

Praise for *Coach Your Self Up*

As the CEO of your own destiny, leveraging your strengths is not enough—you also need to know where you may be holding yourself back. Mike Normant's *Coach Your Self Up* helps you not only see where you are imposing limits on yourself, it teaches you the steps to make sustainable positive changes.

—**Maynard Webb**, Founder of Webb Investment Network, Co-Founder of Everwise, Bestselling Author of *Rebooting Work*, Board Member at Visa & Salesforce

"This book is a "must-add" to your personal and career development library. How we behave and the way we interact with others has a big impact on our career and life opportunities. Mike Normant's *Coach Your Self Up* pushes you to look in the mirror and honestly assess where you may be unknowingly blocking your own success. Building on a superb overview and synopsis of the work of important thought leaders in the fields of psychology and human behavior, Mike shares a step-by-step process for making small shifts that can lead to big changes for you."

—**Dr. Beverly Kaye**, Founder of Career Systems International, Speaker, Co-Author of *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go, Up is Not the Only Way, Love 'Em or Lose 'Em*

"The worlds of personal and career development are merging. Focusing on personal growth at work is part of bringing our whole selves to work. The best thing we can do to move forward in our careers is to make a commitment to our own personal development—to deepening our self-awareness. Mike Normant's *Coach Your Self Up* provides a powerful self-coaching toolkit that enables this growth."

—**Mike Robbins**, Author of *Bring Your Whole Self to Work*

"Mike Normant nails it with his premise that personal development *is* career development. Any work you can do with yourself to shift self-limiting patterns will absolutely benefit you on the job. *Coach Your Self Up* provides you with a pragmatic framework and tools to help you identify your own self-limiting patterns and to self-coach your way to making lasting changes.

—**Stuart Crabb**, Partner and Founder, Oxegen Consulting, former Global Head of Learning at Facebook

"Mike Normant's *Coach Your Self Up* touches two fundamental beliefs we share at 1440—it all begins with self-awareness, and the answers we seek are found only within each of us, for ourselves. Self-coaching follows naturally, helping everyone to guide their own career journeys to the growth and understanding that will take them to the next level."

—**Scott Kriens**, Co-Founder, 1440 Multiversity

"Bookstore shelves are filled with books telling readers what kind of person to be in order to be happy, successful, stress-free and so on. But many of them miss the point entirely—the hard part for people isn't figuring out what they could be, but how to get there. It's difficult to bring one's best self forward—yet to be successful in our work and in our lives, that's the help we really need. Mike's *Coach Your Self Up* provides a roadmap for exactly that."

—**Todd Murtha**, CEO, Careerwave

"*Coach Your Self Up* is a gift directly out of the depths of Mike's life itself, reflecting an accumulation of learnings from his professional experiences along with years of his ongoing pursuit of his best self. This book is as powerful as it is practical and approachable, providing tools, guidance and inspiration to make consequential changes in your career, work and life!"

—**Michael Lipson**, CEO Whisperer, Executive Coach, Culture Builder & Strategist

"I'm in full agreement with Mike Normant's belief that rising levels of self-awareness has the potential for profound effects in the world. Seeing one's self more clearly leads to new habits and behaviors. *Coach Your Self Up* will not only help you be more successful in your career, it can also positively impact the individuals, teams, and organizations that you are part of."

—**Aaron Kahlow**, Founder of ConsciousLeader.org and Founder/Chief Facilitator of Conscious Circles

"Our habitual thought patterns get in the way of being our best selves. In my work I see this every day. The world needs more pragmatic tools to help people "wake up" to their inner potential. Mike Normant's *Coach Your Self Up* is one of those tools. This highly accessible book is meant not only to be read, but to be applied."

—**Segyu Choepel Rinpoche**, Master and Holder of the Segyu Tibetan Buddhist Lineage, Founder and Director of Juniper Integrative Care Clinic

“Benjamin Franklin once said, “There are three things extremely hard, steel, a diamond, and to know one's self.” Lucky for us, Mike Normant’s new book *Coach Your Self Up* has made it easier for us to accomplish this. Using clear language, concise concepts representing current research and transformational practices that are creative and experience based, he guides readers through a self-learning process that leads the student into more expanded self-awareness. Always compassionate in his view of the difficulties along the way, he keeps us present, engaged and on point as we learn about our self from our self. I highly recommend it!”

—**Gary Sherman**, Founder of the Creative Awareness Project and Author of *Perceptual Integration: The Mechanics of Awakening*

“Creating a “conscious culture” is the cornerstone of the Conscious Capitalism four-tenets framework. The self-coaching skills introduced in *Coach Your Self Up* are specifically designed to serve in activating individuals to become more aware of, and responsible for their human-ness, in other words, becoming more conscious. I believe that organizations that aspire to develop and sustain a conscious culture should definitely consider *Coach Your Self Up* as a high-impact component of any personal development and performance initiatives in amplifying the amazing potential of their employees. Mike’s thoughtful and practical approach in this book is a huge contribution to the movement toward humanity-centered business.”

—**Steve Havill**, Founder and CEO of Conscia Ventures, Board President of Conscious Capitalism Bay Area Chapter

The Unlimit Group Publishing
San Francisco, CA 94102



All rights reserved.

Copyright © 2018 by Mike Normant

No part of this book may be reproduced, copied, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or information storage or retrieval systems—without the prior written permission of The Unlimit Group®/The Unlimit Group® Publishing, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Coach Your Self Up® is a registered trademark. The official “registered trademark” symbol is used in the Preface and Introduction. For ease of reading, it is not used throughout the main body of the book. Please protect the rights of the author by not engaging in any copyright infringement of the trademarked title of this book.

The information contained in this book is intended to be thought provoking, informational and inspirational, not therapeutic or medical, and is in no way considered a replacement for consultation with a professional business or legal consultant, coach, trainer, healer, therapist, counselor or medical doctor.

The author, publisher and speaker are in no way liable for any use or misuse of the information implied or contained within this book.

URL for the eLearning program: coachyourselfup.com/course/paperback

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
LCN Number: 2018905921

ISBN: 978-1-7321931-0-9

Editors: Alice Chaffee and Linda Newlin

Cover and Interior Image Design: Ina Murdock-Santos, The Branding Room
Initial Logo Design: Chelsea Rae Cole, Design & Photo

Dedicated to the thought leaders and teachers, past and present,
whose work helps individuals unleash their full potential.

Contents

Preface	i
Introduction	vii
1. Laying the Foundation	1
2. Managing Attention – A Superpower for Life	31
3. Learning Practices (First Set)	51
4. Self-Limiting Behaviors	59
5. The Stories We Tell Ourselves	73
6. Learning Practices (Second Set)	85
7. Speed Laddering and More	95
8. Challenging Your Stories	107
9. Deep Stories	119
10. Learning Practices (Third Set)	131
11. Challenging Deep Stories – Examples and Tactics	141
12. Getting Unstuck	169
13. Maintaining Momentum and Moving Forward	175
Appendix A – Hear from People Who Have Coached Themselves Up	189
Appendix B – Organizational Application	201
Resources	209



Preface

Hello, and welcome to Coach Your Self Up®. I am thrilled that you are exploring this new frontier of coaching to support your ongoing personal and career development. The techniques and practices presented in this book are for individuals who are seeking to make positive shifts in their careers and their lives.

About You

You are interested in taking more ownership of your career, seeking to better understand and proactively utilize the career levers that are in your control.

You believe, or are open to the idea, that the best thing you can do to drive your career success is to commit to your ongoing personal growth, to working with/on yourself.

You realize that shifts you make through personal development at work will spill over into all aspects of your life.

You are interested in working on yourself to be more effective, to be a better version of yourself, and to tap into more and more of your full potential.

You are interested in learning a pragmatic approach to making sustainable behavior changes, an approach that you can use over and over again throughout your life.

You appreciate the importance of “being present” and are seeking tools that can help you improve in this regard.

Coach Your Self Up

You recognize, or are open to the possibility, that sometimes you get in your own way.

You are aware of, or open to finding out about, specific behaviors you engage in that are counterproductive to your success.

You are aware, or open to learning, that you are wired to create stories (i.e., assumptions, conclusions, opinions, beliefs) about your world and about yourself. These stories can also be self-limiting.

You are interested in learning to cultivate a self-observation practice to deepen your self-awareness.

I hope you find this book to be a valuable resource in your professional and personal development journey.

About Me

I would love to share the story of how Coach Your Self Up® came into being.

In 2007, while running the global Learning and Development department of a pre-IPO tech company based in San Francisco, I went through a divorce. Although the divorce was collaborative and generally amicable, it was a stressful and draining experience.

In early 2008, the ink was barely dry on the divorce papers and my ex-wife ended up in the hospital for an extended period of time facing a serious health crisis, from which, thankfully, she emerged. Shortly thereafter, I lost my beloved mother.

People from all facets of my life were there for me and delivered a consistent message of, “You need to take a break and take care of yourself.” I finally listened and left my job (on good terms!) in the summer of 2011. My intent was to take four to six months off to recharge my batteries and then go “do it again” (i.e., run the Learning and Development function at a locally-based company).

Then the universe intervened. Friends recommended books. I read some Eckhart Tolle, some Deepak Chopra, some Wayne Dyer and more. Many of these personal growth philosophies and ideas resonated with me.

Preface

I spent almost a year and a half attending numerous meetings and events with a men's "consciousness group" that a friend had recommended. It was fantastic. I learned so many things about how to "work with/on myself" from that group.

During this time, three different friends mentioned to me a weekend program called LifeLaunch® led by The Hudson Institute of Coaching in Santa Barbara, CA. The weekend was designed to help people reflect on their lives and to create a vision and a plan for a meaningful path forward.

When LifeLaunch® was mentioned to me for the third time, I decided that the universe wanted me to go and I signed up for the next program in the fall of 2011.

A few important things happened during that LifeLaunch® weekend: I gave myself permission to take an entire year off to process the recent upheaval in my life and I decided to enroll in Hudson's eight-month program to become a certified coach.

One important aspect of Hudson's Coach-in-Training (CIT) program was called "Self-as-Coach" and was all about becoming more self-aware. So, there I was, working with a men's consciousness group in parallel with Hudson's CIT program. It was self-awareness development on steroids.

In the summer of 2012, I decided to try and make it on my own. I would lead management and leadership training programs inside fast-growing tech companies.

Along the way, I continued to tell people about some of the personal breakthroughs I'd experienced on the self-awareness front and how that was leading to some life-changing shifts.

During 2013 and 2014, more people started saying things like "Mike, it seems like this self-awareness stuff has been pretty transformative for you, why don't you build a training program to share it with others?" In the summer of 2014 I put my head down and set out to do just that.

My intention was to create a program that could be delivered to cohorts within organizations. And I wanted to make it relevant to any interested employee, regardless of level or role.

Coach Your Self Up

I know that many organizations invest in leadership development programs for their managers and senior leaders. Raising self-awareness is typically a key aspect of these programs. I wanted to bring this aspect of leadership development to a broader audience. Why not bring the gifts and benefits of increased self-awareness to all employees?

With the support and guidance and coaching of lots of good people, a solid program design began to emerge. I got more and more excited about this and eventually came up with a name for the program: “Coach Your Self Up.” I soon found two companies that were excited to run a pilot of the classroom training program for a cohort of interested employees. The results were promising.

Fast forward to 2017. Whenever I shared my purpose with others (to raise self-awareness in the world to help as many people as possible achieve more of their potential), they would tell me, “You need to write a book.” I resisted this for several months.

It finally became clear to me that not only could I write this book, but that at some level my purpose demanded it. I had created something powerful that was already benefiting people in the classroom. If my intention was to impact as many lives as possible, I needed to make this material available to individuals.

As I reflect on my journey of these last several years, I see that I have been applying the Coach Your Self Up self-coaching principles and skills all along the way.

The beauty of Coach Your Self Up® is that it takes relatively complex topics and makes them accessible and easy to understand. I hope you find this to be true for you.

As I write this in early 2018, the Coach Your Self Up® classroom training program has been delivered at multiple companies, including the first international delivery in Chennai, India. Participant feedback has been very strong. It feels fantastic to hear

Preface

anecdotes from folks who have been able to apply principles from Coach Your Self Up® to make positive shifts in their own lives.

Here are two brief excerpts from the testimonials in Appendix A:

“This program was nothing short of transformative for me. It’s been great to see that I am able to make a change—I can react differently right now in this moment.”

“Coach Your Self Up was a catalyst that has helped me become much more conscious of what I am doing with my life. This program has helped me become a better person.”

In 2019, I partnered with an eLearning company (Interplicity) to create an online version of the Coach Your Self Up program. You can check that out at: coachyourselfup.com/course/paperback

Ever forward.

Coach Your Self Up



Introduction

Working with a coach can be powerful. “Coachees” experience professional and personal growth and transformation across multiple dimensions. However, not everyone has access to working with a skilled coach.

The idea of self-coaching came to me when I was describing my training program to others. I would summarize by saying, “Essentially I am teaching people how to coach themselves.” My curiosity piqued, I did some research on the Internet and found several references to the self-coaching topic.

Most notably, I found another Bay Area resident, Ed Batista, an executive coach and an instructor at the Stanford Graduate School of Business (GSB). He has been blogging about self-coaching since 2009 and in the spring of 2015 offered a class called “The Art of Self-Coaching” as part of the Stanford GSB curriculum.

The inaugural class was a success and is now offered on an ongoing basis. Ed is publishing a book through Harvard Business Review (HBR) Press in 2018 entitled, *The Art of Self-Coaching*.

As you might imagine, I was thrilled to find there were others out there with this idea, and super-thrilled to hear that Ed Batista was going to have a book published on the subject with HBR Press.

Self-coaching is the next frontier of coaching.

It will never replace the importance or value of working with a skilled coach. However, for all the people who may never have that

Coach Your Self Up

luxury, learning self-coaching skills can be a giant leap forward. The gift of self-coaching is invaluable.

There is no single “right” approach to self-coaching. As the field grows, numerous variations will make their way into the mix.

I get fired up when I think about the potential self-coaching holds for creating an exponential jump in self-awareness and the ability for large numbers of people to change behaviors and thought patterns that are limiting their potential at work and in their lives.

Given how much time the average person spends at work, it made sense to me to apply self-coaching in the career development arena, to use these powerful techniques to help individuals improve their effectiveness and overall success.

As an individual becomes more self-aware, she is positively impacted and starts making inroads to achieving more of her potential. This in turn has a positive effect on the individuals, groups and organizations with whom she interacts.

As individuals become more self-aware, their empathy for others generally increases. And as individuals practice more self-compassion, their compassion for others also rises.

I see a straight-line connection from rising levels of self-awareness and individuals continually aspiring to become better selves to creating more peaceful, loving, compassionate societies.

Narrowly, this work is about helping individuals be more successful in their careers and their lives. More broadly, it’s about making a better world, one self-aware individual at a time.

Self-coaching is the
**next frontier of
coaching.**

Introduction

About the Journey You are Embarking Upon

This book has been written in a way that roughly simulates the experience you would have if you were participating in the classroom version of the Coach Your Self Up® training program.

You will learn how to “coach yourself” to make sustainable behavioral changes that will have a positive impact on how you are “showing up” in your life.

Learn – Apply - Repeat

You will learn self-coaching concepts and techniques. Along the way I will encourage you to take a few breaks from the book and engage in Learning Practices to apply what you are learning. This significantly increases the odds that you will retain what you learn.

Keeping a Journal

I strongly recommend you keep a dedicated notepad or journal for this self-discovery journey. At various points throughout the book, mostly within the Learning Practices, there will be opportunities for you to capture your thoughts and reflections in writing.

Working with Others

This book will support you in working on your own or with others. When I teach this to groups inside organizations, I assign individuals to an “accountability team” with other participants. If you have one or more colleagues or friends who are interested in working through this process with you, you could work through the material together as accountability partners.

Book Structure

The content is laid out such that it builds on itself in a logical and easy-to-follow manner. I suggest that you work through the book from front to back.

Chapter 1 lays the foundation with supporting ideas, theories and philosophies from numerous fields of study.

Coach Your Self Up

Chapter 2 focuses on the topic of Managing Attention. I consider this a superpower for life. Many of you will never experience your attention the same way again after reading this chapter.

Chapter 3 contains the first set of Learning Practices where you will experiment with various aspects of managing your attention.

Chapter 4 is where you will learn about self-limiting behaviors (SLBs) and choose one of your own SLBs to work on.

Chapter 5 introduces the idea of “stories.” You will learn about the Ladder of Inference and how we are wired to generate stories.

Chapter 6 contains the second set of Learning Practices where you will continue to practice managing your attention. You will also begin self-observing your selected SLB and noticing stories.

Chapter 7 provides insightful activities to help you more fully appreciate the idea of stories.

Chapter 8 lays out an approach on how to challenge your stories.

Chapter 9 introduces the idea of “deep” stories and encourages you to consider what some of your own deep stories might be.

Chapter 10 contains the third set of Learning Practices. You will continue to self-observe your SLB. You will also continue to look out for stories, including those that are associated with your SLB.

Chapter 11 introduces a Self-Observation Worksheet and provides multiple examples of how individuals have used self-coaching techniques to drive behavior change.

Chapter 12 shows how to use the self-coaching tools to work through situations where you feel “stuck.”

Chapter 13 is where you will identify how you will maintain momentum and commit to a personal action plan to do so.



Chapter 1

Laying the Foundation

Let's start your self-coaching journey by introducing some important concepts that underlie this work.

Personal Development is Career Development

While this idea (that personal development is career development) is not yet mainstream, I believe it is simply a matter of time.

I think that a robust approach to career development has three main pillars. They are (1) identifying career goals and/or a vision, (2) developing technical/functional skills, and (3) working on behaviors and thought patterns.

1 - Identifying Career Goals and/or a Vision

In order to engage in meaningful career development efforts, it is helpful to set goals and honestly assess where you want to go. Many organizations have this pillar reasonably well covered and provide career development plans where employees can document their goals and discuss them with their managers.

2 - Developing Technical/Functional Skills

In some organizations, developing technical/functional skills is referred to as working on “the what” of your career development (i.e., “what” you do). This may start with a gap analysis to determine where you are today vs. where you aspire to be—your stated career goals or vision. This may also include identification of your strengths that you can leverage.

Coach Your Self Up

Gaps and strengths become the fodder for identifying appropriate development actions. For instance, you may need to deepen your skill set with certain platforms or tools. Or you may need to broaden your understanding of other parts of your department to become more holistic in your thinking and planning. Regardless of the particulars, the main point is for you to create a plan—and execute on it—to close those skill-based gaps and leverage your skill-based strengths.

3 - Working on Behaviors and Thought Patterns

Some organizations refer to working on behaviors and thought patterns as working on “the how” of your career development (i.e., “how” you do what you do). Tying back to the premise of this section, I see this pillar as personal development, or development of the self.

Of the three pillars, this one often gets the least amount of attention and support within organizations.

I believe this is tied to the still somewhat prevalent idea that personal development is only applicable outside the realm of the workplace. It’s “personal,” hence not “business.” This is an outdated philosophy that needs to be further challenged. The world continues to change rapidly and it’s time for this facet of career development to have its day in the sun.

Other than identifying your career goals and/or a career vision, the one thing you can control is how you “show up” at work. This includes how you behave, how you interact with others, how you manage yourself, and so on.

Personal development—learning more about and working with/on yourself—is intensely important to taking ownership of your professional path, regardless of your specific career goals. That could make self-coaching a potent cornerstone of the next generation of career development. I dare say that you are ahead of the curve on this one.

Your Most Important Coach—You

Odds are, you have at least one person in your life that you would consider some form of coach. This might be a friend, a colleague, a family member, a boss, etc. And maybe you have been fortunate enough to work with a professional coach in some capacity.

Coaches are helpful in many ways. When I ask people what they see as attributes of a good coach, common responses include:

- “He encourages me to pursue my goals.”
- “She helps me to look at different perspectives.”
- “He cares about me and my well-being.”
- “She challenges my thinking.”
- “He helps me find the answers that are already within me.”
- “She supports me in becoming a better me.”

Of course, there are many other attributes of good coaches, but this is a solid list. And as a professional coach, I believe it is of great value for you to have one or more coaches in your life.

That said, who do you talk to more than anybody else? This is not a trick question, and to the best of my knowledge, the answer is the same for all or almost all of us. We talk to *ourselves* more than anybody else. (And for those of you hearing that voice inside your head that’s saying, “I don’t know what he’s talking about.” That’s the self-talk I am referring to.)

You are your most important coach. This is often an overlooked and hence under-utilized internal resource or capability.

Coach Your Self Up



How cool would it be to cultivate an inner coaching voice to bring to some of those conversations you already have with yourself?

To encourage you.

To challenge you.

To help you see different perspectives.

To help you become a better you.

That, in a nutshell, is what Coach Your Self Up is all about.

This is not about replacing the other coaches in your life. The ability to coach one's self is simply additive to this mix. In fact, while a bit oxymoronic, the most effective self-coaching will involve the support of others.

Self-Awareness—Turning on the Light

As we've noted, I believe the best thing you can do to drive your career success is to commit to your ongoing personal development—to deepen your self-awareness in pursuit of becoming a version of yourself that you aspire to be.

Laying the Foundation

You can't stumble your way in the dark to your best self. You need to turn on the light. (I heard this phrase from a fellow Coach Your Self Up facilitator Pete Small—and I instantly took to it.)

We have known for a long time that self-awareness is important. The phrase “know thyself” dates back to one of the Seven Sages of Ancient Greece, Thales of Miletus¹—around 2,500 years ago!

Businesses recognize the value of self-awareness as evidenced by their investment in leadership development programs and executive coaching engagements—both of which typically emphasize increasing self-awareness.

Coach Your Self Up makes this key aspect of leadership development available more broadly, well beyond the leadership suite. If we know that self-awareness plays such a pivotal part in being a successful leader in the workplace, why not start helping all employees in this arena much earlier in their careers?

There are additional more recent workplace trends that are shining a spotlight on the value of self-awareness. Here are just a few:

- Emotional Intelligence (EQ) includes self-awareness as a core pillar.
- Mindfulness places an emphasis on being self-aware in the present moment. (While the concept of mindfulness is thousands of years old, it has only recently begun to become more mainstream.)
- Conscious Capitalism and other flavors of Conscious Business pay homage to the importance and value of having “conscious” leaders and employees.

¹ Richard E. Boyatzis (2007), *Interpersonal Aesthetics: Emotional and Social Intelligence Competencies are Wisdom*. In Eric H. Kessler (ed.) and James R. Bailey (ed.) *Handbook of Organizational and Managerial Wisdom* (pp 223-242). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

You can't
stumble your
way in the
dark to your
best self.

You need to
turn on the
light.

Laying the Foundation

The realm of self-awareness is enormous. For our work, we will emphasize three primary areas.

The first area is your **attention**—what you focus on and how well you maintain that focus. You are no doubt aware that your attention is constantly under attack by myriad information streams in our digital era, not to mention the many and various items on your internal “to do” list screaming to be heard. Learning to “take back” your attention—first by “paying attention to your attention,” and then by learning to better harness and direct it—is instrumental to this work.

The second area is your **self-limiting behaviors**—things that you do (or don’t do) that limit your success. You may be aware of one or more of your self-limiting behaviors (“Omg, I can’t believe I just interrupted again, why can’t I just stop doing that?”), or maybe they live in your blind spot. You will learn how to make sustainable shifts to these behaviors, even those that have been with you for years or even decades.

The third area is your **self-limiting stories**—thoughts that you have that limit your success. Stories (e.g., assumptions, opinions, conclusions, beliefs) are everywhere and many of us don’t see them. An important part of Coach Your Self Up is helping you to see the sea of stories that you are swimming in and giving you simple ways to bust through stories that are getting in your way.

Target Outcomes—Tools for Creating Positive Shifts

Creating positive shifts is the primary overarching outcome that Coach Your Self Up delivers. You will learn a set of techniques and skills that allow you to make sustainable behavioral changes that will have a positive impact on your success.

While the emphasis of Coach Your Self Up is to apply self-coaching skills to improve your success at work, the approach you will learn here is applicable in all facets of your life.

You will learn a set of techniques and skills that allow you to make sustainable behavioral changes that will have a positive impact on **your success.**

Laying the Foundation

There are several other outcomes you are likely to experience that support this overarching outcome. These are highlighted below.

Shifts in one of your own Self-Limiting Behaviors (SLBs): This is a “work” book. To be most effective, you will begin to apply self-coaching techniques to one of your own selected self-limiting behaviors. This brings the concepts and techniques to life via practical hands-on application.

Improved Attention Management: Utilizing increased control over your attention, you will cultivate the ability to focus it when needed and, maybe more importantly, to notice when it has “wandered off” and needs to be “brought back.”

Increased Emotional Intelligence (Self-Awareness and Empathy): By paying more focused attention to yourself, your self-awareness will expand. As you become more *self-aware* of your behaviors, stories, and feelings, your *empathy* for the perspectives and feelings of others is also likely to increase. As you practice self-compassion, it is probable that you will become more compassionate with others as well.

Enhanced Interpersonal Relationships: Seeing how your stories can negatively impact relationships, you will be able to develop and manage relationships more objectively.

Better Decisions: Learning to make conscious/aware decisions in the moment and not succumb to habitual/reflexive responses. Note the old adage that, “You cannot control what happens to you, but you can control how you respond.”

Improved ability to coach others: Applying some of the self-coaching skills and techniques to coaching others around you.

Improved ability to be coached: When others are coaching you in the future, you are likely to be more open and receptive to the process, enabling you to make progress more quickly.

I have found that each individual that goes through this process experiences a unique set of benefits. While I believe that each person experiences some shift in each of the listed Target Outcomes, different outcomes tend to be more pronounced for different people.

Coach Your Self Up

I cannot tell you which one or two of these outcomes will be most prominent for you. Be open to see what unfolds as you do the work.

The Underlying Science

Some people see self-awareness work as soft or fluffy. It is anything but. Coach Your Self Up is specifically based on the latest research from the fields of cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and behavioral science.

Let's imagine that inside each of our heads there is a computer running that has a huge influence on how we experience the world and how we show up in the world. Of course, each of these computers is totally unique.

So here we are, each of us with this computer running in the background, often without being aware of it and with zero documentation. There is no user manual to help us look at and understand this computer. When is it serving us? When is it causing us to get in our own way?

The only way to figure this out is to start trying to observe how it operates, to catch it while it is running and see what it is doing. This can be challenging, because parts of this computer are operating subconsciously. One goal in Coach Your Self Up is to begin to bring this computer further into the light of our awareness, so that we can observe what it is up to.

This is where science has much to offer. Here is a brief overview.

The software component of this computer is our *mind*. Psychology is the study of our minds, and there is significant research that highlights how we can modify our thinking patterns to help us change our behaviors.

The hardware component of this computer is our *brain*. Neuroscience is the study of our brains. Recent findings in the realm of neuroplasticity show that the brain is in fact malleable, that we are not "hard-wired" as we had believed for such a long time. The human ability to create new neural pathways is an important part of Coach Your Self Up.

Laying the Foundation

And finally, from a Behavioral Science perspective, we utilize something called the *Intentional Change Theory*.² Research shows we are more likely to make and sustain a behavioral shift if it is in the service of becoming a more ideal version of our self—as opposed to trying to fix something about our current self.

We are not broken people. We are all humans, experiencing our human lives, with our human shortcomings, aspiring to be better versions of ourselves.

Rest assured, the concepts you will discover through Coach Your Self Up have been substantiated through multiple fields in the domain of human performance and effectiveness.

Response-ability

Response-ability is being able to choose an appropriate response in-the-moment—not succumbing to your reflexive/habitual patterns.

The intent is to try new responses in those situations where you believe your current responses (patterns, habits) are not serving you and/or are getting in your way. You are not trying to determine the perfect response, nor are you trying to determine an average (what would everyone else do?) or compromise type of response. You are simply seeking a response that is better for you than your more typical response.

By experimenting with new responses, you will become more adept, over time, at being response-able.

² Richard E. Boyatzis and Kleio Akrivou, *The ideal self as the driver of intentional change* (Journal of Management Development, Vol. 25 No. 7, 2006. pp 624-642)

Coach Your Self Up helps you cultivate a set of practices that will make you more **response-able.**

Working Through the Book

This book is structured into bite-sized learning chunks which makes the content easier to absorb.

Your success in learning and applying these new skills will increase as you engage in Learning Practices at key junctures along the way. These practices, through direct experience and reflection, allow you to reinforce some of the key ideas and techniques that you are learning about.

Since our focus is on developing your awareness, this format is essential. There **MUST** be time for you to pay attention to and learn about yourself in order to move to a new place of readiness for the next set of ideas and techniques.

In an ideal world, you would spend about 30 minutes per week on the Learning Practices if you are doing this on your own, or an hour per week if you are working with others. The extra time when working with others is for weekly check-in discussions.

If you are interested in a more detailed overview of the content that will be covered in each chapter, refer to the section entitled “Book Structure” in the Introduction (page ix).

Laying the Foundation

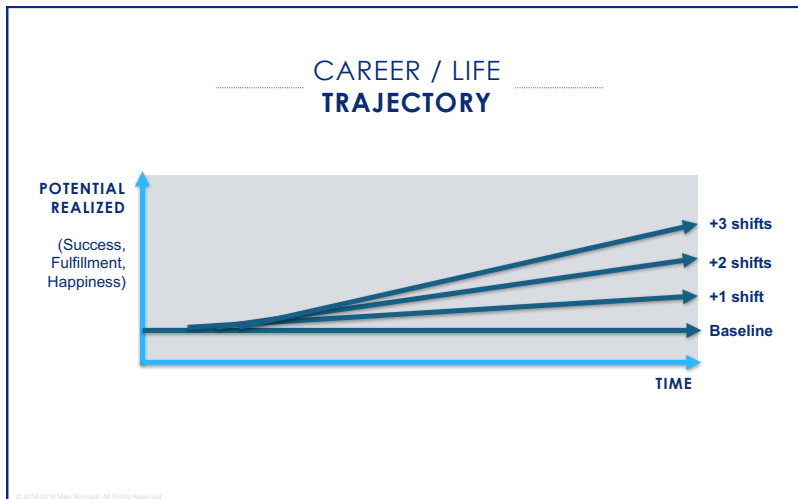
Small Shifts Lead to Big Changes

Another foundational concept that is important to understand is that “small shifts lead to big changes.” It is quite common for us to shy away from making changes to our behaviors, especially behaviors that we have been exhibiting for a long time. It can feel like it will require a huge shift that will demand a huge amount of effort on our part. This often leads us to quit before we start.

Yes, creating change takes effort, but it does not need to be as hard as we think it will be. This is a classic story (that it will be too hard) we tell ourselves.

Think about a meteor that is on a collision course with Earth. Scientists believe (and I hope they are right!) that if we detect such a meteor, we can send a spacecraft to intercept the meteor and with a well-placed large explosion, knock it ever-so-slightly off its current path. This slight change in its trajectory will ultimately result in the meteor not just missing the Earth but missing the Earth by miles.

Likewise, you can think about your career and your life as being on some trajectory. Imagine time as the horizontal axis and your “potential realized” on the vertical.



Coach Your Self Up

Going back to the meteor metaphor, with relatively small shifts in your awareness and behavior, that trajectory could shift in a positive way, leading to opportunities for you to continue to realize more of your potential.

For example, think of a person who has a self-limiting behavior of frequently interrupting others. It is pretty easy to imagine what that person's "trajectory" will look like if he doesn't work on that self-limiting behavior. It is also pretty easy to imagine a positive (upward) shift in that trajectory if he starts to make small shifts toward becoming a better listener. How much more of his potential will that person have realized in six months? A year? Five years?

Do you believe that more interesting career opportunities are likely to present themselves to "the better listener" version of the person vs. "the frequent interrupter" version?

I ask managers to think about two different employees, each of them having tendencies to interrupt others. I have them imagine one employee making small shifts toward being a better listener while the other employee does not. Responses are unanimous that the person who is working to become a better listener will be the beneficiary of more desirable development opportunities.

This is an important point of emphasis. If you believe, as I do and as a lot of research supports, that how you show up and how you behave and interact with others has a big impact on your career and life opportunities, then Coach Your Self Up gives you more control of your trajectory!

You are bending your future towards realizing more of your potential with each of these small shifts in your behavior.

(I love the phrase "bending your future" and the imagery it conjures up. I want to acknowledge that I first heard this from Jeremy Hunter, Ph.D., Founding Director of the Executive Mind Leadership Institute and Associate Professor of Practice at the Peter F. Drucker Graduate School of Management, Claremont Graduate University.)

You are
**bending your
future** towards
realizing more
of your
potential with
each of these
small shifts in
your behavior.

Using Our Minds to Change Our Brains

You are likely familiar with an old adage that, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." In a related vein, you will hear people say things like, "Well, that's just the way I am" or, "I'm just wired that way and there's nothing I can do about it." And that feels true to us.

However, there is significant scientific evidence that our brain patterns are anything but hard-wired. The term that describes this phenomenon is neuroplasticity, or brain plasticity. (The Neuroplasticity entry on Wikipedia is a great jumping-off point if you want to know more - en.wikipedia.org/wiki/neuroplasticity)

Neuroplasticity shows that our brains can create new neural pathways that support the development of new patterns and associated habits.

Although psychologists have long believed that individuals could make significant changes to their thinking and behavioral patterns (behavior therapy has its roots in the 1920s), the neuroscience community continued to believe that the brain stopped developing after a certain point in late childhood. Sure, the neuroscientist community said, a person could modify their behavior. But they didn't believe that later-in-life behavioral change correlated to any physical changes in the brain.

It wasn't until the 1970s that the growing body of evidence led the neuroscience community to shift their position and embrace the idea of neuroplasticity. Study after study was showing that adult brains were *physically* changing...all the time!

Dr. Norman Doidge is a psychiatrist who has authored multiple books on the latest developments of neuroscience. In September of 2008, he was one of the speakers at an event sponsored by The Melbourne Conversations Program entitled "Your Brain: How it can change, develop and improve." Here is his opening statement:

"The idea that the brain is plastic in the sense of changeable, adaptable, malleable...is, I have come to believe, the single most important change in our understanding of the human brain in 400 years. It's revolutionary."

Laying the Foundation

That is a heady (no pun intended) statement.

Rick Hanson is a psychologist who writes and teaches about the essential inner skills of personal well-being and personal growth. He has done a lot of work on the integration of topics from the fields of neuroscience and psychology.

In a talk that Rick gave at The Hudson Institute of Coaching's annual conference in 2014, he said:

“With a bit of skillful knowledge, we can use our minds to change our brains to change our minds for the better. This is called self-directed neuroplasticity.”

You may need to read that one slowly a few times to let it sink in. His point is that just being aware of neuroplasticity causes some shifts in our minds. We become more open to the possibility that we actually can make changes in areas where we used to think it was not possible. (Along these lines, there is a fun statement I've heard a few times: “Neuroplasticity is a six-syllable word for hope.”)

What becomes possible for you knowing that you can create new neural pathways, that your brain can be “reprogrammed?”

Prior to 2005, you would have been hard-pressed to learn about this concept unless your profession required you to do so.

The fact that we are not *hard-wired*, but in fact are *soft-wired*, has huge implications for all of us as a species. This is not lost on many in the field (including Doidge and Hanson) and since 2005 there have been several books published on this topic targeted at a mainstream audience. (See the Resources section at the back of this book for a list of some of those books.)

Just being aware that neuroplasticity exists (and believing it), is sufficient understanding for Coach Your Self Up.

Cultivating a Growth Mindset

I mentioned earlier that we have the equivalent of a computer running in our heads 24/7. The hardware of that computer is the brain and the software is the mind.

Neuroplasticity is a helpful concept pertaining to the *brain* that supports our approach to self-coaching. Let's now look at a helpful concept pertaining to the *mind* that is also supportive of our approach. It is all about "mindset."

Carol Dweck, a well-known psychologist at Stanford University, has articulated the difference between what she calls a "fixed" mindset and a "growth" mindset³. Here is a brief summation of how she defines these two mindsets.

A person with a *fixed mindset* believes his intelligence, personality, and character are carved in stone; that his potential is fixed. This person rarely achieves anywhere close to his full potential.

Conversely, a person with a *growth mindset* believes that his intelligence, personality, and character can be developed; that his potential is unknown (and unknowable). This person continues to reach ever-higher levels of his potential.

There are a few areas where it is helpful to see how people with these differing mindsets behave. Please read through the table on the following page and think about where you typically fall on these different dimensions.

³ Carol S. Dweck, *Mindset* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2006).

Laying the Foundation

	FIXED MINDSET	GROWTH MINDSET
IT'S UP TO YOU!	Believe that my intelligence, personality and character are carved in stone; my potential is determined at birth.	Believe that my intelligence, personality and character can be developed! A person's true potential is unknown (and unknowable).
DESIRE	Look smart in every situation and prove myself over and over again. Never fail!	Stretch myself, take risks and learn. Bring on the challenges!
EVALUATION OF SITUATIONS	Will I succeed or fail? Will I look smart or dumb?	Will this allow me to grow? Will this help me overcome some of my learning edges?
DEALING WITH SETBACKS	I'm a failure (identity). I'm an idiot.	I failed (action). What did I learn that I can apply in the future?
CHALLENGES	Avoid challenges; get defensive or give up easily.	Embrace challenges; persist in the face of setbacks.
EFFORT	Why bother? It's not going to change anything.	Growth and learning require effort.
CRITICISM	Ignore constructive criticism.	Learn from criticism. How can I improve?
SUCCESS OF OTHERS	Feel threatened by the success of others. If you succeed, then I fail.	Finds lessons & inspiration in the success of others.
RESULT...	Plateau early; achieve less than my full potential.	Reach ever-higher levels of achievement.

Coach Your Self Up

As you look over these descriptors, what most resonates with you? Would you acknowledge that you have a fixed mindset? Or do you believe you have more of a growth mindset?

You likely see yourself as having some of both. This is not a binary thing where you are one or the other. Look at this as a continuum between the two poles of fixed mindset and growth mindset. There may be some dimensions where you tend to embrace more of a growth mindset than others. For example, maybe you are comfortable embracing setbacks, yet have a hard time with constructive criticism.

You tend to operate from a default location on each of the continuums shown in the table on the prior page. In certain situations, you may have a tendency to move further along the continuum(s) in one direction or the other.

For example, even individuals who typically embrace setbacks as learning opportunities (growth mindset) can periodically have setbacks that make them feel like a failure (fixed mindset).

For most of us, cultivating a growth mindset is not easy. It takes ongoing effort. The starting point, as with so many aspects of this work, is awareness.

Just being aware of the fixed/growth mindset concept helps you to get a stronger sense of where your current default mindset falls on the continuum. Being aware that a fixed mindset will limit you in achieving your potential will hopefully trigger you to take steps toward developing more growth mindset tendencies.

The goal is to become more aware of your mindset and, over time, work to move toward the growth mindset side of the continuum.

More organizations are espousing the benefits of a growth mindset as part of their desired culture. I imagine you can see how cultivating a growth mindset would serve you in your career.

The self-coaching approach you will learn in Coach Your Self Up requires that you generally embrace and embody a growth mindset. If you lean towards a fixed mindset, consider using Coach Your Self Up to help you start shifting towards a growth mindset.

Coach Your
Self Up
requires that
you generally
embrace and
embody a
**growth
mindset.**

Coach Your Self Up

Moving through Levels of Learning Engagement⁴

In addition to being aware of the differences between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset, awareness of what I call “levels of learning engagement” can be helpful in getting the most out of Coach Your Self Up. (Note that this concept can be helpful to you in your work when learning *anything* new.)

In theory, individuals move in and through these levels during any learning experience. While movement can be linear, with some amount of time spent in each level, it is also common to bounce around from any level to any other level very quickly.

Levels of Learning Engagement

COMMITMENT	I'm <i>committed</i> to put in the necessary effort to achieve <this outcome> which will serve me.
BELIEF	I <i>believe</i> I can achieve <this outcome> which will serve me.
ASPIRATION	I would <i>like</i> to achieve <this outcome> which will serve me.
CURIOSITY	I wonder how this might serve me?

Level 1 – Curiosity

This level is characterized by an interest in learning more. You have not identified anything specific you want to get out of the learning experience, but you intentionally remain open-minded to seeing what might come up for you.

Level 2 – Aspiration

This level is characterized by having identified at least one specific outcome you hope to realize from the learning experience. You are

⁴ Distilled from self-efficacy theories originating with: Bandura, Albert *Social Learning Theories*. City: Prentice-Hall, 1976. Print

Laying the Foundation

not sure it is possible, but you hope it is. You keep this aspiration in mind as a way to stay engaged with the learning experience.

Level 3 – Belief

This stage is characterized by believing that the learning experience will help you achieve one or more of the specific outcomes you aspire to. You may feel excitement when you shift into this state, as this target outcome now feels realistic and attainable. You may move quickly from Belief to Commitment.

Level 4 – Commitment

This level is characterized by simply committing to “doing whatever it takes” to achieve your desired outcome. You are engaged with the learning experience.

It can be common for individuals at any level to “exit/give up” on the learning experience. For example, a person at Level 4 might say “I am no longer committed to this, so I am done.” If you find yourself no longer resonating with the level at which you were operating, try to re-anchor yourself on a lower level. For example, if you are at Level 4 and no longer feel committed...

...Ask yourself: “Do I still believe this can help me achieve my desired outcome?” If yes, re-anchor at Level 3. If no...

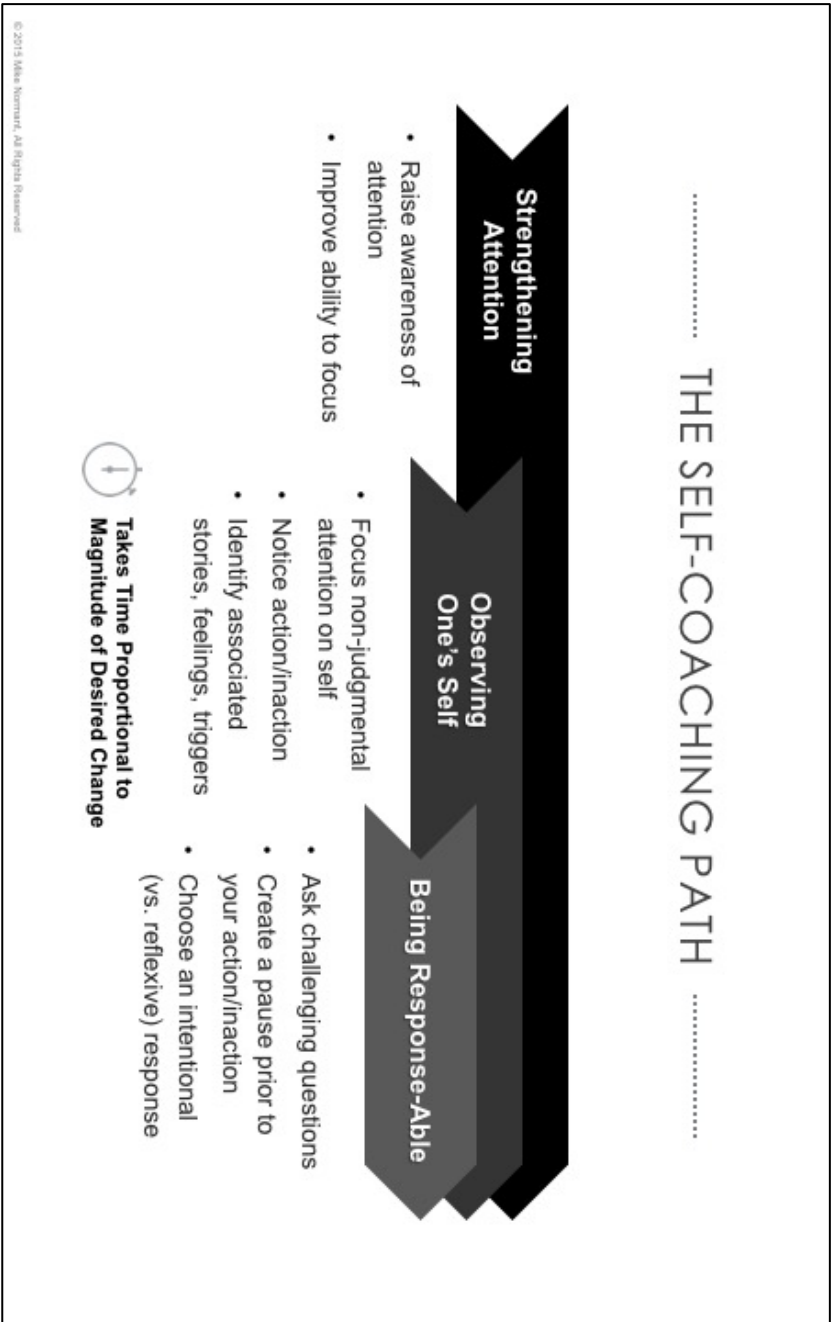
...Ask yourself: “Do I still aspire to achieve at least one specific outcome from this work?” If yes, re-anchor at level 2. If no...

...Challenge yourself to remain curious and open-minded to continue on with the work.

Hopefully you will find yourself at Level 2 from the get-go and will be able to move to Level 3 or 4 fairly quickly.

On the Self-Coaching Path

My schooling as an engineer taught me that it is helpful to have a process to bring concepts to life, to make them actionable. To that end there is a simple three-step process called the self-coaching path. You will find a graphic depiction of the self-coaching path on the following page.



Laying the Foundation

Step 1 – Strengthening Attention

The first step involves becoming more skilled in the baseline ability to more effectively manage your attention. I have a talk that I give entitled “Managing Attention – A Superpower for Life.” I really do see this as a superpower.

For many of us, our attention is typically something that just is. We follow our attention, but we don’t often think about what it is doing.

You will start by becoming more aware of your attention. This is an important aspect of learning to control it more effectively.

Step 2 – Observing One’s Self

Once you begin to improve your ability to manage your attention, you will be able to focus your attention on yourself more effectively. This feeds into the second step of the self-coaching path, which is to cultivate a self-observation practice.

Most of us are less skilled in self-observation than we tend to believe. Until you are able to cultivate a strong practice of self-observation, it will be difficult if not impossible to make sustainable changes in behavior.

Witnessing ourselves through a neutral, non-judgmental third-party lens is important. While difficult, we need to learn to be impartial with ourselves. Otherwise, the weight of our self-criticism can become an obstacle to our ability to make a desired change.

An important skill is being able to simply notice our action (or inaction)—helping us to be more aware of our behavior.

After you have developed heightened awareness around your (in)action, you can begin to:

- Identify any of your *stories* that are associated with your (in)action. Look for themes if you see multiple stories.
- Identify any *feelings* that are associated with your (in)action.
- Identify if there are any *triggers* that precede your (in)action.

Coach Your Self Up

It is important to note this process takes time. The more ingrained the behavior is that we are trying to change, the more time we need to spend really noticing and understanding what's going on.

Step 3 – Being Response-Able

Earlier in this chapter we discussed the concept of response-ability. The third step of the self-coaching path is bringing that to life. You will become more and more response-able; able to more consistently choose responses in-the-moment as opposed to succumbing to your more habitual ways of responding or reacting.

Professional coaches ask their clients challenging questions. With Coach Your Self Up, you will learn to ask yourself challenging questions. You will ultimately be able to create a pause prior to engaging in your reflexive response, and proactively choose your response—to act in a non-habitual, more “present” way.

We will revisit the self-coaching path numerous times.

Accepting that Change Takes Time

Most of us want to fix things quickly. “If I have a particular behavior that is getting in my way, let me fix it ASAP and just move on.”

The challenge with the quick-fix approach is that it often yields a surface level fix and does not get at the underlying issues going on inside of us. Hence the behavior or habitual pattern often returns.

A simple example to illustrate this pertains to New Year's resolutions. In the last few years I have made a practice of getting into the gym for a brief workout, four days per week. I brace myself in early January for the influx of individuals that have made a New Year's resolution to work out more regularly. By mid-January or early February, most of those new faces have disappeared. It is difficult to proclaim you are making an “outer” change and make it stick without doing the needed “inner” work.

The challenge with the quick-fix approach is that it often yields a surface level fix and **does not get at the underlying issues going on inside of us.** Hence the behavior or habitual pattern often returns.

Coach Your Self Up

If a person were using the self-coaching path to create a new habit of going to the gym, she would spend ample time self-observing, just noticing what was going on when she decided to *not go* to the gym. Gaining a deep understanding of that inner context would lay the foundation for making an internal shift that would support the “outer” shift of getting into the gym more regularly.

Our behavioral patterns are patterns for a reason. They are often years, if not decades, in the making.

It is important to do the “inner” work (i.e., work on our mindset and our stories) to make and sustain “outer” behavioral changes. The self-coaching path was designed to ensure you have the tools to do the important inner work that awaits you.

Laying the Foundation

CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

Laying the Foundation

- Personal development *is* career development.
- You are your most important coach. You will cultivate an inner coaching voice to bring to some of your ongoing conversations with yourself.
- We have known for thousands of years that self-awareness is important.
- We are focused on increasing self-awareness in three areas—attention, self-limiting behaviors, and stories.
- The primary target outcome of this book is giving you a blueprint and tools for creating positive shifts in your life.
- Response-ability is being able to choose an appropriate response in-the-moment.
- Small shifts lead to big changes. With each small shift, you are “bending your future” toward achieving more of your potential.
- Neuroplasticity shows that we are not hard-wired. We can create new neural pathways to support new ways of being.
- Self-coaching requires that you embrace a growth mindset—believing that your potential is not fixed.
- There are four levels of learning engagement, from “curiosity” to “commitment.” If you disengage, try to stay curious.
- The self-coaching path is the model that brings self-coaching to life. The three steps include: (1) strengthening attention, (2) observing one’s self, and (3) being response-able.
- Sustainable behavior change takes time. You need to do the “inner” work to support the “outer” change.

