

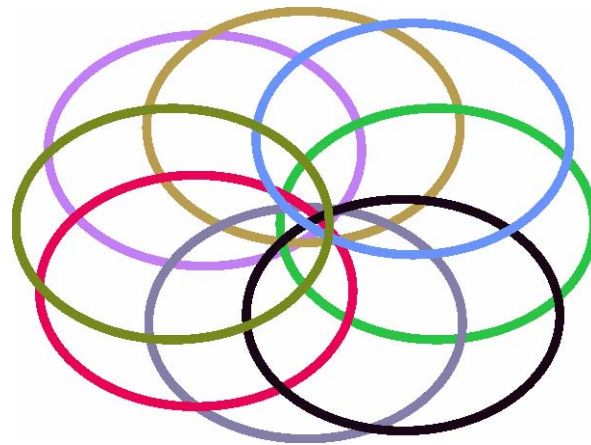
# I CAN DO THIS

## PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT WORKSHOP

Helping Offenders Have The Strength To Not Re-Offend

Seven week course

Helping you learn how to be all that you can be,  
by applying principles that are incredibly simple!



Each of the parts of life are inter related. You cannot separate this interaction. Everything we do in one part of our life has a far-reaching effect on all the other parts of our life. Therefore, learning to do one thing well will help us do everything well.

**Presented by Cordell Vail**  
Editing and Updating by Kenneth Teglia

These seven lessons are based on the “*My Turn To Win: Secrets Of Excellence*” Personal Achievement Workshops.

# Lesson 4

## A VIEW OF YOURSELF: Building self-esteem and self-worth

### ***DEFINING SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF WORTH***

The most important thing that you can learn about self-esteem and self worth is to say, "I Am Responsible".

**Brian Tracy**

What is self-esteem or self worth? It is our view of our selves. It is like the steering wheel of our life. It does not matter how many gifts, talents or skills you have, if you have low self-esteem or low self worth you most likely are going to have difficulty becoming all that you could become. You will have difficulty feeling your successes.

Much of low self-esteem comes from our environment in the past. It is greatly shaped by conditioning. It can be a rut in our lives as big as the Grand Canyon and just as hard to climb out of. The way we act now depends a lot on our past experiences. We tend to become whatever we have done for a long enough time.

You know you have low self-esteem if you catch yourself saying things like this: I am so stupid. Why am I so dumb? I don't fit in. I am a loser. Nobody likes me. I can't do it well enough. Why try? I never do anything right. I have to do this or they will think I am dumb. I feel more comfortable alone. I had a bad family life when I was young. I just can't help it. It is just the nature I was born with. I am from a messed-up family, so I cannot possibly win.

Abraham Maslow is famous for his studies of the four basic needs in life.

- 1) **Physiological**, meaning hunger, thirst, bodily comforts;
- 2) **Safety/Security**, meaning free from danger;
- 3) **Belonging and Love**: meaning being connected to others, being accepted by others;
- 4) **Self-esteem**: meaning a need to achieve, to be competent, and to gain approval and recognition.

If we are lacking in any of these four areas, it would be reason enough for us to feel low self-esteem. We have to take care of our basic needs. If we cannot earn a living for our self or our family and we are very poor, that could be a cause for low self-esteem. If we live in an environment where we don't feel safe, are in constant fear for the safety of yourself or your family, or feel trapped, that could be a cause for low self-esteem. If we feel rejected or unloved by our spouse, family, friends or fellow offenders, these too would be obvious causes for feelings

of low self-esteem. Finally if we do not feel like we can succeed at things, or if we feel we are never approved of or recognized by others for what we do, these would greatly contribute to having feelings of low self-esteem. Another big tell-tale sign of having low self-esteem is a nagging fear of being rejected by others.

Zig Ziglar tells a funny story about low self-esteem. He says we often use as an excuse the fact that, "My sister got all the good looks, my brother got all the brains, and my father never succeeded at anything and neither did my grandfather, so I could not possibly succeed at anything."

When we suffer from low self-esteem and can't snap out of it, we are doomed to go through life in a constant state of discouragement. Discouragement is one of life's most destructive feelings. Have you ever heard the expression that discouragement is Satan's "go-to" weapon when nothing else seems to work for him? It is said he inclines us towards discouragement as a means to stop us from becoming all that we might otherwise become. The discouragement that comes from low self-esteem will stop us right in our tracks. We will quit difficult tasks at the first "bump in the road". We will pull away from changing our life for the better by telling our self that we are not capable, worthy or deserving of anything better. Does any of this sound familiar?

If low self-esteem has arisen from your past experiences, then it is not your fault, right? If your parents told you that you would never amount to anything, they could not be wrong, could they? If your family looks at you as being the black sheep in the family, then that is what you are and you have to live with it, right? You sit here as an offender, so there is no hope of change now, is there? Or is that correct? Can we blame others for our low self-esteem? To blame someone else is always the easiest thing to do. It lets us fail with "dignity". The trouble with that is we still fail. No matter whose fault it is, if we fail, then it is still us who failed. There comes a time in all of our lives when we have to become adults emotionally and accept the responsibility of being who we are, why we are. We have to become responsible for our own destiny and stop blaming others for issues in our life. We have to let go of the past and begin to live for the future. It no longer matters why you broke the law and became an offender. It only matters that it happened and the only appropriate question is: what are you going to do about it going forward. Blaming anyone else, or anything else, will not change a thing. Changing yourself is the only thing that will change your life for the better. If you let feelings of revenge or hate for others control your life, there is not much chance you will be different than you were before. Those feelings must be let go. You cannot change the past but you can control and change the future, **IF YOU WILL!**

Many times we are caught in a low self-esteem life style. Some people grow up around people that are guilt throwers and guilt catchers. And the guilt throwers keep throwing guilt and we keep catching it, and it locks us into a life of low self-esteem. But we can break out of that lifestyle of guilt from the past. We can be different. It is like being caught in a trap or like letting others hold our head under the water.

When your nose is under water, an inch is under water is the same as a mile. It doesn't matter how bad the things you have done in the past were. It doesn't matter how far you have

veered off the good path up until now. If those things have caused you to have low self esteem then the only thing that matters now is what direction you are going to go in the future to be different. If you are going to change, you have to not only get your head above the low self esteem water, but also, you have to get right up out of the water. We cannot allow others to hold us down. We cannot allow others to control us. We have to resolve to be free and start being different.

It is possible that our low self-esteem may arise from things we have done ourselves in the past, rather than just from how others treated us. Many people have low self-esteem because they are disappointed or feel great guilt from something they have done in the past. When we do things we know are wrong, whether we know it from religious teachings, the government or our own natural sense of right and wrong, it brings guilt into our lives. It could be said that in a given society, "There is only one set of rules in life." We often call them laws. Some laws are civil laws. We also normally have moral or religious rules in a society. If we have laws, a moral code, or rules of behavior, and behave in a manner that is outside of those rules or laws in our society, we pay the consequence, which often comes in the form of low self-esteem. So if we have broken the rules of our value system by doing things that we knew were wrong or illegal, that could be the cause of our low self-esteem. You cannot avoid that.

We have free will, and so we can stand in front of a truck. But we don't have free will that can decide what will happen when the truck hits us. But we do have the choice to move out of the way of the truck. But if we do not move, then we no longer have a choice of what happens. We **do** have the choice to change. If we do not change, then we will get more of the same of what we have gotten in our lives in the past. The truck of life will run over us again and again.

The solution to that is not to lower our value system; it is to increase our standard of life to meet our value system. If this is an issue in your life I would highly recommend to you a wonderful book written by Dr. William Glasser called "*The Identity Society*". He also wrote the book called "*Reality Therapy*". You can learn about these books on his web page at <http://www.wglasser.com>. He has been very successful with his work in Women's prisons in Los Angeles. Very few offenders that have been through his program of "*Being Responsible*" have ever gone back to prison. The main point of his teaching is that we need to make our actions **Realistic, Responsible and Right**. If we begin excusing our behavior by misinforming others, refusing to be responsible for our actions, then we can start to rationalize and feel the consequences of our actions were unfair. If we then let the feelings of revenge blind our powers of reason, getting even can become our focus rather than getting right in our lives. If we on the other hand focus on **Honesty, Truthfulness and Integrity** in our lives, we start to build our self worth and self esteem. As we said before, "If we keep doing what we have been doing, we will keep getting what we have been getting".

Many people have different ways of acting in different circumstances. We often act different when we are at home with our family, spouse or children from the way we act when we are at work, or at church, or with our friends or when we are alone. Do you remember the earlier lesson of the "*Family Trap*", where I was the one that acted so differently in the presence of my family than I did in the presence of anyone else? The ideal person with high self-esteem would

be quite consistent in how they act from one place to another, or from one person or group to another. In order to save my own self-esteem, my wife and I had to move away from my family. It was hard; but I did it.

Have you heard the old saying, “You can fool some of the people some of the time but can’t fool all of the people all of the time?” Eventually, those who know us best will see through the masks we try to wear, and see our true nature. That is the whole point of the “*You Can’t Fool The Chickens*” story in lesson one. If we have low self-esteem, people will pick up on it: they **will** know. High self-esteem will reflect happiness and enthusiasm in all that we do. Low self-esteem will cause us to feel feelings of envy, jealousy or remorse and cause us to do things that are wrong, which we would normally not otherwise do.

The obvious question here, then, is how do we improve our self-esteem? If we have low self-esteem how can we break out of that life pattern and reach for excellence in our actions? There are many ways we can do that, but the first and most important is our understanding of how self-esteem is created in our life. The first step in that direction is to gain understanding of things that build self-esteem. We can start by making a list of things that are known to build self-esteem and then study them. Learn about them. And then try doing them. Here is an example list that you can add to.

- (1) The Bible says we should “love our neighbor as we love our self” (the point here is that you need to love who you are yourself first to be able to love others).
- (2) A self-fulfilling need is the fact that we need to be needed. We love to be loved. We will only be loved by others if we love them first. That will make us “lovable” to them.
- (3) We want to be worth something to someone. That is one of the needs that we first need to fill in our lives. That comes by changing our lives by developing our skills and talents.
- (4) We can feel the feelings of charity for others, pure unconditional love. That will build our self-esteem
- (5) Service to others brings powerful feelings of satisfaction and the feelings of self worth.
- (6) Develop a positive attitude. No one likes to be around a growling dog.
- (7) We will build our own self-esteem when we help build the self-esteem of others.
- (8) Focus your life and its purpose beyond the immediate things at hand. Have goals that you are working towards and achieving.
- (9) Insist on living in a positive and safe environment. Get away from bad friends.

Understanding how to build self-esteem is one thing. Doing it is quite another. As we learn about things that will build self esteem, we have to be willing to do them too, for them to be of any value to us. We have to have steps to take that are the things that we can do. We need to have a plan for change.

By studying and adding to the list above you will find that it will become a self fulfilling activity. For example, as you give to others, as you love others, as you serve others, you will fill your own emotional bucket. Isn't that interesting that by helping others, your own emotional "bucket" will be filled. It is important to be important to someone. It is important to need to be needed. Helping others fills that need to be needed. That will happen as you learn to serve others. When you help them, they will respect you and admire you and give you the feeling of being needed and appreciated. That will build your self-esteem as much as anything else you can do.

Another thing you can do to build self-esteem is to change your environment. The role environment plays was discussed previously. If you are in an environment where the people around you pull you down, then you have to get out of that environment. That is not an easy thing to do if those people are your family or close friends, as was the case with me, or in your specific case where as an offender, you don't have much choice as to who you will hang with or where you will go each day. So some of these things will have to be done as you set your goal to leave here and go somewhere else to live and set the goal to **NEVER COME BACK HERE AGAIN.**

However some of the necessary steps can be taken while you are still here. We can start by helping others or being of service. We can do that wherever we are. We can begin to practice avoiding situations that make us feel put down or worthless. Even as offenders, housed in this place, there are still a lot of choices we can make in our lives to improve our situation. The time to begin is now, not later.

As said before, we are creatures of habit. Also, we humans rise to the expectations of others; whether they are low or lofty. If we can't change low expectations, then we have to change our environment.

Sometimes people are like crabs. Have you ever heard how they used to catch crabs in the olden days? They took a big wicker basket and walked along the beach. When they caught the first crab, they put it in the basket and held the basket and the crab in their hand and keep looking. When they caught the second crab, they sat the basket down and just left the two crabs in the basket. They could not get out. Why? Because when one crab tried to crawl up the side of the basket the other crab would pull it back down. They would not let each other get out of the basket. So once the crab-catcher had caught the second crab, he could sit the basket down on the beach and just go about the business of finding crabs and putting them in the basket without worrying that they would get away.

Like those crabs, people can pull others down. Sometimes we are moving two steps ahead; but then, other people pull us three steps back. You have to be willing to get away or stay

away from people who make you feel stupid or pull you down. And you need to do that before the sun comes up again tomorrow.

If we are going to change our environment, it takes action. We have to have new expectations of our self. Here is an example of how people rise to the expectations others have of them. Years ago, I had a huge library in my home. I noticed that when people came to our home and saw the books they changed how they treated me. They assumed I was an expert at things and would ask me questions. I had to look the answers up in my books just as they would have had to, but they thought that because I had the books, I knew a lot. When I moved away, we were not able to take all of the books with us, so I decided to try an experiment. I had a very dear friend who loved to study. Therefore, one day when he was not home, I got his daughter to let me into his home and I put up a huge bookshelf and gave half of my books to him. I did not say anything about why I was doing it. He of course was very surprised and pleased when he came home. Then we moved away. I just waited. Then just as I thought, a few months later he called me and said, “Cordell, this strange thing has happened. Since you moved away, everyone thinks I am the expert now. People keep asking me all these questions”. I asked him if he knew the answers. He said no, he had to look up the answers just like I did. Then I knew my experiment had worked. I set out to change his life by changing the perception others had of him. When they came to his home and saw all the books, they assumed he was an expert and started asking him questions. And, what do you think happened? Well, I’ll tell you. By answering the questions, he **BECAME** an expert. His self-esteem ended up being enhanced by my experiment. The experiment was proof that the lofty expectations others have of us can lead to our fulfilling those expectations.

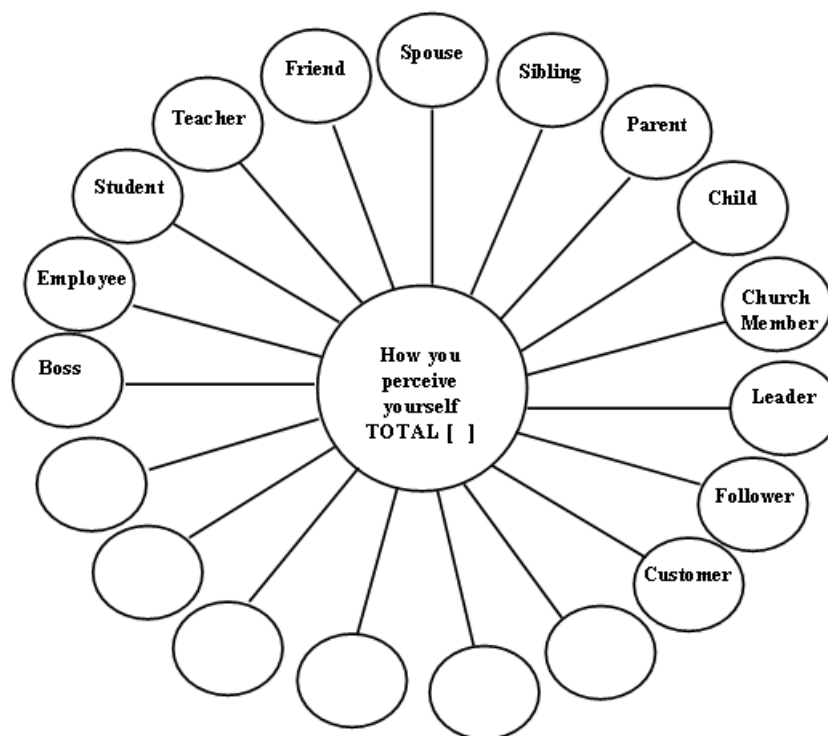
How does any of this relate to you and the expectations you have for yourself or that others have for you? If you perceive yourself as dumb, or not knowing anything, people will treat you that way. That may sound crazy, but people do treat you the way you act. So if you want to be treated differently then you have to learn to act different. To do that you need to find ways to feel better about yourself. Start studying. Get a degree or certificate in something so you feel like you are an expert in something. Find a hobby and get really good at it so you can tell others about it and share it with them. Find something you can be really good at and it will affect every other part of your life.

Having a positive outlook on life can go a long way towards improving your self-esteem and changing the way others treat you. If you change they will change too. People will raise their expectations of you if you change them for yourself first. Where do we start? People do not like a growling dog. But who doesn’t like a friendly puppy dog? Start by being happy and friendly to others. Start now to develop a positive attitude. There is a famous saying that I memorized as a youth that still has great meaning to me to this day related to self-esteem. I think we have all heard it: “When you laugh, the world laughs with you. When you cry, you cry alone”. We need to start learning to be all that we can be.

The next thing we can do is to relax and start to enjoy the journey of life. Start finding joy in your life. If you are under stress all the time you need to work on getting stress out of your life. Many times stress comes from doing less than you can! Stress makes us feel negative. Getting stress out of your life will also do a great deal to help you improve your self-esteem.

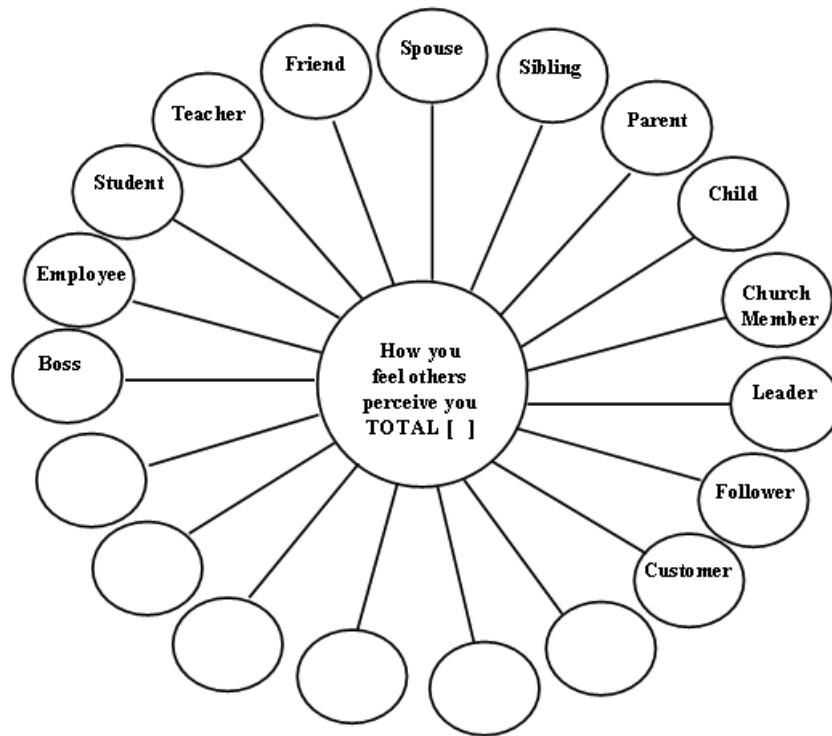
## ***SELF WORTH EXERCISES:***

Here is a little exercise that will help you get a handle on your current feelings of self worth. Look at the categories in this first example and you will see how there are items in the circles that are what we might call roles, talents or skills in our life. The object here is for you to give yourself a score from one to ten for each roll in your life; a score on how well you think you do each one. Then you can add up all the scores in the outside circles and find the average score. Put the average as the total score in the **Total [ ]** box big middle circle. You can add roles in the blank boxes that fit your lifestyle



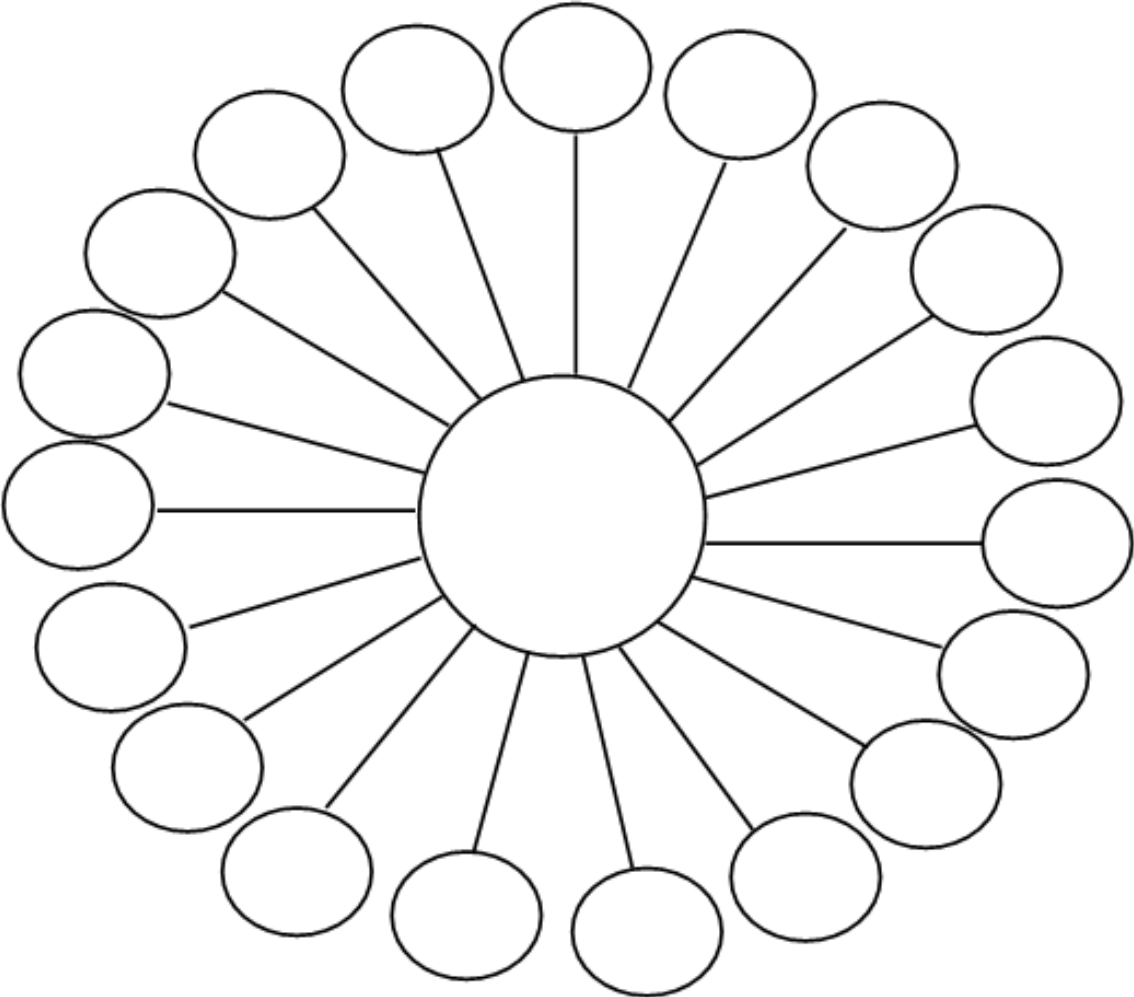


Here is an interesting twist to that exercise. Let's do that exercise again, but this time fill in a score of how you think others would rate you for those roles in your life. Be honest, this is something only you are going to look at. There is no passing or failing; only learning about yourself. It will help you get a clearer picture of yourself worth. If you are really daring, fill in your roles and then let your friend fill in the scores of how they see you in that roll from 1 to 10 (ten being the best) and see how close they are to what you scored for yourself. (That of course will only work if you have a friend or family member who will be that honest with you).



If your score in each circle was not a 10 then you have some work to do on your self-image and the image others have of you. Surprisingly most people have the self-score lower than the score they think others would use to rate them.

Here is a blank template for you to use that will be only roles, skills, or talents that you want in it. Have fun with it. Try it with your friends. As you use it, you will be surprised how well it depicts a person's self worth.



## ***USING GOALS TO BUILD SELF IMAGE***

Something that you can do now to help you on your way to having a higher self-esteem and self worth is to join the talents and skills you have listed in the circles above into a goal-achieving program. Here is another example from Franklin – Covey’s Reality Model that may help you do that. This time instead of putting the skill or talent, you have or want to acquire in the circles, place it in the ROLE box. Then take each of those talents or skills and set some goals that will help you improve that talent or skill.

There will be much more on how to set and achieve goals later in this workshop. Several methods are very effective in setting and achieving goals. One of these methods is to take each of the talents or roles that you put in the outside circles on the diagrams above and then set goals to improve that role or talent. Here is how to do that. Using the blank template below, put the role, skill or talent that was in one of the circles above in the box under Role or Talent. Then write down five goals that you have to improve yourself in that role, skill or talent. Now for the final step, set a deadline for when you will have done that or started doing that.

Here is an example of one filled out:

Role or Talent	Goal	Date to have it done by
Dog Trainer	1. Find out what I need to do to become a dog trainer.	4 July 2010
	2. Get prison approval to take the online course.	30 July 2010
	3. Apply for the online course.	15 Aug 2010
	4. Study 6 hours every day and do homework.	1 Aug 2012
	5. When released get a job as a dog trainer.	1 Aug 2016

The next page is blank for you to use as a template, if you like using this format for goal setting.

**Role or Talent**

**Goal**

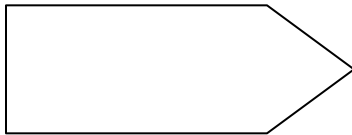
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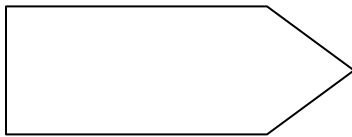
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## ***THE POWER TO CHANGE***

The final step in improving your self-worth and self-esteem will come with the study of attributes that will help you develop character in your life and making the principles behind those attributes a part of your daily routine. Here are the six attributes:

**Dominant Thoughts**

**Desire**

**Belief**

**Preparation**

**Commitment**

**Persistence**

### **Dominant Thoughts**

The Bible says, “*For where your treasure is there will your heart be also*” Matthew 6:21 (King James Version). Our treasure is what we truly want. Sometimes we are not even aware of what that is. Bad experiences from the past can cause us to have such low self-esteem and low self-worth that we lose the vision of what we really would like to become. However, those things still normally remain as our dominant thoughts. They are hidden in our subconscious mind, underneath the surface. We’ll do several exercises in this workbook to help you find what these “**TREASURES**” are in your life. In the next lesson we will fill out lists that will help you learn that. What we truly want is always a part of our dominant thoughts even if it is only subconscious thoughts that cause us to day dream about it sometimes. We often find ourselves daydreaming about them, but if we do not believe, we can have them, they are just daydreams. In this workshop, we will help you find your dominant thoughts. If they are what you truly do want, then eventually, if followed, they will become a reality.

Sometimes our dominant thoughts are not good ones. If we have been abused or if we have fallen victim to bad habits, our dominant thoughts can be negative and filled with feelings of low self-esteem and low self-worth. That can easily be changed. The use of positive affirmations can help you change your dominant thoughts. If you are sad all the time, it is a fact that if you start telling people you are happy when they ask, and if you start repeating over and over in your mind the words, “I feel great, I feel wonderful”, then it can actually change how you feel. Of course if there is something in your life that is causing you to not be happy, like the loss of a loved one, or some physical ailment, then the formula for having happy feelings will have to include dealing with those things too. That might take accepting and letting go of such things, because sometimes things just can’t be completely changed and unhappy past experiences can’t be erased from our life’s history. We can’t go back in a time-machine and change what has already happened. The only thing we can do is to make sure they don’t happen again. We have to block the memory of them out so they can not destroy us. But we can all be happy and feel

joy if we are willing to, no matter the circumstances of our lives. Happiness and joy can be our dominant thoughts if we **WILL** them to be.

Our subconscious mind cannot tell the difference between real and imagined experiences. It believes whatever we tell it repeatedly, either good or bad. Our stomach is very smart. It pukes out bad food. Our subconscious mind is very gullible. It retains and believes whatever we feed it over and over again. (For further information on this you can go to my News Letter Archive and read the article on Self Control and the power of fasting:

<http://www.goldenmailbox.com/newsletter/newsletter00/001209gmbnl.htm>

Most people do not ever stop and analyze what their dominant thoughts are. They honestly could not tell you if you asked them. Yet it is there all the time and is the driving force in their life. We are constantly programming our subconscious mind to believe what we want it to believe, good or bad. To find out what your most dominant thoughts are you will need to try making an effort to be aware of what you think about most of the time. You may even need to write it down so you notice what you have been thinking about for the last two hours. If you will try to pay attention to what you are thinking about, listen, and hear what we are thinking about most of the time, we will see it is our greatest desires and shapes all that we do, positive or negative.

When I was in high school, my friends and I decided to try a little experiment on dominant thoughts to see if it would actually work. There were five of us. We decided to just pick someone at random and then all five of us start telling that person every time we saw him how sick he looked. We picked someone we all saw several times a day. It started at the bus stop and continued in every class all morning. Each time one of us saw this person, we asked him if he was feeling alright, or told him how sick he looked. That person went home sick at lunch. We all had a big laugh about it the next day. However, that event had a great influence on me. I realized how powerful our dominant thoughts are. If we tell ourselves that we are sick we will be. If we tell ourselves that we are wonderful we will be. If we tell our selves all day [..... you can add in here whatever you say over and over...], that is what will come to be. Our dominant thoughts are very powerful and pretty much control the outcome of our lives. So controlling our dominant thoughts is one of the very keys to success in our lives.

## Desire

During our life time most of us have read books or heard people talk about being motivated. The heart of achievement is always centered in desire. I have always said that if you are going to achieve something then "***You've Gotta Wanna***". Norman Vincent Peal said, "*You can be anything you want to be, if you want to be*". You have to want something to get it. But it really is more than that. We all have things we want but still do not get. You have to have a "White Hot Desire" to get what you want. You have to have some driving force. You have to have something that makes getting it worth the sacrifice that it would take to get it. That is the key right there. There are things we want; but we don't want them bad enough to pay the price to have them. We want to be thin; but we are not willing or able to exercise. We want to play

the piano; but we are not willing to practice. We want to stay out of trouble; but we keep associating with friends who encourage us to get into trouble. There are few things in this life we could not accomplish if we wanted them badly enough. But if our life depended on it, then it would be a whole other story. That's because marvelous things have been accomplished by people who are in desperate situations. Competition is also a great driving force in accomplishing desires: to get there before someone else, or the desire to be better is a great driving force in most people's lives.

I would assume that anyone who saw the movie "Lorenzo's Oil" was greatly touched by that story of a mother who was so driven to find a cure for her son that it controlled her every thought and action. And of course, eventually she accomplished what she set out to do. She achieved the goal. Why was she so driven? Because she had a "White Hot Burning Desire" to save her son. If she had seen some child in the news on TV who they said had that sickness she likely would not have been that driven to save the child. It was her own flesh and blood. It was life-critical to her. There was nothing in her life that could have stopped her before she saved her child.

The big question here is: how do we get that "White Hot Desire" to do something? How can we be driven to the point that nothing can stop us? That is one of the main points of this lesson and the exercises that we will be doing. You have to decide what it is that you want. You have to believe you can get it. You must have a plan as to how you will get it. You have to expect you will be able to get it. And then, most importantly, you have to be willing to receive it when it comes. We will talk a lot about those steps in the lessons that follow. For now, just understand that whatever you fix in your mind, and whatever you see as already being in your possession, will come to be. What we think about is what we will do. What we daydream about, or visualize, will become our dominant thoughts, and will eventually become our actions.

That sounds easy, but the missing link here is how can you build desire? Why don't most people want anything better? Why don't we all have a passion we are working towards in our life, like Lorenzo's mother? How did you end up as an offender? Is that what you set out to be? If we can learn the answer to that question, we will fully understand the power of desire in our life.

I used to work in a sewing factory. We had one sewing person there who was far more skilled than any other worker. She was poetry in motion when it came to sewing. I suspected that because she had this attribute of sewing excellence in her life, it would be ingrained in every other part of her life. One day I talked to her just to get to know her better. I asked her if she was planning on going on to school and getting a college education. She said no. I asked her if she did not want to own her own home some day. She said no. Here was a worker who made enough to pay car, rent, food and money for the weekend. That is all she wanted in life. I was so shocked. But as I got to know her better, I learned of some of the horrible problems in her life that had caused her to have such low self-esteem and sense of self-worthlessness that she did not think she could be anything else. I then realized that just having one attribute of excellence in your life is not enough. There has to be harmony in all the parts of your life. I realized that every part of our life is intermingled with every other part of our life. She had the potential of greatness, but had so much baggage from the other parts of her life that it destroyed her desire to

be anything more than what she was. For her, it was a very huge brick wall before her. It stopped any further progression to excellence in other parts of her life. After talking to her and getting to know her better over the next several months, I then realized that there are reasons why people sometimes settle for less than they really want.

Several years ago I worked as a salesman for a truck-driving school. Our job was to find people who had graduated from high school but had not gone to college yet. The reason the truck-driving school looked for those types of people was that they could qualified them for more student loans than those who had already started college. As I went from home to home calling on people who had requested information from the TV commercials, I was amazed at the similarity in the people I met. To a great extent they were working in jobs that didn't take a lot of special skill to do, and had very little drive to do anything else. Once in a great while I would find someone who was very different, and almost without exception I would find he or she had actually gone to college for at least one year. I would interview those people at great length. Why? You may think the answer is that I wanted to see if they wanted to go to the truck driving school? But No! I interviewed them for me. I wanted to see what about them was different from those had never gone to college. After interviewing several, I realized the difference was ambition, or drive. When they had the ambition to do something better with their lives, it actually was noticeable in their character. But the real puzzle was: why would college do that to a person? Was it the chemistry or the math classes?

After talking to many of them, I finally realized that college has the power to create initiative in a person. Why is college different from high school? Because when you get there the first day, the professors pretty much say, "Thank you for the money you just paid for tuition to take this class. We really don't care now if you come to class. We really do not care if you get an A or an F. If you want to drop out, then drop out. Oh and by the way, now you are at college, you mother is not going to wake you up and make you come to class". That, of course, is never actually said to a college student, but that is nevertheless a fact of life at college. In college, you are on your own. You have to have the desire to achieve. If you decide to drop out, there is no one who is going to make you stay. If you skip class, there is no truant officer saying you have to be in class. College makes students do what is necessary, without being pushed and prodded by others and that changes them for the better. It gives them the power to develop desire. And that trait was very noticeable in the character of these people I was interviewing. Ambition is the key to success in life, and it is sparked by desire. The greater the desire, the greater the ambition. The greater the ambition, the more likely you will succeed.

But that's not all College does for you. It forces you to study and read! Did you know that most people never read another book after they get out of school? That is true not only of high school kids, but also of college graduates. We have the tendency to get mentally lazy and only do what we have to do. We lose the desire to do new things. If it is hard to do, we avoid it just as much as most of us avoid hard physical exercise. If you want to build your power of ambition and desire, start taking time to read every day. As an offender, there is no reason why you cannot become well educated. You can learn to read and learn to achieve. You have the time. The question is do you have the desire to be better. Do you have the desire to do better this time? If you can find that desire, it will change you just as much as it changes a college student. It will instill in you the desire to learn and change and be more than you are. We have



to exercise our minds just like we have to exercise our body to stay in shape. If we become mentally lazy, it will show in our character. I have also noticed that people who are out of shape mentally are normally also out of shape physically. We seem to be very consistent in every aspect of our life. If we do not have the desire to improve physically, we normally do not have the desire to improve mentally either.

Why is being physically fit that important? I have found that being out of shape physically makes us tired. When we become out of shape, we normally feel tired all the time. Physical laziness makes you listless. Being tired and listless kills desire. If you're too tired to do things, you won't have the ambition to do them. Have you noticed that in your life? If not, try getting into really good shape physically and see what it does to your energy level. When you are filled with energy, then you will find you start to have the ambition and desire to do lots of things that you have been putting off because you were just too tired to do them.

Where does a white-hot passion for something come from? Can it be developed? Yes! It can be developed. We will do many exercises in these lessons that will help you learn how to develop desire and ambition. They will come by your learning how to dream. They will come by helping you learn to develop your imagination. That is a key. When you are in mental and physical shape, you will find that new ideas will just start to flow into your mind. You will need to develop the habit now to have a book where you write down your ideas. As you develop your self-esteem, you will begin to realize that you actually are a very smart person. Ideas will just flow into you, and you will need to carry a notebook around with you to write inspirational ideas down when they come. Your ambition will increase. You can just expect that to happen.

Attitude is one of the key elements in having desire and ambition. We need to develop our imagination by thinking. Do you consider yourself an idea person? The answer to that question will tell you how mentally in shape you are right now. If you are lacking in ambition and desire to do things, then start developing your imagination. Have you ever sat and just watched little children play? They are so filled with imagination. They can play make-believe games all day long. It is sad that most of us lose that power of imagination as we grow older and that dims our powers of ambitions and desire for better things in our life.

If we are suffering from the loss of desire or ambition, we may have maxed out in our life. But can we still move the dial forward and get off the dime? Well, that answer comes from how we gain desire or ambition. It is a **"rewards"** issue in our life. If someone cut off one of your fingers every time you did something wrong, you would stop. That would give you tremendous desire or ambition to never do that thing again. But we also sometimes get mixed up in our desires and want what could be compared to a child's lack of good priorities when it wants a candy bar now (immediate gratification) rather than being willing to save money for a bike tomorrow (long term gratification). You have to find enough of a reason to make it worth having something. Then you will find the desire and the ambition to accomplish it. The greater the reason, the greater the desire. It is up to you to find the reason.

## Belief

To be able to develop a desire to achieve our dreams, it is important that our dreams be realistic. If they are not, you won't be able to believe you can achieve them. Before you became an offender, if you were earning \$20,000 a year in a part time job right, you probably cannot earn a million the first year you get out. That is not realistic. However if you set the goal to do it, and believed you could, it is possible you could get a better job than you had before where you could make, for example, \$30,000. That would add \$10,000 to your income and eventually work your way up to be able to earn, say, \$45,000 year. That is believable. You could double your income every 3 years. You can do that by getting better educated. You can do that if you will develop the ambition to learn a new skill that would allow you to get a better job. Just think about that: \$50,000 a year for ten years is a half million dollars. So in 20 years you could earn a million dollars. How much of that could you save? What could you do with the money you saved? Could that help you have a better life? Is that believable for you?

## Setting a Goal

Setting a goal that you want to achieve has to be for you, or it will not work. You cannot set goals for your kids or your spouse. Why? Because you are wanting them to change or be different does not mean they want to. You can want them to be different or act better or have more in their life all you want, but until they want it, it is just a wish in your heart. So others cannot set goals for you either. They have to be your goals.

Achieving a goal that will increase the excellence in your life must be done for the right reason. If you don't do it for the right reason, you will soon lose your belief that it can be done; because the burning desire to do it will not be there. The willingness to make the sacrifice to achieve the goal will not be great enough and won't last. If you are trying to change because someone else wants you to, normally that will not establish a strong enough belief system within your mind to give you the ambition and desire to accomplish the goal. You have to have a powerful reason to want it before you develop the desire true enough to believe that you can achieve it: no matter what. Otherwise, when the first discouraging moment comes along, you will lose the belief that you can do it, and will quit.

## Self Worth and Self-esteem

Self worth and self-esteem have a great bearing on your belief. If you do not believe you are good enough to achieve new excellence in your life, you probably won't. If for some reason you feel that you are not worthy of it, you will lose the desire and belief that you can do it before you even start. According to Dr. Wayne Dyer, research has shown that 97% of the people in the United States have low self-esteem. Having the belief that you can achieve is directly related to self-esteem and self-esteem is directly related to dominant thoughts. Are you beginning to see how all of these parts of your life are connected to each other now?

## Priorities

Priorities have a lot to do with what you believe you should do, and what you feel good about doing. In the past, you may have wanted to go to school, but felt you just didn't have time; maybe because of the needs of your family, or other things that were going on in your life. Going to school under those kinds of circumstances, might have left you feeling guilty. In other words, a belief that you can do something can easily be cancelled by a priority that restricts you from wanting to do it. We will talk a great deal about priorities as we go along in other lessons. Jim Hansburger suggests that there should be five priorities in our life: Faith, Family, Friends, Fitness (physical and mental), and Finances, and they should be done in that order. If we keep them in that order in our life, then a belief that we can accomplish worthy goals related to those five priorities will not disrupt our belief that we can satisfy those priorities.

## Service.

As discussed previously, service to others has a great power to help us believe in ourselves. This again is something that can only be understood by doing. We have all heard the saying from the Bible, "It is more blessed to give than to receive". When you give of yourself it builds self worth and self confidence. It helps you believe that you can make a difference in the world. It helps you believe that you are of worth when you make others feel of worth. Service to others can be one of the first steps to feeling the power of excellence in your own life. It is simple, easy to do, yet a step many people simply don't feel they have time to try. You will never know of the power of charity until you try it and feel it in every fiber of your being. You will experience the joy that it brings to lift someone else up. Lifting someone else up will build the feelings of belief in you. It is a powerful key to bringing excellence into your life. A way to help you believe in yourself as a person who can bring about change in others lives as well as your own.

## Expectation

Expectation is a subject that has been studied a great deal, especially in schools for young children. There have been many famous experiments and published as articles in places like "*Psychology Today*". One such study was done where they took a group of young children and just told them they were smart. In one experiment in Los Angeles they took three teachers at random from a school district and told them they had a class of exceptional students. The students had also been picked at random. Because the teachers thought they were exceptional students, they expected them to perform as exceptional students, and the students all rose to meet those expectations. The teachers believed that they were exceptional teachers and that they had been given exceptional students. And.... They, all of them, teachers and students alike, performed according to that expectation. They rose to new heights beyond what they had done before.

There is a wonderful true story depicted in the movie about the Apollo 13 disaster. As the crippled spacecraft approached earth, no one really knew if it could safely re-enter the earth's atmosphere while being flown manually, with no help from the on-board computer. When the reporters went to the mother of the pilot, James A. Lovell, and asked her if she was worried if he would be able to fly the module back to earth, she said something that I think is very profound. She said, "If they could make a washing machine fly, he could land it." We can only believe that one of the reasons he was successful in making such critical, life-threatening maneuvers, where if he made the slightest mistake, he and the other two crewmen would be burned to death, was based a lot on the fact that his mother believed in him when he was growing up. That gave him the desire to rise to her expectations of excellence and he did. He landed the module safely.

There have been too many experiments to mention more than a few here. The school experiments with children have now been called the "Expectation Theory". They have even taken students who lived in ghettos in the inter city, who were all straight F students, and put them in a class together with a teacher who believed in their potential, and they became straight A students in one term. Why? Because they were expected to be. In the news a few months ago, there was a story about a teacher in Phoenix, Arizona who was working with kids who were involved in gangs. She challenged them to make a remote control underwater robot. They then entered that robot in a contest and beat out a group of college students from MIT one of the most prestigious scientific schools in the nation!! There are just too many times this has been done for us to doubt the power of expectations and the effect it has on our belief system. Who can say what the limit of the human mind is? One thing we know for certain about the mind is that it is greatly affected by our belief systems. For the most part, all of us will rise to the expectations others have of us. That is especially true in our family. We tend to believe about ourselves what others believe about us.

## **Preparation**

The power to change will not just come by you waiting for it to happen. We have often heard people say that they were praying that God would guide their steps when they had something very important to do. Nevertheless, I have always felt that God cannot guide our footsteps if we are not willing to pick up our feet and move them. Stephen Covey talks at great length about our need to sharpen our saw rather than to keep sawing away with a dull saw in the accomplishments of our life. Preparation is tied very closely to ambition and desire. If we don't have the desire or ambition to do something, likely we will not spend much time in preparing for it. Most of us have heard the story of the young man who walked up to a world famous concert pianist after a wonderful performance and said, "I would give half my life to be able to play the piano like that". The concert pianist looked at the young man and said, "Well sir, that is exactly what I given to be able to play like that." How often have we heard people say, "practice makes perfect"?

Do not be a jack of all trades, and a master at none. Being good at one thing will affect every other thing we do. Have you ever looked at the accomplishments of Mary Lou Retton? She started by winning a gold medal. Started, did we say? Did you know that she practiced eight hours a day for eight years to win a gold medal at the 1984 Olympics? She won that metal when she was only sixteen years old. A little math will tell you what she was doing in grade

school ever morning before school and every night after school. What child would have to courage and ambition to do that? We also can only assume that along with that preparation she had a white-hot burning desire to achieve that goal. Now if you look at her web page you will see that was just the beginning of bringing excellence into her life.

Preparation has come to be one of the most valuable keys to success in my life. Education and certifications open doors of opportunity that otherwise would remain closed to you. Truly, knowledge is power. Knowledge normally only comes from hard work; from a lot of effort! It comes from the “on purpose” doing of something to change and become better. Newly acquired skills bring new opportunities. If you are willing to put forth the effort to become excellent at some area of your life, you will find that it will have an influence on every other part of your life.

Here is a quote that so perfectly expresses this power of preparation for change in our lives:

That which we persist in doing becomes easier,  
not that the task itself has becomes easier,  
but that our ability to perform it has improved.  
*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

James A. Taylor and executive at J. C. Penney in Columbus, Georgia said, “We all have a piano but we don't all play the same music.” A great hindrance in our life of preparation is the habit of always putting things off until the very last minute, referred to as “procrastination”. Procrastination breeds inaction. Even though we laugh when someone jokingly asks: “Why do today what we can put off until tomorrow”, the sad fact is that procrastinating is often how very busy people live their lives. If we are going to have the power to change our life, we have to be a “**DO IT NOW**” person. Studies of highly successful people have shown that to be one of the characteristics that most all of them share. They take action. They see a need to change and they do it now. They do not wait. If you have this disability (and I truly believe it is a disability) then it can easily be cured by reading motivational books, listening to motivational tapes, studying, learning and believing you can be different. You will find those kids of books and seminars all cover the problem of procrastination and how to deal with it. Coming to this seven week seminar was a step in that direction. Now you have all these handouts to study. The rest is up to you. Have you ever heard the saying “If it is going to be, it is up to me”.

Another powerful tool in helping overcome the disability of procrastination is by having friends who are highly motivated. Why will friends who are not procrastinators help? Because they will **EXPECT** you to be like them. You would be the beneficiary of their having high expectations of you, and you will rise to their expectations. You will become like them. It is a well known fact that if you take the average income of your ten best friends, you will find it will almost always be your average income. We tend to be like those we are around. If we are around achievers who are constantly changing and improving and preparing to be better, then we will be too.

## Consistency

Another necessity in bringing excellence into our life through preparation is consistency. That is the message of Aesop's fable about the Turtle and the Hare. Consistency. In our life's quest for excellence, consistency will win out over flash in the pan speed every time. If you give up as soon as it gets hard, it will set a pattern in your life of giving up. Many people are starters but not finishers. Be a finisher. The turtle won the race not because he was faster but because of his consistency. Or was the turtle a girl? I wonder? Being consistently consistent will bring great success, when others around you are failing.

## Commitment

How can we achieve excellence in any area of our life if we do not have a commitment to do it? The desire and belief are totally inter-connected to having the commitment to stick with something until we have accomplished it. A perfect example of how a great leader instilled commitment in his men is illustrated in the story about Cortez, the Spanish explorer. When Cortez landed with his men in America, he was concerned about their commitment to fight and win. To take care of that problem, after they got off the ship and came to shore, he burned the ships. Then he said to the men, "We now have two choices, we can win or we can die." They won! Commitment is what the mother of Lorenzo had. Commitment is the glue that will give us the *stick-to-it-iveness* to succeed at life. I often hear people tell the commitment story about the chicken and the pig at breakfast. The chicken was willing to make a contribution, but the pig gave it everything he had. Did you know that 99% of all marriages that started with a pre-nuptial agreement end in divorce within three years? Can you see how having a pre-nuptial agreement shows lack of commitment and trust starting out in the first place? That is like saying, "Just in case we fail". That surely illustrates the power of commitment and its ability to give us the courage to change. Where there is no commitment there is little desire to change.

## Fear

Sometimes fear of failure is the biggest reason we fail to make commitments. Here is a dramatic example of fear and commitment to help us see how this can work in our life. If someone laid a 2 x 8 plank on the lawn that was thirty feet long, and offered you \$10 to just walk along it, would you do it? Because it is two inches thick and laying on the lawn, it surely would support your weight. By being eight inches wide, it would give your foot plenty of room to walk along without being anywhere near the edge of the board. Thirty feet is not that far to walk; so why not try it? Now, put that same board twenty stories in the air, over an alley between two skyscrapers in New York City. Would you walk the plank then, for \$2,000? Whether or not you walk across a plank for \$10 is dependent on the height. Twenty stories can make quite a difference in the desire for the reward. We would have to have a powerful commitment of some kind before we would even try it, and, likely, money would not even be a factor in that commitment. It would have to be something like being trapped in a fire where our life, or someone else's life, depended on it. Then we would do it. The point being, that when we set out to establish a goal and accomplish it, we will find that the commitment to do it will rest squarely

on having a good enough reason. It is a fact of life that we normally look for sufficient reward with minimal risk, and it is all related to commitment.

More and more we see how all these things are interrelated. One of the major causes of our unhappiness is our willingness to trade the things we want most for the things we want now.

## Persistence

We said above that the theme of Aesop's Turtle and Hare story was consistency. It obviously is also a story of persistence. Persistence is one of the great dividers between those who succeed and those who fail. You seldom read the biography of any great or famous person that is not laced with stories of failures. We seldom hear that Babe Ruth struck out way more times than he ever hit home runs. Thomas Edison failed over 10,000 times before he figured out how to put the filament in a light bulb. Did he fail? He said himself, when questioned about it, that he had not failed at all. He just discovered a lot of ways that it would not work, and each time he found one of those ways it would not work, it got him that much closer to the way it would work. His life is a shining example to us all for the need for persistence. It is easy to see someone who has achieved great success and wish we had that same success. When we do that, we need to look further and see the failures that preceded it. Failure is one of the great teachers of success. The more we fail, the more likely we are to succeed. If Abraham Lincoln had given up after the first election he lost, we would never have heard of him. If you read his life story, you will see that it was a miracle of persistence that brought him to the presidency. He failed over and over but he never gave up.

When I entered college, I took a lot of tests to see what I should study. I was very undecided and felt that would give me a clear path to a career. I will never forget the day the counselor brought me into his office and told me that I should not go to college at all. He said that my chances of passing college would be about 1 in 100. He said I should drop out and go to a trade school. That is the best thing that he could possibly have told me. If I had not taken those tests, and if he had not told me that, I almost certainly would have failed college, dropped out and gone to a trade school. However, when he told me that I only had 1 in 100 chances to succeed, it made me so mad that I decided that no matter what, I would show him that he was wrong. He was. It took me a little longer than others, but I developed the characteristic of persistence, and I did graduate from college and went on to graduate school. Persistence is a power to bring change into our lives.

I once heard the story of an immigrant who earned his living by selling hot dogs from a cart on the street during the depression. One day his son came home from college and in talking to him about the depression tried to convince him that he could never make a living selling hot dogs on the street. He said there was no profit in it. The immigrant father looked at him and said, "Son, we have a place to live. We have food to eat. We have the money to send you to college. When I came to this country all I had was the pants I wore and the shirt on my back. So if you take away these pants and this shirt, the rest is profit." There are many great depression stories about people who against all odds had the persistence to keep on going and made money and survived financially while all around them were failing. By not giving up, they achieved success. It would do us well to all follow their example in our own lives.

Life is like traveling down a road. One side is bumpy and the other is smooth. If we decided to take the bumpy side, we may still get there, but it will be a lot harder. Our actions decide which side of the road we travel on. Whichever side we take, if we do not have the persistence to keep on going; we will not get anywhere. If you don't like being an offender, then decide **NOW** to change. Decide **NOW** to be different. In the movie Alice in Wonderland, at the crossroads, Alice asked the Cheshire cat which road she should take. That cat asked her where she wanted to go. She said she did not know. Then the cat made a statement filled with wisdom: **"Then I guess it does not matter which road you take, does it?"** If you keep on doing what you have been doing, you will keep on getting what you have been getting. If you don't like that, if you don't want more of it, then decide today to change. Set the goal that you are going to be different in your life from now on. Set a goal to never do anything that would cause you to be sent back to this place as an offender again. You can be different if you will, and I trust that you will!

## **Making the change**

Truly, the power to change our lives for better and realize our quest for excellence lies in the understanding of these five attributes.

**Dominant Thoughts**  
**Desire**  
**Belief**  
**Preparation**  
**Commitment**  
**Persistence**

## **Discussion Items:**

1. Do you feel like you have low self esteem?
2. What can you do to build your self esteem?
3. Do you try to help others who have low self esteem?
4. Are your family or friends responsible for your low self esteem?

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