

I think I can. I think I can. Can I?
Your mental train ticket to self-empowerment
By Michele Wahlder, Life & Career Coach

We all find ourselves at certain points in our lives holding first class tickets to negative mental trains of thought. Michele Wahlder, MS, LPC, PCC, a two-time cancer survivor and Dallas, Texas-based Certified Life & Career Coach and Psychotherapist, has placed thousands of people on the right track to self-empowerment via a plan she calls the *5 C Change Process™*. The journey challenges individuals to:

ONE

Clarify Current View – *Where are you now- honestly?*

Conscious awareness of your current view is the first step in becoming the best you can be. Getting clear about how your life aligns with your values, talents and unique gifts is vital to your happiness. You need to know where you are in order to learn where you want to go.

You can clarify your current view by completing a review of eight life areas. Be **HONEST** with yourself about how happy are you with your profession, finances, health and overall well-being, primary relationships, personal development, spirituality, environment, hobbies, etc.

TWO

Connect with Your Highest Vision – *Where do you want to be?*

Example: A client of mine, a yoga instructor, decided she was happy teaching but wanted to contribute to the world on a larger level. She wasn't happy with the quality of the yoga clothing that was accessible to her and her fellow yogis. Her vision was to design and create fun, hip and timeless yoga clothes using eco-conscious fabrics.

You have to **GET REALLY CLEAR** about what you want. It is crucial that you connect to your highest vision of yourself because you can't create it unless you are clear about what it looks like. If you don't have a vision of where you want to go or what you want to be, you will most likely **NOT** get there. To quote Henrietta Klauser, "If you have a connection to what you want, take the next step and write it down." If you don't have any idea about what you want, or how you want to be in life to bring about greater happiness, begin looking through magazines and create a Vision Board/Collage of what attracts you. You may also want to consider getting an outside perspective from a friend or a professional coach. I take my clients through a guided imagery that gives

them a glimpse of what their future could look like. There are also books that can help guide you. Just get help assessing your talents, divine gifts and abilities and then determine how you want to use them more fully in the world. We can't help others as fully, if we are not aware of how we can best serve. So instead of thinking of it as selfish to engage in knowing yourself better, I would suggest you consider it selfish to hold back and not be the best you can be. Only in this way, can we help the world and others.

THREE

Create Inspiring Goals – *How will you get there?*

Example: My client created a tiered plan of what needed to happen step by step – outer goal. All of this was influenced by her inner goal of keeping a measured pace and a balanced life. Her goal was to enjoy the process.

You have to create a plan and take specific actions to get you from where you are now to where you want to be. When most people write goals, they just write a list of action steps, usually external actions. I believe it is more **POWERFUL** to have **INNER AND OUTER GOALS**. An outer goal is what you want. For instance, you might think, “I want a new house”. An inner goal is more focused on the how. How will a new home benefit me and my family? Will it offer more common gathering areas, a larger kitchen so that we can cook together, etc.? How can I appreciate what I have now until I get this home? How can I make this a joyful experience rather than a stressful one? If you can not be grateful for what you have now, then when you get a new home, it will only create very short-term happiness for you. Then, you will be focused on the next external illusion of happiness. For 2008, I suggest taking at least three of the life areas I mentioned earlier and jot down how you could benefit from living your highest vision in each area. Next, add action steps toward your desired achievements along with completion dates.

FOUR

Clear Obstacles – *How will you remove obstacles in your way?*

We all have dreams and visions for our life, but frankly, there are many things that can get in the way. The two most common obstacles I see with my clients are:

The inability to say NO— In order to bridge the gap from your current view to your highest vision, you have to make room for what “Could Be”. If your life is full and you want to add more of the things that are truly important in your life, you should start the change process by making room first. You must say no to some things in your life, so you can say yes to what is most important. You have to **GIVE UP** the

DESTRUCTIVE HABITS, BEHAVIORS and ACTIVITIES to MAKE ROOM for NEW ONES.

A metaphor would be a water hose watering a flowering plant. The water in the hose is your life force and the flowering plant is what you are trying to grow in your life. If the water hose has leaks, it will not have enough water or life force/energy to reach its desired outcome or vision (to grow the plant into full bloom). Examples of leaks might include toxic friendships, unrealistic expectations, watching too much television, eating sugar, overspending, negative relational patterns with your spouse or working on an outdated job.

Example: A client's obstacle here was that her 8- year-old daughter needed caring for and she was afraid she wouldn't be able to be a good mother plus jumpstart a successful, new business. We remedied this issue by getting clear on the proper definition of a good mother. Also, practically speaking, she needed help picking up her daughter from school. So she got her husband to assist her in this area so she would have time to create this new business.

Negative self-talk—Research shows we have approximately 50,000 internal messages we say to ourselves daily. We are constantly walking around having conversations with ourselves. And it is what we say that makes all the difference in the overall quality of our lives.

Example: I was once in Starbucks, and I watched this woman spill her coffee while reaching for a sugar packet and I heard her say out loud, "I'm so stupid. I can't believe I did that."

Now, I just happen to hear her, but this is an example of something you might say internally as well. You might think, "No big deal. I say things like this to myself all the time." Well, **IT IS A BIG DEAL** as our subconscious hears these messages and acts on them as if they were real. **DON'T SAY ANYTHING TO YOURSELF THAT YOU WOULDN'T WANT SOMEONE ELSE SAYING TO YOU.**

Think of self-talk like mental fuel. Now, imagine filling your car with dirty water. We all know you wouldn't get very far. Now, take that same car and fill it with high quality gasoline. You'll most likely reach your destination. It is the same with people and the words we use. If the words are negative and toxic, we will sputter along with low energy and our performance suffers. If our words are positive and tender, we will feel confident, energized, encouraged and will most likely meet our goals faster and easier. Here are some key things to remember if you ever find yourself preparing to board the train of BAD self-talk:

B– stands for **belittling** self-talk. Stop telling yourself, “I am not good enough.” If your dream is to have a healthy self-confidence, which of the following examples is more likely to get you there:

A. “I’m so stupid. I can’t believe I did that.”

B. “Whoops, mistakes happen.”

Can you see how the **Answer B** is much kinder?

A – stands for **awfulizing**. Stop predicting a future filled with gloom and doom, and dwelling on scary thoughts. If you dream of obtaining a career you love, which of the following will move you closer to your vision:

A. “I did terribly on my interview, I’ll never find a job I like.”

B. “I will answer that question on past employment differently next time and I will ace it! I know I will one day have the job I love.”

Can you see how **Answer B** places you in the mindset of a successful job search?

D – stands for **deceiving**. This is when you deceive yourself into thinking you are a victim, and that other people are to blame for your circumstances. If we want a happy relationship which will of the below responses will aid in achieving this goal:

A. “If my spouse would only do more around the house, then I would be happy.”

B. “I can and will choose happiness today, no matter what my spouse does.”

Answer B is the right choice, wouldn’t you agree?

S – stands for **shoulding** – This is when you give yourself a lot of shoulds, musts, and ought tos, then beat yourself up for not living up to unrealistic standards. Say your dream is to be in top physical condition, which will further that:

A. “I should have eaten a salad for lunch instead of that big ol’ hamburger. I’m such a pig!”

B. “I could have eaten a salad, but I chose not to. Tomorrow I will make healthier choices.”

The second choice is so much more inspiring, don’t you think?

FIVE

Commit to Action – Are you *willing to do what it takes?*

The final step of the *5 C Process* is to commit to action. How many times have we all made plans and never carried them out, or started off excited and lost motivation? No one ever does anything great alone. We all need encouragement and support from others including an accountability partner who is willing to help hold the vision of the person you want to be. In the previous example of my client, her biggest negative self-talk was how to be a good mom and a good business woman. Her thoughts were, “If I don’t pick up my child every day from school, I am a bad mother.” Instead, we replaced it with, “Picking up my child from school daily is not what makes me a good mother. I am, indeed, a fabulous mother.”

Here are the four action steps that have been proven to help you eliminate your negative self talk:

- Become aware of your negative messages –listen to voice in head
- Stop! You have to stop immediately if you find yourself dwelling on any negative thoughts
- Replace negative thoughts with a kinder alternatives
- Practice. It takes a commitment of time in order to turn a pattern of negative thinking into a more positive train of thought.

To learn more about Michele’s *5 C Process* and her upcoming seminars, please call 214-823-LIFE (5433), or visit her Web site at www.michelewahlder.com Once there, you will also be able to download a free workbook containing strategies on how to obtain a positive outlook on life.

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