



biases, fears and other emotions influence your decisions and behaviors? These unacknowledged parts of ourselves only make their appearance when we do things that we don't understand, like sabotage a promotion or a deal. But very often, these vulnerabilities that we are blind to are things that other people know about us.

What is your Achilles heel? What incidents from your past are you still reacting to in the present? What pain, injustice or anger do you cling to? What pretensions and possessions do you use to distance, define and protect yourself?

True self-knowledge is power; the lack of it is self-deception that will always leave you powerless and vulnerable to others. The more you can make what is unconscious conscious and know the whole story about yourself, the more you can act in your own best interests.

### 3. Remember that everyone isn't like you

Organizations are made up of people; people other than you, people who are not like you, who aren't even like each other. Everyone you interact with also has an individual family and work history, social and personal issues, conscious and unconscious feelings, fears, prejudices, ambitions and more. Now that you have begun to think in a more insightful way about yourself, you can start to see how other people operate psychologically. You will come to understand how they function, how you function and, together, how you mix it up.

Your awareness of how to handle people and situations more comprehensively and effectively will increase. You can adjust your style when appropriate, know how not to push buttons, and how to address and defuse conflicts. All this leads to productive and satisfying work.

### 4. Feed the right dog

How do you eliminate your negative habits, take positive steps to achieve a goal, become more of the kind of person you would like to be? There is a very old Navajo parable that speaks of how you can make real change. According to the story, a very distressed young man approaches the tribal shaman and says: "I feel like there are two forces inside of me, pulling me in opposite directions. It's as if there are two dogs; one is pulling me to the east and one is pulling me to the west, and I can't eat and I can't sleep. What shall I do? Which one shall I follow?" And the shaman replied: "It will depend on which dog you feed."

When you attempt, day by day, step by step, to inch toward a better, truer self, you are feeding your good dog. He begins to grow stronger

than his mischievous counterpart and if you continue to feed him well, he will thrive and the road you want to follow will stay clearly marked. As Aristotle told us "Excellence is not an act but a habit; we are what we repeatedly do."

### 5. Wake-up!

It is important not to sleep through your life. Every second, every minute must be lived. Breathe, look around, observe, hear, touch, smell, do whatever you have to do to be truly alert. When you are having a conversation with someone, listen deeply. Don't think about what you want to say next, or where you are going for dinner. Listen not just to their words, but for the emotions and meanings behind the words.

When you are walking down the street, notice the sky, the buildings, the faces you pass. Every moment, even those we plough through so recklessly, has the capability to awaken us to the feeling of being truly alive and present.

### 6. Practice good mental hygiene

Left on its own, the human mind doesn't take very good care of itself. It develops some bad habits. You wouldn't begin your day with an unwashed body and a mouth full of unbrushed teeth. Your mind requires the same preparation and daily maintenance to meet the day ahead. Life is not a casual affair. It takes effort every day to live it appropriately and fully. It requires a readiness to take care of oneself, and a willingness to make room for others and their opinions. Make time to consider the day ahead, who you are to meet, what you would like to accomplish, how to make the best use of your time and abilities and of those with whom you will interact.

We must learn to respect ourselves and those we share our homes and offices with, and we do that by practicing good mental hygiene. If we neglect our physical hygiene, no one will want to be around us – and bad mental hygiene has the same effect.

### 7. Know your anger quotient

Everyone gets angry. It is a basic human emotion that tells us that something is not right in our world. It can be a rational way to respond to injustice or to protect ourselves or loved ones. It can also be irrational, dangerous, and can cause great pain and suffering. We can become angry at a current situation, a memory or in anticipation of a future event. We can express our anger passively or aggressively. It is

important to know your anger history and how it is still with you. How was anger expressed in your family? Are you considered an angry person? What are the triggers and who are the targets of your anger? Do people fear your anger?

If your anger is left over from your past, get help to let it go. If it results from what is currently happening in your life, learn to use assertion to positively express the anger you are feeling to achieve solution and resolution.

## 8. Become comfortable with not knowing

Not wanting to appear vulnerable to ask a question, or to say that you do not know the answer to something, is one of the traps a leader can fall into that will limit his effectiveness. I am deliberately saying “his” in this context because many of the senior men I work with find it particularly difficult to do this. Most cultures demand that men act like they know things even when they don’t. In our corporations and in our governments, we look to decisive, action-taking men – and sometimes women – to lead the charge. But their knee-jerk reactions can have disastrous consequences – from war to financial instability.

Becoming comfortable with not knowing, with taking the time to understand all the elements of a situation as well as the motivations of everyone concerned including yourself, to ask appropriate questions of the right people, to reflect and to decide what, if any, action is warranted, is the kind of leadership that is necessary in the interconnected world of the 21st century, wherein the simplest actions have far-reaching, global consequences.

## 9. Slow down

The greatest deterrent to good mental hygiene is the speed with which we live our lives. Our worlds shift along with the touch of a screen, and we enter and delete fragments of ourselves, not realizing that our souls and hearts and our minds cannot keep up. We are anxious and depressed because we are losing our ability to orient and calm ourselves. Neuroscientists tell us that the brain never rests; even when you are not actively concentrating on something, your brain is still processing.

When you are multi-tasking, you fill up every second of time and essentially force your brain to focus on external tasks, leaving it no time for “its own thoughts”. Multi-tasking is not the highly efficient sport it was once thought to be – our focus, concentration and overall productivity is better when we do one thing at a time, so all this burning and churning of brain cells is getting us nowhere in the long run.

## 10. Take a break

There is a difference between the external world and our internal world. There is nothing wrong with the external one, but we are often there too much and miss the benefits of connecting with what is going on inside of us. We need to take a pause in our day to centre ourselves, to be free of the agendas of the world, the media, office or family. This emptiness can create a space where the unconscious can be made conscious, where all its inhabitants, both conflicts and creative visions, can come into the light of day. Some people meditate; some play an instrument. I use a tea break as a metaphor and a method for connecting both facets of life. Find some ritual or practice that resonates with you. Allow it to create a place for you to settle into every day.

## 11. Understand that goals are not dreams

I often meet people who tell me they woke up one day to discover that they have been living someone else’s life. That happened to them because sometime long ago they lost the ability to know their dreams. They thought only of goals – which are not the same as dreams. Goals are steps in a direction; dreams are the direction. If you cannot remember the dream, you will end up in the wrong place.

Are you living the life you have imagined or the one you have planned? Are you following your passions or doing what is expected? When you create a dialogue with yourself, you can ponder whether meeting your goals will make your dreams come true and, if not, why not. Goals can be changed; they are temporal. Dreams never die.

## 12. Live a civilized life

It is important to live a civilized life especially in uncivilized times. It is a way to cope with a world spinning out of control. While the past 50 years have brought us much advancement, the basics that help anchor us to life have been disappearing. When these little niceties are forgotten, we stop being nice to each other and to ourselves.

Most of us would be horrified to see ourselves on videotape, plowing through our lives in thoughtless and selfish ways. The polite gestures of the past were like pauses in a conversation, they caused us to stop and remember that we do not live here alone. Do you say please and thank you like you really mean them? Have you fallen victim to the current practice of believing that saying you are sorry is how you excuse bad behaviour, and get away with doing what you were going to do anyway?

Behave like the person you would like to be. How well do you communicate to your people that civility and ethics matter? Because if you don't model it and have ways that you enforce it, they will think you don't really mean it. You must let it be known that you will not accept rudeness, meanness, bullying, scapegoating and inappropriate, unethical behavior of any kind.

### 13. Love your work

Working well is a necessary part of being truly alive and without fulfilling work of some kind, we cannot be happy. But we have been making huge errors by not knowing how to work properly. When people are unprepared and unconscious and don't take the time for introspection, reflection and consideration for others, work becomes fraught with our craziness, our neuroses, and our overblown need for money and glory. But every day all over the world, there are people who love their work. It is work that connects, builds, supports, enlightens, heals, creates and changes lives in marvelous ways. You must strive to make your work meaningful and to bring your best self to it every day.

### 14. Take the profit out of life

So many joys escape us. People sometimes hold their breath to get to a destination, and then the marker of success goes unnoticed and they are onto the next thing. No real acknowledgement of the achievement, no celebration, no joy. It is important to learn to take the profit out of life, to spend the dividend. You must do it for yourself, your employees and your children.

### 15. Live without notes

When Gandhi appeared before the British Parliament to explain why it was time for his country's independence from Great Britain, history has it that you could hear a pin drop.

People kept asking how Gandhi could have spoken so perfectly so long without any written notes. His secretary reportedly responded: "What Gandhi thinks, says, and does are one. You think one thing. You say a second. You do a third. That's why you need notes to keep track." (Tager & Woodward 2002, 103.)

The more conscious and awake, reflective and introspective you become, the more you will create alignment inside of yourself with who you are and what you do and what you say. Your employees and

your loved ones look to you to present an authentic, consistent version of yourself.

### 16. Be courageous

Life is not for sissies. It is seldom easy and it requires work. But a life lived well is a great reward that goes to those who have the courage to be vulnerable, to take risks, to believe in dreams, and to work and live with passion.

### 17. Invest in your spiritual self

Put your life in context. Take the time to figure out what you believe. Is this it for you? Or do you believe in an afterlife? Do you believe in a god, an energy, a natural intelligence? It is a question well worth pondering and whatever you decide, it will help shape the meaning of your life, what you do and how you do it. To not address the question and to not attempt to answer it demonstrates a lack of courage and will be a lost opportunity for a life of purpose and alignment.

### 18. Honor human dignity

Your embrace of human dignity will depend in great part on your ability to have empathy for others and for yourself. The beautiful Hindu custom of namaste – the palms-together greeting that bears witness to the godliness in another person – demonstrates the basic empathy we can have for each other when we recognize our shared humanity. When we create a climate for mutual respect, people are more engaged, positive and productive.

### 19. Practice and express humility and gratitude

It is important to remain humble; it is the best way to honor your own humanness and to ensure your connection to everyone you lead. It is also the best antidote to self-delusion. When you tell your personal story to another person, it is a way that you can become known to each other. But it is your humility that will keep it a heartfelt self-revelation instead of an inappropriate narcissistic exercise. It is your humility that will help you stay the course to connection and not use your story to distance yourself. Express your gratitude often. It reinforces your humility, negates any creeping sense of entitlement and keeps you mindful of your blessings. It is a way that you model a civilized and respectful workplace.

## 20. Think about your legacy

Every leader has one. It begins, in fact, the moment you lead even a handful of people. Your influence on the work life of that small group will be remembered by them all of their lives, whether it was good or bad or even neutral. When you think about your own legacies, the ones you have already left, and the ones you are currently creating, will the people you lead be better off for having had you as their leader? Will the organization you serve be able to point to your contributions? Will the microcosm you have inhabited be enriched because you were in it?

Who we are, and what we do, and what we accomplish will probably all end up as a blip on the screen of world history one day. Our real importance lies only in what we do now, with and to each other, in the time we are given. What will you leave behind in your wake?

There it is – a vetted guidebook of how to live a happy and successful life.

Now it's up to you.

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