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CHANGE STARTS WITH YOU

Six Actions

To increase your impact at work
& transform your personal life



The **six actions** which will improve your impact at work:

01

Listen deeply (and not to yourself)

02

Focus on the right things

03

Take ownership of everything that happens

04

Stop taking things personally

05

Invite and embrace difficult conversations

06

Expand your understanding of what is possible

If you implement these, they will also transform your personal life. I invite you to try them for yourself.

This is short booklet, designed to be accessible and quick to read, clarifying these key actions that I have seen repeatedly improve my clients' impact at work. They also bring greater satisfaction and enjoyment across the board.

We are all leaders, whether we are acting in an official leadership role or not. Recognising that you are always having an impact, and taking action to make sure it is a deliberate and creative one, will increase your momentum for success and satisfaction at work.

What's more, it will inevitably make you a better partner, parent, sibling, friend, and member of the community. These six actions are as relevant in every other sphere of life as they are in the workplace.

Are you ready to commit to improve your skills in these areas to create a step-change in your success? Making systemic changes in the way you operate requires setting this as a top priority.

Mastering these six actions of leadership and self-responsibility can be life changing. However, a shift in your whole approach is needed. The power of working with a trusted advisor in a coaching relationship is that you can regularly get support in staying on track as you begin your journey of change. I have seen the following outcomes enough times to be in no doubt that with support, focus and insight, they are possible for everyone:

- the resolution of seemingly intractable problems
- the transformation of difficult relationships
- the acceleration of success, enjoyment, and appreciation at work
- the relief of chronic stress and anxiety
- the creation of apparently impossible futures

Committing to your own growth and development is the most powerfully leveraged decision you can make. Investing in someone to help you do that will repay itself many times over.

It's time to get started.



Chapter 1

Listen deeply (and not to yourself)

In this section you will see the importance of:

- Listening deeply to others (with as little as possible on your mind)
- Not listening to yourself (and recognising how often you are doing that)
- Not trying to prepare a response while you are listening
- How to get more from every interaction and conversation

The value for you:

- A better understanding of those around you
- Getting far more out of team and personal interactions
- Shorter, more effective meetings
- Greater creativity and better ideas

We all think we know how to listen. You probably have a range of strategies for good listening. So why is it that given all that we know, so many people complain that they do not feel listened to at work or at home?

Often when we are listening to others, we already have a lot on our minds. We want to listen for the minimum time necessary and then get on to whatever we think should happen next. We may therefore decide early in an interaction that we already know the message someone is trying to get across to us. Our minds then get very busy working out how we are going to respond, preparing to affirm, contradict, or add more information. None of these are really listening. You can't be listening fully and planning a response at the same time.

Quality of listening is reduced dramatically when we are not offering our full attention. You may feel as if it's more time-efficient, but the cost is missed nuance and detail, and never really discovering what others think and feel. Problems stack up further down the line.

Taking time to listen closely, with effort given to keeping your own mind free of interference, conclusions, responses, even questions, creates a very different experience for the person who is speaking. They have time to express more fully what it is that they want to say; new ideas occur to them as they speak and pause; they may find words to explain something which is hard to articulate. Everyone gets more value from these kinds of interactions.

Listening with nothing on your mind also creates a very different experience for you, the listener. Free from the marshalling of previously known information and habitual responses, or trying to shore up your own position, you open yourself to fresh thinking.

It takes practice to establish a new way of listening. It is often in being listened to deeply oneself that the true value of this becomes clear. I invariably notice my clients slowing down and becoming more reflective as we spend an hour or more together. Being listened to, they listen more deeply. Creative ideas and new approaches start to arise.

As you become a better listener, you will want to create a culture where others do the same. An environment where everyone values honest, reflective, exploratory conversation, and can recognise and flag up off-point storytelling, improves efficiency and effectiveness in every team. You can influence the style of communication within a group, whatever your position and role.

Working with a trusted advisor helps you to navigate the complexities of transitioning into this new way of operating.

Action: Notice how much internal dialogue is taking place when you are listening. Gently direct your mind back to listening.



Chapter 2

Focus on the right things

In this section you will see the importance of:

- Directing attention away from problems
- Directing attention towards what is going well

The value for you:

- Feeling more positive and empowered
- Experiencing less stress and more enjoyment on a daily basis

The only thing you are experiencing moment to moment is your own thinking. Regardless of what is happening around you, there is an interface between it and you, and that is thought. Whatever you are thinking, you will feel. For example, if you think about an unresolved issue, you may feel anxiety and stress. When you are not thinking about it, and get distracted, your stress eases.

It is essential that you spend the minimum amount of time possible thinking about your problems.

If you start to observe your mind at work on problems or issues, you will see that there are two things going on:

- A small amount of time spent on taking practical steps towards actively resolving problems
- An enormous amount of time ruminating on them, worrying about them, discussing them, complaining about them, criticising yourself for getting into them, telling other people about them, over-thinking and over-analysing them

Cut out the second set of activities, or even reduce it, and you will see a dramatic shift in the quality of your day-to-day experience. They are of no benefit to you whatsoever. You will also notice a reduction in your problems.

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Thoughts about our problems will arise (perhaps frequently) and I am not suggesting you waste your time trying to change that. In fact, don't even consider these thoughts a problem in themselves. It's what you do after the thought has appeared which is your point of leverage.

Take it no further.

The simplest way to begin is with the external actions which you can consciously avoid. That is: discussing, complaining, and telling stories about your problems.

Begin there, and you will notice that the internal over-thinking type activities will naturally decline.

The second element of focusing attention is considering where you consciously direct it.

I guarantee that the more time you spend deliberately focusing on what is successful and on things that are going well (in your work and in your life as a whole), the more of these things you will experience.

There are many reasons for this which I love to explore in coaching conversations.

We have been trained to think that it is necessary to focus relentlessly on the problems in our lives in order to fix them. Nothing could be further from the truth. I love to watch the dramatic changes which result from a shift in focus from the unwanted to the wanted as my clients start to learn the impact of this simple change.

Action: *Refuse to talk about what is wrong. Consciously initiate conversations about what is going well.*



Chapter 3

Take ownership and responsibility for everything

In this section you will see the importance of:

- Taking ownership for mistakes even if they are not yours
- Getting into action, rather than looking for unnecessary answers

The value for you:

- Getting things done more quickly
- A better team dynamic
- Reduced stress and overthinking

Not everything is your fault. However, to take ownership when things go wrong, and take responsibility for what is happening, is a powerful stance. It immediately obliterates any kind of blame and avoids all the lost time of exploring exactly how, why and who. It thrusts you into action and forward movement. There may be a time for seeing how errors have come about, but that is far more productive outside the stress of the moment.

The opposite of ownership is victimhood. When you see yourself as the victim of circumstances or of the actions of others, it leads to inaction and overthinking. If you immediately take ownership, the question 'What now?' arises rather than 'Why is this happening?' For everyone in a team, time that would have been spent looking at what went wrong is now directed towards putting things right and making progress.

Everyone can focus their attention in the same direction with a united and supportive team dynamic.

Action: *Eradicate complaining from your interactions. Give up any thought of blame. Your relationships and productivity will be transformed.*

Chapter 4

Stop taking things personally

In this section you will see the importance of:

- Taking your identity out of the equation

The value for you:

- Less stress
- A clearer focus
- Better decision-making

When you stop taking things personally, life immediately gets simpler.

If you find yourself reacting strongly to something, notice how much of the thinking that has come up is about you. It is common for reactive thinking to be along the lines of:

- What will people think of me?
- It's my fault
- People aren't seeing what I'm really capable of
- I should be doing better/differently/I shouldn't make mistakes
- If this doesn't go the way I think it should, my future will be (my career ruined, I'll lose my job, I'll be judged by everyone)
- This means I'm (incompetent, not up to it, a bad person)
- I should have been able to do this better

These have two things in common.

1. They are painful.
2. They are unhelpful.

They stem from a basic misunderstanding: that who you are and your worth in the world are based on what you achieve. If you believe that to be true, that your identity is at stake, it makes perfect sense to get stressed whenever achievements don't proceed as planned.

However, it is not true. Your identity is never at stake.

Learning to separate your sense of who you are from your achievements in the world spells freedom. Emotional and psychological freedom. When you are free from constantly trying to secure your sense of self-worth, your mind is clearer, and you make better decisions. Ironically, you achieve more. Things go better.

We will all be criticised or upset others sometimes. We will all make mistakes. And we all have the capacity to pick ourselves up and move on successfully.

If the personal stories you have made up about yourself and your identity do not serve you, it's time to stop focusing on them and make up some new ones. You made them up in the first place. When you believe a self-critical story, a vaguely critical comment from anyone can send you into a frenzy of anxiety or self-doubt. Every general criticism sounds as if it's aimed directly at you.

In fact, the problem is your own internal, self-critical, 'everything is personal' thinking.

Nothing is personal unless you take it that way.

What's more, when your mind is occupied like this, it's hard to take on legitimate feedback that is helpful. With a busy mind, you can't get access to clarity and new ideas.

When your mind clears, fresh, helpful thinking can break through.

Action: Notice when something looks personal. Consider the fact that your identity is not at stake.



Chapter 5

Invite and embrace difficult conversations

In this section you will see the importance of:

- Having conversations that appear difficult at the earliest opportunity

The value for you:

- Reduced anxiety
- Accurate information
- Speedier resolution of problems

If you are like most people, you put off 'difficult' conversations. You know what you want to say, but you are afraid to say it. Or you are avoiding what you think will be the result.

Meanwhile, anxieties and frustrations build up, problems are created, and relationships are strained. Work suffers.

Everyone is avoiding a made-up problem – a reaction that may not even exist – at the cost of creating a whole range of other problems.

The reason I say that you are avoiding a made-up problem is that however much you think you know how that conversation will go, or how someone will react, you can't know that. Reality is rarely identical to imagination. There are many more ways things can play out and you have no idea what response may occur to you once a conversation begins.

In addition, imagined futures rarely suggest any benefits, only problems. Yet once a line of communication is opened up, there is potential for numerous unexpectedly positive outcomes. You are likely to discover information which was previously unknown to you. You can come up with new thinking and solutions. Now you are dealing with reality.

Remember, the focus of our attention dictates our experience. Therefore, an unresolved problem or conversation attracts our attention and generates huge amounts of ongoing over-thinking. Engaging with whatever the issue is and resolving it one way or the other, reduces the psychological impact, regardless of the actual outcome.

Action: *Address an issue you have been avoiding and have a conversation about it as soon as possible.*



Chapter 6

Expand your understanding of what is possible

In this section you will see the importance of:

- Not believing the limits of what you or others think is possible

The value for you:

- Increased creativity and productivity
- More eagerness and fun in life
- Achieving more with greater levels of success
- Freedom from being stuck

We have been brought up to be realistic. I meet a lot of people who feel deeply stuck. I think these two things are related.

We all admire the stories of great visionaries, inventors and scientists who broke new ground against overwhelming odds. Yet we seem to think that we are different. I suggest that the most significant difference is that we believe what we hear (in our own heads or from others) about what is possible for us, and they didn't or don't.

I know without doubt that there is always more possible than we can currently see. Every time a client overcomes an obstacle or solves an apparently unsolvable problem, the answer is something that was previously either invisible, or looked utterly impossible.

Therefore, the answer is simple: be unwilling to accept what seems possible as the limit of what can be achieved. This opens up a huge space in which to research, explore and play.

If you want to be challenged to think bigger, expand what looks possible, create the impossible and have more fun and less stress along the way, hire a coach. Working with someone as your trusted advisor or partner will constantly challenge you to expand the horizons of what you deem to be possible.

Action: Notice when you write off something you would like to do, or a future scenario as impossible. Think again.



Now Take Action!

This booklet is intentionally brief. But it has the potential to make a huge difference.

I suggest that you read this book through again with your personal life in mind. These ideas are as powerful there as they are in the workplace.

Most of all this book is about taking action. The actions are simple, but require commitment, time, and focus once you have set them as your priority. That's the reason you may decide to hire a trusted advisor or coach. Change is always possible, but support is invaluable as you implement these new approaches in different contexts. If you really want to make changes in your day-to-day life, I urge you to get the support you need to make them stick.

If you would like to improve your effectiveness at work, have a greater impact, and improve your relationships with both your colleagues, family and friends, hiring a trusted advisor will immediately start to shift the way you operate.

Thank you for taking the time to read this booklet. If you have found it useful, here is your next investment in your future: I would like to gift to you 40 minutes of my time as a trusted advisor to help you implement whichever of these actions you feel would have the most impact for you.

Contact me at lizzie@lizziepaish.com. Simply mention that you have read this booklet.



Lizzie Paish works as a trusted advisor and coach to leaders and professionals in all walks of life. She gets straight to the point in uncovering the issue, and helps her clients solve intractable problems in the workplace or at home without stress and hard work. She is relentless in pointing to what is really possible and will never give up on reminding you what you have going for you.

She offers one-to-one coaching, individual retreats (in person or online) to clients worldwide and group retreats in the UK.

Lizzie loves to explore the overlap between different ideas. She questions traditions, rules, and boundaries and seeks answers in territories where others might not think to look. She combines different perspectives to help you make the invisible visible, leading to innovative and surprising ideas and improvements.

Lizzie is the author of two books to be published later this year: *The Light Within: A New Perspective on the Christmas Story* and *Belief is Not Required: Alternative Reflections on the Stories of Jesus*.

She lives in Derbyshire, UK and appreciates the beauty of the natural environment, the opportunity to work with extraordinary people, and the incredible potential in every human being, especially her clients.

Visit her website at www.lizziepaish.com and check out her podcast: *It's Good to be ME!*