

Be Your Own Life Coach

By Frank Ramos



To Ana

My partner in crime

To David and Michael

I'll hear you perform at Lincoln Center sooner than you think

DRI

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About the Author



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Foreword

Life coaching is a booming industry. In the self-help world, the number of life coaches has multiplied exponentially. They're happy to help you be the best you. But should you hire one? Can you do what they do? Can you be your own life coach? There are circumstances when hiring a life coach makes sense. But often, you can do for yourself what others will charge you hundreds, and sometimes thousands, to do for you. I believe whole heartedly in self-improvement and I equally believe that each of us has the potential be our own life coach and transform ourselves into our best selves. You want to be a better lawyer, parent, spouse and friend? You can do it, and you can do it on your own.



What's a Life Coach?

What Does a Life Coach Do?

A life coach helps others define how they want to improve themselves, helps them develop a plan to do so and holds them accountable to implement the plan. Their role is actually quite simple. They help us answer three questions:

- What do I want to change about myself?
- How do I change?
- How do I commit to changing?

Whether it's being a better lawyer, a rainmaker, a leader or manager or whether it's more personal, such as getting in shape, losing weight, being a better parent or developing more meaningful relationships, change starts with identifying what you want to change about yourself, figuring out how to get from here to there and making that change a reality. Life coaches help you do this. They help you to get to know yourself better, define what you really want and work with you on how to get it. Successful individuals set goals and pursue them. When we feel stuck, we're in a rut, or we find ourselves asking, "How did I get here?" we know we need to make a change, but we have difficulty defining the change and have less of an idea of how to make it. A life coach helps you answer these questions.

What Does a Life Coach Not Do?

A life coach can lead you to water but can't make you drink. A life coach can help you devise a plan, but she can't execute the plan. A life coach can give you the tools, but won't build the house for you. The hard work—getting up every morning and working toward your goals every day, in both small and big ways—that's all you. A life coach will help you design the blueprint, but you mix and pour the concrete, saw the wood and build. This is where most dreams fail. This is where the best of intentions only get you so far. This is where it's you changing, ever so incrementally, step by step, inch by inch, making a new you. Your life coach can offer advice, motivation and inspiration but you're the one on the field. You're the one running and hustling, blocking and tackling, throwing and receiving, making the moves and making the plays. In short, a life coach is just that—a coach. She can teach you how to win, but the actual winning is up to you.

What Makes a Good Life Coach?

A good life coach understands her role, understands yours and works alongside you to help you define and achieve your goals. She wants to get in, help you and get out. She's not a crutch, and she's not there to make a buck off of you, insisting on endless hours of consulting. Let me let you in

on a little secret—a life coach helps you figure things out, but once you have a strategy, it's up to you to execute. She's not there to hold your hand or carry you across the finish line. She helps you be the brains of the operation. The brawn is all you. A good life coach has a process for you to follow to determine what you want to change, how to change it and how to stick with it through the end. You two are co-architects and you're the contractor. You two are co-directors and you're the actor. She should be optimistic, forward thinking, speak in plain English and not motivational-speak, and help you help yourself in relatively short order. She should parachute into your life, help devise the battle plans and let you take the hill. If changes to the battle plans are necessary for any host of reasons, she'll help you tweak it or even redo it altogether, step back and let you try again. As you can start sensing, many of you can do this yourself. But this, in short, is what makes a good life coach.

What Makes a Poor Life Coach?

Poor life coaches don't understand strategic planning and have not effectively helped organizations and individuals develop and implement strategic plans. They are primarily interested in advancing their own interests and stretching out the process to charge more and make more. They tend to over complicate matters, use double speak and clichés and mistake motivation with the hard work of thinking through and reducing to writing a personal strategic plan. A life coach should have a well thought out plan and process for her clients and offer success stories and references. A life coach should have a website and social media presence, should have articles she's written or presentations she's given she can share with you and overall can establish she's legitimate, experienced and effective. At a time when so many are calling themselves life coaches, due diligence is crucial.

Buyer Beware

In my book *Go Motivate Yourself*, I discuss the gurus who continually offer another course or seminar, another book or audio series, each costing a premium, promising you the success you crave. Improving ourselves isn't complicated—we define the problem, prepare a plan to address it and execute it. We don't need to spend thousands of dollars to make ourselves better. So if you're looking for someone to help you define and achieve your goals, go into it with your eyes wide open and understand what the bottom line cost is going to be before signing on the dotted line.

Being Your Own Life Coach

Most of us don't need to hire a life coach. Some do, and if so, do your due diligence and hire someone who is a right fit for you and your needs. But for the rest of us, we can be our own life coach. We know ourselves better than anyone else. We know our strengths and weakness, our aspirations and fears, the lies we tell ourselves and the truths we ignore, and no one is in a better position to identify our purpose, destiny, dreams and goals. If we ask ourselves the right questions, we are brutally honest with our answers, use those answers to direct our goals, develop a plan to achieve them and recruit a loved one, friend or colleague to hold us accountable, we can do as good, if not a better job, than most life coaches. Effective life coaching is simple. Identify the problem, solve the problem. We do this at our law firms, at the voluntary bar associations we volunteer for and the charities we serve. Doing it at the individual level, addressing our own problems and solving them, isn't all that different. A company needs to make a turnaround, the leadership turns it around. Your life needs a turnaround, you can turn it around. You've done this in other settings. You can do the same in your own life.

It's Easier Than You Think

You're already juggling a lot and wear numerous hats, why add life coach as another job to take on? Why not outsource it to the professionals? Why not cut them a check and let them do the heavy lifting? First, it's your life. You don't outsource your life. You don't turn it over to others and have them tell you what to do. You've got this. Second, it's easier than you think. This is a short book because it doesn't take long to tell you how to be your own life coach. Ask the right questions, provide honest answers, create a plan and implement the plan. There's not much to this. I'm not suggesting it's easy. It's going to take time, dedication and hard work to implement the plan. But that's all you. No life coach can make you chase your dreams, work harder or sacrifice. I can't do that either. I'll show you the road. It's a long one. It's winding. It has hills and valleys, ups and downs. If you want to reach your destination you'll have to walk that road. I'll help you develop a road map, but it's up to you to put on your sneakers, tie the laces, walk, keep walking and walk some more. The walking—that's your part. Figuring out the journey—we'll do that together. With some guidance, you can learn to draw your own map and map your own journey.



When to Self-Coach

You Want Change

You can't change unless you want to change. Others may suggest, recommend or even tell you to change, but until you decide to do it, it won't happen. A decision precedes change. Change does not happen until you decide it will happen. And so the first question you have to ask yourself "Do I want to change?" Are you so dissatisfied with your life that change, and all the work and effort that come with it, is better than leaving things alone? Have you reached the point where the promise of something else, even though uncertain, is better than what you have now, even though what you have is reliable and comfortable? Change bears risks. Change requires work. Change demands your best. Change is different. Change is not what you have now. It's not your warm blanket, or your comfortable chair or your favorite book. You don't know how the story ends with change. You may ride into the sunset, roll credits, fade to black. Then again, you may end up worse off than you are now. The change, though, can lead to fulfillment. It can lead to one's destiny. The change can make one's dreams come true. If you've decided change is the right choice, if you truly want to change, then you've taken the first step to self-coaching.

You Can Identify the Change You Want

Once you decide to change, you need to decide what changes you want to make. You may already have a sense of what you want to change—improve your career, your health and your relationships. You may have general goals in mind—develop a niche practice, build a book of business, spend more quality time with your family. You may even have specific goals in mind—become the go-to lawyer for cyber security, secure three new clients by getting involved in a trade association or take up improv with your spouse. Knowing where you want to be, even in a broad sense, is one of the steps a life coach would talk to you about. If you're already there, that's one less thing you need a life coach to do for you. Many don't know what they want to change about themselves. If you do, you've taken a large step toward improving yourself.

You Know the Person You Want to Be

You may already know the type of person you want to be. You have an image in your head—a visual of what you are doing, what you have accomplished, what goals you have achieved. You see the goal line, the final score, the end game. You may not know how to get from here to there, but you know what "there" looks like. This visual serves as both a source of inspiration—what you want to run toward and achieve—and a source of

frustration—a goal that too often looks and feels out of reach. Let me tell you, if you have a goal in mind, you can reach it. Put aside for the moment knowing what you are capable of and not having achieved it yet. Let's focus on the horizon and that for you, you already see it. For many, they can't look up and perceive it yet. If you can see the horizon, chances are you can be your own life coach.

You Can Set Goals

As lawyers, we set goals all the time. We set them in our cases, in our law firms and in the voluntary bar associations and non-profits we serve. How are we going to win this case? How are we going to bring in new clients? How are we going to increase our membership and better serve their needs? If you can set goals for others, you can set them for yourself. If you can set them in business settings, you can set them in personal settings too. Goal setting is integral to life coaching, and if you've set goals for clients, companies and non-profits, you can be your own life coach.

You Can Implement a Plan

Goals are just dreams in the absence of plans to implement them. Some folks are big thinkers but struggle with turning their ideas into reality. As with goals, you likely have implemented plans in various settings to achieve goals for your clients, law firms and voluntary bar associations. You have defined the end game and have plotted a course to get from here to there. You're no stranger to constructing the steps from A to B and from B to C. If you can construct a business plan, you can construct a life plan.

You Can Execute the Plan

If you have set goals and have devised plans to achieve them the next step is to execute the plan. You roll up your sleeves and you do the hard work, day in and day out, week in and week out to execute the plan. There are delegators and there are doers. Yes, you understand the importance of a team and each person on the team has a role to help achieve the goals. You delegate to each according to their talents and skills. But you also do your part to achieve the goals. You're more than just a talker. You're a doer. You're more than someone who talks a talk. You walk the walk. And if this is how you tackle your cases, your work and your obligations, then you can do the same in your personal life.

You Hold Yourself Accountable

The buck stops with you. You assume responsibility, you stay on task and you achieve the objective. No one is setting your alarm. No one is kicking you out of bed. No one is making you stay late at the office. No one is reminding you of deadlines. You are your own manager and boss, your own motivator and conscience. You hold yourself accountable. You say you'll do something and you do. Your word, whether to others or yourself, is your bond. If your motivators are internal, if you look inside of you to move forward and not look toward others, then you are the type of person to hold yourself accountable to pursue and achieve any personal life plan you lay out for yourself.

You Have an Accountability Partner

As much as we hold ourselves accountable, it's valuable to have someone hold us accountable too. Having a loved one, friend or colleague check in on us and help us stay focused on the tasks at hand is invaluable to continue moving forward. I'm not talking about a coach or a cheerleader. Just someone who reminds us what our goals are, asks us how we are progressing toward those goals and supports us as we pursue them. These are not life coaches. They are not experts. They are not psychologists or motivational speakers or anything of the sort. They're folks just like us who want to support us. They support us achieving our goals because they care about us, and because they do, they care about what we care about. If you have someone like this in your corner, if you have an accountability partner who will walk alongside you and give you a reminder or nudge when you need one, then you have an invaluable resource in being your own life coach.



When to Hire a Coach

Sometimes You Need Help

Starting something new is hard. You may not know where to begin nor where to finish. You're not sure what you should do and once you start doing it, you're not sure if you're doing it correctly. The uncertainty can hinder you from achieving your goals. Having a trained professional walk alongside you can address your concerns and jitters and allow you to focus on the task at hand, the correct task at the correct time in the correct order. Sometimes you need help from someone who has helped others change, grow and achieve. Sometimes you need a coach, a cheerleader, a mentor and a taskmaster. You know you. You know what you need to achieve. What tools, what personnel, what resources. You have to evaluate for yourself whether you need professional assistance or you can go it alone when it comes to life coaching.

Sometimes You Need a Partner

Having a partner who directs us, encourages us and holds us accountable can help us achieve our goals. It's not uncommon to have a workout partner, whether for weights, running, cycling or yoga. You encourage one another, you keep one another focused and you hold one another accountable. One day you may not want to work out. Your partner encourages you to go. The next day the roles may be reversed. Having a life coach who serves as your partner to assist you in achieving your goals can help you when you don't have the energy, enthusiasm or motivation to help yourself.



Sometimes You Need Another's Perspective

You have your thoughts, feelings and opinions about how to succeed. Others may perceive success through a different prism or paradigm. Perhaps the goals you cherish aren't worthy of pursuit, or if they are, you shouldn't be the one pursuing them. Talking through your dreams and wishes, your fears and concerns, can help you define your purpose and destiny. Discussions can develop a plan to achieve your purpose. Having a sounding board, someone asking questions and follow up questions, delving into your reasons why, into your motivations, digging into your psyche, can help you be honest with yourself and set you on the right path for you. Sometimes we're our biggest hindrance and another's perspective, in the form of a life coach, is just what we need.

The Benefits of a Life Coach

Successful life coaches have helped others define and achieve their goals. They have, in effect, experimented with others' lives and have witnessed what works and what doesn't. They've done their share of trial and error with other subjects, have presumably learned from those experiences and can share that wisdom with you. You may never have sat down and created a personal strategic plan. A good life coach has likely done dozens if not hundreds. They can walk you through an exercise they have walked others through. Sometimes experience is worth paying for.

The Benefits of Reaching into Your Wallet

There's something about committing financially to a life coach. They're not cheap. Prices varies, but those with experience and a track record will require a significant investment on your part. By paying someone to help you, you're more committed to seeing it through because you've paid money that could have been used a dozen other ways. You may be foregoing a vacation, a trip, a new electronic gadget or something else to pay for the life coach. That sacrifice will focus more of your attention and effort to pursue and achieve the goals you have defined with the life coach.



How We Lie to Ourselves

Self-Improvement Starts with the Truth

No one lies more to us than we lie to ourselves. We either give ourselves too much credit or too little. We are either too hard on ourselves or too easy. We are quick to judge others, notice their flaws and reflect on their shortcomings while ignoring the same issues in our own lives. We search out the specks in others' eyes and ignore the planks in ours. Others of us obsess unhealthily about our perceived frailties and weaknesses. It's as if we see ourselves with glasses with either a rose or dark tint, never seeing ourselves for who we really are—the good and the bad, the beauty and the warts, the noble and the selfish. You want to improve? You want to make yourself a better lawyer, a better spouse, a better parent, a better person? It starts with honesty. Brutal, uncensored and complete honesty. This is the time to strip away the layers and the veneer and get to the heart of who you are. Ask yourself the tough questions and give yourself the honest answers. What are your talents? What are your shortcomings? What is holding you back? What perceptions of yourself are false? What fears are weighing you down? If you're not willing to be honest with yourself, put this book down and go back to what you were doing, because I can't help you.

The Lies We Tell Ourselves

We lie to ourselves every day, in small and large ways. What are some of the lies we tell ourselves?

- We are good/bad at X.
- We are talented/untalented at X.
- We are better/worse at X than Y.
- We are suitable/unsuitable for X.
- X can wait until tomorrow.
- X doesn't matter.
- Doing/not doing X won't make a difference.
- My thoughts don't matter.
- My words don't matter.
- What others think matters too little/too much.

We talk to ourselves every day, all day, and often what we are saying to ourselves isn't always grounded in reality. Pay attention to your self-talk and check yourself when you're being too easy or hard on yourself, or when you're giving yourself a pass on a word, act or deed you said or did that would have bothered, upset or annoyed you if it was said or done to you. No one talks to us more than we talk to ourselves. Monitor and fact check the internal dialogue.

We're All Self-Delusional

To one degree or another, to one extent or another, we're all self-delusional. We apply a different measuring stick to ourselves than we do to others, and we have blind spots for some of our thoughts, words and actions. We see the world through our respective prisms and paradigms, our world view and perspectives. These are based on our past, our experiences, our education, our interactions with others and our observations. These shape how we view the world and ourselves. It's never perfect. It's not as if you're looking through a telescope or microscope that provides an accurate view. Sometimes it's more akin to looking through a kaleidoscope, unaware of what a kaleidoscope does and how it interferes with our perceptions. Our loved ones and close friends are often aware of these shortcomings in us but rarely raise them, acknowledging to themselves that they too suffer from the same malaise. If you want to overcome self-delusion, have honest and open discussions with those closest to you and ask them point blank what they perceive in your words, actions or behaviors which are self-delusional. And as hard as it is to follow the next piece of advice, don't take what they say personally. Just listen to it with an open mind. If you want to change you need to start with radical honesty.

Changing the Glasses Through Which We See Ourselves

Before we can evaluate ourselves to determine what needs changing and what goals to set, we need to ensure we're evaluating ourselves properly. Again, neither dark nor rose colored glasses. Calibrating your self-analysis so that it is neither overly critical nor overly self-indulgent takes effort. When analyzing something about yourself ask "how would I evaluate this if I wasn't evaluating myself, but rather I was evaluating person X?" We tend to be more objective when evaluating others. Recruit a spouse, close friend or colleague to help you calibrate your self-analysis. You're going to hear things you don't want to hear. My response? Well, do you want to change? If so, listen. Just as you need to address self-delusional perceptions you need to address your personal lens directly with the help of others.

How We Can Be Honest with Ourselves

Self-awareness is difficult for some. But it's necessary for the rigorous evaluation needed to define your goals and achieve them. Get in the habit of asking the following questions when you engage in self-talk, evaluate a decision or make a choice:

- Are my assumptions honest, fair and reasonable?
- Am I giving myself and my talents too much/too little credit?
- Am I being overly pessimistic/optimistic?
- My thoughts about myself—would I have the same thoughts about someone else?
- Am I allowing negative self-talk to cloud my thought process and judgment?

If we don't question the way we view ourselves, our goals and the plans to achieve them may be based upon faulty reasoning. Start with the right tools to construct the right structure for you and your needs.



What's Important to You

First Things First

In order to change the trajectory of your life, you need to know where you want to end up. What's the end game? What are you hoping to achieve by being your own life coach (or hiring one)? What's the big picture? Where's the finish line? Begin with a broad brush before filling in the details. Think end product before visualizing the assembly line. What's important to you? What are the big things you want to do? What do you want to be remembered for? What do you want to accomplish? Take a journal or pad and a pen and write down all your answers. Brainstorm. Think. Reflect. Jot down. Write. Write some more. Keep your thoughts at the 30,000 foot level. At the forest level and not the tree level. Any life coach would ask you to think big picture. If you're going to be your own life coach, think big picture and let your imagination roam freely and explore lifelong dreams and hopes to begin shaping and molding your long term goals.

What Are Your Big Ideas?

We all have big ideas. Big ideas propel our economy forward, lead to the next generation of technology and reinvent commerce, business, communications and human interactions. Before something is created, it is conceived. Before the skyscrapers, the rocket ships and the smart phones there was someone who thought of them. What are your big ideas? What concepts or thoughts would you like to become reality? Don't think about how you would bring your ideas to fruition or the resources and costs associated with doing so. For now, just envision what those ideas are and write them down. What are your ideas about your career? Your law firm or company? Your personal relationships? How about a new product or process? A new nonprofit or charity? Think big. Think expansively. Think revolutionary. Change the status quo. Change the discourse. Change the conversation. Imagine if that big idea of yours was implemented—what would change and how would it change? Don't underestimate the power of an idea.

What Are Your Dreams?

What big things do you want to accomplish? When you lay awake at night, with your arm tucked under your pillow staring at the ceiling, what dreams creep into your mind? What do you daydream about? What are the hopes you've had that the grind has pushed into the rearview? Put aside for a moment your obligations, your responsibilities and your age. Put aside your doubts, concerns and insecurities. Put aside the conventional wisdom, the world's path and others' definition of success. Humor yourself, give into yourself and imagine yourself achieving what you always wanted to achieve.

Most of us will hang up our dreams in our closet, tucked in the back, and forget they're there. They're on life support at best and dead and buried at worst. Bring your dreams out into the light, hold them up like a prism and look at them anew. Take the time to explore them, study them and evaluate whether they're worth pursuing and if so, how. They're your dreams. They deserve another chance.

What Are Your Passions?

Your passions get you excited. They keep you up at night. They wake you from your sleep. They crave your attention. They dominate your thoughts. They distract you during conversations with others. They are what drive you, motivate you, inspire you. Each of us has a passion. Some of us have several. By identifying yours you discover what fuels you, what's your oxygen, without which you would suffocate. Maybe it's writing. Maybe it's speaking. Maybe it's trying cases. Maybe it's leading others. You probably think about it more than you do something about it. You want to do more, you want to dive in, you want to explore your passion and nurture it and grow it. But you may not know how to. We'll get to that. For now, just identify it. What is your passion? When you turn your car on, the gas in the tank allows it to pull out of your driveway. What's the gas in your tank?

What Are Your Priorities?

What do you put first in your life? How about second? What comes then? Ask yourself what your priorities are. Is it your faith? Your family? Your friends? Your career? Your job? Your health? Something else? Write down everything that matters to you, review the list and organize it according to what you believe your priorities are. You're not going to list the items according to what you think your priorities should be or based on others' expectations. You're going to list them as they actually are. What do you spend the most time doing? What do you spend the most time thinking about? When you have free time or down time, what do you do? What do you worry about the most? Whom do you worry about the most? What drives you? What grabs and holds your attention? Ask yourself these questions as you organize your list from greatest priority to least. Be as specific as possible. Don't simply list family. List which relationships in your family and what aspects in those relationships. Don't simply list your career, but what aspects of your career are you most focused upon? You need to thoroughly and honestly evaluate what you consider most important in your life. If you feel your priorities are out of whack and they need to be recalibrated, you must first identify what your priorities are.

What Do You Want to Change?

The reason folks go to life coaches, the reason you're reading this book about being your own life coach, is a desire for change. There is something gnawing inside of you telling you that you could be better, do better, accomplish bigger things, do something different altogether. Maybe it's your career. You want to become partner. You want to try more cases. You want to develop your own book of business. You want to expand your firm. Maybe it's your health. You want to eat better and exercise. Maybe it's your family. You want to spend more quality time with them. You want to deepen your relationships with them. Or it's all of these things or a whole different list of things. Whatever you want to change about yourself, your career, your health, your family, your trajectory—write it down. Make the list as long as you want and organize the list according to your ideal priority. You're going to draw from this list when deciding what needs changing.

If You're Considering Self-Coaching, Where Do You Want to Be?

If you're going to coach yourself to a better you, you need to start by defining what a better you is exactly. If you're going to coach yourself to accomplish big things, you need to define what those things are. Ignore the obstacles and challenges for a moment. Ignore any fear and excuses. In your ideal world, where's the finish line? What's the goal? What do you want to accomplish a year from now, five years, ten and so on? Remember as a child your parents asked you what you wanted to be when you grew up? In high school your guidance counselor asked what you wanted to do with your life? Where do you want to take your career and your life? There are no wrong answers. There are no absurd answers. There are no impossibilities. You're just imagining right now. Just thinking. The sky is the limit. Where do you want to be? Write it down.

What Are Your Long Term Goals?

What do you want to accomplish? What are your long term goals in terms of your career, your family, your community, and everything else? Perhaps you had goals in college and law school that never came to fruition. Do you want to revisit them? Do you want to breathe new life into them? Perhaps you have more recent goals, ones you've been reflecting upon as of late. Perhaps you have a general sense of what you want to do and where you want to be but haven't reduced these general notions to concrete goals. List your professional and personal goals. Be as specific as possible. Don't start thinking yet about how to achieve them. Just think about what they are and reduce them to writing.

What Do You Want to Accomplish?

What do you hope to accomplish in your life? Fast forward to the end of your career. What do you hope you did during that career? Fast forward to your death bed. What do you hope to have done before you pass? Think about the cases you want to handle, the clients you want to represent, the results you want to procure, the business you want to develop, the organizations you want to lead, the impact you want to have. What do you want to be proud of? When you say, “I did that” or “I accomplished this,” what is “that” and “this?” What you want to accomplish is similar to but not identical to the goals you want to achieve. You may want to accomplish being a renowned trial lawyer. Your goal is a bit more specific—you want to try at least 100 cases to verdict and receive favorable results in 70% of them. What you want to accomplish is best categorized as the big, broad brush stroke items you want to do over your lifetime.

How Do You Want to Be Remembered?

What do you want your legacy to be? We all leave a legacy behind. Some of us leave a positive one and some of us leave a negative one. Some of us have impacted many others and some only a few. Some of us will be remembered generations later and some of us will quickly be forgotten. Each day we build up or tear down our legacy. Each day we expand or diminish it. Each day we reach out further into the future after our deaths or we hardly reach out at all. The kings, the pharaohs, the emperors and conquerors all looked beyond their lives to how they would be remembered. Each of us should desire to be remembered for making a positive impact and for being a change agent in the world and in others’ lives. An exercise you can do to reflect upon how you want to be remembered is to write your own obituary. Write one reflecting how you would be remembered if you died today and write one if you died long after you retired. Analyze the difference between the two and what you can do to bridge the gap between them.

What Will People Say About You After You’re Gone?

Imagine your own memorial. Place yourself there as an invisible bystander, all-seeing and all-hearing. Who’s giving the eulogy? What are they saying? Who’s coming up to offer remarks? What stories are they sharing? After the memorial is over and everyone trudges into the reception, what are they saying about you? Are they laughing? Crying? Commiserating? What others say about you after you’re gone will be a reflection of what you did on this earth while you were alive. Think about memorials you attended and what

was said about the deceased and what struck you, what stuck with you and what to this day you still remember. Think about what you need to do to have others talk about you after you're gone in a way that elevates and preserves your name, reputation and memory.



Overcoming Obstacles

What's Holding You Back?

You want to change your life. But you haven't, yet. You want to get better at your profession. But you haven't, yet. You may have all sorts of goals, ideas and notions of what you want to change, do differently, accomplish and achieve. But for now these ideas are just that—ideas. You are not actively pursuing them. You are not turning the imagined into reality. Something is holding you back. Maybe several things are. To take the first of a thousand steps, to move forward, to advance toward your vision and goals, you must first define, wrestle with and overcome what's holding you back. Only you know what it is. Define it, come to terms with it and move past it. If you don't, you will never advance beyond the starting line. The pistol went off. What's preventing you from running?

Why Do Some of Us Overcome and Some Don't?

Some of us press forward and some of us never push off the starting blocks. Some of us overcome obstacles and challenges and some of us allow obstacles and challenges to overcome us. Why do some of us overcome? The obvious answers—skills, talents, resources—are wrong. They help, of course, but are not necessary and sometimes even get in the way. Sometimes having too much makes us content, comfortable and satisfied with good enough. Sometimes less is more. So why do some of us overcome and some of us don't? Those who overcome cut through the excuses. Those who overcome see the obstacles as necessary for the journey. Those who ignore the noise and the detractors, who dismiss the doubts and the fears, those who do these things realize the alternative—staying where they're at, remaining who they are, the status quo—is no longer acceptable. They refuse to stand still, remain silent and not move forward any longer. Some of us overcome because we refuse to keep doing what we're doing knowing that the same acts will achieve the same results, and we're no longer satisfied with those results. When we change our mentality, we can overcome anything. First comes the thinking, then the doing.

What Separates Those Who Overcome?

Those who overcome share some characteristics. They are disciplined. Things aren't easier for them. Their struggle isn't less real. Their obstacles aren't less challenging. They simply are more disciplined to go over, under, around or if necessary through anything that gets in their way. They have grit. They fall, they get up. They get knocked down; they get up. They fail, they try again. They know life is hard, they know they're in a street fight, and they refuse to lie down and throw in the towel. They are optimistic. They see



opportunities, not pitfalls. They see the silver lining. They make lemonade out of lemons. They take risks. They understand that not only is failure a possibility, but it is necessary to ultimately succeed, and they are willing to take risks to secure the rewards they are pursuing. They are leaders. They do not follow the herd. They do not succumb to peer pressure. They set their own course and they follow it to the end. They are goal oriented. They decide where they want to be and devise a plan to get there. They start with the finish line, not the starting line, and figure out how to win the race before they take their first stride. Those who overcome share these characteristics, and all of us can share them too.

Fear

We're going to discuss the various factors that hold us back from achieving our goals, and we're going to start with fear, because it's one of the most prevalent, most effective roadblocks we create for ourselves. Fear of failing, fear of the unknown, fear of risks, fear of what others may think, fear of making the wrong choices—fear is debilitating, paralyzing and robs us of our resolve, confidence and forward momentum. To prick the balloon of fear and let all the hot air out and make it small and manageable, we must first understand that fear is nothing more than a state of mind. It is how our minds react to a person, situation, set of circumstances or decision. It is not real. It is not corporeal. It's power is derived from us. It is only as strong as we allow it to be. It is an anchor. It is a drag. It is a burden, and it serves no

purpose. There was a time that fear served us—when we were being chased by saber tooth tigers. Today, unless you need the adrenaline for fight or flight to either defend yourself or run, fear is largely a useless emotion that fills our bloodstream with cortisol, which increases weight gain, blood pressure, heart disease and so on. Fear is worthless. Choose not to give into it.

Anger

I follow my discussion about fear with one about anger, because in my experience, they're the flipside of the same coin. When I let my emotions get the best of me in response to a setback, surprise or obstacle, either I'm afraid of what comes next or I'm angry at what may be coming. Being angry at your circumstances, your situation or your career can motivate you to move past a disappointment or failure to the next level. Unfortunately, we often linger too long on anger, let it take hold, let it change us, make us ugly inside. Anger is effective when it is a spark. It is dangerous when it becomes a conflagration. Let anger fuel you, not engulf you.

Jealousy

Wanting what others have distracts your attention from your wants, interests and goals toward those of others. Instead of focusing on you, you're focusing on others. Instead of chasing your dreams, you're chasing someone else's. Accept that what others have is theirs—their situation is theirs; their stuff is theirs; their successes are theirs. And don't assume their lives are perfect. Don't assume what you envy isn't gilded. But whether their apparent success is real or illusory, whether it warrants praise or not, don't be jealous. You have too little time and energy to focus on what others have or have done that you don't have or have not done. Keeping up with the Joneses will prevent you from achieving your own goals. And buying more stuff is not a legitimate goal. It's just stuff. It's temporal, it's ephemeral and will never fill whatever need or void you may have. You have your own purpose in this world. You have your own dreams and goals. Your job is to focus on you and run your race. Let others run theirs. They're running a different race, and it's not all victory laps and laurels. Unbeknownst to you, their race has its own obstacles and challenges and setbacks, possibly some larger and bigger than yours. Focus on your finish line.

Laziness

Change requires effort. It requires more output, energy, and motion to change your personal status quo than to maintain it. It's not enough to do

the same—you must do more. This requires breaking free from poor habits and wasted time, from the inertia and inactivity. Our careers are demanding. Our firms are demanding. Our clients are demanding. When we get home at night, we're exhausted. That exhaustion spills into the weekends. The notion of tapping into our mental and physical reserves to do something new, something else, something challenging, time consuming and possibly risky, is tough to embrace. Getting past the inertia, putting yourself in motion, taking that first step, requires energy. It requires overcoming laziness. It requires getting out of bed, turning off the television, stopping the streaming of movies, shows, music and news and moving forward. Laziness is a habit, which can be replaced with an equally powerful but infinitely more productive habit—action. Always advance, march, proceed and move ahead. Forward motion begets more forward motion.

Indulgence

Some of us pursue the finer things in life at the expense of focusing on more substantive pursuits. We're more focused on things—a luxury car, a huge house, an over the top vacation—than focused on achieving something more substantive. Of course, there's nothing wrong with wanting and purchasing nice things. You've worked hard. You've sacrificed. You want to reward yourself and your family. But be cognizant that we have a limited amount of time, effort and resources, and time spent on opulence, on indulgence, on stuff, is time, effort and resources not dedicated to pursuing goals and achieving dreams. Life is about balance. Pursue the finer things if you want, but do so in moderation so you can pursue other things too.

Lack of Vision

Companies have vision statements. Law firms have them. Each of us should have one too. A vision statement defines where we want to be, our reason for being and what our purpose is. It is the big picture. It is the forest, not the trees. It's the 30,000 foot view. As individuals, our vision should spell out our purpose, which is where our talents, passions and dreams intersect. You were put on this earth to do what? To accomplish what? Achieve what? Change what? Change whom? Project forward and outward, and envision where you are meant to be tomorrow, the day after, the year after that, the decade after that and so on. Leaders are visionaries. Change agents are visionaries. Thought leaders are visionaries. Define your personal vision statement. This will provide you a lodestar to pursue. If you don't have a rich, vibrant, powerful vision worthy of pursuit, your life's journey will be lackluster. Many fail to change because they lack a vision to chase, pursue and embrace.

Lack of Planning

Big achievements are invariably preceded by well-conceived, well-reasoned, well-executed plans. Once you have a vision, a destination, a point of arrival, you have to chart a course to get there. Chasing a goal without a plan often results in disappointment and failure. Many folks, once they have an idea in their heads, run headstrong, hammer and tongs into the abyss and quickly crash and burn and chalk it up to having a poor goal or a bad idea. Of course the goal or idea wasn't necessarily bad, but we'll never know, because they failed miserably in planning on how to achieve their goals. When you have an epiphany, a big idea, a worthy goal, sit down with a pad and pen or at your computer and write out a plan on how to get from here to there. The process of writing out a step by step plan will focus you on what resources to marshal, what to do and how to do it. A contractor wouldn't build a house without a blueprint. Create a blueprint for your plan.

Lack of Effort

Achieving a significant goal requires significant effort. Above and beyond our daily routine—work, family, other responsibilities—we need to find the time and energy to go the extra mile to pursue our goals. It's hard to come home, after a long day of work, and after addressing your obligations at home, and still have gas in the tank to pursue something extra, to do more, and chase your dreams. But that's what it takes. You have to continue with all your obligations and add to those to make your goals a reality. It's not easy. It may not be fun. But it is what it is. If you want more, you're going to need to do and expend more. Greater output requires greater input. There are no short cuts, no easy solutions, no cutting corners—just hard work. Do the hard work and see the results.

Lack of Sacrifice

If you're going to pursue new, big goals, you will have to sacrifice to achieve them. You may have to sacrifice leisure activities, hobbies, even a little sleep, to achieve them. You may have to divert monies from that new car you wanted, the gym membership or that fancy vacation to fund your goals. Anything worth having is worth fighting for and sacrificing for. Many will choose not to sacrifice because they are already sacrificing so much at their current jobs and under their current conditions. Sacrificing even more may seem unreasonable and untenable. But to do big things and chase big dreams, sacrifice is necessary. Count the costs, evaluate what you have to sacrifice, be honest with yourself about the effort, energies and monies involved to achieve your goals, and ask yourself how much you are willing

to sacrifice to make your vision a reality. This gut check allows you to take inventory of what you will need to sacrifice to achieve your goals.

Lack of Failure

Fear, displeasure and discomfort of failure prevent many from achieving their goals. Many don't understand that failure is necessary for success. Few of us succeed on our first try, and the bigger the goal, the greater the number of failures. Failing is not a reflection on you. It doesn't reflect your value. It doesn't reflect your personhood. We all experience it, and those of us who take more risks, pursue more challenges and chase more dreams will experience it more. The more times you're at the plate, the more times you're going to swing and miss. The more shots you take, the more you are going to clank off the rim. That doesn't mean you don't swing or you don't shoot. Learn to expect failure, embrace it, learn from it, appreciate its importance and understand it's necessary for growth and advancement. Each failure is a learning experience you apply during your next attempt at success. It teaches you, strengthens you and propels you to the next step.

Lack of Confidence

Confidence, gravitas, self-assuredness—they are strong indicators of success. You need confidence in yourself to have the mental state and psychological wherewithal to succeed. You need confidence in yourself because others will sense it and will follow you and buy into your ideas because of it. Fear, desperation and worry all exude pheromones which scare others away. But confidence has its own pheromone. It's attractive and alluring, and casts a spell on others without them even knowing, without them even appreciating why they believe in you, in your ideas, in your goals and why they want to help you, support you and walk alongside of you. Confidence is integral to winning. Believing in yourself, your vision and your mission makes all the difference. This belief, always teetering on arrogance but kept in check by humility, this belief in yourself, in your ideas and in your plans is powerful and intoxicating and contagious and can propel you to victory if you let it.

Lack of Belief

You can't pursue a goal you don't believe in. You can't chase a dream you don't have faith in. You have to believe in what you're doing, what you're chasing, what your purpose is. Your beliefs and values have to be aligned with your purpose. A disconnect between what you are chasing and what you believe never ends well. Having your mind but not your heart in a

project will make its accomplishment hollow. Always ask yourself “Why am I chasing this goal?” “What have I accomplished if I achieve it?” If the result is purely monetary, purely self-aggrandizement, purely selfish, it’s going to be a pyrrhic victory. We all need to pursue goals bigger than ourselves that go beyond helping us and go toward helping others. Believing in what we’re doing is often intertwined with doing something that gives back, helps others and changes circumstances for the better.

Lack of Experience

Not having done something before, not having been tested, not having experience with a given task, project or goal can stop one in one’s tracks. It takes audacity, confidence and drive to attempt something new, undertake the unfamiliar, charge a hill you’ve never approached. But there is a first time for everything, and before we become experts we must take our turn at being amateurs. Each of us has the potential of becoming an expert, becoming a leader on a topic or field, or running to the forefront of an issue. Setting a goal to become a master is what leaders and experts do so they can become viewed as thought leaders in their fields. John Grisham once wrote his first page of fiction long before he became a bestselling author. We all have to start crawling before walking and certainly before running.

Overcoming Anything and Everything

To achieve big things, you will encounter obstacle after obstacle and challenge after challenge. Some you will expect. Some will surprise you. Some will be from folks you expect to make you stumble. Some will be from friends and family who mean well and don’t want you to take risks and fail. You will suffer from a lack of time, resources, energy, focus, motivation, skills and a whole host of other things along the way. Be prepared for anything and everything. Assume if something can go wrong it will and have a contingency plan. So many folks quit because what they want is hard to attain. Life is hard. Anything worth pursuing is hard. Success would be empty if it was easy. If anyone could do it, if it required little or no effort, it wouldn’t mean anything at all. Its value is derived from one’s sacrifice. Its worth comes from one’s discipline. You can do this.



The Elements of a Life

Career

When developing a personal strategic plan, one must look at all aspects of one's life and address each in the plan. The first piece for most of us, and the one that lends itself most to setting and pursuing goals, is one's career. And if you're reading this book as a lawyer, that area is the one with which you're most likely seeking help. Career is such an amorphous term and means different things to different people. The best way to define it for yourself is to envision what your career will look like near its end. What type of work are you doing? What type of firm or company are you working for? What title and responsibilities do you have? What are the big things you are doing? What big goals have you accomplished? If you achieved everything you wanted to achieve in your career, and didn't let fear, obstacles, lack of resources, naysayers or challenges get in your way, what would that look like? That's the goal. That's what you're aiming at. You just have to plot out the journey to get there.

Family and Relationships

Many of us consider our personal relationships the most important part of our lives. Our relationship with our spouses, fiancés and boyfriends or girlfriends, our kids, our family and our friends—this is why so many of us work so hard, why we sacrifice, why we chase our goals and dreams. Yes, we do it for us, but we also do it for them. Those relationships are important to us, and they deserve our time and effort and a plan to enrich, strengthen and develop them. Some consider strategically planning relationships inappropriate—we shouldn't plan and control how our relationships grow or which direction they go. They should develop organically, some would say. Their romantic view sees a world where love, chemistry and energy bring us together or pull us apart. This overlooks that all relationships need proper care and feeding, they need our attention, time, and yes, our planning. So any strategic plan should consider how you're going to strengthen and deepen your personal relationships.

Physical Health

We lawyers as a breed are terrible about taking care of ourselves. We don't exercise enough. We eat the wrong foods. We eat and drink too much. Many of us are heart attacks or strokes ready to happen. It doesn't matter if you have the best plan in the world to conquer the legal industry if you drop dead decades before you should. Eating right, exercise and addressing stress not only improve your health and makes you less susceptible to disease but also improves your performance at work. Developing and sticking to a diet and

exercise plan where you reduce your calorie intake and increase the calories you burn will have countless benefits.

Psychological Health

Among all professions, lawyers are one of the most likely to succumb to depression, anxiety, substance abuse and suicide. It is a tough, contentious, demanding profession which can get the best of you if you let it. Waiting until you have a problem can be too late, because once you're caught up in depression or addiction, you may not recognize you need or even want help. Guarding against mental health disease and having a plan to promote joy and peace in your life and to develop meaningful, deep personal relationships can go a long way toward a healthy psychological state of being. Being vigilant of how our career can adversely affect our psychological health and being proactive to protect it is necessary to a proper work-life balance.

Spiritual Health

Though we as lawyers generally avoid discussions about our faith and spiritual wellbeing, our spiritual, religious and meditative health plays an important role in our overall physical, mental and emotional health. The existential questions we ponder and our beliefs that shape how we answer these questions for ourselves are central to who we are and how we interact with our own thoughts, with others and with our community. Defining, embracing and pursuing spiritual health is integral in discovering our purpose in this world, in our community and among our loved ones.



Journaling

Finding Yourself Through Journaling

I cannot emphasize enough how important journaling is to developing and implementing your personal strategic plan. The introspection and reflection that accompanies journaling is crucial on your journey toward self-discovery, defining and setting goals and pursuing them with passion and zeal. Whether it's with a pen and pad, or journal or on your phone, tablet, laptop or desktop, sitting down and writing your thoughts about what means most to you, your dreams, passions and talents, where you want to be and how to get here—thinking through the big questions and writing down your answers is the process to determine your purpose, pursue it and achieve it.

Before we dive into the process of journaling, you first should decide what you want to use to journal. I prefer actual journals you can purchase online, at a bookstore or stationary store. The corporal experience of holding a journal in your hands and writing in it makes the experience physical, real and powerful. You're committed, you're focused and you're recording on paper, with a pen, the road you want to take, where it leads and what you do when you arrive. Feel free to ultimately use your phone or computer to journal, but I beseech you to start with an actual journal and pen. This physical process is transformative.

Brainstorming

Journaling is an effective exercise to conceive, explore, consider and evaluate ideas. Brainstorming—spit balling, doodling, jotting ideas, drawing connections, seeing relationships, connecting the dots—this free, unstructured thinking with a general direction and purpose allows for epiphanies and flashes of brilliance. This is why using a pen and journal rather than typing on a phone or keypad is important, because it's through the writing, underlining, circling and drawing lines between words that the ideas brew and percolate and give rise to transformative thoughts and goals. Try it. Go to a coffee shop with a journal and pen, sit in a corner with your favorite cup of coffee or tea and for an hour, just brainstorm. You never realized how creative, how filled with ideas, how imaginative you were, did you?

Journaling Exercises

Before we discuss developing a strategic plan, let's accustom ourselves to thinking and reflecting differently and creatively. Our jobs as lawyers emphasize our left brain at the expense of utilizing our right brain. Our focus on interpreting and arguing the facts and law often pushes our imaginative side to a corner. We don't think outside the box because we see our careers

as the box, and who are we to step outside of it? So let's run through some journaling exercises to get those creative juices pumping.

Do the following exercises and answer the following questions in your journal:

- Write a scene in a story where you're the protagonist.
- If you could purchase anything to decorate your office, what would you buy?
- If you had time to write a book, what would it be about? Write its Table of Contents.
- If you would write a song or poem, what would it be about?
- Write a short poem about your favorite activity.
- Write your obituary.
- Before you settled on being a lawyer, what other careers were you considering? Write them down and why they intrigued you.
- What's your favorite novel? Why?
- What's your favorite movie? Why?

The purpose of these exercises and questions is to use your right brain and to explore who you are and what your interests and passions are. You will need to know what you enjoy and love when preparing your personal strategic plan.

Complete Self-Transparency

Honesty is crucial when journaling. We all lie to ourselves. We are either too hard or too soft on ourselves, too critical or not critical enough, either forgive ourselves more or less than we forgive others. To change ourselves, we must first be transparent with ourselves, and be honest about what our strengths and weaknesses are, what our values and principles are, what is good about us and what is bad about us, what we want to improve, what we need to change and what thoughts and behaviors we need to abandon. No one else is going to read your journal. If you want, burn it once you're done with it. What's important is the process of self-exploration, self-discovery and self-examination. See yourself for who you are, warts and all, taking a complete and thorough inventory of yourself, acknowledging what others see, the positive and negative. As lawyers, the best advice we can give our clients is a honest assessment of the facts and law. Sugar coating does no one any favors. Do the same when exploring yourself as you journal.

Figuring Out What You Want

If you're exploring being your own life coach, you've realized you have something unfulfilled in your life and you need help to pursue it. But what is it? What is the source of that ache? Figure out what you want through journaling. Answer the following questions in your journal:

- What goals have you stopped pursuing?
- What dreams have you put on the back burner or have given up on altogether?
- When was the last time you were persistently optimistic? Why was that?
- When was the last time you looked forward to a Monday? Why was that?
- What would you get excited to get out of bed to do?
- When's the last time you discussed your long term goals? What goals did you discuss?
- With whom do you share your dreams? When did you last speak about your dreams and what did you say about them?
- What are your big ideas?
- What hobbies and interests have you considered pursuing again?

That restlessness you're feeling is driven by a sense that you should be somewhere doing something and you're not sure where or what. We all have a purpose. Take time to figure out yours.

Figuring Out How to Get Where You Want to Be

Goals are the first half of the equation. A plan to achieve them is the second half. We'll dive into this deeper later, but start thinking about what you need to do to accomplish your goals. Brainstorm the tasks you'll need to perform to get from here to there. Just list tasks and acts you think you need to perform. This isn't a detailed, step-by-step checklist. This isn't the plan you will develop and implement. This is just the beginning of the process to get you thinking about what needs to get done and what you need to do. Jot down any classes, webinars, videos or books you believe you should take, watch or read to pursue your goals. Write down the names of individuals you should meet for coffee or call on the phone for advice to help you achieve your goals. And list the tasks and line items you need to perform and accomplish to achieve your goals. There's no rhyme or reason (yet) as to what you're writing down, what order to do things or whether you're actually going to do some, none or everything on your list. This is brainstorming 101, plain and simple. No form. No endgame. No master plan. Just free thinking.



Dear Diary

Daily journaling is a lost art. Setting time aside each day and writing down your thoughts, ideas, fears, aspirations, goals and accomplishments helps you focus on what's important and how to pursue it. It identifies your personal demons and how to fight them. Daily introspection—total self-transparency and self-accountability—keeps you honest with yourself, keeps you focused and keeps you moving forward. You can journal in a physical journal or yellow pad, on your computer or tablet or even on your phone. Journal however you feel most comfortable and by whatever means you will use consistently. It's not for anyone else to see or read. It's not meant to share or publish. It's for you and you alone. Try it for a month and experience it. Don't knock it until you try it.



Goals

We all have goals. We all have aspirations and wants. We all have dreams and desires. Take the time to write them down. The big ones and the little ones. The transformational ones and the less significant ones. Writing them down makes them corporeal. It makes them real. You can look at them. Organize them. Prioritize them. Let's look at the categories of goals and how to explore the scope of each.

Dream Goals

What are your dreams? When you let your imagination run, where does it run to? What does your mind conjure? What are your big ideas? Stretch the boundaries of what's practical, realistic and manageable. Think big. Think huge. What were your childhood dreams? High school and college dreams? If you could do anything and money and time and resources weren't a factor, what would it be? Maybe you've dreamed about one or more of the following:

- Starting your own firm
- Starting a nonprofit
- Starting a business
- Leading an organization
- Becoming a best-selling author
- Becoming a sought out speaker

No matter how big, how large, how difficult or unlikely, reflect upon your dreams and write them down.

Life Goals

What are your career goals? What do you want to accomplish during your life? How do you want to be remembered for the work you did? Life goals include goals for your job, career, accomplishments, reputation and your impact and effect on others and on organizations and institutions. Examples could include:

- Becoming a leader at your firm
- Becoming a rainmaker
- Becoming an expert in a given practice area
- Becoming an effective trial attorney
- Mentoring and teaching others in your field
- Becoming the go-to professional in your field
- Becoming the go-to professional in your community

Jot down your life goals. Make them as general or as detailed, as broad or as specific as you want. These are the big things you want to accomplish

in your career and the impact you want to make on others. Maybe you've never given these big ideas much thought. Think about them and jot down whatever comes to mind.

Family Goals

So many of the sacrifices we make are for our families. We work hard, we delay gratification, we save and we sacrifice to provide a good life for those we love. Yet, we spend so little time setting family goals. We set career goals, money goals, organizational goals, but few of us set family goals. What do we want for our family? What do we want for our relationships with our family members? And what even is a "family goal?" What does that even mean? If you were to ask me what to include in the bushel of family goals, I would suggest the following:

- Spending more time together as a family
- Defining and pursuing hobbies every family member can enjoy
- Identifying each family member's purpose and equipping each of them to pursue their purpose
- Celebrating each family member's accomplishments and achievements
- Equipping each family member to develop and use their talents

Self-actualization—becoming the best person you were meant to be—is a family pursuit. It's a pursuit a family can pursue together, and work together on and help one another become their very best. Applying corporate strategic planning to one's family can yield closer, deeper more meaningful relationships.

Self-Care Goals

Long term goals are irrelevant if you drop dead young from too much stress and poor eating and exercise habits. We have to take care of ourselves—mentally, emotionally and physically—to achieve goals that will take decades to accomplish. Weight loss, improved diet, lowering cholesterol and blood pressure, exercising regularly, regulating stress and anxiety—these are important and manageable goals. We lawyers are terrible at taking care of ourselves. We work too hard and often eating right, exercising and mindfulness take a back seat. If you need to, enlist the help of your physician, a dietician, a personal trainer or work out partner, but devise a health plan that is reasonable, doable and effective. Some goals to consider are:

- Reducing the intake of fried, fast and sugary foods
- Reducing the intake of processed and fatty foods

- Reducing alcohol intake
- Increasing the intake of fresh fruit and vegetables
- Walking more
- Joining a yoga or mindfulness class
- Joining an exercise class
- Buying basic exercise equipment and working out at home

You can buy all the equipment you need for a home gym for less than \$200 which will take up little space in your home. Consider buying the following:

- An exercise or yoga mat
- Pull up bar
- Push up bars
- Ab wheel
- Resistance bands
- Jump rope
- Set of dumbbells
- Kettle balls
- A medicine ball
- An exercise book with illustrated exercises and routines

You can store these items in your closet and bring them out in the morning or evening to work out.

Manageable Goals

Whatever goals you set for yourself, make sure they are possible and attainable. Yes, you want to push yourself. Yes, big dreams demand big goals. Yes, you shouldn't settle for less. But whatever goals you set for yourself, you must be able to achieve them, or why bother? You have to be honest with yourself about your skills, talents, passions and resources and set goals consistent with these. You should push yourself but you should do so reasonably. You should reach beyond your grasp but not so far that invariably you give up on yourself. It's a balancing act—pushing yourself but not beyond all measure, doing big things but not unwieldy things. Achieving goals is balancing dreams with reality, balancing wishes with circumstances. And sometimes what makes a goal manageable isn't so much the size of the goal but the timing—allowing yourself enough time and resources to do big things. As they say, Rome wasn't built in a day.



Asking Yourself the Tough Questions

Before you can change yourself, you have to know yourself, really know yourself. You do this by asking yourself tough questions—lots of intimate, personal, thought provoking, deep, penetrating questions—and you give yourself honest answers—completely, totally transparent answers. In order to change, you need to know what you're changing from. To get to where you're going you need to know from where you're coming. It's not always a pleasant process. We all have character flaws we hide from ourselves. When we lie, we lie first and foremost to ourselves. We have selfish qualities. We have egos. We have misperceptions of our true nature, self-perpetuated misunderstandings of what our strengths and weaknesses are. We're either too hard on ourselves or not hard enough. We either think too much of ourselves or not enough. We are too confident or not confident enough. Life is calibration. Like tuning a guitar, you have to evaluate how discordant you are and make adjustments. But you must first hear that you're off key. If you're tone deaf, you'll never change.

Self-Survey

To understand who you are and whom you want to become, you will want to conduct a self-survey. Businesses survey their customers when considering new product lines. Law firms survey their attorneys when considering a new strategic plan. You need to survey you if you want a new you. You need to know your talents (and just as important what talents you lack), your passions and dreams to create a life plan that works for you. Exploring yourself—getting to know yourself, learning about yourself, studying yourself—that's how you improve yourself. What you want to be starts with where you are.

Brutal Honesty

You're going to ask yourself a lot of tough questions. You owe it to yourself to be honest, brutally honest, with yourself. The honesty precedes the change. The self-deception perpetuates it. You may want to recruit a friend or loved one to keep you honest. We see ourselves the way a child sees the world through a kaleidoscope. It's far from accurate and sets us on the wrong road, someone else's road toward someone else's goals. You need a thick skin to get someone else involved. It won't be pretty. It won't be neat. It's like pulling a bandage off a fresh wound. Self-examination isn't pleasant. Many don't ever set on a path to improve themselves because they don't want to acknowledge what needs improvement. Fewer ask others for their honest opinions and evaluations. But I promise you if you ask yourself the hard questions and give yourself honest answers, you'll be well ahead of the pack in knowing where you want to be and how to get there.

What to Ask Yourself

The questions below will help you evaluate:

- Your talents
- Your goals
- Your passions
- Your dreams
- Your fears
- Your weaknesses
- Your resources
- Your plan

The questions are spaced so you can print off these pages and write your answers in the spaces provided. You may prefer to jot your answers in a journal or you can type them in a Word document. Use whatever method you find most comfortable. I'm a believer in the tactile experience of pen and journal, writing longhand my thoughts and ideas. You use what works best for you. Here are the questions, organized by the categories above:

Your Talents

As a child, what talents were you praised for?

As a child, what did you believe your talents were?

As a child, what awards, if any, did you win and what were they for?

As a teenager, what did others tell you your talents were?

As a teenager, what did you consider your talents to be?

As a teenager, what awards, if any did you win, and what were they for?

In high school, what were your hobbies?

In high school, what after school activities were you involved in and why?

If you participated in high school sports, what sports did you participate in, what positions did you play, how successful were you and how would you describe your role on the team?

If you participated in music, art, theater or dance in high school, what activities did you participate in, what was your role, what did you enjoy about it and what did others say about your participation?

What movies and television shows did you watch and what books, magazines and newspapers did you read in high school? Why did you watch what you watched and why did you read what you read?

Why did you choose the college you attended? What did you think you'd accomplish or achieve at your college as compared to those you turned down?

Why did you choose your major? What classes did you choose outside your major and why did you choose them? What talents helped you succeed in class and in your major?

What did you do outside of class? What organizations were you involved in and why? What activities were you involved in and why? What talents did you bring to bear to these organizations and activities? What did others in these organizations identify as your talents?

When did you decide to attend law school? Why did you choose law school? What made you think you were qualified to be a lawyer? What skills did you plan on relying upon to succeed in law school?

Why did you attend your law school? What attracted you to your law school? Why were you a good fit for your law school? If you were a poor fit for your law school, why was that?

In law school, what practice areas were you considering? What were your talents that made you believe you were equipped to practice in those areas?

Did you participate in law review? Why and what was your role? Did you participate in moot court? Why and what and how did you do? Did you participate in any other law school activities? What did you do, why and what talents did you rely upon?

Did you receive any awards, accolades, or compliments in law school? If so, for what?

Did you work during law school? If so, what skills did you develop and apply while working?

When preparing for the bar exam, what came easily and what was difficult?

What comes easy for you at work and what do you find difficult?

What tasks do you enjoy at work and which ones do you avoid?

What compliments do you receive at work from other attorneys, staff, opposing counsel and others?

What extra-curricular activities that are career-related have you participated in and why?

As of today, what are your talents?

As of today, what do others tell you that your talents are? What compliments do you receive?

Have you received any professional awards? Any other awards or accolades? For what? What skills contributed to you receiving these awards and accolades?

List all your talents, starting with your most developed talents and ending with your least developed talents?

What talents serve you best in your career? In your extra-curricular activities? In your personal relationships?

Your Goals

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

As a teenager, what careers were you considering?

When did you decide to become a lawyer? Why?

If you had not become a lawyer, what career would you have pursued?

In law school, what career did you envision?

What aspects of your job are lined up with your goals? What aspects are not?

Have you ever written down your goals? When? How? What were they?

How do you define the term “goal”?

What are your current career goals? What are your non-career goals?

Have your goals changed over the last 5 years? Last 10 years? How have they changed? Why?

How do you create, develop or decide upon your goals?

Have you abandoned any of your goals? Which ones? Why?

Have you changed any of your goals? Which ones? Why?

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? 20? Why?

How would you want your obituary to read?

What do you want to be said about you as part of your eulogy?

What areas of practice do you want to specialize in? Why?

What types of clients do you want to represent? Why?

Are there specific clients you want to represent? Why?

Are you happy at your current position? If so, why? If not, why?

Is your current job consistent with your long term goals? Why? Why not?

Write down all your goals.

Look at the goals you just wrote, and assume nothing could prevent you from accomplishing them. Assume you had all the skills, resources and time to accomplish them? Would you still have the same goals? If not, what would they be? Would they be bigger? Would they be more expansive?

Your Passions

As a child, what were you passionate about?

As a teenager, what were you passionate about?

As a teenager, what would you daydream about?

What were you passionate about in college? In law school?

What are you passionate about now?

What aspects of your job are you passionate about? What aspects of your job are you not passionate about? What aspects do you find boring or rote?

What books, magazines or newspapers excite you?

What topics of discussion excite you at lunch, dinner or at cocktail parties?

What do you daydream about?

Is there a job you could perform that you wouldn't consider work?

What do others say you're passionate about?

What are you willing to get up early for and stay up late for?

What keeps you up at night? What are you thinking about when you can't sleep?

What does the word passion mean to you? How do you define it?

What motivates you? What inspires you? What gets you going?

What activities do you need external motivators for?

Your Dreams

What were your dreams as a child?

What were your dreams in high school?

What were your dreams in college and law school?

What are your current dreams?

What are your career dreams?

What dreams do you have outside your career?

What dreams have you accomplished? Which ones are you working towards?
Which ones have you abandoned? Why?

How do you define a dream?

With whom do you discuss your dreams? What have you told them about
your dreams?

Have you written down your dreams? When? Where? How?

Your Fears

What scared you as a child?

What scared you as a teenager?

What scared you in college and law school?

What scares you now?

What fears hold you back?

Have you in the past, or do you currently have, any phobias? What are they?
How have you addressed them?

Have you ever made a decision driven by fear? What was the fear and what
was the decision?

Are you risk adverse? How much? Why? What drives you to being risk adverse?

Have you ever overcome a fear? When? What were the circumstances?

Do others describe you as risk adverse or as a risk taker? Have they said why?

Have you become more or less risk adverse as you have grown older? To
what do you attribute that?

What fears, if any, are holding you back from accomplishing your goals?

Your Weaknesses

What did you struggle with as a child?

What did you struggle with as a teenager?

What classes did you consider the hardest? Why?

What classes did you receive the worst grades in? Why?

What did you struggle with in college? Law School?

What do you struggle with at work?

What tasks do you try to avoid at work?

What tasks are you not given at work?

What do you think your weaknesses are?

Have others identified your weaknesses? Who? What did they say?

What have you done to work on your weaknesses?

Have you embraced your weaknesses? Have you spent your time developing your talents and strengths?

Do you understand we all have weaknesses? How do you feel about that?

Do you think it's better to work on your weaknesses or build your talents? Why?

How much energy, thought, time and effort do you spend on your weaknesses?
How about on your strengths?

Your Resources

What talents do you have to achieve your goals?

What skills do you have to achieve your goals?

How much money, time and energy do you have to achieve your goals?

What other resources do you have to achieve your goals?

Your Plan

Have you written down your dreams and goals?

Have you defined the scope and breadth of your goals?

Have you written down action steps to achieve your goals? What are they?

Have you given yourself a timetable to achieve your goals? What is it?

Do you hold yourself accountable to achieve your goals? How? Do you have someone to hold you accountable? Who is it? What do they do to hold you accountable?

How detailed is your plan? What's in your plan? Do you update your plan? When and how?

How did you decide what to include in your plan and what to exclude?

How did you decide what tasks to include in your plan and the order of those tasks?

Analyzing Your Responses

Those were a lot of questions. I hope you found them thought provoking and helpful in showing you the person you are and the person you want to be. After you answer all of them, take a close look at them and study the patterns, the answers you repeated, the answers you lingered upon, the answers that made you think, the answers that reassured you and the ones that made you wince. You have reduced to writing your nature, your soul and your spirit. Study it, reflect upon it, understand it and come to terms with it before you sit down and write out and pursue your personal strategic plan. You have to know you before embarking on the new you.



Your Workbook

Use a workbook to draft, revise and develop your personal strategic plan. It can be a physical notebook you physically write in. It can be an e-notebook created from a Word document or other document that you add to and revise. It doesn't matter whether you use a journal, a word document, an app, or something else entirely. What matters is that you use something that works for you and with which you're comfortable. Developing and implementing a personal strategic plan is a creative, time consuming, messy process and you need a place to capture your thoughts, imagination, ideas, values and beliefs. You decide how many details to include. You decide what to jot down. You decide what's important to reduce to writing and what's not. I will provide some parameters for your workbook and how to use it, but its role in your personal development is largely up to you.

Your Coaching Notebook

Any personal strategic plan will define your values, mission and vision, your goals, actions steps (large and small) to achieve them, a timetable to achieve them and provide accountability to ensure you achieve them. Your workbook, or if you prefer, your coaching notebook, will be where you think through and write down all these items. You can print off the pages below and use them to create your coaching notebook, or use the items below to create your own document or handwrite the items below onto a journal. Again, do whatever works best for you. The format you use doesn't matter. What matters is that it works for you.



Its Purpose

The purpose of a coaching notebook is to work through and reduce to writing a plan that will get you from where you are to where you want to be. It's that simple. The purpose of any coach is to help you realize your potential. If you're acting as your own coach, your job is to make you the best you that you can be. It isn't complicated. It doesn't require a 10 step plan. It doesn't require a weeklong retreat, or membership in some club or buying some monthly coaching plan. It, all of it, is quite basic, quite rudimentary, quite simple. Figure out who you are, where you want to go, devise a plan on how to get there and execute. By answering the questions I provided above, you've done much of this already. What follows is an elaboration and fine tuning of the self-evaluation and planning of what you've already started and done.

Its Contents

I've laid out the contents of your coaching notebook below so that you can simply print off the following pages and use them to work through your strategic plan. Or you can use them as a template when creating your own Word document or when writing in your journal, whatever is your preferred method. At the end of the plan there is a one page form that you can use for a daily checkup of your goals, tasks and accountability. I've streamlined your coaching notebook to make it easy, user friendly and accessible. You can use it to define and achieve career goals, health goals, family goals or any other goals. I'm not here to tell you what goals to pursue or judge you about them. I'm here simply to facilitate the process you pursue to define and achieve your goals.

Here It Is

What follows is the content of your coaching notebook. Each of the following pages walks you through the process of creating a personal strategic plan through questions and statements for you to reflect upon. By the end of it, you'll have a plan to follow and pursue whole heartedly and by doing so you'll become the person you were meant to be.

Your Values

What are your values?

What values did your family teach you?

What values did you learn at school?

What values have you learned at work?

What values do you live by?

Write down all the values you live by and define them. Each of us has core principles that serve as our lodestar. You have to reflect upon your values and commit to living by them, even when it's hard. Especially when it's hard.

Organize your values in order of importance, relevance and significance to you.

Your Mission

Most organizations have a mission statement, a statement that defines why they exist, what their purpose is. Write your mission statement. Write what your purpose is.

Your personal mission will serve as a beacon for what you pursue and how you pursue it. Take time to edit it, revise it and reduce it to as few words as possible.

Your Vision

If your mission is your purpose, your vision is how you achieve your purpose. Your mission drives your vision. Write down your vision for yourself. How do you plan on achieving your mission? What is your meta goal to achieve your mission?

Like your mission, you want to reduce your vision to as few words as possible. Perhaps there is an overarching goal (or two) that encapsulates your vision. Write it down.

Your Goals

What are your meta (overarching) goals?

What are your career goals?

What are your goals at your current firm or employer?

What are your family goals?

What are your health goals?

What other goals do you have?

What are your goals for 5 years? 10 years? The remainder of your life?

What are your big goals? What are your medium sized goals? What are your small goals?

List your goals in order of importance to you.

List your goals in the order of the amount of work, time and resources to accomplish them.

See which of your goals can be broken down into a series of smaller goals, and do so.

Organize your goals in the order that makes the most sense to you to accomplish them.

Your Plan

Once you have defined your goals, you need to develop a plan to achieve them. First, review all the goals you wrote down, select a reasonable number of them and prioritize them. These will be the goals you pursue.

List your goals. Be as specific and detailed as possible.

For each goal, write an action plan, which includes all the tasks, large and small, to achieve the goal, and a timetable to achieve each task.

List the resources you need to complete your tasks.

State what you will do to complete your tasks.

Decide how you will hold yourself accountable to complete your tasks.

Decide what you will do if you face obstacles, challenges or difficulties when trying to complete your tasks.

Understand that a plan is just that—a plan. Be prepared to swap out tasks, processes or efforts to achieve your goals. Change the plan as need be. Don't change your goals unless absolutely necessary.

A mission can be abstract. A vision can be abstract. Even goals can be abstract. A Plan must be concrete. Action steps must be concrete. Deadlines must be concrete. Go back over your action steps and make sure they are concrete, spelled out, understandable and doable.

Devise a budget for your plan.

Identify someone who will hold you accountable to pursue your plan and decide how that person will hold you accountable.

Decide how you will measure success in achieving your plan and what you will do if success proves elusive.

How will you keep track of completing your tasks?

How much will you spend each day, week and month, to complete your tasks and achieve your goals?

Set aside time in your calendar to pursue and complete your tasks. Decide what time each day you will work toward your goals.

Decide with whom you will share your plan and how will you let them know of your progress. Know and appreciate most people won't care and will be annoyed to hear about what you're doing.

You will succeed if each day you work toward your goals and keep track of your progress. Here is a daily form to help you do this.

DATE: _____

What goals did you work toward today?

What tasks did you perform today?

What did you accomplish today?

Was today productive? Why? Why not?

What do you hope to accomplish tomorrow?



Making New Habits

To accomplish your goals, you will need to create new habits. In effect, you've assumed a second job—the job of improving yourself. Time you spent watching television, surfing the web, sleeping in, following sports, playing video games, and generally not making the best use of your time will now have to be used to complete the tasks to achieve your goals. This won't be easy. Being a lawyer can be exhausting and it's hard to come home and keep working on yourself. It's hard to spend weekends working on yourself. But if you want to transform yourself, you will have to do just that. You will need to abandon time-wasting habits and supplant them with productive habits. Otherwise, your plan will simply be that—a plan—that never takes hold and never gets implemented.

Break Old Habits

To create new productive habits, you must first break old, poor habits. First, identify the habits you want to change. Don't try to change every bad habit. Pick a few—the ones that create the biggest obstacle to you accomplishing your goals—and work on eliminating or reducing them. A bad habit may be binge watching programs on streaming services. Identify how much time each day and each week you're spending on the habit. Ask yourself why you do it and why you spend as much time on it as you do. Then curtail the habit. For example, decide that instead of watching television two hours each night, you'll only watch one hour, and instead of watching television all Saturday afternoon, you'll limit it to two hours. As you can see, this shift in time from a poor habit to a positive habit can have an immediate and significant impact on accomplishing your goals. You have to be conscious and active to change and reduce a poor habit. Stick with it. Eventually, you'll get the better of it.

Creating New Habits

To create new habits, decide upon which habits you want to create. Don't choose too many. You won't have the time, energy or motivation to pursue more than a few. Write down the habits. Describe the habits. Write down how you plan to turn these new actions into habits. Some say it takes three weeks to turn a new action into a habit, before a new action becomes second nature and becomes part of your natural repertoire. You have to commit to consciously do this new act until it becomes a habit. For example, you may want to make regular exercise a new habit. You start by deciding you will start exercising regularly. You then define what regular exercise will be—how many days a week, how long, where, what, etc. You may decide you will work out at home 4 days a week for 45 minutes each session doing a mix of

floor exercises and free weights. You'll then decide which specific exercises you want to do and purchase the equipment (floor mat, dumbbell set) to perform the exercises. You then create time in your schedule to exercise. Maybe you get up an hour earlier or you do it an hour after dinner. Then you do it. You make yourself do it until it becomes second nature, until it becomes a new habit. You can do the same approach if you want to get into the habit of writing each day, or engaging in social media each day, or whatever task you want to do regularly and consistently. It starts as a decision and ends as a habit.

How Your New Habits Will Change You

If you want to transform yourself, it will take more than a personal strategic plan. It will take new habits to enact that plan. Review your personal strategic plan, decide which 2 or 3 new habits will help you enact it, and then pursue those habits and make them part of your routine. Journaling or writing every day, exercising daily, eating healthier—you can see how these habits, which are not directly related to your career, could still lead to improvements in your career. The confidence that comes from regular exercise and a healthy diet could land you new clients. Journaling every day could lead to the copy for a new book that you can use to promote your practice. Healthy habits can change you, your life and your trajectory.



Your Goals

Once you've drafted your strategic plan, and you've written down your goals, make sure your goals:

- Are specific
- Are concrete
- Can be reduced to specific tasks
- Can be reduced to smaller goals
- Are manageable
- Are realistic
- Reflect your values
- Are an extension of your personal mission and vision
- Rely on your talents
- Are driven by your passions and dreams

Your goals are what you hope to achieve to become the person you want to be. Make sure you understand what they require of you and what you need to do to achieve them.



Your Plan

Your plan is how you will achieve your goals. You have to spell out the steps from here to there, from where you are to where you complete your goals. You may find that the plan you laid out for yourself is flawed. Correct and proceed. Tinker with the plan while leaving the goals alone. You only change your goals after various plans have proven inadequate. Often the problem isn't the goal, it's the plan meant to achieve it. Don't be shy to seek help from those who have accomplished similar goals to discuss the viability of your plan and what alternative plans you can pursue to achieve your goals. You want to write a detailed plan because it's in the writing that you think through the steps from A to B and from B to C. And when you write out your plan, think as many moves ahead as you can. Think of your plan as akin to a chess match. If at all possible, think through every move and counter move until you achieve checkmate.



Your Action Steps

Each goal should be reduced to a checklist of action items that if completed will accomplish the goal. Your action steps should be:

- Concrete
- Finite
- Achievable
- Understandable
- Organized in the right order for your goal
- Reduced to writing

As you finish each action step, check it off. Regularly review, and as necessary revise and augment your action items checklist to ensure you stay focused and on task. Think of your action steps as a checklist you'd prepare for one of your cases. It directs you to the end game, focuses you on the "win," and keeps you on the right path.



Your Affirmation Statements

Some believe in motivational and inspirational statements, quotes, calendars and posters. Some don't. I recommend you try affirmation statements—quotes that you can read that will motivate, inspire, focus and push you. Do a search for “motivational statements, quotes and sayings” and “inspirational statements, quotes and sayings” on Google, skim through several of the sites and pick about a dozen quotes that speak to you. Copy them and keep them nearby. Review them regularly until you've memorized them. If you're not the memorization type, just keep reading them. These affirmation statements will help you keep moving forward.



Your Obstacles

You will face obstacles on your road to achieving your goals. Poor health, death of a family member, divorce, loss of a job, depression, anxiety—life—will knock you to the ground. Falling short, failing, making mistakes—they're intertwined with chasing success. First, understand that bad things will happen. Second, accept that bad things are part of life and you can't avoid the bad things—you have to confront and address and overcome them. Third, develop coping mechanisms that work for you to confront and get past the bad things. And fourth, understand anything worth doing requires time, effort and resilience. You've got this.



Your Progress

Keep track of your progress. This will keep you motivated and focused. It will also serve as feedback as to whether you need to modify your approach to achieving your goals. At the end of each week, month and year, track your progress. If you're diligent and stick to your plan, you'll be surprised by how much you've done, accomplished and overcome. If you were dieting, you would keep track of your weight loss. If you were lifting weights, you'd keep track of how many reps you do. Do the same for your personal strategic plan.



Your Accountability

Hold yourself accountable for your plan and your life. You're in charge of what you do, what you pursue, what you accomplish and what you achieve. You're in charge of your work ethic, your attitude, your beliefs and your approach to life. Hold yourself accountable and as a backup recruit a friend with whom you will meet regularly who will hold you accountable to sticking to and pursuing wholeheartedly your personal strategic plan. Plan on meeting for coffee once a month to discuss your progress and setback and talk through the next steps. Knowing you have to answer to someone once a month will help keep you on track.



Your Change

You're bound to change. If you stick to your plan, you will become a new person, a better person, a person better equipped to handle, deal with, address and overcome life's foibles and challenges. You'll find that your new you, the improved you will have more time, more energy and more ability to accomplish what you set out to accomplish. For example, let's say you set out to write daily. 6 months in, you may find that writing has become second nature. You blow past your daily required output of 250 words and you're now writing, without much effort, 500 words. Fast forward another six months, and you find that you can easily write 1000 words a day in the time it took you initially to write 250 words. You will get better. Better than you ever imagined.



Your Results

Periodically evaluate your results and compare them to your goals to determine if you should stick with or tinker with your plan. Regular self-evaluation and feedback will make you more efficient in achieving your goals. This looping process—evaluating, tinkering, re-evaluating—will help you progress faster and faster.



You Can Do This

You are more talented, capable, passionate and hardworking than you can imagine. You can do this. You can pursue and chase down and accomplish all your goals. You thought through, studied, envisioned and developed your personal strategic plan. You are daily working on the tasks to accomplish your plan. You are seeing progress and you are changing week by week, day by day, hour by hour. You are a new person. A new creation. You can definitely do this.



Planning for the Elements of Life

Understand life will happen and you will have to adjust how you pursue your personal strategic plan based on the seasons of life. You will deal with health issues—your and others. You will deal with career issues—your firm struggles, implodes, closes or lets you go. You will deal with family issues—divorce, prodigal child, an ailing parent. This is life. Life is messy. Take life into account when pursuing your personal strategic plan.



Life's Challenges

You don't have to face life alone. If you're dealing with health issues, see a doctor. If you're struggling with depression or anxiety, seek professional help. If you find yourself feeling lonely or withdrawn, seek others' company. Even though each of us is responsible for our own life and our own decisions, it doesn't mean we have to go through this life alone. Having healthy, strong personal relationships will help you face life's challenges.



Hitting Bottom

Some of us will hit bottom. Depression will turn into suicidal ideations. Drinking will devolve into alcoholism. Experimenting with drugs will become an addiction. Anxiety will turn into full blown panic attacks. Be aware of your downward slide and seek help. Don't be ashamed. Don't see yourself as a failure. Many of us hit bottom. Many of us have personal demons that drag us down. For some of us, we'll need to hit bottom to drag ourselves back to the surface. You can get back to where you were. You can always go back home. As long as you're breathing, you have the ability and wherewithal to get your life back. Reach out, make and maintain relationships, seek help, focus on and help others and make it your life's mission to get better.



Grit

I don't care about your pedigree. I don't care what college you attended, what law school you went to, or what firms you have worked at. I don't care what house you live in, what car you drive, or where you vacation. What I care about and what you should care about is if you have the grit to get up after life knocks you to the mat. Life punches you in the face, you shake it off. Life throws you to the ground, you get up. Life kicks you in the groin, you take a deep breath and square off back in the center of the ring. Grit is the one quality that separates those who give into failure and those who overcome it. Not much scares life. Grit does.



Humor

Don't underestimate the power of humor. Watch funny things. Read funny things. Share funny things. Hang around funny people. Engage in funny activities. Consider taking an improv class, reading books on comedy and going to comedy shows. Humor will get you and help you get others through so much.



Serving Others

A central tenant of your personal strategic plan should be to serve others. Serve those in your family, your firm, your clients and your community. A self-centered plan focused solely on you isn't worth pursuing or accomplishing. Success will be measured by not only what you accomplish personally but by how much you help others accomplish their goals.



Changing the World

Each of us has a purpose and that purpose is to change the world for the better in our own way, using our talents, passions, dreams and work ethic to serve others. None of us can take it with us and you'll never see a hearse followed by a U-Haul. Use your personal strategic plan to change the world and leave a positive impact.



Your New You

Fast forward a year. You're making progress on your goals. You're a different person. You're a better person. You're more confident. You're more strategic. You're nicer. Your personality and outlook make you more attractive. You are a different person, and you will never be the same and you will never go back. Onward and upward. God bless and Godspeed.



