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UNFU*K YOURSELF

Get out of your head
and into your life

GARY JOHN BISHOP

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This book is dedicated to my three sisters; Paula, Elizabeth and Sandra, my mother Agnes and father, Patrick. We grew together, we cried together, we stood together and we fought together. I am who I am because of you.

I acknowledge the downbeat and trodden, the single mothers and unemployed fathers, the dreamers and wannabes; I am you, and you can do it.

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Chapter 1

In the beginning...

“This is a conversational slap from the universe to wake you up to your true potential, to unfuck yourself and get spectacularly into your life.”

Have you ever felt like a hamster on a wheel, furiously churning your way through life but somehow going nowhere?

All the while you're caught in a loop of constant internal chatter and judgement that never stops, a little voice telling you that you're lazy or stupid or not good enough. You won't even notice the degree to which you believe it or are drained by it, you'll just be spending your day working to overcome the stresses and strains, trying to live your life and at various points facing the resignation that if you can't get your ass off this damned wheel maybe you are never going to get to where you want in life – maybe that happiness you're after or that weight you want to lose or that career or relationship you crave will remain just out of reach.

These pages are dedicated to those that experience that self-defeating monolog. The endless stream of doubt and subterfuge that limits and taints everyday life. This is a conversational slap from the universe to wake you up to your true potential, to unfuck yourself and get spectacularly into your life.

Let's get this thing started in the right place. There are two kinds of talk you engage in every day: talking to others and talking to yourself. You might be one of those that insists, "I don't talk to myself!" But, in fact, most of the conversations you have on any given day are with yourself—all "enjoyed" in the solitude and privacy of your own head.

Whether you're introverted or extroverted, creative or practical, you spend huge swathes of your time talking to...YOU! You do it while exercising, working, eating, reading, writing, walking, texting, crying, arguing,

negotiating, planning, praying, meditating, having sex, (on your own and with others)—you name it. And yes, you even do it in your sleep.

You're actually doing it right now.

Don't worry, it doesn't mean you're crazy. Or, perhaps it means we're all a little crazy. Either way, we all do it, so settle in and welcome to the freak show.

Studies show that we have over fifty thousand thoughts per day. Think of all the things you say to yourself that you'd rather not or that you try to overcome or defeat. While we have little or no say in those automatic and reactionary thoughts, we have a massive say in which of those same thoughts we attach significance to. They don't come pre-loaded!!

The latest in neuroscience and psychology adds weight to the idea that the *kind* of talk you engage in has a profound impact on the quality of your life. Professor Will Hart of the University of Alabama conducted four experiments in which participants either recalled or experienced a positive, negative or neutral event. They found that people who described the neutral event in ways that it suggested it was ongoing, actually felt more positive and when they described a negative event in the same way, they experienced more negativity. In simple terms, the language you use to describe your circumstances determines how you see, experience and participate in them and dramatically affect how you deal with your life and confront problems both big and small.

The connection between what we say and how we feel has been known for hundreds if not thousands of years. Philosophers like Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Gadamer all knew of the importance and significance of language in our lives. Wittgenstein said, "...the harmony between thought and reality can be found the grammar of the language".

The good news is, studies have continually found that positive self-talk can dramatically improve mood, boost confidence, increase productivity, and more. Much more. In fact, as evidenced by Professor Hart and his studies, it can be one of the key components to a happy, successful life.

The bad news is, the reverse is also true: Negative self-talk can not only put us in a bad mood, it can leave us feeling helpless. It can make small problems seem bigger – and even create problems where none existed before. Here’s the breaking news, your self-talk is fucking you over and in ways you can’t even begin to imagine.

With all of this in mind, let’s get one thing clear: Even though this is a book about using the right language to improve your life, I’m NOT suggesting you suddenly take on positive thinking or personal affirmations. Those subjects have been done to death with varying degrees of success and certainly not what we’ll be doing here.

I won’t ask you to tell yourself you’re a tiger as a way to unleash your inner animal. Firstly, you’re not a tiger and secondly, well, you’re not a tiger. This all may work for some people, but I’m much too Scottish for that. To me, being told to do these sorts of things feels like being force fed a bucket of maple syrup liberally sprinkled with bits of last year’s candy canes. Thanks but eh, no thanks.

For all my “positives” out there, sorry but we’re taking this baby in another direction! This book is designed to give you an authentic leg-up—one that feels genuine and right for you and can propel you into greater levels of your true potential.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUCCESS AND FAILURE

“If human emotions largely result from thinking, then one may appreciably control one’s feelings by controlling one’s thoughts – or by changing the internalized sentences, or self-talk, with which one largely created the feeling in the first place.”

That quote comes from Albert Ellis, one of the forefathers of modern psychology. Ellis found that how we think and talk about our experiences

shifts the way we feel about them. In short, our thoughts are bedfellows with our emotions.

Ellis also found that the way we think can often be completely irrational.

Consider how many times you've told yourself something like, "I'm so stupid," "I always mess things up," "My life is over," or some negative description of an event like, "this is the worst thing that's ever happened to me".

Raise your hand if you've ever completely over-reacted to something that, in hindsight, barely registered on the important-o-meter? Ok, put your hand down, people are watching and you're starting to look a bit silly. If you look back you'll see that in the instant before that seemingly random over-reaction, you had a flash of outrageous self-talk, **BANG!** ...and off you go with your good self.

Some of the things we say and do aren't always particularly rational but we seem to say and do them anyway! In addition, we never really see what we are leaving ourselves with or the emotional residue of engaging in even the mildest of negative self-talk.

You see, it's not always dramatic self-talk, sometimes it's subtle but equally disempowering. If you're working on something, you might think, "***This is so hard. What if I don't finish in time?***" or worry about all the different ways you can "mess up," which leaves you in an anxious or worried state. Sometimes negative self-talk leads to anger, sadness, or frustration that manifests in different or seemingly unrelated situations.

This kind of self-talk doesn't make your life any easier. The more you tell yourself how hard something is, the harder it will actually seem.

Unfortunately, since we are constantly listening to a steady stream of our automatic inner thoughts and have become so accustomed to the critical voice in our heads, we often don't realize how negative thoughts impact our mood and behavior in any given moment and, as a result, we end up doing—or not doing—things our rational minds want us to do.

For a simple example, take a moment to think about the daily chores you dread the most, all because you've built them up in your mind to be

something worse than they really are. We sometimes avoid simple things like folding laundry and unloading the dishwasher, when they actually take little time and effort. With enough of these little persistent items hanging around it's easy to collapse them in with the bigger, more important things until we find ourselves overwhelmed or exhausted by life.

Why do we “resist” certain things in our lives? We have a personal conversation about those kinds of tasks that is firmly rooted in some negative opinion. Look in your own life for your “stuck-ness” and you’ll see what I mean. You have a pretty serious self-talk blockage!

HOW LANGUAGE CHANGES OUR LIVES

The way we talk doesn't only affect us in the moment. It can seep into our subconscious and become internalized, changing our thoughts and behavior in the long-term.

In real everyday terms, the way we talk to ourselves and others instantly shapes how we perceive life, and that same perception directly impacts our behavior right there in the moment. Ignore your perceptions at your peril! Even worse, live with the illusion that you don't have perceptions!

If you're sometimes talking about how “unfair” life is, you'll start to act according to that view, perceiving slights where none exist or, as studies have shown, putting less effort into your work because you've already determined it won't accomplish anything. The unfair view will quickly become your reality.

On the other hand, the person who views success as if it were just around the corner will not only work his butt off to achieve it but be energized and alive to it and all the while acting on that fundamental view of success. To be clear, believing you will be successful is only one, (albeit important), part of success. By the same token, there is a way to accomplish great things without that belief although the ride will be a bit rougher!

If you're worried that you don't have that kind of personal belief, **READ ON!**

Marcus Aurelius, the stoic philosopher turned Roman Emperor, said, “Here is a rule to remember in the future, when anything tempts you to feel bitter: not ‘This is misfortune,’ but ‘To bear this worthily is good fortune.’”

It’s entirely within our power to determine how we think about and talk about our problems. They can be a nuisance or a stepping stone. They can hold us down or lift us up.

In fact, stoic philosophers like Aurelius believed that outside events hold no power over us at all. We create our own reality with our minds.

“Reject your sense of injury and the injury itself disappears.”

Take some time here to ponder that statement.

How willing are you to consider that your life is the way it is, not because of the weight of your circumstances or situation, but rather the weight of self-talk that pulls you down? That what you think you can and cannot do is influenced much more directly by some subconscious response than the reality of life itself?!

If you keep looking out there, (outside of yourself), to your circumstances and feverishly working to get out of them you’ll keep getting the same response. No power, no joy, no vitality. At best it’s a see-saw of success and disappointment, happiness and despair. Sometimes your circumstances just don’t change, sometimes they stagnate and crystalize. What if that thing you’re working toward, that thing you are sure will make you happier, better or more confident doesn’t happen? What then? Even if it does arrive someday, what happens to your life between now and *that* day?

This book will require you to seek the answer, not out there, but *inside* of yourself. It’s not that you have to *find* the answer, you *are* the answer. As I’ve said to my clients many, many times, people spend their lives waiting for the cavalry, all the while never realizing *they* are the cavalry. Your life is waiting on you to finally show up.

RE-TRAIN YOUR BRAIN - ONE WORD AT A TIME

All this talk about our subconscious isn't just a bunch of psychobabble.

Scientists have discovered that our thoughts can actually change the physical structure of our brain. This phenomenon, neuroplasticity, is revolutionizing the way we think about the human mind.

As we go through life learning and experiencing new things, our brain is constantly arranging and rearranging the neural pathways that control how we think and behave. The best part is, we direct our thoughts in a way that consciously modifies these pathways for ourselves. And the easiest way to shape those thoughts is through conscious, decisive self-talk. The kind of talk that “cuts through” and takes control of your life.

Just like we build habits by repeating an action until it becomes “automatic”, we can use strong, assertive language over time to create lasting change in our lives. It's more than just happy thoughts, (don't break out the candy canes just yet) – you're affecting your brain's very biology.

We can determine our emotions by steering our thoughts. We can shape those thoughts by being conscious of and diligent about our words and the kind of language we engage in. A lot of this will come down to your basic tolerance of your current mindset and your willingness to change it.

It all starts by making a conscious choice to talk in a way that's helpful rather than harmful. By using the right kind of language and framing our problems in a more readily accessible light, we can quite literally change the way we see and interact with the world. All that stuff you've heard and read about, “creating your own reality”? It's not only possible but millions of people the world over are already doing it! And the best part is, they're not only creating it, they are in fact acting on it and living it.

Remember, no matter how difficult, challenging, or pressing life's circumstances can be, how you fundamentally relate to and engage with those circumstances will have the biggest say in how they turn out. Again, the answer is inside you rather than outside you.