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This sample includes the front and back covers, table of contents, and more than a dozen of the inside pages from the book.

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Living the Wonder of It All

*Positive, Empowering Messages
from The Daily Motivator*

Ralph S. Marston, Jr.

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Living With a Flexible, Creative Open Mind

An exquisite contradiction

You are the same person you were yesterday, and yet you are also more than you have ever been before. You are changing on a moment by moment basis, and yet at some level you remain the person you have always been.

Stop for a moment and consider what a beautiful paradox it is. You constantly move through life, learning, growing, experiencing, becoming, while all the time continuing to be you.

You can embrace change without abandoning the absolute, fundamental values which provide a solid foundation for your existence, your purpose, your fulfillment. You can stand firm while at the same time learning, adjusting, accepting and adapting.

Part of moving successfully forward is your ability to stay firmly anchored to who you are and to what you know is always true. And part of maintaining a strong sense of who you are is your willingness to change for the better.

You are fixed and you are flexible. It is an exquisite contradiction. Learn to see the value in those things which do not change, and also in those things which can be changed for the better. They both have their place, they both have their value, and they both are yours to use in living a life of meaning and fulfillment.

Adapt and prosper

When conditions change, some people become immobilized by worry. Other people complain. Still others make the changing conditions into an excuse for not taking action. What do successful people do when conditions change? Successful people adapt. That's what makes them consistently successful.

When conditions change, suddenly there can be plenty of reasons to give up. Suddenly there can be plenty of perfectly understandable justifications for not moving forward. Suddenly there can be an abundance of excuses for failure.

And yet, when conditions change there are also great opportunities. Some people will have the confidence to recognize those opportunities and act upon them. Someday everyone will say those people were lucky, that they were in the right place at the right time.

The truth is, when you're willing and able to adapt, you're always in the right place at the right time. Those who recognize that fact and take advantage of it by adapting in a positive way to changing conditions will be very fortunate indeed.

Another approach

When one approach is not working to reach the desired goal, that's not a reason to abandon the goal. Instead, it is time to devise another approach. Sometimes the objective and the means to that objective become so intertwined that it is difficult to imagine one without the other. Yet there are many different ways to reach any particular goal, given enough persistence and creativity.

That's why, for those who are able to consistently get things done, there is no such thing as failure. There are only approaches which have been proven ineffective.

There is a way to achieve whatever you desire, even when you've already fallen short of the mark. There is a way to do it. That way may not be obvious. It may well require some skillful, creative thinking. It's there, though. Learn from each attempt, learn from each approach and you'll surely discover one that works spectacularly.

Differing opinions

If you listen only to those with whom you already agree, there's only so much you can learn. Take the time and effort to consider other points of view. Often you can learn the most from those with whom you disagree, if you respect them enough to listen and truly consider what they have to say.

Be careful not to get trapped by labels. Just because someone disagrees with you about one thing, does not necessarily mean that person will disagree with you about everything.

You can find value in the thinking and opinions of others without compromising your own convictions. Each person with whom you interact has a unique perspective. In that perspective is a golden treasure just waiting to be uncovered.

Anyone who has an opinion can perpetuate a disagreement, but what does that accomplish? Rather than looking for a reason to disagree, look for value in all the differing points of view which you encounter. Only when you're confident enough to acknowledge that you don't know it all will you be able to grow in knowledge and wisdom.

Creating Value

Wish list

Imagine this. You wake up one morning and quickly discover that everything you wish for will magically and instantly appear in front of you. You wish for a brand new sports car and poof, it appears in your garage. You wish for a slim, muscular physique and poof, you have it. This is fun, you think.

You wish for a billion dollars in your bank account and suddenly it is there. Then you realize you don't really need the money because you no longer must buy anything. You wish for a new computer, a puppy, a giant house, a loving companion. They all appear instantly. Physical manifestations of your desires begin to surround you.

After a while it becomes overwhelming. Even the most casual thought causes a "poof" and another artifact appears on top of the growing pile. Suddenly it gets very boring and quite senseless. What good is all this stuff, anyway? You soon grow to resent your desires, because they are filling your life with useless junk. You cannot escape them.

You finally wish to not have this power anymore, and that wish, too, is granted. Instantly, all the new stuff disappears and you are left with only the experience and a little more wisdom.

It all gives you a profound new appreciation for the value of effort. You realize that your desires are not fulfilled by the things you desire, but rather by the person you become in the process of following those desires. When you could have had

anything in the world, the life you have right now — with all its struggles and frustrations — is what you selected over everything else.

Be necessary

Success comes from making yourself necessary. It does not come from making a nuisance of yourself, nor from making people feel sorry for you, nor from taking advantage of others. In whatever arena you seek success, you will attain it by making a useful and substantial contribution.

What are you doing right now to make yourself necessary? How much of yourself do you put into your work, into your life? True, lasting achievement requires effort on your part. You may be able to lie, cheat or steal your way to a big bank account, but you cannot steal true success and fulfillment. It must be earned. It must come from you. It must come from making your own unique, positive contribution to the world.

You're a special individual, and the best thing you can do with your uniqueness is to make it available to others. Make yourself necessary. Make a difference. Your own life is the most blessed when the most others are blessed by it.

Giving and taking

Whatever you seek to acquire, the most reliable way to get it is by giving, rather than by taking. To obtain wealth, give value. To be happy, make other people happy. To truly learn, teach others. To be loved, give love. To be respected, act with respect toward others.

When you attempt to take what you want, you'll be met with suspicion, barbed wire and guard dogs. By contrast, when you

give of yourself, you encounter little or no resistance.

Sincerely seek to give, to provide value, to make a difference, and people will line up to support you. Every person alive, no matter how sincerely selfless and altruistic they may be, is concerned in some way with their own self interest — if they weren't they would stop breathing and die. You can be sure that anyone with whom you come in contact is influenced to some degree by their own self interest. However, you cannot be sure that they are the least bit interested in you.

That being the case, you're considerably more likely to achieve your own success when you champion the self interest of others. It's as close as you can get to a sure thing.

Who can you help?

Think of everyone around you — in your family, your school, your office, your community, your country, your world. Who can you help? How can you help them?

What value do you have to impart to others? Answer that question, and it will lead you to wherever you want to go.

Do not think that you have nothing of value to offer. You most certainly do. Your job is to find what that is, to discover who you can help, and how you can help them. The value you have to offer is most likely a mixture of your knowledge, your skills, your opinions, your interests, your likes and dislikes, the people you know, and the experiences you've lived through.

Help others enjoy prosperity, and you will become wealthy. Help others to be truly happy, and you will be filled with joy. Teach to others, and you will learn. No matter who you are or

how doggedly life has beat you down, you have something to offer, something that will make your life shine.

Who can you help? What can you do to make a difference?

Invest in kindness

A snide remark gains you nothing, yet costs you much. A selfish act brings no lasting value, yet it attracts the enduring resentment of others. A kind word, on the other hand, costs you nothing. And it can bring about a lifetime of value.

What if, just once each day, you were to stop yourself before making a cruel remark and replace it with a sincere word of encouragement? Such a thing would cost you absolutely nothing, and yet it would bring real, positive value to your life and your world.

Cruelty is a waste of precious time and energy. Kindness is an investment which pays endless dividends.

If you desire a life of value, then do the things which bring true value, as often as you can. Fill your moments with kindness, and fill your world with value.

Ambition or arrogance?

Too many people confuse ambition with arrogance, and then wonder why it fails them.

The distinctions between ambition and arrogance are sometimes subtle, yet critical. From a distance, the two can appear to be the same. However, their results are worlds apart.

Ambition is expecting the best of yourself. Arrogance is be-

believing you are better than others. Ambition is the desire to make a difference. Arrogance is the belief that you're indispensable. Ambition is doing whatever it takes to accomplish what you know you deserve. Arrogance is thinking that the world owes you something, and doing what you can to take it. Ambition is disciplined and assertive. Arrogance is pushy. Ambition is responsible and respectful. Arrogance is destructive and disdainful.

Are you driven by ambition or arrogance? Arrogance will drive you into the ground. Ambition will drive you to the top.

What is best

Sure, it's a lot easier to think you've already missed the big opportunity than it is to make that opportunity work for you. And it's easier to assume you've done all you can than it is to put in just a little more effort to make absolutely sure.

It's much easier to tell yourself that you know all the answers than it is to go through the effort of learning something new. And it's much easier to talk about doing something than it is to actually get busy and do it.

But the easy way is not usually the best way. The best way is to do what you know is right. Do you know what is right? Of course you do.

You know that opportunity is always there for those who are willing to put in the work that it requires. You know that often your extra efforts can make the difference between spectacular success and mediocrity.

You know that the smartest people are those who have the courage to admit what they don't know. And you know that it

Get Beyond Being Stuck

Do you feel like you're stuck where you are, unable to move forward? Does it seem that when you take two steps ahead you then fall back three? Are you trying desperately to get ahead and yet falling more and more behind? Do you know precisely what you want to accomplish, and how to do it, and yet you just cannot bring yourself to take the necessary actions for a long enough period of time?

Do you keep trying to live positively, to give of yourself, to make a real difference, and the world keeps throwing it back in your face? Does it seem that you're completely overwhelmed?

That feeling of being stuck is actually a very positive sign. It means that you're truly ready to begin moving yourself forward. To illustrate, let's look at an example. Imagine that you drive home from work on Friday afternoon, park your car in the garage, and accidentally leave on the car's interior light without knowing it. You go in the house, enjoy a lovely dinner, watch a film on television, and go to bed. All the while, the light has been draining your car's battery and at about 3:00 am, the battery runs completely out of power. But of course you don't even realize it. On Saturday morning you get up, have breakfast, take a walk and then spend most of the day working in your garden. The weather is beautiful and you're having a wonderful time. Later in the afternoon you get cleaned up and ready to go meet some friends for dinner.

You then walk out to the garage, get in the car, turn the key in the ignition switch, and nothing happens. Your battery is dead and your car won't start. You are stuck. But you didn't realize you were stuck, you didn't feel stuck, until you were ready to go somewhere. All that time you were walking through the neighborhood and working in the garden, you didn't feel stuck. It's only when you really are attempting to get somewhere, and are somehow prevented from doing it, that you truly feel stuck.

So that feeling of being stuck means that you are indeed ready to move forward. It means that there's somewhere you really want to go, even if that somewhere is "anywhere but here."

So what's the next step? Let's go back to the car battery story. If the battery is dead, what needs to happen? You need to get a jump start. A pair of jumper cables connected to another vehicle's battery will get you up and running in no time. But let's think for a moment about the things that will NOT get you up and running.

Being angry at yourself for leaving the light on will not get you going. You can fill yourself with rage and resentment for leaving that light on, and still when you turn the key nothing is going to happen. When you're feeling stuck in your life, it can be easy to become angry with yourself. After all, you're the person who is most responsible for getting you where you are. Though it's useful and positive to accept that responsibility, it is of no use to be angry or resentful about it. What's happened has happened. The best you can do is to learn from it. Holding on to the anger will only delay your moving forward. So accept responsibility for where you are, and then also accept the reality of where you are, without fighting against it but rather with a desire to truly do something positive about it.

Being angry at the car manufacturer for making the light so easy to leave on will not get you going. You can rant and rave about how poorly designed the car is, and yet when you turn the key nothing is going to happen. You're still going to be stuck. When you're feeling stuck, it is very easy to blame others for your situation. In many cases, other people are indeed very much to blame. Yet the process of assigning blame is not going to move you forward. Sure, it can make you feel better to know that your troubles are not entirely your own fault, but you'll still be stuck. In order to get beyond being stuck, you must put your focus elsewhere.

Feeling sorry for yourself, and receiving the sympathy of others, will not get you going. If your car battery is dead, you can call your sister who lives two hundred miles away and she can make you feel better by being very sympathetic over the phone, but there's nothing she can do to get your car going. She can encourage you to do something about it, and that encouragement can be extremely useful, yet you're still going to need to go beyond merely being encouraged and to actually do something about it.

Thinking of excuses will not get the car going. Certainly there are things that stand in your way. The car is pulled into the garage and will be difficult to reach with jumper cables. You don't know anyone who has jumper cables. You're all dressed for dinner and don't want to get your good clothes dirty. Those are all very valid facts. Yet to get yourself going you must view them as obstacles to be overcome rather than as excuses for not taking action. When your life seems to be stuck, it's easy to see all the things standing in your way. One by one, these are things that must be overcome if you are to move forward. Viewed together, they may indeed appear to be insurmountable. But you don't have to conquer them all at once. You're not going to get past them all in an instant. It will take a con-

tinuing effort. You're fully capable of working your way through one obstacle after another, until you eventually make your way through them all.

Positive thinking alone is not going to get the car going. Yes, it's great to have a positive outlook on life. Yet that positive outlook, that positive thinking, is only the beginning. In order for it to make a difference, you must act upon it. It's great to have a lot of positive ideas and plans for moving forward. To actually move forward, you must act on those plans, you must put those ideas into motion. Let positive thinking guide your actions, and let your actions make those positive thoughts a reality.

We've taken a look at some of the things that will not get you going. So what exactly will get you moving ahead, past the point of being stuck?

One of the most reliable ways to get beyond being stuck is to start small. To illustrate this, let's look at another example. A week or two ago, I was doing some repair work and needed to replace a 3/16 inch diameter steel cable. I had purchased a 12-foot piece of this cable but I needed to cut it down to about 10 feet long. The problem was, I didn't have a tool capable of cutting the cable. So I took the "divide and conquer" approach. A 3/16 inch steel cable is actually made up of many, much smaller wires wound together. I did have a wire cutter capable of cutting the smaller wires. So I used a pair of pliers to untwist the strands, and then used my wire cutter to cut each individual one. It took some time but eventually the entire cable was cut to the length I needed.

Over the years, problems and challenging situations can build up and twist together like the wires of a steel cable to the point where they are holding you firmly in place. When you

tug against the cable itself, you go nowhere. You simply do not have the strength to break free of it. Yet if you look closely at that cable, you'll realize that it's made up of small, vulnerable strands — strands that you can begin to break, one by one. So start cutting those wires. Go to work on the obstacles one by one. It will take some time, yet during that time not only will you be cutting yourself free, but you'll also be building your confidence with each small victory. And before long, you'll be moving rapidly ahead.

Another way to move past being stuck is to keep your focus on where you're going rather than on the fact that you're stuck. Constantly repeating to yourself and others that you're stuck is going to reinforce that fact in your mind, and affect all of your actions. So even while you're still stuck, start acting like you're not.

For example, let's say you feel stuck in a certain part of town and would like to be able to move to a new neighborhood. Rather than being miserable about where you live, start to actually enjoy the place where you would like to live. Drive over there on a regular basis, park your car, and take a walk through the neighborhood where you want to move. Do your shopping over there. Eat in restaurants or attend a church or join a sports club in the neighborhood. Find a way to start living and acting as if you were past the point of being stuck where you are. And while you're doing it, realize that you are, in fact, doing it. You're moving solidly and substantially past the point of being stuck. You're not wishing and hoping and dreaming about being there, you're actually doing something to get yourself there.

In order to move past being stuck, you need a lot of energy. There's plenty of energy available to you, but much of it is probably being drained away. If you live in a cluttered, messy

We are always immersed in the wonder of it all, yet too often we fail to even begin to appreciate it. We see the leaves falling and then reappearing in the spring, perhaps we admire their beauty, and yet we move hurriedly on without fully appreciating, without fully living the wonder of what we're experiencing. We hurry and worry, struggle and strive, and in the process we often overlook many of the most useful and valuable qualities of living. We need continual reminders to re-focus our thoughts on the things that really matter, and that's what this book is all about.



For more than eight years, Ralph Marston been writing brief, positive reminders of those values and those qualities that enable us to truly live the wonder of it all. Each Monday through Saturday since November 1995, The Daily Motivator website has offered a new, original message designed to help readers remember, appreciate and experience how beautiful and full of wonder life can be. In this book you'll find some of the best of those messages.

ISBN 0-9664634-1-2

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