

**The SELF-Factor:**  
*The Power of Being You*

*A Coaching Approach*

*by*

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## INTRODUCTION

I am inviting you now to enrol in an amazing workshop, the ultimate workshop. It's called 'Life'.

One of the amazing things about 'the workshop of life' is that you get to choose at any time, or for any period, what the purpose of the workshop will be. You also get to choose which of the contents you are going to focus on and how much value you will get out of it.

What would you like to take a course in? Material success, having an intimate relationship, leadership, bringing up a family, growing a business, expressing your creativity, excelling in your career? Or perhaps one of the many other subjects available.

And whatever you choose to do, *who* will you be and *how* will you be as you do it?

What I am offering here is a foundation course. It allows you, and the people you interact with, to take all the other courses more easily, more happily and more successfully. It also helps you choose future courses that will be more fulfilling and life-affirming, rather than being enrolled in whatever comes along by default.

Together we are going to explore a course in fully appreciating your greatest asset, yourself. My experience, of working with people for almost thirty years, is that at the core of us all there is a common source of wisdom, strength and joy coupled with a desire to live a meaningful life and to contribute to our world. In this respect we are all the same. Alongside that, we each have our own unique combination of values, talents, style and quirks, all of which contribute to the rich tapestry of our lives together. The more that you can tap into your inner strength AND embrace your own and others' humanness, the more you will have the power to create a meaningful and happy life. This is the power that comes from being you.

The extent to which you can tap into this power depends upon your relationship with yourself. The way that you see, behave towards and express yourself is the biggest single factor in determining who you will allow yourself to be, what you will allow yourself to do and to have, and how you will perceive and experience life. Your relationship with yourself is also the basis for good relationships with others.

Wherever you are, whatever you do and whatever you say, your effectiveness will always depend on the you who is there, doing and saying. This is what I call the self-factor. For both individuals and organizations, the self-factor is the foundation on which all success is built.

Even more importantly, developing a strong relationship with and sense of self is crucial to your feeling fulfilled in your life and work.

You are not omnipotent and the best sense of self in the world does not guarantee that there will be no disasters or disappointments or that you will accomplish everything that you want to. It will, however, enable you to make the most of your time, talents and opportunities. Considering that most of us use only a fraction of our potential, this is a huge shift.

A few years ago, I was involved in a series of trainings for Australian Telecom, which involved everyone from top management to call operators. On every level, the thing that people most reported wanting more of was appreciation. There have been numerous studies that have confirmed this and shown that when people are appreciated they are more committed, resourceful and effective.

From my dictionary, the three main definitions of 'to appreciate' are:

- To value highly and be grateful for
- To be aware of and understand
- To develop in value

Don't you want more of this in your work and relationships? And if you want it from others, who are around you for just a part of the time, then realize how much more important it is that you give it to yourself – because you are there with you all of the time.

### **If you are a coach or other professional using coaching**

In the book, you will find an abundance of ideas, models and tools that have been used very successfully by myself and by coaches that I have trained and mentored. When I introduce new ideas to coaches, I always start by having the coaches apply them to themselves so that they integrate them into their own lives before using them with clients. Then their coaching conversations have authenticity and clients are far more likely to open up and to trust them.

### **If you are a leader or manager**

It is becoming more common now to speak of people as being your greatest asset. Apart from the ethical aspects involved, the financial and other costs of burn out, low morale and high staff turnover are escalating. You can use the ideas in this book in two ways. Firstly, to take care of and empower yourself, so that you are in a more resourceful state and can model the way. Secondly, as a guide on how to appreciate and support your teams and employees. If, however, you try to do the second without the first then you are likely to have little impact.

### **If you are a teacher or parent**

The same is true when dealing with children. If you want them to develop high self-esteem and self-care, then remember that they learn most by imitation.

For these reasons, whatever your role, this book is mostly written from the standpoint of applying the principles to yourself. From your own experience of walking your talk you can then support others.

There can be a great reluctance to appreciate and take care of yourself, as if this were somehow selfish or taking away from others. In practice it is the basis for healthy synergistic relationships. It is like the safety message on an aircraft where you are told to fit your own oxygen mask before attempting to help anyone else. When you are taken care of then you can be of real benefit to others.

Our inner and outer worlds reflect each other. At the deepest level, learning to appreciate yourself is about developing a rich, ongoing relationship with life. It is a journey of discovery and no one can travel the road for you. My intention is to make your journey a little lighter, by discarding some unnecessary baggage, and to make your route more direct by providing some outline maps of the territory. The examples I give are simple enough for you to use immediately and flexible enough for you to make them your own. As your understanding and experience of the process grows, I encourage you to periodically re-draw the maps to fit your unique perspective and requirements.

My style of coaching, whether personal or business, is about making the most of potential and opportunities in ways that are meaningful and aligned with your values. The best coaches are masters at supporting their clients in learning to appreciate themselves more. Where coaching differs from some other approaches is that it occurs in the context of fully owning, engaging in, and taking action in your life.

It's in this context that I invite you to appreciate and strengthen your relationship with yourself. You can try out new behaviours, take care of your needs, develop a more positive attitude and learn to support yourself unconditionally. You can engage in a dance of learning through interaction and reflection.

### **A game worth playing**

One deeply held myth in our current society is that of the perfectly happy, healthy and successful person. It is an expectation that in our life, career and relationships we can, and indeed should, have it all, all of the time. If we don't manage to achieve this then we feel that something has gone drastically wrong and that we have failed. In extreme contrast to the



perfect-life myth is a belief that we are helpless victims of upbringing, society and circumstance, condemned to endure whatever life has given us.

The reality is that most of us do grossly under-use our ability to make choices and improve our experience AND that sometimes life is messy and difficult and doesn't fit the storybooks AND that we always have a choice in how we respond to it.

This or any other book cannot make you okay, for the simple reason that you already are okay. In fact you are more than okay, you are unique. From that perspective you can afford to experiment, express yourself and make the best of what is possible. Then you get to play an entirely different game with the odds stacked in your favour.

And that is the game in which I invite you to join me. It is a game where you can be real and human and can afford to take risks because whether things work out or not, you are still okay. I invite you to have a relationship, a lifelong love affair, with yourself.

I am playing the game myself and, yes, sometimes I still have 'bad me' days. That is how real relationships are; they involve challenges as well as joy, require commitment and working on, and they deepen over time. The difference with this relationship is that, like it or not, it is 24/7 and here for life. Divorce is not an option!

Make it your game and adjust the rules to work for you. If you're ready to join the workshop, then it's time to begin...

# CHAPTER 1 – SETTING THE SCENE

My overall purpose is to support you in:

- Feeling good in, and about, yourself
- Being and expressing yourself fully
- Making the most of your life and opportunities

You can use these three points as criteria for how you understand or use the different models introduced in the book. If an idea doesn't support you in these three areas then adapt it or dump it. Please don't use it to undermine yourself or your life.

As a coach, I work with a wide variety of clients. I will support you whether you want to be the best beach-bum in the world, lead your organization to the next level, do a satisfying day's work for reasonable pay, advance your career, compose music, be a better parent, or whatever. My concern is that, whatever you are involved in, it is meaningful and important to you, allows you to be authentic and supports you in feeling good in, and about, yourself.

Whoever you are, and whatever you do, the relationship with yourself will be the biggest single factor in determining how happy and effective you will be.

## **Fulfilment beyond success**

Coaches have traditionally supported clients in being more effective and achieving their goals. In recent years, more and more clients are additionally talking about wanting to live fuller lives and to find more meaning in what they do. They are finding that conventional success is not always deeply satisfying or worth the cost to their lives as a whole.

Being fulfilled is about much more than achieving a set of goals or getting gold stars from people around you. It is about *how* you do things as well as *what* you do. It is about being yourself and choosing aims and methods that matter to you. It is about being with integrity so that who you are aligns with what you say and what you do.

All of this depends on having a strong relationship with yourself – one which enables you to connect with and express the power within you and, at the same time, allows you to embrace your everyday humanness.

## **The SELF model**

The SELF model is a set of ideas and tools for connecting with, supporting and expressing yourself fully. It is for people, like you, who want to get more out of life than simply getting by.

Many people admit that they can be their own worst enemy. The approaches contained in the SELF model will help you to become your own best friend.

Individuals coming to coaching want to feel better about themselves and to get more out of their lives and work. Organizations using coaching want to motivate and inspire their managers and executives to produce better results and to build better teams. In all coaching lasting success requires that you appreciate and support yourself more fully as a person rather than just as a commodity. It requires that you connect with, and take care of, yourself, and that you achieve your aims from a place of greater resourcefulness and satisfaction.

Only a limited number of people get to work with a coach and not all coaches are skilled in this deeper and necessary adjunct to working with particular goals and projects. Having worked with and trained hundreds of coaches and clients, I continually hear how good it feels to be fully accepted, given permission to tell the truth of how things are, warts and all, AND to be encouraged and supported in recognising your potential and in aiming for more. That is how we will work together in this book.

Just as the different plants and trees in a garden have their special foliage, scents and fruits, so you have your own individual character, essence, and contribution for the world. Plants and trees thrive when looked after and nourished. In the same way, you need the right conditions for *you* to flourish. The SELF model is a guide to providing the conditions under which you can grow and be your best. It is an outline for what a self needs to be healthy, happy, effective and fulfilled.

#### **The four aspects of the SELF model**

**S**ustaining

**E**mpowering

**L**istening

**F**riendship

*Sustaining* is about providing yourself with a nourishing and safe environment and doing what it takes for your various needs to be taken care of. Unmet needs tend to drive you, make you cranky and drain your energy. Meeting your needs in a healthy way gives you energy and a foundation for relating well with others.

*Empowering* is about believing in, encouraging and supporting yourself so that you have the best chance of achieving the things that really matter to you. It involves taking responsibility

for your self and your life as well as creating a positive mental and emotional climate in which you can grow and move forward. It also means providing yourself with the necessary time, and other resources, for whatever you undertake.

*Listening* is about taking the time to acknowledge what is true for you on different levels. It is about finding out what your values are and what you really care about and want. Many of us lead such busy lives that we are out of touch with ourselves and cannot see the wood for the trees. When you slow down and connect with yourself, then you have access to much greater wisdom and perspective.

*Friendship* is about giving yourself the gift of unconditional, positive regard so that whatever is going on in your life, and however you are doing, you are always there for you and ready to support yourself. Friendship is the overview that both informs the other elements and is developed by them. If you are to take only one thing from this book, then make it the intention to be a really good friend to yourself.

There is an enormous power that comes from fully being you. The four parts of the SELF model help you to access and express that power, in different ways.

Each of the four aspects will be explored in greater depth in its own chapter. Once you are familiar with them, they can be used together because they interlink and mutually support each other. As you take care of your needs and sustain yourself more this will empower you and create more space in which to listen to your self. As you listen with friendship rather than judgement, you create a safer space in which to acknowledge your needs and to take the necessary steps towards meeting them. You also make it safer to take risks, to extend your comfort zone and to make more of your opportunities, all of which is highly empowering. As you feel more empowered, you learn to take responsibility for your experiences and are much more able to make supportive changes.

So, shifts in any one aspect will bring about shifts in the others and your journey towards fully appreciating and expressing yourself will be unique to you. You can also apply the ideas as you support and respect others, whether they are clients, friends, family, or people that you influence as part of your job.

## **Being your own coach**

This book is written from a coaching perspective. Coaching, as I view it, is not prescriptive. The coach acts as a catalyst and the power comes from engaging together in a deep exploration of your particular situation. You remain the authority on what is right for you. As a

coach, my job is not to tell you or anybody else how to think or how to live. My purpose is to support you in raising your awareness and in taking responsibility so that you are better equipped to choose for yourself.

In that light, as you read this book, I encourage you to be your own coach. Use the different suggestions to get you thinking and to shine the spotlight of awareness on your own life and work. Explore the various ideas and then decide what does and does not work for you. There will be a difference in how much you get out of the book, depending on whether you scan through it quickly or whether you really take the time to reflect and think for yourself. Roughly speaking, your response to the different ideas will fall into one of three categories:

- You will know intuitively that something is right for you – so apply it
- You will know intuitively that something is not right for you – so ignore it
- You will need to try something out before knowing – so experiment with it

The last category will be the largest. Give yourself the chance to try things out, to see what works and to adjust ideas to suit you.

## Reflection points

To help you think and choose for yourself, you will find 'reflection points' throughout the book. These provide an opportunity for you to pause and to reflect on what happens and what is possible for you. You may also like to write about an idea or discuss it with a friend.

### **Reflection point – your relationship with yourself**

*In what ways do you have a good relationship with yourself now and in what ways could you improve on it?*

*What really matters to you, and how will YOU measure success?*

If your style and preference is to scan the chapters quickly and to try out some tools then that is also valid and possible. At the end of most of the chapters you will find key points, intentions to hold and possible actions steps. These are a starting point from which you can create your own intentions and actions that more fully reflect your unique perspective and needs.

The discussion and reflections points are designed to raise your awareness of current reality as well as how else you might want things to be. Change is then fuelled with intention and developed through action. Action brings feedback from which you can learn, gain more awareness, re-direct your intention and take further action. This process continues until you achieve your desired outcomes or else choose something else.

## **Holding an intention**

As it is used in the chapter summaries, holding an intention means having a focus and a vision of how you want things to be. For instance, you may hold the intention to live more healthily. This in itself can be powerful if it is consistently kept in your awareness. One way of keeping your intention alive is, twice per day, to subjectively score yourself out of ten for how much the intention was maintained, and to notice what did and did not help. Don't judge yourself as you do this. Developing an increased awareness of how things are going, and what is involved, will already be a catalyst for change. If you are visually-oriented, then you may want to make a chart and to stick it up where you will see it frequently. Writing about your experience or sharing it with others, for support, can also be very helpful.

## **Taking action**

Alongside holding the intention, you can choose to commit to specific goals and action steps. For instance, joining a weight-loss club or taking regular exercise as part of a sustainable lifestyle. While different people respond to different degrees of detail, most will benefit from committing to some specific actions. From the suggested intentions and actions at the end of each chapter, choose just two or three of each. Better still, come up with some of your own.

Chapter 7 gives an overview of working with vision, intentions and goals. You may like to glance at that alongside working through the other chapters.

You will also find throughout the book various case studies that illustrate the application of some of the ideas.

As we journey together, I am going to suggest that you change some of the ways in which you relate to yourself and your life – not only in what you do, but in how you think and feel, and how you look at things. The next chapter is a reference chapter which draws a map of the territory, explains what is involved and prepares you for creating or responding to change in general.