan's Evasion Gimmicks

Although Alan was eager to engage in the coaching process in order to overcome his undesired behavior patterns, he still occasionally succumbed to using evasion gimmicks. At the beginning of our coaching program, Alan sometimes tried to rationalize that his anger outbursts were really someone else's fault. This was an easy evasion gimmick to overcome. All I had to do was identify it and point him back to his unconditional declarations. He owned his anger outbursts, and he was going to curtail them independent of any person or any situation.

Alan slipped into the use of more evasion gimmicks when trying to overcome his inability to execute consistently. Alan was very smart and loved to do research. Sometimes that was helpful, but when I noticed he was doing it often, I asked him if maybe that was an escape ritual to avoid handling some difficult tasks. After pointing this out a few times, Alan finally agreed. That created sufficient discomfort that Alan eventually did his research only when it was scheduled.

I tracked Alan's progress on all of his projects, and when he fell behind on some, I would ask him why. When his explanation sounded weak to me, I would ask him if he was giving me a reason or an excuse. Sometimes I would accept his explanation as a valid reason. Other times I would ask him about the level of interruptions he expected when he committed to accomplishing certain tasks. Many times, he would recognize that he was not providing a valid reason. Once again, this exposure of an evasion gimmick forced him to face that he was failing to enact his intention, which normally caused him to get back into action through the path of least discomfort.

Leveraging Progress on Anger Management

Once Alan finally began to transform his anger at home, we were able to leverage that experience to help him with other transformations. Alan now had direct insight into what it was like to observe his auto-self's activities and to experience a transformation.

At work, Alan started noticing when he disengaged from activities that he needed to engage in. He also became confident that he would notice when his anger started to rise and that he would be able to substitute an appropriate behavior before he created any external displays of his rage. He was able to leverage his insights from his previous transformation to change the way he interacted at work.

As Alan became increasingly adept at constructing dynamic self-awareness of a particular auto-self activity, he started noticing when he failed to take needed action and pinpointing the nature of the feeling that was blocking him. Often, it was a fear of losing control of his emotions that preempted his active engagement. Over time, Alan was able to recognize this barrier and some other barriers that were blocking his passionate engagement. Alan's previous transformation created confidence he could make another one, which led him to regain his gusto in most situations.

Recontextualize - Attitude Change

In addition to heavy doses of virtual consequences, I also helped Alan reconstruct some attitudes. I came back to that episode in the appliance store several times. When I probed about his concept of a family, he finally was able to unpack his attitude towards his family. He believed he was "king of the realm" or "lord of the manor." When we finally made that auto-context explicit, Alan realized that was not the way to treat his wife or work with her to raise their children. Just because he was a big deal at work did not make him the boss at home. He proceeded to create an explicit attitude regarding his role in the family. As usual, after using that explicit context for a while, it eventually migrated to an auto-context (Two-Selfs Property #7: Emergence - Auto-self processes imperceptibly emerge to execute repeated activities automatically).

Successful Conclusion

Alan transformed his anger outbursts because he was able to manage all three dimensions of anger damage. Alan no longer had a hair-trigger for his anger outbursts. He had raised the threshold that triggered his anger response to a normal level. The virtual penalties that I instilled in him created such discomfort when he noticed an anger outburst that he greatly lowered the intensity and stopped very quickly whenever he did become angry.

This coaching engagement went beyond what we should expect a friend or colleague to accomplish when guiding someone through transformational change. However, it illustrates many of the techniques discussed in this book and shows how guides can use them in less intense situations. Alan's transformation required a combination of intense virtual conditioning, recontextualizing, stripping away evasion gimmicks, and leveraging the first difficult transformation to enable subsequent changes.

While this engagement lasted a bit longer than we usually target, Alan successfully reduced his anger outbursts to

occurring only in extreme situations. As we would expect, his situation improved both at work and at home. We provided this example to illustrate that the intensity of the virtual penalties and virtual rewards must match the tenacity of the auto-self resistance to change. In this rather extreme situation, Alan's discomfort escalated towards pain. In the previous examples, much less intense emotions were involved.

As we concluded our coaching program, Alan thanked me for all I had done for him. He even told me that his wife sent her thanks for all the changes he had made. He also noted the support I gave him throughout the process. Here is how he expressed it, "Barry, you were very tough on me during many of our coaching sessions, but I realize it requires inducing a lot of feelings to change deep-seated habits. I also appreciate that in spite of all of your tenacious pushing of me, you also repeatedly focused me on my goals and kept encouraging me to achieve them. I realize I had no chance in the world of ever making the changes without your unwavering help and support."

I usually follow-up about one year after I stop a coaching engagement to check on the status of my clients' transformations. In Alan's case, I did not need to follow up. He called me before the year was out to thank me again and tell me the transformations he made had indeed stuck and that his company had just promoted him to a management position. He also shared that his family life had improved considerably.

19. Brad's Case - Exceeding Expectations

"The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it."

- Michelangelo

Anemic Expectations

Brad, the manager of human resources for a Midwestern manufacturing company, approached me to coach his CEO who had a bad temper and intimidated people. Paul, the CEO, then commissioned a leadership survey of the top managers in the company. Besides conducting an online 360° leadership survey, my organization interviewed several people. I interviewed Brad. When I asked him where he would like to be in five years, he answered, "Employed." That obviously was not a very empowering outlook. At the time, Brad reported to an executive who reported to the CEO.

While I was coaching Paul through his intimidating behavior, I also conducted some informal coaching for Brad. When I found out that Paul deliberately avoided conducting performance reviews because he did not think they helped, I persuaded him of the value and I coached him through the process of setting up meetings and conducting performance reviews for all for his direct reports, with Brad's help to prepare for each review. When we finished the process, I asked Brad to take over helping Paul for the future. Brad responded, "I can't do that - I can't tell Paul what to do."

I pointed out to Brad that as head of HR, he should take the responsibility for doing it and if I could work the process from the outside, he could work it even better from the inside. Even though Paul had moderated his behaviors, Brad was still terrified of him.

As time went on and Brad became increasingly comfortable with the new Paul, he became more effective to the point where Paul promoted him to Director of HR reporting directly to him.

After coaching Paul through his aggression episodes and a few other issues, getting him focused on developmental performance reviews, and guiding him to ask open questions in meetings to develop his team members, we had many aspects of the company

running well. Paul was strong in technology, in manufacturing, and in finance - he knew how to create profitable businesses. He also was a ferocious problem solver.

Oblivious to Greater Possibilities

What Paul lacked was the patience to focus on the day-to-day execution of the many projects and tasks required to sustain success. Since Paul disclosed having a form of attention deficit disorder, it did not seem productive to coach him to lead the charge on methodical execution. Instead, we wanted to complement Paul with somebody who could assure the execution of the directions that Paul so ably set. One possibility would have been to go outside and hire a COO (Chief Operating Officer) - an expensive path that also would mean bringing in somebody who did not know the business well. We felt that none of the plant managers had what it took to assume that corporate role.

Brad had been making good progress in his ability to interact with Paul and had been taking an increasing role in driving results. As Paul and I discussed how to complement his abilities with a more methodical executive, we concluded that Brad might fill that role if I coached him to operate at a more senior level.

Brad had become solid as head of HR, but he could not envision himself in a much greater role. He needed more confidence and additional techniques. Brad wanted Paul to tell him what to do, but Brad needed to figure out what to do on his own to assume the senior operating role.

Paul and I saw possibilities in Brad that Brad could not see himself. Brad initially resisted getting involved in coaching. Since he did not have significant aspirations or empowering self-confidence, he was unable to visualize a greater future for himself. Paul acted correctly by not insisting that Brad enter a coaching program. However, Paul and I continued to offer coaching to Brad as a possibility. Eventually, Brad decided to receive coaching.

Reaching the Next Level through Coaching

When I interviewed people around Brad at work as a normal prelude to a coaching engagement, I found auto-self issues that Brad would do well to improve. He often failed to pay close attention during meetings, so he sometimes would ask a question about something previously discussed. He would frequently talk over people when they were speaking to him. He was viewed as being overly pessimistic - a glass-half-empty kind of guy. These issues were the starting point for his coaching program, but Paul and I had much greater expectations than correcting Brad's minor deficiencies. We intended to develop Brad to take on significantly greater responsibilities.

After the departure of the CFO, Brad assumed responsibility for driving the strategic planning process. He did a good job of getting all the key players together and leading the way to identify some viable strategic directions. However, during the next year he was not able to drive the execution of the strategic plan into the operating plans. He lacked the ability to hold people that did not report to him accountable.

Since lack of accountability ran rampant in their company, Paul and Brad asked me to conduct a commitments/accountability workshop series. As part of Brad's development, I asked him to co-facilitate the workshop on commitments/accountability. That helped establish Brad as a top leader in the company and it provided an excellent opportunity for him to learn to hold his colleagues accountable and lead the process of improving the accountability culture in the company.

As I coached Brad to operate at a higher level, he pleaded that he was too busy and just could not take on much more. I then challenged Brad to offload 50% of what he was currently doing so that he could take on higher-level activities. At that point, he could not imagine how we could offload that much activity and he could not visualize how he could usefully fill up so much additional time.

Fortunately, Brad had a capable assistant at one of the plants, Lucy, who appeared to have more potential if we could get her to offload some of what she was doing. The plan was

falling into place. Brad was to offload 50% of what he currently did to Lucy and then hire a plant HR person to whom Lucy could offload some of her work. Lucy already handled some corporate work for Brad; now she would take on more.

I also coached Brad to take more responsibility for holding colleagues accountable. Gradually, he stepped up to this increased responsibility.

Brad still sometimes waits for Paul to tell him what to do or to give him permission to take needed actions, but he has come a long way. Brad is learning to lead at a higher level. He is becoming a star performer at a level almost unimaginable before he experienced coaching.

Training to Coach

As Brad started freeing up time, we had the opportunity to introduce him to new activities. As a further part of Brad's development, and as a means to develop others and provide in-house coaching expertise, I began training Brad as a coach. I "shadow coached" (monitored Brad's coaching sessions and occasionally coached - usually when Brad invited me in at the end of each issue) Brad as he coached three different leaders with vastly different needs and personalities and therefore needing three different coaching approaches. Brad made excellent progress on all but the most difficult aspects of coaching.

The areas where Brad struggled provide insights into where transformational guides and inexperienced coaches may fall short. Brad had difficulty constructing open questions, as most untrained people do. After most sessions, Brad and I would debrief on how he did at coaching. I would usually point out that he asked too many closed questions that were not stimulating thinking or evoking feelings. After a while, Brad would notice his closed questions after he asked them and restate them as open questions after getting a terse response. As time went by, Brad got increasingly better at constructing evocative open questions on the fly.

After Brad learned to construct powerful open questions, he had another barrier he needed to overcome. He would get

uncomfortable and ask another question instead of waiting for his coaching clients to struggle through formulating acceptable answers. This issue was related to his habit of talking over people when in normal conversations. Brad started coaching others while I was still coaching him, so we were able to work simultaneously on his over-talking issue and his struggle to wait for answers. He needed to listen better. Happily, Brad has not only learned to construct potent open questions, he now also pauses while his clients struggle with their answers.

As Brad has continued coaching others, he has become increasingly competent - demonstrating a keen ability to search for evasions, ask timely pointed questions, and keep his clients/colleagues on a path to enact their intentions and achieve their grand goals.

As an example, without prompting from me, Brad challenged his clients to develop their team members better so they could offload more to them. He explained that this was the way for them to assume higher-level responsibilities. This move by Brad provides yet another example of how experiencing an internal auto-self shift makes it easier to coach other people through it.

Brad's major remaining challenge is to induce virtual rewards and virtual penalties at the level dictated by the situation.

We were failing to make adequate progress in coaching Larry, one of Brad's internal clients. I suggested to Brad that he needed to induce some virtual penalties to get Larry over a major hurdle that was blocking his success. Brad pushed back. He said, "You don't understand, Barry. If I make Larry very uncomfortable, it might hurt my relationships with him and I have to keep working with Larry after this coaching program is over." To me, that was Brad's excuse for avoiding the discomfort of inducing virtual penalties.

I have seen such reluctance before with people I have trained to coach. For most of us, it takes considerable conditioning to accept this discomfort. However, getting people occasionally annoyed with us during the coaching process is the norm. After all, we are pushing them to do something that

they have declared that they want to do but that they find uncomfortable and still try to avoid. After having been through this process many times, I have found that clients seem to forget about the difficult moments and rejoice in the successful transformation once it occurs. They realize that without the persistent nudging they would never have achieved the changes they desired.

Since I was no longer formally coaching Brad, we did not have sufficient opportunity to get him through this barrier so we decided that I would come to town to apply virtual conditioning face-to-face with Larry. That session had the desired effect. I moved Larry past a major barrier that was keeping him from executing some crucial activities effectively.

Brad learned from this experience. Here is how he put it. "I like the way you handled this, Barry. You did not get aggressive with him and you did not insult him. You just kept pressing open questions that made him squirm and reflect upon his lack of progress." During this session, Brad and I reversed roles; I took the lead and he occasionally coached, and Brad landed one potent open question. After the session when Brad and I debriefed, I congratulated him on posing a timely open question and asked if he noticed that he failed to look at Larry when he asked the question. To Brad's credit, he did notice and commented that it was just too uncomfortable for him to look straight at Larry while asking the question. Brad also said he noticed that I made eye contact throughout my interactions with Larry.

Brad still needs to overcome his final major hurdle because he will need the same skills and the same ability to withstand the discomfort of pushing people through their resistance to change as he assumes increasing responsibility to drive consistent results in the company.

Exceeding His Own Expectation

What a joy it is to help a leader in his late fifties exceed his own wildest dreams of success and accomplishment. And people claim you can't teach an old dog new tricks.

Brad resisted entering into coaching. Also, periodically during his coaching, he suggested not continuing. He kept focusing on addressing his shortcomings, and when he corrected them, he wanted to stop the coaching process. However, his undesired behaviors were not overwhelming, and Paul and I wanted to focus on developing new capabilities. Brad could not see greater possibilities. Such is the nature of our auto-self that he could not visualize his potential. Fortunately, Paul and I did see his potential and moved Brad along, even if somewhat reluctantly on his part, to realize that potential.

At the time of this writing, Brad continues to assume greater responsibilities. He is well on his way to taking over responsibility for overall execution - essentially the COO role.

Brad's case provides an excellent example of people exceeding their own expectations and of how they can learn through coaching to execute and lead at successive levels above their own wildest imaginings.

The plan worked out extremely well. Instead of hiring a COO, Brad took over the top operating role while still maintaining overall guidance of HR and direct responsibility for people development. Brad promoted Lucy to the position of manager corporate HR. By developing Brad to operate at a higher level and then having him challenge and develop Lucy to assume responsibilities for half of what he used to do, the one new hire was a plant HR generalist instead of a more expensive COO. Even with well-deserved raises for Brad and Lucy due to their promotions and greatly increased responsibilities, the company saved significant money and dramatically improved overall performance by systematically developing and getting the best out of the talent they already had.

