

CHANGING YOUR EQUATION

Moving toward Your
Ideal Future

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Introduction

It is not in the stars to hold our destiny but in ourselves.

—William Shakespeare

Change does not happen by magic. It isn't something someone else can do for you, nor can you do it for another. The change in mind-set needed to make any change means you must be your own personal leader. The goal is to leave the mind-set of "just getting by" behind. This is the time to take the helm of your life and navigate the journey to your ideal future.

**Personal
Leadership**

- According to Joelle K. Jay, PhD: "Personal leadership is the leadership of the self. It is the ability to define a direction for your leadership and life, and to move in that direction with consistency and clarity."

While you are leading yourself toward change, remember that you don't have to go it alone and are not without resources to help along the way. The change you need doesn't mean you have to totally create the way you should go or the methods you should use. Others have successfully made changes, and their lessons will be your guide. As unique as we may all seem, we are far more alike than we are different. In learning from each other, we can learn more about ourselves. Transforming your life is

a challenging-enough process as it is; why not use knowledge gained from others to help along the way?

For your first shift in mind-set, understand that developing yourself doesn't have to be a painful process. It may not be easy at times, but it should not be something that is so agonizing that you don't go any further. As humans, we try to be so independent, even taking great pride at times in going it alone. However, when we are so determined to learn on our own, we often experience pain and its aftereffects. Rather than admit that we should have listened, learned, or asked for help, we wear the pain like a badge of honor, as if to say, "I learned it the hard way, so can you." Why is this so necessary for our self-worth? Change is difficult enough. Do you really want to add pain to the process?

Our intent for you is to gain insight into the changes you need and want in your life—insight we wish more people had helped us gain along the way. The learning principles in this book are designed to help you avoid needless painful experiences. Implementing change in your life—the change required to fulfill your dreams and aspirations—should be a journey of discovery and enjoyment. While this journey should be savored, and our experiences can help you do that, remember that getting through these changes will require your own personal accountability, action, and effort. There is no magic potion. You cannot just make a wish on a star and reach your ideal future.

Hopes and dreams, however, will certainly help, and there *is* a secret formula for bringing the elements of the change process to light. We have developed an equation to help others understand the aspects of their lives they can and should change.

So here goes. Here is our formula for you to use in changing your equation:



This formula has three factors, different yet related to your ideal future. Certainly the vision of an ideal future will vary from person to person, but these three basic factors are universal to everyone.

Our ideal future isn't so much a destination as a journey made up of every future day in our lives. We will never wake up one morning and exclaim, "We're there. We've reached our ideal future!" No, the ideal future is always more about making choices that create a path toward living life to our fullest potential—maximizing fulfillment and simultaneously minimizing regret. It means finding your path, owning it, and leading the way. You will no longer accept a path full of ifs and maybes. Your ideal future is far too important to leave to chance or for others to determine its outcome. Our decision was to take full ownership of our path to the ideal future and everything that it would bring to our lives.

An ideal future is a collection of dreams, goals, and wishes that come to fruition. An ideal future realized is a life lived to full potential. It is the ability to look back at your life with satisfaction and meaning. Failure to obtain your ideal future leads to a life full of regrets. In embracing the concept of an ideal future, you're refusing to accept those regrets. Instead, you're using short-term and long-term goals to create your vision of the major items you want to accomplish in your lifetime. It is time to manage the factors to obtain the ideal future.

■ Life Elements

Life elements make up the first factor in our equation because they form the foundation of who we are. They are our core, and they are universal. Everyone has them. Collectively, they constitute where we are today—the starting point. Relationships, values and ethics, education, finances, and career are some of the elements that define who you are today.

We all need this higher level of understanding before we can set a course to where we want to go—that destination being our ideal future. By embracing the need to inventory where you stand in life, your life elements will come into sharper focus. Then you will be ready to move forward toward implementing the changes needed to reach your ideal future.

■ Realities

The next set of factors in our ideal future equation are those comprising our realities. These include the reality of you as a person, the reality of others around you, and the reality of a leader's world. They are the real truths that make up our lives. Using personal leadership to manage your equation and reach the ideal future means you must have a realistic perspective of your world and what is truly achievable. Some will say you can do anything you want as long as you set your mind to it. While we are absolutely against shutting people down, in developing this equation the need for a real understanding of what is achievable becomes paramount to obtaining an ideal future.

It's fine to have out-of-this-world hopes and dreams, but you can't let them become a wild fantasy that distorts the reality of who you are and what is actually achievable. Your ideal future needs to be rooted in reality, not fantasy. This distortion is more common than you may think. In such a media-focused culture,

it is easy to be led away from the truth in our lives. For example, how many talent shows are shown, and just how few people have true, uniquely gifted talent? While we might not be one of those few, we do have our own talents that are uniquely our own. We need to be aware of our strengths—and yes, our limitations.

The reality factor helps us capitalize on our individual talents instead of trying to capture the talents of others. Chasing the fantasy will not bring any of us to our ideal future, no matter how hard we try. In the end, we want to find our purpose or accurately see our true selves, and we have to acknowledge and understand just how much reality impacts our ideal future.

■ Change Agents

The final set of factors in our ideal future equation is our change agents. These are the elements we can or should change—we just may not know how to change them or even be aware of their existence. When we get trapped in things like financial limitations, past experiences, the inability to ask for help, the person we try to portray to others, the failure to create opportunities for ourselves, the hopelessness of being unable to forgive, and the inability to realize that we need to believe and have beliefs, we are actually creating roadblocks—self-imposed roadblocks. These roadblocks cause the agents of change to become invisible. Even though they are all around us, we become blind to what is changeable.

The epiphany in all of this is that a slight change of perspective will make them visible and allow us to harness their incredible power to create change. Our goal is to help you clear self-imposed roadblocks, make the invisible visible, and transform yourself from powerless to powerful so that your change agents become actionable. You can then accelerate the pace of change and achieve more than you ever imagined. The distant ideal future won't be so distant anymore. What once seemed so far away is now at your fingertips.

■ Move into Action: Envisioning Your Ideal Future

Use this tool to begin to develop your ideal future. Begin by answering these questions, and keep refining your answers as you progress through this book. Use this page or create a journal of your own. It doesn't matter as long as it is a list you can refer back to. Remember—an ideal future is ever evolving, so make sure you keep updating and refining it as you move forward on your life's journey.

In this column, list your goals, hopes, dreams, or anything you think will help you live life to its fullest potential.	Use this column to answer the question, “Why is this important?”	In this column, answer the question, “What difference or value will it bring to my life?”	Answer this final question over time: “How does the life equation need to be used to make this possible?”