

Self-help book: Sample

This is a sample of a typical self-help type of book. You can see the full text of the introduction and of the first chapter. I have also presented the type of outline that the client would see and approve before actual writing on the book begins.

FINDING THE TRUE SELF

Outline

Introduction – What is the True Self?

The definition of True Self. Downside of denying the self. Short and long term costs. A working definition of happiness. The upside of being true to yourself.

Chapter One – Approaches to the True Self

Different approaches to understanding the self – philosophical, psychological, religious, the business approach. Emphasis on results. Create a success environment. Forgive yourself.

Chapter Two – Who are you?

The importance of self image. Aspects of self image. How self image develops. Important experiences. Profile: W. Mitchell

Chapter Three – The inventory

Self assessment. Genius: physical, mental, emotional, relationships. Profile: Michael Jordan

Chapter Four – Values

Recognizing your values. How to prioritize your values. Sample list of values.

Chapter Five – A brief rest

Defining happiness. *Schadenfreude*. Cognitive dissonance. Worthy goals.

Chapter Six – Role models

Importance of role models. What successful families have. The four-minute mile. Finding role models. Directed imagination. Profile: Viktor Frankl

Chapter Seven – Putting it into action

How do I get started? How do I manage my actions over the long haul? Worthy goals. Setting priorities.

Chapter Eight – Goal setting

The STAMP method of goal setting – specific, timely, achievable, measurable, priority. Checking on yourself. Profile: Gene Kranz

Chapter Nine – Overcoming fear

From the known to the unknown. Baby steps. Your changing self image. Eat an elephant. The Swiss cheese method of problem solving. Breaking bad habits.

Chapter Ten – Handling success

Focus on the process. Aspire, adapt, accept. Emotional stakeholders. Keeping a lofty vision.

Chapter Eleven – The importance of usefulness

Defining usefulness. Reality isn't always bad. Adapting ideas from other people. Vision and imagination. Profile: Ray Kroc

Chapter Twelve – Problem solving 201

Encountering unexpected difficulties. Methods of problem solving. Utilizing the different methods.

Chapter Thirteen – There's no such thing as time management

Organizing your efforts. Time is about choices. Plan and execute around priorities. Budgeting time. Sharpening your ax. The Pareto principle. Delegation.

Chapter Fourteen – Backsliding

No plan is perfect. Two steps to backsliding: recognize and confront. The habit of laziness. Subgoals.

Chapter Fifteen – The importance of relationships

You can only work on yourself. Handling negativity. Pay attention to other people. Don't brag. Expect resistance. Overcoming the fear of success.

Chapter Sixteen – FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

The observer's paradox. Your changing self. Spontaneity and new experiences. Hitting a wall.

Chapter Seventeen – Tools

The amalgam. The duality of the human being. Why we chose a business approach. Western tools.

Chapter Eighteen – The success environment

Improving your odds. Controlling your environment. Things. Place. People. Evaluating your world.

Chapter Nineteen – Journey's end

The importance of the search. Worthiness: worthy goal=worthy actions=worthy person. Growth. Happiness.

INTRODUCTION

"People often say that this or that person has not yet found himself. But the self is not something one finds, it is something one creates." -- Thomas Szasz

At one time or another, all of us face challenges in our lives. It might be problems at work, problems with our relationships, financial problems, or just dissatisfaction with choices we've made or habits we've developed. It might be (and usually is) a combination of any or all of these.

Often we don't even know exactly what the problem is, other than the sense that something doesn't feel right.

We all have a compass that guides us -- a gut feeling -- towards those things that make us feel good, and away from these things that make us feel bad. Often, though, we ignore that gut feeling and disregard the little alarms that go off in our head.

Think about it: have you ever done something that was bad for you, even though you knew you shouldn't?

Have you ever said something to someone, even though you knew you should keep your mouth shut?

Have you ever known the right thing to do, but done something else because the "right" way was too difficult?

Do you have habits that you know you should stop, but can't seem to find the will power to do so?

Are you unhappy with your weight, even though you know the benefits of exercise and a healthy diet?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, don't feel alone. Confusion about why we do the things we do is common. It's part of what makes us human; however, if you have persistent pain in your life from making poor choices, then maybe you're just not being true to yourself.

What is your "true self?" It's what makes you an individual, unlike anyone else on earth. In our lives it's those moments when we feel pure true happiness when we achieve something, create something, or accomplish something that makes us feel like it's the thing that we were born to do. Golfers often talk about the "perfect shot" when they hit the ball soundly, with almost no effort.

While the definition of "true self" is amorphous and hard to pin down, we all recognize those moments when we experience them. Whether they're described as "bliss," a "flash of inspiration," a "moment of clarity" or simply a "feeling of contentment," the moments when you connect to your true self are memorable.

Now the question you may be asking yourself: How can I experience those moments more often?

Good news: Asking the question is the first step toward finding the answer.

First, though, let's look at what happens if you're *not* in touch with your True Self.

Emotional stress. Going down the wrong road in your life takes a tremendous toll on you, emotionally. The anxiety you feel prevents you from experiencing full, uninhibited peace and happiness. This is sometimes called *cognitive dissonance*, feeling one way and acting another. We will often rationalize to ourselves that we're doing the right thing, but there's no fooling the deepest part of ourselves that knows the truth.

Wasted time and energy. Again, using the analogy of a trip, think about missing your turn when you're driving in a strange city. We've all done it, and you may have even missed an important appointment because of the lost time. Now imagine your gas tank is nearly empty and you run out of gas on the way. Is there anything more frustrating?

Poor image to others. When your life is this disorganized, as your mind, spirit and body tell you to act in a way different from how you really are acting, what do others see? Someone who is competent, "on top of your game," or someone who is bumbling and unsure of yourself?

An important aspect of projecting a poor image is the example you set for people who look to you for guidance, such as subordinates, or even your own children. Human beings learn by example; what lesson are

you teaching those who are watching you?

Denial of purpose. Many people believe that each of us is put on earth for a purpose. Whether you call it karma, or God's intention, or Fate, being unconnected to what's in store for you violates the Universe's laws. Whether you believe in a higher power or not, following such a course of action can't be good for you!

The bright side

On the other hand, imagine yourself using every single moment of your life pursuing the one thing that you're meant to do. You know what that's called?

Happiness.

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of definitions of happiness. The definition I like to use is when *your actions are aligned with your values.*

The Army once used the phrase "Be all that you can be." That's a great way to look at using the tools you already have – and you have more than you think – to accomplish, achieve and enjoy your life in ways you may not think possible.

Let's look at the upside of finding your True Self:

Efficient use of resources. You waste less time, energy and money when you work toward a definite goal. If your goal is well thought out, and your actions are all directed toward reaching that goal, you seem to have more of each than you thought.

Try this: Plan a budget of your finances for one month. Write down your expenses for the coming month, putting them in order of importance. Then allocate your income for the month and spend every dollar of it, on paper, in advance. Many people find that they have more money than they thought they had, and wind up with extra cash at the end of the month.

That's a simple example, but it works the same way with your time and energy. Focus your intentions on a target, and you'll find that you have more resources than you thought.

The principle that this is based on is the idea that human beings are not static. We are either moving toward a goal that we choose or away from it toward another objective that we didn't choose. By consciously planning in advance, you keep chaos from ruling your life.

You serve as an example. When you show others how you conduct your life in this way, you teach them the same rules and techniques. Suddenly, those around you are not draining your resources with the chaos in their lives. They are helping you reach your goals at the same time they are reaching their own.

Children, in particular, benefit from such an example. Our relationships with our family are the most important relationships we'll ever have. Teaching your children how to achieve on their own makes them happier, more fulfilled and able to control their own lives.

All of the reasons I've cited so far are nice, but they may seem a little abstract to you. How about this, then – by recognizing, accepting and pursuing the goals of your True Self, you'll *feel good*. Given a choice, wouldn't you replace disappointment, despair and disgust with joy, contentment and fulfillment?

In this book, we'll explore just a bit to figure out exactly what "finding your True Self" means. We'll look at different ways to approach the topic, and discover a system to help you turn your thoughts into actions that can help you become and enjoy more of what you were meant to be – to *create* your True Self.

CHAPTER ONE

*“Knowing others is wisdom.
Knowing yourself is enlightenment.
Mastering others requires force.
Mastering the self requires strength.”*
- Lao Zi, *Tao Te Ching*

When you start talking about a person’s “True Self” or “Self,” it’s easy to get confused as to what you really mean. Getting your mind wrapped around the concept (as we use it in this book) is vital. Without having that knowledge firmly in mind, the confusion will dilute your efforts and weaken your results. A good working definition of “self” is “the essential qualities that make a person distinct from all others.”

Okay, you’re the only “you” that has ever existed. How can you use that information to help improve your life? Let’s look at a few different ways of considering your “True Self.”

Philosophy. Philosophers are consumed with the idea of “self” and “consciousness.” Some believe that the “self” is simply a collection of experiences and perceptions that a person retains. Although you’re still the same “you” that existed five years ago, you’ve also changed in some ways, maybe physically, maybe mentally, maybe emotionally – the change was brought on by experiences you’ve had. Despite those changes, there is still a “you” around which all the experiences occur.

Other philosophers consider the “self” (sometimes using the word “soul”) as the core essence of a being, integral and part of the being. The activities you engage in that align with that essence are expressions of your “true self.” For example, if a knife had a soul, then the act of cutting would be the soul, or self, of that knife, because “cutting” is the essence of being a knife.

As you can tell, it doesn’t take long when discussing philosophy before it becomes a little too introspective and hard to understand. However, we can take a couple of lessons from philosophers:

- You can experience change and growth without “becoming someone different.” At your core, you retain the essence of the person you’ve always been.
- Each of us has individual strengths obtained at birth or through experience, and aligning your actions with those strengths is an expression of the true self.

Religious. Most mainstream religions recognize a higher calling that guides each of us as we go throughout our lives. The journey is sometimes described as following the “path” or the “way;” enlightenment comes in proportion to how closely we align our selves with the way. Awareness of the path is often achieved through meditation or prayer.

In either case, awareness of a higher calling helps guide our actions and attitude. The belief in something bigger than yourself, that you’re working toward a larger goal, can sustain you through rough times. Some lessons we can take from the religious view of the “true self:”

- Realizing that there is a “big picture” and that you’re part of it, can keep you motivated to work toward your ultimate goals.
- Spending time in quiet reflection can be a useful way to gain insights into yourself and your course of action.

Psychological. Abraham Maslow was a psychologist of the early 20th century who constructed a hierarchy of needs. At the bottom of the hierarchy were physiological needs such as food, water, air and physical security. At the top of the hierarchy was the principle of self-actualization. Morality, creativity, spontaneity and other of what we would consider the higher attributes are expressions of fulfilling our need for self-actualization – or, for our purposes, finding your true self.

(This brings up a good point. If you find yourself in a situation that threatens your health, or even your life, then address that situation first! Removing yourself from physical danger takes priority over any other aspirations you might have.)

If we agree with Maslow's hierarchy, then we can take a couple of lessons from a psychological approach:

- Pursuing self-actualization, or the true self, is a natural process that all human beings engage in.
- Although discovering the true self is important, other needs and concerns continue and can't be ignored. Safety, security, and other basic needs still have to be met.

The business approach. Speaking of the various approaches, one thing that we'll emphasize in this book is *results*. There's no point in discovering new ideas or coming to brilliant realizations unless we can put those concepts into action. Using the information that you find to improve your life is the point. Although there are exercises throughout the book, its ultimate purpose is definitely **not** an exercise – it's to help you take the appropriate actions that will guide you toward the most rewarding, fulfilling life you can live.

To achieve results, we'll use methods that have been tested in the business world and shown to be effective. (Relax, I'm not going to turn you into a money-hungry drone; keep your mind on your ultimate goal and use the tools of business to achieve that goal.)

In his book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," Stephen Covey introduces a concept of time management that is used often in business: *Plan and organize around priorities*.

Put into terms that you can apply to your own life, it's this: Decide what people, activities and goals are important to your life and center your time and actions around those people, activities and goals.

Regardless of your attitudes toward business, I hope you realize that companies are designed to get results. We'll be using some of the tools of business for the same goal – to get results.

Our approach, therefore, will be holistic – to use the tools and systems of business and management to achieve our goals, while also embracing the concepts of the "True Self" inherent to philosophy, religion and psychology.

Why is this approach important? Because you want to give yourself every chance to succeed. You want to create a success environment. You'll be engaged in a hard – sometimes very hard – quest for self improvement, and during this time you'll enjoy contentment and mental congruity if you realize that your goals are worthy, and that *you* are worthy of the effort you'll be putting into the quest.

The process in the coming pages will be incremental. At times you may find an exercise or a plan that is difficult for you or makes you uncomfortable. That's actually good; it means you're exploring new areas and using mental or emotional muscles that you haven't used before. Relax, take your time, and work through it at a pace you can handle.

Remember the adage: *If you keep doing the same things you've always done, you'll get the same results you've always got.* We fall into comfortable routines that are not always productive. The temporary discomfort you may feel along the way will be forgotten when you've reached your goal.

Create a success environment. As you go through this book, there will be times that you will be more vulnerable to negative influences. A misinterpreted look or an inadvertent remark from a loved one can throw you off track. Take this opportunity to surround yourself with positive things that create a good feeling. Do you enjoy a particular flower? Put it in your office. Is there a painting or photograph that inspires you? Hang it on a wall where you can see it often. Do you have a certificate of achievement or some other sort of recognition that you're proud of? Put it in a prominent place.

At the same time, get rid of items that make you feel bad. Is there a portrait of a person or scene that depresses you? Either get rid of it entirely or put it someplace where you won't have to look at it. A pile of old magazines or books that you have put off reading, and now you feel guilty? Same thing.

The idea is to actively design your world so that positive influences dominate. By creating this environment, you'll be able to see more clearly what great things you are capable of achieving.

Forgive yourself. As you consider the different aspects of your life, your experiences, and your dreams, you may at times wonder why you made certain decisions. While natural, dwelling on such questions is not productive. Each of us makes the best decisions we're equipped – mentally and emotionally -- to make. Some of the decisions are useful, some aren't.

For most of us, forgiving ourselves is the hardest task of all. If you've made poor decisions in the past, remember that you did the best you could at the time. Starting right now, your purpose is to equip yourself with

better tools, and to focus your energies on making useful decisions – “useful” in the sense that they help you achieve your goals – and to center your time and actions on those important items that will lead you toward finding your True Self.