

GETTING STARTED



TAKING BACK
YOUR LIFE

*'It is not in the stars to hold our
destiny but in ourselves.'*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

CHAPTER ONE

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Are You Destined to Succeed?

Beating the odds

Palm readers believe that your left hand is what you are born with and your right hand tells the story of what you do with it. In other words, regardless of the hand you're dealt in life, it's always going to be up and down to you what you choose to do with it.

Just for fun, here's a list of famous people and the afflictions they were born with – see if you can identify which affliction goes with which person.

Sir Winston Churchill	Partially blind
Dame Agatha Christie	Partially deaf
Sir Isaac Newton	Asperger's syndrome
Ludwig von Beethoven	Speech impediment
Albert Einstein	Dyslexia

- **Sir Winston Churchill had a speech impediment, yet went on to become known as one of the greatest orators of the twentieth century.**
- **Dame Agatha Christie had all the symptoms of what is now known as dyslexia yet wrote more than 70 books that sold over 2 billion copies.**

- **Ludwig von Beethoven composed his ninth and final symphony, considered by many to be the greatest work in all classical music, while almost completely deaf.**
- **Sir Isaac Newton went partially blind as a young scientist yet recovered to develop the theory of gravity and the basis of both physics and calculus.**
- **Albert Einstein exhibited all the traits of the modern diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome, yet his theory of relativity revolutionized modern science and led to the development of nuclear energy.**

Given what they were up against, would you predict that each one of them would go on to greatness? Or would it seem like the difficulties they had to face in life meant they were destined to fail?

I was constantly told at school that I would never amount to anything in life. But I determined early on that I wasn't going to let someone else's diagnosis of my problems become a prognosis for how things would turn out in my life.

And the same thing is true for you. Like everybody else, you were born with a potential. You got all the genetic advantages of a human being, from a rational, creative brain to opposable thumbs. And yet if you're like most people, you're probably more aware of what you don't have than what you do.

Did you have a difficult childhood? So did Oprah Winfrey, Kevin Spacey, Charlize Theron and over 50 per cent of the most successful men and women in the world.

Do you have learning difficulties? So did Thomas Edison, Richard Branson, Alexander Graham Bell, Hans Christian Andersen and George Washington.

Have you been serially unemployed, completely broke, fired from your job or even bankrupt? So were Bill Gates, Simon Cowell, Lady Gaga, Jay Z and millions of others.

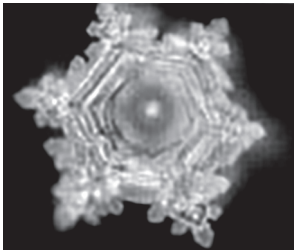
If there's one thing that life has taught me, it's that it isn't what you're born with or what happens to you in life – it's the choices you make along the way that determine your ultimate destiny. Choice is power, and it's a power you will be identifying, developing and working with throughout our time together.

The science of possibility

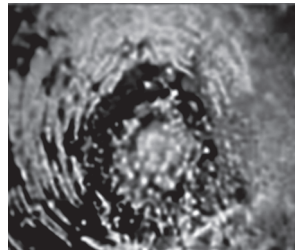
In the past 50 years or so, scientists have begun to explore the impact of attitude and belief on the physical body. In one of the most interesting sets of experiments I have come across, the late Dr Masaru Emoto took twice distilled or 'pure' water and exposed it to four sets of stimuli – words, pictures, music and prayer. He then froze the water and photographed the crystals that formed afterwards.

For example, he took one jar of water and wrote the words 'Thank you' on it. He then took another jar of water and wrote the words 'You fool' on it.

He froze each jar and did an analysis of the water crystals under a microscope. Here's what he discovered:



Thank you (Chinese)



You fool (Japanese)

The results were consistent – when the water was exposed to positive words, images, music and prayer, the crystals were beautiful, unique and symmetrical; when the opposite stimuli were given, the crystals were either disfigured or didn't form at all.

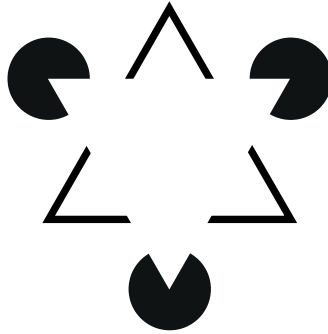
Now, if you think about it, human beings are over 60 per cent water. The implications for the impact of our own internal thoughts and images on the body are staggering. What we think about all day long is literally shaping our physical destiny, day by day and moment by moment.

In the late 1970s, a new field in medicine emerged, known as psychoneuroimmunology, or PNI, studying the impact of our psychology on our physiology – what is more commonly known as the mind–body connection. One of the early researchers in the field, a neuropharmacologist named Candace Pert, discovered that the body is hard-wired with links between our immune system and our emotions. More recent studies have shown undeniable links between our thoughts, the stress response, and both our susceptibility to illness and our capacity to heal. It seems that the more closely we study the body, the more we discover about the direct connection between how we think and how we feel.

The power of hypnosis for change

In his fun and inspiring TEDx talk, my longtime friend and world-renowned life coach Michael Neill asks his audience, ‘Why aren’t we awesomer?’ He goes on to demonstrate how we are all held back by the limits of our own perception.

One of the drawings he shares in the talk to illustrate his point is an optical illusion known as the Kanizsa triangle:



Nearly everyone who looks at this image can clearly see a bold, white, upside-down triangle connecting and overlapping an equilateral black triangle and three black dots in the picture. Yet the truth is, there are no complete triangles (or in fact dots) in the picture.

Our minds fill in the lines to create what we expect to see in our imaginations. In the same way, our perceptions and expectations from the past cause us to see the world in a certain way, even if what we see only exists inside our mind.

In my own career, I have seen people who used to think of themselves as not very bright score at genius level on exams. A woman who had been paralysed as a result of an emotional trauma got up and walked, and a man who had been functionally blind for over seven years began to see, simply through changing their perceptions and expectations and tapping into the power of the mind.

In this book and on the accompanying DVD, CD and downloads, I will be using hypnosis to help you tap into your potential at a deeper level than you may ever have thought possible. In addition, we will be using cutting-edge techniques and a new science called 'Havening' to change the structure of your brain to shift your perceptions and open you up to possibilities that may not even be on your radar yet.

But in order for me to help you, there is one thing you need to do first. This is a strange request, so I encourage you not to say 'yes' too quickly:

Are you willing to be wrong?

Would it be OK with you if it turns out that you are more powerful than you suspect, more capable than you know and more creative than you have ever noticed?

Here are a few things to reflect on as you consider your answer:

- **It isn't what you're born with or what happens to you in life, it's the choices you make along the way that determine your ultimate destiny.**
- **Choice is power.**
- **There is a direct and undeniable link between how we think and how we feel.**
- **Our perceptions and expectations from the past cause us to see the world in a certain way, even if what we see only exists inside our mind.**

CHAPTER TWO



Taking Your Life Back

You are not a victim

When I hypnotize someone on stage to do extraordinary things, most people think that I am taking a person who is wide awake and putting them into a trance. But the truth is, we all walk around in various stages of trance all day long. Think about zoning out on a long car journey or train ride. Suddenly you find yourself at your destination with little or no memory of how you got there. Or in an lift, watching the floor numbers go up and down without any sense of the people around you.

One of the most common trances that people walk around in is the 'victim trance' – the misapprehension that they are victims of the world around them and have no choice but to respond in fixed ways to whatever it is that happens in their life. My friend the late author Robert Anton Wilson used to describe these limited perceptions as reality tunnels, because they give us a kind of tunnel vision that only allows us to see evidence of what we already think and believe. Wilson called this phenomenon Orr's Law – the idea that whatever the thinker thinks, the prover proves.

What that means is that your ideas about yourself and what's possible for you are not fixed or solid. You have learned to believe in your limitations, and have unwittingly used Orr's Law to gather evidence to 'prove' their existence. But these ideas and perceptions are not really yours, they're learned – stray ideas and random thoughts you've picked up

along the way. And the good news is that anything you've learned can be unlearned.

For example, far too many people I've met sit around and blame their lives on the world around them. They complain about everyone and everything, from their parents to the economy and their health to the state of the environment.

And these people do have a point. Life isn't always fair, and it certainly isn't always easy. Bad things do sometimes happen to good people, and I've never met anyone who hasn't been let down or ripped off at least once in their lives. But the difference between those people who thrive in spite of their circumstances and the ones who seem doomed to be thrown around at the mercy of their environment is a simple one. The people who struggle are lost in a trance, seeing themselves as victims of a system set up to benefit other people at the cost of themselves. The ones who thrive have woken up to the fact that we make our own choices in life, and that it is the sum total of those choices that creates our destiny.

For example, in 2008 I sat down to interview the billionaire Philip Green as part of the research for my book *I Can Make You Rich*. He told me the story of how at one point early in his career his fortune had been taken from him in a business deal and years of hard work were wiped out overnight. One day he was a multi-millionaire; the next he was worth £20,000.

When I asked him how he had handled it, he told me, 'I picked myself up, I dusted myself off, and I bet on my own judgement. I took half the money we had left and booked my

wife and I on a holiday at an exclusive resort in the Caribbean. We spent the week relaxing, enjoying each other's company and imagining the future we would like to create.'

Since that island getaway, Philip has become known as 'the high street billionaire' and one of the world's leading philanthropists. What allowed him to turn his personal misfortune into a global fortune? Something that nearly every happy and successful person I have ever met has at an almost unconscious level: a recognition of the built-in human capacity for resilience – to bounce back from any life circumstance and come back with even more resourcefulness than they had before.

The Christmas ornament, the orange and the rubber ball

In his wonderful book on resilience, *Bounce: The Art of Turning Tough Times into Triumph*, bestselling author Keith McFarland shares an analogy for the three ways that companies respond to difficulties in their lives: Christmas ornaments, oranges and rubber balls. If we are like a Christmas ornament, we do what it takes to look good on the surface, but we see ourselves as fundamentally fragile and easy to break. If we are like an orange, we have a tough skin but every time something goes wrong we get a little more bruised until eventually we begin to rot away from the inside. If we are like a rubber ball, we have no fear of being dropped on our heads or of things going wrong in our life. Quite simply, we were made to bounce.

In my work with high achievers, I see this ‘rubber ball’ quality at play all the time. No matter what life seems to throw at them and how hard they get knocked down, they seem to be able to get back up with more ‘bounce’ in their step than before. Fortunately, this quality is not something that some people are born with and others aren’t. It’s inside all of us – and it can be brought to the surface through a bit of subconscious reprogramming and a recognition of the power of choice.

There are a lot of people who see their experience of life as something that happens to them. So if it’s a grey day, they feel bad; if it’s a sunny day, they feel good. When things go

the way that they want, they feel good; when things don't, they feel bad. If you were to observe them from a distance, it would seem as though there was a direct cause-and-effect relationship between the weather and their moods, or between how things turn out and the way that they feel.

That's a 'Christmas ornament' view of life – the idea that it's not we who make our way in the world, it's what happens to us. But not everyone feels bad when it rains and not everybody feels good when the sun shines. Not everyone wants to kill the traffic warden when they get a ticket and not everyone feels grateful when they get a gift. The difference that makes the difference is what Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl called 'the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way'.

To better understand this, imagine you have an infinite number of pairs of glasses, each one with a special filter in the lens that will cause you to see the world in a certain light. When viewed through 'Christmas ornament' glasses, the world is filled with potential threats – things that could go wrong and cause you to 'break'. When viewed through 'orange' glasses, the world is tough and your job is to be tougher – to develop a thick skin and a tough outer layer of attitude that will keep the world at a distance and keep you safe even as you get battered and bruised by life.

But imagine for a moment that you put your 'rubber ball' glasses on. Suddenly, the world is a playground you can

throw yourself into with abandon, because everything you bump into helps move you in a new direction. Every time you hit bottom it's simply another opportunity to bounce.

Now, in each of the three scenarios, the circumstances haven't changed. The circumstances are as they are, but the way we perceive things completely changes our experience.

So if it looks to you like you're being 'realistic' when you tell the story of how you're a victim of your circumstances, know that 'reality' is just a question of perception, and it changes according to what we think we are going to see. In science, this is called the 'observer effect'. Simply stated, the observer nearly always has an effect on the thing that is being observed in the experiment. So, for example, if you put a thermometer in your mouth to take your temperature, the presence of the thermometer actually changes the internal temperature of your body ever so slightly.

Now, in most things in nature, the impact of the observer on the observed is of minor consequence. But when it comes to our personal worldview, it's the most powerful thing in the world. And understanding this is the key to taking charge of your destiny:

*The way we look at the world determines what we see.
Even a tiny change in the way you look at life
changes everything.*

In the next chapter, I'll be asking you a series of questions about your life – where you've been, where you are and where you're headed. But, for now, just take a few moments to contemplate these key points:

- **The 'victim trance' is one of the most common delusions that people walk around with – you could say, that people are asleep to – in their lives.**
- **We can wake up from this trance in any moment. No matter what has happened to you up until this point in your life, you will always have choices about how you move forward.**
- **It's possible to live life as a Christmas ornament, an orange or a rubber ball. It's just a matter of perception.**
- **You have much more freedom than you think.**

CHAPTER THREE



A Snapshot in Time

Mapping your destiny path

One of the most unusual things about the work I do with clients is that the changes they undergo are often so dramatic they can't remember what it was like before the changes happened. This is because once the brain re-codes the way it thinks about a particular problem or situation for the better, there's no way back to the original.

So someone might come in with a phobia of spiders, but in less than an hour that lifelong phobia is gone and they can't imagine how they could ever have been afraid. They may even say something like, 'I guess I wasn't really phobic after all – sorry for wasting your time!' In fact, my friend and mentor Dr Richard Bandler used to run into this so often that he would jokingly suggest he could easily 'reinstall' the phobia if his client wanted to feel the terror again. That way they would know they had been cured!

So, in this chapter, before we begin with the cure, we want to take a kind of a mental snapshot of the problem. I'm going to ask you to take a look at your life at three different stages – how it is now, how it was in the past and how the amazing bio-computer between your ears predicts it will be in the future.

This will serve two purposes. First, it will give you some perspective on where you've been, where you are and where you're headed on your current life trajectory. Second, it will serve as the 'before' photograph for comparison after you've

completed working through all the exercises in the book, watched all the videos and listened to the hypnotic trance. You'll be able to see how far you've come in just one day, and you'll be able to return to the circle again and again to see how much your destiny has changed over time.

I call the exercise we're about to do 'The Circle of Life'. It's incredibly simple, but please don't underestimate its power. If you take the time to answer the questions honestly and fill in the wheel, I guarantee you'll be surprised by how much you'll learn in the process.

What we're going to do is take a look at the six main areas of your life – your health, relationships, career, finances, happiness, and sense of larger meaning and purpose. For each of those areas, you're going to rate yourself on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is the lowest and 10 is as good as you can imagine things being. One of the reasons this exercise will give you such a powerful perspective on your life is because you are going to do this from three different points of view – how things look to you today, how they looked to you ten years ago, and how you suspect they'll look to you ten years from now if you continue on the destiny path you're currently on.

Here's a bit more about each of the six life areas we'll be exploring. After you've read through this section, I'll provide an easy visual version of the exercise so you can go through it in detail for yourself.

1. Health

Everyone thinks about health a little bit differently, but true health is more than just the absence of illness. It's a measure of the positive energy that's flowing through your system – what Oriental medicine often refers to as 'Chi', or what we in the West would typically call 'the life force' or 'vitality'.

When you give yourself a score for your health, be sure to take into account not only what a Western doctor might measure (weight, blood pressure, cholesterol, illness, etc.) but also your sense of vitality and aliveness.

2. Relationships

The quality of your relationships with others are one of the most important measuring sticks for the quality of your life. This includes your relationships with family, friends and significant others at home and at work.

If you have very different relationships with different people (i.e. a great relationship with your parents but a difficult relationship with your children, or a wonderful relationship with men but difficult relationships with women), give yourself a number based on how much you enjoy the people you spend the majority of your life with.

3. Career

Everybody does something to make their way in the world. Whether you're unemployed, a homemaker or a CEO, you spend a certain amount of time supporting yourself and others in the world.

Remember as you score yourself in this category that what matters is not what someone else would think of what you're up to in the world – it's the extent to which what you do is interesting, enjoyable and fulfilling *to you*.

4. Finances

Money is one of the most emotive things in the world – people tend to love it or hate it, and the pursuit of it (or dealing with an absence of it) seems to occupy an incredible amount of nearly everyone's time.

The score you give yourself for finances should not be a measure of how much you currently make or how much you have in the bank. Instead, give yourself a higher score if you feel a sense of ease, abundance and being supported by money, and a lower score if you feel a sense of stress, lack and hardship.

5. Happiness

Having spent many years researching happiness alongside many of the experts in the field and even writing a book on it, the one thing I can say definitively is that happiness is a natural human state, like hunger, anger, excitement, boredom, neutrality and alertness.

When you give yourself a number for happiness, look beyond your mood of the moment to your general sense of well-being. While we all have moments of sadness and moments of elation, what feels normal to you? What is your apparent 'happiness set point'?

6. Sense of larger meaning and purpose

One of the hidden dimensions of life is our connection to the larger whole – our relationship to the fact that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. If you are religious, you might think of this larger whole as 'God'; if you are spiritual but not religious, you might call it 'universal mind', 'the miracle of nature' or 'the human spirit'. Even people who don't believe in any outside agency beyond the human mind find meaning in committing themselves to some kind of a purpose beyond their own individual survival.

For better or for worse, however you think of whatever that larger whole is that you and your life are a part of, the number you give yourself in this category should be a reflection of your relationship with it.

Putting pen to paper

On the next page, you will find a blank circle of life for you to fill in. If you are reading this book on an electronic device, you can download a copy to print off at www.paulmckenna.com/downloads. Of course, you can also simply copy the drawing on to a piece of paper (or even a napkin) and fill it out there.

In order to assist you in completing this exercise, here are a few questions to help you:

The present

What year is it now?

What is your age?

The past

What year was it ten years ago?

What age were you then?

The future

What year will it be ten years from now?

What age will you be then?

Some people like to take each life area and look at it from all three time perspectives before moving on to the next; others prefer to go through all six life areas from the perspective of the present before repeating the process from the past and then again from the future.

However you do it, the process should take you between 5 and 15 minutes. *It is essential that you actually mark down your scores on paper and connect the dots to make a circle (or whatever shape they make).* Trying to do this in your head or skipping it altogether will be a waste of your time and will limit the value you get from the rest of this book.

Do it now!

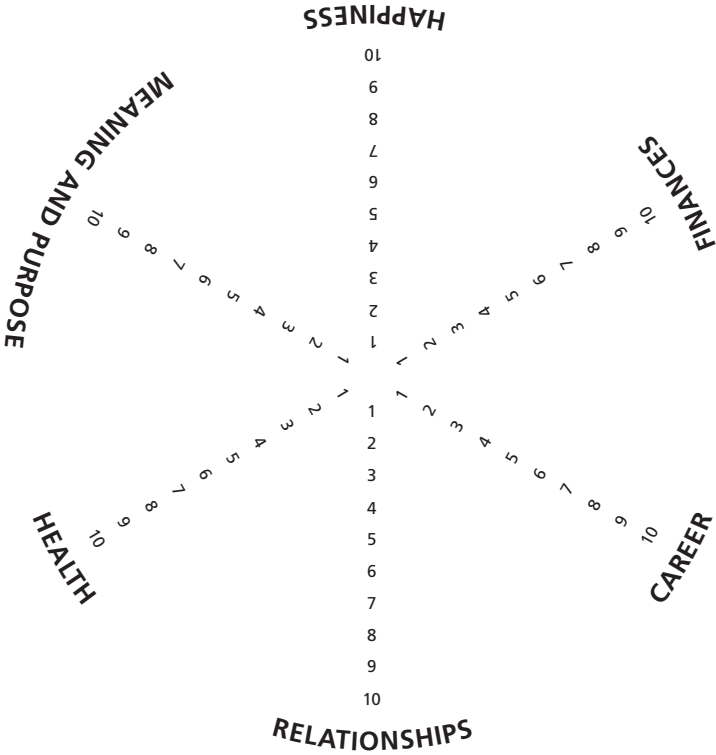
THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

- On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your **health**? How would you have rated it ten years ago? If you continue on the path you're on, how do you suspect you'll rate it ten years from now?
- On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your **relationships**? How would you have rated them ten years ago? If you continue on the path you're on, how do you suspect you'll rate them ten years from now?
- On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your **career**? How would you have rated it ten years ago? If you continue on the path you're on, how do you suspect you'll rate it ten years from now?
- On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your **finances**? How would you have rated them ten years ago? If you continue on the path you're on, how do you suspect you'll rate them ten years from now?
- On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your **happiness**? How would you have rated it ten years ago? If you continue on the path you're on, how do you suspect you'll rate it ten years from now?
- On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you rate your **sense of larger meaning and purpose**? How would you have rated it ten years ago? If you continue on the path you're on, how do you suspect you'll rate it ten years from now?

THE PAST

What year was it ten years ago? _____

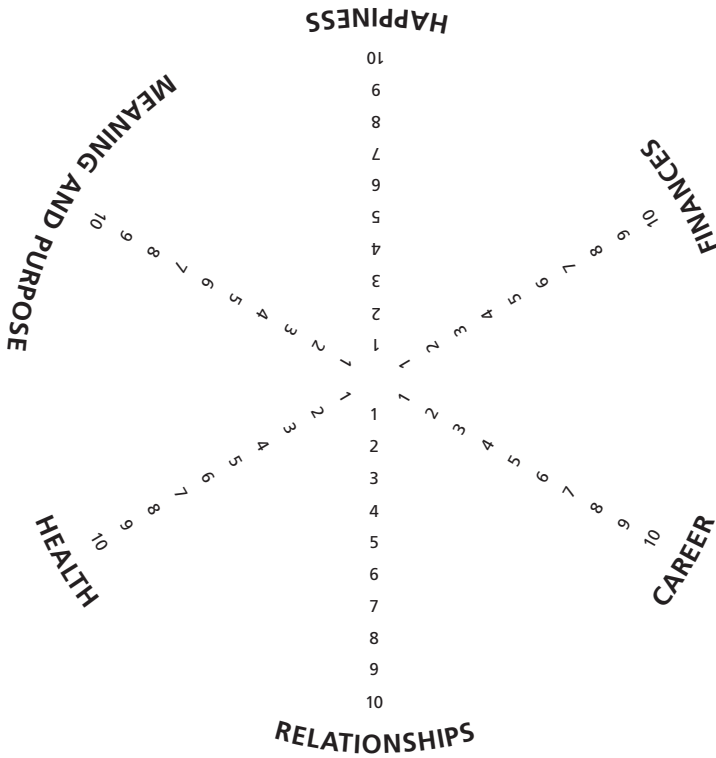
What age were you then? _____



THE PRESENT

What year is it now? _____

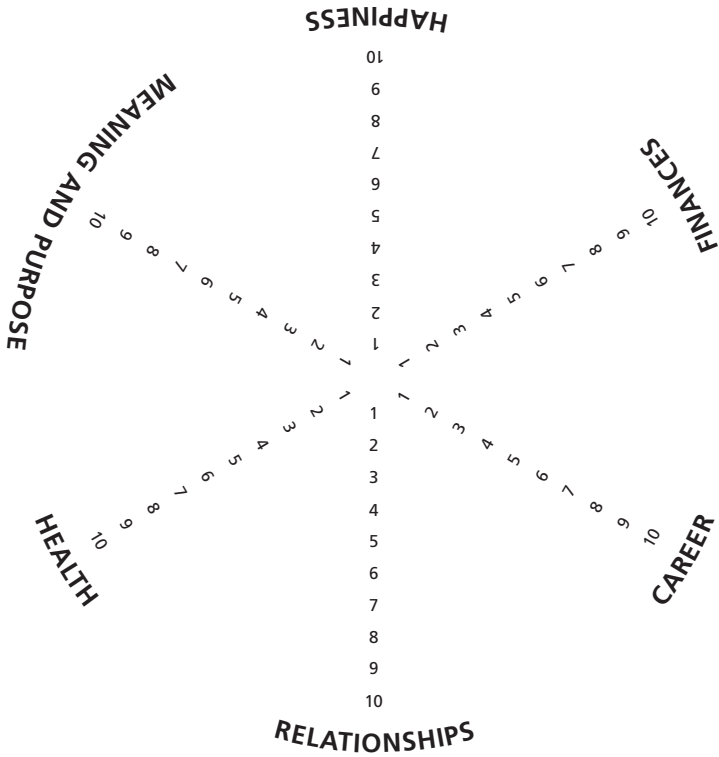
What is your age? _____



THE FUTURE

What year will it be ten years from now? _____

What age will you be then? _____



So, what does it all mean?

Having done this exercise many times, I know that people often wonder what to make of their results. Is it better to have higher numbers in some categories and lower in others (like a flat tyre), or uniformly even numbers that make a perfect circle even if the numbers are low?

Fortunately, **there are no right answers to these questions!** This exercise is simply a snapshot in time – a chance for you to get a visual perspective on where you are now, where you’ve come from and where you’re headed. At the end of the book, after you’ve read through the text, done all the techniques at least once and listened to the hypnotic trance, I’ll ask you to repeat this exercise and you’ll be able to see how the shape of your life now (and your future destiny) has changed.

In the meantime, here are a few things to remember before moving forward to the first of the three things:

- **Before making a change, it’s useful to get a clear picture of where you are now.**
- **Health is more than just the absence of illness.**
- **Absolutely everyone can be happy.**

IMPORTANT!

The most important thing in this book is to *actually do each and every one of the exercises*. Reading the book without doing the exercises is like reading a menu without eating the meal – it might be enjoyable but it won't be fulfilling. I have designed this system so that the book and techniques work together to change your destiny – you must do every exercise at least once and read the book all the way through to get the full benefit and have your world change significantly for the better!

THE FIRST THING
•
CLEARING
THE PAST

*'It is never too late to be what
you might have been.'*

GEORGE ELIOT

