

Module #5 of 10

A World of Possibilities

SKILLS FOR CREATING HAPPINESS AND BLESSING OTHERS

The Freedom of Self-Discipline

We often shy away from self-discipline, thinking that it takes the spontaneity and fun out of life. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is only through self-discipline that we can fully enjoy life, optimally express our creativity, and experience the deep satisfaction of unconditional love.

Like playing basketball or learning a foreign language, self-discipline draws upon a set of skills. It takes effort and real-life practice to learn the skills and to continue exercising them so we don't lose our edge. Fortunately, life abounds with creative opportunities, both large and small, that allow us to practice and improve our self-management abilities.

Be playful and courageous in building your muscles of self-discipline. Greet life's little challenges as a game in which you enjoy testing how well you can employ your growing skills of self-discipline.

To remain silent rather than strike out at another or spread negative gossip; to follow through on your exercise and dietary goals; to stop rushing and overworking; to devote yourself wholeheartedly to a process of spiritual enrichment; to put aside distractions and listen with complete respect, openness, and attention to a loved one or co-worker—such are the freedoms and pleasures afforded by self-discipline.

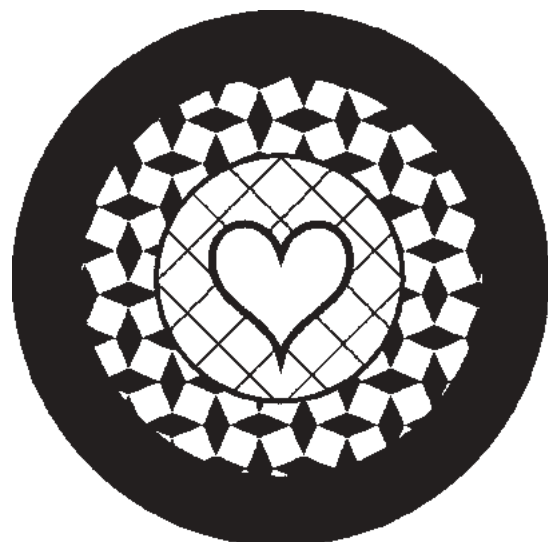


7 Core Principles



- 1 The skills of self-discipline are like muscles: If you exercise them intelligently, your self-management ability will grow steadily in strength and flexibility, always ready to serve your highest good and that of all others.
- 2 Building our muscles of self-control does demand effort and patience; but far from being happiness-killing drudgery, self-discipline is the doorway to true freedom, strength, creativity, service, love, and joy.
- 3 Self-discipline involves three key components: calmness, intuition, and willpower—the calmness required to hear our intuitive guidance and the strength of will necessary to follow through.
- 4 Practice being more inwardly calm; tune more deeply into your intuitive sense of insight and guidance; and enjoy gradually strengthening your willpower.
- 5 As appropriate, when you are inwardly prompted to do something or to stop doing something, act immediately.
- 6 Make it a game: See the little difficulties of life as events that test your self-discipline, and take pleasure in skillfully meeting challenges and learning from them.
- 7 Remember, the more centered you are on the Target of Life, the greater your well-being, the wiser your choices, and the more effective you are in everything you do.

Put yourself in the center of the heart of the Target of Life. Notice that the heart of the Target is clear, unobstructed, full of light. From there, you see clearly and make choices that are good for you and those around you. You are attuned to your inner guidance and best judgment. You feel at peace, strong, compassionate, joyful, energetic, and creative. Your reflexes are sharp, your immune system strong. You stumble and fall less often, and you handle life's inevitable challenges with more confidence and skill. Your ability to endure prolonged hardship increases. You are naturally more sensitive to others—more patient, generous, and understanding. You more easily express the richness of your authentic self. The more deeply centered you are in the heart of the Target of Life, the more love you feel and share. **You are at your best—physically, mentally, and spiritually.**



Target of Life

Although you undoubtedly have experienced being relatively centered, often little and big things happen that go against your desires and expectations, and you are likely to find yourself thrown off center and pulled out of your heart's wisdom into the surrounding web of minor frustrations and energy-drainers. Your vitality, peace, and sensitivity begin to fade, and little tensions, doubts, and fears start to emerge. Stress creeps in and things bother you more easily. You are more critical of yourself and edgier with the people in your life. Your effectiveness, spiritual attunement, and physical health start to slip.

All of this can pull you even further away from the center of the Target of Life into the area of increased darkness and sharp edges. When you are in this portion of the Target, you have strayed still further away from your center—your heart of hearts, your home of love, wisdom, and joy. Stress levels are high, and it's much more difficult to sense your inner guidance. You're far more likely to become irritable with co-workers and friends, to yell at family members, and to make poor decisions in every area of life. Tension, disharmony, and fatigue take their toll on your creativity and physical well-being. You and everyone around you are affected negatively.

Beyond this portion of the Target of Life is the outer darkness. Here you can't see well at all; it's a terrible place to be. Insecurity, doubt, confusion, and selfishness are rampant. Stress soars to dangerous levels, and good judgment plummets to an all-time low. You feel heavy and burdened and make decisions that hurt yourself and others. You are driven by fear, blindness, and anger. In this outer darkness your health suffers tremendously, and all kinds of abuse, destruction, and violence flourish. Despite your inherent goodness, you may find yourself saying and doing horrendous things. Truly, it's a living hell.

Every individual has a Target of Life as does every relationship, organization, city, and nation. Even the world as a whole has a Target of Life, and when the world moves too far from its center of love, an array of major problems erupt, including disease, poverty, environmental disasters, international strife, and war.

It is our individual and collective choices that move us away from our intuitive wisdom at the center of the Target of Life into varying degrees of stress, confusion, frustration, and conflict. **Fortunately, by making wise choices at any time, we can move back toward the center of the Target into greater levels of peace, vitality, kindness, and opportunity.**

In the gift of choice lies our greatest power—a power that can be used to uplift or destroy. The Target of Life is a helpful way to understand our individual and collective well-being. **With awareness and practice, we can become highly skilled at detecting and creatively responding to the early signs of harmful stress.** We can gradually learn to stay more deeply centered with increasing frequency, saving ourselves all kinds of trouble and our society billions of dollars in unnecessary health care costs.

If you have a strong spiritual orientation, you may find it helpful to think of being centered as being in the heart of the Divine Presence—the source of all goodness, harmony, abundance, and creativity. As temptations confront you and you allow yourself to be lured into making less than optimal decisions, you stray from the center of Divine Love into varying degrees of fear, pain, and self-defeating behaviors. To move toward the center of Divine Presence or toward a self-created hell of outer darkness, to go more deeply into love and joy or to separate yourself from the Divine and become lost in fear and confusion—these are decisions that you face each day. By staying centered and honoring your intuitive guidance, by remaining alert and choosing wisely, you can be at your best more frequently and help to create a world of marvelous possibilities.



Here's the most important thing you need to remember about self-discipline: If you are reading this paragraph, if you get out of bed in the morning, if you've ever accomplished anything, you have successfully exercised your powers of self-discipline.

In other words, *you already are a self-disciplined person!* You've had at least some basic successes, and now you're like an athlete who is trying to take his or her talents to the next level. This publication will give you some tips for doing just that.

Self-discipline is when your conscience tells you to do something and you don't talk back.

W.K. Hope

We're all in school; life is one great big course in self-discipline. In everything you think, say, and do, you are either strengthening or weakening your self-management skills. The inability to manage yourself results in lost opportunities and all kinds of problems. *Self-discipline—the art of following your positive tendencies*—opens the door to achievement, enjoyment, and new possibilities. Approached in a creative manner, learning self-discipline is much less difficult and more pleasurable than most people realize.

THE LITTLE WAY OF SELF-DISCIPLINE

Whether you are tackling a major world problem or you merely want to improve your eating habits, you may find “The Little Way of Self-Discipline” helpful. It's based on eight simple principles:

- ◆ *Pay close attention to the little things that make such a big difference*—the little smile that means so much to your child, the little extra effort at the last minute that wins the big game, the little touch of creativity that makes your project shine.
- ◆ *Break large jobs into little tasks and take one small step at a time.* Can't tackle that big report right now? Why not start with the cover page and a draft of the introductory paragraph?

- ◆ *Remember that minutes are more important than hours.* With appreciation and concentration, spend each moment well, and your hours and days will overflow with contentment and achievement.
- ◆ *Extend little gestures of thoughtfulness, appreciation, and encouragement to those around you.* It will calm and energize you, and it requires little time and effort.
- ◆ *Don't waste time on insignificant matters.* Avoid spending time on things of little importance that, in the long run, have no bearing on what you value most. Use your precious time and energy wisely.
- ◆ *Learn to think small and make many little beginnings.* For example, look at each hour as if it were a brand new day, a fresh opportunity to build on your progress or launch out in an innovative way. Remember, it's never too late to make a fresh start.
- ◆ *Say no to negative temptations as soon as they pop up.* If you even consider acting upon temptations, they will grow in strength and size and have more power over you. Instead, get into the habit of immediately saying yes to the positive promptings of your heart.

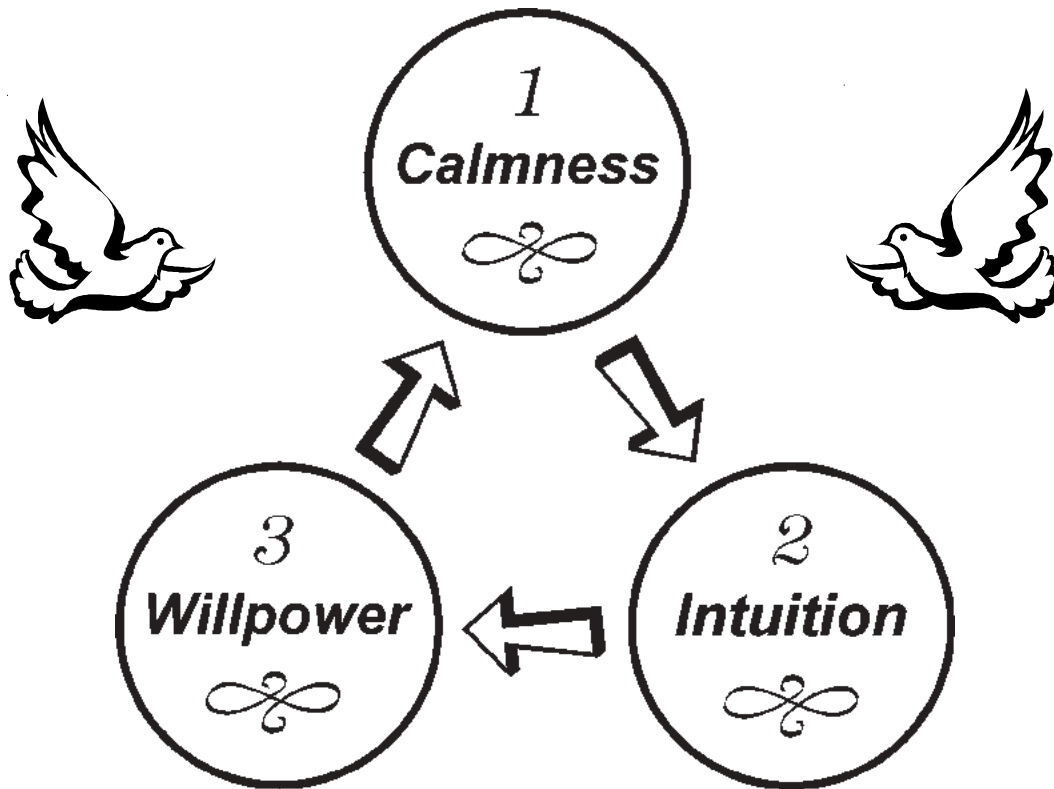
Obstacles cannot crush me; every obstacle yields to stern resolve.

Leonardo da Vinci

- ◆ *Realize that your little daily thoughts shape your self-discipline and your life.* Refuse to feed doubts and worries with your attention. Focus on the positive. If you really understood the creative power of your mind, you would avoid negative thoughts altogether.

DON'T BE FOOLED

The Self-Discipline Process on the next page is very powerful. The more you understand it, apply it, and make it second nature, the more your skills of self-discipline will grow. Don't pass over Page 5 too quickly or be fooled by its simplicity.



Self-Discipline Process

Calmness is feeling peaceful inside. **Intuition** is the inner guidance that shows you what is best. **Willpower** is the strength to make things happen. Self-Discipline is as simple as 1, 2, 3.

- 1. Be calm within.*
- 2. Pay attention to your intuitive guidance.*
- 3. Use your abundant willpower to follow through on what you are inspired to do.*

The Self-Discipline Process is like breathing; it should be happening all the time.

Calmness: Whether you are petting a baby kitten, playing your favorite sport, caring for a loved one, or dealing with a major problem at work, if you are calm within, you'll feel better and be far more effective. Do your best to make inner peace a constant habit. **Intuition:** When you are unruffled and at peace, it's so much easier to sense those all-important intuitive signals arising from your body, mind, and spirit. Strive to be always receptive to your intuition's wise guidance.

Willpower: Trust your intuitive signals and immediately act on them, knowing that you have enormous untapped strength within you. Through regular practice, keep your muscles of willpower in tip-top shape so that you are always ready to back up your inner knowing with skillful action.

MORE SELF-DISCIPLINE TIPS

Do it now. As soon as you realize it's time to get up, to be quiet, or to begin that project, do it! Don't delay. It's when you postpone action and allow your mind to start rationalizing that your will is weakened and trouble sets in.

Challenge yourself. Walk an extra mile. Sit next to that person who in the past has threatened you or "gotten on your nerves." Use everyday situations to boost your skills of self-discipline.

Celebrate your strengths. Write down some of the many ways in which you already are self-disciplined. Then make a list of all your positive qualities, your special talents, and compliments that people have paid you. A good friend can help you identify your strong points.

We ask for strength and life gives us difficulties, which make us strong.

Native American Saying

Find a coach. Invite someone you respect to be your personal coach—a person who will listen to the desires of your heart, assist you in setting tangible goals, challenge you to overcome your weaknesses, and provide encouragement and guidance to keep you on course. A reliable, upbeat friend may be an ideal coach, or you may wish to hire a professionally trained personal coach.

Keep your word. If you say you are going to do something, do it. Occasionally things will come up, and you won't be able to follow through. But as a rule, if you say you will be there at 8:00, be there. If you think you might be late, just honestly say, "It may be well past 8:00 before I show up."

Create your own mental movies. Using all your senses, see and feel yourself achieving your goals. If there's something you want, mentally see it repeatedly in vivid color, right in front of you. If there's a habit you want to get rid of, visualize it in a shabby gray color and see it quickly moving away from you, getting smaller and smaller until it disappears completely. Behold in your mind's eye only what you truly believe in and love.

Nourish yourself with positive self-talk. Say goodbye to words such as "can't," "impossible," and "if only." You can accomplish almost anything if you believe you can and talk to yourself accordingly. Say to yourself with joyous, deep conviction: "Today is the best day of my life!"

Put others first. Without neglecting yourself, look for opportunities to put others' needs and interests first. Inconspicuously give the best to someone else; don't take the best seat or the largest slice; let the driver behind you have the most convenient parking place. This is an excellent way to bless others while building your muscles of self-discipline.

Rise above your likes and dislikes. You may have preferences, but don't enslave yourself with a rigid set of likes and dislikes. Loosen up and open up. Learn to accept—even to like—the things you previously found distasteful. Avoid judging others for a day; instead, simply love them as they are. Independent of what confronts you, do your best to remain even-minded, resourceful, and happy.

Learn from outstanding examples of self-discipline. Listen to and watch disciplined people whom you admire. Seek out new heroes—great leaders, visionaries, teachers, saints, and mature athletes. Zero in on their secrets of success and make them your own. Always be ready to admire and learn from the positive traits of those around you.



QUESTIONS TO PONDER AND DISCUSS

One good question can be worth a shelf full of books. *Think about the broad topic of self-discipline, then write several related questions that come to mind.* Ponder your questions and discuss your responses with a friend or with a small group. Following are two queries that might inspire further questions:

- ✧ The title of this publication is "The Freedom of Self-Discipline." Can you give examples of how self-discipline results in freedom?
- ✧ What, more than anything else, helps you to be self-disciplined?



SKILL BUILDERS

Skill builders help you exercise your creative muscles to give you the strength you need for success. *In addition to the skill builders below, create some of your own on the topic of self-discipline.* As with physical fitness workouts, benefits come from actually *doing* the exercises.

- ◆ By phone or in person, interview three disciplined people whom you admire. Listen to their formulas for success, and take good notes.
- ◆ Take a favorite piece of clothing or another precious possession and give it away to someone who will really appreciate it. Or donate a significant sum of money or portion of your time to a good cause. The goal is to stretch your muscles of generosity.
- ◆ Before the day is over, conquer a little fear.

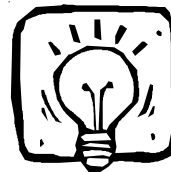


A NEW POSSIBILITY

Bringing a dream to life is a journey. It begins and continues one step at a time. Think about all that you have learned from this publication and how you might put it into practice. Then choose one small goal that you want to accomplish in the next few days. Move toward a new possibility that is really important to you—one that you are enthusiastic about and are confident you can achieve.

Take a card or a piece of paper and, at the top, write “A New Possibility.” Under this heading, briefly state what you will do and by when. Sign this action plan and put it where you will see it often. Tell a supportive friend or family member about your goal, and frequently visualize yourself following through. Be prepared just in case doubts or roadblocks crop up. Know that you can always draw upon faith, firm resolve, and creativity to overcome any obstacles that may arise.

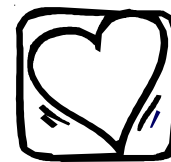
When you put the deepest desires of your heart into action, it naturally benefits others, either directly or indirectly. Have fun with your action plan; make a difference; inspire others. Dare to envision new possibilities, and then create your dreams one step at a time.



POSITIVE THOUGHTS

You may find the following brief thoughts (or similar ones that you create) to be simple yet powerful inspirational tools. You might, for example, memorize and, with deep feeling and concentration, mentally repeat one of these seed thoughts or write it on a card and place it where you’ll see it often.

- ♥ I possess the insight, courage, and strength to achieve—step by step—all my heartfelt, high-priority goals.
- ♥ Setbacks and unexpected challenges cannot stop me. With renewed determination, I press forward, drawing on my soul’s indomitable willpower, faith, and optimism.
- ♥ Sharing the noble ambitions of others, my heart says, “I believe in you! Your goals are my goals. You have the talents and self-discipline to succeed, and I will gladly encourage and assist you.”



LOVE MADE VISIBLE

Together, let us envision and build a world where all people enjoy optimal well-being. Let us strive to awaken fresh thinking, new enthusiasm, and abundant love. Let us create a world of unimagined possibilities. It can be done!

10 Educational Modules

A World of Possibilities: Skills for Creating Happiness and Blessing Others is an educational series containing 10 modules. Each module is accompanied by a Macromedia Flash® movie, a PowerPoint® presentation, and other teaching tools. All these resources, along with a Facilitator's Guide, are available free-of-charge in camera-ready format at the following website: www.ca.uky.edu/fcs/possibilities.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Your Vision Map 2. Making the Growth Choice 3. The Way of Peace 4. Heart Intelligence 5. The Freedom of Self-Discipline |  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Embracing This Present Moment 7. Accepting and Loving Your Body 8. Healthy Relationships 9. Unleashing Your Creativity 10. Gifts of Gratitude and Blessing |
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