Written by

ANDY DIX, MS, BCC

31 QUESTIONS

that

ONLY YOU CAN ANSWER

A Daily Mental Workout for Breakthrough Thinking

Be your best at doing your good!

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An epic gift from your future best self
to be savored one day at a time.



MAY I ASK YOU A QUESTION?

“Never ask a question unless the answer makes a difference.” – Proverb

I only have one incredibly powerful tool in my executive coach's toolkit. A simple "?". While my coaching clients come to me seeking answers to their most challenging issues and frustrating situations, my go-to response is just like "Jeopardy," always in the form of a question. Questions are the seeds that grown answers. Questions are like levers to wedge open the rusted shut doors inside our minds that lockout new possibilities and new solutions. Truthfully you don't want my answers to your problems. You want to discover and create the solutions with consequences you are willing to accept. If you need new solutions, then you probably need to be asked new questions. I would welcome an opportunity to accompany you on your discovery journey and support your growth as your executive coach. But since we need to begin somewhere, how about accepting my challenge to take a daily baby step to leverage some fresh ideas and thinking?

I challenge you to invest at least 10 minutes per day for the next 31 days and sit with one question until you come up with your answer that you are willing to live with. Please hand write your answer down in a journal. Handwriting activates various parts of your brain that typing does not.

My hope is you will discover a breakthrough concept that will help you be your best at doing your good. I believe more answers are waiting inside of you for the right question to spark them to life. So if you are ready to get growing, then may I ask you a question?

Andy Dix, MS, BCC

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DAY 1

Your mindset and self-talk create the illusionary boundaries of your possible options. Your natural intrinsic motives are much more influential to your actions than your willpower and self-control. You always have a reason as to why you are choosing not to take action with the potential to move you closer to achieving your goal. Your procrastination is usually due to your fears, and achieving your goal doesn't matter enough to you to justify your effort.

Today's question makes several assumptions:

- You have a goal. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reason that matters and Time-bound)
- You have options, capabilities, and resources.
- You can take action if you choose to do so.
- You are willing to commit to taking action today.
- You have someone to encourage, support, and hold you accountable for taking action today. (A coach is perfect for this.)

“Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.”
Martin Luther King Jr.



DAY 2

Today's question has a hidden trick to answering it correctly. You may become frustrated, overwhelmed, and stuck when you try to control what is beyond your control. You only have two options within your direct control. You can somewhat control your thoughts, and you can usually control your behaviors or actions.

On a sheet of paper, list what thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, values, and motives are possibly preventing your progress or actions towards goal attainment. Also, list what behaviors you are doing or not doing that are working against your progress.

Are you stuck in inaction due to false evidence appearing real (fear)? How are you self-sabotaging your success? What will you commit to doing differently in your thinking and behaving today? What do you need to stop, start, or continue doing to take your next step toward your goal?

“A particular train of thought persisted in, be it good or bad, cannot fail to produce its results on the character and circumstances. A man cannot directly choose his circumstances, but he can choose his thoughts, and so indirectly, yet surely, shape his circumstances.”
James Allen



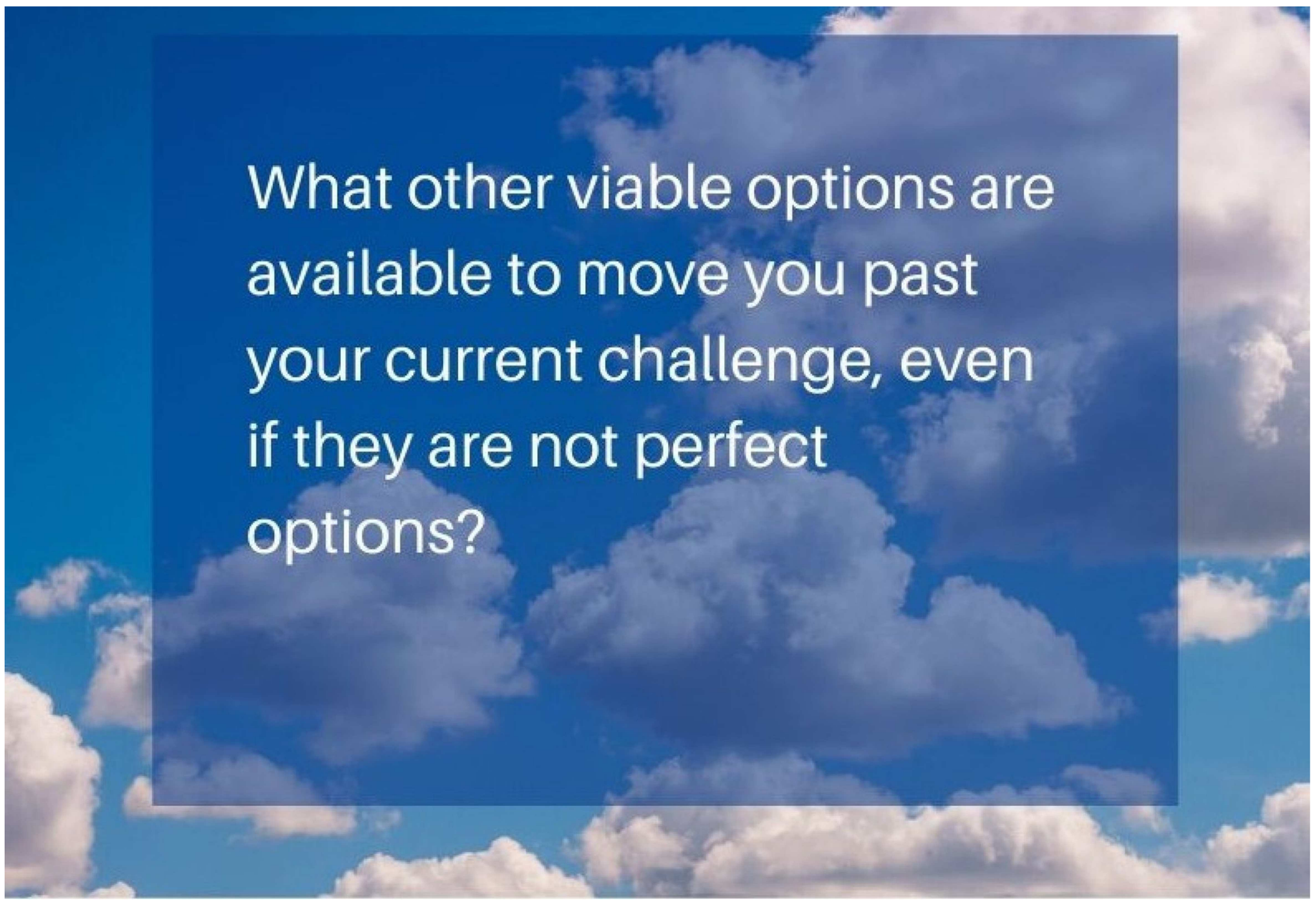
DAY 3

Today's question confronts either your false dilemma or your false dichotomy. (They mean pretty much the same thing.) A false dilemma or false dichotomy is when you believe you must choose between only two options. Either/or thinking prevents our exploration of many possible options. Unfortunately, your brain trys to be helpful and naturally limits your choices without much conscious input.

Your tendency to either/or choice-making is often called black and white thinking. You simplify down the complex and complicated into either good or bad, right or wrong, for you or against you, to try to make your options more understandable and your decision more clear. When you engage in either/or thinking, you limit the possibility of discovering a third or twentieth viable option.

You might be quick to discard a possible option if you think it is less than perfect. Most options are less than ideal unless we rationalize them. When faced with a difficult choice, it is constructive to consider a minimum of two additional possible options before deciding. You might also ask yourself if there is a way for both/and to replace your either/or? Explore your options, even if they are less than perfect, and avoid the trap of either/or thinking.

“In life you have three options with any situation that is a challenge. Remove yourself from the situation, change it, or accept it."
Phil McGraw, Ph.D.



DAY 4

If you visit any garden center, you will see a small plastic steak in the pot of the plants providing recommendations to care for the plant. Humans, unfortunately, are not born with such specific instructions. You can spend a lifetime in various trials and errors as you learn what you need in your own ecosystem to feel a strong sense of belonging, well-being, and thriving.

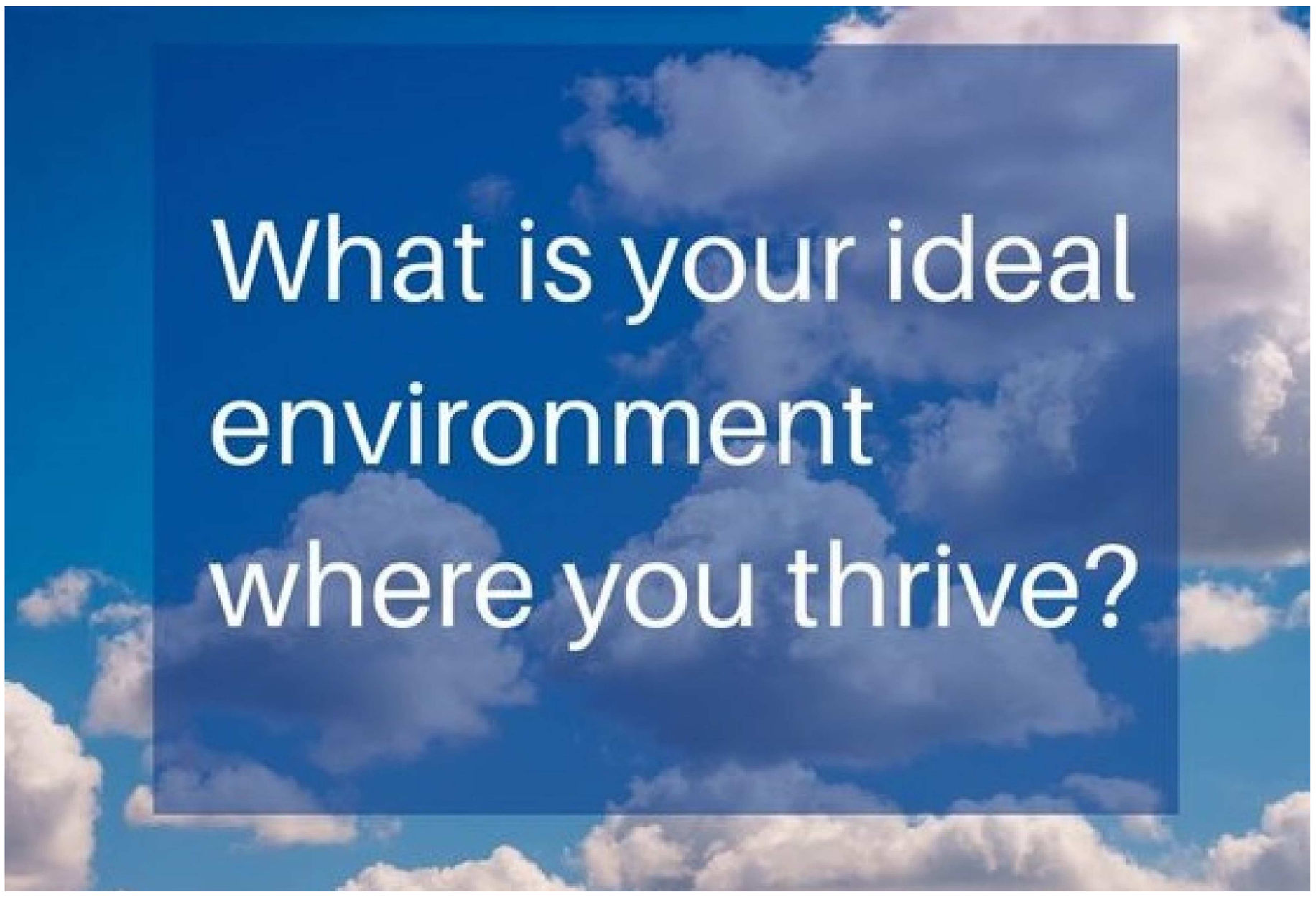
I have helped nearly 1,800 professionals over the past decade to understand what they need to do to create a satisfying environment for their true nature. According to the extensive psychological research of Professor Steven Reiss, Ph.D., humans share 16 basic human needs. For example, one of the basic needs is the appreciation of beauty. For the person with an extreme need for beauty, s/he must immerse themselves in a beautiful environment. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Suppose a job requires someone who is hard-wired to thrive on exposure to beauty to work in what they judge to be an unappealing setting. In that case, the beauty lover may ultimately find their work frustrating, draining, and ultimately intolerable. Choosing to deny your intense needs temporarily requires the most self-control and willpower and is exhausting. It is better to understand how to create a satisfying environment. When you are in your natural element, you can not only thrive, but you will be most able to sustain excellent performance.

A Reiss Motivation Profile® is your owners manual for living a meaningfully satisfied life. You can learn more at https://adgrowthadvisers.com/reiss-motivaton-profile.

“Our created natures make us like organisms in an ecosystem: there are some roles and relationships in which we thrive and others in which we wither and die."

Parker Palmer

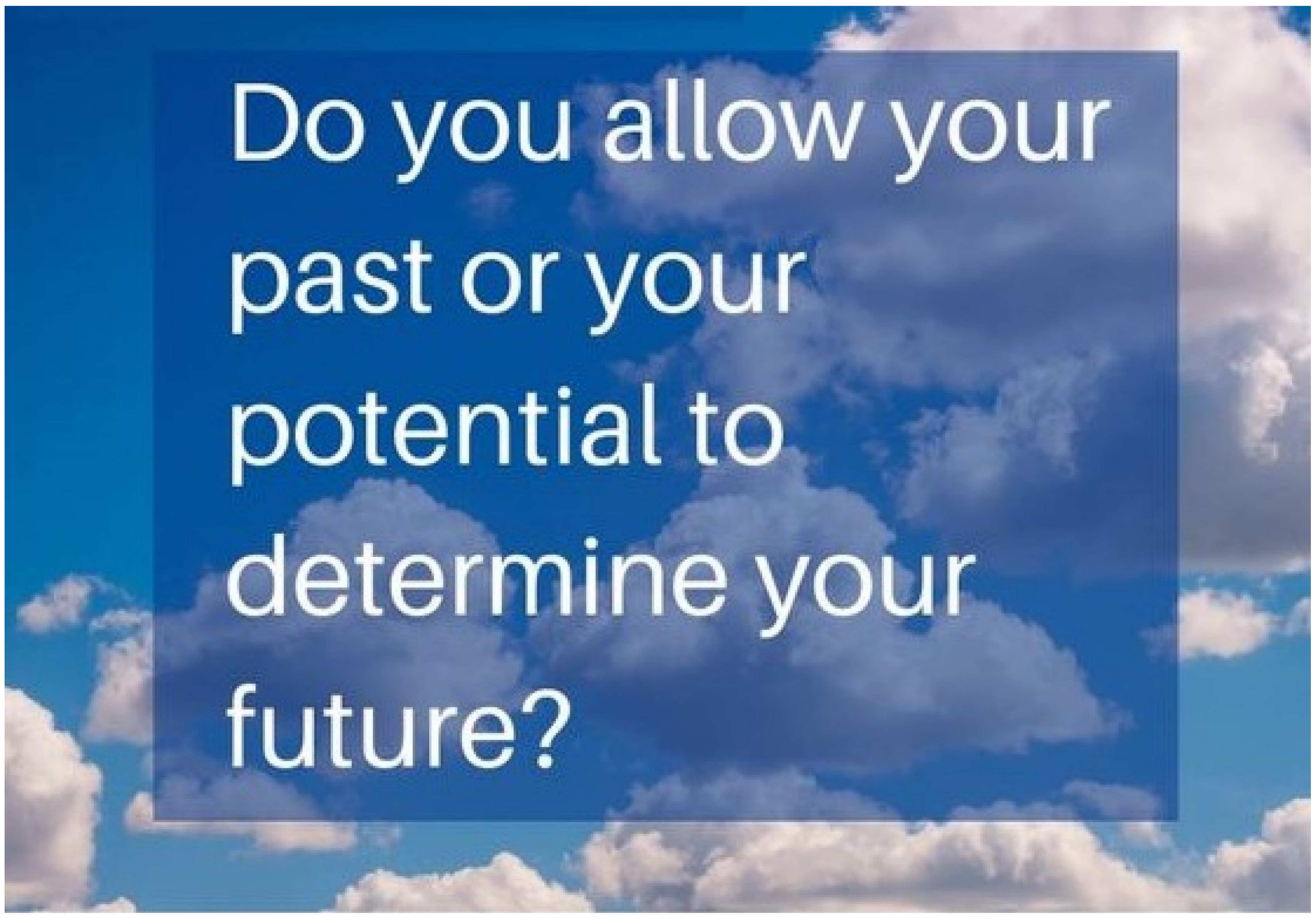


DAY 5

Your past is like a printed history book. It is open to reference and interpretation, but it is closed to any edits or alterations. Your personal past story is powerless to force or limit your choices in the present or future chapters. I have often heard the past as the wake of a boat. A boat's wake is a trail that shows where the boat has been, but not where the boat is heading. The wake cannot change the boat's course or destination. Do not buy into the lie that the unchangable past creates a predetermined future! Those pages of your story have yet to be written or acted out.

Your better future version of you is hoping for you to grow into their character so they someday take center stage in your life's epic adventure story. Your struggles with challenges and adversities are the hard-won battles that free your potential into your present and future capabilities. Unrealized and untested potential is waiting to show up for work. Only your potential in action can build your best possible future.

“Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they've been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing.”
Muhammad Ali



DAY 6

It is helpful to review your completed tasks from the past several weeks and evaluate which made any meaningful contribution for you this week. There is a good chance that last week's top priorities, which caused you much stress and angst, are not relevant to the present, let alone the future.

You assign meaning based on your unique values-system; you naturally find most meaningful whatever you value the most. Only you can define what is a meaningful task for you. The secret to living a meaningful life is doing more of what you find the most meaningful, most often.

When you invest your time and resources in completing meaningful tasks with a significantly longer shelf-life than today's lunch special, then you are gradually building a foundation for your most meaningful life.

“Life has no meaning. Each of us has meaning and we bring it to life. It is a waste to be asking the question when you are the answer.”
Joseph Campbell



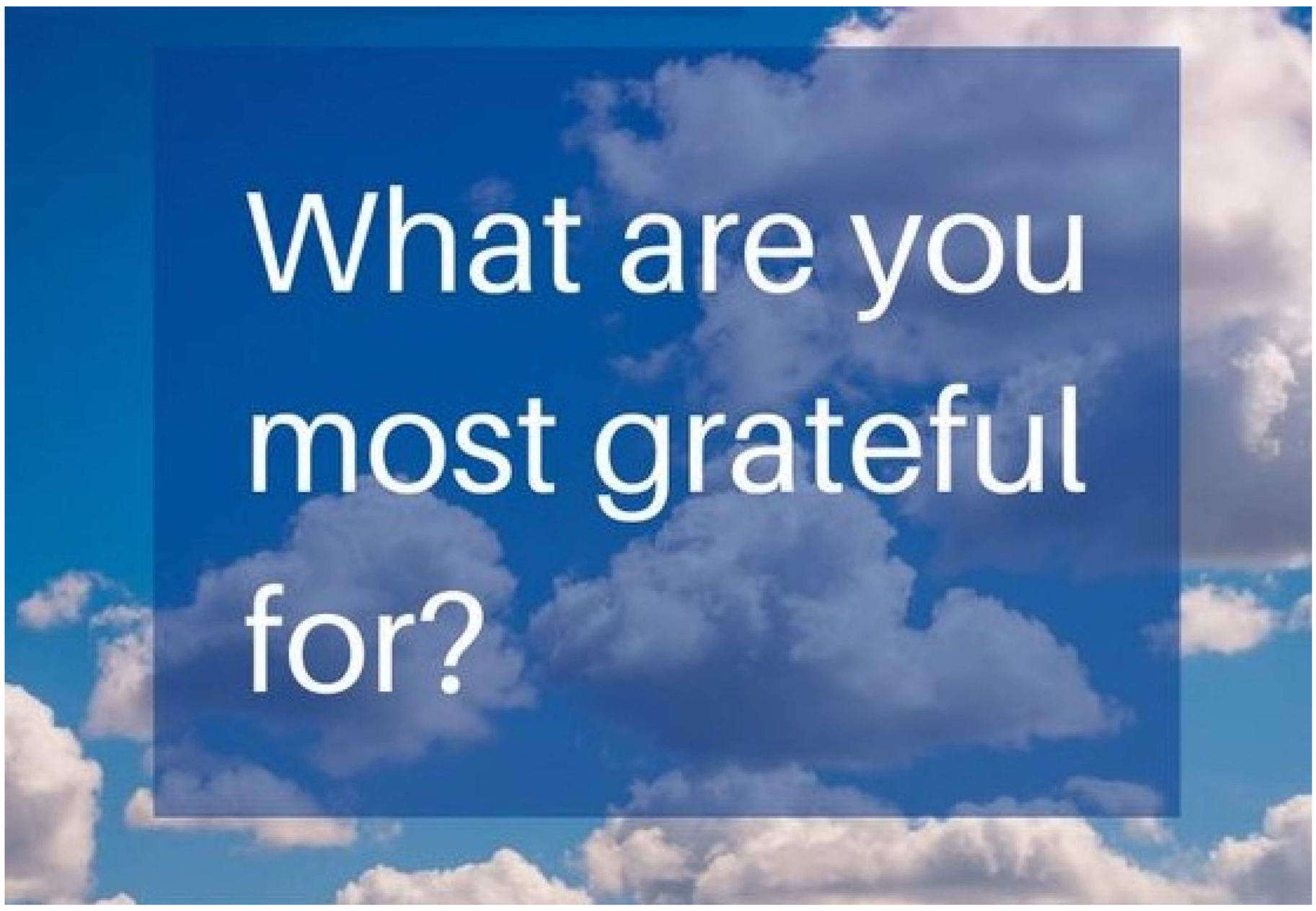
DAY 7

If you want to understand the power of gratitude, Professor of Psychology, Robert Emmons, Ph.D., at UC, Davis is an expert on the subject. He defines gratitude as having two steps. The first is "recognizing that one has obtained a positive outcome," and the second is "recognizing that there is an external source for this positive outcome." Gratitude is a positive difference-maker. Feeling grateful means recognizing and appreciating that you have received some benefit as a gift from outside of yourself and beyond your efforts.

A Greater Good Center at UC, Berkley white paper lists many benefits of being grateful. *"Research suggests that gratitude may be associated with many benefits for individuals, including better physical and psychological health, increased happiness and life satisfaction, decreased materialism, and more. A handful of studies suggest that more grateful people may be healthier, and others suggest that scientifically designed practices to increase gratitude can also improve people's health and encourage them to adopt healthier habits. Many more studies have examined possible connections between gratitude and various elements of psychological well-being. In general, more grateful people are happier, more satisfied with their lives, less materialistic, and less likely to suffer from burnout. Additionally, some studies have found that gratitude practices, like keeping a "gratitude journal" or writing a letter of gratitude, can increase people's happiness and overall positive mood."*
(p.4) "The Science of Gratitude," published in May 2018.
(https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF_White_Paper-Gratitude-FINAL.pdf)

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend.

Melody Beattie



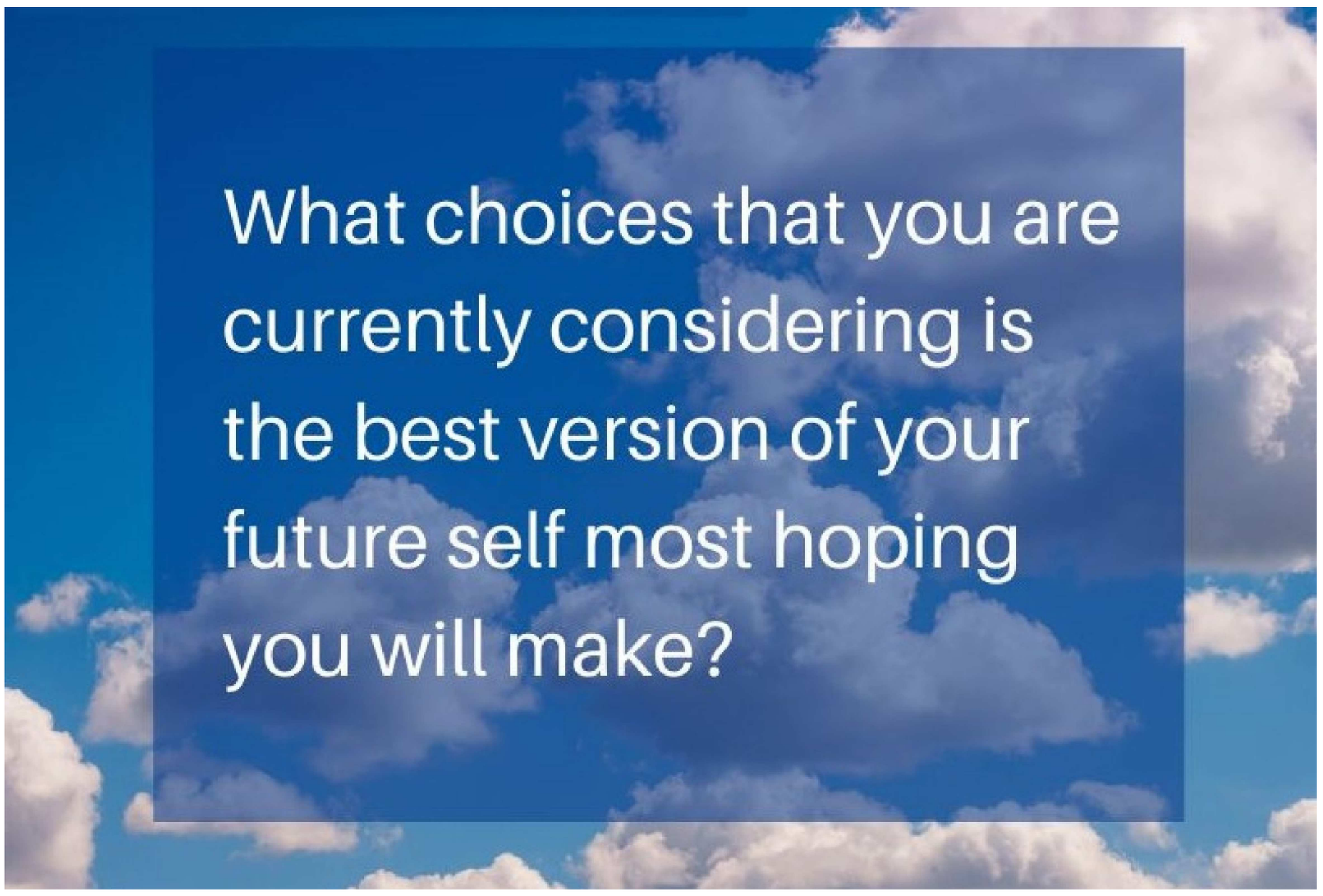
DAY 8

There is an incredibly important character in your life's story that our world is hoping to meet someday. S/he is the hero of your story and has the potential to do good for all humanity. Our hero, who is the best version of you, is frozen in the future. The current version of you is on a quest to become the future best you. Each choice you make has the potential to move you closer or farther away from transforming into your best self.

If hindsight is 20/20, then the future you is always rooting for the present version of you to make wise choices to transform yourself into the hero you were born to be. You risk becoming your future best self whenever you choose the easiest, immediate option without considering the potential longer-term consequences. Taking a moment to wonder what your best future self might be hoping you will decide to do in a situation might guide you to make a wise decision.

Your best future self might discover the answer to someone's greatest need. I hope you choose to show up in the future.

"You cannot predict the future, but you can create it."
Peter Drucker



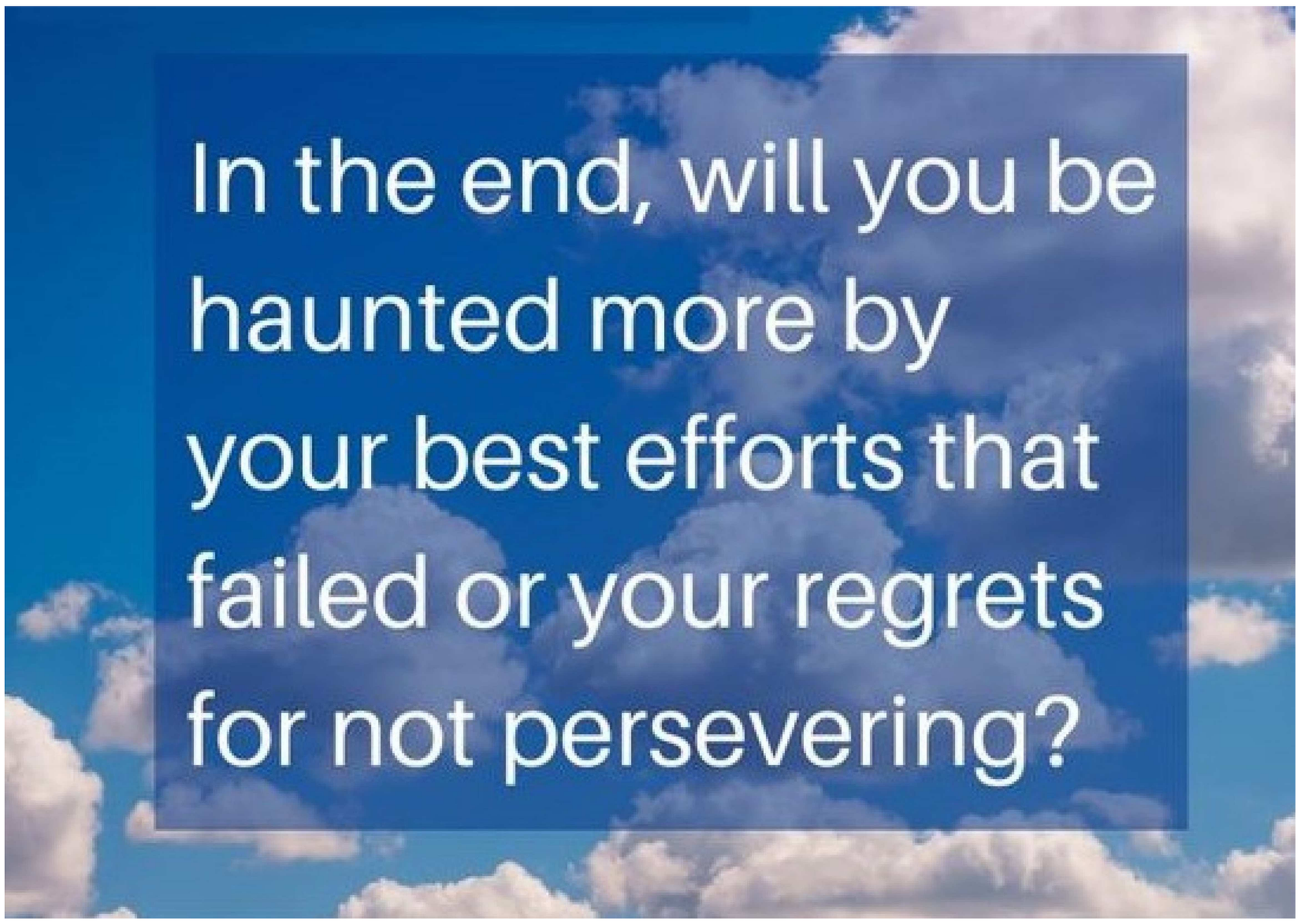
DAY 9

You may tend to experience peace in failure when you believe you gave it your all and still came up short of your goal. Whenever you quit, you have no idea how close you were to achieving success.

Remorse for failure and regret for not persevering can both be emotionally devastating for a high-achiever or idealist. According to Psychologist Melanie Greenberg, Ph.D., "regret is a negative cognitive or emotional state that involves blaming ourselves for a bad outcome, feeling a sense of loss or sorrow at what might have been, or wishing we could undo a previous choice that we made." ("The Psychology of Regret: Should we really aim to live our lives with no regrets?" Psychology Today Online, Posted: May 16, 2012.)

Ruminating on regrets is very damaging to your well-being. "What's done is done" is a true statement. Accepting what you cannot change is a proven pathway to serenity. Understanding which option will cause you the most significant distress; trying and failing, or choosing not to try at all, can perhaps guide you to making decisions you can live with no matter the outcome.

“Of all the words of mice and men, the saddest are, "It might have been.”
Kurt Vonnegut



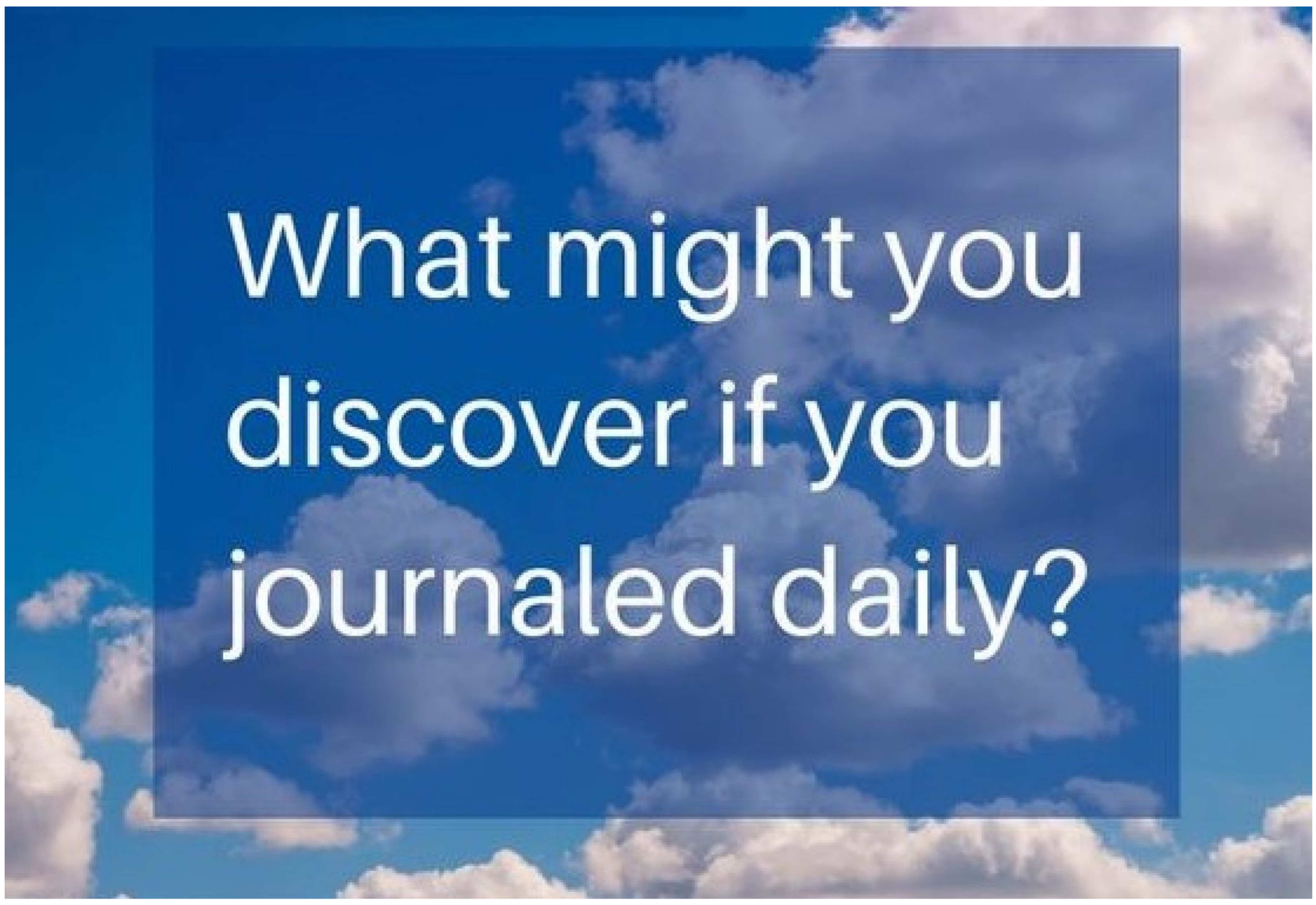
DAY 10

Thousands of thoughts flash across your mind's screen every minute. Quite a few of your ideas are helpful, insightful, and maybe even brilliant. Unfortunately, your train of thought is all too often an express to nowhere, or passes by too fast to catch a ride. Distractions and your fleeting emotions can easily derail it. How do you catch the train? Journaling has proven to be exceptionally helpful in allowing people to see how they are thinking and feeling. The good news is you do not have to be a writer to journal.

A quick internet search will yield thousands of articles and suggestions on the journaling tips and journaling benefits. I suggest an article by Courtney E. Ackerman, MSc., titled, "83 Benefits of Journaling for Depression, Anxiety, and Stress. (https://positivepsychology.com/benefits-of-journaling/)

Handwriting a journal for as little as five minutes per day is beneficial. Handwriting engages various parts of your brain in helpful ways that typing and even speaking does not. Grab your favorite writing instrument and some paper. Find some quiet space and capture what is on your heart and mind.

"Writing in a journal reminds you of your goals and of your learning in life. It offers a place where you can hold a deliberate, thoughtful conversation with yourself."
Robin S. Sharma



DAY 11

Some questions have the potential to scare the hell out of you. Is it cancer? Will my child survive? Do these jeans make my butt look big? OK, maybe not the last one. You may go to extreme lengths to avoid asking these questions and, more importantly, to avoid facing a truthful answer to them. Avoidance keeps you mentally on the run. We like to delude ourselves into believing ignorance is blissful, or if we ignore a problem long enough that it might go away on its own. What we fear most often is our imagined inability to cope with whatever answer an ugly question prompts.

A former executive coaching client of mine once said that he had avoided working with a coach for years. His reason was being afraid of answering a coach's questions honestly and risk being exposed as the imposter he feared he was in his heart of hearts. In several sessions, he would start an answer with, "I was afraid you might ask about that." That was our indication that we were likely getting close to the heart of the matter.

A feared question can lurk like an invisible monster imagined to be under a child's bed in the darkness. Avoiding the question will not make it go away. Our best option is turning on the light of truth and seeing what is really under the bed so we can finally deal with it and move on.

“I am not afraid of storms, for I am learning how to sail my ship.”
Louisa May Alcott



DAY 12

It is foolish to wait to seed your garden until you are starving. The wise business strategy is to foresee a problem on the future horizon and start creating your best solution now, in preparation for the problem's arrival. Recognizing a future unfolding opportunity is necessary for today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment.

Risk aversion is a natural tendency to employ a wait and see strategy. When your fear of loss or failure exceeds your courage and desire for the perceived gain or benefit from capitalizing on an opportunity, you tend to fail to prepare to take action. You may seek more information or want to wait for more resources. Some call this tendency analysis paralysis. Fortunately, Noah started building the ark long before it began raining.

A plan in action is often easier to adjust to situational changes than a possible strategy that remains only under discussion. The timing to launch will never be perfect. Your resources will never be adequate and available. Your knowledge and understanding will never be complete and accurate. But a workable plan that is underway is perhaps more advantageous than a perpetually unfinalized perfect plan. It often takes courage to get started working.

"*The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now."*
Chinese Proverb



DAY 13

Today's question is a ticking question timebomb deep inside of you. It will likely go off somewhere along your way in mid-life. The question will explode onto your consciousness with a force you have probably never experienced before. One day you will fully realize that one day you will die. It comes as breaking news to your ego, but you are not immortal. In a moment of extreme clarity, you will make a shift from pursuing success to creating significance. You can define significance as being important enough to be remembered after you are gone. Being remembered is our ego's last-ditch effort to cheat death.

In light of your impending mortality, what you leave behind is often thought of as your legacy. Another way to think about your legacy is living out your legacy. You can choose to build monuments to the fact that you were once here, or you can decide to make enough positive difference in other people's lives, so they remember your significant contribution to them. On your deathbed, what will be the proof you find solace in when you ask yourself, did it matter that I lived? Will you build a legacy to leave behind, or will you live a legacy that carries on inside others?

“The things you do for yourself are gone when you are gone, but the things you do for others remain as your legacy.”
Kalu Ndukwe Kalu



DAY 14

Paying attention is a common saying that has much truth in it. Attention is a high energy-consuming brain function. The brain naturally tries to conserve energy. Focused attention can be expensively exhausting, so we tend to be very frugal on how much we pay attention.

Listening to someone requires paying attention and can also be exhausting. There is always a motive behind your listening; otherwise, you wouldn't have a reason to expend the energy. Sometimes you listen for your opportunity to say something in response or change the subject to something of interest. Othertimes you listen to judge the shared information as true or false, interesting or boring, good or evil, and more. Often you listen for validation of your values and beliefs.

On rare occasions, you listen deeply, intending to understand the person speaking empathetically. In these moments, you listen with focused attention, and you can sense the communicated invisible emojis. People do not just want to be heard, as much as they seek to be deeply understood.

“Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence.”
Robert Frost



DAY 15

To succeed means to have achieved your desired result. Without a meaningful definition of success, you may complete your desired outcome but will likely be unsatisfied with your success. Author Lewis Carroll wrote, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there."

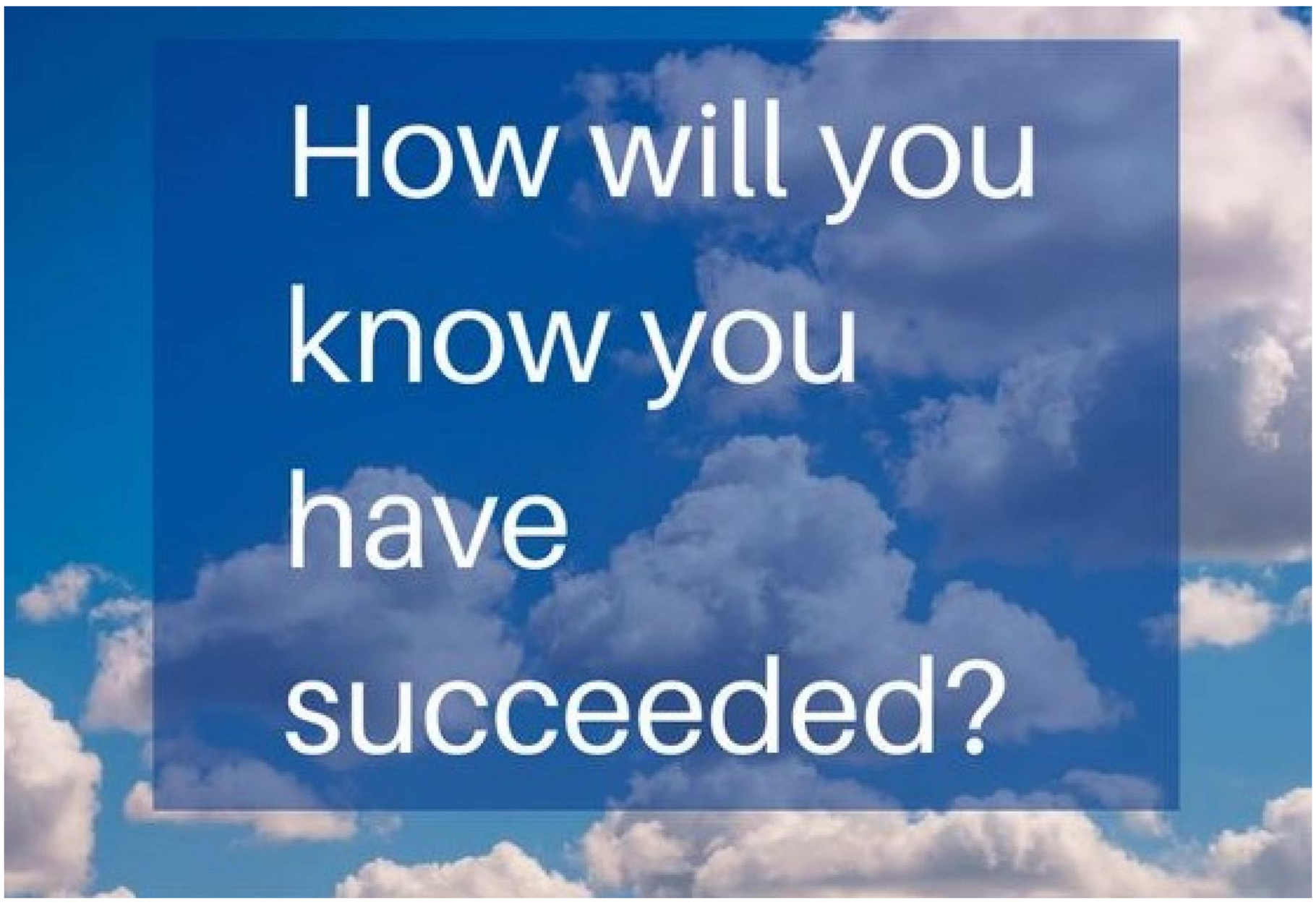
You are investing your life, the most precious and limited resource you have available to you, in your pursuit of success. Will your return on investment be worthy of the cost? Unknowingly, you may default to someone else's definition of success. Perhaps you have adopted your parent's definition of what their wish for your success might be. Maybe you are frequently being programmed by influencers on social media, evangelizing their brand of hustle guaranteed to bring you success.

In his book "Halftime: Change Your Game from Success to Significance," Bob Buford writes about how greyhounds trained to race to chase a mechanical rabbit may never run again if they ever catch the fake. Are you pursuing a rabbit worthy of your best efforts? Will you be satisfied with your catch? Disenchanted executives often say that they were so busy climbing the corporate ladder that they failed to notice that they had chosen a ladder on the wrong wall.

Make your definition of success something you can live for and live with as the price of pursuing it is the same either way.

"Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful."

Albert Schweitzer



DAY 16

Review your completed tasks and past calendar appointments for the past 31 days. List your top ten most important activities that you have worked. Rank each item's meaningfulness to you on a scale of 5-1, with a 5 being most meaningful and a 1 not meaningful at all. Add up your total and multiply your sum by two. Grade yourself on your meaning of life score. A score of 90-100 is passing.

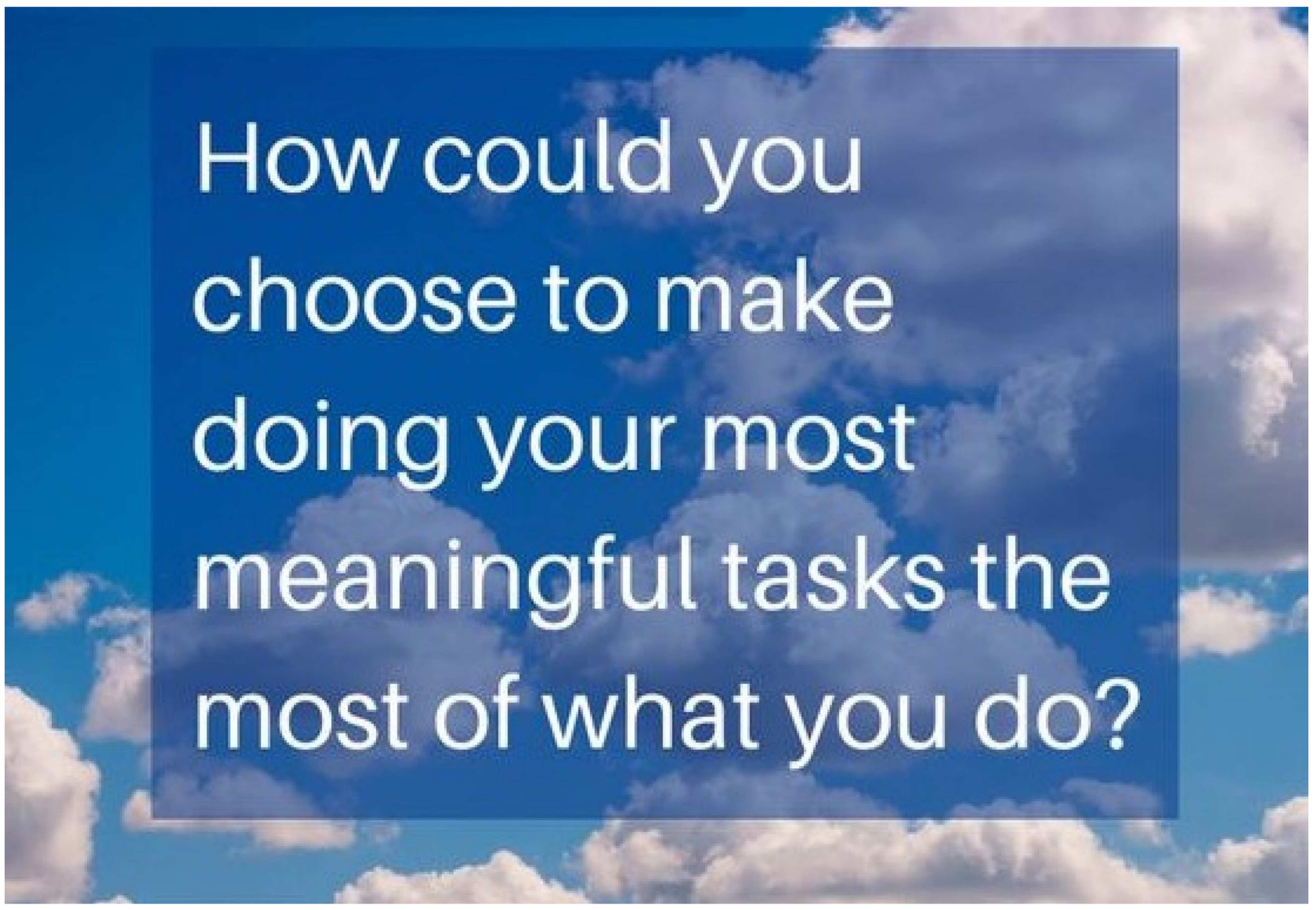
Meaning strikes a resonate chord in your being that says YES! this is it for me. If you want to experience more meaning in your life, you must do more of what you find most meaningful.

What if you cannot afford to quit your meaningless job and follow your dream at the moment? Your best option is to reframe your judgment about the tasks you are doing and try to link them to something you value. Tie completing a task to somehow contributing to your life's purpose, satisfying one of your significant needs, or using one of your favorite strengths. You are responsible for the definition of what you find meaningful.

Stephen Covey divided tasks into four quadrants in "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People." Quadrant I-Urgent and Important, Quadrant II-Not Urgent but Important, Quadrant III-Urgent but Not Important, and Quadrant IV-Not Urgent and Not Important. Replace important with meaningful and sort your tasks based on meaning. If it doesn't matter, why do it?

"Life has no meaning. Each of us has meaning and we bring it to life. It is a waste to be asking the question when you are the answer."

Joseph Campbell



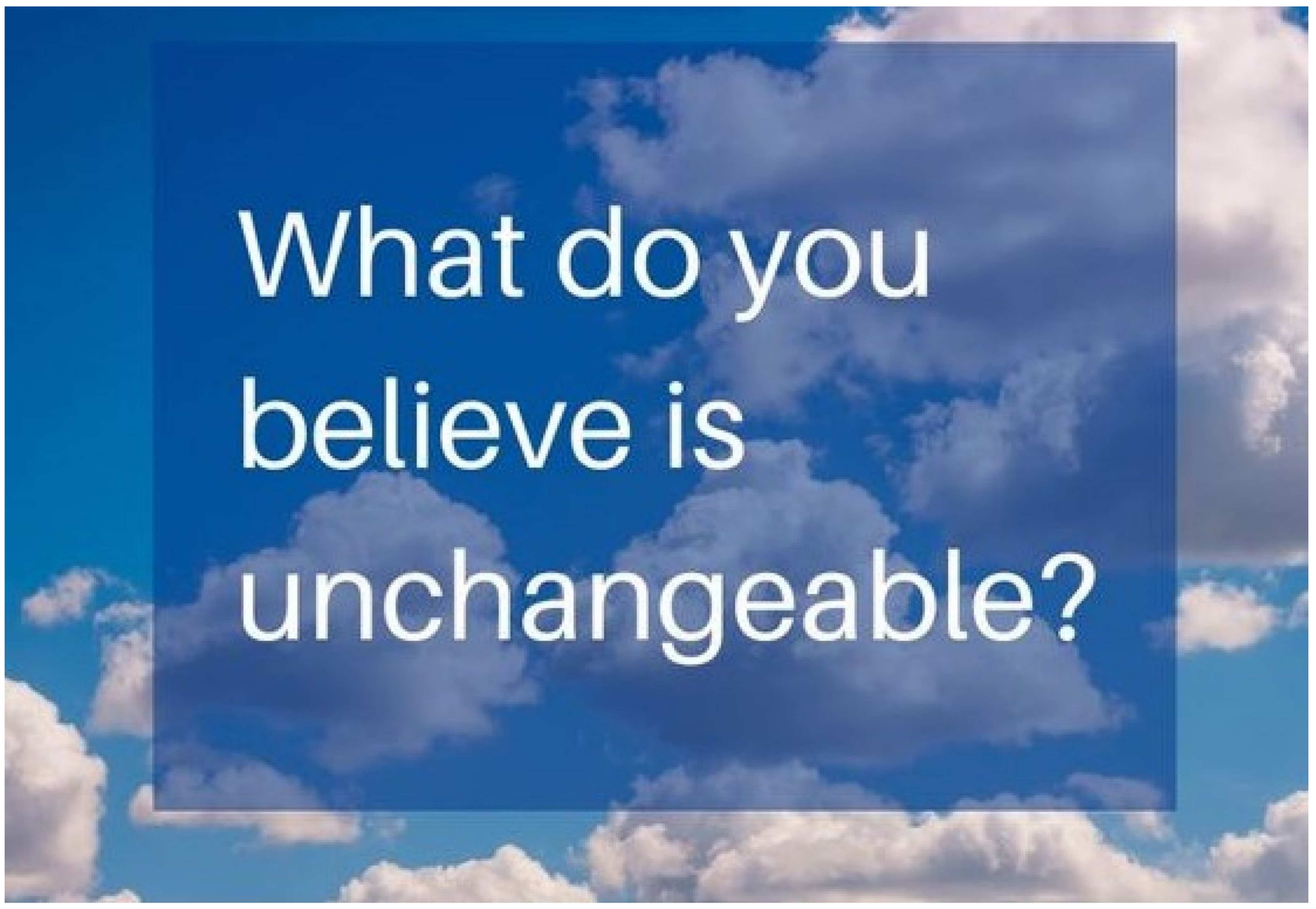
DAY 17

We make subjective sense of our experiences and create our individual interpretations of what we call "reality" based on our values, beliefs, faith, hopes, understandings, and experiences. You base your beliefs on truth, fact, myth, superstition, or some wild assumption of your creation. Your beliefs create an operating system you live out daily. Your biases help to maintain the validity of your beliefs. What you believe to be true is true to you.

One potentially self-limiting belief is in permanence. Permanence is often the misperception that something is unchangeable. Just because something is hard to change, or will take a long time to change, does not make it impossible to change. Whenever you believe something is unchangeable, you lock the door to possibility. You choose to be a helpless victim. A good gut check is to ask yourself if you could present enough truthful evidence in court to prove the truth of your belief be.

“Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.”
Rob Siltanen

“Be the change that you wish to see in the world.”
Mahatma Gandhi



DAY 18

You make dreams and plans with the same organic computer inside your skull. Humanity's most powerful tool is our collective imaginations. When was the last time you gave your imagination permission to take you someplace awesome to play?

Today's question has a couple of potentially problematic fragments to consider as you come up with your answer that you can live with. The first challenge you can confront is your fictitious belief that your future, "one day," is guaranteed. News Flash: Anything can happen unexpectedly. Surprise! Game over. There are no guarantees in life, except it will end.

The timing for pursuing your dream full-time may not be right today. But does your situation stop you from taking even small steps to prepare for the right timing? Are you open to chance opportunities that open the next step in making your dream a reality?

Are you willing to commit to beginning the rest of your dream meaningful life today?

"It occurred to him that he had not spent his life as he should have done. It occurred to him that his scarcely perceptible attempts to struggle against what was considered good by the most highly placed people, those scarcely noticeable impulses which he had immediately suppressed, might have been the real thing, and all the rest false. And his professional duties and the whole arrangement of his life and of his family, and all his social and official interests, might all have been false."

Leo Tolstoy



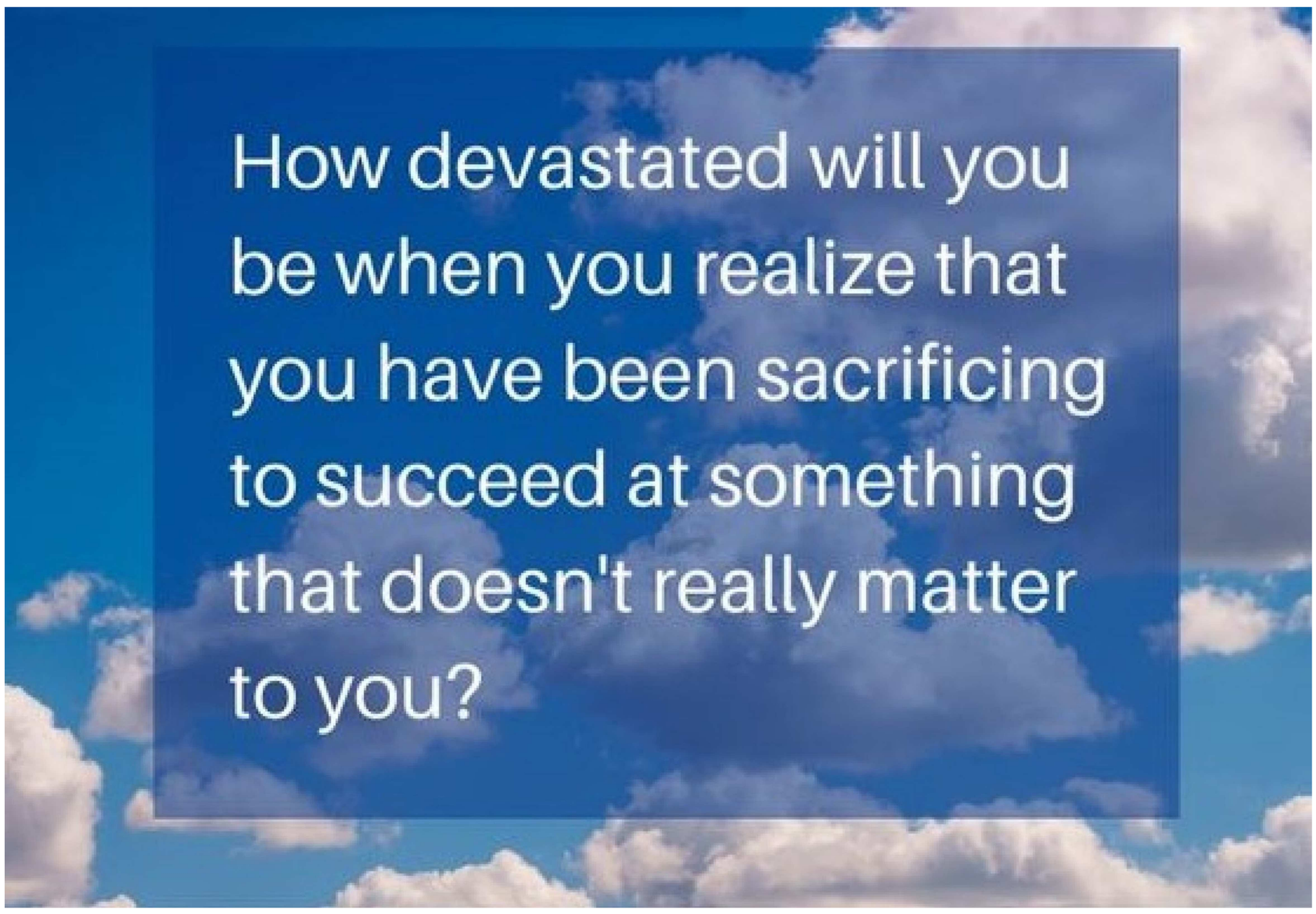
DAY 19

Today's question prompted me to think about my own life experience. Here is a hard-won life lesson I can share from my autobiography. I was once a very busy and successful executive at a large corporation. Then one day, after 17 years of service, extensive work travel, and relocation of my family several times, the company restructured, and my role was unexpectedly eliminated. My services were no longer needed. As I drove home from work for the last time, I realized that everything on my to-do list was no longer my responsibility. My worries about upcoming project deadlines evaporated. The nights away from home, working weekends, and skipped meals had a strict no refund policy. Everything associated with that particular role that was so important to me at 9:00 A.M. that day expired by 9:30 A.M. on the same day. One short conversation can make all the difference in your world.

I was fortunate that I am grateful for my past experiences and satisfied with my achievements and professional growth while at that company. Other people suffer sudden health or relationship issues and end up with severe regrets that cannot be silenced by the size of their bank balance.

Remember that life is a one-time live event. There are no reruns or refunds. If you are not careful, you can easily pay for the ticket and miss out on enjoying the show. Be sure to define success meaningfully, so you will feel you have received a 100X ROL (Return on Life).

“Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at something that doesn't really matter.”
D.L. Moody



DAY 20

How long has it been since you made a real, human, and face-to-face meetable friend? If you are like most Americans, you probably have not made a true friend in the past five years, according to an extensive study conducted in 2019 by OnePoll in collaboration with Evite.

The vast majority of the people surveyed, 81 percent, reported that they believed meaningful friendships are difficult to establish in our social media oversaturated world. Participants indicated that they were most looking for friends who were trustworthy and honest.

The best way to keep good friendships is to keep being a good friend. Keep your conversations confidential. Keep your promises. Keep meeting regularly. Keep interested in learning more about what matters most to your friend.

“A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out.”
Walter Winchell



DAY 21

I have yet to have someone tell me that their superpower is their ability to wait patiently. Waiting is often a frustrating fact of work and life. There are times when waiting to proceed is the wisest course of action. Other times waiting is a symptom of counterproductive head trash. Avoidance of success and failure, perfectionism, and the ever-popular procrastination.

If you explore the motives driving you to procrastinate, you might enjoy feeling under pressure and become thrilled by the rush of the last-minute that forces your focused effort. You might be trying to avoid feeling critiqued or judged by others who might evaluate your performance.
Procrastination might also be an avoidance of responsibility strategy, so you can say honestly, "It was not my fault." You may also put off doing something that is not meaningful or challenging enough to be worth the effort.

The only time we have to influence a situation is always the same. It's called this present moment or now. When is the right time to click the publish button on your blog post or release your app? How about now?

“Only put off until tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone”
Pablo Picasso



DAY 22

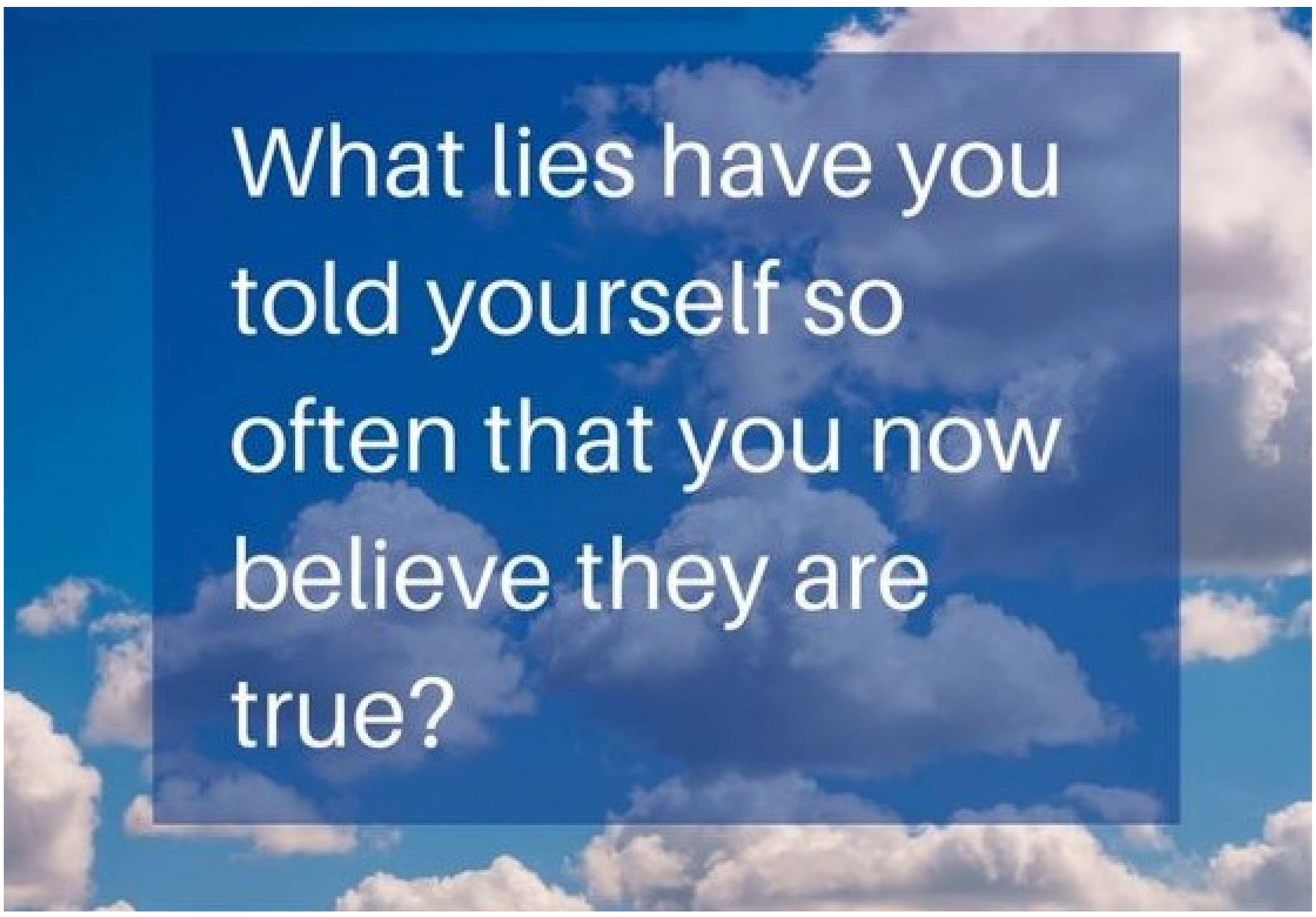
You trust your inner voice the most, and it is always narrating to you. You will feel empowered if you carry around your biggest fan in your head. You can learn to recognize when your worst lying critic is living rent-free in your mind.

Here are five malicious lies you may believe about yourself:

- I'm undeserving.
- I can't.
- I'm unlovable.
- I'm a failure and will never improve.
- I'm a fraud.

When your inner saboteur starts a fake news campaign about you inside your head, do some fact-checking. If you believe, "I'm a failure," then try thinking, "THAT'S A LIE!" and then add a disputing truth about you like, "The truth is I did not get my desired results this time. While my plan failed, I can learn from it and make a better plan next time. Learning what works from what doesn't work makes me an innovator and not a failure."

"The most important thing you can do to increase your self-control is to identify the misbeliefs in the words you tell yourself. Then argue against those misbeliefs. Never let yourself get away with misbelief talk. Use determination and energy in arguing and refusing each misbelief with the truth. You can be self-controlled in every area of your life. People who exercise self-control have discovered a major key to living fulfilled lives."
William Backus, Ph.D.



DAY 23

Today's question is designed to prompt you to defend yourself against your internal judge. I play several roles for my clients as their executive coach. Often I am their sounding board, truthteller, and guide. Sometimes I need to be their champion and defender, especially when they start trash talking themselves. I often hear, "I am so *&%$ing stupid," or "I am a pathetic loser," or some even more derogatory and self-degrading judgments. I want to blow my whistle like a referee and call a foul on their mental and verbal self-abuse.

Interestingly, my clients' inner judge is caught off-guard when I object and question what evidence they have to back up their self-slamming and shaming. It seems like they have such a habit of their negative self-talk and criticism that they are unaware that they are saying these hurtful and unwarranted accusations about themselves.

Your self-talk is an essential element to your subjective evaluation of what you call reality. The old saying, "you are what you eat," has a more apt twin in, "you are whatever you think you are." There is a good chance you would rush to the defense of a loved one should they ever experience the verbal assault by someone using the same defamatory statements that you regularly use on yourself. If you believe kindness is an admirable virtue, then start by extending some kindness to yourself. You are an imperfect human being living a challenging life. You are doing the best you can, just like everyone else.

"If you don’t love yourself, you cannot love others. You will not be able to love others. If you have no compassion for yourself then you are not capable of developing compassion for others."

The Dalai Lama



DAY 24

Today's question features the topic of hope. As the host and producer of The Hopeful Hoosier Pocast®, I study, think, and talk about hope quite a bit. Today's question defines hope in its most basic form. Hope is the eager anticipation that something in the future will happen or become a reality. Hope is not a wish. Your beliefs fuel your hopes.

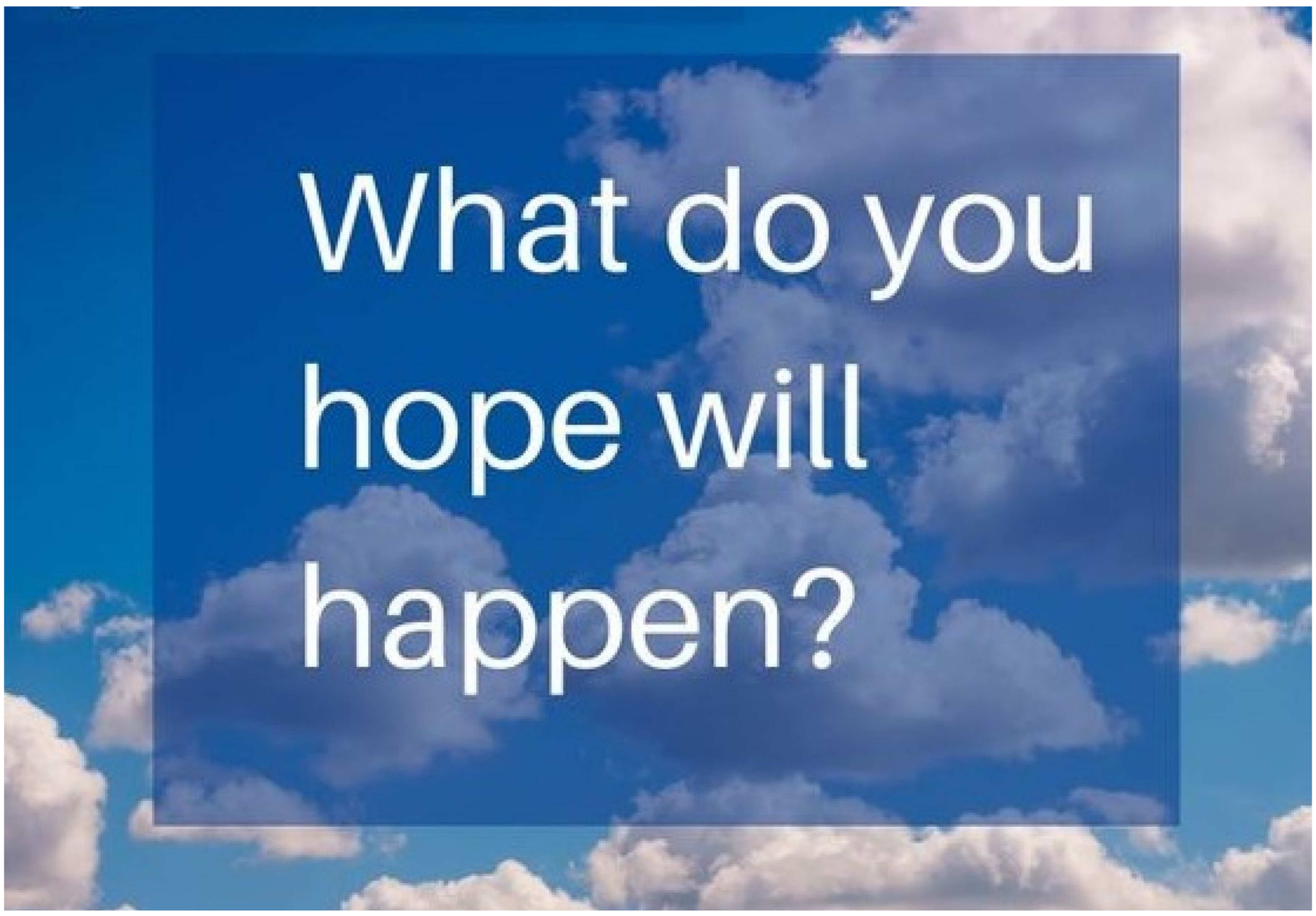
Scientists who study hope describe it as having two components: the first is willpower, meaning what you hope for is something you would will to happen, and waypower or agency, which means you can envision a way to influence the hoped-for outcome to happen. When you believe you have a will and a way, you are hopeful.

When you truthfully think or say, "everything will work out for the best," or "we will get through this together somehow," you are employing a hopeful attitude. You can share hope through interpersonal contact with others.

When someone feels hopeless, s/he believes something cannot change, or it is impossible to find a way to get their desired outcome. Unfortunately, some people choose to accept their false hopeless thoughts and give up, or worse. It requires less effort to believe in our world's ever-changing nature due to the abundance of daily evidence than believing something can never change. Yes, things might get worse, but they also might miraculously get better. Hope in action is powerful and contagious.

“They say a person needs just three things to be truly happy in this world: someone to love, something to do, and something to hope for.”

Tom Bodett



DAY 25

We often hear people talk about "cutting back" on their schedule or responsibilities. Today's question encourages you to think about what you must first stop doing to free up the capacity to do what you desire. Bad habits and unrealistic wishes can keep you uselessly doing things that are not producing satisfying fruit.

A winemaker can expect to cut back 70-90 percent of a healthy grapevine each winter. An unpruned vine will not produce as many grapes as a vine more severely pruned. You can get more sunlight and air into your life by pruning your overgrown and unproductive schedule. Deciding what to cut and discard in life can be painful, but it is often where new growth happens. What deadwood do you need to cut out of your habitual living to make room for new life to sprout?

"Everything has seasons, and we have to be able to recognize when something's time has passed and be able to move into the next season. Everything that is alive requires pruning as well, which is a great metaphor for endings."
Henry Cloud, Ph.D.



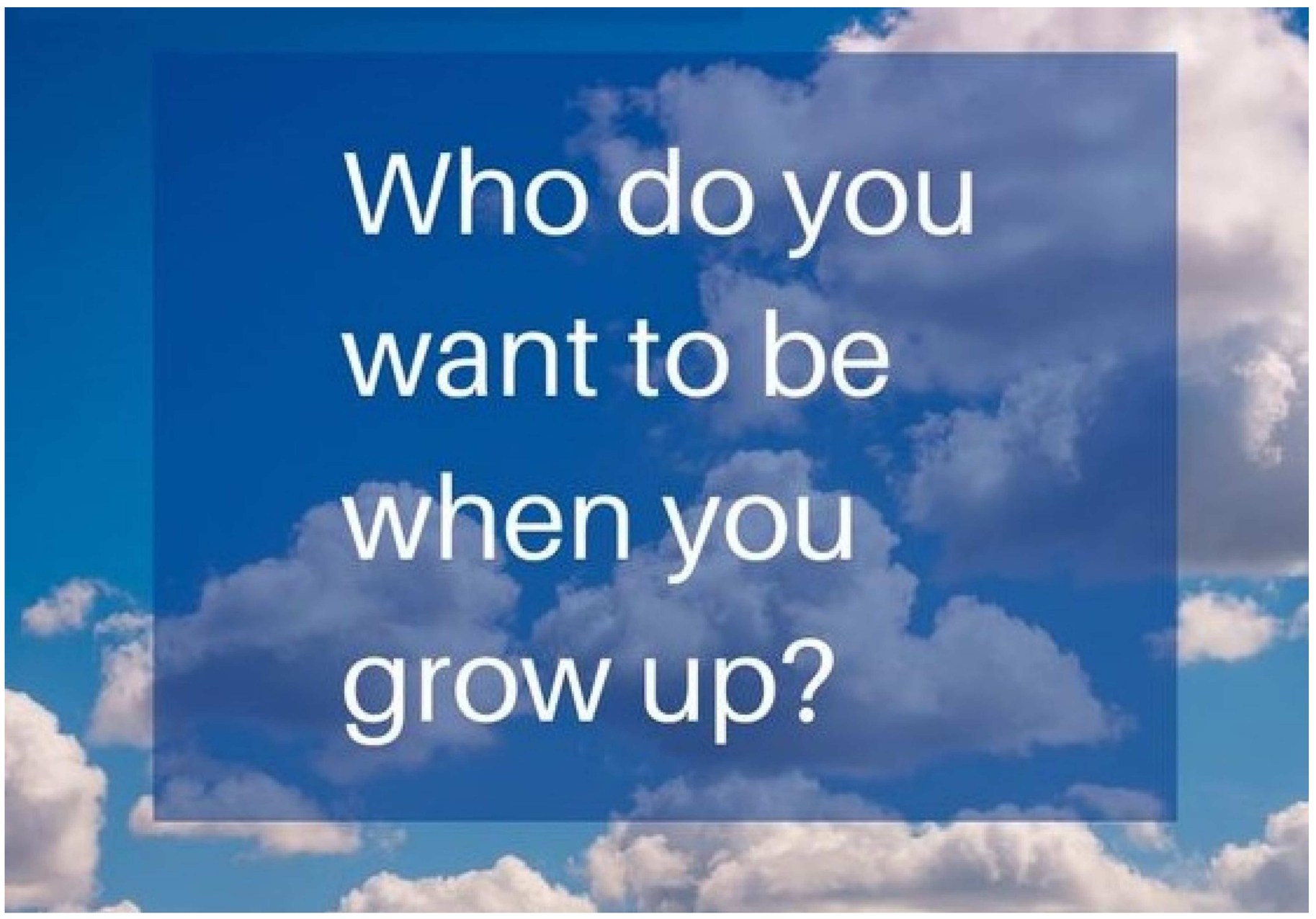
DAY 26

You are on a lifelong epic journey towards becoming the best version of yourself. Every experience is a potential character development opportunity. Today's question is a slight yet important twist on the question you were probably asked as a child, "what do you want to be when you grow up?" Being asked what do you want to be, invites you to share your future occupation, vocation, career, or job role. You may have spent a lot of time and effort working out your answer to what you wanted to be when you grew up.

Your character is your core nature. A working definition of character is the unique mix of your values, beliefs, ethics, reputation, and behaviors. Some people refer to your character as your brand. It's who you are.

You may not have invested as much time thinking about your character development plan. For better or worse, maybe you have just unintentionally grown into your present character. A key to more satisfaction is understanding who you are well enough to guide you in deciding what you do. A mismatch between your character and your career is a recipe for unhappiness.

"Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are."
John Wooden



DAY 27

Your concept and experience with failure have the potential to influence your thinking and beliefs greatly. Some people are afraid of both failure and success.

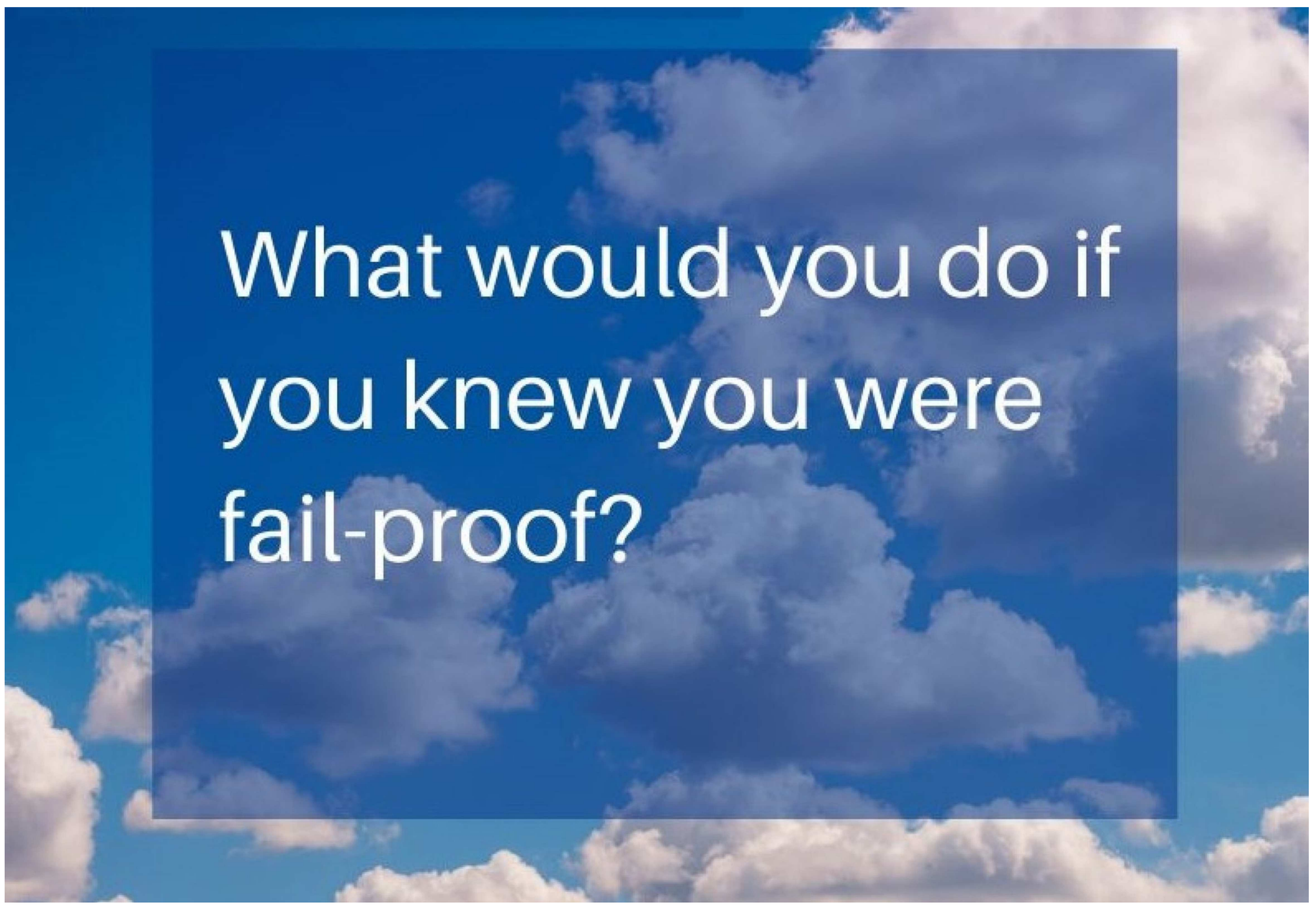
Some psychologists think that people do not fear failure as much as they seek to avoid feeling shame from failure. Shame can destroy your self-worth. It can cause you to self-identify as a failure instead of a competent person who failed despite your best efforts.

Scientists have a more helpful approach to failure. Experiments often fail to produce their hypothesized results. While the researcher might be disappointed with the trial's outcome, the data gained from the failure could lead to a breakthrough insight.

Being fail-proof means failure does not trigger feelings of shame. You may experience failures, but a fail-proof mindset doesn't allow your experiment's outcome to define you personally. You can be open to experimentation and test your ideas and opportunities. You can learn to expect failures as natural and likely outcomes. You can focus on learning from your failures to add to your understanding and increase your next try's odds of success. Having a resilient, fail-proof mindset doesn't prevent failures, but it does protect you from calling yourself a failure.

“I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work.”

Thomas A. Edison



DAY 28

My favorite type of executive coaching client is a senior executive or founder of a benefit corporation, social enterprise, or non-profit. These people are often trying to balance profits and purpose. They want to be a force for good and to make our world a bit better for having been a citizen.

Trying to balance many conflicting stakeholder interests equitably is a massively complex and challenging pathway to success. Many decisions have multidimensional consequences. Many people can find the task of making the right decisions overwhelming. These leaders often don't have and cannot get full situational clarity. They also usually cannot afford to delay making a crucial choice.

Unfortunately, there are no magic answers that guarantee ideal results. You are entitled to the freedom and responsibility for making whatever choices you believe are best. After all, you are the one who will have to accept the resulting consequences.

When you don't know all of the steps that get you to your desired outcome, I suggest you keep today's question top-of-mind. You may not know for sure the best, wisest, or best decision you should make in a complex and complicated situation. You may only see a small good thing you can do. Do it and see if you gain some additional clarity or perspective from your new position, one step ahead. Then repeat as often as possible.

“If you don’t know what you’re here to do, then just do some good.”

Maya Angelou



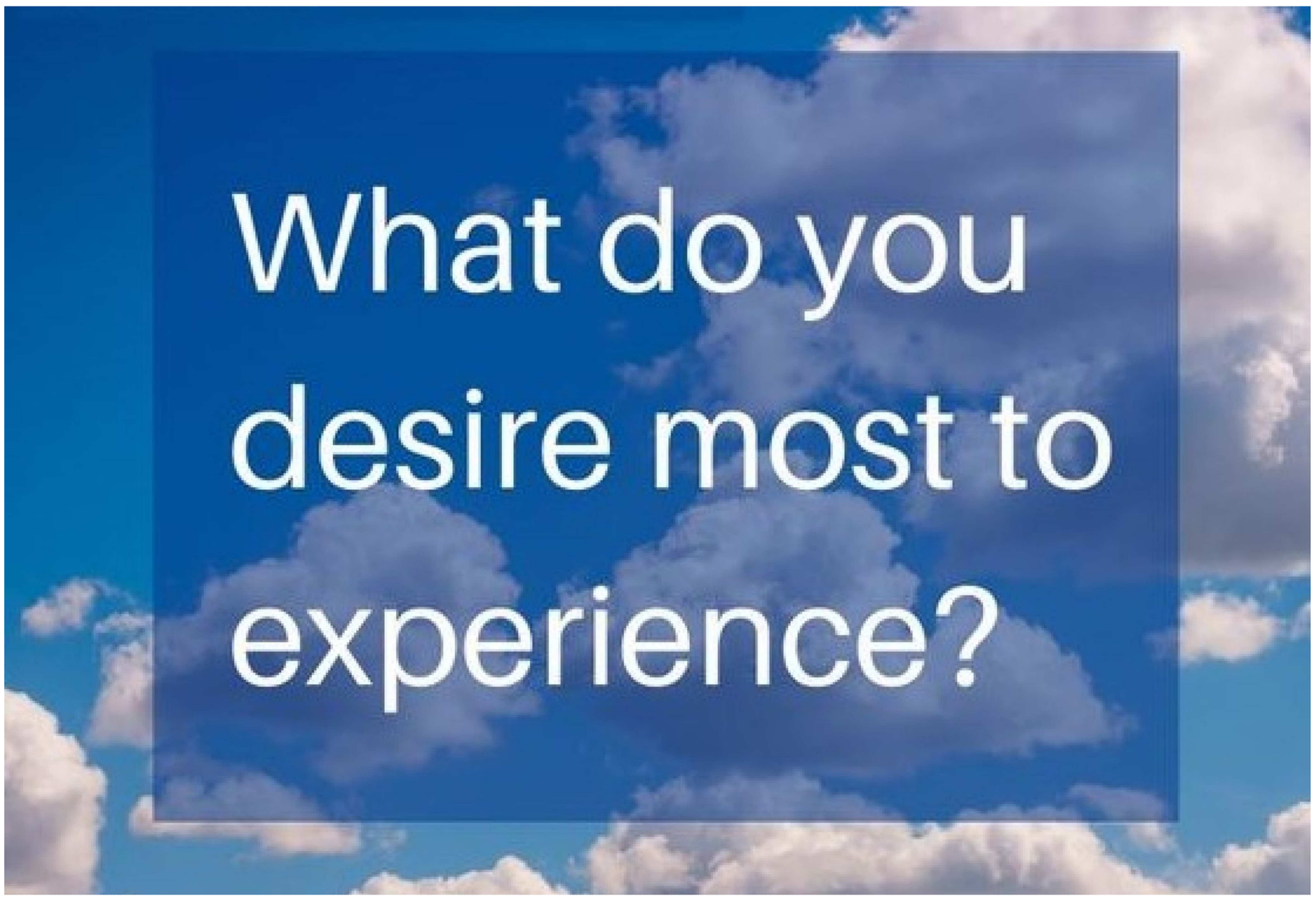
DAY 29

If I asked you to share an extraordinary experience from your life, what comes to mind? By definition, your experiences are the events you live through. Your resume and autobiography are the retellings of your experiences' greatest hits. The best way to create a lasting memory is through your full-engagement and participation in a moment. You must pay attention to buy a memory.

In the end, your life's story is the sum of your lived experiences. What adventures do you need to experience to make the remaining chapters of your epic life's story worth remembering? Life is far too short to be boring.

Don't waste time taking another selfie. Do you want to remember the experience of taking a bunch of pictures, or do you want to reminisce fondly of the satisfying feeling of your life well-lived?

“The purpose of life is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience.”
Eleanor Roosevelt



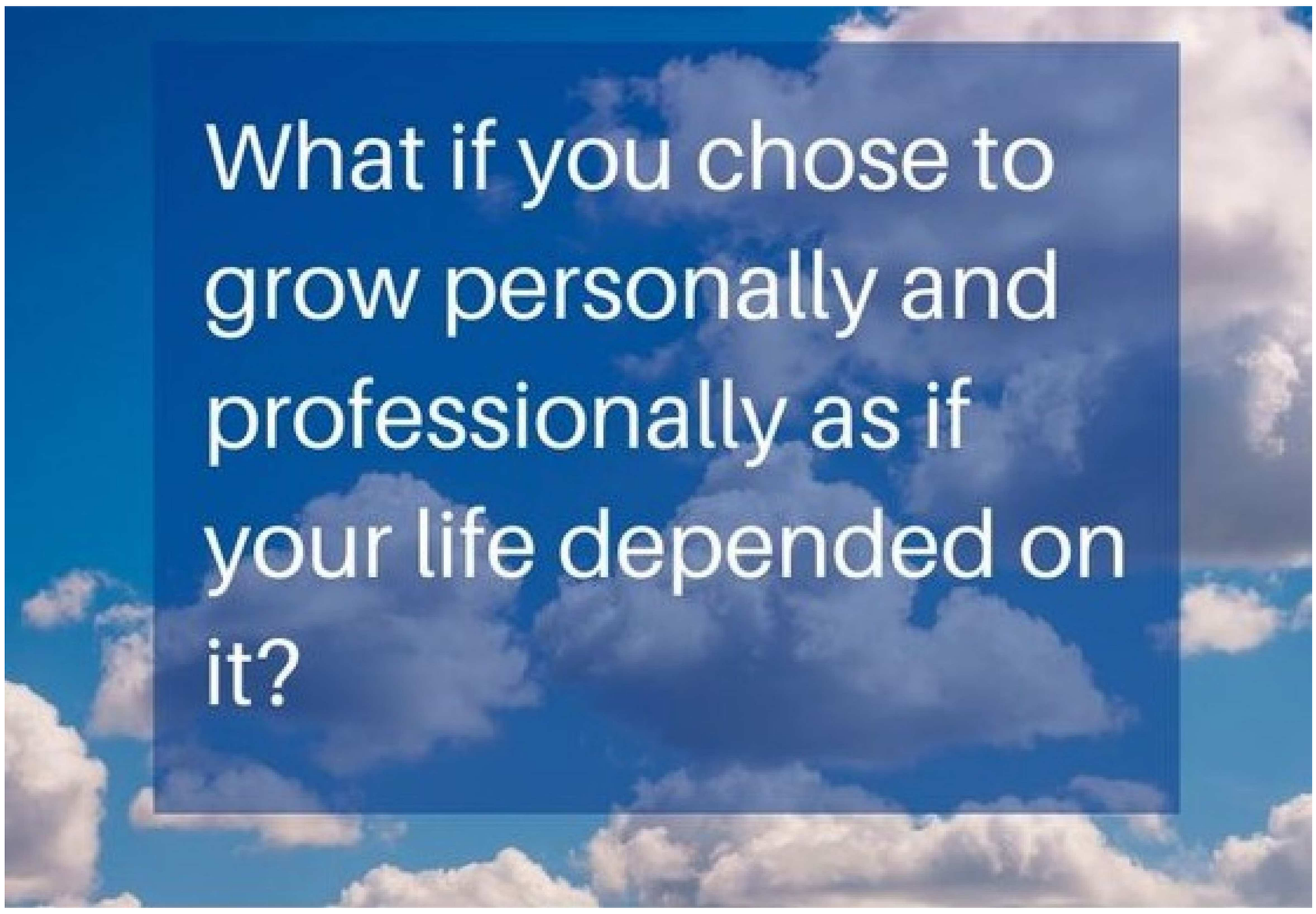
DAY 30

Growth is always an optional invitation. Are you growing into the person your future best self is hoping to meet someday?

Hopefully, I am preaching to the growing choir if you have grown with me for the past 29 days. The whole point of this book is to help you create a daily habit of thinking differently about how and what you are thinking about. When you change your thinking, your behaviors change as well.

Stop growing, and you have stopped living. Humans sit at the top of the food chain because of our ingenuity and adaptability. The day you choose to stop growing is the day you decide to become obsolete. We live in an era of abundant instant access to personal and professional upgrades. What accountability partner and growth plan do you need to keep you ahead of obsolescence and extinction?

“One can choose to go back toward safety or forward toward growth. Growth must be chosen, again and again, fear must be overcome again and again.”
Abraham Maslow



DAY 31

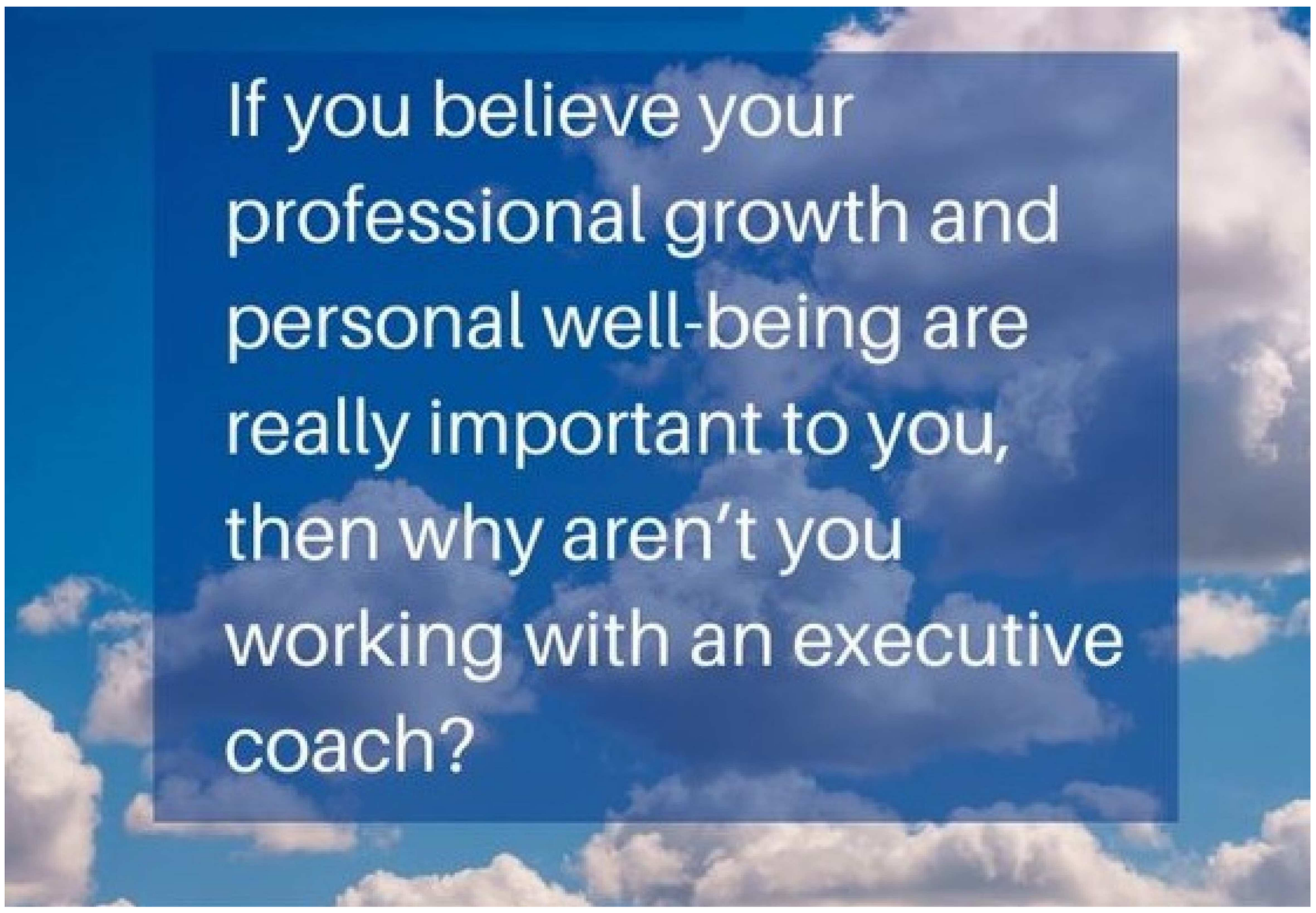
I've yet to find a book, app, or video that can consistently hold me accountable for doing what I say I want to do. There is an African proverb that says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." Personal and professional growth is hard, but you do not need to make the journey alone. All you need to do is be coachable and invest in receiving the support of a well-trained and experienced executive coach.

Many successful people reach the so-called "Peter Principle" and advance to the highest level of their incompetence. My saddest professional experiences are with idealistic founders who fail to keep their personal and professional growth rates in advance of their organizational needs. These well-meaning and passionate founders get left behind when the organization they birthed outgrows their competencies.

Pride, self-confidence, and fear can all keep you from being open to receiving helpful coaching support. Coaches don't fix broken people—coaches guide and support people into discovering their unrealized potential and exploring new possibilities. I like to think of myself as a professional bus (motor coach) driver. I will meet you wherever you are and take you to your desired destination. Hopefully, you will get there faster and better than you can do so on your own. Plus, you can enjoy your trip with some lively company! Executive coaching has the potential to accelerate your growth into being the best and most successful version of yourself. We all would like to meet the best version of you sooner rather than later.

"Coaching is unlocking people's potential to maximize their own performance. It is more often helping them to learn rather than teaching them."

John Whitmore



CONCLUSION

Congratulations! If you have made it this far, you have probably grown at-least a little over the past 31 days. My hope is you will continue your daily growth habit and find someone who will ask you the hard questions you really need to answer.

Many of my executive coaching clients come to me, hoping I can fix their people or processes. They are often surprised to learn that their path and fix-it strategy begins with them. Not that they need fixing, but that they need to grow into the leader and manager that their new situation requires of them. Executive coaching is about utilizing untapped potential and mastering already acquired knowledge and skills in new ways. Coaching is a highly efficient and impactful collaborative process where clients rapidly realize the benefits of professional and personal development in sustainable ways. After all, isn't unutilized potential and ineffectively deployed talents a waste?

The foundation performance excellence is strengthening your mindset and cleaning out any misbeliefs and self-sabotaging self-talk that sparks irrational fears, doubts, and counterproductive behaviors. A coach uses powerful questions and truthful observations to allow clients to see potential blind spots and pitfalls.

My clients regularly report greater satisfaction and reduced frustrations at work and at home. They master developing and sustaining effective interpersonal relationships and alliances. Executive coaching clients who chose to work with me learn to be trustworthy, outwardly emotionally stable, demonstrably compassionate, and creators of hope. These are the high-demand qualities people look for in their leaders, according to on-going research.

"I can no longer work with my boss" continues to be the number one reason people give for changing jobs. What is undesired turnover costing your organization? What if you could quickly improve teamwork, collaboration, reduce interpersonal conflicts, and improve performance by working with me as your coach? According to recent research, the typical executive coaching client realizes a return of between $4 to $8 for every dollar invested in receiving coaching from an experienced executive coach.

INVITATION

Could you be better at doing your good? Take the following quick self-survey and mark the statements you agree with:

__I often feel overwhelmed by having so many things to do.
__I feel like I am always putting out other people's fires and can't focus on my plans.
__I always have to be a referee of my own people's arguments.
__We lack teamwork and collaboration.
__My best people keep leaving.
__Nobody seems to care around here but me.
__My board wants me to be a better leader and more professional.
__I must be a more effective communicator.
__We must be more agile in our ability to change.
__I have got to develop my people.
__We have great plans and awful execution.
__I need to hold people more accountable.
__My perfectionism is getting in the way.
__Revenue must go up, and expenses must come down.
__I have got to be able to tell the story of my vision for the future better.
__I can't allow myself to burnout or become discouraged and lose hope.
__I feel like an imposter and worry people will find out I am faking it and not making it.
__Our quality could be much better.
__I need to delegate more.
__I need to develop systems and processes that can accommodate our growth goals.
__I need to motivate people to want to work harder.

If you can relate to any of the above statements, then there is only one more question that only you can answer. Are you coachable?

If you would like to experience a free, no-obligation executive coaching session to get some clarity on a challenge or issue you are struggling with, then let's explore what it might be like to work together. My goal is to quickly help you to be your best at doing your good! The only thing you have to lose is whatever you think is holding you back.

Best of success!

Contact me for your free executive coaching conversation at:

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



As a Board-certified Executive Coach, I help visionary C-suite executives, founders, idealists, social entrepreneurs, conscious capitalists, non-profits, and B-Corps realize their mission for a better and brighter future. Doing good profitability is good business!

I serve as a facilitator for the LEAD program of the University of Indianapolis' Institute for Postindustrial Leadership and am a North American training partner for IDS Publishing Corporation's Reiss Motivation Profile® Masters Certification Training.

My first book is a business parable titled, “Life Matches: Fire Up Your Life!” I show you how to live a more satisfying life by using your natural strengths.

My labor of love is hosting and producing the Hopeful Hoosier Podcast®. I interview Indiana citizens who are making a positive difference for a better and brighter future in Indiana. https://hopefulhoosier.podbean.com.

Prior to founding AD Growth Advisers Inc., I served for 10 years as an internal executive coach and performance improvement consultant for a cable TV and Internet advertising division of a Fortune 100 technology firm.

My home is Indianapolis, Indiana, USA, where I enjoy heatland living with my wife Kathy, two daughters, and two corgis.

If you can't find me, look up. I'm a private pilot who loves to fly!

It would be my privilege to help you be your best at doing your good!

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31 QUESTIONS

that

ONLY YOU CAN ANSWER

A Daily Mental Workout for Breakthrough Thinking

Be your best at doing your good!

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