

Exercises for Developing the 5 Principles as Habits

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To achieve solid success day in, day out one must create the conditions for good luck to occur by preparing steadily to meet opportunities as they come along. This requires developing all 5 key principles into dependable habits. Then you'll use them consistently in every situation, the right conditions will be created and you will succeed far more often than not. As success accumulates you'll realize your strength has significantly increased to help you do anything at all. That will make it even easier to keep up those habits.

There are only 5 key areas in which you need to develop habits. In brief they are:

1. Learn to be positive
2. Learn to be creative in thinking about goals and how to reach them
3. Learn to be honest... calmly
4. Learn to build new habits steadily
5. Learn to balance these 5 areas while all are in action in every situation

If you happen to have been born good at one or more of these, that's great. You can learn to be highly effective at the others and at all together. Then you'll succeed at whatever you decide to do consistently, with sustained balance.

Each of the 5 has nuances. As with all habits, the basic skills that you develop first improve and deepen over time with continuing practice. The core skills can be learned quickly. I recommend these exercises, but there are variations that help in special situations. Feel free to tailor them after you try them to get an idea how they work and how they make you feel.

I suggest reading them all through before trying each. As you first work with them, they are probably best tried in this order. After that use the ones you feel necessary at various times, in any order you choose. The key is to cut through to find your own real desires and goals and clear roadblocks to doing them.

Exercise 1: Things you've been proud of - Developing a Positive orientation

We hear a lot about the power of positive affirmations, but not a lot about the detail of how to create effective ones. The best are real, not just wishful thinking. This exercise is designed to focus the right kind.

Spend 15 minutes with pen and paper brainstorming a list of things you've done that you've been proud of, excited by or surprised by in your past – a variety of positive insights into how your life has developed. Write just a few words for each event that will jog your memory later. List anything at any period of your life. Try to get yourself in a mood of appreciation and awe at your own surprising achievements. You'll find they were things you often didn't foresee even a year or so before you achieved them.

The goal of this exercise is a list of events you were proud about, that surprised you positively about yourself, that made you feel successful and quietly or mightily pleased with yourself. These can be from any period of your life. They can be from any area – sports, work, social, school, family or any other area. You may later group them into categories by period of life or type of activity, but it isn't necessary.

The purpose is two-fold. First, to create a positive glow of feelings about yourself by recognizing where you've been successful in the past. Second, and just as important, to remind yourself what sort of activities really excite you – because this is a guide to your goals. We have difficulty defining what will make us happy in future. From this past list you can see where goals should be set, to do more of these sorts of things. This exercise sets the stage for that.

The more challenging you find this, the harder it is to come up with positive events, the more important it is to revisit this from time to time and re-do and add to your list.

Those who find it difficult will want to review Marty Seligman's book, *Learned Optimism*. Professor Seligman shows from his continuing PhD-level research that optimists inevitably fare better than other people and that optimism can be developed. The proof is solid. This is how it's done, slowly over time, but with an activity that anyone can mentally review everyday. Seligman lists more, but this is the most straight forward, easily practiced and with every day value.

Special Note: Building this skill will add optimism as if it were a personality trait. Some lucky people have it to begin with. For those who don't it requires a new habit to build it in to every day life. The same is true for each of the 5 principles. We actually add to our personalities the standard behaviours we want if we practice regularly to make them permanent, daily habits. We'll find ourselves doing that activity as if it were entirely natural. Maintenance is automatic because we do what we feel comfortable with and all habits qualify.

The habit of feeling positive basically boils down to being able to remind yourself at any moment of a list of things you've done well in the past. This raises your spirits and gives you your own honest feedback about real events. Positive "affirmations" are not much good unless you, yourself, believe them. The way to ensure you do is to base them on things you've done before – proof! Over time you'll become adept at recalling events in each area of life, so when you're running into roadblocks in that area and find it hard to get motivated, you can recall just the right proof that you have solid skills there. It will also give you hints about how to start in the new situation. Nothing succeeds like a sense of success awaiting.

Everyone's emotions run up and down daily. From moment to moment we feel positive, then dejected about passing events and actions we're trying to get resolved. Building a regular habit of reminding oneself that you've succeeded and felt good in the past seems artificial when you explain it, but it works extremely well in practice. It's what keeps great individuals going. It is always helpful to know someone else has succeeded at what

we're attempting, too. We'll see the value of that in later exercises, but the bedrock of taking action is to see that you yourself have in the past done something like what you're facing now.

Take a few moments at the end of this first exercise to review your list and ask yourself whether you had any idea 3 to 5 years before you achieved each success that you would ever have done this in your life. Chances are most of them came as complete surprises. If we could see the future, how boring life might be. The fact is we can't. That means many more such startling successes lie ahead.

Keep adding to the list from time to time till you feel you have a broad selection and keep reviewing positive events mentally every day whenever you feel dejected or stymied.

Exercise 2a: Finding True Goals - An Exercise That Requires Lifelong Re-Visits

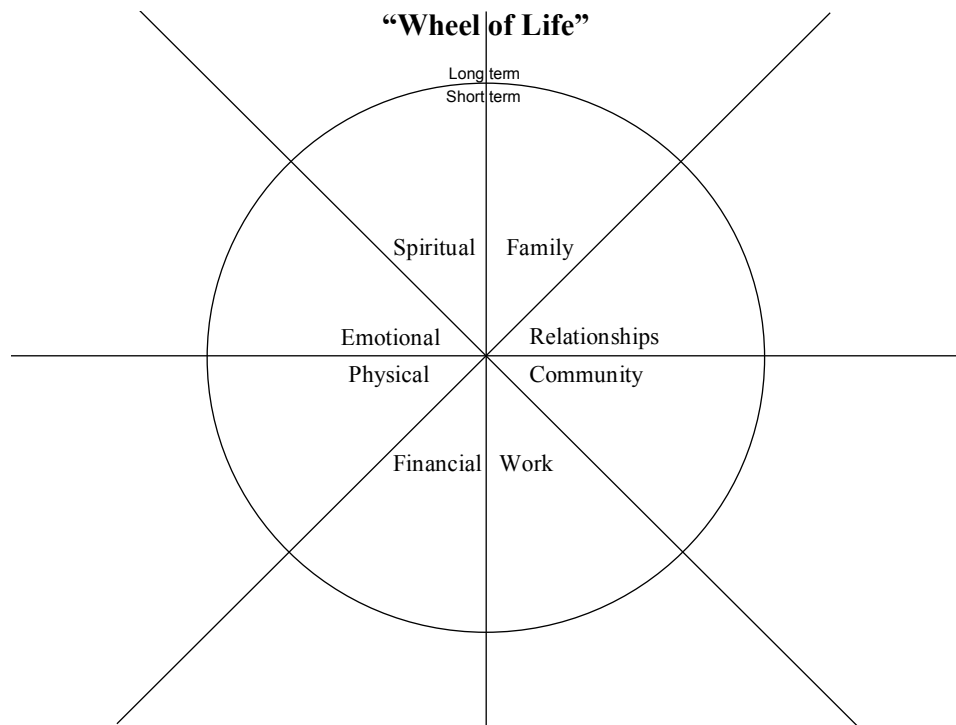
You don't really create goals; you find them... within yourself. Goals are short and long-term things you want from life, work and family. Unfortunately we're born not knowing exactly what these are. Yet they actually are inside each of us. You cannot live someone else's life or goals.

Fortunately we get flashes of insight into our goals throughout life when we stumble into activities that excite us, make us proud of ourselves, that we feel really good about and dream about doing more of.

That's what we covered in the first exercise, so take a look at the list you brainstormed and then take a look at the Wheel of Life below (printable version at www.CrispStrategies.com/forms). Feel free to change the names of any of the categories shown on the Wheel. They're guides to help you consider where you may find goals in various areas of your life, but you can carve up your thinking into more or fewer areas, change the titles and build whatever suits you.

Try to brainstorm goals with pen and paper for about 20 minutes at least every five to six months. List a couple of short-term and at least one long-term goal in each area: work, financial, etc., (short-term inside, long-term outside the circle works well). Look at your list of past positive events whenever you're stuck to see what may be intriguing in future that you'd like to work on. Start by doing this exercise now and make a note on your calendar to try it again on a clean sheet of paper in about 6 months.

What defines short and long-term is up to you. Most people think of short as six months to two years and long as five years to eternity. You'll notice there's a gap in the middle. We aren't good at figuring out mid-range goals and don't need to be. It's enough to concentrate on right now and distant future and let the middle happen as we go. By the time we get there, our short term goals will long since have evolved and we'll find ourselves pursuing new ones we couldn't ever have imagined three or four years ago. Just recall that aspect of the Positive event exercise.



Do not put down long term goals that aren't really things you feel good about. Don't worry if you feel you haven't the skills yet to achieve these goals. Once again, this takes practice. At first you'll feel limited by "can't do" items and you won't put them down. You'll also be inclined to put down things that you feel you ought to, but really have little interest in. Catch yourself in a positive mood and try to forget what's needed to get to a goal or what you ought to do. No one else ever needs to see these. Just put down what would feel really good if you could get there. Be honest. Go quickly; you can delete later.

Too many people also put down only "acceptable," but boring (ie: boring to them – that's all that counts) long-term goals in place of what they really want because they feel the lesser ones are more achievable. That's deadly – a formula for misery. Don't bother with those. If they're truly easy, you'll do them in the midst of others. Try to list only things that make you excited when you think of them, great goals. Let lesser goals take care of themselves. You don't have to list them. Put down ones that vibrate, that excite you enormously to think about if you could achieve them. Later I'll ask you to trust that you can, but for now just put down dreams even if they seem wild to you at the moment. Some will feel quite achievable, but some won't.

Again with this exercise you won't think of everything in every area at any one time. That's OK. Your goal sheet should be reviewed approximately 5 minutes per week and when you do that after the first time brainstorming you can fill in anything you missed and shuffle things till they feel more right. At the six month reviews, you'll find brainstorming flows more easily. After a few times you'll begin to see some consistency building from previous times. You'll find your goals change slowly over time.

Goals clarify and come into focus as we age. Early in life this is a provisional exercise. You can't see which "long-term" goals will really stick with you lifelong. You can guess, but it's OK to change. You want to keep flexible. Later you'll feel greater certainty and focus and you'll find yourself going deeper into certain goals than you ever imagined. Earlier it is usually impossible to tell which these will be. Some people stumble into the "right" path for them early, like the kid who always wanted to be a doctor and spends an entire lifetime at it. That's extremely rare. Most people can expect to pursue many careers and life patterns at different stages.

We really can't see ourselves easily, so it is only by living out some of our short-term steps toward longer-term goals that we truly find our way. We begin to find some things we never expected that turn us on, make us excited and draw us forward to more. This is part of the joy of life, regularly discovering things about the most interesting person we'll ever encounter – ourselves.

With this skill of goal-finding, like all other skills, practice makes perfect. Feel free to go back and brainstorm more at any time, but try to do so at least every 5 to 6 months. Research proof shows that doing so will improve your physical and mental health in ways that are still measurable up to 5 months later from just one 20-minute brainstorming session.

Ideally review your results for five minutes each week to keep them in focus. Short-term goals may evolve more rapidly. They are the "steps" toward long-term ones. Simply reminding yourself sets you on the track to doing some of the short-term steps to get to them. Really all you're doing is looking at a list of things you've taken the time to figure out you'd really like to do.

Humans are drawn to do their secret desires. That's why often when we try to do things we "think we should," we find ourselves doing something entirely different. Somehow the different thing we're doing is tied to a secret desire that overpowers "should." We all know this. The important use of it is to try to become more and more clear over time about what those "secret desires" really are. What you truly "should" be doing is what truly draws you because you'll do more of it and get very good at it. These are our true goals. If we can remove the cover of secrecy and see them clearly we are far more able to get to them faster.

Our secret desires can always be pursued positively. Many people fear putting them on the table because they seem socially unacceptable. For instance if you presently have a secret desire to have many life-partners, but feel your family believes you'd be better off to marry permanently and have kids, you have a problem. You'd be better off facing this clearly before you marry. Continue to have fun meeting people. But do it honestly and positively. Don't drag others into a fantasy that isn't going to come true.

It takes courage to pursue your true goals. This is not so much because they're scary, but because others always are ready to tell you that you really should be doing something else. Then you have to be prepared to stick to your choice and take some pressure.

You'll find your present true goals will change over time. In the marriage example, you may or may not find at some point you want to settle on one partner and a family. People have longer lives today and can create beautiful families at any point, even by adoption and other solutions later in life. If you settle down only when and if you're ready, you'll be a far better partner and parent. If it turns out you never settle down, that's OK, too – and far better than trying to force yourself into something that will never work and only hurt yourself and others.

Once you have your clear goals and some secret desires filled in along with some short-term goals that relate to these you'll feel a bit overwhelmed. Who'd have thought we have so many goals.

Exercise 2b: Unifying Your Goals - the Creative Thinking Challenge

The next step is to group goals wherever you can. Look for groups where by doing one or two things you can make progress on several goals. For instance, by seeking a promotion and new, different challenges at work, you may be able to work toward a job you'll enjoy more, that is in line with several goals – time for family, your preferred work, more money to build a financial future, prestige, fame, freedom, whatever it is you desire.

A general goal like “more money” is useless by itself. There is no set of habits that just make money materialize. You get it by doing something you'll like well enough to do a lot and get good at. Then more people will pay more money for what you do naturally and enjoyably. Grouping goals is not only recommended, it's essential to make them work.

You can't pursue dozens of directions at once, but only a couple – at work, at home, with community or whatever. Some will need to wait to later life when you have time for them. But you should be putting the most important goals right now into two or three groups that you can develop specific plans for.

Of course, you'll immediately see you can't get them all into one activity or career and there will be trade-offs. This is where your unique life starts to unfold. You and you alone can determine which trade-offs are acceptable to you – and it must be to you alone and no one else. Will you take a bit less money with the next career move to get something closer to your other dreams, closer to family or to freedom. Is that the perfect step? No one can judge as well as you, but you know you may make mistakes along the way. That's OK. You can make changes later.

We'll come back to this exercise of re-searching your goals over and over because it is the most important and has the most hidden challenges attached to it. When we pull all the exercises together in balance it will be the one that takes the most thought and re-doing. It's a life-long exercise to figure out what we want to be “when we grow up.”

The best short-term goals are ones that will automatically move us closer to our long-term goals. In fact, we should think of them as steps toward those. Take a look and see if you've included short-term goals that would qualify as moving you closer to long term ones or whether you've put down immediate, day-to-day needs that really don't relate. The best do both. They're things you need to do right now, but also move you forward in your long-term directions.

This makes it far easier to group when short and long-term are lined up to begin with. You may find this takes a few adds and deletes to accomplish. Whether you choose to do that is entirely up to you. There are no rules saying you can't review and tinker with your goals whenever it occurs to you to do so.

Exercise 3: Calm In The Face of Fear - Our Deepest, Most Secret Challenge

Getting your goals out and organized represents another key challenge. Many people don't do this sort of thinking because it tends to be overwhelming. Others fear goal-setting more than anything else on earth.

First we hesitate to admit to ourselves or others that we want to do something that could take years and still end up making us look foolish, not achieving it.

Second, there are days when we can't face the thought of all the changes and struggle that following our dreams will entail.

Where these fears cause trouble is in starting work on our short-term goals. These shorter objectives are the steps to the long-term. They are things that we must work to develop habits for.

Managing the key principle of honesty in this area requires a habit we need to build at this point. That is to do this goal-thinking anyway, to convince ourselves that the changes will come one or two at a time, that we'll be able to cope and the result will be success.

It helps to be clear that these are entirely our own choices to make and that building the right habits makes success inevitable. These are our own fears. No one looking at us can tell whether we can or can't do them any more than you'd look at Einstein and guess what he would do in life... before he did it.

These fears keep people from even thinking about their true goals. It's paralyzing. There are two solutions. First, the positive momentum within our own feelings that we build by reviewing past, surprising successes. Second, building a habit of belief that we can develop skills in any area, so we know for certain that ultimately anything we want can actually be learned and put into operation. This is possible through understanding that habit allows us to learn to do anything, which we will cover in more depth shortly.

By practicing these ideas mentally until they become automatic, we provide the certainty we need to face our fears calmly. The fears don't go away, but we learn to act in spite of them. As many said, courage is not the absence of fear, but the decision to act anyway.

Between reminding ourselves of successes and our ability to build any new skill at all, we come to be able to face honestly the worst feedback of all – our own doubts about our capabilities. What others think pales in comparison to the horrid accusations we level at ourselves about incompetence, incapacity and laziness.

Not a day goes by for most of us that we don't say to ourselves, "I could never do that, I wouldn't be able to stick to it, I haven't any talent to build on, I'm too unimaginative to figure out where to begin." Every senior executive I've known sits in senior meetings sometimes literally looking in amazement at the other professionals there and thinking, "How can I be here; I'm a fraud; I don't know what I'm doing; Someone will see through me any moment and I'll be humiliated."

The truth is very different. We have tremendous untapped skills and the capacity to develop more in any area.

But we're not perfect. And we don't have to be. We choose what to pursue, when to make the moves, when we feel ready or need to just coast. We can stack the deck totally in our own favour. The object isn't to set goals with a sense that we now have to force ourselves to pursue them, but to realize they are just out there to savour, to clarify things and feel good about.

We can take all the time we need to get in touch with our positive belief in ourselves through exercise #1 and then step forward toward building new skills. In fact the smaller the steps we take, the more fun it will be and the better base we'll build for big steps later.

So sort out your goals with peace of mind. No one need know what they are, but you. Only when you're ready, if you're ready, should you reveal any of this thinking. These can all stay invisible. Just go ahead and begin the first steps, then the next and so forth.

The key set of habits in this area is to remind yourself regularly that it's normal to feel you can't do what you've set out to do, that your goals are impossible. This goes entirely against the grain of most self-help books, but there are actually a few about the power of pessimism. The power is to show yourself that you can succeed in the face of your own beliefs that you can't.

The trick is to understand that these feelings pass. Let them come; then let them go. Get into a habit of recognizing them for what they are. Don't try to avoid or bury them. They'll haunt you. The only way to bury them is never to set a goal that you secretly feel you can't reach. That's disastrous. Every worthy goal is one you cannot possibly feel totally certain about. That's why you begin by reviewing past successes AND why they were surprising.

Remind yourself that you didn't know ahead of time you could do those things. Then get into the habit of saying to yourself, "This can be another instance like that – to get there I simply have to figure out what to do and practice to develop some new habits, which will become skills automatically in time, and then I'll be able to." Don't argue with the feelings of incapacity. Let them come. Then let them go while you focus your thinking on what you need to do to build new skills. In time you'll find you feel ready and the negative feelings of hesitation will have disappeared on their own.

Are you beginning to see the 5 principles coming together? Working to be positive, setting goals, grouping them into key activities... that you think you can't do, facing that honestly, but going back to remind yourself about positives.... This forms a cycle that sets the groundwork for action – for skill-building through habits.

Exercise 4: Building Habits – You Have to Do Something in Life so Make It Count

If you re-read the last few paragraphs, you'll see the beginnings of habits you need to practice to develop. Being honest in every situation begins with being honest with yourself. It becomes a habit with practice. You can manage this more easily by recognizing the pace of things is in your control. You choose. You decide how fast to go after goals. You need to be willing to give yourself time to build the base you need to get to the bigger ones.

Beginning anything new can be hard. One of the best solutions to our normal fear of beginning is to see the action as the beginning of a habit and realize that we stumble along initially until the habit becomes comfortable.

The steps along the way to any goal should be as enjoyable as possible. This will happen if they are made into habits because, almost by definition, habits are things we enjoy. That's why we do them; they feel comfortable.

Building habits is incredibly simple. Actions become habit when repeated in substantially the same form for about 20 tries, usually give or take 10. It can sometimes take considerably more, up to about 50 in cases of truly unpleasant behaviour. I don't suggest anyone try building skills that feel truly bad at first until they've proven to themselves how successful they can be at more enjoyable and rapidly achievable habits.

Building habits simply requires reminding yourself to make an effort to do a particular action at a particular time. The mechanism I use most is to use a small yellow sticky note posted as near as possible to where I need to begin the action. If it's something to do first thing in the morning I hang them on the bathroom mirror or stick them to the counter. I put others by the phone when needed or at the door as I leave for meetings, or inside my notes folder for when a meeting starts. It's not hard to do. Write a few words and stick.

The honest truth is that no behaviour feels comfortable till it becomes habit. So we wouldn't learn anything new or develop any new skills if we simply never did anything uncomfortable. We usually have to have something even worse hanging over our heads or some powerful urge driving us forward to overcome the initial discomfort. Didn't you feel silly learning to ride a bike, drive a car, dance or whatever? You did it because someone helped or made it less embarrassing, or it was something you wanted desperately, or you feared being left behind more than the discomfort.

We can make it easier for ourselves with little notes. They remind us to try. On days when we don't feel like trying the actual action, the note reminds us of our goal and we at least try out the action mentally, adjusting it, looking for ways to make it easier or approaches that would make it seem more comfortable.

This mental form of practice is invisible to others. Psychologists say, "we have to be able to see ourselves doing it," before we'll try. So mentally rehearsing the words, the actions, the initial overcoming of fear are essential to beginning actual practice physically.

Key Concept: Pleasure in life comes from making progress. Yet the first steps toward it are often painful. This is our ultimate puzzle – how to minimize the pain to get through it to the pleasure of success. You have full reign to apply your judgment, to choose the pace at which you'll go, to decide how much mental practice is needed before action. The greatest success comes from building these 5 habits so you continually make progress day by day in small steps. This adds up to fantastic success over time and yet feels comfortable to the greatest extent possible. Finding that balance is up to you.

The objective in this area is to realize that mental rehearsal can precede action and can help make the behaviour you want feel easier.

So choose some habits you need, that will move you toward your long term goals, no matter how small the steps might be. Think them through till you can see ways to work on at least pieces of them and begin to assemble them into a whole. Learn these through practice and assemble pieces into a larger habit that represents a bigger step toward your goals. Each success reinforces your confidence positively that you can do more and each takes you a step closer to figuring out how to do those big, "impossible" goals.

Exercise 5: Sustaining Balance - the Ultimate Key to Success

As you read through this discussion you probably felt the contradictions and puzzles. There is no magic to fitting the exercises all together. You can only do them one at a time, practice each till it becomes habit. As you work with goals and steps (also called short-term goals), you'll find yourself constantly adjusting them. Slowly you'll develop the skill of using all 5 habits at essentially the same time in every activity.

The key is simply not to lose your focus on what you want to do. Long-term goals are the beacons in the distance to keep you pointed and moving in the right direction. Many

times you'll have to slow down or take a side trip to build a habit that seems to stall your progress. There's no magic formula. Try, try again. Never give up as Winston Churchill so plainly and pointedly said.

By building habits you ensure you never give up because those automatically continue whether you're tired, down-hearted, frustrated or excited, energized and rushing forward. Throughout it all, the right habits keep you on track. The key ones you need are simple: be positive, be creative in working with your goals, long and short-term so you can see yourself making progress toward them continuously in small, bite-sized steps, new habit by new habit regardless of your honest feelings that there are some things you can't do. In spite of those feelings, you can. They are just mirages.

The final key concept throughout is balance. That includes balance in how fast you try to progress. Take time, put a goal aside temporarily when you feel you need to. Work on something else, a sub-goal that sets you up for a return to the "impossible" one later. But keep focused on the future.

Keep reviewing your progress, feeling good about what you have accomplished. Steadily, steadily... over 40 or 50 years – think how much you've done at some times in your life in one or two years. 40 or 50 years isn't one lifetime, it's many. Nothing is impossible for us that any other human somewhere can do, if we work steadily toward our own way of doing it, tailor it to our patterns, styles and enjoyable activities... over time.

The aid that I use most to keep the overall perspective and try for balance is a weekly agenda sheet. (This is also downloadable at www.CrispStrategies.com/forms.) I don't do them every week, but whenever I start to feel I'm not progressing enough, that something is stalling me. Then I pull them out, usually on a Sunday and fill in my appointments for the upcoming week. I write my short term goals for the week (which this forces me to identify) in the left-hand column, usually no more than four to six (it probably should be three, but... it's ultimately up to you).

I make sure to fill in times to spend with family, on exercise, on diversions. These are all necessary to fit on-going goals. They're also more important than work goals. Work will always be there. Family and health won't unless you specifically make time. You'll find this significantly reduces the time you leave yourself for work. It defeats Parkinson's law, which says that work expands to fill the space allotted. Were you aware this law was the result of actual research and is much more than just a humorous comment. It's a fact.

By limiting the amount of work you do, you achieve two goals. Foremost, a better balance of work and enjoyment, which is necessary for health and sustained effort. Second you force yourself to seek the quickest, most efficient ways to get tasks done. They say you should give a project you want done to the busiest person because that person will act rapidly and knows how. Their know-how comes from regular practice. This is a set of habits you need to develop into skills for sure. There is only one way to achieve that – start, stumble through the initial hesitations and begin to get better with practice.

I normally do weekly agendas for a few weeks and then stop once I'm feeling things are organized and I'm on track. While I'm doing them, the key is to review at the end of the week, usually when I'm about to do the next one. The key question is, "why didn't I get to my goals," meaning goals for the week. Asking this question forces your brain to answer and come up with new ideas for ways to get where you want to go.

People think they are not creative. The brain has two amazing mechanisms. One is habit – the ability to make any activity routine, comfortable, smooth and skilled simply through repetition. The other is to give a different answer every time you ask yourself a question. Sometimes you need a break – to "sleep on it" overnight, to take a walk, change your activity and mind set so you come at the problem with a slightly different point of view instead of staying stuck in a rut mentally.

In the end, keep asking yourself "how could I do this (impossible) thing my way?" Ask over and over. This is Re-Search (spelled that way to emphasize that you are searching over and over, within yourself, by talking to others, by reading books, listening to TV, overhearing people on the street discussing similar problems).

There are a million ways to re-search and re-ask the question: HOW? How can I? This is the most important question on the planet. Then think of the answer in terms of sustained balance toward developing habits you feel good about... so good that your own fears and hesitations are overcome. How much simpler could it be. Not easy, but simple. Not instantaneous, but faster than you believe (especially since you believe it will never happen).

We only believe we're not creative because we get jogged off our goals by fear and uncertainty. By practicing the habit of striving for balance using these 5 sets of habits continuously we set the stage to be able to deal with all this and keep asking questions till the answers appear and turn out to be easier than our fears suggest.

By this time, you see the repetitive links among these habits. Each depends on the others. You can't leave any out or you'll be missing a key peg that keeps you going. By building slowly at first, you soon develop momentum that makes even very large goals achievable with surprising speed. But we are mostly caught up in the first stages of the next goal by the time we're successful at earlier ones. One key to balance is to keep aware and enjoy progress. All work and no enjoyment is deadly.

But I'm definitely repeating things that are already within the power of these 5 principles: be positive, be creative with re-search, be honest, steadily set new habits to learn and practice them... and keep balanced. Good luck... which means: do this and you will inevitably have good luck because you will be prepared for more and more opportunities as time goes on. It's not the big stuff that stops us, but the small stuff.