

Absolute Abundance

Pathway to Permanent Prosperity



First Steps

Small Group Workbook

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WEEK 1: The Power of Thought



“Both poverty and riches are the offspring of thought.”

— Napoleon Hill, *Think and Grow Rich*

One of the primary teachings of New Thought is, "Your thoughts create your life." So, if you want to know what you are thinking, look at your life. Do you have enough money to do the things you dream of? Do you have the time you need to enjoy your life? Are illness and injury preventing you from living life to the fullest? Do your friends and family understand you and support you? Your answers to these questions illustrate what you hold in consciousness. Over the next five weeks, we will look at those thoughts and learn how to shift them to support your dreams and your heart's desire.

To do that, we need to establish baseline expectations and commence a practice that will change your life. You may know the saying, "If Nothing Changes, Nothing Changes." Dive in and begin to change your life for the better by taking these simple steps:

Daily Practice:

Morning: Set an intention for the day and write it here:

Hourly: Set an alarm on your phone to go off every hour on the hour, nine times every day this week. When the alarm goes off, breathe and become present then affirm your intention for the day.

Evening: At the end of the day, open your journal and write about holding your intention for this day. How did it go? What did you notice? How could you have improved? List two things that went as you intended today.

Homework:

Create a vacuum for your good to fill in. Clear out a closet or a drawer or your garage. Let go, sell or give away what you no longer need or use. (Refer to “Create a Vacuum Receive” on page 4.)

Affirmations & Dreams. Before your Small Group meets, complete activities on pages 6-8.

Choose a Partner. At your first Small Group meeting, choose a partner for the text/email assignments under “Evening” for weeks 2-6.

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE – FIRST STEPS

Reflection Questions:

1. Something has prompted you to take a class on abundance and prosperity. What do you expect to learn or experience during the next six weeks?
2. Do you recall a time when your family and friends supported your dreams?
3. Your body is an amazing gift of abundance. What do you love about your body?
4. You have manifested the time to read this workbook and to answer these questions. How did you do that?
5. You are financially abundant. Write about it here:

Prosperity Mindset

“There’s enough for everyone. If you believe it, if you can see it, if you act from it, it will show up for you. That’s the truth.”

— *Michael Bernard Beckwith*

Absolute Abundance is about living in the constant awareness of prosperity. It is about finding the blocks within yourself to the natural and persistent good everywhere present, and constantly creating the consciousness to live in that abundance.

There is a difference between the term “abundance” and the term “prosperity.”

Abundance is the infinite supply of the Divine, available to us at all times.

Prosperity is our realization and manifestation of that abundance.

Further, **Absolute Abundance** is the free flow of ideas and an effortless way of life. That includes, but is not limited, to:

- Vibrant Health
- Fulfilling Relationships
- Work you Love
- Financial Freedom

Abundance in your life does not happen by chance but is in direct relation to your prosperity mindset. In other words, wealth, peace, health, supportive relationships and leisure time appear in your life through prosperous thinking. Your mind can be trained to think prosperously in creative, simple, and delightful ways.

Your way of thinking has gotten you to where you are in life. To move beyond where you are now to a life of Absolute Abundance something in your consciousness, and the choices you make, are going to have to change. Because, "If nothing changes, nothing changes."

The most important decision you can make is whether the universe is friendly or hostile. That mindset will determine how you experience your life. You may not be able to determine the hand you are dealt, but you can always decide how to play it. If we decide that the world is hostile to us and not safe, we will make choices and use our resources to protect and keep what we have. When we make this choice, we tend to withdraw from others and from the new things that life may bring us.

However, if we decide that the world is neither safe nor friendly, just neutral, we may see ourselves at the effect of some random toss of the dice. This mindset may be useful in lifting ourselves from a victim consciousness to a place where we know "there is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so," as Shakespeare put in Hamlet's mouth. However, it does not necessarily help us to reach our full potential.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION: Imagine if you can for a moment that the universe and all the people in your life are conspiring to help you succeed. ***What would you do if you truly believed this?***

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE – FIRST STEPS

NOTICE WHAT YOU ARE THINKING

While you may not be able to determine which thought pops into your head, you can determine if you hold on to that thought or let it go. To experience your abundance, you must constantly release fear-based, negative thoughts and consciously choose those which will build your life and your dreams.

Make a habit of noticing your thoughts. Sit in silence for five or ten minutes and just notice the thoughts that cross your mind. At first, don't do anything but notice. Observe your thoughts as if they are trains passing by on railroad tracks out of town. Be careful not to resist any thought and not to give any thought your approval, just observe. You may notice that your thoughts just come and go when you don't engage with them.

Doing this can make you aware of an important fact: *You are not your thoughts.* However, those thoughts that we engage with, give energy to, and constantly repeat to ourselves like a mantra become beliefs, *and beliefs certainly do manifest in our lives.*

You are the creator of your world. Your mind will always create from the patterns you hold. Think about it this way: from your mind comes an idea and from that idea comes its manifestation. Mind—Idea—Manifestation is the way all creation happens. The author of the Book of Genesis was describing this process when he wrote, “God said, let there be light, and there was light.”

You may think about getting a better job with better pay, but to make that leap you know you need more training. So, you sign up for a course that will improve your skills, then in the process of your new course, you find someone who offers you your new job: Mind—Idea—Manifestation.

What you need to know about this process is that The Universe and Divine Mind do not care what belief you hold. Beliefs may be creative and positive or dark and destructive; the Universe wants to help you manifest what you put your energy and passion to- be it passionately pessimistic or optimistic.

Because we have the power to create our world, if we want to live in the world of abundance, we must choose our thoughts with care. Choose to believe the universe is conspiring for your higher good and it will.

CREATE A VACUUM TO RECEIVE

By letting go of your negative thoughts, you can create a vacuum for new, good things to enter. So, how do you release the thought or belief? You may notice a random thought, and just say no thank you. For instance, on occasion you may think, “I don't have enough time.” Recognize that thought and say, “No thank you.”

However, if that thought is a habitual one that you have invested a lot of energy into, it may be a belief. To release a belief, simply question it. *Is it true? Is it really true?* By questioning your beliefs, you regain the power of choice. In this examination you could also become aware of how you spend your time. For the thought, “There is not enough time,” is about feeling out of control.

Sometimes, it is important to form a vacuum by letting go of unsupportive or toxic relationships, habits and patterns of living, or physical spaces or belongings that are not supporting our highest good.

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE – FIRST STEPS

Begin this practice by creating a vacuum by releasing stuff. *Create the space in your life, so that your good can flow into it.* (See Homework on page 1)

BUILD YOUR FUTURE WITH AFFIRMATIONS

Affirmations are one the most powerful tools of change that you can employ. Affirmations are concise, positive statements of a new future unfolding in your life. *Affirmations help to ensure the vacuum you have created is filled with the new things you desire rather than more of the old patterns and the old stuff you have just cleared out.*

When you can create affirmations that are positive, present tense, and grounded in truth, you cannot fail. These simple tips are helpful when creating affirmations:

- **I Am.** I Am is one of the most powerful statements to focus your beliefs and funnel the power of the Universe on your behalf. What follows, “I am” is going to be seared into your consciousness and help you manifest in kind. “I am powerful and compassionate.”
- **Positive.** “I am prosperous. I am healthy and whole. I am attractive and witty.” Be careful of modifiers, for they limit or postpone your good. For example, “I am getting better.” While this may be true, it can keep your wholeness at bay.
- **Present Tense.** Set your affirmations in the here and now. “My boss appreciates and honors me.” “Money is constantly flowing to me.” Another way we delay our good is to “will” it. For example, “I will be rich.” Or “At my new job I will be respected.” That small word can constantly keep your good away from you for it always *will be* and never *is*. Words have power, be clear.
- **Grounded in Truth.** While your affirmations should challenge your entrenched beliefs, affirming what you simultaneously believe to be false does not work. However, all you need is a tiny bit of faith (belief) for your affirmation to be powerful and transformative. So, find some small part of you that knows the higher truth of your being and affirm that. Shift your perspective to affirm the glass as half full instead of half empty. As Rev. Paul Hasselbeck says, “Faith it ‘til you make it!”

For example, you can state, “I am wealthy,” because you know that you are living a life of material and spiritual prosperity greater than you have ever known, and perhaps, more financially abundant than many people on the planet. Your wealth isn’t measured in comparison to others or only by financial and material assets. It includes the flow of your spiritual, emotional, physical, relational prosperity. By stating, “I am wealthy,” you open to a state of appreciation and gratitude that allows your good to continue to flow.

Claim your good right now by using the power of affirmations in writing. Writing it down will help you commit it to memory. The Universe is always providing! By the way, “*The Universe is always providing for my needs,*” is a spiritual truth and also a great affirmation.

Claim your good right now by changing the words you speak. As previously stated, words have power! Notice how we use them so indiscriminately: *I am tired; I am late; I don’t care; I am sorry.* Imagine what you could create by turning these spoken words around: *I am going to rest, so that I may recharge; I am leaving immediately so that I can honor my commitments; I release my attachment to any outcome; I*

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE – FIRST STEPS

apologize. These alternative ways of using the power of your words may seem awkward at first but experiment and find ways to make them your own, and you will experience the power within you.

LET'S APPLY THE POWER OF THOUGHT

The following questions are designed for you to practice clarity in your thinking and your affirmations. Take a moment to breathe into your heart space and receive the following questions with the awareness of your thoughts and create powerful affirmations to shift your thoughts to a perspective that supports your growth and higher purpose. Write out two or three affirmations after each question.

What would you like to establish/experience around your health?

What would you like to affirm about your relationships?

How do you see your career, your work life, or your retirement?

What is your relationship with money and wealth?

What would you do if you could do anything, and nothing was in your way? What if age, gender, time, money, education and experience didn't matter? Write out affirmations about five things that you would love to do or accomplish as if they were already in your life (In Truth, they are):

Now look over your affirmations and be honest, did you edit or limit what you wrote down? If so, why?

SMALL GROUP SHARING: Choose a few affirmations to share with your Small Group. Then share a bit about your process of writing your affirmations. Example prompts: *How did you feel? What did you learn about yourself? Did you notice a tendency to edit or limit your affirmations? What have you learned about your power of thought or how you use words?*

The Process of Manifestation

“It is the repetition of affirmations that leads to belief. And once that belief becomes a deep conviction, things start to happen.”

— *Muhammad Ali*

We experience abundance in our lives through the process of manifestation. While all things already exist in Divine Mind, you bring them into form and function in your life using the process of manifestation. All that you long for and dream about is possible, and so much more! For many of us, the problem is not that we are setting our sights too high, but rather we don't believe that we can achieve our dreams or that we deserve them. You might even look back on your life and see how small and limited your old dreams were. Perhaps you have been blessed to live a life far more magnificent than you could have conceived. That is grace: *The Universe giving more than you can dream of or ask for.*

I had a revelation about the process of manifestation that I have been using in my life. I have formalized it into *The Process of Manifestation* to make it accessible to everyone.

Here are the steps that I use as *The Process of Manifestation*, and we will use as the basis of this study:

- 1. Name/Claim your dream.** State your intention, be clear and be bold! If you are unsure of what it is you desire, what shows up in your life will be as fuzzy as your thoughts. Take the time necessary to discern just what it is you desire; meditate, journal, research, go on a retreat, try things on for size. Then state it, write it, tell people about it, affirm it, and be specific. Don't be shy. Claim your dream. As Marianne Williamson reminds us, “Your playing small does not serve the world.”
- 2. Take concrete steps toward your dream.** After you name your dream/desire, you must take action. We must put feet to our faith, action to our dreams. So, enroll in the course, the money to pay for it will arrive when it is time. Buy the domain name. The website will be ready when you are. Have business cards made. Opportunities to network will arise. If you wait until everything is perfect and everything is in place, chances are it will be too late. Whatever your goal, take positive action now!

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE – FIRST STEPS

- 3. Share your journey.** The person or persons who can help you manifest your dreams are already in your life. But they can't help you if they don't know about your journey. Share your story. Be honest about your triumphs and setbacks along the way. You never know who has the key to open the next door. This step is a continuation of Step One because manifestation takes time.

NOTE: Do not try to enlist help from people who don't support your dreams or goals. *Your dreams are the Divine in you seeking expression in the world.* Surround yourself with people who support you and who see you as the magnificent being that you are!

- 4. Be open to how it will show up.**

Your good might show up differently than you imagined it- probably a sign that it is from Spirit rather than from your ego. The Universe/Spirit/God has infinite ways to fulfill our dreams and desires. Release the idea that it has to look a certain way and be open to the creativity of Spirit! See beyond appearances *to the substance of your heart's desire*; when you can do that, you might realize that the thing you are looking for is already in your life.

These simple four steps can be used for little things like manifesting a new outfit or for major life goals such as buying a home! Whatever your next goal, these steps can help you to achieve it. The time it will take will vary according to the complexity of the project. Apply them again and again as you walk this journey, as with any muscle your mental muscles need exercise to stay healthy and strong. Make these steps a habit and you will build the mental muscles necessary to walk the pathway to prosperity.

The Steps of Manifestation are not linear. It doesn't matter in what order you apply them. You could start with being open and see what activities or events fulfill your life's purpose. Or you can name and claim as your first step. *It only matters that you are applying the principles of abundance in your life.*

Take the steps and practice them in your own life over the next weeks and months. My experience has been that you will begin to witness miracles in your life. In the space below, write yourself a few notes about a Goal or a Dream for your life and what steps you could take.

1. What is your dream or goal you would like to be manifested in your life?

2. What concrete steps could you take that will move you in the direction of your dreams.

<p>SMALL GROUP SHARING: Be vulnerable, be brave and share your dream or goal with your small group. This is an opportunity to receive support and encouragement- to be seen. Bonus points for sharing one or two steps you will take- this adds accountability!</p>
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WEEK 2: An Attitude of Gratitude



“Gratitude can transform any situation. It alters your vibration, moving you from negative energy to positive. It’s the quickest, easiest, most powerful way to effect change in your life — this I know for sure.”

– Oprah Winfrey

Science now tells us what we New Thought Truth students have known for years; people who regularly practice gratitude by reflecting upon the things they appreciate and are thankful for experience more positive emotions, feel more alive, sleep better, express more compassion and kindness, and even have stronger immune systems. To top it off, they are more successful in their work and make more money.

Gratitude doesn't need to be reserved only for momentous occasions and for when you reach some long sought-after goal. Sure, you might express gratitude after receiving a raise or a promotion at work, but you can also be thankful for something as simple as a good hug from a friend and the time to rest and reflect. Research by UC Davis psychologist Robert Emmons, author of *Thanks!: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier*, shows that keeping a gratitude journal - regularly writing brief reflections on moments for which we're thankful - *can significantly increase well-being and life satisfaction*.

With all of this going for it, why wouldn't you want to add a gratitude practice to your life?

Daily Practice:

Morning: Set an intention for the day and write it down.

Anytime: As you open your email each day this week, take one minute to write a short letter of genuine gratitude to someone in your life. Heap praise and appreciation on that person and see how your mood lifts as you start your daily tasks.

Evening: Text or email a group member a list of three things that you are grateful for today. Don't over think this exercise. Just look back on your day before you go to sleep and send your list out. Then open your journal and reflect how you did on your intention for today.

Homework:

Find a way to practice Stop—Look—Go in your life this week and journal about your experiences. (Refer to description of Stop—Look—Go on page 13)

Happy and You Know It!

“When we are happy— when our mindset and mood are positive— we are smarter, more motivated, and thus more successful. Happiness is the center, and success revolves around it. “

– *Shawn Achor*

There is something you know about me, something very personal, and something that I did not always know. There is something I know about every one of you, something that is very central to your life. It motivates you to get up in the morning to go to work, to give to others, to constantly try to improve your situation and the lives of others. There is something that we all know about every person on the planet; it explains why they put up with difficult situations and people, why we all persist despite the odds. That thing is that every one of us wants to be happy. Happiness is the thing that binds us all together, the thing we all have in common. How we imagine our happiness, that differs from one person to the next, but as Thomas Jefferson declared to the world in the Declaration of Independence, the pursuit of happiness is a fundamental desire of all humankind, given to us by God.

As I mentioned earlier, I did not always know this. It took my journey into sobriety and New Thought spiritual teachings for it to become obvious to me. Then, three years ago my husband and I adopted a sixteen-year-old boy. This young man had spent eight years of his life in the foster care system and had been moved to 19 different homes. We were determined that our home would be his forever home, and we worked hard to give him a family life that had never been consistently shared with him before. I don't need to tell you that it was not always smooth sailing, what journey with a sixteen-year-old—or with any of us—ever is?

THE WORK OF BYRON KATIE

About a year and a half into our journey with our son, I attended a Byron Katie workshop. I had read her books, practiced her “judge your neighbor worksheets,” and attended practice sessions on “The Work.” Intellectually I understood her roadmap to emotional and spiritual freedom, through the process of questioning all of our thoughts and beliefs. I used this process on my thoughts about our son's behavior and found great relief from the stress of parenting a teenager. This day though, I could not escape my worry about him, and this thought kept repeating in my mind, “I am his dad. It is my job to teach him.”

When the opportunity arose, I raised my hand to ask Bryon Katie about my belief that it was my job to teach him. She asked me, “If that were true, what would you want to teach him?” I thought for a moment and answered, “I guess if I were clear about that, I would be more successful.” She didn't let me off the hook with that answer and asked again, “What do you think it is you're supposed to teach him?” I answered, “To be successful. My job is to help him learn to be successful.” She asked, “What does successful mean?” “Oy,” I responded as I began to think deeply. After a long pause I answered, “To be happy, I want him to be happy!” She looked at me and asked, “Isn't the best way to teach him to be happy, to be happy yourself?”

This exchange left me cracked open and with a profound question. I had been studying spirituality for years. I had been through the dark night of my soul and had a practical and intellectual understanding that the key to my happiness lies inside of me. Here, I was knocked off my spiritual pedestal by a 17-

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE—FIRST STEPS

year-old boy. Without my knowing it, I had given my power away. So, how was I to recover my happiness and be the dad he needed? How was I to demonstrate what I thought I already knew?

Our subject this week is gratitude. You may be asking yourself, “Why is he talking about happiness? What is the connection between happiness and gratitude?” Some people might answer, “That’s very easy. When you are happy, you are grateful.” Or, “When I am successful I am happy and grateful.” But think again. Is it the happy/successful people that are grateful? We all know some people who are successful, they have everything that they need or want, and yet they are not happy. At that moment of my life, I was one of those people, what a wakeup call that was to me.

As long as I needed my son to behave differently, I was giving him power over my mood, my happiness. When I release my attachment to his behavior, his mood, his choices, I get to live my life and to make choices for myself that support and nurture me. Choices that will hopefully serve as a positive example to him. Knowing that my job is to live my own life and clean up my side of the street, freed me. As the parable teaches us, “First take the plank out of your own eye.”

Of course, as I went through this process, I became more and more aware that my son was making his choices out of his own desire for happiness. He was seeking the thing we all seek, true happiness. Happiness, as Shawn Achor describes in *The Happiness Advantage*:

“Perhaps the most accurate term for happiness, then, is the one Aristotle used: *eudaimonia*, which translates not directly to ‘happiness’ but to ‘human flourishing.’ This definition really resonates with me because it acknowledges that happiness is not all about yellow smiley faces and rainbows. For me, happiness is the joy we feel striving after our potential.”¹

With this awareness, I was able to be grateful for my life, all parts of it, and to live out the Truth I know: Happiness is never something you will find at the end of your journey. You take happiness with you along the road; you bring it to every destination, it does not reside anywhere but within you.

GRATITUDE CREATES HAPPINESS

Research shows us that people who practice gratitude feel more empowered, have less addictive and compulsive behavior, have a greater sense of community, are happier, make better spouses, are more successful managers and employees, and sleep better. With all of that going for it, why would you not build a practice of gratitude?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION: How do we build a practice of gratitude? First, look at your own experience. Think back on your life and recall a time when you have felt true gratitude, a feeling of awe and wonder. What gave you that feeling? In retrospect, did you experience what the research shows: *feel more empowered, have less addictive/compulsive behavior, have a greater sense of community, are happier, make better spouses, are more successful managers and employees, sleep better?*

¹ Achor, Shawn. *The Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles of Positive Psychology That Fuel Success and Performance at Work* (p. 49). The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE—FIRST STEPS

In those moments, we are experiencing an emotion, and emotions are fleeting and cannot easily be sustained. Robert Emmons has researched happiness and gratitude and wrote about the practice and the experience of gratitude this way:

“As a short-term fleeting emotion, the feeling of gratitude cannot be acquired through willpower alone. You can’t try to be grateful and then, through sheer will, automatically achieve it any more than you can try to be happy and succeed. The benefits of gratitude come from the long-term cultivation of the disposition of gratefulness through dedicated practice.”

Therefore, the key to creating a practice of gratitude that will empower and transform your life is becoming **Awake—Aware—Present!**

AWAKE

Be Awake to the consistent gifts of your life. Know that every moment is a gift. You haven't earned it; you haven't brought it about in any way. You have no way of assuring that there will be another moment given to you. The present moment contains all the possibility of the Universe. It is an opportunity.

All of us live in the infinite field of opportunity but are sometimes unaware of it, or how to use it. The Universe is consistently providing opportunity to all of us, in equal measure. The God we speak of in New Thought— Divine Source—does not withhold or punish, *it only blesses*. It is up to us to take the gifts we receive and make them into our success stories. It is our choice to see them as they are, and as they could be.

Every moment is a new gift, a chance to start over, to appreciate what we have and to make amends. When you are awake, there are no mistakes. Even if you let an opportunity go by, you can choose another to act upon when you are ready. Every choice can lead us to our highest good.

AWARE

I am not saying that we are grateful for everything, or happy at all times in our lives. We certainly cannot and should not be grateful for violence, for war, for oppression, for children or animals suffering, or for fellow human beings being harmed. Personally, we will find it difficult to be grateful for the loss of our family members and dear friends or for those times when our trust is broken.

We can, however, be aware of the pain in ourselves and throughout the world, and we can use that awareness to catapult us into action. We can be grateful *in* every given moment and aware of the opportunity it provides. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul says, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” He doesn’t say give thanks *for* all things but rather *in* all things. In every circumstance, give thanks and remind yourself that you are blessed.

With an attitude of gratitude, you can say, “I know my good exists in this moment.” As A Course in Miracles tells us, “Miracles are a shift in perception from fear to love.” When you look at a difficult situation and ask to see it through the eyes of gratitude, you are opening your heart and mind to seeing

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE—FIRST STEPS

the Truth. When you align yourself with your highest self, miracles occur. *This day contains 86,400 seconds. How many of them will you use to give thanks?*

PRESENT

The path to the manifestation of consistent abundance in your life is not a sprint or even a 5K, it is more like a marathon. A marathon takes patience and training; it takes commitment and presence. It is the consistent seeking of improvement in your thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors. It is the willingness necessary to see yourself as you are with love and compassion and then to shift to the next level of your being.

This commitment need not be painful, or stressful; you can affirm right here and now, “I move through life with ease and grace.” I have found a simple tool that helps me stay present and grateful. It naturally happens to us all many times a day. We stop. That’s right stop, but now remember what your parents taught you when you were a little child about how to cross the street: **Stop—Look—Go.**

Stop at the red light, at the intersection. Look around you, take it all in and become aware. In line at the grocery, Stop and Look at the abundance in your cart and your life. When we are waiting for someone else to show up, don’t jump onto your phone, instead Stop and use that time to Look within and meditate on the blessings of your day. At the end of your day, when your body is telling you to Stop, listen to it and look back on your day, remembering two or three things that were gifts.

How often do we stop, but not really pause? We rush through life with our mind full of worry, fear, and blame. “They took too long.” “This traffic is making me late!” “Why is there always a line in this store?” We miss the opportunity/gifts because we don't stop our minds.

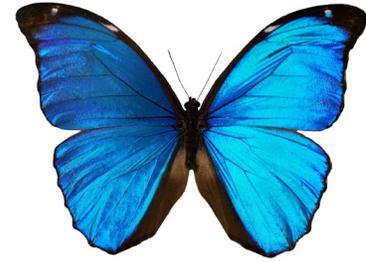
Shift your monkey mind to a gratitude consciousness with these simple steps. Then, when you decide to Go, to cross the street, to change jobs, to ask that really cute new person out, or make the decision about your medical treatment, you are doing so from a place of connection to a power greater than yourself, a place of truly knowing your abundance.

Every time we turn on the faucet, water comes out. Every time we click on the light switch, the power goes on. We take it all for granted. Would you be reminded of these as gifts in your life? You didn’t create running water and electricity, yet every day it is a gift in your life. Let your imagination run wild, find ways to appreciate all the gifts in your life that you no longer see. Open your heart to the incredible gifts that this time gives to us. There is no end to the abundance that we live with- enjoy it, appreciate it, give thanks for it.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION: In the Awake—Aware—Present practice of creating gratitude, how important is the difference between giving thanks **for** all things and giving thanks **in** all things? How do the power of thought and use of words (from week 1) illuminate this nuance? In other words, how does giving thanks **in** all things shift your thoughts, beliefs, or language about your experiences?

SMALL GROUP SHARING: Share about your Stop-Look-Go practice over the past week. How did you practice it and what did you experience? Did you gain a new perspective or learn something about yourself? Was it difficult? What made it challenging? What value did you get from this practice?

WEEK 3: Visioning Your Life



"Imagination is more important than knowledge. For while knowledge defines all we currently know and understand, imagination points to all we might yet discover and create."

– Albert Einstein

What do you want your year to be like? Are you planning for this year to be like the last one or better? Are you spending your time thinking about what could go wrong? What if you took time every day to envision a life that has you excited to wake up in the morning? Imagine what might happen if you dedicate some time these next weeks and months to seeing yourself making bold and powerful choices in your life.

As we read in Week One, the first step of manifestation is to name and to claim your dream. This week, spend time in prayer, meditation and play to clarify the vision for your abundant life. What kind of relationships do you want? How do you see your health? What do you want for your vocation and avocation? What is your income? How much do you have in the bank? Instead of seeing your life unchanged, actively vision your life full, magnificent, peaceful and prosperous. Dream big and you will live big.

Daily Practice:

Morning: Set an intention for the day and write it down.

Daydream: what would be fun for you? What would you like (love)?

Vision the day at its best: What would make it special for you?

(It may help to write out your to do list first, just to get it out of your head and on paper)

All day: Notice when you say, "I can't afford it."
Celebrate anytime you accomplish something, even something as simple as picking up this workbook!

Evening: List three or more things you are grateful for that are currently in your life and text/email the list to a small group member.

Homework:

Collect images to remind you of your goals and the people/things that create happiness in your heart.

Visualize (imagine) yourself as wildly successful. (Refer to "See Yourself Successful" on page 16)

Reflection questions. Before your Small Group meets, complete questions on page 18.

Visualization Makes the Impossible, Possible

“Formulate and stamp indelibly on your mind a mental picture of yourself as succeeding. Hold this picture tenaciously and never permit it to fade. Your mind will seek to develop this picture!”

– Dr. Norman Vincent Peale

VISUALIZE FOR FUN

Our New Thought teachings about visualization are given to us in all the children's books, movies and fairy tales we grow up with: *The Little Engine That Could*, "I think I can, I think I can." *The Sound of Music*, "I simply remember my favorite things and then I don't feel so bad." *Cinderella*, "It's possible for a plain yellow pumpkin to become a golden carriage. It's possible." Unfortunately, as we grow up, well-meaning adults in our lives teach us to stop daydreaming, to stop playing and pretending. We now know that play and imagination are crucial to the creative process, and to be successful we should all play more.

Too often as adults we forget the depth of these teachings and discard them as childish. However, there is a huge difference between behaving childishly and being childlike. Childish behavior is what we witness from the truly self-involved and egocentric. When we are childlike, we possess a purity of heart and mind, generosity of affection and consciousness of the truth that anything is possible. It is in this consciousness that we can manifest good in our lives. Dr. Stuart Brown of UC Berkeley tells us:

“For humans, creating simulations of life may be playing’s most valuable benefit. In play, we can imagine and experience situations we have never encountered before and learn from them. We can create possibilities that have never existed but may in the future. We make new cognitive connections that find their way into our everyday lives. We learn lessons and skills without being directly at risk.”¹

By using play, we can move our visualizations from disaster planning—trying to figure out and plan for what could go wrong— to actively seeking our highest expression. One of my favorite quotes is, "We do not see things as they are, we see them as *we* are." When we understand this idea, we know how to begin; not by fixing the things in the outside world, but by turning our attention to the thoughts and beliefs going on between our own ears. Then, visualization is one of the most powerful tools that we can employ to manifest in the world.

You are in fact using visualization all the time whether you are conscious of it or not. For example, you learn of a great job opening in your field. What is your first thought? Is it, "I would be perfect for that job?" Do you then imagine yourself getting the job, showing up for work and loving what you do? Or do you list all the reasons you won't get the job? To which image do you want to give your power to manifest?

¹ Brown, Stuart L., and Christopher C. Vaughan. (2010) *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*. Avery.

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE – FIRST STEPS

SEE YOURSELF SUCCESSFUL

Today you can harness your amazing power of visualization not by trying to make things right but *by seeing them rightly*. When you see things differently, you behave differently and you change everything. The secret of manifesting the life your heart desires lies in vividly keeping yourself centered in the consciousness of abundance. When your whole being is synchronized with the abundance of universal possibility, you will attract to you the people and things to make your dreams real. This is often called "*prosperity consciousness*."

You achieve this level of consciousness not by repeating prosperity affirmations alone, you must become willing to release the thoughts and beliefs that are roadblocks to your ultimate success. Abundance is not dollar signs, not things, not pots of gold at the end of a rainbow; ***it is the knowing of who and what you are—God's magnificent expression***. You, me, most of the world see ourselves as only human, how limiting is that? I am more than this body; you are more than you appear to be. See yourself as successful because that is what God has in store for you and infuse your life with the power to move mountains! Eric Butterworth speaks about it this way:

"You will always tend to act like the person you conceive yourself to be. This is your self-image. As Emerson says, you surround yourself with the image of yourself. If your self-image is faulty, you project its limitation into every experience. Many inadequate job situations are the direct results of a self-image of inadequacy being impressed on the job experience. But you can change the way you see yourself. This is what the new insight in Truth is all about."²

We are using visualization all the time, consciously or not. Today, stop and do what athletes and successful people from all walks of life do: visualize your success! Collect images that call to your highest self and place them where you will see them. They could be images of the children or pets in your life, experiences you want to have, or places you want to live or visit.

NOTE: If your eyesight is limited, you can easily adapt this practice by making audio recordings to playback to yourself or any method that activates the imprint of your success on your mind and heart.

You can take this a step further. Write yourself a check for \$10,000,000 (or more) and put it on your mirror or in your wallet. Draft an email negotiating the terms of your new employment. Write down the characteristics you are looking for in your soul mate. Take five or ten minutes and use your power of imagination to see yourself in the role that you have always wanted. What does it feel like? Be specific. Include the sights, feelings, smells, words and sounds you hear. Revel in your success.

SMALL GROUP SHARING: Consider your homework assignments to collect images (or other prompts like audio recordings) and to visualize yourself wildly successful. Share what this process was like for you? Were you surprised by what "wildly successful" means to you? Did you learn something about yourself? Did you realize a way you have been unconsciously visualizing your failure or limitation rather than your potential and your success?

² Butterworth, Eric (1993-01-01). *Spiritual Economics: The Principles and Process of True Prosperity*. Unity School of Christianity.

COMBINING VISUALIZATION AND AFFIRMATION

Athletes who visualize themselves having success find that their performance improves. Everyone has moments when they battle the voice in their head that tells them they cannot win. To silence this negative voice, some athletes not only visualize success but also practice positive self-talk in the form of affirmations. Affirmations go hand in hand with visualization and allow the athletes to both hear and see success. Again, these practices can be modified in a way that imprints the success on your mind and heart.

The more athletes imagine practicing a task, the easier it is for them to accomplish the task in a competition. They can rely on visualized cues to help guide them during their events. Ice skaters, for example, visualize the various elements of their routine. Mentally, away from the ice, they feel the ice beneath their blades, they hear every nuance of the music, and they complete their jumps. This form of visualization is a practice of meditation. Like an athlete, you can use this meditation technique in combination with your practice of affirmations to improve your performance in the world.

There is ample science that demonstrates the effectiveness of visualization, there are even some amazingly cool and effective practices we can execute from the comfort of our favorite chair. For example, you can practice your yoga routine, work out, hone your chess skills, practice for tomorrow's talk in front of an audience of hundreds, and you can even prepare for your best life!

The amazing new science of the brain reveals that thoughts produce the same mental instructions as physical actions. Science now knows what New Thought practitioners have known for years: visualizing success impacts the cognitive processes in the brain- memory, motor control, attention, planning, and perception. When we visualize anything, our brain is getting trained for actual performance. Further, it has been demonstrated that visualization practices can enhance motivation, increase confidence, improve motor performance and prime your brain for success – all relevant to achieving your best life!

BABY STEPS

Baby Steps are not small for the baby; they are a major shift in worldview and possibilities. So do not underestimate the advantage of setting small goals and achieving them little by little. In fact, goal setting can be a successful tactic to manifesting your dreams. Goals should be designed in small increments that are genuinely achievable in the short term.

When I was a professional dancer, I often struggled to meet larger goals, such as learning how to do four pirouettes, or to achieve a full split in a grand jeté. Not being able to accomplish these desired goals had a detrimental effect on my motivation and confidence. But by going back to basics and trusting my teachers I learned that the way to do four pirouettes is to do one correctly, and the way to achieve a full split in a grand jeté is to spend some extra time each day in my stretching exercises.

When I set incremental and attainable physical goals I was able to achieve the larger goal and to achieve it consistently. It is incredibly important to make large goals and break them down into small, attainable components that provide a roadmap to achieving the larger goal. Being able to repeat this process of attaining our goals is what will ultimately lead us to success!

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE – FIRST STEPS

Just as we cheer that baby for their first steps, we should cheer ourselves and others for the small goals we achieve. Being aware of and acknowledging our accomplished goals helps create more powerful visualizations and boosts our confidence and courage. Take some baby steps today!

Questions:

1. You surely have some level of belief that these practices can change your life. What do you think has to shift for your life to be more abundant?
2. What would your life look like if that shift was complete today? (Visualize it here, writing it down has power)
3. What risks are you willing to take to make that happen? (Be brave and remember, baby steps!)
4. Are you willing to let go of the beliefs that hold you back? (We all have them)(It is ok if you aren't ready yet, sometimes we need to understand the purpose these limiting beliefs have served before we can release them.)
5. Which of your beliefs are limiting you or holding you back? (If you are stuck, take this to meditation and ask.)

SMALL GROUP SHARING: Share one or two of your responses with your group. Be vulnerable, be brave and trust your group to give you support and encouragement.

WEEK 4: More=Give



“Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved, as to love. For it is in giving that we receive...”

– St. Francis of Assisi

The prayer quoted above is one of the most popular prayers in Christianity because it has a connection to a universal truth that we all know and were taught from a young age: you get what you give. Some call it Karma, some the Law of Giving and Receiving, and when it involves actions we feel are negative, hostile, or hurtful, we call it divine retribution. Let’s examine this idea from a New Thought perspective. When we lift ourselves to our highest consciousness—our divinity—we no longer plead to be granted anything. Instead, *we are looking to where we can give what we think we desire*. In Truth, we already have everything we are seeking. Just like the Scarecrow, the Tinman, the Lion and Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, we all go on a journey to find the things we already possess.

It boils down to this simple adage: if you want more, give. Want more time in your life? Give of your time to people and things that enrich you. Want more friends or a special friend? Be the best friend you can be to one person and build that skill. If you want a healthier body, give your body the exercise, great food and loving attention it deserves. If you want more money, give your money to the people and places that energize and sustain you. Hoarding of your time, your affections, and your treasure does not make you rich; it blocks the flow of good in your life.

Daily Practice:

Morning: Set an intention for the day around money and write it down.

Daydream: what would be fun for you? What would you like to have happen in your financial life, with your health, your relationships, your career?

All day: Become aware of your habitual thoughts and use the enrichment exercise on page 38 below to change them.

Evening: List three or more things around money and finances that you are grateful for that are currently in your life and text/email the list to a group member.

Weekly Practice:

Pray with a Prayer Chaplain/Practitioner after Sunday Service about your finances, health, work or relationships. (pick one and concentrate on it this week)

Look at where you are giving of your time talent and treasure and journal about what needs to be adjusted.

Enrichment Exercise page 23 complete at least two of these and be prepared to share with your group.

Abundant Financial Resources

“Money is the easiest thing to make manifest!”

– Louise Hay

“It’s a sin to be poor.”

– Charles Fillmore

How do those statements make you feel? Do you believe it is easy to manifest money? What do you think about relatives who ask you for money? The people who beg on the street corners? What do you feel when your spiritual center/church asks you to support it financially?

Money is often the most difficult thing for two people or group of people to discuss. Money has been the undoing of organizations, churches, friendships, and families. To change this dynamic and to change ourselves we must step up to the conversation about money and open our hearts and minds as we honestly examine our own feelings, thoughts, and relationship to money. The beliefs we have built around money can become prisons that keep us trapped in situations we desperately want to change.

Several years ago, I taught a class in which we had a lively discussion about our struggles with the value of money, the shame of poverty, and the guilt of wealth. It seems impossible to grow up in this world and not accumulate some of these beliefs, value systems, and wounds around the concept of money. If you want to change the status quo of your life, it is now time to step up to the conversation about money and open your heart and mind to examine your feelings, thoughts, and relationship to money. With a new relationship to this energy we call money, we can break free from the beliefs that no longer serve us and experience a new prosperity.

To begin with, ask yourself these simple questions to find out what you believe about money.

What is the source of your income? _____

Is there enough to go around for all people? _____

Do you have all the financial resources you need or want? _____

Can your financial situation improve? _____

These may seem like simple questions, yet you would be surprised how many times I hear people say, "I am living on a fixed income. My situation will not change." Or, "My job can only pay me so much." My favorite is, "There is someone who deserves it more than I do." With beliefs like those, we lock ourselves into situations that need not be permanent.

God is the source of all your good, including your income. It is not your job, your employer and not your pension. When we believe that our good or our income can only come from one specific channel we are blocking our good. You live in an infinite universe with more than enough to go around. When you

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE – FIRST STEPS

prioritize having your financial needs met the universe will rise to meet you. In truth, there is no limit to the amount of money you can make. Your age, education, gender, and intelligence do not stop you from being successful. Look at all the people in the world who are successful without any of the things we are told you need to succeed. Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss) was voted least likely to succeed by his college graduation class because he spent all his time doodling! Do not let others tell you what is possible for you, *your thoughts are the only limits.*

Hoarding your money will not make you rich. In fact, when you hoard anything you are cutting off the natural flow of energy contained in the thing itself. It is especially true of money. Joseph Campbell said, “Money is congealed energy, and releasing it releases life’s possibilities.” If you know that God is wanting to richly compensate you for who you are, you become open to receiving your wealth from the infinite streams of the Universe. Then you can give and receive your financial abundance with ease.

The way to break free from our self-imposed prison of lack and limitation is to courageously examine what we think and feel about money, then begin to do the work necessary to shift our beliefs. Take all the time you need to sit with the questions below, then take action: if you want more financial prosperity in your life give of your wealth! Give your money to where you are being spiritually supported, give things that you don’t need or use to help others. Remember as you give you shall receive. Give in joy and receive your abundance joyfully!

Questions:

1. What are the money taboos, or beliefs about lack you were taught or that you took on?

2. What will you do to clear them and/or change them? What action will you take in the physical realm?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION: What money taboos or beliefs about lack exist in your culture of origin? How did you internalize those beliefs and what has been the impact on major life decisions? How about the impact on small, everyday decisions?

Refer to the quotes at the top of page 20. How do those statements make you feel? Do you believe it is easy to manifest money? What do you think about relatives who ask you for money? The people who beg on the street corners? What do you feel when your spiritual center/church asks you to support it financially?

Vibrant Health

“Love is the great miracle cure. Loving ourselves works miracles in our lives.”

— Louise L. Hay

Louise Hay talks about our “dis-ease”—our belief that we are broken, flawed, and less than—as the source of our maladies. And love is the cure.

In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy writes this prayer:

Our Father/Mother God all-harmonious

Adorable One

Thy kingdom is come; thou are ever present

Enable us to know—as in heaven so on earth— God is omnipotent supreme

Give us grace for today and feed the famished affections

For love is reflected in love

And God leads us not into temptation but delivers us from sin, disease, and death

For God is infinite, all power, all life Truth, Love, over all, and all.

The beauty and the power of Mary Baker Eddy's version of the Lord's Prayer makes me confront the uncomfortable truth that I—*by the power of my thoughts and beliefs*—am creating my wellbeing or lack of it. At the same time, her prayer demonstrates that I have the power to change it, “Love is reflected in Love . . . (God) delivers us from sin, disease, and death.” In this interpretation of The Lord's Prayer, I read the answer: Love—love of God, love of others, love of self.

There have been times I have withheld love from the church, from the government, from the drug companies, from my family and most hurtfully, from myself. *The cure I found was to give love.*

You can decide right here and now to love your body, to bless it and care for it with your words and your behavior. Notice what you focus on about your body, particularly as you age, because what you give your energy and attention to will become your experience. Try some affirmations on for size: *My body is amazing; it is a gift! My years on the planet have taught me how to take loving care of my body!*

Give yourself the daily gift of bringing love and joy into your life. Spend time in affirming love for your body and try some of the exercises below to bring more joy into your life.

Enrichment Exercise

Infuse happiness into your life and health into your body by taking some simple steps:

Choose one or two to try out and see how they work in your life.

- **Get out in nature, even for a walk around the block.** Exercise doesn't have to be hard or long, it might even just be fun. There is beauty all around you, take the time to see it.
- **Write an email to someone to tell them how much you appreciate them.** Before you answer the hard emails, make sure you get a dose of positive emotion in your body- make your day sing.

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE – FIRST STEPS

- **Sing a song – Out Loud.** Research shows that singing makes you happy. It fills your lungs with air, brings more oxygen to your brain and muscles and changes your brain chemistry. In the shower, in the car, at church, or on a stage, just do it.
- **Plan a vacation or date night.** It can be a year or two out — the vacation, not the date-- just plan them. You will receive many benefits by process of planning.
- **Spend at least 5 minutes each day in meditation.** There is nothing more potent than meditation to reduce stress and empower your success. The busier you are, the more important it is that you meditate.

SMALL GROUP SHARING: Share about the Enrichment Exercise(s) you chose and your progress with it. Did the exercise have an unexpected outcome? How are you experiencing the universal law of more = give?

Life-Enhancing Work

“Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

—Howard Thurman

I believe the world needs you—your true self—and for you to share your magnificence. The story of Adam and Eve in Genesis states that they were forced to the East of Eden where they suffered. Let’s be truthful, most of us enter our spiritual journey because we are suffering. Our longing is to return to Eden, to Heaven on Earth. Since we know that Heaven and Eden are not physical places but places in consciousness, we return to Eden by shifting our consciousness to wholeness and love. You already possess what you desire more of in your life. Manifest life-enhancing work by giving that energy and activity to your work and career right now. **The following are common objections to this idea:**

My work place is toxic—how can I possibly make a difference there?

Your workplace is dysfunctional - all workplaces, homes and spiritual centers are. That is part of the human experience. Remember we are “East of Eden.” Even if by some miracle you were raised in a completely functional home, you went to school and met others' dysfunction there. Don’t curse the darkness, light a candle. What better place is there to bring the light of your being? Your contribution of positive thinking, empowering conversation, and healthy boundaries will shift you in the situation, and then the situation itself cannot stay the same. *You are at the point of power.*

My job is mind-numbing, I am only there because I am close to retirement.

Live your calling not your job. Your calling is something that you do whether you will be paid for it. Your job may be data entry; your calling can be, “sharing love in the world.” As you do your data entry job, practice your calling. Enter the data with the consciousness of its importance; the data you are entering is important to your company and its clients or customers. Your work is a

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE – FIRST STEPS

gift to them, meaningful and important to the success of the company's mission. Therefore, important to your calling.

When I ran a floral company, one of the most tedious jobs in the shop was stripping roses of their thorns- hundreds per day. As I did this work, I would practice my affirmations. With each rose, I would affirm: I am prosperous, or I am healthy and wealthy.

The thought that your job is mind-numbing is causing your job to be mind-numbing. Shift your perspective and notice how your work and your work life improve. Instead of waiting for retirement, practice your calling, from which you will never retire.

When I get a job I love, I will give it my full self.

There is no “when” there is only **now**. This mystical “when all the stars align or when the right and perfect position opens up, I will give my best” is delusional thinking. If you don't give your all now to the situation you are in, how will you be good enough or skilled enough or practiced enough for this job you are dreaming of? Either you will give your all or you won't, period.

In all these scenarios and in most situations that people share about their work environments, I hear the longing for something greater, a supportive and affirming workplace. I also see that the very thing they long for is the thing they withhold from others or their place of employment. We can sometimes believe that if we give to others without them meeting us halfway, we will be taken advantage of. That consciousness is what some refer to as a zero-sum game- there are only so many pieces of pie. If I give away mine, I will be left with nothing. Is your work consciousness, a zero-sum game? Are you bringing your hurt and hostility to the workplace?

If you want a positive workplace, it must start with you. When you open your heart and give of yourself fully, you will receive ten times as much in return. Newton's Third Law—for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction—does take place in the infinite Universe. However, Einstein's theories of relativity prove that the forces that interact with your efforts may shift how you receive and perceive their return. In other words, *where you give your good may not be the same place you receive it*. So be the advocate and example of fierce positivity at work. Don't let others' negativity create yours.

Remember, if you want more, give. Give what you desire right now and see how the situation you are in shifts by the power of your actions. Be patient and willing, remembering the fourth step in The Process of Manifestation: Be Open. You never know from where your good will come. Expect unexpected good!

Enrichment Exercise:

Your thinking, your conditioned or habitual mind may be arguing for your limitations. “I don't learn as fast as I used to,” “At my age, it's too late to change careers,” “I don't have the right education,” “I don't know how to do that,” “Not in this economy!” are all examples of how we block our good. It takes practice to train your mind to be the “watcher” or to notice what you are thinking.

Today, write down four things you noticed your mind thinking about work or the people you work with. Then write an affirmation to shift this pattern of thought.

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE – FIRST STEPS

Thought:

Turnaround Affirmation:

1.

1.

2.

2.

3.

3.

Enriching Relationships

“Far too many people are looking for the right person, instead of trying to be the right person.”

– *Gloria Steinem*

I use a version of this quote in most of the wedding ceremonies I create. I say, “Happiness in marriage is not just finding the right partner, it is being the right partner.” It holds true in all of life’s adult relationships: work, friendship, professional, marriage. If there is something that you want or desire from the relationship, provide it/be it. More=give applies to relationships, too! Personal relationships are sometimes the most challenging spiritual work we can do. However, nothing on earth can bring you as much clarity as your relationships with others. Our relationships are like gigantic mirrors reflecting our beauty and our flaws.

PRIMARY RELATIONSHIPS

Most of our lives we are working out our primary relationships – those with our parents or primary caregivers. These fundamental relationships are crucial to how we interpret every personal interaction and establish our expectations for the future. Most people feel they did not get everything they needed from their parents- it is virtually impossible to feel otherwise.

So, the first thing you can give to this relationship if you have not done so already is to give your parents a break. They were all were doing their best; even if their best failed you. The next thing you can do is give yourself what it is you think your parents didn’t give you. If they didn’t love you, surround yourself with surrogate parents who do. Find mentors, teachers, ministers, and other role models who will gladly provide you with what your parents did not possess. You are in charge of your life. Take positive action today, rather than complain about the past.

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Many of us—ok all of us—enter our romantic relationships or marriages in some attempt to heal what is left unresolved from our primary relationships. There is nothing unusual or pathological about this, although the Greeks turned it into a tragic play.

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE – FIRST STEPS

The key to transforming these relationships and creating enriching romantic partnerships is first being aware of what you are seeking from your partner: unconditional support, affection, encouragement, compassion, financial support, or something else. Then realize you *already* possess all the qualities you are seeking from someone else! Finally, in keeping with the theme of this chapter, give what you are seeking: first to yourself, then to your partner, and watch what happens.

FRIENDSHIPS

We are all aware of the cliché “put on your own oxygen mask first.” The flight attendants on every airplane ride you take will remind you of that piece of advice. I offer it here as well: take care of yourself first. Otherwise, you will have nothing to give to a friendship. In fact, the biggest gifts you can bring to a friend relationship is an understanding of your self-worth and healthy boundaries.

Our friendships can be for a reason, a season, or a lifetime. Whatever form they take they can be that place of support and honesty that keeps us sane in a very insane world. When we are a kind, loving, compassionate, honest friend with healthy boundaries to someone else, we understand our worth and expect and receive those qualities from our friends.

PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

As we have already discussed, we can shift our thinking in our workplaces or careers- even in our retirement- and lift ourselves to higher ground. In this chapter, let’s look at how we are giving to others. Are you mentoring junior colleagues at work or as a retiree? Do you provide career or life mentoring to youth? There are so many needs in our world for people just like you to step up and help others. If you want more from your professional relationships, give to those who need it. My guess is that you won’t have to look far to find somewhere you can make a difference. Like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, start by looking in your own back yard: your extended family, social circles, or workplace.

VULNERABILITY

We all long for connection, we all long to be seen, heard and valued. Our relationships, from the time we are born to the moment we die, are the ways we feel and know connection. If those relationships are not fulfilling or life-enhancing, we suffer.

Biology tells us we are wired for connection. We require connection to thrive physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. This idea might have been perceived as New Age or spiritual nonsense just a few decades ago. Today, neuroscience is now proving that the strength of our connections with others impacts the way our brains develop and perform.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION: How much are you willing to be vulnerable with your friends and loved ones? How much are you willing to give to those relationships? If you want more from your relationships, how can you apply More=Give?

WEEK 5: Grit



“Grit is that 'extra something' that separates the most successful people from the rest. It's the passion, perseverance, and stamina that we must channel in order to stick with our dreams until they become a reality.”

– Travis Bradberry

Our happiness and fulfillment are dependent on knowing and following our inner guidance and listening to our own heart. The cliché, "I have to be myself, everyone else is taken" speaks to the truth of our unique manifestation. You have within you a gift to give the world that no one else can. Emilie Cady in her seminal work *"Lessons of Truth"* states, "Desire in the heart is always God tapping at the door of your consciousness with His infinite supply—a supply that is forever useless unless there be demand for it."¹ The things you desire are the Divine of your being seeking expression. *This is the call that must be answered, the only variable is when.*

Remaining steadfast in the face of societal pressure or intense disappointment is not easy. Commitment is essential if we are to manifest our heart's desire and our true abundance. Our ability to consistently pursue our goals and desires in the face of setbacks and obstacles is the number one indicator of our success: not talent, not connections, not race, or gender—Grit.

Daily Practice:

Morning: Set an intention for the day and write it down.

All day: Determine what it means to have Grit in your everyday life and apply it.

Evening: List three or more things you appreciate and are grateful for that are currently in your life and text it to your Small Group partner.

Homework:

Go online and to get your Grit score: <https://angeladuckworth.com/Grit-scale/>

In her research with West Point cadets and others in strenuous settings and programs, Angela Duckworth created a way to measure your Grit level. This scale has proven incredibly accurate in determining who will survive and thrive in their endeavors. (Refer to “The Power of Passion and Perseverance” on next page)

¹ Cady, H. Emilie. *Lessons in Truth* (Unity Classic Library) (Kindle Locations 812-813). Unity Books. Kindle Edition

The Power of Passion and Perseverance

“If you define genius as working toward excellence, ceaselessly, with every element of your being— then, in fact, my dad is a genius, and so am I, and, if you’re willing, so are you.”

— *Angela Duckworth.*

When Angela Duckworth was a young girl, her father constantly reminded her, “You know, you’re no genius.” This pronouncement would come at all times, in the middle of a TV show, at a family dinner or as he was reading the Wall Street Journal. It was with quite a bit of irony and wonder when in 2013 Angela accepted a MacArthur Fellowship, sometimes called the “genius grant.” One does not apply or lobby for the MacArthur; your peers nominate you. While her dad did not think of Angela as a genius, her peers certainly did.

She later decided to study psychology and entered the Ph.D. program at the University of Pennsylvania. There she researched and studied what makes someone successful. In her book *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, she describes the mindset of the Gritty;

“Why were the highly accomplished so dogged in their pursuits? For most, there was no realistic expectation of ever catching up to their ambitions. In their own eyes, they were never good enough. They were the opposite of complacent. And yet, in a very real sense, they were satisfied being unsatisfied. Each was chasing something of unparalleled interest and importance, and it was the chase — as much as the capture — that was gratifying.²

Because you are in this study, you are answering the call in your heart for a life greater than you are currently living. The most rewarding successes take time, strength and perseverance to achieve, in one word: Grit. Webster's dictionary defines grit as, “*firmness of mind or spirit: unyielding courage in the face of hardship or danger.*”

A more elegant synonym for Grit might be tenacity. However, Grit has an earthiness and textural feel about it that describes the experience of being in the midst of something or getting up and trying again after a bruising loss. We all have Grit. But we don't all use it in the same ways.

We are not born winners or losers. We are all born in God's perfection; meaning we all have equal access to the Divine. Stephen Hawking is not more or less divine than you or me. His brilliant mind is not a result of God loving him more. His physical challenges are not a result of God punishing him. Our equal access to the wholeness of our being comes from the Truth that we are all made in the image and likeness of God.

SMALL GROUP SHARING: From the homework, share your Grit Score. Does it resonate with you or are you surprised? Has your “grit” changed over the years? Do you feel more or less gritty in your life now than in the past? How does this awareness make you feel?

² Duckworth, Angela. *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* (pp. 11-12). Scribner. Kindle Edition.

BUILD YOUR GRIT MUSCLE

My definition of Grit is the ability to bounce back from a challenging event, or to continue despite encountering obstacles along the path to your goals. Grit and growth mindset have a strong connection. Psychologists have studied the difference between “fixed mindset” and “growth mindset,” and how much we adopt a growth mindset affects our ability to achieve success. Those with a “fixed mindset” tend to avoid difficult situations or challenges. They think of situations, and their abilities, as static, and perhaps most importantly; discount critical feedback. Individuals who possess more of a “growth mindset” have been shown to embrace challenges, persist in the face of adversity, and seek to learn from criticism. It is easy to see how persons who possess those attributes are more successful.

We are successful in life when we are willing to keep getting up and trying again. We fail when we stop trying. The truly Gritty know that hitting the bulls-eye once is meaningless unless we can do it over and over again. The ability to keep going, to keep improving, and to keep striving is Grit. We all have it, and we build more Grit muscle if we are willing to keep on keeping on.

Even more than keeping on, when we are willing to be coached— not only to accept help but to seek it out—is how we grow our Grit. When we look at how we fell short and seek feedback on how we could improve, we are allowing God into our lives in the form of another human being who is willing to give to our success. What greater gift can we receive?

This curriculum is about abundance in all of its forms. Are you willing to receive abundance in your life by accepting the gift of coaching and training? If so, your willingness is the key to the flow of abundance in your life. If not, you are the clog in the cosmic pipeline.

Perseverance

Grit or growth mindset is extremely important because obstacles that can derail you from reaching your goals will almost always arise. For example, most of us have set New Year’s resolutions or goals. Some of these include losing weight, exercising regularly, spending more time in meditation, and spending less time at work. No matter what the resolution is, I am confident that our desire for implementing it is genuine.

We also mostly know how to achieve our goals. We know how to lose weight, walk out of the office on time and to sit in the silence. However, staying with our resolutions—keeping our commitments—over the long haul is another story. Some of us have children to take care of, while others have most of their time consumed by work, travel, or other family and personal obligations. While children, work, family and travel all demand unique attention, often the real-life practical matters get in the way of us achieving our goals.

If discouragement takes over your mind and heart, remember our lesson on affirmations, and shift your attention to the small but powerful things that are working in your life. Create and live into your affirmation of what is at work in your life: “I now lift my sights to my highest good, and my path is made clear.”

Passion

We can all be successful and diligent about a goal in the short term; passion is a necessary component to our success for the long haul. When I was 18, I told my parents that I wanted to move to New York and make my living in show business. My mother's immediate and uncensored response was, "But you don't have any talent." I used to joke that I spent the next decade trying to prove her wrong. The truth is, I was motivated by a commitment that transcended any hardship, indignity or slight that I had to endure. As we have already discussed, talent is not necessarily a great indicator of success. I had something far more important going for me: I was passionate about my goal.

The first plays I saw on Broadway were *The Elephant Man* and *Sweeny Todd*, two very different shows about the human experience. As a young kid, I was blown away, and these shows opened my heart and mind. I had what I can only describe as a transcendent experience. I experienced the power of personal transformation, and I knew at that moment what I wanted to do with my life; *I wanted to illuminate our shared spiritual journey and create experiences for people to see a larger truth about themselves and others.*

I spent the next decade in dedicated study, hard work, and great joy. They say it takes ten years for a dancer to build their technique, and that seemed to be what it took for me. While I worked some in the theatre during that decade, it wasn't until ten years in that I began to make my living solely from my passion. Not surprisingly, the productions that gave me the most satisfaction all revolved around our human and spiritual journey.

What is it that you want to do in the world? What would you do if time, money, age, or family obligations were not in the way? Let go of your reasons—or excuses—and explore your heart's desires. Let your imagination take you on a journey to the realm of infinite possibility. Explore every nuance of feelings and creative ideas. Revel in the abandon of your passion. This emotional and spiritual journey is what it can feel like to be alive and to know what we are born for. Yet, most of us settle for safe and familiar. ***Absolute Abundance is about finding and living your true purpose.*** I know that when you do, the Universe will reward you greatly.

You are a magnificent expression of the Divine; your hiding your light does not serve you or the world. Build your muscles with baby steps, take the decade it may take to manifest your dreams, and know that with every step on your journey, you are blessing yourself and others. The world does not need more people who subjugate their calling to greatness in the name of practicality. The world desperately needs people willing to answer that calling one baby step at a time. As Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Everything I learned in those years in the theatre and every talent I have, I now employ in my purpose: *to illuminate the human experience and create experiences for people to see the larger truth about themselves and others.* The more things change the more they stay the same, when you are following your passion. Jobs change, careers morph, **passion endures.**

You never know where the road will lead you once you start down the path. The only guarantee is if you stop "keeping on", you will not get to your true destination. There is no such thing as an overnight success. Those who are successful and abundant have harnessed their tenacity—Grit—and applied it to the desires of their heart. Now, at the end of this journey, is your opportunity to commence your

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE – FIRST STEPS

journey into manifesting more abundance in your life. Commit to shifting your consciousness and let the abundance of the universe flow into your life.

One of the best ways to build Grit and manifest your dreams is to plan. In our first chapter I identified *The Steps of Manifestation*. They are a roadmap to success, and you can apply them to any area of your life.

1. Name and claim your dream/goal

Recommit yourself to articulating your heart's desire, your passion. Know that what fulfills you will also be a blessing to others. You are shifting your consciousness by your work in this course. The goals you might have identified in week one may have expanded or shifted. Spend some time in your visualization work and your meditations, and live into this process.

My dream/goal/passion is:

2. Take concrete steps to make your goal manifest

Take action, bold action, remembering that bold does not necessarily mean big. Baby steps are not small for the baby. Take the steps you can today and leave tomorrow's concerns for tomorrow.

My next steps are:

3. Share Your Journey

As you travel down your path, let others know what you are about and where you are going. The most unlikely of partners may surprise you. Conspire with others in manifesting your dreams, and release those who don't share your vision.

The people who encourage me are:

ABSOLUTE ABUNDANCE – FIRST STEPS

People or situations to release are:

4. Be Open

We never know where our blessings will appear. When life presents unexpected and unwanted challenges, determine to see them differently, and watch as your desire manifests in a form or way you previously didn't expect. In other words, expect unexpected blessings!

Affirm your willingness to see it differently: