

BE YOUR
**BEST
SELF**

AN INTERACTIVE
COMPANION

MIKE BAYER

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In *Best Self* the book, the very first exercise is to design your own Best Self. You describe him or her in great detail, and even draw a picture. Before you start this companion guide, return to that exercise and transfer your own Best Self onto this page, or, do it here for the first time. Get creative, and get out your art supplies.

My Best Self's name is: _____

I describe my Best Self as: _____

This is what my Best Self looks like:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing or description of the user's 'Best Self'.

SPHERE 1

Be Your Best “Social” Self

I like to think about the Social SPHERE as being broken into these categories:

How we socialize

- Sending clear messages
- Listening
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Handling emotional interactions

Who we socialize with

- Family
- Colleagues
- School associates
- Friends
- Acquaintances

Fill in any other general groups with which you socialize:

First, get in touch with how you're faring in each of the categories by completing the Social Skills Inventory starting on page 109 in *Best Self*. You can use that valuable insight to discover why you might be struggling in your social life. The four skills listed above really go hand in hand, so it's important to be able to objectively evaluate each. For instance, if you're highly skilled at sending clear messages, but you're lacking in the area of listening, your Social SPHERE is likely out of balance. In order to effectively communicate as your Best Self, you need to be able to do both well.

Refer back to your Social Skills Inventory and write down your scores here:

PART 1 (Sending Clear Messages) _____

Total Score: _____

PART 2 (Listening) _____

Total Score: _____

PART 3 (Giving and Receiving Feedback) _____

Total Score: _____

PART 4 (Handling Emotional Interactions) _____

Total Score: _____

If you scored between 1 and 21 in any of these areas, that is an indication that those areas require more attention from you. Keep those areas in mind as you progress through this chapter.

In order to help you discover whether you're showing up as the best version of yourself within all of your social circles, let's take this a step further by looking at a list of traits and choosing which ones apply to who you truly are within your Social SPHERE. When you are interacting with others—whether we're talking about a friend, family member, acquaintance, colleague, coworker, boss, employee, manager, teacher, vendor, assistant, waiter, flight attendant, or perfect stranger—what kind of person are you when you are being authentic?

As you look at the list of words, first circle the ones that jump out at you right away. Your eyes will likely land on those traits that ring true. Then, take a slower, more thoughtful look at the list and circle any other words that apply to you.

admirable	enthusiastic	leader	sensitive
affectionate	ethical	lively	sociable
agreeable	exciting	loving	sophisticated
altruistic	expert	magnanimous	spontaneous
amiable	fair	mature	steadfast
amicable	faithful	modest	stoic
appreciative	fearless	nurturing	suave
approachable	flexible	optimistic	subtle
at ease	forgiving	patient	supportive
attentive	forthright	perceptive	sweet
benevolent	friendly	personable	sympathetic
calm	functional	persuasive	teacherly
charming	fun-loving	philanthropic	tender
cheery	gallant	playful	thoughtful
compassionate	generous	polished	tolerant
conciliatory	gentle	popular	trusting
cool	genuine	principled	trustworthy
cooperative	giving	protective	unassuming
cordial	good-natured	rational	uncomplaining
courteous	gracious	reasonable	understanding
dedicated	grateful	relaxed	undogmatic
discreet	helpful	reliable	warm
dutiful	hospitable	respectful	watchful
dynamic	humorous	responsive	welcoming
eloquent	inspiring	romantic	
empathetic	intuitive	sage	
empowered	kind	selfless	

Anything about yourself that you find to be a positive attribute, and that you don't see above, write below:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Are you starting to visualize, in an objective way, who you are within your Social SPHERE? Are you noticing any patterns? A good way to help you recognize these patterns in a more tangible way is to think about specific examples of these traits playing out in real life.

For example:

- If you selected “calm” from the list of positive traits, perhaps you chose to be calm when a waiter accidentally spilled something on your shirt, and it helped defuse an awkward situation.
- If you selected “teacherly” from the list of traits, maybe you took on a guiding role with a new employee who was struggling to understand a concept, and it made them feel safe and comfortable to ask questions.

Specific examples of my Best “Social” Self traits in action in my Social SPHERE are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Recalling the list of traits you've already attributed to yourself within your Social SPHERE, consider the following questions.

1. Is your Best "Social" Self:

- a particular gender?
- an animal?
- a mystical creature? Or a wise voice inside yourself?
- a character inspired by a book or movie?

2. Does your Best "Social" Self behave in a particular way when someone is being:

- kind to you?
- threatening toward you?
- critical toward you?
- emotional with you?
- sarcastic with you?
- empathetic toward you?
- open with you?

3. Does your Best "Social" Self:

- send clear messages to others?
- listen attentively when others are sharing about themselves?
- give and receive feedback without judgment or condescension?
- handle emotional interactions well?

4. Does your Best “Social” Self move/dance/walk in a specific way?

5. Is your Best “Social” Self:

- the life of the party?
- the shoulder to cry on?
- the event planner?
- the talker?
- the listener?

6. What is your Best “Social” Self’s superpower?

Write a full description of your Best “Social” Self here:

Now, how better to get a good visual of your Best “Social” Self than to draw it? You can use a pen, crayons, markers, colored pencils, whatever you like. Remember, we aren’t all visual artists, so if it’s not much more than a stick figure, that’s okay! The image you have in your mind is likely more detailed than your drawing, and that mental picture is what’s important. You can imagine the kind of looks I get when I sit down with major corporate executives to do this exercise! But the results are always worthwhile.

Draw your Best “Social” Self here:



Finally, take a moment to assign a name to your Best “Social” Self and write it at the top of the image you created.

Understand Your Anti “Social” Self

Create Your Anti “Social” Self

Now that you are on firm footing with who your Best “Social” Self is, let’s turn our attention to your Anti “Social” Self (which doesn’t necessarily translate to being “antisocial”!). Just as you defined and drew your Anti-Self when you read the book *Best Self*, you’re going to do the same exercise but specifically within your Social SPHERE.

Below is a list of traits that could apply to how your Anti “Social” Self behaves. When you are not acting as your Best Self in a social setting, how do you tend to behave? I know this isn’t the most positive thing to think about, but remember that things appear scarier in the dark, and we want to shed some light! Do not judge or condemn yourself while doing this exercise; instead, maintain an objective point of view, as if you were evaluating someone else. You will only stall your progress if you pass judgment on yourself. Instead, be honest about what can happen when you show up as your Anti-Self within your Social SPHERE so we can work toward eliminating that kind of behavior in the future. It takes a lot of courage to face the truth about how we sometimes behave, and it’s really the first (and hardest) step toward reversing it. You’re reading this book and doing this work so that you can improve your life all around, and it will be so worth it in the end.

As you peruse this list of traits, first circle the ones that jump out at you immediately, and then take a second pass and circle any additional ones that apply.

abrasive	critical	hostile	passive
abrupt	crude	impatient	perfectionist
angry	cynical	inconsiderate	perverse
anxious	deceitful	indiscreet	pessimistic
apathetic	demanding	inhibited	petty
argumentative	devious	insecure	pompous
arrogant	disagreeable	insincere	possessive
artificial	discouraging	insulting	resentful
awkward	dishonest	intolerant	rigid
bitter	disloyal	intoxicated	rude
boring	disrespectful	irritable	self-centered
brutal	disruptive	jealous	selfish
calculating	distractable	judgmental	stiff
callous	dogmatic	loud	stoic
cantankerous	domineering	malicious	tactless
charmless	dull	mannerless	tense
clingy	egotistical	mean	unappreciative
cold	fixed	moody	unfriendly
complaintive	follower	narcissistic	ungrateful
compulsive	gloomy	needy	unpleasant
conceited	greedy	negative	unpolished
conformist	gullible	obnoxious	unwelcoming
cowardly	hateful	overly opinionated	uptight
crass	haughty	paranoid	vain

Write any negative words you attribute to yourself within the context of your Social SPHERE here:

Do you notice any patterns in the traits of your Anti “Social” Self? In other words, could you potentially group the characteristics you wrote down into specific categories? Maybe you tend to criticize others, or you become self-centered. Try to look at the traits objectively and see if you can identify larger patterns at play.

Patterns I notice in my Anti-Self traits as it relates to my Social SPHERE are:

In the second chapter of the book, you imagined your Anti-Self. Now, I invite you to do that exercise again, but within the context of your Social SPHERE. When you are having an off day and you find yourself behaving as your Anti-Self, what does that look like? Again, it's important to identify that now to help you avoid those behaviors and actions later.

Recalling the list of traits you've already attributed to your Anti-Self within your Social SPHERE, consider the following questions.

1. Is your Anti "Social" Self:

- a particular gender?
- an animal?
- a mystical creature?
- a character inspired by a book or movie?

2. Does your Anti "Social" Self behave in a particular way when someone is being:

- kind to you?
- threatening toward you?
- critical of you?
- emotional with you?
- sarcastic with you?
- empathetic toward you?
- open with you?

3. Does your Anti “Social” Self move/dance/walk in a specific way?

4. Is your Anti “Social” Self:

- loud and obnoxious in a crowd?
- attention-seeking?
- a wallflower?
- afraid of socializing?
- a poor listener?
- overreactionary?

5. Does your Anti “Social” Self:

- struggle with sending clear messages to others?
- become inattentive or tune out when others are sharing about themselves?
- give abrasive or judgmental feedback?
- have an inability to gracefully receive constructive criticism from others?
- avoid emotional interactions or allow them to escalate unnecessarily?

Write a full description of your Anti “Social” Self here:

Now, grab a pen or pencil, marker or paintbrush; it's time to sketch out your Anti "Social" Self. Get as detailed as you can!

Draw your Anti "Social" Self here:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for drawing the Anti "Social" Self.

Before you move on, assign a name to your Anti “Social” Self and write it at the top of the drawing.

Note: You might be thinking that you have more than one Anti “Social” Self, depending upon certain situations, triggers, interactions with specific people, etc. Try to draw the other versions of your Anti “Social” Self in a journal or on blank pieces of paper.

Next, write down three recent events or situations when you know your Anti “Social” Self had taken charge of a situation. Sometimes, we show different sides of ourselves based on who we are interacting with, so let’s begin each of these scenarios by recalling who you were with and the details of your environment at the time.

Scenario 1:

- Who were you interacting with?

- How, specifically, did you behave?

- How did you feel following that behavior?

Scenario 2:

- Who were you interacting with?

- How, specifically, did you behave?

- How did you feel following that behavior?

Scenario 3:

- Who were you interacting with?

- How, specifically, did you behave?

- How did you feel following that behavior?

Next, ask yourself how you would handle those three situations if you were acting as your Best “Social” Self instead:

1.

2.

3.

Based on your Social Skills Inventory scoring, the traits you identified earlier, and the three recent scenarios you just highlighted, what are some changes you can begin to make today in your Social SPHERE to help bolster your ability to show up as your Best “Social” Self?

For example:

- If you learned that you tend to avoid social settings altogether, and you often cancel plans last minute or sabotage your ability to attend upcoming social events, then you might make a deal with yourself to say “yes” to the next three invitations you receive and commit to following through on them.
- If you’ve realized that you often come across as self-centered when socializing and you focus only on yourself rather than talking and really listening to others, then you might write down that you’re going to make a concerted effort to listen carefully and even quiz yourself later on three things you learned from others at a social event.

The point is, you want to define an *action* you can take in response to a negative pattern you’ve seen within your Social SPHERE.

Now, write down three behaviors you’ve noticed you need to improve and three corresponding actions you can take immediately to increase your odds of showing up as your Best Self in your Social SPHERE:

What I've Noticed:

Immediate Action I Can Take:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Progress begins with taking an in-depth, honest look at yourself, and then creating an action-oriented plan for improving in areas that need it. Once you know what you need to do, it's vitally important to create some form of accountability. Referring back to the work you did in *Best Self* in creating a highly functional team of people around you, think about who on your team might keep you accountable for making the necessary changes in your Social SPHERE. If you don't currently have someone on your team who is appropriate for this task, think about someone you trust who might be willing. Write down your accountability partner here:

My accountability partner for my Social SPHERE is:

Next, write down how you will ask them to help keep you on this new path. Will you ask them to help you say "yes" to social invitations for the next month? Will you ask them to check in with you weekly

to be sure you've been behaving as your Best Self in social settings? Will you ask them to attend social gatherings with you and give you reminders when needed? Whatever your plan is, write it down here:

I will ask my accountability partner to help me by:

Tracking Your Progress

After a couple of weeks, return to this chapter and check in with yourself to see whether you've kept the forward momentum in your Social SPHERE. Do you feel you've made progress? Are there areas that require more of your attention? Write a few lines about how you've noticed yourself improving in your social life.

SPHERE 2

Be Your Best “Personal” Self

Let's begin by carefully considering your answers to these core questions:

1. What aspects of yourself do you genuinely love?

- It's often easier to think about those traits that we don't love, but I want you to set aside those thoughts and focus on what you truly love about yourself.

Write down what comes to mind here:

2. Do you put yourself first?

- Despite your long list of responsibilities, do you prioritize yourself and your needs above all else?
- If not, why not?
- If so, how are you currently putting yourself first?
- Are you compassionate toward yourself?

Write down your thoughts here:

3. Do you make it a priority to properly manage stress in your life?

- Do you have a strategy for dealing with stress promptly, and in a healthy way?
- Do you find yourself feeling anxious, but aren't sure how to address it?
- Even when there are excessive demands on your time, do you still maintain proper hydration, sleep, exercise, nutrition, and meditation so that you are better able to meet those demands?

Write your thoughts and answers here:

4. What messages do you say to yourself that are negative?

- Do you sometimes brow-beat yourself for your “failures”?
- Are there certain triggers that send your mind off into a tailspin of negative inner dialogue? If so, what are those triggers?
- What percentage of your daily inner dialogue is negative versus positive?

Write your thoughts and answers here:

5. What messages do you say to yourself that are positive?

- Do you celebrate your personal wins?
- Do you encourage yourself the way a coach would, by reminding yourself of your strength, and finding ways to improve upon areas that need it?
- Do you struggle to find your positive attributes in a specific area, such as your appearance, intelligence, competence, skills and abilities, or value?

Write your thoughts and answers here:

Creating Your Best Self Mindscape

Let's set the stage for the work you're going to be doing here, and for significantly improving your Personal SPHERE. First, take a look at page 133 in *Best Self: Be You, Only Better* and review your responses to the Internal Dialogue exercises starting on that page.

Since you completed those answers, has your internal dialogue changed at all? Write down an overview of the inner conversations you've been having with yourself lately.

That constant dialogue you have with yourself all day long actually creates an internal landscape—for the sake of this conversation, let's refer to it as your mindscape. Imagine if someone were to enter into your current mindscape—what would they see? Is it a harsh environment, like the surface of a planet riddled with explosive volcanoes and hot, dry air, with nowhere to escape? Or would they step into a lush, welcoming place, with gentle ocean breezes and a hammock strung between two palm trees? If you're always beating yourself up, obsessing about something you did or said, blaming others for your feelings,

focusing on something you're ashamed of, or thinking toxic thoughts about others in your circles, then your mindscape isn't a pleasant place to exist.

Alternatively, if you're telling yourself that you are capable, kind, and confident, then your mindscape is a softer, gentler, *safe* place. An imperative aspect of your mindscape is gratitude. By making a concerted effort to reassure yourself with a grateful spirit, your mindscape becomes a space that lifts you up rather than drags you down.

Right now, I want you to get really specific about your mindscape. What does it look like? How does it make you feel? What kind of thoughts does it tend to create? Write your answers here:

I'd describe my current mindscape as:

My mindscape makes me feel:

The kinds of thoughts my mindscape generates are:

The Outside Noise Quiz

In *Best Self*, as summarized at the start of this chapter, one of the topics in the Personal SPHERE is your locus of control. I wanted to spend a little extra time on that subject here in the workbook, because I think it's an incredibly valuable tool. Another way to think about your locus of control is to consider whether you tend to assign blame for your circumstances in the external world, or to take responsibility for your life.

When someone says something negative about you, that's outside noise. World news is outside noise. Gossip is outside noise. Someone else's negative opinion of how you live your life is outside noise. You get the point. The question is—do you choose to engage in that outside noise, and to allow it to affect your internal peace? Does outside noise dictate how you feel about yourself, or about your place in the world? Let's investigate a bit with this quiz.

1. If you have an issue with someone at work, do you tend to blame the other person? Do you often find yourself saying or thinking, "If I just had a different manager (team, assistant, etc.), I would love my job"?

YES NO

2. When you're driving and someone cuts you off, do you often get upset, or even yell or flip them off? Do you feel violated by their behavior, and like they should "learn how to drive"?

YES NO

3. If you're having a disagreement with your intimate partner, do you often leave the conversation or argument thinking to yourself that he or she is the problem in the relationship, and if they "would only change" in some way or another, then you'd get along just fine?

YES NO

4. Do you chalk up your troubles to "bad luck" in some (or every) area of your life, and believe that's why you struggle with certain things?

YES NO

5. If you're suffering to any degree in any part of your life, are you pretty easily able to pin it on another person, place, or thing?

YES NO

If some, or any, of those statements even slightly fit your current thinking, then it's likely that you tend to allow outside noise to affect your internal peace. This is the same thing as having an "external locus of control." The trouble with this mentality is that it causes you to give all of your power away.

Your Current Personal Life versus Your Best Self Personal Life

Now let's spend some time looking at the current state of your personal life (your internal dialogue, attention to self-care, etc.). From the lists of traits below, write down ones that apply to how you're currently thinking and behaving within your Personal SPHERE.

abundant	easygoing	helpful	rational
accepting	empathetic	hospitable	reasonable
accountable	empowered	humorous	relaxed
affectionate	enthusiastic	inspiring	reliable
agreeable	ethical	intuitive	respectful
amicable	exciting	kind	responsive
appreciative	expert	leader	romantic
at ease	fair	lively	sage
attentive	faithful	loving	secure
benevolent	fearless	magnanimous	self-aware
bountiful	flexible	mature	self-reliant
calm	forgiving	modest	self-sufficient
celebratory	forthright	nurturing	sensitive
cheerful	friendly	optimistic	sincere
cheering on	fun-loving	patient	spiritual
compassionate	fulfilled	peaceful	stable
complimentary	functional	perceptive	steadfast
conciliatory	generous	persuasive	supportive
cool	gentle	playful	sweet
dedicated	genuine	prayerful	sympathetic
diligent	giving	principled	teacherly
discreet	good-natured	prioritizing of self	tender
dutiful	gracious	proactive	thoughtful
dynamic	grateful	protective	tolerant

trusting
 trustworthy
 unassuming
 uncomplaining
 understanding
 undogmatic
 warm
 welcoming

wise

abrasive	crude	hostile	perfectionist
abusive	cruel	immature	perverse
angry	cynical	impatient	pessimistic
annoying	damaging	inane	petty
anxious	dark	inconsiderate	poisonous
apathetic	deceitful	inhibited	pompous
argumentative	delusional	insecure	quitter
arrogant	demanding	insincere	resentful
artificial	denial	insulting	rigid
barbed	disagreeable	intolerant	rude
bitter	discouraging	irritable	ruthless
brutal	dishonest	jealous	scary
calculating	disloyal	judgmental	self-obsessed
callous	disrespectful	lame	severe
cantankerous	dogmatic	malicious	tense
coarse	domineering	mean	threatening
cold	egotistical	menacing	unappreciative
cold-hearted	failure	moody	unfriendly
complaintive	follower	narcissistic	ungrateful
compulsive	gloomy	nasty	unpleasant
conceited	grim	negative	unpolished
conformist	gullible	obnoxious	unwelcoming
cowardly	hateful	offensive	uptight
critical	haughty	paranoid	vain

How I am currently within my personal life:

Take a look at the traits you wrote down, and let's consider any negative traits on your list. How are those playing out in your personal life? Has your Anti-Self been known to overshadow your Best Self at times and tell you lies about who you are, what you're capable of, and what you deserve? Have you ever found yourself indulging in a blame game, beating yourself up, or neglecting yourself in some way? We've all been there, and the first step toward breaking patterns like that is to acknowledge them. And the best way to acknowledge them is to find specific examples of them in your life.

For the first question in each scenario, think about what was going on in your world at the time. Were you preparing for a presentation at work? Were you disciplining your child when he or she was misbehaving? Were you interacting with your partner or another family member? Were you juggling an endless to-do list, burning the candle at both ends and trying to be everything to everyone? Think about the external trigger or scenario that was playing out.

Scenario 1:

- What was going on externally?

- What was your internal dialogue telling you?

- How did you feel during this situation?

- What were the outcomes or consequences of this scenario?

Scenario 2:

- What was going on externally?

- What was your internal dialogue telling you?

- How did you feel during this situation?

- What were the outcomes or consequences of this scenario?

Scenario 3:

- What was going on externally?

- What was your internal dialogue telling you?

- How did you feel during this situation?

- What were the outcomes or consequences of this scenario?

We will come back to this exercise in a moment, to see how your Best Self would have handled each scenario. But first, look back at the same list of traits, and identify ones that accurately describe how

you are in terms of your relationship with yourself (inner dialogue, self-care, stress management, etc.) when you are being your **Best Self**.

For example, when you're firmly rooted within your Best Self, perhaps you express gratitude on a regular basis, so you might write down "grateful." Or you might be more "nurturing" toward yourself, or "compassionate."

How I am when I'm being my Best Self in my personal life:

Now, I want you to think about some specific examples of the Best Self personal traits you selected as they play out in real life.

- For example, if you selected "patient" from the list of positive traits, perhaps you can think of a time when you made a mistake of some kind, but instead of berating yourself, you chose to be patient and give yourself space to make an error and learn from it.

- Or if you selected “complimentary” from the list of traits, an example might be when you caught a glimpse of yourself in the mirror and thought, “Hey, I’m looking good!”

Specific examples of how I behave in my Personal SPHERE when I’m being my Best Self are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

1. Can you see a difference between how you’re currently operating within your personal life versus how you operate when you are being your Best Self?

YES NO

2. If yes, then in what area(s) do you see a difference? Explain:

Internal Dialogue: _____

(Example: Currently, when I talk to myself about my skills and abilities, I am very critical. I tell myself that I'll never measure up and that I'll never get anywhere in my job or relationships. But as my Best Self, I am forgiving of myself, am accepting of my flaws, and reassure myself that I am capable of growth.)

Self-care: _____

(Example: Currently, I rarely make it a point to think about how I'm dealing with stress. Instead, I get overcome with anxiety to the point of barely being able to function. But when I'm being my Best Self, I create time to meditate and visualize positive outcomes.)

Passions: _____

(Example: Currently, I do not feel connected to my passions, and I do not take the time to explore them or put them into practice. However, when I'm being my Best Self, I prioritize my passions and find the time to do activities that reflect them.)

3. Now, look back at the three scenarios you wrote earlier. If you'd been acting as your Best Self, what would have been different?

Scenario 1:

- What was going on externally?

- If you'd been acting as your Best Self, what would your internal dialogue have been?

- How would you have felt if your Best Self had been in control?

- What would the outcomes have been?

Scenario 2:

- What was going on externally?

- If you'd been acting as your Best Self, what would your internal dialogue have been?

- How would you have felt if your Best Self had been in control?

- What would the outcomes have been?

Scenario 3:

- What was going on externally?

- If you'd been acting as your Best Self, what would your internal dialogue have been?

- How would you have felt if your Best Self had been in control?

- What would the outcomes have been?

Creating an Action Plan

Are you starting to see the ways that your Best Self can help you produce better outcomes in your personal life? I know it can be challenging to focus on our Personal SPHERE (until there's a problem, and I don't want you to wait that long!), but in order to show up as your Best Self as a parent, a role model, an employee or supervisor, a friend, a son, a daughter, a sibling, and so on, you *must* show up for yourself first.

So, what are some changes you can begin to make today in your Personal SPHERE to help bolster your ability to show up as your Best "Personal" Self?

For example:

- I've noticed that I have a strong tendency to judge myself as incapable of taking on new challenges, so I'm going to create a mantra that specifically states how adaptable I am, and how I'm able to confidently undertake new tasks.
- I often put myself at the end of the list, and by the time I get there, I'm too tired to take care of myself properly. So, the action I'm going to take is to prioritize myself each and every day, and take time for me before I begin taking care of others in my life.

The idea is to define *action* you can take in response to a negative pattern you've seen developing within your Personal SPHERE.

Now write down three areas you've noticed you need to improve and three corresponding changes you can make immediately to increase your odds of showing up as your Best Self in your Personal SPHERE:

What I've Noticed:

Immediate Action I Can Take:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Think about the team of people around you, and who might be the right fit for keeping you accountable to making the necessary changes in your Personal SPHERE. If you don't currently have someone on your team who is appropriate for this task, think about someone you trust who might be willing. Write down your accountability partner here:

My accountability partner for my Personal SPHERE is:

Next, write down how you will ask them to help keep you on this new path.

- Will you ask them to remind you to not judge yourself so harshly the next time you talk negatively about yourself?
- Will you ask them to remind you each day to check in with yourself on your internal dialogue?
- Will you plan some “self-care” activities together, such as a meditation class or just a quiet stroll around a park?

Whatever your accountability ideas are, write them down here:

I will ask my accountability partner to help me by:

Tracking Your Progress

After a couple of weeks, return to this chapter and check in with yourself to see whether you've kept the forward momentum in your Personal SPHERE. Do you feel you've made progress? Are there areas that require more of your attention? Write a few lines about how you've noticed yourself improving in your personal life.

SPHERE 3

Be Your Best “Health” Self

When our physical health is operating at its highest level, the possibilities for what we can accomplish in this world are endless.

—*Best Self*

What does better health mean to you? We’re always aging, always evolving, and our bodies are always going through some process, but for you specifically, what does better health really look like? That’s what I want you to focus on as you read this chapter. This isn’t about achieving someone else’s idea of good health, or measuring up to your social media feeds’ definition of healthy. This is about your own specific, unique journey toward better health. Once you are able to articulate what that is, then you’re much more likely to be able to achieve your health goals. Here are some questions to get you thinking about your health.

1. ENERGY: Do you have enough energy to get through your day?

- Do you lack the energy needed to do activities you love, such as playing with your kids, running with your dog, taking hikes in nature?
- Do you have health challenges, such as respiratory issues, heart problems, autoimmune disorders, etc., that interfere with daily life?

Write down your thoughts and answers:

2. PREVENTION: Do you feel you could be doing more in the area of prevention, so that your health is more protected now and in the future?

- Are there areas such as nutrition and exercise where you know you have room for improvement, but you just haven't made the effort to program your lifestyle in such a way to preserve your health?

Write down your thoughts and answers:

3. POWER: Do you feel you have power over your health?

- Do you make decisions on a daily basis that have a positive impact on your overall health, or does that feel like a constant struggle?
- Does your Best Self look out for your health, acknowledge when something feels “off,” and address it right away? Or do you often sweep potential health issues under the rug and hope they’ll resolve themselves?

Write down your thoughts and answers:

Rate Your Health

Look back at the Health Inventory you completed on *Best Self* page 180, where you rated your health on a scale of 1–10. A 1 means you recognize that your Health SPHERE needs your immediate attention because you are facing health challenges, and a 10 means you are already taking excellent care of your overall health and have little to no room for improvement in this area.

Transfer your previous answer here:

My past physical health rating was _____ as of _____ (date)

Now, I'd like you to rate your current state of health. As we know, health is not static—it is always changing and evolving with time.

My *current* physical health rating is _____ as of _____ (date)

Note: If your rating is between 1 and 5, that is an indication that your physical health requires much more attention from you. If you rated between 6 and 10, that means you are already making effort to take care of your overall health, but your Best Self may not always be leading the charge in this SPHERE. I can tell you right now—if you rated your physical health as a 10, then you are the Michael Jordan of health. You're a star, an anomaly. I personally believe we all have room for improvement. Maybe you disagree, but I'd still encourage you to read on and engage in the rest of this chapter.

Has your health rating changed over time? If so, write down why you believe it has. For instance, have you begun exercising more regularly, or have you gone on a specific diet? Alternatively, have you been under a lot of stress that's having a negative impact on your health? Or have you been diagnosed with something that you're still learning how to manage?

My physical health rating has changed over time because:

Next, let's celebrate some of your health "wins." These are behaviors that are working for you and that you plan to continue. Some examples are:

- I regularly exercise in a way that feels good for my body and doesn't cause injury.
- I eat foods that I know are supporting and preserving my physical health, rather than foods that have a negative impact on my health.
- I regularly go in for checkups with a physician or specialist that I trust.

The following are behaviors that are working to protect, promote, and preserve my health, and the ways in which they are doing so:

- _____ How: _____
- _____ How: _____
- _____ How: _____

As you work through the rest of this chapter, think about areas that you can start improving upon, and behaviors you can begin to adopt in order to further strengthen and preserve your health going forward.

Current Picture of Your Health SPHERE

The lists of words below are some common traits when it comes to the way we approach our overall health. Of course, we all have good days and bad days, but think about traits that accurately describe your own attitude and resulting behaviors in general. If you feel “energetic” 8 out of 10 days, then it’s safe to describe yourself as energetic, for example.

Closely look at these lists of traits and then write down ones that generally apply to you. Feel free to write in any words you don’t see listed here, too.

accepting	electric	intuitive	relaxed
active	empowered	mindful	reliable
adaptable	enduring	moderate	resilient
alive	energetic	motivated	resolute
at ease	enthusiastic	muscular	restful
athletic	exerciser	nourished	satiated
attentive	exerting	nutritious	satisfied
awake	fit	organized	savoring
aware	flexible	peaceful	self-controlled
balanced	flourishing	positive	self-restrained
better	fresh	powerful	self-willed
body-positive	glowing	practicing	spontaneous
bright	goal-oriented	prepared	sporty
brisk	good habits	preventative	steadfast
busy	grateful	prioritizing	strong
calm	happy	proactive	sustainable
clean	health-conscious	pure	tough
committed	healthful	purposeful	undogmatic
content	healthy	rational	unyielding
curious	hearty	reasonable	vibrant
dedicated	hydrated	recreational	vigorous
determined	hygienic	refreshed	well
disciplined	informed	regimented	zestful
driven	in-shape	regular	
dynamic	interested	rejuvenated	

absentminded	depleted	dragging	gloomy
addicted	depressed	drowsy	gluttonous
ailing	discontented	dull	gym rat
anxious	discouraging	empty	"hangry"
apathetic	diseased	exhausted	harping on self
avoidant	dispirited	failing	idle
careless	dissatisfied	famished	ignorant
craving	distracted	feeble	ill
dehydrated	distressed	forgetful	inactive
denying	dogmatic	frail	inattentive

indifferent	moody	rash	sweet tooth
indulgent	negative	reckless	tense
injured	negligent	resigning	tired
in pain	nervous	resistant	unaware
insatiable	noncommittal	restless	undernourished
intoxicated	oblivious	run-down	underweight
irregular	obsessed	sad	unhappy
jealous	over-eater	sickly	unhealthy
jittery	overindulgent	sleep-deprived	unmindful
judgmental	overweight	sloppy	unmotivated
lazy	passable	slow	unprepared
lethargic	pessimistic	sluggish	uptight
lifeless	queasy	starved	weak
miserable	quitting	stressed	worn out

How I am currently within my Health SPHERE:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Now, let's identify any problem areas you are having in the management of your Health SPHERE by looking at some recent scenarios that show the choices you've made that affected your health in a less than ideal way.

Scenario 1:

- What were the specific circumstances?

(Example: I had been sick for a week and the symptoms were only getting worse.)

- How, specifically, did you behave?

(Example: I kept on with my busy schedule and never went to the doctor. I took medications to mask the symptoms, but didn't try to figure out the cause.)

- What was the result of that behavior?

(Example: I got a fever and almost passed out while driving. I had to go to urgent care, where I learned I had strep throat and needed antibiotics. I ended up missing several days of work, but if I'd gone to the doctor earlier, I would've missed much less.)

Scenario 2:

- What were the specific circumstances?

- How, specifically, did you behave?

- What was the result of that behavior?

Scenario 3:

- What were the specific circumstances?

- How, specifically, did you behave?

- What was the result of that behavior?

Next, ask yourself how you would handle those three scenarios if you were acting as your Best “Health” Self instead:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The next time you are faced with any kind of circumstance that involves your health, stop and think before you act. Ask yourself, “How would my Best Self handle this situation?” It only takes a moment’s awareness to make a decision that is in your best interest, rather than one that can hurt your health.

The Best Self Version of Your Health

Now, take another look at that same list of words, and think about which ones apply to you when your Best Self is running the show in your Health SPHERE. Think about those days when you are caring for your body, eating foods that nourish you properly, exercising in a way that feels good, and giving yourself credit for the work you’re doing.

How I am when my Best Self is in charge of my Health SPHERE:

It could be that there's overlap between your current list and your Best Self list. Or there might be a significant difference between them. Now that you've seen them side by side, you can gauge for yourself how far off you are from your Best Self being in charge of your health.

Now, I want you to think about some specific examples of the Best Self health traits you selected as they play out in real life.

For example:

- If you selected “informed” from the list of positive traits, perhaps an example is that you often read up on the latest health trends or listen to health-oriented podcasts and apply what you learn to your own life.
- If you selected “preventative” from the list of traits, maybe an example is that you know your family is prone to heart conditions, so you take extra precautions to maintain a healthy heart through diet, cardiovascular exercise at the gym, and your doctor's other recommendations.

Specific examples of my Best “Health” Self traits in action are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Refer to these examples any time you need a reminder of how your Best Self can look out for your health. You can always choose behaviors that prioritize your physical well-being.

Habit Shifts

So much of your physical health is related to your habits—both good and bad. You can think of habits as computer programs that are just running in the background. You’re not actively using the program, but it’s there, running its processes and taking up space on your hard drive. There’s great power in habits, though, because you can harness them and direct them to do good for you.

Let’s take a look at some of the most common habits that have an impact on your health and see if there are some simple shifts or adjustments you can make so your habits better support your health. The fewer decisions you have to make around your health activities on a daily basis, the easier keeping them a priority becomes.

Do you have any habits that you know have a negative impact on your health? (That is, smoking, vaping, taking illicit drugs, abusing prescription drugs, drinking alcohol in excess, consuming a lot of processed or fast food and soda, etc.)

My current habits that could have a negative impact on my health:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Now, look at each habit on your list. Rather than thinking about trying to get rid of one or all of them (since we don't really get rid of habits; we *replace* them), think about how you could adjust the habit or replace it with something that will help you with your health goals.

For instance, if you have a habit of drinking a caffeinated drink of some kind in the afternoon for a burst of energy, think of replacing that drink with a nutrient-dense snack such as an apple and almond butter.

Possible replacements that will have a positive impact on my health:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

I want you to see that your habits are not at all permanent. Give yourself a good two to three weeks to really establish your new health habits, as it takes about that length of time for your brain to click into autopilot. Yes, it might seem foreign at first when you replace a harmful habit with a helpful one, but stick with it and you'll be surprised when, one day, you automatically do the new habit without even having to think about it. This is how people who exercise every day get to that point—they just keep doing it until their body understands the routine. Then, they don't even have to think about it anymore! It just seems to happen. This reflex can happen for you, too. It's like brushing your teeth.

Continue, Stop, Start

Now, let's look at the entire picture of your Health SPHERE and consider the areas in which you're already thriving, areas in which you're potentially sabotaging your health, and areas in which you need to add in some new behavior(s) in order to bolster your health. This is a "continue, stop, start" exercise, designed to help you clarify how your

behaviors need to change in order to meet your health goals. Fill out each of these sections:

I need to continue:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

I need to stop:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

I need to start:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Isn't it nice to have a very clear list of what you need to do? This is the first and most difficult step toward achieving your optimal health. So many people live their whole lives stuck in a state of "I wish I felt better," or "I wish I had more energy," or "If only I wasn't sick all the time." But now you have a clear action plan, a path forward so that you don't have to "wish" and "hope" anymore. You can behave your way to success.

Your Health Accountability Partner(s)

Research indicates that having an accountability partner, someone who is committed to helping you attain your goals, exponentially increases your odds of success, especially in the area of health. Who is someone in your life who would, for example, go on walks with you in the morning, or have healthy lunches with you in the afternoon? Or someone who is willing to text or email you daily with motivational reminders to stay on track, and to congratulate you on meeting your goals along the way? Think about a person, or several people, who will help you stay on this new, healthy path.

My accountability partner(s) for my Health SPHERE is/are:

Next, write down how you will ask them to help you stay accountable to your health goals.

I will ask my accountability partner(s) to help me by:

Tracking Your Progress

After a couple of weeks, return to this chapter and check in with yourself to see whether you've kept the forward momentum in your Health SPHERE. Have you made some headway? Are there any areas that require more of your attention? Write a few lines about how you've noticed yourself improving in your health life.

SPHERE 4

Be Your Best “Education” Self

Even if you never liked school, if you believe you have a learning difference or you think you just don't like the process of taking in new information, your Best Self is thirsty for knowledge—your job is simply to figure out what interests you on a deep level.

—*Best Self*

When I was writing *Best Self* and thinking about the Educational SPHERE, I seriously considered naming it the Evolution SPHERE. I believe that we are always, always evolving—we are taking in information from our experiences and making subtle adjustments to the way we live accordingly. But this shouldn't be a passive evolutionary process. I believe we can evolve with purpose and intention—the key is to stay in learning mode. Educating ourselves, stretching our minds and imaginations, and learning about subjects

that interest us is one way that we can improve upon our Best Self and truly create our best life. We also have to stretch ourselves past what we believe to be our ability; that's how we create growth in our lives.

Before you dive into the work in this chapter, consider these core questions.

1. **EXTINGUISH:** Are you willing to acknowledge and then remove any biases or limiting beliefs around your ability to learn and evolve?
 - Did you struggle in school, or in a particular subject, and you've been telling yourself a story about your inability to learn as a result?
 - Have you often felt like you're just too old to learn new information, or that there's just no more "room" in your brain?

Write your thoughts and answers here:

2. EXPAND: Are you routinely pushing yourself outside of your comfort zone to try new things, and are you stretching yourself to acquire new skills and knowledge?

- Do you consider yourself a “sponge,” always soaking up new information?
- Do you enjoy reading, listening to audiobooks or podcasts, or even taking “master classes” online?
- Do you often select “infotainment” style television programming, in which you’re learning something new while also being entertained?
- Do you take an interest in learning more about yourself, what makes you tick, why you behave in certain ways, etc.? (Since you’re doing this workbook, I’d guess the answer to this one is a resounding “yes!”)

Write your thoughts and answers here:

3. EXPLORE: Do you seek to understand how others experience and view the world, especially people who are different from you in some way?

- Have you sought out people who come from a different background, or who are from another part of the world, and asked them about their experience?
- Have you traveled to other regions in order to experience, firsthand, another culture?

Write your thoughts and answers here:

4. EXPRESS: Do you find ways to express, teach, or share your interests and passions?

- Do you get excited about something you've learned and then share it with people in your life?
- Do you seek out other people who share your interests?

Write your thoughts and answers here:

Uncovering Your Innate Curiosity

When thinking about your Educational SPHERE, rather than focusing solely on formal education, like being enrolled in a class or in full-time schooling, I'd invite you to broaden the definition a bit and think more about your curiosity. I believe that, at our core, we are all curious beings. It's an important part of being human, because it's our curiosity that pushes us to adapt and evolve. So, as you look at the lists of traits, think about all areas of your current "educational" life, not just school.

able	detailed	hopeful	reasonable
academic	determined	humble	researcher
accomplished	devoted	informed	scholarly
ambitious	diligent	initiative	scientific
analyzer	disciplined	inquiring	self-motivated
artistic	driven	inquisitive	serious
aspiring	dynamic	intellectual	skilled
attentive	eager	intelligent	smart
avid	educated	interested	student
awakened	energetic	keen	studied
beginner	engaged	knowledgeable	studious
bright	enlightened	learner	talented
capable	enthusiastic	listener	teachable
clever	experienced	literary	teacherly
committed	expert	logical	thorough
competent	exploring	optimistic	thoughtful
confident	factual	practical	tireless
cooperative	focused	practicing	trained
creative	gifted	proficient	understanding
curious	goal-oriented	purposeful	well-read
dedicated	hard-working	questioning	wise

abandoning	cowardly	embarrassed	insincere
absentminded	cynical	fearful	intimidated
adrift	dense	half-hearted	irresponsible
aimless	detached	helpless	lazy
ambitionless	directionless	hopeless	lost
anxious	discouraging	hesitant	meaningless
apathetic	dishonest	idle	mediocre
apprehensive	dispassionate	ignorant	mindless
arrogant	disregarding	illiterate	misguided
awkward	disruptive	impatient	naïve
bored	distractable	inconsiderate	negative
careless	dogmatic	informal	neglectful
closed off	doubtful	inhibited	neutral
conceited	egotistical	insecure	passive

perfectionistic	self-important	unattainable	uninformed
pessimistic	shy	uncomfortable	uninterested
pompous	smug	uneasy	uninvolved
pretentious	thoughtless	uneducated	unskilled
purposeless	timid	unexceptional	untrained
self-conscious	unassertive	unimpressed	wary

How I am currently within my educational life:

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Now, let's think about traits that describe how you are when you're being your Best Self in terms of your educational life. Think of times when you've been curious, asked questions, and explored more deeply topics that intrigue you, and times you've shared your passions with others. Maybe consider times you've pushed yourself to acquire a new skill, to understand a situation from several angles, or when you've used creative problem-solving at work or home.

Look at the list again and write down traits that represent your Best Self within your educational life.

**Traits that describe me when
I'm being my Best Self in my educational life:**

Now let's see your Best Self in action. When you are being your Best Self within your educational life, what exactly does that look like?

For example:

- If you selected “diligent” from the list of traits, perhaps you can recall a time when you took on a new project and you were on top of every detail, learning new information and adapting to each curveball that came your way.
- If you selected “informed” from the list of traits, maybe you remember a time when a doctor diagnosed you or someone in your family with an illness, and rather than feeling overwhelmed by your own lack of understanding, you chose to dive headfirst into research and made sure you were fully informed on the illness and all options for treatment.

Specific examples of how I behave in my educational life when I'm being my Best Self are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The Stories We Tell Ourselves

As I discussed in *Best Self*, I had a really tough time in school. As a result, I started to tell myself a story about how I wasn't good at learning, and I told myself that story so much that it became a deeply ingrained belief. That's called a limiting belief. It limited me from being able to reach my full potential. I created a wall in my brain that didn't exist until I put it there. I couldn't learn and retain information because I *believed* I couldn't. It took me a long time to figure that out, and then to release that limiting belief.

What kinds of limiting beliefs have you placed on yourself? Have you let a few life experiences completely color your view of yourself? Did you have a rough year in math, and now you believe you're practically incapable of basic addition and subtraction? Maybe your tennis

coach told you you're uncoordinated, and you've never picked up a racket since? Was a certain English teacher particularly hard on you, and as a result, you've been telling yourself you're not a good writer? Did you always dream of doing something, but a limiting belief has stopped you from going for it? Think for a moment about any limiting beliefs you may have developed over time that have stood in your way of learning something.

My Limiting Beliefs:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Now that you know your limiting beliefs, what are your new, unlimited beliefs about yourself? Write them here:

My Unlimited Beliefs:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

How did that exercise feel? I hope you're seeing more clearly that you can learn, achieve, and acquire any knowledge, information, experience, skill, or ability that you set your mind to.

An Educational Experiment

It wasn't until later in life that I discovered the topics that really interested me, and then I was finally able to "make the grade." But it's important to remember that gaining knowledge is its own reward. What I want you to do is to spend time digging into your Best "Educational" Self and finding out what it is that fires you up!

Let's try a little experiment. What's a way that you could force yourself to get out of your comfort zone this week? It should be something that has no potentially harmful consequences. The idea here is to choose an activity you wouldn't normally think to do, and that might even terrify you. It should scare you at least a little bit. Here are some examples from people who have tried this with me:

- Enroll in a class that you have to attend at least once. It could be in auto repair, coding, cooking, language, art, etc.
- Sign up to teach a class of some sort. You are probably more qualified than you realize! For example, there are organizations that will have you read to children.
- Go to an event that is open to your community. It could be a senior mixer at the YMCA, a street festival, or a farmer's market. Make it a point to talk to a stranger!

This week, I will commit to getting out of my comfort zone by:

Now, write down the result(s) of this activity. Did you learn something new? Did you meet and connect with a stranger?

How did it feel getting out of your comfort zone?

Do you feel you could take another risk like this in the future?

YES NO

Educational Sabotage

While limiting beliefs are perhaps the most pervasive way that we keep ourselves from evolving, there are other ways we sabotage our own growth. Sometimes we get caught up in the tide of our fast-paced lifestyle and become closed off to our educational pursuits. And sometimes we slip into a state of being a “know-it-all” and act as if we al-

ready have all the answers. That's typically because our Anti-Self has taken the reins.

Think about some ways that your Anti-Self tries to sabotage your opportunities to learn, evolve, stretch, and grow.

Write some examples here:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

If your Best Self had been in charge, how would you have approached the above examples differently? Write it here:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Staying Accountable

I've found that the only thing more fun than learning something new is learning it alongside someone else so you can talk about it afterward! Think about your overall team and/or your inner circle of friends and family, and identify someone who would enjoy learning something new with you. Maybe you form a mini book club, and read a book simultaneously, and talk about it weekly, or perhaps you both enroll in a course of some kind. Whatever this might look like for you, I encourage you to stick to your educational goals by picking an accountability partner.

My accountability partner for my Education SPHERE is:

Next, write down how you will ask them to help keep you on this new path. Will you ask them to help you say “yes” to new learning opportunities? Whatever your plan is, write it down here:

I will ask my accountability partner to help me by:

Tracking Your Progress

After a couple of weeks, return to this chapter and check in with yourself to see whether you've made progress. Are there areas that require more of your attention? Write a few lines about how you've noticed yourself improving in your education life.

SPHERE 5

Be Your Best “Relationship” Self

No one thrives in isolation; we come to
know ourselves through others.

—*Best Self*

As much as society would have us believe that relationships are difficult, and that “it’s complicated” is the status quo for most of us, I believe that relationships can actually be quite simple. The key is showing up as your Best Self within your relationships in order to preserve and protect balance within them, and prevent problems. Sometimes, especially when we’re around people with whom we’ve become very comfortable, we drift away from our Best Self and become reactive. It’s totally normal, and with the tools in this chapter and the Relationships chapter in *Best Self: Be You, Only Better*, you can maintain equilibrium.

Let's begin with these thought-provoking questions to get you into the mind-set. Write down what comes to mind when you read each question so that you can create a road map for topics you want to tackle while doing the work in this chapter.

1. Do you feel in touch with your principles or standards for living, and are you living them out within your relationships?
 - Do your values line up with those of your intimate partner?
 - How do your values compare to those of your family?

Write your thoughts and answers here:

2. Are there unresolved issues within your family that directly involve and/or impact you?
 - Did you feel pressure from your family to behave in a certain way when you were young, and does that pressure still exist today?

- Are there negative moments from your childhood that are still with you today?
- Do you make decisions even today based on what your parents/ family would like you to do?

Write your thoughts and answers here:

3. Do you know, concretely, what you are willing to accept and not accept within an intimate relationship?

- Are you careful not to compromise your core values for an intimate relationship?
- Do you recognize that you and your partner do not have to be like-minded on every issue in order to have a good relationship?
- Do you acknowledge that you and your partner have flaws, but that you can have a great relationship regardless?
- Do you sometimes expect your partner to take responsibility for your happiness?
- Do you give to your partner that which you expect to receive?

Write your thoughts and answers here:

- 4.** If you're a parent, do you feel you are showing up as your Best Self in the majority of your interactions with your child?
- Are you parenting in such a way as to foster your child's understanding of his or her own Best Self?
 - Do you acknowledge that the most powerful role models in a child's life are his or her parents, and are you therefore thoughtful about the behavior you are modeling?
 - Have you defined and outlined your family's priorities so that you can parent in a harmonious way?

Write your thoughts and answers here:

As you can see from those questions, and from the Relationships chapter in *Best Self*, we are covering your:

- family relationships
- intimate relationships
- relationship with your child (if you're a parent)

Throughout this chapter, you'll be doing exercises and some self-exploration to discover who your Best Self is when it comes to your relationships in all three of the above realms. Certainly, there are differences in how we relate to those in our family of origin, versus intimate relationships and our relationship with our child(ren). But in this workbook, I want to take you underneath those specifics to discover the values that are at the heart of how you relate to those closest to you, and to make the connection between your experiences as a child and those in your adult relationships. By taking an objective look at these aspects of yourself, you'll gain much more control over all of those key relationships in your life, and begin to feel like you're in the driver's seat rather than just at the mercy of someone else.

Evaluating Your Values

Returning to the Values Exercise on page 201 in *Best Self*, what are your top seven values? Write them here:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

The positive values represent your character strengths, while any values with a negative connotation are likely coming from your Anti-Self. If we've been living some aspect of our life steeped in our Anti-Self, certain negative values become engrained to the point that we begin to live by them. The goal is to identify those values, and discover how to move away from them and replace them with positive ones.

Gaining clarity around your core values will help you to see where

your values either line up with or run contrary to those held by people in your immediate circles. Keep these in mind as you progress through this chapter, and make note if you realize that someone in your life has values that run contrary to your own.

Now, ask yourself these questions:

1. When I receive feedback from people in my life, does that feedback match up with my values? In other words, do others feel I am reflecting into the world those values that matter the most to me?
 - For instance, if one of my core values is optimism, do others view me as optimistic? If they were talking about me to someone who doesn't know me, would they describe me as someone who stands out as an optimist?

YES **NO**

If you answered “yes,” what’s a recent example of something you did or said that was a direct reflection of one of your core values?

If you answered “no,” what is one way you could be proactive about making sure you are living out your core values in your everyday life?

2. When you are facing some kind of adversity, which of your core values do you rely on to get you through to the other side?

- It is when the going gets tough that we most need to lean into our core values and allow them to navigate us through rough waters. Is this an area where you sometimes struggle? It’s not always easy when the pressure is on to look within ourselves and act with integrity and authenticity.
- But putting some thought into it now, and deciding what kind of behavior you’re going to exhibit when life throws you a curveball, can help make those decisions slightly easier when the time arrives.

Which characteristics sometimes interfere with your ability to operate from your core values (such as impatience or jealousy)?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

If you could take a breath in times of stress and choose which of your values you're going to rely on to help you manage it, what are those values?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Remember—in order to take action, you must have insight. By connecting more deeply with your core values, you can begin to behave more consistently from within them.

Your Current Relationship Picture

Your core values apply broadly to your entire life, across all of your SPHERES. They are what matter to you the most. Now, let's drill down and look at who you are within your relationships specifically—these attributes that describe who you are and how you behave in relationships. There might be overlap with your top seven values; there might not be. But look at these lists of traits and then write down which ones accurately describe how you *currently* behave within your relationships. For the purposes of this exercise, choose traits that apply most universally to all of your relationships—familial, intimate, and parental.

acknowledges	cooperative	forthright	leader
others	courteous	friendly	lively
adventuresome	dedicated	fun-loving	loving
affectionate	discreet	functional	magnanimous
agreeable	dutiful	gallant	mature
amiable	dynamic	generous	modest
amicable	empathetic	gentle	nurturing
appreciative	empowered	genuine	optimistic
approachable	enchanting	giving	patient
attentive	encouraging	good-natured	perceptive
calm	enthusiastic	gracious	personable
cheery	ethical	grateful	persuasive
collaborative	exciting	helpful	philanthropic
compassionate	fair	hospitable	playful
conciliatory	faithful	humorous	polished
confident	fearless	inspiring	popular
connective	flexible	intuitive	principled
cool	forgiving	kind	protective

rational	sanguine	sweet	uncomplaining
reasonable	selfless	sympathetic	understanding
relaxed	sensitive	tenacious	undogmatic
reliable	sociable	tender	warm
respectful	sophisticated	thoughtful	watchful
responsive	spontaneous	tolerant	welcoming
romantic	steadfast	trusting	
safe	subtle	trustworthy	
sage	supportive	unassuming	

abrasive	critical	hostile	passive
abrupt	crude	impatient	perfectionist
angry	cynical	inconsiderate	perverse
anxious	deceitful	indiscreet	pessimistic
apathetic	demanding	inhibited	petty
argumentative	devious	insecure	pompous
arrogant	disagreeable	insincere	possessive
artificial	discouraging	insulting	resentful
awkward	dishonest	intolerant	rigid
bitter	disloyal	intoxicated	rude
boring	disrespectful	irritable	sarcastic
brutal	disruptive	jealous	sassy
calculating	distractable	judgmental	self-centered
callous	dogmatic	loud	sinister
cantankerous	domineering	malicious	tactless
charmless	duplicitous	mannerless	tense
clingy	egotistical	mean	unapologetic
cold	fixed	moody	unappreciative
complaintive	follower	narcissistic	unfriendly
compulsive	gloomy	needy	ungrateful
conceited	greedy	negative	unpleasant
conformist	gullible	obnoxious	unwelcoming
cowardly	hateful	overly opinionated	uptight
crass	haughty	paranoid	vain

How I am currently within my Relationship SPHERE:

Next, look at the same list of traits, and identify ones that accurately describe how you are in your relationships when you are being your Best Self. What does being completely and totally yourself look like? Think about times when you weren't allowing the past to color your current mood or reactions to another person. Or think about times when you were fully relaxed, not carrying baggage around from your workday or other stressors, just being fully present and engaged in the moment with a close friend.

For example, are you patient, warm, and selfless when you're being your Best Self? Are you able to lighten any situation with your humor, and able to find the silver lining no matter what? Think about all the different traits that describe how you are when you're behaving from a place of authenticity with those you love and care about.

How I am when I'm being my Best Self within my relationships:

Is the picture becoming clearer of who you are, and who you are capable of being within your relationships? Are you noticing any patterns? A good way to help you recognize these patterns in a more tangible way is to think about specific examples of these traits playing out in your life.

For example:

- If you selected “safe” from the list of positive traits, perhaps you enjoy being that safe place to fall for those you love—anytime they are worn out or worn down, you are always there to hold them close and help them feel secure in the knowledge that it’s all going to be okay.
- If you selected “adventurous” from the list of traits, an example might be when you planned a trip with your intimate partner, which included several activities that were outside the norm of your daily life, and together you experienced a great adventure that strengthened your bond.

Specific examples of my Best Self traits in action within my relationships are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Now, think about ways in which you can allow your Best Self to take the lead more often within your relationships. Consider recent scenarios that have occurred within your family, intimate, or parental relationships when you may not have shown up as your Best Self, and what you would have done differently if you had been your Best Self.

Scenario 1:

What happened? _____

+ How I reacted: _____

= Outcome: _____

What happened? _____

+ How my Best Self would have reacted: _____

= Predicted Outcome: _____

Scenario 2:

What happened? _____

+ How I reacted: _____

= Outcome: _____

What happened? _____

+ How my Best Self would have reacted: _____

= Predicted Outcome: _____

Scenario 3:

What happened? _____

+ How I reacted: _____

= Outcome: _____

What happened? _____

+ How my Best Self would have reacted: _____

= Predicted Outcome: _____

Your Attachments

Our family relationships are the first ways we learn to communicate and connect with others. Our capacity for resiliency has its roots in those earliest relationships. At the CAST Centers, my dual diagnosis rehabilitation center in West Hollywood, where we work with people on everything from anxiety and depression to addiction—both in person and online as a telehealth forum—we use something called the CAST Alignment Model. In it, we explore our attachment patterns of behavior and the impact they have on our lives today.

There are two primary types of attachment: secure and insecure. Secure attachments imply a system in which the attachment figure, usually a parent or caregiver, is seen as accessible and responsive when needed. Insecure attachments imply a system in which the responsiveness of the caregiver cannot be assumed, and the child's fundamental needs are often not met. This drives the child to adopt a strategy to compensate for and cope with the perceived unresponsiveness of the parent or caregiver. This could manifest as disruptive, attention-seeking behavior. Alternatively, it could lead a person in a positive direction, to teaching them to develop certain survival skills.

Let's explore your own attachments.

- Do you feel you formed a close emotional bond with your parent(s) or primary caregivers? In other words, did you perceive that they met your needs and gave you a secure base from which you could safely explore the world?

YES NO

- If you answered “yes,” then you likely experienced a secure attachment as a child.
- If you answered “no,” then you likely experienced an insecure attachment as a child.
- If you had an insecure attachment, what are some ways you think that has played out in your adult relationships?
 - For example, do you find yourself seeking out romantic relationships that somehow duplicate your experiences or negative emotions you experienced as a child, despite how painful?

Write your thoughts and answers here:

If you’ve come to the realization that you experienced an insecure attachment to your parents or caregivers as a child, and that there might be repercussions on your relationships today, there is hope. There are plenty of people who have lived through insecure attachments and discovered ways they can have healthy, fulfilling relationships as adults. Yes, it takes effort, but it’s completely achievable. Here are some tools:

TOOL 1: You can create more awareness by identifying your needs in any given relationship.

- In this process, make sure your needs are realistic, and that you aren't seeking something from someone else that only you can give yourself.
- For example, if you think you need to be accepted by others, the truth is, you really only need to accept yourself. Or if you're looking for other people to make you happy, that is not their responsibility. You control your own happiness.

What are needs in your relationships that aren't currently being met? This can apply to familial or intimate relationships:

TOOL 2: You can engage in healthy communication with the other person.

- Rather than keeping your feelings and needs to yourself, find ways to communicate them effectively to your partner.
- Choose moments when you are both calm and not juggling other responsibilities. Good communication requires attentiveness from both parties.

Write down your ideas for more effectively communicating within your relationships:

TOOL 3: You can set healthy boundaries with others so that you never feel as though others are taking advantage of you.

- Instead of letting others walk all over you, speak to you in a disrespectful manner, or take from you without giving back, you can choose to stand up for yourself, say “no” more often, and require others to treat you with respect.
- As my friend Dr. Phil always says, you teach people how to treat you. If you aren’t setting up healthy boundaries and expectations for others, they will (purposely or not) take advantage of you.

What relationship(s) in your life currently require a boundary?

Write down some ways you can set healthy boundaries in your familial, intimate, and/or parental relationships:

TOOL 4: You can work on managing the feelings that arise when you might not get what you want or expect from others.

- This starts by being honest with yourself about what you are expecting from people and relationships. Are you expecting someone to do something that is outside of their ability, or that you haven't made clear to them?
- Other people, even intimate partners, are not mind readers, so if you expect something of them, you must communicate that information.
- If you often find yourself feeling hurt or let down by others who are close to you, then take a moment to reflect on whether your expectations are unreasonable or unsaid.

Write down ways you can manage your expectations and the feelings that arise when they are not met:

Subtle Shifts

Everyone experiences moments of adversity within their relationships. Sometimes we must make the difficult decision to part ways with someone in our life because the relationship has simply become too toxic. But if you can resolve to do everything in your power to show up as your Best Self in your relationships, you will likely begin to notice subtle shifts within them. Or it might even surprise you when those shifts aren't so subtle, and things get back on a healthy track faster than anticipated. The point is that you can only control your actions, so if you can let go of trying to change or control the other person and just focus on yourself, then you're already winning.

Choosing someone to whom you can be accountable to behaving as your Best Self is not to be taken lightly. You should select someone who can remain objective, who isn't biased one way or another, who can be discreet, and who has your best interests at heart. You may want to pick a different person to whom you're accountable for each of the various relationships you're working on. Write down your accountability partner(s) here:

My accountability partner(s) for my Relationships is/are:

Next, write down how you will ask each person to help keep you on your new path. Will he or she help you manage your expectations and your feelings when they are not met? Will he or she check in with you each morning to help you set your intentions for how you're parenting your child? Whatever your plan is, write it down here:

I will ask my accountability partner(s) to help me by:

Tracking Your Progress

After a couple of weeks, return to this chapter and check in with yourself to see whether you've improved in your relationships. Look back at the questions I asked at the very beginning of this chapter.

Do you feel you've made progress? Are there areas that require more of your attention? Write a few lines about how you've noticed yourself improving in your relationships.

SPHERE 6

Be Your Best “Employment” Self

I believe that if you stay rooted in your authenticity while earning your living, life will surprise you beyond your wildest dreams.

—*Best Self*

As you begin this leg of your journey, keep your answers to the following questions in mind:

1. In *Best Self*, we talked about how we are all artists. In what ways are you able to express your own form of “art” within your career?

- How is the work that you do helping you to grow in positive ways?

- What are a couple of ways that you are utilizing and strengthening your own unique skills and talents through your work?

- What are some examples of how your work stimulates your creativity?

- How would you describe the connection between your passion(s) and your job/career?

2. In what ways does your work energize and excite you?

- When you're getting ready for or on your way to work each day, what is going through your mind?

- What are some recent examples of how your work feels rewarding to you?

- In what way(s) are you contributing to the world in a positive way through your work?

- 3.** If you ever struggle in an aspect (or several aspects) of your work, how does that play out for you?

- When are the times that you do not like your job?

- How do you feel about the people with whom you work?

- How do you feel at the end of your workday? Do you feel like work has completely zapped all of your energy, or do you feel like you have plenty of gas left in your tank to spend time with family and accomplish personal tasks?

- In what ways does your work inspire you?

4. What feelings surrounded money when you were growing up?

- Have you experienced any traumatic events or stressors that were related to money? If so, what were they?

- What are your limiting beliefs around your ability to make money?

- How do you feel about how much money you're making at your current job?

Envisioning Your Best Self Career

In the book *Best Self*, I asked you to think about what your Best Self would like to do for work, in an ideal world. We talked about the type of work that you'd like to be doing where you'd feel like you're using your gifts, expressing your art, and feeling productive and rewarded by the work you do. Let's revisit that exercise, and then build upon it.

1. First, take a deep breath and allow your body and mind to completely relax.
2. Next, before you think about a specific job, think about how you would like to feel while you are working. What comes to mind?
 - *While working, I would like to feel:*

(Example: While working, I would like to feel challenged but not overwhelmed, excited about the work I'm generating, and at peace rather than under pressure.)

3. Now, think about what types of activities are most fulfilling to you, that make you feel like you are living out your purpose for living.

- *I feel most fulfilled when I am:*

(Example: I feel most fulfilled when I am caring for others and providing a service that makes someone else feel better.)

4. The final step in this process is to consider the work you are currently doing and see if it lines up with your answers above. If it doesn't, that's okay. But now you are empowered with an understanding of what you want out of a career, and you can begin to work toward creating that, whether it is:

- through a “side hustle,” where you create time in your schedule for work that is fulfilling to you
- by first volunteering during some of your free time in order to experience what it is you're looking for
- by finding ways within your current job or company to feel more fulfilled

It might be time for you to start searching for a new position doing something that is in line with your Best Self. If that's the case, then spend as much time as you can researching your next move, because you don't want to waste any more time doing something for a living that isn't aligned with your Best Self.

Your Current Employment Picture

Let's start by getting a complete picture of your current professional life. Be honest with yourself as you look through these lists of traits, and select the ones, or write new ones, that accurately describe how you currently think and behave with regard to your job.

able	confident	enthusiastic	intentional
accomplished	conscientious	ethical	kind
achiever	content	excited	knowledgeable
administrative	creative	experienced	leader
admired	dedicated	expert	limitless
ambitious	detailed	focused	listener
aspiring	determined	formal	manageable
attentive	devoted	friendly	meaningful
avid	diligent	fulfilled	methodical
balanced	disciplined	genuine	missional
bright	driven	goal-oriented	moral
businesslike	dynamic	grateful	motivated
capable	eager	hardworking	optimistic
clever	efficient	helpful	organized
committed	encouraging	hopeful	passionate
competent	energized	humble	persevering

personable	proud	self-aware	thorough
poised	punctual	smart	trained
practical	purposeful	stable	valuable
pragmatic	qualified	successful	visionary
proactive	reasonable	supportive	vital
problem-solver	relational	systematic	willing
productive	resourceful	teachable	worthy
professional	respectful	teacherly	
proficient	rewarding	team-player	

abandoning	discouraging	informal	pessimistic
absentminded	dishonest	inhibited	pompous
adrift	disregarding	insecure	pressured
aimless	disruptive	insignificant	pretentious
ambitionless	distracted	insincere	procrastinator
anxious	doubtful	intimidated	purposeless
apathetic	dramatic	irresponsible	restless
apprehensive	dull	isolated	rude
argumentative	egotistical	jealous	scattered
arrogant	embarrassed	lazy	self-conscious
avoidant	exhausted	limited	shy
awkward	fearful	lost	struggling
bored	half-hearted	meaningless	tactless
careless	helpless	mediocre	timid
complaining	hesitant	micromanager	toxic
conceited	hopeless	mindless	uncomfortable
concerned	idle	misguided	unethical
cowardly	immoral	narcissistic	unmotivated
cynical	impatient	negative	unorganized
demanding	impersonal	neglectful	unprofessional
demeaning	inconsiderate	nitpicking	unsuccessful
deprived	indifferent	overwhelmed	wandering
detached	inexperienced	passive	workaholic
directionless	inferior	perfectionist	worthless

How I am currently within my Employment SPHERE:

Now, let's take a moment to connect the traits you see in yourself within your employment to your actual behavior with regard to your job. If you selected "perfectionist," for example, perhaps there's been a time when your need for perfection in any given task has driven you to be stubborn, or even unkind to yourself or others at work. Or if you selected "overwhelmed," maybe you can think of a time when you just wanted to walk away from your job, or you've felt extremely emotional because it just felt like you'd never be able to accomplish everything that has been asked of you. Be specific in the examples you write down, as they can really help illuminate what your feelings and behaviors at work are telling you about your current employment experience.

Real-world examples of how I currently feel, think, and behave at work:

Example 1: _____

Example 2: _____

Example 3: _____

Next, look at the same lists of traits and identify ones that describe how you behave within your employment when you are being your Best Self.

So, if you selected “administrative” from the list of positive traits, perhaps you take pride in your ability to stay organized and keep your workplace running smoothly and efficiently, and you’ve even received compliments or acknowledgment from your boss or coworkers. If you selected “purposeful” from the list of traits, maybe you are motivated by your company’s mission and, though the work is not always easy or without frustration, you feel you are making a significant contribution to your community.

**How I am when I’m being my Best Self
within my employment:**

Taking the Focus off More Money

I have worked with countless clients who say they are unhappy in their careers, and when I ask them, “What would make you happier?” they reply, “If I made more money.” That’s a mistake. It’s so easy to blame your unhappiness on lack of financial reward, but the truth is, if you were feeling truly aligned with your Best Self in your job, you wouldn’t be so concerned about money. When your focus is solely on your paycheck, your attitude can very quickly become an endless merry-go-round of resentment, feeling unappreciated, and being jealous of those who are making more. This resentment is then reflected in your output, and maybe you aren’t getting promoted as a result, and then the feeling gets even worse, and so on. Not a pretty picture, and not how you want to spend the majority of your week!

The more you can shift your focus off the money you are making and on to ways you can weave passion and purpose into your work, the happier you will feel. Work just happens to be the thing that generates money.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

1. When you’re at work, or thinking about your job, does your mind inevitably zero in on how much you’re making?

YES NO

If yes, then what are some thoughts you can shift your mind toward instead?

2. What kinds of changes can you make today in order to think of ways your career fulfills you, other than financially?

The “Yes” Key to Career Freedom

I was recently at a party with someone, and when I asked what he did, he said, “You know, I’ve been at work all day, I really don’t want to talk about work.” It was very apparent to me that he did not love his job. At the end of my workday, I enjoy talking about projects I’m involved in, and ideas that I’ve been having. That’s the way I think we should all feel about our careers!

I've found that clients who say they are miserable in their careers usually feel that way because they don't have enough freedom. Even though they may start out by talking about wanting to make more money, or wanting to be more respected, or hoping for that next big promotion—when we get to the heart of the issue, it's about freedom. What we really seek is some autonomy over our lives. We want to be able to have some flexibility in our schedules, some decision-making capabilities around which projects we're working on, etc. So, how does one achieve that? The answer is simpler than it might seem. Say *yes*.

When someone at your job asks you to go above and beyond in some way, or to take on something extra, or to do a task on a weekend, do you immediately say “yes” and jump at the opportunity? Or are you more likely to draw a boundary, explain that it would cut into personal time, or that you aren't available for work on the weekends, or that it's “not your job”? Do you think that if you set a precedent with your boss that he or she will soon be taking advantage of you?

Write your thoughts and answers to those questions here:

I had another employee who worked in operations and had already pulled a full shift, but when the front desk receptionist had to go home to her sick daughter, my operations manager didn't even hesitate—she just sat down behind the desk and started answering phones. It's that kind of attitude that helps you grow as an employee, and helps the company grow as well.

When was the last time you did something that “wasn't your job,” and not just for the recognition?

You can always tell a good employee, and an employee who has a desire to grow and achieve not by what they say, but by what they do. You gain freedom by saying yes, and taking action.

Asking for Help

You're not always going to have the answers, but luckily, you don't need to in order to have your Best Self career. What *is* required is a tenacious spirit, which means you're willing to do whatever it takes to find the answers you need in order to do your job. Creative problem-solving means doing your research. Sometimes that means looking

on the Internet, other times it means asking a coworker for guidance. Doing your research might even mean asking your boss for clarity. You need to be able to say, “I don’t know how to do that, but I’m certainly willing to learn.” Asking for help isn’t a sign of weakness—it’s smart!

What’s an example of a time when you could have saved time or done a better job by asking for help or actively seeking out the answers you needed? Write it here:

What would have been a better course of action?

There also might be times when you notice an inefficiency in the way some aspect of your company runs, and you make a suggestion to improve it. Maybe you see that the phone system is outdated and doesn’t work well, so you find out about a new system that would be

better. Or it could be as simple as reorganizing your desk so that you're able to accomplish more in a shorter amount of time.

What's a way you could help improve efficiency in your job or organization?

Next Steps

Write down three areas you've noticed you need to improve within your employment, and three corresponding changes you can make immediately to either show up as your Best Self in your current job, or to move toward identifying a job that is more closely connected to who you are authentically:

What I've Noticed:

Immediate Action I Can Take:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

I believe that everyone should have someone they consider a mentor. This should be someone you look up to, who is their Best Self in their job, and who is passionate about lifting others up to achieve their career goals. It might be someone who works in a totally different industry, or it might be someone within your own organization.

My accountability partner in the area of my Employment is:

Next, write down how you will ask them to help keep you on track. Will you ask them to check in with you each week about a looming work deadline that you've been dreading? Will you ask them to keep you in mind if they hear of potential job openings for which you would be a good fit? If they are a fellow coworker, will you ask them to give you honest feedback so you can identify areas of improvement? Whatever your plan is, write it down here:

I will ask my accountability partner to help me by:

Tracking Your Progress

After a couple of weeks, return to this chapter and check in with yourself to see if you've kept the forward momentum in your employment. Do you feel you've made progress? Are there areas that require more of your attention? Write a few lines about how you've noticed yourself improving in your professional life.

SPHERE 7

Be Your Best “Spiritual” Self

I believe our spiritual life underpins everything else in life. I think of your Best Self as actually being your spiritual self.

Your spiritual self is the place within you from which all goodness and light radiates outward. It is where you form your integrity, values, and how you treat other people.

—*Best Self*

When people hear the word “spiritual,” they make a lot of assumptions. It can be a very loaded word. For many people, the word “spiritual” stirs deeply rooted emotions because of past experiences they have come to associate with religion. Some of those experiences may have been profoundly enlightening. Others may have been detrimental. What floats to the surface for you when you think of the word “spiritual”? Ponder that for just a moment.

Some of that baggage can muddy the waters for us when we are doing work within our spiritual life. And the truth is, when we nurture our spiritual life, we will experience benefits within all of our other SPHERES. So, before you approach the work within this chapter, let's pause for a moment and remove all the attachments we have to the idea of spirituality.

Imagine that your spirituality is a beautiful tree, and there are all kinds of memories and ideas dangling from the branches. Walk up to the tree, and gently remove each hanging memento from your past and place them to the side. One by one, just take them down until all that's left is the tree, its branches strong, its leaves a vibrant green, its roots extending deep into the earth. It sways easily in the breeze, yet remains strong and rooted even in the winds. This is your spirit. This is *you*.

Now, with all of those encumbrances gone, let's delve into who you are within your spiritual life. Be kind to yourself as you walk through each step of this process. Use these questions to guide your exploration.

1. What do you believe about God/the universe?

- What role does faith play in your everyday life?

- What role does faith play for you when you are faced with adversity?

- When life gets stressful, disappointing, or overwhelming, how do you get through it?

- How do you maintain spirituality in your life? (that is, meditating, praying, attending religious services, discussing faith with a friend, volunteering, reading scripture, spending time in nature, attending yoga classes, or whatever way feels authentic to you)

- 2.** Part of having faith that things will work out for you means letting go of control to some degree. What are some ways in which you struggle with the concept of “control” in your life?

- What are some examples of when/if you worry about the future?

- How does fear or anxiety about making decisions in your life impact your daily life?

- In what ways do you beat yourself up about choices you've made in the past?

- 3.** Do you subscribe to the belief that things happen *for* you, not *to* you? If so, what's an example of that playing out in your life? If not, what do you believe instead?

- Describe a time in your life when something did not go your way, but ultimately led to an unforeseen opportunity.

- 4.** In *Best Self*, we talked about how sometimes people will choose to stay in their current suffering out of fear of the unknown. What's an example of a time when you chose to continue suffering rather than taking a risk?

- In what way(s) are you choosing suffering over change right now?

If you really dug deep when you were answering those questions, then you might have some new questions of your own. Perhaps you experienced some epiphanies or connected dots in your spiritual life that you hadn't previously been aware of. If that's the case, then let's investigate a bit more by writing down any patterns emerging in your spiritual life. What are some areas that you now realize might benefit from some change? Here is some guidance to get you thinking in this way.

1. What, if any, new questions about your spiritual life came to mind as you wrote your answers to the four questions above?

- 2.** What is a pattern or theme you noticed in your answers to the four questions above?

- 3.** Based on your answers to those questions, what is an area within your spiritual life that you feel might benefit from some change in your thoughts, feelings, or behaviors?

Now, as you continue through the work in the rest of this chapter, keep these observations in mind so that you can cultivate your unique spiritual journey.

Snapshot of Your Current Spiritual Life

Our spirituality isn't "set it and forget it"; it's something to be nurtured and carefully maintained through the years. It evolves with us over the course of our lives. You may have had one set of beliefs about a higher power or the universe at an earlier point in your life that has since changed into a different set of beliefs. As you look at the list of attributes below, think about where you are right now in your spiritual life. Select words from the list, or write new words that apply.

able	creative	grateful	reliant
accepting	decisive	harmonious	religious
agreeable	dedicated	hopeful	resolved
aligned	deserving	humble	restful
alive	determined	independent	satisfied
artistic	devoted	inquisitive	searching
aspiring	devout	intentional	self-aware
assured	diligent	joyful	self-motivated
attentive	disciplined	listener	sensing
available	encouraging	missional	sensitive
awakened	energetic	nurturing	serene
aware	engaged	observant	soulful
believing	enlightened	open	spiritual
bright	enriched	optimistic	steady
calm	enthusiastic	peaceful	sure
certain	expecting	persevering	thoughtful
clear	exploring	positive	trusting
comfortable	faithful	powerful	understanding
complete	focused	practicing	valuable
composed	free	prosperous	willing
connected	fulfilled	purposeful	worthy
consistent	generous	quiet	
content	genuine	reasonable	

afraid	dispirited	indifferent	pessimistic
agitated	dissatisfied	insecure	pressured
anxious	doubtful	jealous	purposeless
apathetic	down	judgmental	resistant
apprehensive	dreadful	lazy	restless
avoidant	dull	lifeless	sad
bored	empty	manipulated	scared
burdened	exhausted	meaningless	self-conscious
careless	fearful	melancholy	strained
cowardly	fretful	mindless	stressed
cynical	gloomy	miserable	tense
dejected	grieving	moody	timid
denying	helpless	negative	tired
depleted	hesitant	neglectful	troubled
depressed	hopeless	nervous	uncertain
despondent	hurt	obsessed	unhappy
detached	idle	obstinate	worried
directionless	impatient	offended	worthless
discontented	inattentive	overwhelmed	
discouraged	inconsolable	passive	

How I am currently within my Spiritual SPHERE:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Now, think about those times in your spiritual life when you've been fully aligned with your Best Self, and look at the list again. Write down traits that represent your Best Self within your spiritual life.

How I am when I'm being my Best Self in my spiritual life:

Now, let's consider your Best Self in action. When you are being your Best Self within your spiritual life, what exactly does that look like?

- For example, maybe you selected “hopeful” from the list of traits because you have stayed optimistic during a particularly difficult season for your family rather than giving in to a sense of hopelessness or despair.
- Or if you selected “observant” from the list of traits, maybe you have started spending more time outside in nature, and it has caused you to slow down and notice things you never would have before—like the vibrant flowers in the neighbor’s yard, or the sounds of birds chirping in the trees.

Specific examples of how I behave in my spiritual life when I'm being my Best Self are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Change Your Gr-Attitude

Gratitude has been talked about so much that it's practically lost its meaning. Here's the deal: if you can create time and space within your life to practice being grateful, you will experience not-so-subtle shifts in your spiritual life. And if you're noticing that the ways you express your gratitude begin feeling routine, then it's time to switch it up.

The important aspect of any expression of gratitude is that it feels authentic. You shouldn't be focused on other things, such as answering a text message from a friend, driving on the freeway, watching TV, or anything else that distracts you. In order to reap the benefits of gratitude, close your eyes, and envision in your mind's eye the person, place, thing, idea, or feeling for which you are grateful, and then really *feel* the wave of gratitude wash completely over you. Commit fully to that feeling of gratitude. Give it your undivided attention.

Recognizing the people and things that mean something to you,

that help you, that you have been given or that you have earned—it’s something that is easily overlooked. And yet the power of that appreciation is unending.

What are some things in your life for which you wish to express your “Gr-Attitude”?

- _____
- _____
- _____

What are a couple of new ways you can express your deep appreciation for those things?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Spiritual Growth Through Acceptance

Faith has a lot to do with acceptance. This is something that many people struggle with, but knowing that there are some circumstances we are powerless to change, and accepting those circumstances and

then growing from them, is essentially what faith looks like. We can either choose to live in the painful belief that we can't change, or we can choose to accept it, move through, and grow away from it.

Is there something in your life that you've had a hard time accepting? If so, write it here:

Was there ever a time when something occurred that you didn't want or expect, but it ended up okay in the end? Or perhaps it even turned you in a new and better direction?

When we hit a brick wall in our lives, one option is to change our course. Sure, we can choose to keep bumping up against that wall again and again, but pivoting in a new direction is often the option that leads us right to where we're meant to be.

How can you accept and move through something that's been difficult for you? Be specific in your answer.

What is a possible positive outcome of this difficult situation?

You can return to this acceptance exercise anytime you're faced with a challenge, adversity, or any kind of unexpected circumstances. This is one way to further develop your spiritual life because it helps you to see that even though you can't control every outcome, you can still be okay. The universe has your best interests at heart, and even in the darkest moments, you can still choose to see the light.

Spiritual Growth Through Connection

Your spiritual life shouldn't be something that you cultivate in isolation. Community is a powerful help in spiritual growth. When people come together to express or discuss their spirituality, incredible things can happen. This looks different for everyone, of course. For some, this might mean attending a regular yoga class, where a dozen or more people are working to deepen their mind-body-spirit connection together in one space. For others, a spiritual practice could look like a religious service, such as within a church, synagogue, mosque, or other place of worship. It could even translate to meeting a friend for coffee and sharing your faith with each other.

Another way we can grow spiritually is by serving other people. There is true power within the spiritual stirring we feel when we are in service to others. By volunteering your time and energy to help someone else, you are opening a window into your soul, and pouring in love. When we are selflessly giving to others, we receive so much more than we can imagine. Bottom line—when we do good, we feel good. There are endless ways in which we can use our own gifts, talents, and abilities to help people—and each is as unique as we are. Once you open your mind and heart to the idea, you'll be surprised how many opportunities will appear.

Our subconscious often makes excuses for not creating spiritual space in our lives. Sometimes the practice isn't high on the list of priorities. If you think back to when humans were primarily living in tribes, maintaining strong community connection was an essential

aspect of survival. By working together, groups of people were able to stay strong and safe from outside threats. But as we have evolved, we have moved further apart from one another. We aren't "communing" as we used to, and I think we are seeing the detrimental effects of this manifesting in a multitude of ways. The truth is, if we could make an effort to return to a stronger sense of community, and to allow ourselves to be open and share our spiritual selves, we would see a lot less depression, anxiety, isolation, and even suicide. It's that significant.

Right now, consider some ways that you can easily fit more community connection into your lifestyle in order to help bolster your spiritual development. Be specific in your examples. If you think you'd like to start volunteering, write down where and how you will. If you want to start attending religious services, write down exactly where and when you'll begin, and so on. Write your ideas here:

- _____
- _____
- _____

If you've done yoga before, but haven't in a while, I'd encourage you to pick it back up. It doesn't have to be a full hour class, and you don't even have to go anywhere. Yoga is something you can do in the comfort of your own home. There are many videos online that will guide you through the proper form of a certain pose. Choose yoga poses that feel the most relaxing to you, and focus on those.

Staying Accountable

As we discussed earlier in this chapter, community is an essential piece of your spiritual picture. Think about who you have in your life who might be a good fit for keeping you accountable to the work you're doing on a spiritual level. And if you don't have anyone, that's okay! That's even more of a reason to go out and meet people who would be great for this.

My accountability partner for my Spiritual life is:

Next, write down how you will ask this person to help keep you on this new path. Will you ask them to help you say "yes" to new spiritual opportunities? Whatever your plan is, write it down here:

I will ask my accountability partner to help me by:

Tracking Your Progress

After a couple of weeks, return to this chapter and check in with yourself to see if you've kept the forward momentum in your evolution. Do you feel you've made progress? Are there areas that require more of your attention? Write a few lines about how you've noticed yourself improving in your spiritual life.
