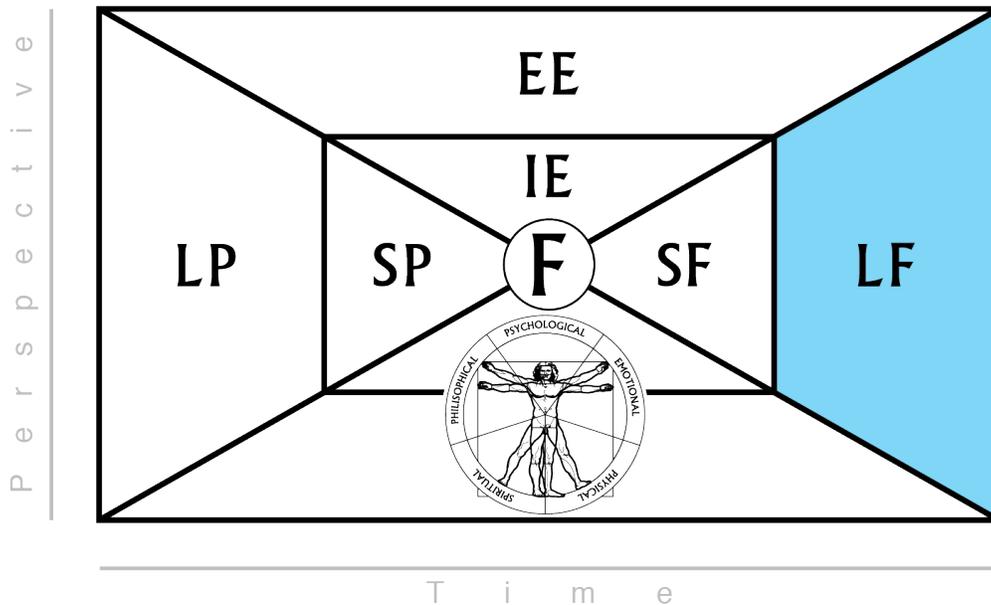




FINDING YOUR FLOW TOOLKIT
VOL. 22
THE POWER OF LEGACY

**“If you would not be forgotten as soon as you are dead,
either write something worth reading or do something
worth writing.”**

-- Benjamin Franklin



The ability to clearly define one's multiple life missions truly separate the average from the exceptional. To translate these missions into a rich, complex, and compelling vision internalizes the

multi-sensory information deep within you—compelling you consciously and sub-consciously towards those images, thoughts, feelings, sounds, tastes, and even smells that reside within you.

To make these intentions even more rich and significant let's take one last perspective before moving on to building your Philosophy of Engagement—that perspective includes looking backwards on a life well lived—your personal legacy.

With two perspectives in place (future missions and present vision), it is time to reflect, from your own perspective as well as the perspectives of others, what this legacy might look like. In essence, if you could draft your own obituary, what would it say?

At first glance, writing your own obituary seems like a strange, even creepy, exercise. However, this exercise hits hard—but it's a good hard.

Visualize the following scenario: You've just gone out of this world in a blaze of glory (whatever that is for you). Whether you were ready for it or not, you are now looking down on yourself and marking the time that you transitioned from your mortal life to the after-life.

To assist you in this new life chapter, you are given special permission to attend your own funeral and to witness the lives of those you have touched—for good or bad.

As you float freely around the room, you see your spouse, immediate family, close friends, professional colleagues, community members and many others whom you haven't seen in years.

Many are eager to share their sentiments and stories about you. Some you are not so sure about. As you observe the scene, you can overhear the conversations—even tap in to their thoughts and feelings. You are not sure you want to hear and see "EVERYTHING", as nobody is perfect, including you. However, this exercise is

designed for you at this point. So, let's not make any assumptions just yet. While we are all less than perfect and might imagine somebody coming to our funeral and making one last public statement about how much we disappointed or hurt them, let's instead focus on what we would like them to say about us—as we are not dead yet and perhaps still have some time to make the necessary adjustments.

For the next several minutes, consider the stories, comments, or sentiments that you wish to hear from those individuals. Here are some examples:

Your spouse:

My spouse was a loving and kind person. He almost always thought of me and our children before himself. His dedication to his work was a significant part of his life. He made a difference in the lives of his colleagues, whether they were subordinated, superiors or peers. He took time out to play, to think and to serve the local community. He was the complete man. I am a lucky woman to have had such a husband, and feel that anyone with such a spouse should be proud and consider herself truly blessed.

Your closest sibling:

Jane was a thoughtful and caring person. She was always there for me in times of triumph and sadness. As an adult I saw her overcome many challenges and make the right choices when things were tough. She cared about her family and her friends. She was always looking for ways to add value to the lives of others. Few could ask for a better sister than Jane. She made a difference in my life and in the lives of my family. What more could be asked of a sister?

Your closest child:

While most of the men that I know spend their lives looking for significance in their professions, dad, while successful in his career,

took even greater pride in the lives of his wife and children. Dad was there for my sporting games, there to help me with my homework and there to meet with me one-on-one to talk about my problems and help me navigate the challenges of life. He was a beautiful man who was dedicated to my success and that of my brothers and sisters. He was not only a father, but perhaps my best friend.

Your best friend:

...

A work colleague:

...

A member of a civic organization:

...

A long-time neighbor:

...

Someone whose life you touched that you may have forgotten about:

...

What did they say about you? If this exercise was a struggle for you, then all the better. A few uncomfortable moments as you consider the people you have left behind is often the kind of wake-up call we all need to make some adjustments, and to design or re-design the kind of person we would truly like to become.

Here you have painted a picture by looking backward from the perspective of others—simply another vantage point for viewing yourself and clarifying the image of the type of person you most

want to be—one you can be proud of and who made a difference in the lives of those who were closest to you. This is the kind of person who finds flow regularly in his or her relationships.

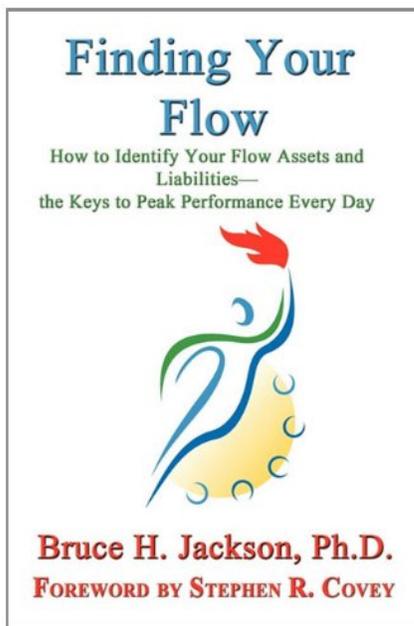
This is a fantastic start to molding a new self-image. You now have under your belt three rough documents that provide you with three valuable perspectives in time (past, present and future). Over the next week, consider several re-writes to each of these documents until they clearly represent the kind of person you wish to be.

Once you feel comfortable with these initial drafts, keep them with you wherever you go—in your computer, PDA—anything to which you have quick access. Print them out and keep them in your pocket if necessary. Read them once a day for a week, and at least once a week thereafter. When something new hits you, a new insight, image, idea or refinement, take a moment (don't miss it) and make the necessary adjustments. Think like Picasso and the other great masters who saw their great works as "in progress" for which refinements were necessary and regular.

I'll see you next week where we will take a look at building your Philosophy of Engagement—the stuff that gets you from here to there...

EXERCISE AND PRACTICE:

- Exercise: "Legacy Statement"
- Complete your personal legacy statement
- Re-write your mission(s) and vision documents
- Transfer these documents to a place where you can read, review, and revise often.

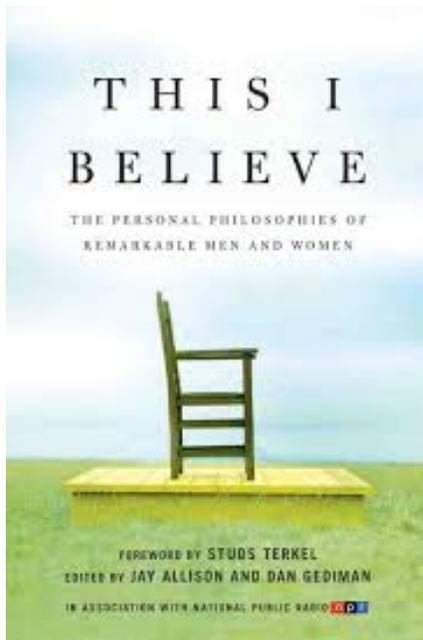


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