

# CHAPTER FOUR

## "AUTHENTICITY"

*"Be yourself, there's no one else like you."*

~ UNKNOWN

When I was in my twenties, there was a popular phrase, “Be real.” It was a phrase that really meant, “Give it to me straight and no BS.” It was quite popular for some time but, like many things, culture and times change. The slogan went out of favor, but the phrase “be real” is quite appropriate for this chapter. I used to reference this phrase quite frequently. In fact, I would use it interchangeably. Ironically, the more I would use this phrase, the more emptiness I would experience. That emptiness came from the fact that I didn’t know who the real me was. As I got older and began to use more appropriate language, I found the term that resonated with “be real” was the word “authenticity.” Authenticity defined means a genuineness, or being true to who we are. How many twenty somethings or, for that matter, people of any age are fortunate enough to really know who they are? In my own life, I consider the decade of my twenties as the decade of self-indulgence. I believed that the whole world revolved around me. As time passed, I realized that wasn’t the case. So, in my thirties I began to explore the process of personal growth and self-awareness. Now mind you, you don’t have to wait until you are in your thirties to figure this out. Perhaps I was just a slow learner. Getting to know who we are might be one of the most important things we ever experience. This process can be painful. It requires a lot of introspection, quiet time, and thought, but the rewards can be immeasurable.

Have you ever wondered why you believe what you believe? Have you bought into some old axioms like *money doesn’t grow on trees*, *rich people are selfish and evil*, or even that *a woman’s place*

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*is in the home?* I know many of these old sayings come from generations past but, nonetheless, they were beliefs passed on by people we trusted and loved. Our parents were simply passing on to us what was passed down to them from their parents. We must examine these ideas to assess whether they are a universal truth—like what goes up must come down—or just something we accepted without even thinking about it. As we discussed in this book on a few occasions, our thought and belief systems dictate our life’s experiences. If we don’t challenge our belief systems, then we’re resigned to stay in a state of sameness. Have we really ever examined the beliefs we hold as it relates to finances, gender, race, culture, relationships, education, or sex—the list is nearly endless. Do they reflect our true beliefs or beliefs of others?

Taking stock of our belief systems in each of these areas will help us to begin to understand how we think, and why we act the way we do. Now, your current belief systems as you examine them might be appropriate. They may resonate quite deep within you, and there’s no need to change them. However, if you spend little to no time examining your belief systems, it’s a good bet that many of your belief systems don’t reflect your authentic self. Therefore, you’re currently just repeating the old belief systems that you were taught from the most influential people in your life: parents, grandparents, teachers, clergy, etc.

Growing up in a strong Italian family, I had the belief system that the best food in the world was Italian food. And although that may be true, that stopped me from experiencing and trying all kinds of different cultures and their food. For years, I never

stepped outside of your typical fast food or Italian restaurants. I had no idea what I was missing, until one day we were invited to join friends for dinner at a Korean restaurant. The experience and the food were both wonderful. I thought to myself, *If Korean food is good, Japanese food must be just as good! What about French food, Mexican food, English food?* Well, maybe not perhaps the English food, if you've been to England. But the point is we can become so rigid in our thoughts and ideas that we never venture beyond what we already know. This prevents us from experiencing an infinite number of other thoughts and beliefs that might be integral to our future growth. That growth is necessary to expand our vision so we can better understand who we truly are.

Growing up, I often aspired to be like my heroes—such as a professional baseball player or rock star. Even though I enjoyed those passions, I did so without truly understanding what was important to me. There's a fine line between emulating the qualities and characteristics of someone you admire and giving up the uniqueness of who you are. We all have various strengths and weaknesses. We need to learn, understand, and embrace each of them. Most of us spend far too much time thinking and focusing on what we don't do well. Things that make us unique and different are the talents that we're really good at. I found more success by focusing my time and energy on my strengths.

Children, as well as many adults, are always looking for acceptance from outward sources, whether it be our parents, family, or friends. Only true acceptance comes from within. When we're young and emotionally fragile, the words of the most influential people in

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our lives can have a profound effect on our thoughts and belief systems. Even the most innocuous statement could leave a lasting scar on our subconscious mind as an impressionable child. For example, as a child, I was out playing basketball and one of the older kids (who I admired greatly as an athlete) said that I'd never be a good basketball player because I couldn't jump very high and, at the time, he was absolutely right. But what I heard was, *you're not a good athlete, you'll never be any good, so don't waste your time*. When I internalized that it became my reality which, in turn, became my belief system. For the longest time, I would never pick up a basketball because of this, even though this belief system is not rooted in any truth whatsoever. In fact, as I got older, I realized that I was actually a pretty decent athlete but, for the longest time, I would not challenge myself athletically because of that negative belief.

It's these kinds of comments and jabs, even in jest, that can unintentionally lead to low self-esteem and low self-worth. Those comments can have a huge influence, which can alter our internal belief system and how we view ourselves. One of the most common elements that people have trouble with is a lack of self-worth and self-love. A lack of self-worth leads to self-sabotage. Self-sabotage will often occur when we begin to make progress and self-improvement. We subconsciously undermine that progress to move us back to what is called an emotional set point. These are best described as our self-imposed comfort zones, stemming from beliefs such as, "I can't lose weight," or "I'll never become wealthy." Thoughts like these will sabotage any attempts made to change. The only way to overcome these

set points is by changing our belief system. One of the best ways for doing so is by getting to our true authentic self.

When we begin to explore who we are—and I know this may sound crazy—we must fall in love with ourselves; not in a conceited, self-loathing manner, but one that honors and respects our uniqueness. The ironic thing is, until we fall in love with ourselves, it's impossible to love others. You see, you can't give away what you don't own. This means that unless we are love, we can't give love away. This is often evident in people who struggle with relationships, as they always seem to be attracted to people who are toxic for them. They tend to attract the same type of individual over and over. Our culture plays a big part in this; when you watch any sort of TV show or movie, read books and magazines, listen to the radio, or any type of advertisement or marketing, the overriding message tends to be that you're lacking something, and we (they) have what it is that you need. It might be that fancy new car to make you feel whole as a man, or the new pair of shoes and purse that will make you that attractive stunning woman. It might be that little pill to make you a voracious lover.

We are bombarded daily with thousands of messages telling us about how inadequate we are. If your psyche is fragile, you buy into this and start to look for external reasons to fill something that requires an inside solution. It creates an illusion that we're not whole, and we must search outside ourselves to find fulfillment. This is false programming, commercialism, materialism, alcohol, drugs, sex; all these forms of escapism only provide a temporary high to fill the void within. They create a neurochemical high

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which we become addicted to, requiring another shopping spree, another new car, the next drug or alcoholic beverage. This fuels the addiction cycle, which leads to a self-destructive pattern, all based on a set of lies. Each time we fill that emptiness, the high has to get stronger to fill the void as the void gets deeper. That void can pull us deeper into the inevitable outcome of an ultimate crash and burn. Truly understand that nothing from outside yourself can fulfill the void of inside yourself—that void is self-love. We must learn to love ourselves before we accept someone else into our life.

Most relationships fail because we're hoping that we can find the things that we believe we are lacking within ourselves from someone else. Unfortunately, no one can ever live up to that expectation. Eventually this will lead to disappointment and disillusionment in the relationship, ultimately leading to its demise. By learning who we are, and what makes us unique and different, we can embrace and learn to accept ourselves. The process of filling this void takes time, work, and can be painful, but it is truly the only solution to break this endless destructive cycle. We must first begin by understanding that happiness is an emotion and, like every emotion, our emotions are choices. Either we are in control of them or someone else is. Don't choose to be a victim. We can choose to be happy or sad, angry or calm, content or disappointed, fearful or faithful. This doesn't mean that bad things or things that upset you don't occur, because they do—life will always happen. It's how we choose to react to these life situations that matters. When living authentically, we have a better understanding of who we are and we can choose to

focus on the negative or the positive. Keep in mind, within every negative experience is the seed of new opportunities.

### **The four steps to living authentically**

**Step number one:** Examine your most deeply held beliefs about yourself and your surroundings. Are these beliefs your truths, or truths that you've accepted from others? If you reject the beliefs that you're currently holding, write out a new set of belief systems for yourself.

**Step number two:** Choose to focus on your strengths. Identify three to five of your strongest attributes. If you're having trouble identifying those attributes, ask someone close to you. They should share them with you freely. You should spend 80% of your time on the things you enjoy and are really good at.

**Step number three:** Choose the emotion and energy you want to live by. Prepare your mind in advance for when adversity and challenges in life occur. How will you choose to react? Will you choose despair, anger, disappointment, or regret, or will you choose optimism, hope, faith, and opportunity? Inherent in every negative is a positive. Do you choose to acknowledge that?

**Step number four:** Choose relationships that allow you to be you. The people who truly love you for who you are will celebrate you and not try to change you into something you're not, or someone they want you to be. True authenticity lies in the ability to live your life as you see fit; to follow the path that God has put you on to experience the most joy and happiness that your journey has to offer.



## Eliminating the Obstacles to Living Authentically

1. Do you feel like you live true to your authentic self?
2. What previously held thoughts, behaviors or beliefs do you need to eliminate to live more authentically?
3. What would your life look like if you lived more authentically?
4. What date do you plan on implementing authentic living into your daily success habits?

# CHAPTER FIVE

## “GRATITUDE”

*“Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues,  
but the parent of others.”*

~ CICERO

## Change Your Mind, Change Your Destiny

Who doesn't love the Pharrell song, "Happy"? It's nearly impossible to listen to that song and not bounce around, move, or dance. The energy, tone, and vibration of that song just makes you feel good about yourself.

How would you define happiness? Does happiness come from extraneous temporal experiences? Those momentary experiences that might occur from our purchasing a new pair of shoes, or perhaps buying the latest electronic gizmo we desire. Happiness can be when we're around the people we love. It could be a warm sunny day, or sitting by the ocean and listening to the waves rolling up on the shore. Happiness can be an easy Sunday morning or a wonderful meal with friends and family. Happiness can come in so many forms and so many variations. The cool thing is that we get to decide what it is that makes us happy. However, so many of the things I just mentioned are temporary; they're fleeting. Some experiences may leave you with a sense of emptiness shortly thereafter, resulting in the need for the next fix. This often leads to addictive types of behaviors, such as over-consumption of alcohol, medications, shopping, or unnecessary purchases. It has been my experience that true happiness occurs when we learn gratitude.

Gratitude is defined by Wikipedia as "a thankfulness, gratefulness, or an appreciation, a feeling or attitude, an acknowledgement of a benefit that has been received or will be received." To me, gratitude is being thankful for all things that exist in our lives, whether we considered them good or bad at the time. In every life experience there's an opportunity sewn within; a chance to

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experience something new or to be challenged, which will cause us to grow. Gratitude is an acknowledgement; an acceptance that all things currently present in our lives are there for a reason, and being thankful that they are present. Gratitude is also a consciousness of being thankful for things yet to come; for the things that we define as being good, as well as the things that we see as difficult. Many people come to gratitude when they experience a significant life challenge, such as a health issue with themselves or a close family member. If they're fortunate enough to overcome this obstacle, the overwhelming emotion experienced is gratitude. Gratitude to be able to overcome the health challenge, to experience a new outlook on life, to have a second chance, and this often leads to a new perspective on things that were perhaps once taken for granted. The simple small things in life we now acknowledge as being true blessings.

If you look back in your life, I would bet that some of the greatest experiences you've ever had were also your most trying times. They molded you into the person you've become. I have many examples of this in my own life. One, in particular, is when I was faced with a major health scare. At the time, I was in my early thirties with three small children when I developed a condition called Benign Fasciculation Syndrome. This is a condition that causes muscles to flutter and twitch. It can occur in a single muscle or throughout your entire body. Think of a million worms crawling all over your body. Not a pleasant experience. This condition began following the completion of my first triathlon, which seemed weird. Unfortunately, my condition was incessant and 24/7 nonstop. It being part familial and part stress-related,

as well as the result of nutritional deficiency—which was the precipitating factor in my case. But as a healthcare provider, I knew that fasciculation is also associated with ALS or Lou Gehrig’s disease. Before I was diagnosed with the benign form of this condition, I was terrified that I was going to die and leave my wife husbandless and children fatherless. All I wanted was a positive diagnosis. It was all I thought about for many weeks before my exam was completed and test results were known. At times, I felt helpless—like my life was on hold. I was also feeling completely overwhelmed, anxious, and depressed. I thought this couldn’t be happening to me. I lived the right way. I did all the right things. I worked out, ate right, and didn’t smoke. I lived a healthy lifestyle. I would have done anything to avoid the fate associated with this disease. Unfortunately, those families touched by this disease know, ultimately, this disease is a death sentence.

During the greatest challenge of my life, all I could think was, if I could get a second chance I would live my life differently. I prayed for that second chance. I would be a better dad, husband, and leader. I would be kinder and more grateful. Fortunately for me, on that fateful day, I got that second chance. The doctor told my wife and me it was not ALS and that I was not going to die. I was shocked, relieved, overjoyed, and immensely grateful. I couldn’t believe the words coming from his mouth. My wife and I were in tears. I thanked God for the positive news. Believe me, my perspective on life changed forever. It wasn’t that I didn’t cherish my life before then, but going through something like that will change you—and it did change me in a big way. I had a much

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deeper sense of gratitude than ever before. I committed to the pledge I made to myself to be a better human being. Rather than looking at the world as the glass is half-empty, I now saw the world in a totally different light.

So, I ask the question, why is it that we don't live in a deep sense of gratitude all the time? Why is it that, often times, we need a tragedy to occur before we come to this realization? It is my hope through my experience that you can come to a conclusion without experiencing a major life challenge. The human condition is constantly looking at what's not right, rather than seeing all the good that exists. Because, if we choose to open our eyes and change our perspective, good does exist all around us. How do we get conditioned to be so negative all the time? Is it possible to change and, if so, what does it take? What are the steps?

Let's first start by understanding that gratitude has historically been a focus of most world religions. It reinforces present and future emotional and psychological benefactors. It has been found that those who appear or attend religious service more often are more likely to have a greater sense of gratitude in all areas of their lives.

A study was done that found a 70% increase in sales when customers of a jewelry store were called and thanked for their purchases, compared to customers who were not called. Servers at a restaurant who wrote "Thank you!" on the back of patrons' checks received bigger tips. A most recent, larger study found that people who are grateful experience a higher sense of well-being.

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Grateful people are happier; they are less depressed, less stressed, and more satisfied with their lives and social relationships. That study was from the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. That study also indicated that grateful people also have higher levels of control of their environment, personal growth, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. These are just a few of the examples and studies that have shown the positive effects of a consciousness of gratitude.

Gratitude, like any other emotion, is a choice. Each day or, for that matter, each moment, we get to choose the emotion that we want to experience. At this point you're thinking, *I already do*. But the reality is, most of the time we are reactionary with our emotions and not consciously choosing them. Therefore, we allow our circumstances and those around us to have the greatest influence on our emotions. So the question is, are we more influenced by external circumstances or internal thoughts?

Many people are stuck in the habit of complaining and criticizing rather than taking responsibility for their own thoughts and behaviors. Ultimately, this results in seeing yourself as a victim and in today's culture this is heavily reinforced. This creates a predicament that is nearly impossible to overcome. The most obvious example of this was the financial crisis of 2008, brought on by millions of people unable to pay mortgages because of the easy access to debt that had been made widely available. Neither the lenders nor the borrowers saw this as a problem until the bubble burst, resulting in the largest bank bailout in history. The Government created policies that encouraged predatory lending

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to people who couldn't afford the loans, while at the same time they threatened lenders if they failed to make those loans. The crazy thing is that no one took responsibility for the mess and chose to blame others for their incompetence. Who was left to pay the tab for the bad policies? Us – the tax payers.

The simplest way to overcome victimhood is to develop a strong sense of gratitude in your life. In fact, it is virtually impossible to be a victim and be grateful at the same time.

The exciting thing about gratitude is that it doesn't only benefit the one expressing the gratitude, but the individual receiving it also experiences a higher level of personal satisfaction. I guess what I'm trying to say very simply is, if you want to change your life, start by adding an attitude of gratitude. It's the simplest thing you can do to begin to change your outlook on life. In a sense, it will be like reprogramming your operating system of your subconscious mind. This helps us move away from being our old self with the old thoughts, beliefs, actions, and emotions we've had repetitively for years. If we want to choose a new experience, we have to begin by reprogramming the mind and, particularly, the subconscious mind from which 95% of all our actions originate. We're creatures of habit, and when we begin to move away from unconsciously producing thoughts, beliefs, actions, and emotions, to taking control more consciously – in other words, being more aware of those things – we begin to rewire the brain to fire differently. We then create new thoughts, new beliefs, new actions, new emotions, and new results.



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This all starts with the consciousness of awareness. Being aware of the thoughts that we're experiencing all the time is so counterintuitive to today's culture and society. Virtually everything that we experience is designed to move us away from reality, to move us away from conscious thought, and to dull our senses—which results in a mind-numbing experience. Shifting our consciousness requires a reawakening to conscious living. So let me be clear; all we have to do is to remind our self who we no longer want to be. This may seem difficult and challenging, but it starts with a simple decision, one in which you begin by asking a question. *Do I choose to continue to experience the life I have, or do I want something new and different?* If your answer is the latter, then let's begin by changing our thoughts so we anchor ourselves to a consciousness of gratitude.

The interesting thing about rewiring the mind is that once you create your new habit and behavior (i.e., your new self), it's impossible to have two opposing thoughts at the same time. So when you're in a consciousness of gratitude, you are less likely to experience things like hatred, anger, and fear. The more we focus on what's good, the more we attract what's good. This is not a simple play on words, but one that I've experienced on countless occasions. For example, I had a desire to serve more people in our community. To do so, I needed to share with them the life-changing benefits of natural healthcare and chiropractic. This could provide my community with more abundant health and vitality, so I began to express more gratitude for the opportunity to serve. The funny thing is, the more gratitude I expressed, the faster my business grew. The more I focused on it each day, the

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busier I got, and the more patients I started to see. The act of being truly grateful built my business.

I can give you countless other examples of similar experiences, but this is why I have such a strong belief that gratitude is a foundation that can change your life, and the lives of those around you, for the better. Gratitude unlocks the power of abundance, which attracts things to us by first giving thanks for what it is you want to create ahead of time. There’s no greater source and no greater tool to start with than gratitude. It will make the world around you a better place to be, inside and out.

### **The six steps to create more gratitude in your life.**

**Step number one:** Create a gratitude journal. One can be purchased at the store, or you can simply use a loose-leaf notebook or a journal/notebook app on your mobile device.

**Step number two:** Write down all the things that you’re currently thankful for in your life; all the things that are going well. This could be your health, relationships, job, finances, or friends. List them all as completely and as thoroughly as possible.

**Step number three:** List and identify all the current challenges you’re experiencing in your life. For example, you might be experiencing challenges with your family, relationships, health, career, etc. Be as thorough as possible. The second part of this step is to answer the question, *How does this current challenge benefit me in my life? What lessons am I supposed to learn from this experience?* This can be a difficult step, but give this serious

thought. *In what ways will this challenge make me stronger?* List each one as thoroughly and completely as possible. I want you to see the inherent opportunity, and the lesson, from each of these challenges. This will begin your mental reframing.

**Step number four:** At the conclusion of each day, open your gratitude journal and date it, then write out three things that you're currently grateful for on that particular day. These can be as simple as a home-cooked meal, beautiful rain on a spring afternoon, or a new book you started to read (hopefully mine). Then write one challenge you had for that day, why you're thankful for it, and what you learned from it. The power from this habit is nearly immeasurable. This literally begins to retrain your brain by neurologically rewiring how the brain fires into a habit of thinking in a gratitude consciousness.

**Step number five:** Each morning upon waking, before you even open your eyes, give thanks for another opportunity to live your dream. Give thanks for the abundance in your life, for your health, your family, and your ability to serve and to live out your dream, and for the one big goal you want to accomplish that day. This will begin the flow of gratitude in your consciousness as you start your day.

**Step number six:** Do each of these lessons every day and without fail. In the beginning, creating these new habits can be a challenge. The more diligent and consistent you are with applying these steps daily, the faster you'll create the new habit of gratitude. Before long, if you keep at it, you'll begin to receive all the amazing benefits of gratitude in all aspects of your life.

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## Eliminating the Obstacles to Create More Gratitude

1. What dominant emotion (fear, uncertainty, doubt, anger, envy, guilt or despair) do you need to release to live presently in gratitude?
2. How will living in a state of gratitude change your life?
3. What would your life look like if you lived in the presence of gratitude?
4. What date do you plan on implementing gratitude into your daily success habits?