

- We can't admit that we need to change—
- We do not appreciate inertia's power over us.
- It takes extraordinary effort to stop doing something in our comfort zone
- We don't know how to execute a change.
- There's a difference between motivation and understanding and ability.
- The real achievement is that I actually decided to change and successfully acted on that decision.
- Truth #2: No one can make us change unless we truly want to change.
- Some people say they want to change, but they don't really mean it.
- What makes positive, lasting behavioral change so challenging—and causes most of us to give up early in the game—is that we have to do it in our imperfect world, full of triggers that may pull and push us off course.
- simple is far from easy.
- An excuse explains why we fell short of expectations after the fact. Our inner beliefs trigger failure before it happens. They sabotage lasting change by canceling its possibility. We employ these beliefs as articles of faith to justify our inaction and then wish away the result. I call them belief triggers.
- After years of medical training, many doctors thought that the constant reminders, especially when delivered by subordinate nurses, were demeaning. The surgeons thought, "I shouldn't need to use a checklist to remember simple instructions." This is a natural response that combines three competing impulses: 1) our contempt for simplicity (only complexity is worthy of our attention); 2) our contempt for instruction and follow-up; and 3) our faith, however unfounded, that we can succeed all by ourselves.
- I warn each client that the process will take longer than they expect because there will be a crisis. I can't name the crisis, but it will be legitimate and real—
- The old problem of becoming CEO has been replaced by the new problems of being CEO. This belief triggers a fundamental misunderstanding of our future challenges.
- Getting better is its own reward. If we do that, we can never feel cheated.
- If there is one "disease" that I'm trying to cure in this book, it revolves around our total misapprehension of our environment. We think we are in sync with our environment, but actually it's at war with us. We think we control our environment but in fact it controls us. We think our external environment is conspiring in our favor—that is, helping us—when actually it is taxing and draining us. It is not interested in what it can give us. It's only interested in what it can take from us.
- In her zeal to be a professional negotiator, she behaved like an amateur human being.

- But for now let's absorb and wallow in Nadeem's hard-won appreciation that our environment is a relentless triggering machine. If we do not create and control our environment, our environment creates and controls us. And the result turns us into someone we do not recognize.

- A feedback loop comprises four stages: evidence, relevance, consequence, and action.

- What if we could control our environment so it triggered our most desired behavior—like an elegantly designed feedback loop?

- Conscious triggers require awareness.

- Unconscious triggers shape your behavior beyond your awareness.

- Now it's your turn. Try this modest exercise. Pick a behavioral goal you're still pursuing. We all have a few, from getting in shape to being a more patient parent to being more assertive around pushy people. List the people and situations that influence the quality of your performance. Don't list all the triggers in your day; that's overkill given the hundreds, perhaps thousands of sensory and cerebral stimuli we encounter. Stick to the trigger or two that relate to one specific goal. Then define it. Is it encouraging or discouraging, productive or counterproductive? Then chart the triggers to see if you're on the right side. If you're falling short of your goal, this simple exercise will tell you why. You're getting too much of what you want, not enough of what you need. You might learn that your best

- My hope for this exercise is that it 1) makes us smarter about specific triggers and 2) helps us connect them directly to our behavioral successes and failures.

- To lose the ten pounds, it's up to me to escape the upper left quadrant where I prefer what I want to what I need. It's my choice, my responsibility. It doesn't solve the puzzle of achieving behavioral change, but it's a start in the right direction.

- The more aware we are, the less likely any trigger, even in the most mundane circumstances, will prompt hasty unthinking behavior that leads to undesirable consequences.

- This was "situational leadership." It dissected the relationship between leaders and their followers into four distinct styles: 1. Directing is for employees requiring a lot of specific guidance to complete the task. The leader might say, "Chris, here's what I'd like you to do, step by step. And here's when I need it done." It's primarily a one-way conversation, with little input from the employee. 2. Coaching is for employees who need more than average guidance to complete the task, but with above-average amounts of two-way dialogue. Coaching is for people who both want and need to learn. The leader might say, "Chris, here's what I'd like you to do," and then ask for input: "What do you think, Chris?" 3. Supporting is for employees with the skills to complete the task but who may lack the confidence to do it on their own. This style features below-average amounts of direction. The leader might say, "Chris, here's the task. How do you think it should be done? Let's talk about it. How can I help you on this one?" 4. Delegating is for employees who score high on motivation, ability, and confidence. They know what to do, how to do it, and can do it on their own. The leader might say, "Chris, here's

the assignment. You have a great track record. If I can help, just ask. If not, you're on your own."

- Situational leadership is a well-known theory that's been applied in training millions of leaders around the world. Because I learned it early in my career from its creators I believe it in my bones. It's one of the big reasons I've made a career out of helping business leaders develop better relationships with their colleagues and subordinates.

- Whether you're leading other people or leading the follower in you, the obstacles to achieving your goals are the same. You still have to deal with an environment that is more hostile than supportive.

- You still have to factor in the high probability of low-probability events. And you still have to consider that as the day goes on and your energy level diminishes, your motivation and self-discipline will flag.

- I discussed this with Rennie and we agreed that his need for guidance in staff meetings was high. Very high. He couldn't go into meetings hoping he'd behave himself. He needed clear instructions available to him at all times. Our solution came in the form of an index card, which Rennie placed in front of himself at every staff meeting. The card said, "Don't confuse your staff. Don't give the same assignment to more than one person." It may sound corny or simplistic, but when the discussion became intense and Rennie was most vulnerable, the card was all the reminder he needed to think before he made an assignment. This is how Rennie's inner planner got in sync with his inner doer.

- This is where the analogy between situational leadership in the workplace and in ourselves applies. In order to change his unproductive behavior as a leader of others Rennie first had to change the behavior between the leader and the follower in him.

- The boxer-philosopher Mike Tyson said, "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the face."

- The exception was Rennie, who, I later learned, raised his hand and then wrote "No interruptions, no judgment" on an index card that he discreetly tucked under his water glass within his line of vision.

- Forecasting is what we must do after acknowledging the environment's power over us. It comprises three interconnected stages: anticipation, avoidance, and adjustment.

- Successful people are not completely oblivious to their environment. In the major moments of our lives, when the outcome really matters and failure is not an option, we are masters of anticipation.

- Peter Drucker famously said, "Half the leaders I have met don't need to learn what to do. They need to learn what to stop."

- Part of the reason is inertia. It takes enormous willpower to stop doing something enjoyable.

- This impulse to always engage rather than selectively avoid is one reason I'm called in to coach executives on their behavior.*2 It's one of the most common behavioral issues among

leaders: succumbing to the temptation to exercise power when they would be better off showing restraint.

- It's a simple equation: To avoid undesirable behavior, avoid the environments where it is most likely to occur. If you don't want to be lured into a tantrum by a colleague who gets on your nerves, avoid him. If you don't want to indulge in late-night snacking, don't wander into the kitchen looking for leftovers in the fridge.

- Adjustment happens when we're desperate to change, or have an unexpected insight, or are shown the way by another person (such as a friend or coach).

- Given the choice, golfers will take a dull round of that caliber over a dramatic roller coaster every time.

- The not-so-good news is that it's hard to stay alert as we move from one environment to another. Our circumstances change from minute to minute, hour to hour—and we can't always summon the ability or motivation to manage each situation as we would like. We mess up. We take one step forward, two steps back.

- I wasn't telling him anything he didn't know. He'd been at the higher levels of corporate life for many years. He'd seen many peers get stranded or lost in so-called retirement. But he hadn't considered applying this insight to himself. He was making the same mistakes the rest of us make.

- We always have a chance to create better behavior in ourselves—how we treat people, how we respond to our environment, what we permit to trigger our next action. All we need is the impulse to imagine a different us.

- A politician once told me, "The most thankless decision I make is the one that prevents something bad from happening, because I can never prove that I prevented something even worse." Preserving is the same. We rarely get credit for not messing up a good thing.

- CEOs tend to see three of the four elements in the wheel of change with great clarity when it applies to an organization.

- Finally, the CEO had heard enough. He dismissively tossed the reports into the center of the conference table and said, "This meeting is over. When we reconvene in a week, I want a new plan from each of you based on one criterion: your business will vanish next year and it's never coming back. I want to see projections that accept what's staring us in the face."

- But our natural impulse is to think wishfully (that is, favor the optimal, discount the negative) rather than realistically.

- Accepting is most valuable when we are powerless to make a difference. Yet our ineffectuality is precisely the condition we are most loath to accept. It triggers our finest moments of counterproductive behavior.

- I spent two intensive days with Alicia and her team as they developed their new "seat at the table" strategy. Using the wheel of change as her template, Alicia told the team they only had

to make four decisions: choose one thing to create, preserve, eliminate, and accept. Here's what they came up with:

- Good things happen when we ask ourselves what we need to create, preserve, eliminate, and accept—a test I suspect few of us ever self-administer. Discovering what really matters is a gift, not a burden. Accept it and see.
- It's true they had the benefit of an outside agency—namely me—pointing out the environment's malign impact on their behavior. But that kind of insight, which explains why we act the way we do, can take us only so far. It illuminates our past more than the way forward. Executing the change we hold as a concrete image in our mind is a process. It requires vigilance and diligent self-monitoring. It demands a devotion to rote repetition that we might initially dismiss as simplistic and undignified, even beneath us. More than anything, the process resuscitates an instinct that's been drilled into us as tiny children but slowly dissipates as we learn to enjoy success and fear failure—the importance of trying.
- hear this so often, I shouldn't be surprised anymore. But I am. It's the main reason I host several "What are you going to do with the rest of your life" get-togethers at my home for my clients. They're not thinking about it. They're not in creation mode.
- Apologizing is a magic move. Only the hardest of hearts will fail to forgive a person who admits they were wrong. Apology is where behavioral change begins. Asking for help is a magic move. Few people will refuse your sincere plea for help. Asking for help sustains the change process, keeps it moving forward. Optimism—not only feeling it inside but showing it on the outside—is a magic move. People are automatically drawn to the confident individual who believes everything will work out.
- In my experience, fully engaged employees are positive and proactive about their relationship to the job. They not only feel good about what they're doing; they don't mind showing off their enthusiasm to the world.
- It's one of my signature themes: People don't get better without follow-up. So let's get better at following up with our people.
- The theory was that different phrasing of the follow-up questions would have a measurable effect because active questions focus respondents on what they can do to make a positive difference in the world rather than what the world can do to make a positive difference for them. (John F. Kennedy must have known this when he crafted one of the more memorable calls to action in American history: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.")
- While any follow-up was shown to be superior to no follow-up, a simple tweak in the language of follow-up—focusing on what the individual can control—makes a significant difference.
- Did I do my best to set clear goals today?

- Executives demoralized by their leaders' fecklessness became dramatically more engaged after they started setting their own direction for the day instead of futilely waiting to receive it from someone else.

- Did I do my best to make progress toward my goals today?

- Progress makes any of our accomplishments more meaningful.

- Did I do my best to find meaning today?

- Did I do my best to be happy today?

- As Daniel Gilbert shows in *Stumbling on Happiness*, we are lousy at predicting what will make us happy. We think our source of happiness is "out there" (in our job, in more money, in a better environment) but we usually find it "in here"—when we quit waiting for someone or something else to bring us joy and take responsibility for locating it ourselves. We find happiness where we are.

- Did I do my best to build positive relationships today?

- Did I do my best to be fully engaged today?

- A runner is more likely to run faster in a race by running faster when she trains—and timing herself. Likewise, an employee will be more engaged at work if she consciously tries to be more engaged—and rigorously measures her effort. It's a self-fulfilling dynamic: the act of measuring our engagement elevates our commitment to being engaged—and reminds us that we're personally responsible for our own engagement.

Deliberate practice

- When I asked myself, "Did I say or do something nice for Lyda?", I could call in a few minutes, say "I love you," and declare victory. When I asked myself, "Did I do my best to be a good husband?", I learned that I had set the bar much higher for myself.

- The point is, your Daily Questions should reflect your objectives. They're not meant to be shared in public (unless you're writing a book on the subject), meaning they're not designed to be judged. You're not constructing your list to impress anyone. It's your list, your life.

- "Did I do my best to..." triggers trying.

- Go ahead. List the goals on a chart so you can score them at the end of each day. Where appropriate make sure you begin each question with "Did I do my best to..." Now study the list and rate your chances of doing well over the next thirty days. If you're like most people—and 90 percent of all people rate themselves above average—you will give yourself a better than 50 percent chance of hitting your targets on all your goals.

- It is incredibly difficult for any of us to look in the mirror every day and face the reality that we didn't even try to do what we claimed was most important in our lives.

- As Dr. Gawande stared at the dispiriting string of nos, the irony wasn't lost on him that he saved strangers' lives every day yet he couldn't master the simple task of purchasing life

insurance to protect the people he loved most. He was failing a test that he'd written. But irony doesn't trigger action. The accumulated nos triggered an intense emotion, Gawande told me. He was embarrassed that he had failed to complete such a simple task that delivered a cherished benefit. The next day he bought life insurance.

- Emily's story is an instructive template not only in the mechanics of doing Daily Questions right—picking the questions, keeping score, monitoring yourself, sticking with it—but in the choices and tweaks we make that influence the outcome.

- Her next step was embracing the concept of active questions to focus on effort rather than results.

- One of the unappreciated benefits of Daily Questions is that they force us to quantify an unfamiliar data point: our level of trying.

- At Day 51, we can see the start of a string of X's for Questions 4–6. Emily has concluded that she doesn't need to measure these objectives anymore. They come naturally to her and therefore are not actions at which she has to challenge herself to “do my best.” She's winnowed her goals down to three items. That's more than enough. She's not giving up; she's letting go (a valuable skill we'll return to in Chapter 13).

- Of course, there are many areas where our motivation—intrinsic or extrinsic—is less than optimal. Daily Questions press us to face them, admit them, and write them down. Until we can do that, we have no chance of getting better.

- They highlight the difference between self-discipline and self-control.

- Self-discipline refers to achieving desirable behavior. Self-control refers to avoiding undesirable behavior. When we wake up in the dark morning hours to hit the gym, or run a weekly meeting so that it ends on time, or leave work with a clean desk, or remember to thank our colleagues for helping us, we're displaying self-discipline—repeating positive actions consistently. When we deny ourselves that which we most enjoy—whether it's stifling the urge to crack wise at someone else's expense or saying no to a second helping of dessert—we're displaying self-control.

- We reveal our preference for self-discipline or self-control in the way we phrase our Daily Questions. It's one thing to ask ourselves, “Did I do my best to limit my sugar consumption?” and another to ask, “Did I do my best to say no to sweets?” The former calls for self-discipline, the latter self-control. Depending on who we are, that subtle adjustment can make all the difference.

- They shrink our goals into manageable increments.

- At the highest level, a coach is a source of mediation, bridging the gap between the visionary Planner and short-sighted Doer in us.

- The Coach meshes our inner Planner with our inner Doer. This is how successful change happens: in situations big or small, we make choices that marry intention with execution.

- Griffin couldn't change his environment, so he changed how he reacted to it.

- If we do it, we get better.
- We get better faster.
- I see this with many of my one-on-one clients after we part ways. Like Griffin, once they've learned how to change one behavior, they can do it again with another behavior—more smoothly and swiftly than the first time.
- Eventually we become our own Coach.
- Coaches can bridge that gap because they're objective, not caught up in the environment that so often corrupts us.
- you should be asking yourself whenever you must choose to either engage or "let it go." Am I willing, at this time, to make the investment required to make a positive difference on this topic? It's a question that pops into my head so often each day that I've turned the first five words into an acronym, AIWATT (it rhymes with "say what"). Like the physician's principle, First, do no harm, it doesn't require you to do anything, merely avoid doing something foolish.
- The moral: there's never anyone in the other boat. We are always screaming at an empty vessel. An empty boat isn't targeting us. And neither are all the people creating the sour notes in the soundtrack of our day.
- I end the exercise with a simple reminder that getting mad at people for being who they are makes as much sense as getting mad at a chair for being a chair. The chair cannot help but be a chair, and neither can most of the people we encounter. If there's a person who drives you crazy, you don't have to like, agree with, or respect him, just accept him for being who he is.
- The common sense comes from Peter Drucker, who said, "Our mission in life should be to make a positive difference, not to prove how smart or right we are."
- These are just four random examples of what we do all day. From wake-up to bedtime, when we're in contact with another human being, we face the option of being helpful, hurtful, or neutral. If we're not paying attention we often choose hurtful, largely to prove we're smarter, better, more right than the "other guy."
- Whether the subject is climate change or the life span of unicorns, when you cite demonstrable facts to counter another person's belief, a phenomenon that researchers call "the backfire effect" takes over. Your brilliant marshaling of data not only fails to persuade the believer, it backfires and strengthens his or her belief.
- Another Peter Drucker quote changed my life. I tell it to everyone I coach, some would say over and over again: "Every decision in the world is made by the person who has the power to make the decision. Make peace with that."
- There is immeasurable satisfaction—even pleasure—in taking a big risk and fighting a battle you believe in.

- “How long has this been going on?” I asked. “This resentment and regret?” (In such moments, I often feel like the Regret Whisperer—which I don’t mind.) “Two years,” he said. “Who are you angry with?” I asked. “The owner for selling, or you for buying?”

- No idea looms bigger in Alan’s mind than the importance of structure in turning around an organization and its people. I believe that the Business Plan Review (BPR) process that he has developed is the most effective use of organizational structure that I have ever observed. In my years of coaching and research on change, I have learned one key lesson, which has near-universal applicability: We do not get better without structure.

- But Alan, who had spent his entire career building jet airplanes, had an aeronautical engineer’s faith in structure and process. To get talented people working together, he paid attention to details, all the way down to the granular level. He began each BPR session in the same way: “My name is Alan Mulally and I’m the CEO of Ford Motor Company.” Then he’d review the company’s plan, status, forecast, and areas that needed special attention, using a green-yellow-red scoring system for good-concerned-poor. He asked his top sixteen executives to do the same, using the same introductory language and color scheme. In effect, he was using the same type of structure that I recommend in my coaching process and applying it to the entire corporation. He was introducing structure to his new team. And he did not deviate, either in content or wording. He always identified himself, always listed his five priorities, always graded his performance for the previous week.

- The executives knew they’d be meeting again the following week, and the week after that, and so on. And Alan and the entire team would be there, listening to all the reviews and helping one another make progress. Alan’s message was impossible to miss. He was telling his team, “We know we will continue to make progress on our plan because we all know the real status, and we are positively committed to working together to accomplish the plan.”

- That’s one of structure’s major contributions to any change process. It limits our options so that we’re not thrown off course by externalities. If we’re only allowed five minutes to speak, we find a way to make our case with a newfound concision—and it’s usually a better speech because of the structural limitations (most audiences would agree).

- The agenda for each meeting was a sheet of paper with the following questions: • Where are we going? • Where are you going? • What is going well? • Where can we improve? • How can I help you? • How can you help me?

- Where are we going? tackled the big-picture priorities at the company. It forced Robert to articulate—not in his mind, but out loud so each executive could hear it personally—what he wanted for the company and what he was expecting from the executive.

- Where are you going? Robert then turned the table and asked each person to answer the same question about themselves, thus aligning their behavior and mindset with Robert’s.

- What is going well? Bad as he was at setting clear goals, Robert scored almost as low at providing constructive feedback. No meetings, no opportunities to praise his superstars.

- Where can we improve? This forced Robert to give his direct reports constructive suggestions for the future—something he'd rarely done and that his people didn't expect from him. Then he added a challenge: "If you were your own coach, what would you suggest for yourself?"

- How can I help? This is the most welcome phrase in any leader's repertoire. We can never say it enough, whether we're in the role of a parent or friend—or a busy CEO running a meeting. It has a reciprocal power few of us take advantage of. When we offer our help, we are nudging people to admit they need help.

- How can I become a more effective leader?

- Robert gave each team member carte blanche to call him on any leadership failing and to take personal responsibility for immediately contacting Robert if he or she felt confusion or ambiguity on direction, coaching, or feedback. Robert changed himself and his environment. Robert added structure. The team assumed responsibility. The combination produced amazing results.

- That's an added value of matching structure with our desire to change. Structure not only increases our chance of success, it makes us more efficient at it.

- The social psychologist Roy F. Baumeister coined the term ego depletion in the 1990s to describe this phenomenon. He contended that we possess a limited conceptual resource called ego strength, which is depleted through the day by our various efforts at self-regulation—resisting temptations, making trade-offs, inhibiting our desires, controlling our thoughts and statements, adhering to other people's rules.

- Researchers call this decision fatigue, a state that leaves us with two courses of action: 1) we make careless choices or 2) we surrender to the status quo and do nothing.

- Under depletion's influence we are more prone to inappropriate social interactions, such as talking too much, sharing intimate personal information, and being arrogant. We are less likely to follow social norms; for example, we are more likely to cheat. We are less helpful. We can also be more aggressive; the effort of curbing our normal aggression depletes our self-control over that impulse.

- One of this book's central arguments is that our environment affects us in powerful, insidious, and mysterious ways. Depletion is one of those environmental hazards.

- Structure is how we overcome depletion. In an almost magical way, structure slows down how fast our discipline and self-control disappear.

- The BPR meetings started at 8 a.m. and often lasted several hours. If executives had been allowed to freewheel for so much time, their collective depletion in the last hour would have been palpable. Being handcuffed by Alan's rules minimized the depletion, kept them fresh and at their best with a full tank—and they didn't even know it.

- I delegate all travel decisions to an assistant and never question her choices (to discipline my time).

- That's the paradox: We need help when we're least likely to get it.

- Society provides structure to deal with a loved one's passing—funerals, mourning periods, grief counselors, support groups, therapists explaining Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief.

- For example, imagine that you have to go to a one-hour meeting that will be pointless, boring, a time-suck better spent catching up on your "real" work.

- Now imagine at meeting's end you will be tested—just you—with four simple questions about how you spent that hour: 1. Did I do my best to be happy? 2. Did I do my best to find meaning? 3. Did I do my best to build positive relationships? 4. Did I do my best to be fully engaged?

- That's the motivational kicker in knowing you'll be tested afterward. It turns the indifferent environment of a boring meeting into a keen competition with yourself. It makes you hyperaware of your behavior.

- Here's my radical suggestion. From now on, pretend that you are going to be tested at every meeting! Your heart and mind will thank you for it. The hour that you spend in the meeting is one hour of your life that you never get back. If you are miserable, it is your misery, not the company's or your co-workers'. Why waste that hour being disengaged and cynical? By taking personal responsibility for your own engagement, you make a positive contribution to your company—and begin creating a better you.

- This pretend-you'll-be-tested concept flips it around. It's not cheating. It's not a gimmick. It's structure, the kind that successful people already rely on.

- When we know we'll be tested—even if it's just pretend—we're forcing ourselves to live in the present.

- One other thing: when we decide to behave well and our first steps are successful, we often achieve a self-fulfilling momentum—Griffin called it "cruise control"—where we don't have to try as hard to be good. Like getting through the first four days of a strict diet, if we can handle the initial stages of inhibiting our undesirable impulses, we're less likely to backslide. We don't want to waste the gains of our behavioral investment. Good behavior becomes the sunk cost we hate to sacrifice.

- Can it be that simple? Evidently yes. The simpler the structure, the more likely we'll stick with it. And Hourly Questions are fairly simple, comprising a series of steps that segue so smoothly from one to the other we barely register them as discrete stages in the process.

- For most things we suspend our hypercritical faculties and find satisfaction with the merely good. The economist Herbert Simon called this "satisficing"—our tendency to commodify everyday choices because chasing that last bit of improvement is not worth the time or effort. It will not significantly increase our happiness or satisfaction.

- The problem begins when this good enough attitude spills beyond our marketplace choices and into the things we say and do.

- The takeaway: If your motivation for a task or goal is in any way compromised—because you lack the skill, or don't take the task seriously, or think what you've done so far is good

enough—don't take it on. Find something else to show the world how much you care, not how little.

- We think that because we raised our hand to help out we can raise our hand to opt out at the inconvenient moments.

- The true test is delivering top-shelf performance with our stupid commitments—the kind we didn't want to do in the first place

- Who among us hasn't noticed how in our home environment we behave in ways we'd never tolerate in a work environment? Some of it is goofy harmless stuff like being absent-minded and mechanically incompetent. Other behavior is more distressing; we're brooding, taciturn, isolated, antisocial, or angry. Careers collapse if we bring such behavior from home to the workplace. So for the most part, we don't.

- Most of us fall into this amateur-versus-professional trap each day without knowing

- We all do it. We segregate the parts we're good at from the parts we're not—and treat our strengths as the real us. The weaknesses are an aberration; they belong to a stranger, someone we refuse to acknowledge as us. This is how we confer amateur status on ourselves and secure our license for good enough.

- The takeaway: We are professionals at what we do, amateurs at what we want to become. We need to erase this devious distinction—or at least close the gap between professional and amateur—to become the person we want to be. Being good over here does not excuse being not so good over there.

- This is the ultimate blessing of not settling for good enough. When we dive all the way into adult behavioral change—with 100 percent focus and energy—we become an irresistible force rather than the proverbial immovable object. We begin to change our environment rather than be changed by it. The people around us sense this. We have become the trigger.

- six Engaging Questions: 1. Did I do my best to set clear goals? 2. Did I do my best to make progress toward my goals? 3. Did I do my best to find meaning? 4. Did I do my best to be happy? 5. Did I do my best to build positive relationships? 6. Did I do my best to be fully engaged?

- I can't tell you what to change. It's a personal choice. I could run through a list of gaudy qualities such as compassion, loyalty, courage, respect, integrity, patience, generosity, humility, etc. They are the timeless virtues that our parents, teachers, and coaches try to inculcate in us when we're young and malleable. We're frequently reminded of them in sermons, eulogies, and commencement addresses.

- When we embrace a desire for awareness and engagement, we are in the best position to appreciate all the triggers the environment throws at us. We might not know what to expect—the triggering power of our environment is a constant surprise—but we know what others expect of us. And we know what we expect of ourselves. The results can be astonishing. We no longer have to treat our environment as if it's a train rushing toward us while we stand helplessly on the track waiting for impact. The interplay between us and our environment

becomes reciprocal, a give-and-take arrangement where we are creating it as much as it creates us.

- And yet there's one aspect of our lives where we wear changelessness as a badge of honor. I'm talking about our interpersonal behavior and our resistance to changing how we treat other people.