

**Living Your Glorious Life
Program**

Monthly Mentor #6

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Feel free to share this Monthly Mentor one time by mail, electronically or in person with anyone you think could use it. Better yet, give me their e-mail addresses and what you'd like in a note, and I'll send it to them. But don't sell it.

To guard participants' privacy, all names have been changed; occupations, biographical information and the locales have at times been changed. Sometimes, participants portrayed in this book are composites of those who took part in actual coaching sessions and some coaching sessions are composites.

This workbook contains exercises to help you on your journey. Many people put their Monthly Mentors into 3-ring binders. Carry it with you and make it a faithful companion: highlight important sections, mark it, flag it, and write your ideas and the actions you want to try.

The strategies, techniques and tips in the *Living Your Glorious Life* Program are offered as guidelines only. Each person is unique. Each situation is unique. What works in one situation may or may not work in another. The direction chosen by one person in one situation may be completely opposite from the direction selected by another person in what seems like the same situation.

These approaches work. If at first you don't succeed, call and we can develop new plans. Use good judgment and uncommon sense about what will work for you and what sequence of steps to follow, depending on the feedback you get at each step. Remember how you learned to walk – step-by-step, going one way and then the other, forward and back, sometimes falling but always adjusting to feedback.

Give this program as a gift to help friends, family, partners and employees get unstuck and build rich, full, glorious lives.

Schedule an appointment for individualized coaching, advising and consulting. To get help using these ideas, plans and tools more effectively, and to deal with difficulties before they become obstacles, contact me at 877-8BULLIEs (877-828-5543). I'll call you personally to set up your first session as soon as possible.

If you decide you no longer want to receive the monthly program, simply send a fax or e-mail and you won't be charged again.

On this journey together, please send your stories, ideas, questions or suggestions.

“The hardest challenge is to be yourself in a world where everyone is trying to make you be someone else.” e.e. cummings

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Why the “Living Your Glorious Life” Program is Important to You

Many people have not been prepared to face what life throws at them. Most of us have not been taught with insight and wisdom. We’ve been taught *wrongly* that:

- It’s OK to trudge through dull, desperate or meaningless lives – lives not worthy of our best.
- The world is too big and harsh for us – we won’t make it.
- We are helpless victims of our genetics, upbringing and fate.
- We cannot choose our attitudes, beliefs, moods, emotions, rules and roles.
- All great, heroic action is useless and actually motivated by mean, selfish reasons.

We have been taught coping strategies that are not effective in the real world.

“Listen, are you breathing just a little, and calling it a life?” **Mary Oliver**

In contrast, I have seen a tactical approach that can turn life into a joy, worthy of our best - a glorious, rich, full life. This monthly mentor will give you case studies, thought provoking mindsets, tips, techniques, tools and exercises to help you overcome your hesitations, destructive attitudes and outdated strategies. Some case studies may be about situations that are different from yours, but you may be surprised to see how useful the ideas and tools are for the issues you’re dealing with.

If you want to have the richest, fullest, most glorious life you can, you will have to live with courage – minute-to-minute, day-by-day heroism. I don’t mean heroism on the battlefields of war. I certainly don’t mean celebrity. I mean the heroism it takes to live wonderfully in the day-to-day battlegrounds of love and marriage; of job and career; of doing your best for your children, family, friends and yourself.

Special Bonus Offer for Members in the *Living Your Glorious Life* Program

Sign up a friend and get a month of free membership after their third month. Simply have them give me your name when they sign up.

Catastrophize (Self-Bullying) → Immobilize or Stampede

Debbie had great intentions but never carried through. As soon as the littlest thing went wrong, she made it the end of the world. She became stuck – frozen; thinking she'd never be good enough, feeling helpless – and every intention would turn to ashes. She was hopeless. She knew her successes were not signs of good things to come, but her failures predicted doom.

When Debbie was having major renovation in her home – construction noises and interruptions by workman in and out all day to ask her opinions or get permission – she couldn't do the work she wanted and expected from herself, her first thought was, "What does this say about me?" And she knew it said that she was too weak to set boundaries, she'd never succeed and it was hopeless. While she beat herself up she did nothing productive. She accomplished nothing.

When she did so much physical labor in her garden that she was exhausted and didn't make her house and kitchen spotless at night, she knew that meant she was not strong enough or didn't have enough will to succeed. So she'd stop gardening, get depressed and stop cleaning also.

When Debbie saw the slightest signs of being disorganized, she was sure there was something wrong with her so she might as well give up.

If she couldn't control her feelings or she blurted something out without examining and considering it for days, that meant she was childish, selfish and uncaring. She'd drive away her friends; she'd never keep the man she wanted. So she might as well not even try.

When someone saved \$50 compared to the price she paid for a car, Debbie knew that meant she was stupid, ignorant and scatterbrained. She would never get the best bargains. She might as well never buy anything important.

When dieting was hard instead of easy, she knew that she didn't have the strength to ever lose the weight she wanted. "What does that mean about me," she wailed? It meant she would always be a fat, out of control, loser.

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The key for Debbie was to step forward into the moment and simply focus on the task at hand so she was no longer obsessing on herself, judging herself and looking for signs and symptoms of failure and impending doom. The very thought patterns that were supposed to mobilize her to succeed by working harder and smarter had become the greatest sources of her failure. Her own mind immobilized her so she couldn't do what was necessary.

Debbie had many objections to focusing on the task instead of herself and was scared at first:

- "If I stop examining myself, won't I make even more dumb, mistakes?"
- "If I stop beating myself up won't I turn arrogant and selfish? Won't my evil core take over?"
- "If I don't get things right the first time doesn't that predict I'll always be a failure?"
- "What if there is something wrong with me? What if I don't have the brains or skill to succeed? If I don't examine myself and push myself to be perfect, won't I remain a loser?"

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Debbie finally accepted that her best chance of success lay in stepping into life and persevering at the task in front of her. If she wasn't succeeding at first, her best chance lay in persevering or

in rapidly trying another approach that might be successful. Obsessing on her character, skill, chances of success or goodness only got in the way of action.

With her new perspective, looking at herself with her new eyes, Debbie could see that her old thought loops had immobilized her. Her best chance of success was continuing to act, not judging herself. She no longer needed to get things right or be perfect the first time. She could keep experimenting until she accomplished something, and then move on to the next thing.

For example:

- She told the workmen to stop interrupting her every minute, and she arranged quiet places to work away from her home most of the day.
- When gardening exhausted her, she did less or accepted exhaustion. She started working out to strengthen her body.
- When she couldn't find something, she organized that small part of her life better and accepted that she wouldn't have a perfect system for everything instantly. For example, she accepted that it would take a month of successes and failures to develop the habit of putting her keys on the hooks she hung near the door. She didn't have to do it right very time. She just had to succeed eventually.
- She noticed that when she blurted things out, they actually were things she wished she had said sooner but had held back. So she began to say them in nicer ways sooner. She stopped blurting them out.
- She accepted that she'd try to get the best deals she could. Not getting the best in the world didn't mean she was hopeless; it just meant that she either had to spend more time negotiating or learn to be a tougher negotiator. Since she didn't really want to spend the time to do either, that was OK.
- Dieting was actually simple. If she persisted, no matter how difficult, and kept exercising and strengthening herself, eventually it would work. She just had to persist, no matter how she felt. She did, and developed muscles to boot.

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The same underlying pattern of catastrophize (self-bullying) → immobilize or stampede comes up in many other ways.

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Eleanor was right. When she woke fifteen minutes later than usual she felt certain she'd never be able to catch up and the day would be one of the worst in her life. She knew she could make up five or ten minutes, but not fifteen. By the time she got the kids ready and driven to school, they'd be late and she'd be late for work.

She knew her normal schedule squeezed too many things in too short a time but it was the only way she could get everything done. And when she couldn't get everything done, she knew there'd be disaster ahead.

Eleanor was right. The kids were late for school and she was late for work. In the early afternoon, when she was still moving frantically to catch up with her lengthy to-do list, she received a call from school. The school therapist wanted to see her as soon as she could come. Eleanor promised her boss she'd finish her work that night and went to school immediately.

The therapist told her that there was a problem with her oldest daughter. Eleanor was stunned. Her daughter was a model student – perfect attendance, straight A's, the kind of child who worried herself sick if she made one mistake on a test. "That was the problem," the therapist said. Her daughter had a lunchroom accident – water had spilled on her clothes, into an unzipped backpack and on a report that had been due in the afternoon. It had been a trivial

incident – the clothes and backpack would dry, the report could still be read and the teacher would accept it, no matter the condition. These kind of accidents happened all the time.

Except that Eleanor's daughter had lost it. She had stood, unmoving, trembling and trying to hold back tears. Finally, she flopped down in the puddle and wailed that she'd get a terrible grade on the report, she'd flunk the class, her pack was ruined, they'd never have time to buy another one, her clothes were totally ruined, all the kids would make fun of her and this was the start of her losing ground in school. She sat, frozen in the puddle, until a teacher carried her to the office.

Although the therapist had gotten Eleanor's daughter calmed down, the girl had refused to go to afternoon classes and was sitting in the nurse's office, waiting for Eleanor.

Eleanor was stunned. Why had her daughter been so careless about the water and why hadn't she zipped up her backpack? Eleanor knew she had been a terrible mother; how could she have done this to her daughter. It showed how out of balance Eleanor's life was and how her priorities were totally whacked out. She'd never be able to make amends for the way she had raised her daughter. Also, she was probably overlooking the very things that would tear her marriage apart and she'd never catch up with all she had to do at work. She'd probably get fired. Her parents were right – she hadn't noticed her mistakes and now they had caught up with her.

All her life Eleanor had been dreading this day, when her mistakes would come crashing down around her. Her life was like a house of cards, held together only by frantic effort every minute to prevent collapse. Eleanor almost got hysterical, predicting a host of future disasters and berating herself for being such a failure. She had never been able to live up to her own expectations, much less her parents'. Eleanor was frozen in the chair, unable to go to her daughter.

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Eleanor's life had been lived on the edge of catastrophe. She was the youngest child in a family that had made it pretty big. But then they had lost their fortune and been reduced to middle class means. They hadn't suffered from deprivation – they always had more than enough for food, clothes, necessities and even vacations. But they constantly looked back with regret at what might have been when they were rich. They obsessed on what had brought them low. Her parents decided that they'd overlooked fatal mistakes that had seemed insignificant at the time. After that decision, her parents became ever fearful and ever vigilant; any imperfection or sign of trouble might mean another catastrophe down the road.

Eleanor grew up always on the alert; “You never knew when disaster would strike from the most unlikely quarters.” Some of the interlocking rules Eleanor had breathed in each day were:

- If I mess up in the slightest way, if I make one mistake, it could be all over, forever.
- If I haven't learned it yet, I never will and it could be all over, forever.
- If I don't straighten something out immediately, I'll never fix it, it'll get worse and it could be all over, forever.
- If I don't teach the children everything or give them every good experience, they'll feel deprived, hate me and fail in life, forever.
- If I give in now, I'll set a precedent and always give in, and it could be all over, forever.

Eleanor had developed an elegant strategy to keep herself safe from disaster: predict catastrophe around every corner, freak out and rush around to prevent the potential tragedy. It didn't matter

that none of her imperfections or mistakes had led to catastrophe before; she never knew which mistake might be the one that destroyed her, forever.

That strategy had made her a perfectionist who over-reacted to each fear by predicting doom and gloom. But that strategy had also been a source of great success. She had always planned ahead, gotten every detail right and had prepared for every contingency.

On the surface, Eleanor's life appeared great. She and her husband loved each other, had good jobs, healthy four children and lived in a wonderful house in a neighborhood with good schools. But beneath the surface, Eleanor ran herself and her family ragged.

She was totally stressed out trying to cover all the bases. She crammed every day with frantic activity – she was always late and out of breath. When she tried to relax, she sat stiff as a board with thoughts of how far behind she was getting. Or else, she leapt into a task that she simply had to complete before she could settle down.

Eleanor's work suffered because when she was there, she worried about family problems. However, when she was physically with her husband and children, she was mentally and emotionally absent, worrying about problems at work. She couldn't talk with her husband about their problems because she couldn't admit they had any. If she wasn't the perfect wife and mother or she was trying to do too much, that meant her marriage was a total failure and they'd divorce inevitably. She could predict the downward slide that would lead to divorce.

When Eleanor catastrophized, her brain seemed immobilized or stuck, racing in circles, while her body ran like a chicken without a head.

Eleanor bullied herself with her parents' fears and strategy to prevent disaster. She was very frank about it – if she didn't feel enough pain she'd remain a lazy slug, she wouldn't do better and disaster would follow. She had to bully herself into being perfect enough to succeed. Every thing, no matter how slight it seemed, might be critical. Her daughter had accepted this style easily and rapidly.

This incident at school had one good effect: Eleanor realized she must change. If she didn't, her predictions of disaster for herself and her daughter would become self-fulfilling prophecies.

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Eleanor was able to step back into a place in which she had a much broader perspective. Eleanor's lateness to work was not the end of the world for her. She didn't have to cram every experience into their lives to make them successful. Her daughter's accident was not the end of the world for her. Neither of them had to be perfect to succeed or to have wonderful lives.

From this new place, she could see the old place in which she'd used her parent's fears and responses. In that old place she'd perfected her parents' strategy. She used to stack up all her unrelated mistakes and potential disasters until she was hemmed in by catastrophe on all sides. She'd used that pressure to prod herself to become perfect in hopes of averting disaster. But that was her parents' way. She didn't have to choose that anymore. She could choose better.

Eleanor could now see the price she'd paid for using that style. She had always looked over her shoulder, had never relaxed, had driven herself to work harder at everything than she actually wanted to, had felt frazzled and had begun to develop colitis. She used to take time off only when she was sick or close to exhaustion. And then she never enjoyed it. She felt insecure, waiting for disaster since she wasn't barreling along at full speed.

In this new place, she could feel a sense of strength in her own abilities. She recognized countless times she had faced difficulties and overcome them. Her fears had actually led her to develop tremendous competence and resilience. She could handle – mentally, emotionally, physically and monetarily – what life threw at her.

When she stepped back, Eleanor could actually start arranging things that had gone wrong, in a continuum from the trivial to the important. She could actually laugh at how she used to lump them all together as matters of live-or-death. Very few of her mistakes or of the bad things that happened to her were really that damaging. She knew she was much stronger and competent than she had given herself credit for.

She could see that, truthfully, she was great at work and they appreciated her effort. She had nothing to worry about there. Although, if she wanted, she could go back to the old way of looking at things and start panicking. After all, they might notice if she worked less obsessively and they might fire her. She found that her new perspective enabled her to handle things much better than she used to in “panic mode.”

There were many opportunities for Eleanor to step back from the precipice of life-or-death and deal with a better perspective. It was too late for her daughter's backpack and report, but she could help her daughter see that she was a fine student. No one report or test would be her undoing. Her daughter could also relax and start enjoying herself while keeping her grades up.

Three changes surprised Eleanor:

1. She could acknowledge her successes without turning into a lazy slug. She didn't need false modesty or a whip in order to take effective action.
2. She could now accept with good grace and tranquility that she and her husband had sore places between them. She could talk about their difficulties and calmly plan to resolve them.
3. She could acknowledge things she wanted: wanting and asking weren't signs of selfishness, laziness or weakness that would haunt her forever. She could vacation with her husband. Taking off would not automatically cause disasters.

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### **Ideas-Plans for Action**

What have you made into such a big deal that you hesitate, freeze, avoid or panic about?

When do you think about yourself a lot?

Which qualities do you obsess on and wish you didn't have?

Which qualities make you so proud that you let everyone know about them?

Where and when would it be best for you to examine yourself or to make predictions?

If you stopped paying attention to yourself and what other people thought about you, what would you have time to do?

If you didn't need to be or do right the first or every time, what would you let yourself learn?

**“Many of our fears are tissue-paper-thin, and a single courageous step would carry us clear through them.”** Brendan Francis

## The #1 Decision for Teenagers (and Parents Too) – Part 1

### A life of drifting alternating with white water

Eddie was drifting through high school. He did the minimum. He put out effort only when he was interested or a course was easy. He was late to school, he forgot his pencils and pens, and couldn't keep track of deadlines for papers and exams. His grades reflected a few peaks and mostly deep valleys. He looked like he was in a fog – just wandering with no incentive or goal.

His parents worried that he had a hidden, but severe, learning disability or was drinking or doing drugs. They were wrong. Eddie wasn't disabled or diminished by drink or drugs.

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The telling clues were that Eddie was always prepared and on time if he wanted to be – with his buddies to skateboard or exchange music, with girls he wanted to see, to fun trips with church groups, the weight room and karate. He was disciplined, organized and intense when it came to concerts, snowboarding and skateboarding. Like a corporate executive with his cell phone and built-in scheduler, Eddie efficiently multi-tasked appointments with his friends. He only forgot to enter appointments or deadlines he didn't care about.

Eddie alternated between drifting with the current and launching himself into the white water; periods of laid-back comfort interspersed with intense excitement. Other than small pleasures and excitement, Eddie simply didn't have anything in particular he had to do or wanted to do.

Eddie was bright, sweet and charming. He put off responsibilities as long as he could. Deadlines were endlessly negotiable, missed assignments could always be handed in late, B.S. worked enough, breaks came his way, his parents went to bat for him and he could slide by. If his girl friend got on him about how messy his room or car was, she could put up with it or leave. He'd be crushed – for a week – but there was always another one. Why put out more effort when life was full of ease, little comforts and white water thrills when he wanted it?

Eddie was a perfect example of what John Schaeffer, an 18 year-old Marine recruit, says about his former girl friend in *Keeping Faith*, “Erica seemed lost. She appeared to be waiting for somebody to drop a life into her lap, anything that would tell her what to do, where to go.”

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In the summer before his senior year, Eddie's parents got it. The only thing wrong with him was that there was nothing that mattered – except comfort, pleasure and excitement. Previously, his parents had explained, pleaded, bribed, negotiated and sent him to school psychologists, but to no avail. Eddie knew he could drift past these temporary discomforts. Bad consequences would be minimal. He could stay placid or hidden and the winds would die down the next day. Nothing they said or did had much effect or impact. It was that simple.

Eddie saw his parents clearly. They would try to make an impact by nagging him or fighting endless battles to ground him and then they'd renegotiate if he promised to do better.

But his parents changed their approach. His father told Eddie that they had giving up trying to teach Eddie the lessons he needed to learn in order to succeed in the world. They'd let the world

teach him. They knew that Eddie would have to pay a higher price, learning those lessons from a boss, a wife or a judge, but that's the way Eddie wanted to learn. He'd won; they'd given up trying to make it easier for him to learn at home. He wasn't worth the effort any more.

His father told Eddie that he'd lost respect for him. Eddie had broken a bond between them. Eddie had lied to him so often, had pledged and broken so many promises that he simply didn't believe Eddie any more. He just assumed that Eddie was lying and conniving all the time. He thought Eddie was a weak, hypocrite – lying to them; lying to his church group about his commitment to God and to honesty; lying to himself that being a manipulative snake was OK.

His father would support Eddie for his final year in high school. Eddie would have his free room and board; he could pass or fail his classes; he could prepare himself to be a man or not. But after that, graduate or not, he was gone – whether or not he had plans, a job or a school. His father had lost faith, trust and, even, liking – he didn't care to associate with someone, even someone he loved, who wouldn't work hard but was deceitful and manipulative.

His father, Ted, told Eddie of an incident that happened when Ted was about the same age as Eddie. Ted's father had been very strict. He had imposed rigid curfews and rules. Ted used to break them regularly. The incident happened when a friend of Ted's had borrowed his parents' brand new car. They had gone for a long ride in the fast, new car and were on their way back to drop Ted off at home in time for his 11 PM curfew. Really. They hadn't even been drinking.

But the car had gotten a flat. The spare tire was also flat. Ted had to help his friend; he knew his father would approve of that loyalty. They removed the flat tire and carried both it and the spare for miles before they found a station. In those days owners lived above their stations and could be gotten out of bed to repair cars. They begged. The owner understood, fixed the flat tire and inflated both. They carried them back to the new car, got the tire on and the spare stowed so his friend's father wouldn't know.

They got Ted back home at about 2 AM. The house was completely dark. Ted heaved a sigh of relief, took off his shoes and tiptoed in. He could make it to bed and lie to his father the next morning that he had made curfew. As Ted silently crossed the living room, the light switched on. There was his father, sitting in silence waiting for Ted.

Ted explained why he was late and filthy. He had stuck by his friend, just like his father would have wanted him to. His father said he didn't believe him. Ted was struck dumb. "But, this time it was the truth," he stammered out. "I was on my way home before curfew and I had helped my friend out of a jam."

His father shrugged his shoulders in a resigned way. "You don't understand, Ted," he said. "You've lied to me so often, I just don't believe you anymore. I assume that everything you say is just another lie. That's the price you pay for lying. Your own father doesn't believe you when you claim you're telling the truth. You've let me down and you're letting yourself down. You're not worth believing anymore." And his father simply walked upstairs to bed.

Ted told his son that in that terrible moment, he got it. He staggered back as if his father had punched him. He fell into a chair and he must have cried for hours – broken-hearted. He had broken the bond he held most important. The man whose respect he wanted most had absolutely none for him. That evening changed his life, Ted said. He never lied again.

Even more. He looked around and saw his life as his father saw it – mediocre grades, no interests, no plans, and no great aspirations. Just a humdrum, drifting life – like his buddies. No wonder his father had no respect for him. He had earned none and was worthy of none.

Ted told Eddie that he hadn't been sure what he wanted back then, but he knew he never wanted to feel that wretched and worthless again. He wanted his father to be proud of him and he wanted to be proud of himself. He started working at school, saving money, and hanging out with people who had energy and plans, who were excited and interested in the world. He became the father Eddie admired.

But now, when he looked at Eddie, he saw what his father had seen in him. And it wasn't worthy of respect. He turned and simply walked upstairs.

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The #1 decision for teenagers (and parents too)

Eddie got it. His game was exposed to the light of truth and his father's judgment. His soul was bare. He could no longer pretend that things weren't his fault, that "forgot" was an acceptable justification, that he was really trying or that he was successfully fooling his parents. They had simply decided to pay one more year to let a beloved leech keep sucking – but no longer.

That night, Eddie changed. He made the #1 decision that every person has to make before any further learning can occur. He decided to stop drifting and take charge of his own life: To commit and to act. He became responsible to himself for his actions and their consequences.

The specific decision Eddie made was to become a Marine. Notice two separate decisions here:

1. Eddie's commitment to his own life – no more drifting.
2. The specific "thing" he committed to.

When he applied, the Marines told him what he had to do before they'd be willing to take him. For the first time, Eddie knew that he had to meet their standards or get lost: No exceptions.

Simple and clear. Eddie wanted it so much he started working hard – he studied so he could get enough credits to graduate, worked out so he could pass the physical and went on recruit training exercises. He got up at 3 AM and he didn't complain. He did what he was told and he didn't try to glide by with his charming smile. He had chosen his path for now and he did whatever it took.

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### **When you let yourself drift, you become a victim of the wind and current.**

Eddie had chosen – he had a purpose, a goal and a high bar to clear. Eddie had reached out and taken hold of his own life. He had made the #1 decision – he had committed to his own life and that made all the difference. Good for him.

### **Until a person chooses to create his own life, no help helps. All help is wasted.**

Eddie discovered rapidly that when he committed to living his own life, that commitment challenged him to organize the rest of his life around it. He could no longer drift or follow somebody else's life. Did that mean he never goofed off or got in trouble again? Of course not. But it did mean that he started on a trajectory that took him higher and farther.

Kids (and adults) who are drifting, who have not committed to a life that matters to them, can enjoy periods of ease and comfort alternating with the excitement and thrills. They think they're safe and/or invulnerable: you'll protect them and get them safely out of the rapids and into the backwaters if they need. Or they'll get lucky.

Eddie was on that ride until he committed to his own life. Everything else flows from, is nourished by and is judged by that first commitment. The fruits of your life will be produced from the DNA of what you've committed to and from the blossoming of the seed within you.

When you commit to your own life, you are challenged to see clearly and to clear out what pollutes or diminishes that commitment; to see clearly and cleave to what is worthy of that commitment; to see clearly if you are worthy of that commitment. And you'd better act because if you don't, you are lost.

When you commit to your chosen life, you can no longer settle for the life you were raised or trained to live; scared, twisted, bent or beaten into living. You can no longer settle for the life friends, newspapers, magazines, TV, radio tell you to live; the life you drifted or were sucked in to living. When you commit to living your own life, you take your first step to becoming great, the hero of your life.

### **How do you know what pollutes and what is worthy?**

Come on, 'fess up. You know. So choose and act.

### **Why don't we commit and act?**

We all know why – fear, laziness, blindness, selfishness, cowardice and seduction by little comforts and pleasures. William Boast summarizes it by “S.I.N.” – stupidity, ignorance, narcissism. Keep giving in to those and you'll be too late, too old, too dying and too dead to do anything about it: just carrying a bigger burden of “should'a, would'a, could'a.”

You're trying to drift when you hear yourself saying that you've committed four hours a day and that's enough. You get to play, relax, hang, veg. or party the rest of the time. Sorry, that doesn't work. That commitment to the life of your spirit challenges you to look at every 24 hours.

There's a difference between hangin', drinkin', veggin' or video gamin' as addictions from any of those activities done in a way that feeds your spirit. If you can't do something in a way that feeds your soul, then you're destroying your spirit. If it's not really nutritious for your soul, like eating a menu or drinking salt water isn't for your body, just say, “No!”

Don't focus on the fiddly bits of the excuses you use to hold yourself back. Don't think that if you only knew the intricate and fascinating details of each neurosis, eventually you'd figure out how to detach those mental barnacles. Nonsense – just stop! And start doing what the best of you must do.

“But I'm not certain, it doesn't seem easy, the path is rocky, the world isn't opening, there's no safety net, what would those I love say, etc.” Stop it! I'm getting a headache listening.

Your preferences, likes and dislikes, difficulties and struggles are irrelevant. Doing successfully is all that matters. As Yoda said, “There is no 'try,' Luke. There is only 'do' or 'not do.' ”

**Choose a commitment requiring your very best: That you have to struggle to be worthy of.** If what you've committed to, doesn't require your very best, doesn't require you to struggle, doesn't require heroism to overcome your least – your comforts, pleasures, little preferences, likes and dislikes, the “7 Deadly Sins” – to become greater than you thought you could be, it's not great enough to give you a glorious life. If it doesn't demand your absolute best – and then more – it's not worthy enough to commit your life to.

Become alive, vital and passionate about each moment. Only do the actions that are worthy of your best. Do them intensely, passionately, vitally from/with/based on/expressing your highest and best. Be a miracle. Bring the sun up over a different you: the you of your spirit.

Act. Commitment without action is merely wishful thinking. It's that simple; you'll see.

**Your greatness unfulfilled is a great tragedy.**

**Notice I left out at least four considerations that most people waste their time on:**

1. How do you feel about the Marines?
2. Why Eddie joined the Marines?
3. Is joining the right-correct-best decision?
4. How can you figure out what's the right-correct-best decision?

Those are not useful considerations.

### **1. How do you feel about the Marines?**

Sorry. If you focus on that, you miss the point. How you feel about the Marines is irrelevant. The point is not that you can reason to the right-best-correct answer about the Marines or that Eddie and his parents should get to the same answer you prefer. If you focus on your preferences in politics or anywhere else, you miss the bigger picture.

The bigger picture is that Eddie needs to commit to his life and do it 110% – no drifting or excuses. He has to make his own life. Your and my opinion about the Marines is irrelevant. His task is to do something 110% worthwhile for him – in his own unique time and way.

Of course, some ways of living have the potential of a glorious life while others have only small potential or the even probability of a mean, nasty little life. Committing to “great and glorious” is very different from committing to “safe and comfortable.” Commit. Improve your wisdom about what's worth committing to. Commitment in action is the engine.

**Eowyn: “I fear neither death nor pain.”**

**Aragorn: “What do you fear, my lady.”**

**Eowyn: “A cage. To stay behind bars until use and old age accept them. And all chance of valor has gone beyond recall and desire.”**

**Aragorn: “You are a daughter of kings.”**

**Peter Jackson's “Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers”**

## 2. Why did Eddie join the Marines?

Again, irrelevant. Don't try to figure out what caused Eddie to make that decision: What happened in his childhood; what he saw on TV yesterday; whether or not he's deciding that way in reaction to his father; what fears, hopes or neuroses he has. Those "why" questions, followed by cause → effect answers, only strip the vitality and glory out of someone's effort to live greatly, heroically. Stop it.

**Eddie's #1 job is to choose and then to make something wondrous, glorious, rich, full and great out of that choice.**

Whatever reasons you might use to strip away the heroism of Eddie's decision, you can also balance by thinking that he, like most 18 year-olds, need challenge in the world. They have to test themselves in order to bring out the best in themselves. They want to be responsible for protecting what they love – their families and their countries – and the Marines are one way of doing it. Don't deny them that because you don't like our politics today or you think comfort and safety are more important. Comfort and safety certainly aren't more heroic or glorious.

Of course, Eddie's #2 job is to aspire higher and greater than any previous decision and make even more greatness with the next decisions in his life. The same for his parents and for us too.

And good job to his parents who applaud his making his decision – totally separate from their politics, feelings about the Marines, fears he might get shot, hopes he might do/be great. The important point is that they understand the importance of decision, commitment and action to him. They understand the great Eddie he could make of himself doing this.

**"What you greatly think, nobly dare."      Homer**

**Remember what Maude told Harold: "Harold, if you don't play the game hard, you're not going to have anything to talk about in the locker room."      "Harold and Maude"**

## 3. Is joining the Marines the right-correct-best decision?

No one will know for years – Eddie might be killed in boot camp; might meet the love of his life, get married, have many wonderful children and live healthy to 90; might kill an innocent person who could have saved the world; might save the life of a person who saves the world.

Wait. "years" is not right either. Eddie won't know whether he was right until he looks back just before his last breath. No, that's not right either. We won't know until the effects of his decision have rippled out for two generations. Better make that five generations. And who will make the decision about whether it was the right decision for Eddie?

Get the point. That's simply not a useful way of thinking.

What's important is that Eddie, at age 18, is making a decision to live his own life his own way. He has made the #1 important decision for teenagers (and adults also). He is following his own spirit as best he can today. As long as he keeps doing that tomorrow and tomorrow and

tomorrow – he will live his own life. At the moment of committing and acting, Eddie becomes an immensely powerful force in his world. For better or worse, for right or wrong. Awesome!

So, how about you and me? The important point is to make the decision and act on it. And then to make the most of it – no looking back, no regrets, no pats on the shoulder because it was the right decision. It was your decision. That’s enough. Awesome!

Sure, we commit to our families, jobs and careers – to a greater or lesser extent – and to the success and peer or public appreciation that we imagine will build self-image. But, how about the commitment to your spirit, to the best of you – which isn’t the least affected by family, job or career? What’s the commitment to your best – and for how many hours a day?

Empty yourself of what you’ve been raised with. Empty yourself of your ego. Be empty. Then SEE. Be new. Be SELF. Act. Take your chances.

**Don’t wait for your life to come to you. Don’t wait for the current to carry you to Treasure Island. Will yourself to the life you want. Will yourself to love and joy. All it takes is effort.**

#### **4. How can you figure out what’s the right-best-correct decision before acting?**

Forget it! Life is full of tension, paradox and unfairness. But it’s not a philosophical problem to be solved. It’s not a problem to be thought about, mulled over or agonized about until you can reason through to the right-correct-best answer. There is not and can never be a right-correct-best solution. You don’t live a glorious, rich, full life by arriving at philosophical solutions.

There can never be a solution that produces no bad consequences. There will always be consequences. If we waited until we’d figured out the right-correct-best answer with no bad consequences, we’d never have used fire; we’d still be in caves – never having made it to huts.

Remember my Grandmother, walking across Europe at age 16 with her cousin, age 14, to Bremerhaven to get the boat to America (Monthly Mentor #2). Never knowing if they’d live through the trip, what would happen to them in the new world, if they ever see their family again. I’m glad they did it because I’m alive and I can look back from here. But who could have predicted back then, no matter how long and hard they thought about it? No one could have ever predicted what would happen to the world in the last 100 years or what would ripple out from their seeds and the seeds of that journey.

**The future is made of both chance and choice. Act as if it was all your choice.**

**“You only get a few chances in life to show your stuff. Often it’s a split second when you step up or you don’t. If you don’t step up and you should have, that eats away at a young man. And I don’t think it goes away when he gets older.” Pat Tillman’s father, (Pat, an NFL linebacker who volunteered for the rangers after 9/11/01, was killed in Iraq, 4-22-04)**

**Ideas-Plans for Action**

What lessons do you insist on being the one to teach your children?

What lessons do you really think they are willing to learn from you?

What lessons will they learn the hard way – from the world (bosses, spouses, friends) when the price is high?

Why do you want to waste your time trying to force them to learn lessons they don't want to learn from you – knowing that will lead to resentment and fights about your forcing your will on them and take the focus off the lesson you want them to learn?

Where are you letting yourself down by settling for drifting and occasional white water?

Is that all there is to your life?

Is that the highest you want to show-model for your children?

What do you wish your parents had modeled for you?

How can you model those characteristics and qualities for yourself and your children?

**“Finish everyday and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; begin it well and serenely and with too high a spirit to be cumbered with your old nonsense. This day is all that is good and fair. It is too dear, with its hopes and invitations, to waste a moment on yesterdays.” Emerson**

## Your Success Stories

“I thought your exercise of bringing ‘wows’ home (MM #5) was pretty naïve and would never work, especially with our 10 year-old. As I expected, he resisted at first. He thought it was dumb and he didn’t have much to say to us. I told him he had to do it and challenged him to bring home better ones than I did.

He began to like it – and he liked competing with me for the best ‘wow’ of the day. He began telling us about what was happening at school and the ideas he had that he was excited about. He started bringing stories home from scouting trips. He stopped whining and complaining. You’re right - he’s learning how to tell a funny story.

I stopped coming home and complaining or withdrawing in silence. I got caught up in it too. I look forward to our eating and talking together. Sometimes, I can’t wait my turn. Other times I get stressed out in the late afternoon, if I don’t already have a ‘wow.’

My wife thought she’d never find anything to talk about because she’s home or helping at school. But she’s got great stories. My wife says that I’m much more interesting to be with – like I used to be. She especially looks forward to hearing from our son.

Our oldest son moved out recently but we told him about the exercise and said we wanted him to participate when he came over. He’s become fun to be with again. It’s like being with the son we always loved. He finally said that it’s made him look at his roommates differently. He gets very tired of their complaining.

Not bad for a silly, little exercise. It’s a winner. Thank you.” CFO – Banker

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“Thank you for the ‘wow’ exercise. I couldn’t find anything to be excited or happy about - the world was pretty dark. I hadn’t realized how depressed I was. I had to stop listening to NPR, and watching and reading so much news in order to find something that was a ‘wow.’

Coaching with you really helped. My husband and I have started making sure we have time for dates again. We bought a DVD/VCR player and are renting comedies. It makes all the difference. We’ve been laughing again – and we hadn’t for about two years.

The world hasn’t changed but my world has. I’m so much happier when I see what’s wonderful instead of seeing only what’s wrong. We have more energy and I’m sleeping better. I was able to handle very difficult situations at work and with my father that I hadn’t even been able to face before. Amazing.” Executive Director – Non-Profit

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### What have you done with the ‘wow’ exercise in Monthly Mentor #5?

## Effective Coaching and Consulting

Here's a comment from a person who got individualized coaching which working her way through the Living Your Glorious Life Personal System. As usual, the name of the person, living in Denver, has been withheld.

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"While I was carrying out the action plan we created based on the LYGL system, I decided to go back to the beginning of the books and CD set to make sure I hadn't missed anything. It was a revelation. I had learned so much the first time through, that I saw much more this time and was able to develop a more effective plan.

Your coaching kept me on track. Now, I see why I used to be so hurt by bullies at work, but I don't anymore. Now, I can plan much more effective strategies. I've given up trying to be accepted by jerks I don't even like or respect. I've also given up trying to be liked by everybody. Now I seek out only good, quality people as friends and allies. They have really helped me become successful.

Even though I had been using the program to focus on bullies at work, the biggest revelation was that I'd been letting my husband bullying me for the whole 16 years we've been married. I had actually thought of running away while I was walking down the aisle and many times since. But I never could put my finger on exactly why I was feeling that way. I had minimized what he was doing. He could always make me feel that things were my fault. Also, he could talk me into doing what he wanted.

If I had read the bullies program 17 years ago; I wouldn't have wasted so much of my life."

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As you can see, the self-help exercises and coaching that are part of the system were critical for this person. As much as written information is helpful and important, using the exercises for yourself and getting my feedback are critical for opening up new awareness, new "ah-has" and for making plans you can carry out successfully.

Learn how to eliminate the high cost of low attitudes in your life

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## Membership in Dr. Ben Leichtling's *Living Your Glorious Life Program*

"I never subscribe to monthly publications but after I tried yours, I'm convinced. I never thought I'd be able to change my old habits. I thought I'd always be afraid. But now I can see my progress, step-by-step. It's like the world has opened up in front of me. Your reminders have been life savers." Name withheld by request

**The rest of the components of the LYGL Personal System, if purchased separately, cost \$124.85, plus shipping:**

1. "Bullies Below the Radar: How to Wise Up, Stand Up and Stay Up," Softcover, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition – \$19.95, plus shipping
2. How to Stop Bullies in Their Tracks," Softcover – \$19.95, plus shipping
3. Parenting Bully-Proof Kids," Softcover – \$9.95, plus shipping
4. How to Stop Bullies in Their Tracks" and Parenting Bully-Proof Kids," CD set – \$75.00, plus shipping

**Price for purchasing the rest of the system as a unit is \$99.00, plus shipping**

In addition, you will receive:

- **65 Handy Guides** to handle bullies below the radar.
- **63 Wisdom Quotes** in card and bookmark formats.
- **6 Additional Case Studies**, 1 per month for the next six months.

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"I was amazed. During 16 years of marriage, my husband had become someone I didn't like. But after I followed Dr. Leichtling's plan, I recovered my strength and energy and he has finally become the man I married. I wish I had seen Ben years ago." Name withheld by request

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