



ERIC TAYLOR'S  
**best year ever**<sup>™</sup>  
PROGRAM

## SECRETS & STRATEGIES FOR UNLIMITED SUCCESS

# *The Beginning*

### PARTIAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>“In The Beginning...”</i>	PAGE 3
<i>Make Up Your Minds</i>	PAGE 3
<i>The Time Is Now: Do This First</i>	PAGE 5
<i>About New Year’s Resolutions</i>	PAGE 6
<i>The #1 Ultimate Secret of How To Change Your Life</i>	PAGE 8
<i>Stuck In A Rut?</i>	PAGE 10
<i>Make Change “Habit Forming”</i>	PAGE 11
<i>Procrastination: The Thief Of Time</i>	PAGE 13
<i>Want To Learn New Ways To Ride The Crest Of The Learning Curve?</i>	PAGE 15
<i>Concentrate, Concentrate</i>	PAGE 17
<i>One Last Look Ahead</i>	PAGE 18
<i>FYI: Just One More Point</i>	PAGE 22

# What This Module Can Do For You

## Thoughts on Infinite Possibilities and Potential

In this “Beginnings” module you’ll find many ways to get ready to work on the abundance of material coming your way in the 12 Best Year Ever modules.

It is also a resource you—or others—can use independently from The Best Year Ever (BYE) program because the lessons it imparts apply virtually any time you embark on a new endeavor.

Like any journey, each of the segments, and the entire Best Year Ever program, have a desired destination or outcome. And the beginning of any transformation starts with your evaluating your current situation.

*The beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of a young and tender thing; for that is the time at which the character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken.*

**Plato (427?-347 BCE)**  
Philosopher

*Nothing is far and nothing is dear, if one desires. There is only one big thing-desire. And before it, when it is big, all is little.*

**Willa Cather (1873-1947)**  
American writer

Acknowledging where you are now is KEY when charting the course to where you want to go. You must understand how change happens for you in order to make the changes you truly want to make.

In some areas you may be closer to your destination than you think!

Your *vision* of who and what you want to become is synonymous with *thoughts*.

Your *thoughts* are pictures in your mind’s eye; your mental movie of how you see yourself and what you see yourself doing. And your thoughts are what lead you to take *action* on an idea or a goal.

From that *action* you get a *result* or an outcome that either confirms or reinforces your idea as good and then strengthens your belief or it produces an undesired outcome and, in most people, dis-empowers them and they quit.

**But not you. Not anymore.** From this moment recognize that an undesired outcome is only a stumbling block that you will now turn into a stepping stone. *The only way you can fail, is if you quit.*

And you’re not a quitter.

*Thought is the blossom;  
language the bud;  
action the fruit.*

**Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)**  
American writer

The entire mission of the Best Year Ever program, beginning with this “Beginning” module, is to prepare you for mastery.

# “In The Beginning...”

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These, of course, are the opening words of Genesis, the first book of the Bible.

Now maybe it's a little audacious to begin this Module about beginnings with such lofty language.

**But maybe not.** The Best Year Ever journey you have ahead is all about creating something remarkable—something better for you and those you care about.

As with most beginnings, it's a bold step. Taking that step is not without consequences, both pleasant and, frankly, perhaps a bit difficult or disagreeable in some respects. No doubt you will have to work at some parts of the BYE program. And knowing that, you may be hesitant about getting started.

*Please don't delay.*

Have you ever heard this definition of procrastination?

*“Getting ready to get ready?”*

Many people spend their lives getting ready to live their lives. This is a mistake.

Here's some insight from the Franciscan Monk, Alfred D'souza:

*“For a long time it had seemed to me that life was about to begin—real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, or a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life.”*

The notion in a nutshell then: “This is it!”

So let's get going.

## *Make Up Your Minds*

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That's right, *minds*—plural. Because the people whose business it is to study such things have determined that different parts of our physical brain consider different aspects of an issue. And in order to get working successfully on having a Best Year Ever, all these different minds must be in accord.

But that very clever multi-part mind also sends us signals that sometimes seem in conflict and can be difficult to sort out.

Take, for instance, how you may feel about embarking on the Best Year Ever journey.

*A good beginning hath a good ending.*

**James Howell (1593-1666)**  
**English writer**

You know what you *should* do...  
what you *want* to do...  
what you think you're *supposed* to do.

*Things do not change,  
we change.*

**Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)**  
**Philosopher**

But what you *decide* to do and then *actually do* is...

Well, maybe nothing.

**Clearly, *knowing* isn't *doing*.** And sometimes our minds seem powerless to carry out orders in the face of conflicting commands.

What sabotages us? How can you take control? How can you make the various parts of your mind work for you?

For starters—

## **Know Your Own Mind**

Let's think a minute then about the multi-part mind. Some suggest that it's easiest to imagine that these multiple parts work like a Board of Directors, sitting around a conference room table. At the head of the table, of course, is the big deal—

***Executive Mind.*** This mind does those things that executives do: sets priorities, gives orders, enforces rules, coordinates, decides, judges, and — as boss — oversees the other parts of the mind, the parts that actually do the WORK.

And, as it happens, W-O-R-K turns out to be a good acronym for identifying the other parts of the mind, namely—

***Wondering mind.*** This part is intuitive. It explores, discovers, experiments and plays. As it does these things, it learns and creates.

***Organizing mind.*** This function is the analyzer; the part that assembles information, sorts through it, sequences it, puts things in order.

*It does not take much  
strength to do things,  
but it requires great  
strength to decide what  
to do.*

**Elbert Hubbard (1856-1915)**  
**Publisher/craftsman**

***Reacting mind.*** Ouch! Ha! Duh! This is the part of the mind that brings us experiences or supplies emotions. It interprets physical sensations and lets us know whether they're painful or pleasurable. It's the place where we have a range of experiences running the gamut from sorrow, anger, fear and psychic pain—humor, compassion and love.

***Knowing mind.*** Last in the list of workers (perhaps as expected) is the mind function doing the core stuff; collecting information and presenting it for the other minds to process. The knowing mind sees, hears, smells, and tastes.

**Meeting of the minds.** To move successfully toward having your Best Year Ever all these minds must be on board and enthusiastic at a conscious and unconscious level. And now that you're aware of them and how they fit the picture, one key to getting going is to consider—

*Which mind may be holding you back from action?  
Which mind is undecided?*

*All beginnings are somewhat strange;  
but we must have patience, and, little by  
little, we shall find things, which at first  
were obscure, becoming clear.*

**Vincent De Paul (c. 1580-1660)**  
French missionary



**ACTION IDEA:** Actively engage your Executive Mind—you can if you put your mind to it (groan)—and *challenge, evaluate, judge* what your W-O-R-K minds are saying and then *decide* to take action.

**Frogs on a Log reminder:** You may recall one of our favorite stories that we often tell at live events about the three frogs sunning themselves on a log in the middle of the pond. After explaining that two of the frogs decide to jump off the log we ask, “How many frogs are left on the log?”

Most of the audience quickly answers, “One.”

But most of the audience is wrong.

**The Correct Answer:** Three frogs are left on the log, because *deciding* to take action and *actually taking action* are two distinct things.

So make up your minds and let's jump to it.

## *The Time Is Now: Do This First To Ensure Your Best Year Ever*

Do you think you're mentally prepared to take action and begin having your Best Year Ever now that you decided to take action?

Are you absolutely sure?

*The first step...is the one on which depends the rest.*

**If not, then do this first:**

Imagine for a moment that you're about to begin a weight loss program.

**Voltaire (1694-1778)**  
French writer

*Yep. Weight loss.* Most of us know how that process begins (especially when bathing suit season rolls around). You step on the scale and groan at the number peeking between your toes. “I'm beginning my diet today!” you exclaim.

*Not so fast.* Unless you're mentally ready to lose weight, any diet you try is doomed to failure. Studies by the American Institute for Cancer Research in Washington, D.C. suggest that while people may feel ready to lose weight, if they're unprepared to alter their behavior, they will fail.

And the same holds true for any improvement program that you embark on.

***But don't quit before you begin.*** Understanding the process is the first key to success. Here's what you need to grasp to successfully start achieving your Best Year Ever:

In a widely accepted model of behavioral change, there are five stages of motivational readiness. If you're stuck in an early stage, the program won't work. The five stages of motivational readiness that can be applied to dieting, exercise, or just about anything in your life are:

**Stage One:** *Precontemplation*—A person has no intention of changing.

**Stage Two:** *Contemplation*—A person intends to change—later.

**Stage Three:** *Preparation*—A person is ready to change.

**Stage Four:** *Action*—This is the stage when a person starts to change.

**Stage Five:** *Maintenance*—This final level occurs only when a person has carried out the new behavior for at least six months to two years.

*The man who removes a mountain begins by carrying away small stones.*

**William Faulkner (1897-1962)**  
American novelist

Often, in one of the first three stages, the difficulties we perceive with the change outnumber any advantages. Perhaps we lack confidence in our ability to successfully make changes. If all a person can envision are barriers instead of benefits, then change is unlikely. So clearly, if you want to move forward, the "pros" have to outweigh the "cons" in your mind.



**ACTION IDEA:** Be specific about what you are trying to overcome and creative about possible solutions. Find ways to get around barriers that you think are inconvenient, expensive, boring, or difficult.

*Payoff:* Small successes build your confidence in making more changes. If you are ready to change some behaviors, make at least these changes, whatever they are. Make them no matter how insignificant you feel they are. Each success counts and each will move you closer to your Best Year Ever.

"BEGINNING" FACTOID:

## *About New Year's Resolutions*

The tradition of making New Year's resolutions dates back to the early Babylonians. Probably went something like, "This year I'm really going to improve my cuneiform" or "Return oxen borrowed from Shem."

Fast forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the 10 most common New Year's resolutions are to (1) lose weight, (2) stop smoking, (3) stick to a budget, (4) save more money, (5) find a better job, (6) become more organized, (7) exercise more, (8) be more patient at work/with others, (9) eat better, and (10) become a better person. *Sound familiar?* You bet.

Whatever it involves for you, a new Best Year doesn't necessarily begin on January 1.

The thought to keep in mind is that the future is ahead. What becomes of it is largely in the hands of each of us as individuals.

In fact, a new year begins each day. Every new millennium, new century, new year, new day—every passing moment—presents another chance to start anew.

Of course this is not a unique or new observation. Others have made it in other ways. The critical point is summed up in this little test:

*Q: What message is hidden in these run-together words?*

## **OPPORTUNITYISNOWHERE**

*A:* Well, there are two answers, but for Best Year Ever purposes only one is right-minded enough to win you a gold star.

If you see the words—

## **OPPORTUNITY IS NOWHERE**

Then you have a little more work in front of you.

However, if you immediately saw the phrase—

## **OPPORTUNITY IS NOW HERE**

***Congratulations!*** Go to the head of the class. The Best Year Ever opportunity is NOW.



**ACTION IDEA:** You don't have to wait for December 31 to make New Year's resolutions. Every day is a beginning of a new year and you can choose to begin a new era any time you want. If it helps in some way to have it coincide with a remarkable date, great. But the day you make the big decision and TAKE ACTION will be such a remarkable date, *we guarantee it.*

*Carpe diem!* Seize the day and every day that follows.

Resolve today to seize every opportunity!

*Before you begin, consider well;  
and when you have considered, act.*

**Sallust (86-34 BCE)  
Roman historian**

# *The #1 Ultimate Secret Of How To Change Your Life*

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If you really want to change your life, here's your choice . . .

You can attend classes and seminars, read books, watch and listen to recordings. In fact, since we provide all these things as part of the BYE program we certainly believe they are worthwhile—heck, necessary even—to guide you on the way to new levels of success.

*Begin to be now what you will be hereafter.*

**Saint Jerome (c. 340-420)  
Latin scholar**

But even more important than all the other “aides” we can provide is this wisdom:

## **You Must Act On The Message That Follows**

This message gives you the essence of all these seminars, books and tapes . . .

Ready? OK. Drum roll, please.

Here it is:

## **If you really want to change your life —CHANGE YOUR LIFE!!**

That's it.

You can *think* about change . . .

You can *read* about change . . .

You can *listen to* and *watch* speakers speak about change or . . .

## **YOU CAN CHANGE!!!**



**ACTION IDEA:** In the end, if you want to change your life, if you want to have your Best Year Ever, YOU have to change your life.

Remember the ten most powerful two-letter words:

## **IF IT IS TO BE IT IS UP TO ME**

If you want to start your journey to success and you have to make changes, you can start with a giant step or a baby step.

Either one will bring you progress. But YOU have to take that first step.

*Small beginnings are not to be despised.*

**American saying**

So if you want to change your life, *change your life*.

**A “most important” point:** Change is more often a process than a result. Sometimes the best outcome of change is not in reaching the goal you envision but in the journey toward that goal. A good process (and we think the one plotted out in the BYE program is a pretty good one) increases the probability of a good end. But it might not be the end you imagine at the outset. Hey, it just may be a whole lot better!

*In other words:* While you set out from Point A intent on reaching Point B, don't forget to enjoy the expedition. And don't be surprised if you end up at Point C with much more accomplished than you imagined at the outset.

## **THE #1 ULTIMATE SECRET OF HOW TO GET STARTED CHANGING YOUR LIFE**

So now would you like to know the secret of *how to get started* making the change we talk about so enthusiastically?

Of course you would. And, just like the secret of change, you're about to learn what to do to get started.

Ready? OK. Another drum roll, please.

Here it is:

### **If you want to get started —GET STARTED!!**

We said it earlier:

- Action will change your attitude.
- Motion will change your emotions.
- Movement will change your moods.

The renowned composer George Gershwin got most of his ideas by just sitting at the piano, playing. He didn't wait for inspiration. He would just hit various chords, play a bit of this and a bit of that and, pretty soon—something would come to him.

*To begin, begin.*

Throughout his career, he demonstrated that the way to learn how to do anything is *to do it*.

**William Wordsworth (1770-1850)**  
**English poet**



**ACTION IDEA:** IT'S THE “START” THAT STOPS MOST PEOPLE.

There's a big gap between what most people WANT TO DO and what they ACTUALLY DO. Remember those frogs on a log.

Here's an often-told story worth repeating: Novelist Sinclair Lewis was supposed to deliver an hour-long lecture to a group of college students who planned to be writers.

Lewis opened his talk with a question:

"How many of you really intend to be writers?"

All hands went up.

"In that case," said Lewis, "my advice to you is to go home and write."

With that, he left.

## *Stuck In A Rut?*

### **DO JUST ONE THING DIFFERENTLY**

As an accomplished celebrity author, Sinclair Lewis could be glib with his advice. And while we agree that it's pretty much on target, we'll also acknowledge that it could sound as if it falls into the realm of "fluffy" advice such as "Don't worry. Be happy."

And that can be more than just a bit annoying. Being told to "calm down" when you're upset can be infuriating. Exhortations to "be happy" when you're not are unrealistic.

You want solutions, not explanations. Fortunately, they're not so hard to find — when you know where to look.

*Life is like a game of chess...there are many moves possible, but each move determines your next move...where you wind up is the sum total of all your past moves...but first you have to make some kind of move.*

**Mort Walker**  
Cartoonist

### **Feelings vs. Behavior**

Maybe you can't change the way you feel. But you can change the way you behave. The smallest change you can imagine may prove to be the big first step to getting out of a rut. And that's a good beginning.



**ACTION IDEA:** Take the outsider's viewpoint. Look at your own life as an anthropologist would. Study the actions you take over and over again.

*Definition of insanity:* Doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Find just one link in the chain of a routine that upsets you...*and do it differently.* Figure out exactly what you're doing...*and do something different.* Something big, something small... *it doesn't matter.*

*Example 1:* Your office is disorganized and it troubles you. Start by taking just a few moments to, say, reorganize your writing implements. You have our permission to throw out any pencil shorter than 3 inches or

without a good eraser. Likewise, test your pens and toss those that don't work smoothly or don't feel good in your hand.

That's all you need do now. But we'll bet the way this small step makes you feel will enable bigger organizing changes soon. (Think about spending a couple minutes of tomorrow's lunch hour straightening up a corner of your desk.)

*Example 2:* If workplace stress follows you home: Don't allow it to interfere with family time. Make a doorknob rule. Once you reach home and your hand touches the knob, you're required to smile—even if it's a forced smile.

That's it for now. Just smile and begin the shift from "work mode" to "home mode." (Maybe tomorrow you'll think about shedding more of your work mindset as you change out of your work clothes.)



**ACTION IDEA:** Be alert to what works. If changing some behavior doesn't accomplish what you want, it's no big deal. Give it a real chance to work, of course. Don't look for instantaneous change. But if an altered behavior doesn't pan out the way you expected, move on. Just figure you'll try something else at a later time.

## Attitude Check

Of course, we can get stuck in thinking about things the same old way. And that, in turn, can prevent us from getting underway on new beginnings. What we focus on is what dominates our experience. We attach meanings that trap us in problem patterns.

*Example:* Personal relationships. You become aware of being bothered by something a coworker or spouse or friend does. Soon it dominates your thinking: She's always late... he never puts the lid down... she checks e-mail when you're talking.



**ACTION IDEA:** Focus on things the other person does right. She puts time and effort into looking nice every time you go out... he takes care of laundry and grocery shopping... she always has the new sales statistics ready for the weekly meeting.

## *Make Change “Habit Forming”*

Like adjusting your attitude, getting ready for your Best Year Ever means modifying old habits and learning new skills.

And let's be truthful right upfront: Change at a core level is not always easy. That is, in part, why we put "Beginning" material in your hands before you take even one step into the comprehensive Best Year Ever program.

*Only begin and then the mind grows heated.*

*Only begin and the task will be completed.*

**J.W. von Goethe (1749-1832)**  
German poet

**You want to Get Ready.** To help you do that most effectively, here is a step-by-step system to set you on the road to changing, learning, and growing. Use it as you begin to work your way through each of the Best Year Ever skills.

## Your 10-Step Head Start

**#1:** *Visualize how great it will be after you improve your skill.* Picture yourself using that improved skill and dazzling others (and yourself) with it. Think of how proud you will feel when you get all those compliments on your new behavior.

**#2:** *Approach BYE with a winning attitude.* This kind of thinking isn't nonsense. The right frame of mind really helps.

We often cite that classic platitude about attitude: "Your attitude determines your altitude." Tell yourself these are skills you can learn with a little work and—presto!—you'll soon find that you're becoming quite good at them.

**#3:** *Make a plan.* Good intentions are fine, but for making things happen, plans are better. The Best Year Ever program itself is such a planning tool. It's organized, plotted and paced to bring you along in a steady, right-minded way.

But we know life is not just one kind of Best Year Ever planning. Maybe, for example, you also want to deal with some financial planning issues. Or maybe there are family affairs that need to be addressed. So, above and beyond the Best Year Ever outline we prescribe, you'll want to master the basic planning drill.



**ACTION IDEA:** Chart your course. Use a simple day planner.

**Think big at first.** (Why not think big? You're already working on a Best YEAR Ever program). Identify end-of-the-year or year-away goals and the actions/skills you anticipate you'll need to accomplish them. Then break down the tasks into doable chunks—monthly, weekly, daily. Use your day planner to outline what you will do in that time frame to build your skills.

Don't make vague entries like "do this more" or "do a better job in this area." Be precise. Sweeping generalities don't mean much and won't help you learn anything.

**#4:** *Do a little bit at a time.* When you make a plan for tackling actions in each Module, don't try to get everything done in the first week. You probably won't be able to do it all. You'll become discouraged and go back to doing things the old "more comfortable" way without making progress.

Building Best Year Ever skills takes some time. You may want to skip some part of a Module or put it on hold until later. That's OK. Although the BYE program is intended to build one skill set upon the next, you will make progress without mastering every nuance. Little gains compound.

*The expectations of life depend upon diligence; the mechanic that would perfect his work must first sharpen his tools.*

**Confucius (551-479 BC)**

And, like the miracle of compound interest, geometric growth yields huge rewards.

**#5: *Discipline yourself.*** Stick to your plan, even when you don't feel like it (which may be most of the time for certain skills). Do a little bit each day, each week, until success becomes a habit in itself.

**#6: *Practice.*** We learn by doing. Use your new BYE skills as soon and as often as possible. Practice DOES make perfect.

**#7: *Reward yourself for successes.*** Even little ones. One of the best rewards is simply to tell yourself, "I knew I could do it!"

And if you feel you haven't been successful lately, look back occasionally to where you were when you started, then to where you are now. You may be surprised at just how far you've come.

*Celebrate failures, too.* You're going to have them; we all do. They're just part of the process. Learn from what works and learn from what doesn't work.

*Failure isn't fatal—unless you don't learn from it.* When mistakes happen, don't give up and quit. Ask, "What will I do to keep this from happening again?" Seek out the positive in every bad situation. Then move on knowing that failure is only an event and that the only way you lose is by quitting after some minor setback.

**#8: *As you begin to use each new skill, rehearse it in your mind.*** Imagine how well you'll do it. See yourself doing it well. Visualize, step by step, what you'll be doing. Then see yourself enjoying the rewards of a positive result.

**#9: *Involve others.*** Committing to others is a powerful motivator. Tell people you can rely on to encourage you because you're trying to improve a certain skill. Ask them for feedback.

**#10: *Periodically review.*** Consider what you've done and look at how far you've come. Tell yourself how proud you are, and then refer to Number seven: Reward yourself. Go to dinner at your favorite restaurant (and bring someone special).

## *Procrastination: The Thief Of Time*

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Here's a quiz straight from your high school science class: Explain Newton's First Law of Motion.

"Huh," you might answer. "I don't think I got around to studying that."

***Congratulations!*** If we were grading your exam, we think that answer deserves at least partial credit.

*Here's why:* The science of Newtonian physics recognizes two kinds of inertia—and both can be related to procrastination. "Not getting around

*Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.*

**Mark Twain (1879-1935)  
American writer/humorist**

to studying” is probably a fairly good example.

Now, for the record and to enable us to broaden our discussion of procrastination, the scholarly answer to our science question might start by spelling out that, “*Newton’s first law, also called the Law of Inertia, states that a body at rest tends to remain at rest and a body in motion continues to move at a constant velocity, unless acted upon by an external force.*”

The BYE takeaway here is less scientific but related nonetheless:

Procrastination is “at rest” inertia. You aren’t moving, and therefore you don’t move!

Procrastination overcome, however, puts you in a place where the other part of Newton’s First Law takes over. Once you start the ball rolling, so to speak, then it’s likely to keep on rolling.

So now that we’ve had a little physics review, back to the quiz for a moment:

For extra credit, what does Newton say it takes to start the at-rest ball rolling?

OK students, pencils up. Even if you didn’t say “*external force*” we’re willing to keep role-playing the teacher a bit longer and be that external force. Here’s—

## **The Push You Need To Get You Moving When Procrastination Bogs You Down**

We’re so confident that this strategy can get things moving that we’ll start by giving you an additional five minutes to postpone action.

Some cool teachers, huh?

*You bet.*

*When in doubt, do it.*

**Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (1841-1935)**  
**American jurist**

***But there’s a catch.*** And a small bargain. In these five minutes you must identify what you are putting off. On a blank sheet of paper, note several important activities that you realize you are delaying or have put on hold.

### ***Now here’s your PUSH.***

- Look at your list of tasks.
  - Pick one, any one.
    - Now do it.
      - RIGHT NOW!

Put the energy you've been directing toward excuses into the activity you've been avoiding. You'll discover that action eliminates anxiety.

**Bonus push #1:** If getting started is the hard part for you and our little "five minute" ploy isn't adequate prep time or comes up at a really inappropriate or inopportune time, use this moment to pick a time slot later today to work on the list.

**Bonus push #2:** Think your day is filled to the brim already? Sorry, you're procrastinating and we caught you.



**ACTION IDEA:** Set aside 30 minutes of your lunch hour for work specifically on one job, project, or personal goal that you've been avoiding or find difficult to start.

**Bonus push #3:** If what you are putting off involves other people, consult with them RIGHT NOW. (We'll wait.) Your reasons for delaying action may be imaginary. Lack of communication often turns molehills into mountains.

## *Want To Learn New Ways To Ride The Crest Of The Learning Curve?*

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**How do people ever learn anything?** That's a question we asked ourselves often while developing the Best Year Ever program.

*"Human beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so."*

Author, dramatist and amateur environmentalist Douglas Adams wrote that in a book on endangered animal species. And the same behavior Adams spoke of (ignoring the useful experience of others) we see practiced in live events by "endangered species" attendees.

*Here's an insider insight:* In the fraternity of public speakers and presenters we often categorize the types of attendees at workshops or events. Briefly the list goes like this:

**Prisoner**—that's someone who is there because someone else made the decision for him or her attend.

**Vacationer**—that's the person who volunteers to go to a seminar because they figure doing anything any other place is better than what they'd be doing otherwise.

*Listen to the mustn'ts, child  
Listen to the don'ts  
Listen to the shouldn'ts,  
the impossibles, the won'ts.  
  
Listen to the never haves,  
then listen close to me...  
Anything can happen, child  
Anything can be.*

**Shel Silverstein (1930-1999)**  
**Cartoonist/poet**

**Graduate**—that’s the attendee who believes he or she already knows the stuff that’s being presented.

**Student**—this is the attentive, ready-to-learn audience member who wants to hear what’s going to be shared.

Now each of the four types of attendees is welcome by truly professional presenters because the pro knows that very few attendees are entirely one type. We also know that good information, well presented, can break through any level of resistance and positively impact an individual regardless of mindset.

We assume that—because you’re interested in having your Best Year Ever and because you have read this far in this Module—you’re here to learn; that you’re a *Student* type. And that the Douglas Adams quote doesn’t apply to your mindset.

*I'm an idealist. I don't know where  
I'm going, but I'm on my way.*

**Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)**  
**American Poet**

Still, there is certainly a lesson here for all of us: Our personal beliefs and experience can get in the way of our ability to learn more useful tools and techniques. So it’s time to begin and explore how to—

## Open Your Mind To Better Learning

Let’s investigate steps that seekers after the Best Year Ever can take to improve their learning experience. What can we do to overcome the resistance to learning that seems to be ingrained in almost every adult mind?

## How To Learn More, More Quickly

The first line of attack here is to convince yourself that the ideas being presented are useful.



**ACTION IDEA:** Please notice we didn’t say that the ideas are “good” or “better than” ideas you already hold near and dear. Your brain (and its multiple minds with their entrenched beliefs) will naturally fight back if presented with the thought that what you’re currently doing is “wrong.”

Instead, please be aware that the operative word is “*useful*.”

That could mean that the idea is *helpful*, *supportive* or many things. And it doesn’t have to mean “right” or “better.” This subtle change in perception can make a world of difference in your receptiveness.

*You can do what you have to, and  
sometimes you can do it even better  
than you think you can.*

**Jimmy Carter**  
**39th US President**

From this base, learning more quickly is a two step affair—

**Step #1:** Suspend your current beliefs about how things work or what works. If you filter new ideas through your existing beliefs, then you might be tempted to discard many important and potentially profitable ideas right from the beginning.

*Another important note: Changing your beliefs is very serious and usually difficult work. But suspending those beliefs, and just listening to and processing new ideas without pre-judging, is very doable for each of us.*

**Step #2:** Relax and enjoy this “different” learning process. Almost all of us received our formal education in rigid environments that sucked most of the fun and joy out of learning. Decide that it is a privilege to study and learn - and even more, it is a joy!

The multimedia, pieces-over-time approach the Best Year Ever program takes emphasizes the creative release that occurs when you approach a topic in a playful and even joyful way. Try it elsewhere in your life and you may approach every task this way after you learn how useful and fulfilling it can be.

Learning new ideas can be a trying and stressful experience if you resist the ideas being taught. But if you begin now by adding a little creativity and fun, the entire learning process can take you to higher level.

## *Concentrate, Concentrate*

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The skill of concentration simply means the ability to focus your attention on something and keep it there for relatively long periods of time.

Although the many elements of the Best Year Ever program are devised to make them easy to master, some concentrated study will be necessary. So, to get you going on the right foot, a little skill-building program in concentration seems in order. And then we'll let you get to work on the 12 Modules.

*The fact is, nothing comes: at least nothing good. All has to be fetched.*

**Charles Buxton (1823-1871)**  
**English Writer**



**ACTION IDEA:** What follows has application beyond the confines of the Best Year Ever structure, as does most of what we will share with you. Apply its lessons whenever you need to get “into” a chore—writing a report, working on your taxes, learning a foreign language, playing games with your kids, going at your fitness routine.

**#1:** *Set up the conditions you need to go to work.* Set aside the time. (Just to be on the safe side, you probably want to budget at least a third more than you anticipate.) Get the materials you'll need. Go to a place you've chosen to work, arrange your items and sit down to the task.

**#2:** *Do not try to force yourself to concentrate.* Instead, take a few minutes to let your mind go where it wants; let it wander, daydream, whatever.

*A pile of rocks ceases to be a rock pile when somebody contemplates it with the idea of a cathedral in mind.*

**Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900-1944)**  
**French aviator**

**#3:** *After a few minutes, gently bring your attention to what you want to work on.* Start thinking about the overall topic, reviewing the various parts in a moderately interested way. Reflect on the end results you want to achieve and the benefits of getting it done.

**#4:** *Pick out some item associated with the task and begin to get involved with it.* Select whatever feature seems most interesting to you at the moment. Maybe it's a visual stimulus like a picture or a diagram. Maybe it's a new idea or intriguing fact. Use this as a "hook" to draw your attention more closely into the task.

**#5:** *Gradually narrow your attention to the subject at hand and move toward the logical beginning.* Decide what specifically you want to accomplish in this session. Once you have picked your starting point, narrow your field of view and lock onto it. Keep your attention there as you proceed.

**#6:** *Monitor your level of attention from time to time.* If you feel you're drifting away, take a break as needed to refresh yourself. Then repeat the entry process to re-establish your level of concentration.

*Watch this:* Much of the Best Year Ever program is set up this way to enable you to come "into" the subject matter through a set of exercises or stories meant to gather you in, focus your thoughts and direct your thinking.

As with all the "Beginning" information, we think it's important for you to have these tools at your disposal. It's part of our commitment to partner with you, to encourage you and to challenge you to follow through on the way to achieving your Best Year Ever.

*The world is round and the place which may seem like the end may also be the beginning.*

**Ivy Baker Priest (1905-1975)**  
**U.S. Treasurer**

## *One Last Look Ahead*

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At this point we'd like to recap and tell you a story.

As we were finishing this Module and the Best Year Ever "Beginnings" CD in the recording studio, and editing the DVD of one of the Best Year Ever "Live" Events, the amazing Lance Armstrong bicycled to his seventh consecutive win in the grueling Tour de France.

**Seven wins. Imagine it.** Wow! Even if you don't care much for this sort of thing, you have to agree it is some remarkable feat. And it certainly gave Lance his Best Year Ever.

And with that thought in mind, let's wrap up by pointing out some parallels between this unprecedented win and your "beginnings" in the Best Year Ever program.

Here we go:

**MODULE 1 - *Unleash Boundless Personal Energy.*** Of course the relationship between the Tour de France and Lance's personal energy speaks for itself. But amid all the hoopla about how nature has endowed him with extraordinary physical capacity is the fact that other World Class Tour riders test out in the same range as Lance.

So it's really all about mindset.

Here's some insight from Lance himself:

He said, *"Pain is temporary. It may last a minute, or an hour, or a day, or a year but eventually it will subside and something else will take its place. If I quit, however, it lasts forever. That surrender, even the smallest act of giving up, stays with me. So when I feel like quitting, I ask myself, which would I rather live with?"*

✓ Lance Armstrong's "extra" edge comes from his dedication to skill building. **You can do the same.**

In the Best Year Ever program, **MODULE 2** is *Build an Unstoppable Belief System*. Cripes! The guy's a cancer survivor. In fact, before his battle with the big "C," his biking claim to fame was as a sprinter. You gotta believe unflinchingly about where you deserve to be in life to accomplish what Lance has accomplished in his post-cancer-treatment years.

You must also keep the commitments you make to others and yourself.

*"There was nothing on the line this year, no history, no record, no financial reward, just a promise."* Lance said that the day before his seventh win to explain his participation.

✓ Lance honors self promises. **You can do the same.**

BYE **MODULE 3** is *Got Goals?* In 1996 Lance was diagnosed with cancer that spread to his lungs and brain. He underwent chemotherapy and brain surgery and began his comeback in 1998. The next year he won his first Tour de France.

Now he has won his seventh.

Surely his goal setting/goal achieving strategy is not unique. As we suggest for accomplishing your Best Year Ever goals: Find your vision and passion, state them in the positive, write them down, and set a date when you will achieve them—a date with destiny.

✓ Now Lance Armstrong has achieved seven—count 'em—seven goals in seven years. **You can do the same.**

**MODULE 4** is *How to Put Time on Your Side*. Add Lance to the list of remarkable folks who have just as much time in the day, week, month and year as you and I do. And Lance trains, gives interviews, does endorsements, has time for his kids....

How do the truly successful accomplish so much in their 24/7/168/365?

*One way:* Immediately after his seventh win Lance told reporters that the following day he'd be on the beach in the south of France *"with a beer, having a blast."*

✓ He knows: Prioritize and compartmentalize your time and reward success. **You can do the same.**

In the Best Year Ever program *The “I’m-No-Geek” Way to Use Today’s Tech* is

**MODULE 5.** Lance Armstrong knew he couldn’t win his seventh Tour de France just by pedaling; he needed the best bike technology, too.

Instead of playing it safe, Lance asked Trek Bicycles for “lighter and stiffer” models for his seventh attempt to win the tour.

Trek engineers designed two specialty bikes, one for mountains and one for time trials. These bikes helped Lance earn and keep the yellow jersey as the overall leader. It takes the team’s chief mechanic four days to put the wheels together for the time-trial bike.

Certainly Lance understands a great deal of how the tech comes together. But he doesn’t try to do it all himself.

✓ He consults with the experts, assesses their recommendations based on his understanding of his needs and then acts accordingly. He delegates responsibility. ***You can do the same.***

The lesson of **MODULE 6** is to *Model the Behaviors of the All-Time Greats*. Although this was Lance’s seventh triumph in the world’s toughest bicycle race, it was, as he acknowledges, in many ways simply icing on the cake. His sixth victory last year broke the tie he was in with four other Tour de France dominators.

Each was the star of his own decade starting in the 1960’s. Don’t you think that Armstrong and the entire Discovery Team, as the U.S. Postal Team in prior years, reviewed and replayed the winning moves and mistakes of their predecessors as well as their own?

✓ No doubt! ***You can do the same.***

**MODULE 7** of the Best Year Ever Program is *Communicate with Confidence*. In a brief speech from the winner’s platform Lance praised the two riders flanking him on slightly lower steps, Ivan Basso who finished second and Jan Ullrich who was third.

“It’s really a dream podium,” Armstrong said. He called Basso “not only my rival but a special person. It’s tough to race against a friend.”

Ullrich also earned praise from Armstrong, who then thanked his teammates, team officials and a host of others. “Vive le Tour,” Lance concluded. “Forever.”

✓ Of course it can’t possibly be that Lance always had the ability to communicate like this at this level. No doubt he had coaching and he practiced. So add it to the list of his accomplishments. If he ever had an “elevator speech” he certainly has now elevated it to the winner’s platform on the world stage. ***You can do the same.***

**MODULE 8 - Don't Network, Net Weave for Success.** Yellow “Livestrong” wristbands. Is there anyone who doesn’t know the connection? Cancer survivor Lance Armstrong is using his fame to raise money to help cancer victims.

Surely this benefits Lance in ways beyond the obvious. And it's because it's not about "getting" that it works so well and so memorably.

✓ Lance has developed the NetWeaving mindset, mastered the art and now reaps the rewards. ***You can do the same.***

**MODULE 9 - *Tap the Perpetual Power of CPR™ - Creating Personal Referrals.*** It figures that when you've won a string of Tours de France you don't have to be too assertive in seeking referrals.

But did you know there's a "Livestrong" Hewlett Packard-AMD notebook computer? HP has included yellow Livestrong wristbands and yellow stereo ear buds with every notebook. Livestrong notebooks are "autographed" under the keyboard. Fifty dollars from the sale of each computer goes to the Lance Armstrong Foundation.

✓ CPR™—Creating Personal Referrals—is all about setting goals and targeting relationships that work. Lance does it. ***You can do the same.***

**MODULE 10 - *Is S-A-L-E-S a Four Letter Word?*** For his bicycling labors, Armstrong won a half million dollars in addition to a handsome bowl, just like the six others at home in Austin, Texas.

That's an hourly rate of roughly \$5,750 (or \$224 per mile). Not bad. But not much compared to the other revenue that comes his way because, like everyone, Lance sells.

How many logos were emblazoned on his yellow jersey? How many products have been mentioned here? Scores of businesses—some quite removed from the world of competitive biking in France, appreciate the exposure and excitement of being part of this remarkable victory.

✓ Lance "sells" because Lance knows the mindset today must be "Give value and they will come." ***You can do the same.***

**MODULE 11 - *Empower the Leader in You.*** In the Tour de France, individuals get the accolades, but it's impossible to win without the aerodynamic lift from a team.

How do you establish the "team" mentality?

In one interview given even before the race began, Lance was asked what image he would most like people to remember from the Tour. And he said it would not be one from the race but it would be one from a small training camp with Johan Bruyneel, the Discovery Channel team director, because, as Lance said, *that's where the race is won — in the preparation.*

As is the custom, the opening part of the final stage was marked by general hilarity and conversation in the pack. Armstrong shared a Champagne toast en route with Johan, who was driving a car. (Neither did more than clink glasses.)

✓ Lance the leader knows you publicly acknowledge the contributions of others and share success and praise. **You can do the same.**

And, of course, the final module in the Best Year Ever program is: **MODULE 12 - Never Stop Growing – Taking It to the Next Level.** Lance Armstrong says he has “retired” from professional bicycle racing. About his retirement, he said he has, “*Absolutely no regrets.*”

But we should all note carefully. Lance did not say he was retired from life. And with his mastery of all the Best Year Ever skills, we expect that this landmark “end” of what has to be his Best Year Ever also marks the beginning of an eventful new Best Year Ever.

✓ Learn from the example of Lance Armstrong, and **you can do the same—with no regrets.**

*Seize the moment of excited curiosity on any subject to solve your doubts; for if you let it pass, the desire may never return.*

**William Writ (1772-1834)**  
American lawyer

## *FYI: Just One More Point*

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As many of our friends know, we like to end our letters and e-mails and e-blasts and “TGIM” messages and all such communications with a quote or perhaps an anecdote, “FYI” – For Your Inspiration.

Since this Module has been peppered with notable quotes, we’ll End your Best Year Ever “Beginnings” with—

### **A Fable For Our Times**

An ancient Chinese fable tells of the emperor whose custom it was to, once a year, offer his condemned prisoners a choice. They could either be quickly beheaded or take their chances with a mysterious fate that waited beyond an ominous black door.

As each prisoner came forward, each and every one shunned the black door and chose an instant death.

After witnessing this ritual over the years the emperor’s chief minister dared to inquire, “Your greatness, if I may be so bold, what lies beyond the black door?”

And the emperor answered, “Freedom.”

The unknown is fearsome to most of us. In the face of change, not knowing what lies beyond, we feel dread and trepidation. Given a choice, we feel caught on the horns of a dilemma.

So many people take the easy way out.

Most chose the known path.

You have wisely done otherwise.

This Beginning Module and the ones that follow are for a select group of individuals who have boldly chosen to face the unknown, attempt the challenges, and begin striding boldly toward their Best Year Ever.

Congratulations on your decision. You have begun.

Freedom and success await you.

*There will come a time when you  
believe everything is finished.  
That will be the beginning.*

**Louis L'Amour (1908-1988)**  
**American novelist**