

E-Book: Regaining Control

*Eight Actions that bring change and peace
to a life interrupted by a
child's addictive ways*



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Foreword

If you are a parent dealing with the struggles relating to your child's addiction you are likely wrestling with same emotion filled questions, fears, pains and experiences I have encountered during my son's six year odyssey with heroin. I have been there and have ridden the waves of emotion you are riding right now. Even though my son is currently celebrating a period of sustained recovery, I am never too far removed from those thoughts and concerns. Once you begin living this nightmare, no matter how much progress my son makes in his life, many of those scars never really completely heal.

Because we love our children more than anything, nothing is more painful than witnessing the systematic destruction of a child's life that was once filled with so much promise, energy, and opportunity. The feeling of helplessness, anger and loss can be incredibly overwhelming for any parent. It gets to the point where the obsession to find a cure or a solution to the problem becomes the most important activity of the day.

The sad part of the addiction story is that there are no easy answers or no simple, quick fixes. As a parent, you are in this for the long haul. The only comfort I can offer you is that you are not alone in your struggle.

Through my experiences I have come to the realization that the fundamental requirement for any parent in this situation is they must first discover and embrace their own recovery program. Until we create a recovery program that distances and separates ourselves from our child's addiction we are not prepared or equipped to manage the chaos of the disease in our child's world. Without our own recovery program the addiction becomes us, consumes us, and systematically destroys is just as it does our own child.

The love, commitment, and hope of a parent can create a situation where the parent is pulled into their child's addiction driven life to the point where the parent risks losing control over their own life. The more we wrestle with this monster the more committed we become, as parents, to find a solution or solve the problem or do whatever it takes to save our child. With every setback our

resolve grows because we know how high the stakes are in this battle.

Without realizing it, their addiction becomes our obsession. Finally it reaches that point where the addiction becomes, and is, our life. This is where and when the destructive forces of addiction really take its toll on us parents.

The purpose of “Regaining Control” is to provide parents with an outline for creating a recovery plan to help distant them from their child’s situation. This does not teach, encourage or promote the notion that parents stop loving, coaching, caring, hoping, or encouraging our children on this dark odyssey. Rather, it helps parents realize that the stronger they become in living and celebrating the life they have, the more equipped, clear, focused a parent can be in managing and responding to their child’s situation.

There has been one clearly documented test case to this process – me. I am confident of this process because I have seen how it has worked in completely changing my life and the influence it has had on those around me. The process outlined in this e-book will help any parents putting these ideas in place to constructively distance themselves emotionally from the situation, creates a roadmap for clarity and purpose in their life, and helps the parent discover a fresh perspective for dealing with this adversity.

Until I stumbled upon this process, I was a dad who spent every moment of every day trying to figure out how to coach, nurture, love, inspire and guide my son to sobriety. With every loving, committed action I continuously experienced failure, deceit, and disappointment. I painfully learned, and was repeatedly reminded that the beast of the addiction in my son was more powerful than anything a loving, committed father had to offer. With every failing, I pushed even harder and harder, never once letting go of the belief I could rescue my son. Until one day I realized that his addiction and my commitment were working together and destroying me. My health, my business, my relationships, and my psyche suffered to the point of ruin.

Today, I celebrate my recovery program and all that it has done to inspire and guide me in a wonderful transformation. It never changed how I feel about my son or altered my commitment to his recovery. Instead it provided a recovery program for my life that helped me distance and

separate myself from the toxic aspects of my son's addiction. In the process, I have empowered myself to find peace in living the life I desire and celebrating the gifts I have. I also have empowered Brandon through this process to be responsible for his choices and decisions and have demonstrated what living a life of positive, peaceful addiction looks like. I never lose hope for my son; but, I am clear that his addiction is his journey and I have to live my life regardless of his path and be at peace with this reality.

Introduction

We all have those moments in our lives. That moment when we look at a situation that has gotten completely out of control and find ourselves declaring “*this is nuts*” or “*this is crazy.*” As our frustration builds, many times we do nothing about it until, finally, we catch ourselves declaring “*this is so out of control, I have got to make a change.*” It is at that moment when we finally decide something --intervention, action, or change -- must be done.

For many, these challenges are health related, a weight gain issue, a soured, toxic relationship, our current job. Whatever it is, everyone has those moments where they would love to change their current reality and define a new outcome. Unfortunately, many of us spend more time commiserating about the situation and dreaming about a new outcome than we do actually getting to work on realizing those dreams.

The key to changing our lives as it relates to the addiction issues requires we believe we are empowered to discover our own recovery program.

As the parent of an addict, the reality of the disaster is much more obvious and the opportunity to dream about a different outcome doesn't last long. It is also a little more difficult to push the thoughts about the stress and the issues on the back burner as the painful experiences of addiction hits each of us in the face quite routinely and usually very hard.

Understanding, believing and embracing opportunities for change in our life does exist. Despite our powerlessness over the addiction related issues in our child's life, each of us has the ability to define a new outcome for our life. The key to making the changes we desire in our lives relative to our child's addiction is to recognize we are empowered to discover our own recovery program.

The foundation for inaction or reticence to act and embrace change has many potential sources:

- **We have set goals before and have failed.** It is simply too painful and frustrating to set another one, only to be disappointed with the outcome later.

- **We really don't know that doing something will actually change the outcome.** There will be a lot of work and some progress with very little to actually show for an outcome.
- **We simply don't have the time,** the power, or the ability to invest in that kind of energy, again. We are so busy simply surviving that we don't have the time, the energy, or the ability to engage in something like this.
- **We think about it, then things seem to get better, then we forget about it.** We only think about it when something happens and then we get distracted and it goes away for awhile.
- **We really don't believe that this will make things better.** The fear is that we put in all this time, effort, and energy to embrace a change in our life only to realize that our world is still in the same place it was before we got started.

Creating the changes we desire requires us to go through a conscious thought process that helps us understand how we got there in order to keep us heading in that direction.

“Conflict provides lessons we refuse to learn in an easier way.”

Whatever the reason for not engaging in the pursuit of our dreams or improving our situation, much of our response – action, inaction, and accommodation – is mostly related to our mindset or our thought process. *How we view the situation defines how we approach the exercise of changing it.* Until the issue becomes life threatening, life changing, or is forced upon us, rarely do we take action. Once forced into it, we are all capable of incredible change and creating amazing results. Unfortunately, few volunteer to go through that experience unless forced to.

Once a person understands the thought process most people go through to finally take action; they will be more equipped to consciously apply the process and proactively move forward towards life's desired outcomes. Without this knowledge, much of our activities regarding change are subconscious acts of survival. Regardless of the cause – proactive or reactive – the thought process is much the same. The primary difference is that the proactive approach delivers a higher sense of conscious empowerment which puts us in confident control through the clarity and commitment of our actions.

Before sharing the steps used to define and creating life changing actions, I would like to first share one critical shift in perspective with you.

“You are pursuing an outcome defined by a vision, not a goal”

A goal is simply the finish line. It is something you cross. It is a destination you arrive at. It is the yardstick by which you track progress. A goal is a necessary part of the process for that is how you will ultimately measure your success.

When it comes to realizing an incredible outcome, a goal will not ultimately drive you to your destination -- the vision of accomplishment will!

Vision is the outcome of the achievement. Vision is how you define what it looks like and feels like -- physically, emotionally, and spiritually -- to realize the outcome of change, improvement, or accomplishment you seek. The process of creating and capturing a clear visual image of what achievement looks like to you is what will drive, inspire, and guide you through your journey. It is not only the image created of you crossing the finish line, but the bigger picture view you create of the entire experience associated with crossing it that offers the power to push, persevere, focus and endure through the entire process. Though I will talk more about this later, it is critically important to begin to recognize and embrace there is a powerful difference between goal and vision. Beginning the process of envisioning the entire impact of the outcome will be of great importance as you go through this process.

Creating a vision of your accomplishment helps you live in the moment of your celebration every day; as a result, you essentially draw the finish line toward you on your mission.

STEP ONE: Awakening

“It's exhilarating to be alive in a time of awakening consciousness; it can also be confusing, disorienting, and painful”. ~ Adrienne Rich

The first step to change is the awakening to your reality. Awakening is that moment of clarity when your eyes are opened and you finally realize, admit or discover something is really wrong. This doesn't mean you suddenly became aware of the situation. Awakening means that you finally had that epiphany and recognized the situation for what it actually is and its impact on you and your life.

When I was going through my painful lessons and experiences with my son's addiction, I looked past and tolerated a great deal. I chose to ignore the reality of his situation and the impact it was having on my life. Only in retrospect do I now realize how much I tolerated, accepted, and overlooked throughout that ordeal. I was living my life in willful denial of the obvious. It was not as though I was completely powerless or totally oblivious -- on the contrary. I knew what was going on and I knew it was messed up and I desired to change both the outcomes of his addiction and the impact it was having on my life. I was aware. I simply hadn't experienced that awakening.

Until we are able to truly recognize and admit that the situation we are in is completely unacceptable and requires a change, we will not begin to really embrace the notion that this is a serious problem.

Once I came to the reality -- that awakening -- that this situation was a complete mess, my behaviors and my actions related to them changed completely. The biggest difference between awareness and awakening is the ability to recognize, understand, and see the complete impact an adverse situation has on our lives. When it came to my son's addiction, I knew -- I was always aware -- that is was totally screwed up. Until I realized -- had that awakening -- just how completely and painfully disruptive the situation was I had no capability to declare my commitment to change it.

Awakening is a very powerful experience. It is that moment when we come to that stark reality of the impact of the situation on our lives. Usually there is a trigger – an event, a photo, a conversation – that finally flips a switch that helps really see what we have been creatively, selectively ignoring, or accepting for some time.

Once the genie is out of the bottle, there is no going back. Once we are enlightened by our awakening, we will be cognizant of what we discovered. We may not act on it right then or there; but, every single event or experience related to that person, perspective, or situation will now be viewed in a different light. We are now wide awake, we know it is messed up, and we now realize how incredibly toxic this is for us. Once awakened to our reality, it is only a matter of time before something has to, or will be done.

Awakening is a ticking time bomb. It will generate one of two responses. It will kick us into gear and start us down the road to defining and implementing changes. Or, it will fester inside of us. It is impossible to ignore this new reality. We may try to find reasons to believe that, given time, things will simply change, be different, or are not really as bad as they currently seem to be.

Responding in this manner may settle us down for a little while; but, we now have been presented with a harsh, honest perspective that will be hard to ignore. From this point forward, nothing really prevents us from continually referring back to discovery that our awakening brought us.

The only downside to not moving forward is what happens to us if that discovery is suppressed and allowed to fester. There is an added physical, spiritual and emotional toll that comes with attempting to ignore or suppress this awakening. The situation has already been taking its toll, but in many respects it was a quiet, silent destroyer. Now, armed with the knowledge of the impact of the situation on your life, suppressing it only adds to the damage. Resentment, anger, or loss of self are examples of adverse impacts that will begin to hurt us as a result of inaction.

While the task of change is difficult, challenging, and frightening, the cost of inaction is even

While the task of change is difficult, challenging, and frightening, the cost of inaction is even greater. Once we have our moment of enlightenment, the best course of action is to TAKE action. It is only a matter of time before you will need to act anyway.

greater; especially on the enlightened self. This is why I often encourage people to take action on their discoveries because inaction only avoids the reality of what will need to be done eventually.

Awakening is enlightening, frightening, and powerful. It is my hope that when someone discovers what they have been denying or avoiding, that they move on to the next step. Even if they don't at that time, many usually do, eventually. Even if someone never takes that big, next step, there will definitely be a moment in their life where they come to recognize the impact of this toxic situation in their life. I am hoping that once enlightened by their awakening people will find the courage to move forward.

With that, let's move on...

STEP TWO: Acknowledgement

“Any man worth his salt will stick up for what he believes right, but it takes a slightly better man to acknowledge instantly and without reservation that he is in error”. ~ Andrew Jackson

It is hard to avoid or ignore the obvious once it hits you square in the face. When I think of that moment on my porch when I finally realized what I was doing to myself in relation to Brandon’s addiction, I almost chuckled at the irony in my discovery. Here I was, for the unknownth time, going through the painful process of wondering where my son was, worried about how he was doing, praying for his well being, and trying to find peace and comfort in this chaos. All of a sudden, it hit me – *“Dave, you have done this a lot lately.”* The awakening hit me like a cold, hard shot! *“Man, you are right; I have done this all too often.”* That is what the awakening does – it calls our attention to the obvious.

Our ability to challenge ourselves to embrace change requires that we recognize our own deception and how we have convinced ourselves that this situation isn’t as bad as we really think it is.

All that was left to do was acknowledge the accuracy of this discovery and my responsibilities for it and to accept responsibility for changing it. I had gone to great lengths to avoid, ignore, or even accept as a new normal the mess my life was in. I had convinced myself that this was something that I needed to deal with, under the existing rules, constraints, and responsibilities of being a dad. I had allowed myself to accept some truth that this was the way it needed to be for the time being. That was until I realized – in my awakening – the actual state my life was in as a result of these behaviors and decisions.

It was at that moment I came to the reality of the impact of this deception. I was convincing myself that I had no choice and could not see how to manage this differently. I was defending the

only option I believed viable until I realized how my choices were destroying me one action, one deception, and one painful step at a time. I came to the reality that, regardless of what I had done in the past, something had to be done in the present. I acknowledged the reality of the situation and my responsibilities for changing it.

Recognizing the impact of a toxic situation in our lives creates tremendous opportunity. It doesn't facilitate the change, yet; but, it is the force that challenges us to recognize the obvious and accept our responsibility for having arrived at this point and explore our role in altering its impact on our lives. It takes a special honesty to acknowledge that we have had a hand in allowing, enabling, or making it so. Acknowledging our responsibility for a different outcome gives us the courage to move forward in a different direction.

Once we acknowledge our responsibility for the situation, we then give ourselves the opportunity to explore changing it. If we do not own it, we have very little authority to change it. This does not mean that what people are doing around us can be necessarily changed; for we only have the ability to change what we can control. In that sense, we can only shift or change what happens in relationship to the actions, behaviors, and decisions of others provided we acknowledge our responsibility for our roles, behaviors, actions, or decisions relative to the situation. Without that honesty and ownership, we will be unable to assign power to our ability to influence a different outcome.

As we go through this step in acknowledgement there are two clear actions: acknowledge our responsibility for being in the situation in the first place; and, accept responsibility for taking the actions necessary to change it.

STEP THREE: Assessment

“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.” ~ Winston Churchill

Going through the process of assessment is similar to the action discussed earlier as we create our vision. When we find ourselves so dialed into the adverse emotions of a toxic or negative situation it is hard to envision a better outcome on the other side of it. The sheer magnitude of the assignment can make it difficult to believe that any solution is worth the work, the output or the effort. I will discuss the return on effort and investment later on; but, right now, the challenge is to look at the situation and say, *“if I could change it or redefine it, what would I do?”*

This is the act of assessing the options, the opportunity and the potential for action. Assessment is the next critical step. The challenge is to get past the noise, the negativity, and the obstacle in a manner that allows you to be truly creative and innovative. Your ideas do not have to be big ones or game changers. They do need to be powerful enough to redefine the outcomes and strong enough to inspire you to believe in them.

As I encourage others to think about the possibilities in their lives, the more mired in the chaos, the harder it is for them to think beyond it. Life has hammered them with negativity and adversity on a routine basis. Many times they can hardly imagine a situation that would be any different. It has been all they have known for a while. The longer they have experienced it or the more deep seeded the routine, the more challenging it is to develop some semblance of a vision that looks significantly different.

In this situation, the most successful approach has been to engage in an activity that diverts their attention from their continued and sustained, dark reality to a world of complete, unreal, and energizing fantasy. To accomplish this, I ask them to close their eyes and imagine they just found out they won ten million dollars. Imagine someone came to their door and handed them a check

for ten million dollars. I encourage them to allow themselves to escape and embrace this fantasy. *What would they do, if they just won ten million dollars? How would they feel? What are the possibilities in that situation?*

The response to the question is amazing. When they start to think about this possibility, their bodies are stimulated and their imagination races -- It is as if all their troubles are actually behind them. They begin to imagine, create, daydream, and come up with all kinds of answers, actions, and ideas. While this scenario is not a very realistic one, it is one that is created with no limits, no obstacles, and no real problems. The presence of the winnings instantly erases or removes all current limitations.

This is the opportunity that is created in the assessment phase – allowing you to imagine a different situation or outcome in the face of adversity. Once faced with the reality of the obvious – acknowledgement – the next step in the process is to say “if I could change it, what would I do?” The secret is to allow you to imagine a solution that removes all limitations, obstacles, fears, doubts, or worries. Much like imagining you have received ten million dollars, there are no limits to the opportunities before you.

Later on we will examine or explore the plan for action. It is in that place that we define how to initiate or implement a crazy plan. Until then, allow your mind to wander – freely, openly, and unencumbered by your perception of reality and examine the possibilities.

When we take the limits off in our imagination and dreams, we are able to envision incredible and amazing opportunities in our life.

As you go through this process, there will be one or two very clear, concise and relatively simple solutions that clearly resonate as viable. Allow those that resonate most to percolate for a while. Give them an opportunity to encourage you to see them as true opportunities for change. Most importantly, do everything you can to find a way to not corrupt them by discounting them, limiting them, or losing faith in them before you even get started. These are real options that were created from your soul – allow them the opportunity to live and have positive light shined upon them.

Now that you have done this, you have gone through the most important part of the process. Let's review:

1. **Awakening:** Suddenly you came to the realization that there is situation in your life that is exacting a greater toll on you than you realized. You are now aware exactly how this has been impacting you and you recognize that you may need to do something about it;
2. **Acknowledgement:** As you go through the process of honestly looking at this situation, you realize that you allowed this to go on much longer than it needed to and you are also responsible for making certain something changes. If you do not take action, it will continue to eat at you and destroy you; and, now that you are armed with this knowledge you realize it will be very difficult to avoid or ignore;
3. **Assessment:** Knowing what to do or what your options are at this point in time are not very clear. While you know you need to do something, the question becomes "what?" The time has come to quietly and openly identify actions, steps, ideas or opportunities that best help you change or redefine the issue. In your relaxed and receptive state, you will end up with some great ideas that clearly resonate. And, you will land on one or two that really feel like they are potentially do-able and worth exploring.

Now, you are ready to examine what it would take to put an idea into action and begin to define a new outcome for this challenging troubling situation.

STEP FOUR: Accommodation

“There are no safe choices. Only other choices.” ~ Libba Bray

Accommodation is not really a sequence to the process, but is a continuous part of the early process. Many times, when faced the undeniable reality of a situation, we simply choose to look away, reluctantly accept, or painfully move forward without seemingly giving much thought to the real pain or frustration to it. Even when faced with the obvious, as we examine in slow motion this entire thought process, we are continually evaluating whether trying to do anything at all is really worth it. For many, there is a point where the answer is simply, it's not. That is accommodation.

Sometimes we simply aren't ready to make the commitment to change our lives. This is not wrong or a failing, it simply means we are not ready. Even if you don't get started on your change today, it is only a matter of time before you will be back at this same place making the same choices around the same situation until you act to change it.

Accommodation allows the individual to return back to the place they were in at the beginning of the process. They have decided, at some point in the thought process that whatever it is going to take is simply not worth the time, the effort, or the risk. Instead they settle back in to their uncomfortable, yet familiar, routine and hope to discover another way to get through it; or, hope that the situation will somehow change itself.

There is no failure or dishonor in shifting to accommodation. Once someone goes back or ends this progressive thought process, it is clearly a statement that, at that point in time, they were not ready or they did not believe in their ability to change the outcome. Every one

of us has experienced that emotion or had those thoughts – *“I really like the idea or the concept, I just don't think that I am ready to go there.”*

Accommodation is most prevalent at this part of the process because the individual is now beginning to crystallize the options. We are getting to that point where we are considering what to do, when to do it, and how it all is going to work. We are starting to get to that point where action may soon be required.

As we evaluate our options, our responsibilities, and our choices, we are now nearing a “go” or “no go” situation. As a result, we start to think about effort, reward, risk, failure, and our commitment to the task. As we begin to look at the return on effort, the return on emotional and physical investment, many will start to become uncomfortable with the amount of uncertainty to realizing the desired outcome.

It is one thing to be emotionally, physically, or spiritually destroyed by a particular situation, the specter of the risk, the effort, and the potential failure can be even more disruptive than the current adversity. It is sometime easier to dance with the devil we know than to embrace change with an angel we don't. As a result, many people will evaluate their situation, look at the mountain they must climb to change it, and decide it simply isn't worth the risk. Or, in other words, I am not ready or do not yet have the confidence in my ability to succeed in changing it.

It is always disappointing to see people dream and then stop the process before doing the hard, yet inspiring, work to realize their dreams. In many ways it is a good idea that they have made this decision before moving forward. If you do not believe in your ability or commitment to make the change, chances are you are going to really struggle with the hardest part – the early stages of the solution. It is always best to take action when you are convinced that (A) you have no option or (B) you will not be denied. Armed with either or both of these perspectives, you will be empowered, inspired, and unstoppable.

Ideally, you want to avoid doubting or discounting your ability to succeed. As we reflect back on how we have come to this part in the process, it is hard to imagine doing anything else except moving forward. We have come to the reality of the source of our greatest frustrations and we realize how much it has impacted our lives. We have even gone so far as to accept responsibility for the situation and for changing it in some fashion. The only thing left is to define what we need to do and embrace a plan for doing it.

We all know that any change is fraught with challenges. Rarely does anyone like it. Often, we will go to great lengths to avoid engaging in it. This time it is different. We cannot deny, avoid, or ignore a situation that is completely disrupting our peace and our happiness. We cannot hope that somehow magically it will change, because deep down we know we are going to have to do something, eventually. If not today, when? If not now, why not?

We can easily be frightened by the prospect that this project is very risky, quite challenging, and requires a great deal of physical and emotional energy; but, we have also been enlightened and empowered by our awakening and know that we are going to have to do something eventually if we are ever going to really enjoy and celebrate our lives the way we desire.

As you go through the process, I encourage you to look past the fear, the risk, the worry, and the effort. Embrace the vision you created at the beginning of this process. Would you rather go through this process – as difficult and challenging as it threatens to be – to realize and celebrate the change you desire? Or would you rather accept the situation for what it is and hope that change will find its way over time?

It is always up to you. I am convinced and am a firm believer in the power of embracing change. I encourage you to move forward and embrace the opportunity that was created when you had your awakening.

Keep moving , keep dreaming, keep working, and keep believing. This is how you get through the accommodation phase without stopping or backing up.

Change is never easy and there is never a time where it will be less difficult. The right time is when one knows it is necessary. Often one knows when that is and is able to embrace the discomfort associated with the activity.

STEP FIVE: Action Planning

“Setting a goal is not the main thing. It is deciding how you will go about achieving it and staying with that plan.” ~ Tom Landry

This is that point in the process where you start thinking about the plan. You have gone through the thought process enough to know what you really need to do. All that is left is to map it out and make the commitment to execute the plan.

Creating and defining a plan for action often becomes a bigger hurdle than it needs to be. For many of us all we need is to take that simple step necessary to get everything moving. Unfortunately, we have been conditioned that every life changing action requires some big, organized plan before proceeding. It is not true. The need to do something big is a reflection of the fears that exist in others when it comes to change. As a result, they use this thinking to create more obstacles to change as a way to reinforce and justify their fear of the entire transformational process.

Your action plan needs to be simple enough to get you moving and begin the change you recognize is necessary. I will talk later about the focus and commitment necessary to stay moving. All you need to define is what needs to happen next – that one thing you know you need to do now – to initiate the change.

When I committed to my 100Day Challenge, I knew I needed to reclaim control of my life. As I reflected on the actions necessary to make that happen, it was obvious to me, more than anything else, that I needed to start my day in the right emotional, physical and spiritual place. I needed to positively frame the beginning of my day. When I historically have done this, the rest of my day always goes better.

I determined that all I really needed to do to gain control in my life, at least to begin with, was to start my day with a productive workout. Whenever I began my day with a good workout the rest of my day was much more positive and productive. In the chaos that had taken over my life, I had become very inconsistent in that area. Not working out regularly was definitely a contributing factor to my adverse state at the time. I had allowed the negativity in my life to control my decisions. My morning workouts were one of those casualties.

Keep your action plan simple, easy to follow. Avoid complicating it with a lot of steps, activities, or results. Focus on one driving critical behavior essential to realizing the outcome.

My action plan – that simple step – was to commit to working out more regularly in the morning. As I reflected on this, I decided that I needed more of a challenge than simply to focus on working out regularly. I instinctively knew I needed a little stronger incentive. That is when I added the challenge of riding my bike for one hour for one hundred consecutive days. It was a challenge that would require a higher level of commitment and focus on my part. My action plan shifted my focus away from the situation I was in and productively, positively focused it on a solution that empowered me to be in better control in my life for at least one hour every single day.

This is how an action plan works. Keep it simple, get busy. I had no idea that my bike rides would have such a profound effect on the rest of my life. But, it did. My action plan reflected a big commitment – one hundred consecutive days – but, in many respects a very simple plan – a one hour bike ride. Those two actions – the challenge and the task – created an outcome that completely changed my life.

As you begin to create an action plan, ask yourself – “*what is the one thing that I know I need to start doing?*” The answer is the impetus for change you are looking for. Accept the answer, as simple as it may seem, as a great place to begin. Then ask yourself, “*What is my commitment to doing that? How will I track and measure progress while celebrating my accomplishments to the task?*” Keep it simple. Make it reasonably doable. Avoid the complexity of a long list or a complex set of tasks. Most importantly, give yourself a chance to believe in the possibilities for this to put you moving in the direction you desire. This is your action plan.

The less complex the plan, the easier it will be to take that first step. Much like my experience of simply starting out on a bike ride, the next steps and the next opportunity will reveal itself to you as you create momentum and progress from your first action. The transformation in my life was evolutionary. As I created more positive energy from my rides, the inspiration that arose from my clarity created future opportunity, ideas, and action steps. I didn't need to know where I was going next, I only needed to know what I needed to do now.

Life rarely goes as planned and the same is true for any plan. We can create a complex roadmap only to find out that it became too daunting and we gave up under the enormous weight of the plan. Or we end up adjusting, tweaking, or changing it in light of other outcomes and lose valuable momentum in the process. Create a situation that encourages you to focus on the one step or action you already intuitively know you need to take. Focus on consistently putting that action to work for you. The outcome of that action plan creates an environment which gives you the freedom to learn, explore, and identify future opportunities as you go. The journey of discovery is the most powerful part of the experience.

STEP SIX: Adversity

“There is no better than adversity. Every defeat, every heartbreak, every loss, contains its own seed, its own lesson on how to improve your performance the next time.” ~ Malcom X

As I reflect back on those times when I was successful or those times where I was not, I can easily plan and prepare for my success. When I am honest in my assessments of commitments or plans where I have ended up falling short, there is a clear pattern to when or how I fail. There are certain event triggers that often interrupt my commitment, progress, momentum or enthusiasm. While they may seem to be different or unique – they are actually very similar in nature.

Now that I realize what causes me to interrupt my progress, I prepare for my success by planning for the adversity that I know will show up and interrupt or distract me. In the realization of what stops me, I can plan and prepare for those moments in a way that allows me to respond to it in a positive and productive way without losing momentum.

When you anticipate your potential failure or weak moments, you are actually preparing and planning for your success.

There are a wide range of typical distractions we all have that we are not aware of. We call them exceptional events, until we realize they are everyday occurrences that we simply use as an excuse of a justification for breaking from our commitment or challenge. I have heard them all and have effectively used many of them to my detriment. Here is a list of popular adversities that are nothing more than everyday events:

- *I was doing fine until I got sick*
- *I got busy at work and couldn't find the time*
- *I had to take my kids to...*
- *It just didn't feel like it was making a difference*

- *It was too cold, too wet, too hot, too dark outside*
- *I got injured*
- *I got distracted*
- *I just don't have the time right now*
- *I was going to until I had to...*

Every one of these is a weak excuse for not honoring a commitment. I am a firm believer that whatever it is you want to do, you will figure out a way. If you don't really want to, you will figure a way out. These are all conversations used to justify our getting out of a commitment, not to find a solution to honoring one.

When I began my 100Day Challenge, I became aware of the vocabulary I was using. I started to become conscious of three words I began to eliminate from my conversations. These words enabled me to find an excuse, a reason, or a way out. In eliminating these words, I became more conscious of my commitments, real intentions, and my interrupters to success.

The three words I cut out were:

Try: Either we are doing something or we are not. Either we are committed or we are not. When you use the words "***I will***" or "***I am***" there is very little wiggle room. When you accept responsibility for these words in relation to your commitment, there is very little that will interrupt your obligations to fulfilling or honoring it.

But: When you look at the list of excuses, there is a component to the justification story we tell ourselves that goes like "I had planned to, but..." or "I was going to, but". The word "but" is usually the beginning of a converse view, opinion, or perspective. "*I understand why you feel that way, but...*" "*I recognize why that works for you, but...*" Accept your commitments for what they are. They are not subject to justification for failing or stopping. You made a decision to tackle this problem by committing to this action. Trust and honor the decision and avoid allowing yourself to find a way out. "Seemed like a good idea at the time, but..." Every one of us justifies our failing with a story. We have failed in the past – learn from our failings and make certain it doesn't repeat itself.

Can't: The word “Can’t” is synonymous with “Won’t.” “I can’t seem to get up that early” is the same as “I won’t get up that early” “I can’t seem to find the energy necessary to get that done” is the same as “I won’t find the energy to do that.” Eliminate the notion that you “can’t” and you realize you can and you will. You simply have to decide that is the story you are telling yourself.

Adversity is a distraction, it is an excuse, and is rarely as unpredictable as we would like to believe it is. The opportunities associated with adversities can be found in our ability to be honest about the past and recognize how we have used our adversity as a reason for failing. In learning from our previous failings, we are able to plan for our typical excuses, and be prepared with a response to these predictable situations to create a different and successful response to them. This enables us to stay focused, on course, and avoid the typical triggers that interrupt the quest for accomplishment in each of us.

STEP SEVEN: Accomplishment

“Nothing builds self-esteem and self-confidence like accomplishment.”

~ Thomas Carlyle

When I embarked on my first 100Day Challenge, cycling for at least one hour for one hundred consecutive days, there was never a day where I felt like I couldn't or wouldn't complete my challenge. There was never a moment where I was really concerned about getting to the objective of one-hundred consecutive rides. Even though the challenge itself was a stretch, there was never one thought that I might not make it or even when I contemplated not completing any of my rides. A big reason for this mindset was because my mission and commitment were so clear, I had no choice except to honor them and ride.

Though each ride provided a very small, incremental benefit, I started to become more aware of the massive transformation that was gradually occurring. From where I was on the first day to where I was at any other point in the ride, I had come a long way. I became conscious of the source of this confidence in my progress -- I was able to celebrate and record an accomplishment upon the completion of each and every ride.

Each celebration provided me an opportunity to feel a sense of accomplishment and acknowledge the progression of my continued success with the completion of another positive step in the direction I desired for my life. .

This moment became one of the most powerful tools in keeping me on my journey. Beyond my commitment and vision was the realization that every day that I celebrated an accomplishment was another day I moved closer to what I desired in my life.

Incredible successes come in very small increments or steps. Often, we see the success when we realize the end of the effort, not the beginning of the process. As a result, success appears as having happened in an instant or a short period of time when, in fact, it has been the

product of an extended effort.

The same is true in any extended challenge like a 100Day Challenge. It was only one-hundred days, a series of bike rides. One could argue there would be nothing to truly celebrate until the mission was accomplished; after all, that had always been the “goal.” Yet, with each and every ride, from the first ride to the last ride; there was a significant transition and measurable progress. While it took the successful, consecutive completion of each and every ride to ultimately define the challenge a success, the rides themselves were incremental steps -- little victories – on the transformational journey. Each ride was a small and significant separate event. Only when the rides were assembled together did they represent the bigger, more significant accomplishments. None of them would have been possible without the little steps or daily accomplishments.

Find something to celebrate every day. A sense of perpetual accomplishment is contagious, builds momentum, and sustains us through the rough patches. Give yourself credit for the seemingly small, insignificant, and simple successes.

Every day you are presented with an opportunity to celebrate something you accomplish, achieve, or complete. Each of these celebrations provides affirmation of your gifts and your value to yourself and others. Making time to enjoy and embrace these celebrations creates positive, incremental momentum in your life. Before we know it, we have made significant progress over time because every single day we took that small, passionate step forward and paused long enough to appreciate and celebrate it. Because we received energy from it, we have an increased desire to repeat it. In repeating it, we celebrate more. As we celebrate more, we do more. As we do more, we create powerful momentum that results in giant shifts in our lives. These shifts are sometimes hard to measure on a regular basis; however, we sense them because of the energy we receive from our daily celebrations.

Every day, I celebrated the accomplishment of each ride. I viewed my ability to change the number in my countdown or my count-up as a measurable accomplishment. It was relatively simple to calculate and measure the progress of my activity relative to the rides. Much like working a to-do list, I was able to check the box on that activity as complete. It was very fun,

very cool, and always worthy of a celebratory moment. I was making progress.

The magical inspiration associated with my rides was not found in the accomplishment of the rides themselves. The power hidden in those rides was the little celebrations associated with the insights, discoveries, and conversations that emanated during them. Those new insights were my emotional celebration. They became the source of my true accomplishments. They were what gave me energy for the next day. They also offered me confidence that every little thought or idea I discovered or learned was an indication that I was moving toward the vision that I had created for my life. They were the outcomes that affirmed that I was making great progress toward my vision of success and change in my life.

The key to any accomplishment is not necessarily the goal but the vision we have defined for ourselves and the reason we set the goal in the first place. This is the real outcome that is driving our efforts and our commitments. This is our source of inspiration and passion. We do not need big goals or big celebrations or big outcomes. What is needed is a clear vision of what drives, guides, and inspires us and what small, simple steps we need to take to get there. Once you make that commitment, take action, and celebrate the incremental steps taken each day as progress. Each step brings us closer to our desired outcome. Though we cannot measure the progress of each step when we take it, together, those steps collectively lead to incredible movement over time.

As you begin to go through the process of engaging in the activities you have defined as necessary for you to begin the process of changing your life, remember to celebrate on a daily basis, the little victories of your accomplishments. They reinforce and remind you that you are making progress. The celebrations encourage you to feel a sense of accomplishment on a regular basis. And, they create tremendous momentum over time. You cannot get to the end game without time, effort, energy, and focus. Once you know what you need to do, take action in that area in a consistent fashion, and celebrate every step you take!!

STEP EIGHT: Activation

***“A real decision is measured by the fact that you've taken a new action.
If there's no action, you haven't truly decided.” ~ Tony Robbins***

The only thing left to do, now that you have gotten this far, is to put your plan to work. Activation is the official kick-off of your program. Hopefully, you have trusted my advice to this point and have tasked yourself with a simple activity that can be consistently, repeatedly completed. The less complicated the challenge, the greater the likelihood you will experience a sense of accomplishment toward redefining the situation that troubles you.

In its simplicity, you will need little advance preparation. You will not necessarily need to recruit a coach or accountability partner – all you really need to do is declare when you are going to get busy. The magic is discovered in getting busy -- the sooner, the better. You don't want to allow any time for that chatter in your head to try to talk you out of doing something you know you need to do.

There are two things I would encourage you to commit to. First, make a commitment to focus on bringing this activity or behavior into your life for at least one hundred days. As you prepare to take action, this cannot be something you simply “try” -- this must be a process you can and will commit to. There are different ways to measure commitment and everyone has their own take on what that looks like. From personal experience, I have successfully used my 100Day Challenge to effectively engage in several productive outcomes. That is why I encourage taking on a long term commitment to a simple activity as opposed to a big action that will be difficult to sustain for an extended period of time.

Your objective through this entire process is to facilitate an action that will begin the transformation of change in your life away from what is holding you back or impeding your happiness. The activity itself cannot be a big burden – the issue you are facing is burdensome

enough. You need something simple that will give a sense of positive accomplishment on a regular basis just to get you started in the right direction.

One hundred days may seem like a long time. It may sound like a daunting task to make that type of commitment. In many respects, it is a lot to ask over time. In my personal experiences focusing on an activity that I know I will be good for me encourages me to engage without going through the process of testing its effectiveness on the outcome I desire. This enables me to focus on the challenge of completing the task, not on whether or not it will actually be good for me. If you have successfully gone through this process, what you have identified has already been defined as something you know you need to do. The only challenge before you is whether you can and will do it and how long you can stick with it.

***Make a long term commitment
– 100Days – to execute your
plan without deviation.
Incremental progress takes
time. Trust the process that
brought you here to this point
and embrace the action.
Consistency is an essential part
of the success model.***

Staying in the game for one hundred days gets you out of the activity of measuring the outcome driven results of your commitment and focuses you on the task at hand – simply honoring the commitment. As you begin to engage in taking action, remember and remind yourself, this is a process. Whatever it was or is that you are working on changing has likely had a great deal of time to develop, grow and become what it is. Applying a focused effort for a relatively short period of time on something that has had nothing but time to evolve is going to yield smaller, incremental results. Measuring your incremental progress against an expectation of instant and significant change is going to frustrate and disappoint you. In your disappointment, you will likely lose valuable momentum or commitment to the plan.

In committing to a 100Day challenge, now the action has opportunity to create results for you because you are more focused on the process of the commitment than on your expectations for instant or immediate gratification.

Step one: As you begin to activate, make a long-term commitment to the plan. Focus on the commitment to the task.

Step two: Always remember why you are doing this in the first place. As you begin the adventure associated with taking action, focus on the vision. You are engaging in this process in order to facilitate peace, joy and happiness in your life. It can be long journey. As you begin it, focus on the vision of your accomplishment. Put the picture of your vision in front of you every moment you can and remind yourself that every positive step you take in this direction brings you closer to that moment.

In the next segment, I will talk about adversity; but, for this exercise, you need to continually remind yourself and reinforce your actions as to why you have made this commitment. You need to consciously encourage yourself to stay the course when things don't seem to happen quickly, easily, or when maintaining momentum is difficult. As you start on this adventure, your confidence, your energy, your enthusiasm will be high.

It is human nature to be excited at the beginning of any trip. Then, there will be that moment where you start to wonder “*how much longer?*” or “*am I there yet?*” This is where your commitment to your vision – why you are doing this – provides the impetus, the courage, and the strength to push through those challenging times.

The activation process is not so much a formal kick-off of the program as it is your send off on a new journey. You have gone through a wonderful mental exercise to get to this point. You are excited, inspired, and ready to engage in taking the actions necessary to change the outcomes in your life. The key to realizing the outcomes at this point is to commit to the journey in a way that says – “*there is no going back, I am staying on this course until I get there; or, at least until I have more clarity about the path that I am on.*”

Activation is about making the commitment, taking that giant step forward and moving with focused confidence and courage on your very inspired journey.

Moving Forward:

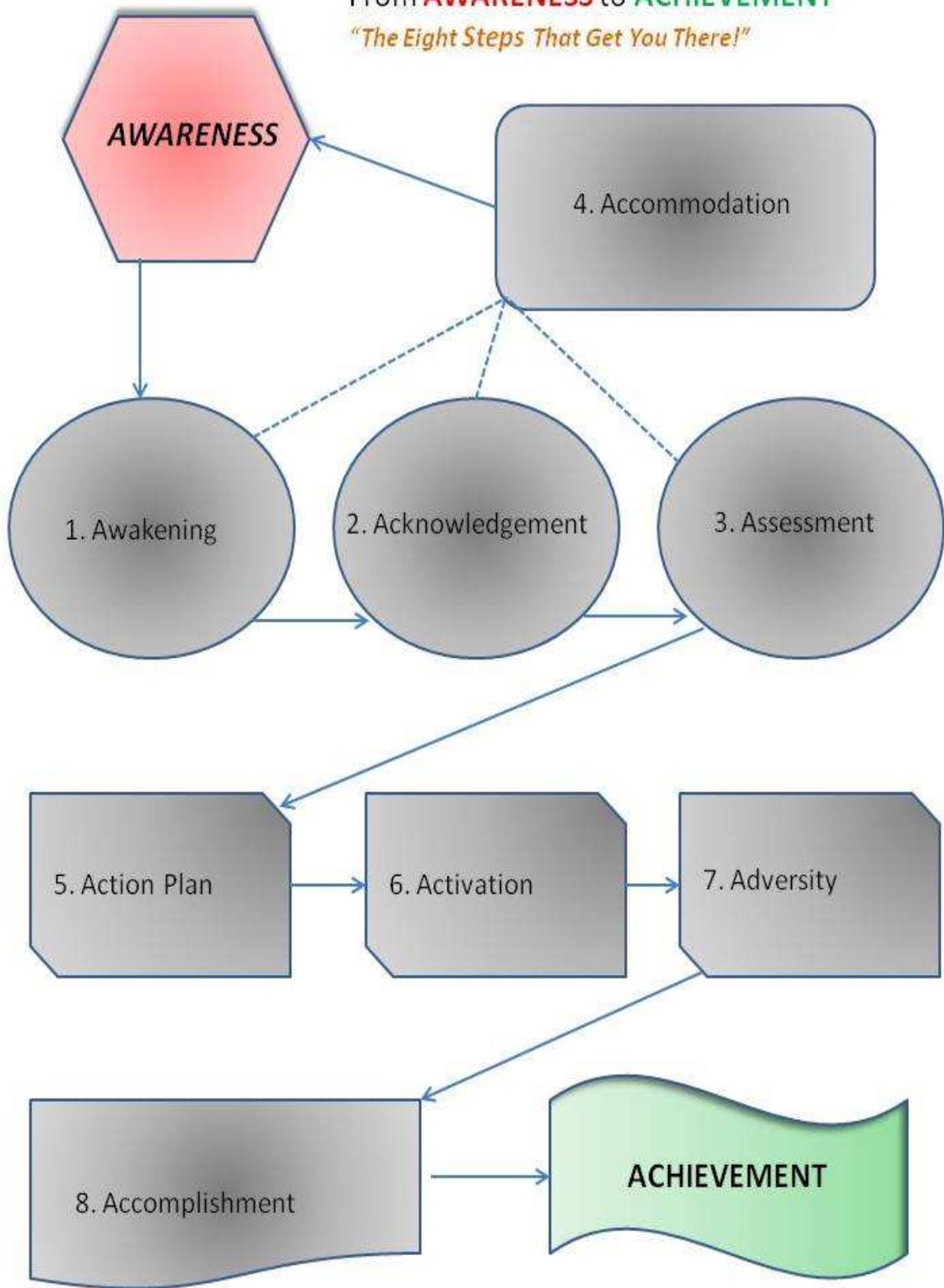
You now have the tools, the process, and the roadmap that will guide you to a successful transformational activity. The only obstacle in your way right now is you. Having lived the experiences of addiction in my life, the greatest gift in this painful journey was the gift of my recovery. Until I devised a methodology that successfully separated me from my son's addiction driven lie, his addiction became my life. In my commitment to love, help, and save my son, the addiction became my focus and I lost control of my life.

Until I went through this process and created something that lifted me up, gave me a sense of accomplishment, and allowed me to escape the daily battle for my son's life, I ceded all control. Once I grabbed hold of a plan for my recovery, I found strength, clarity, and focus for my life. I was able to distance myself from the forces of his addiction. Instead of reacting to his situation, I was able to respond to the issues from a stronger and clearer emotional and physical space. The entire experience of my recovery completely changed my life.

Take the challenge and embrace your recovery. If you need a push, a little encouragement, or someone to discuss your program with, I am here for you. Drop me an email or give me a call. There are also several aids to assist you. They can be found on the website at www.100Pedals.com. If you cannot find what you are looking for, let me know. Good luck and get busy!! The change you desire in your life is only eight steps and one commitment away – **make it happen!**

From **AWARENESS** to **ACHIEVEMENT**

"The Eight Steps That Get You There!"



About the Author

Dave Cooke is an accomplished author, international speaker, and an inspirational sales trainer. He leverages 25 years of sales and marketing experience to design and implement growth strategies and educational programs that profitably and sustainably increase both revenues and profits.

Dave takes pride in his experience with turbulent, changing and chaotic work environments. Having taken the lead in multiple corporate turnaround projects and post merger transitions, Dave understands the challenges organizations face in challenging and difficult times.

In 2009, Dave embarked on a different path, embracing a new more challenging life experience. It was then that Dave found himself on a unique and unplanned journey associated with his youngest son's heroin addiction. His loving commitment to help his son deal with the emotional, physical and legal challenges associated with his son's addiction nearly destroyed his own world. Having realized the incredible, adverse impact of his son's addiction on his own life he made a conscious decision to regain control of his life while providing a model of focused accomplishment for himself, his son, and others facing their own personal adversities.

Dave brings refreshing insight and enthusiasm to the current trends and complexities of today's business environment. Dave enjoys the opportunity to share his stories, reflect on his experiences and offer his perspectives to provide inspiring insights for today's sales professional or business executive.

In sharing the story of his experiences with his son's addiction, Dave wrote "*Behind the Dumpster – The story of a Son's Addiction, a Father's Love, and a Bike Ride.*" He is currently in the midst of another writing project, "*Beyond the Dumpster – Lessons in Addiction and Personal Leadership*" which chronicles the progression of his journey as the parent of an addict and the incredible life transformation resulting from these experiences.

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