

FIRST TWO CHAPTERS!

**CONTROL**

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**INFLUENCE**

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**ACCEPT** **(FOR NOW)**

**CIA(FN)<sup>TM</sup>**

**COPING WITH A FUTURE NO ONE CAN PREDICT**

**DAN MOORE**

**Praise for *Control, Influence, Accept (For Now)***

“Dan Moore is one of the world’s best at motivating and inspiring others. For decades, he has taught thousands of people how to believe in themselves and reach their fullest potential. His teachings have a profound and lasting positive impact. (I can attest from personal experience!) Finally, Moore shares his wisdom with the world. In *Control, Influence, Accept (For Now)*, Moore uses masterful and relatable storytelling to convey actionable advice in a quick and digestible format. Worth your time to read!”

—**KELLY BRESLIN WRIGHT**, Founder of Culture Driven Sales,  
Board Director, and Former EVP Sales at Tableau Software



“Dan Moore has authored a profoundly insightful road map for managing professional and personal growth in the face of unprecedented social and economic change. *Control, Influence, Accept (For Now)* is engagingly written, and readers will be equipped to successfully navigate a future characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability with newfound optimism, confidence, and peace. Moore’s deep wisdom is evident on every page of the book, and he conveys general mindsets as well as specific tactics that have been proven to facilitate excellence both in our work lives and beyond.”

—**STEVEN S. POSAVAC**, Ph.D., E. Bronson Ingram Professor  
of Marketing, Faculty Director Master of Marketing, Vanderbilt  
University Owen Graduate School of Management



“Door-to-door book salesman, corporate president, and motivational speaker Dan Moore has packed more than fifty years of wit, wisdom, and war stories into this wonderfully entertaining, powerfully argued, and genuinely inspiring new book. With references ranging from Marcus Aurelius and Viktor Frankl to Christopher Reeve and Zig Ziglar, it teaches us all—young and old—how to live healthier, happier, and more purposeful lives in the face of a future that remains radically uncertain. It is a book that deserves to be read and reread, put into practice in one’s everyday life, and then passed on to those whose lives we ourselves would like to influence (forever). (It also contains perhaps the most enthusiastic endorsement one will find anywhere for eating octopus . . . .)

—**MICHAEL NAAS**, Professor of Philosophy, DePaul  
University, Southwestern Book Salesman, 1978–1982



“In a deeply uncertain world where so many lead with fear, Dan shows us a better way. We don’t need to live in fear of the unknown when there’s a wealth of knowledge available to us on how to flourish in chaos, personally and professionally. Going miles deeper than the usual ‘believe in yourself!’ mantra you’ll find in self-help, Dan uses psychology, history, and his wildly entertaining stories to draw the reader in and give them compelling and practical ways to cope with life’s obstacles. What’s always impressed me about Dan is his humble, servant-hearted spirit—one you wouldn’t expect from someone who

spent decades as president of a company. You'll read *Control, Influence, Accept (For Now)* and walk away feeling like you have a new friend who genuinely wants the best for you in life. I highly recommend this book to any human being who wants to stand tall in the storms of life with a big goofy smile on their face."

—**SARAH MADDACK BELL**, Artist, Songwriter, and Influencer



"Over the years, Dan Moore has powerfully motivated multitudes, both one-on-one and in group meetings. *Control, Influence, Accept (For Now)* shows he is equally inspiring with the written word. This is a book to read throughout your life. It would have helped me immeasurably when I was starting out and today it is making me a better me."

—**MARTY FRIDSON**, author of *Unwarranted Intrusions*, which the *Boston Globe* said should be short-listed for best business book of the decade



"In our ever-connected and AI-driven world, more than ever, we need to control what we can, influence the world around us, and accept what we can't—for now. Dan's firsthand experience of turning principles into action has guided thousands of entrepreneurs to succeed in business and their personal lives. *Control, Influence, Accept (For Now)* is a must-read!"

—**MARK PALMER**, named by *TIME* as *A Technology Pioneer Who Will Change Your Life*.

“I find it helpful every now and then to take stock of my own development, do a SWOT analysis of my strategic plan for personal success, and check my attitude. Dan Moore’s insightful book is a complete, thorough, and entirely enjoyable read filled with excellent questions necessary to ask one’s self to get the answers you need to take control, flex your boundaries, and boost your resilience. In this challenging and transformative era of change, I give my full-throated endorsement to this timely and much-needed book written by my friend and mentor, Dan Moore.”

—**MARYANNE HOWLAND**, Founder and CEO,  
Ibis Communications and Global Diversity Leadership Exchange

**CONTROL**

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**COPING WITH A FUTURE NO ONE CAN PREDICT**

**DAN MOORE**

SouthwesternBooks

*Control, Influence, Accept (For Now): Coping with a Future No One Can Predict*

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When I was young, I wanted to change the world.

I found it was difficult to change the world,  
so I tried to change my nation.

When I found I couldn't change the nation,  
I began to focus on my town.

I couldn't change the town, so when I grew older,  
I tried to change my family.

Now, I am old, and now realize the only  
thing I can change is myself.

If long ago I had changed myself,  
I could have made an impact on my family.

My family and I could have made  
an impact on our town.

Our town could have changed the nation.

And I could have changed the world.



—Attributed to Lithuanian Rabbi Israel Salanter, 19th century





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# DEDICATION

*For Maria Goreti*



# FOREWORD

In July 2023, some eight hundred people traveled at their expense from around the world to honor Dan Moore's retirement from Southwestern Advantage. The celebration consisted mostly of people whom Dan mentored, counseled, and worked with over the last half-century. Speakers toasted Dan's many contributions to Southwestern, but far more than that, attendees, collectively and individually, thanked Dan for the profound difference he made in their lives. That is why so many spent their own money to travel so far. Very few people ever receive such an outpouring of gratitude.

Dan worked for Southwestern Advantage his entire career. Only one company, ever, which is a somewhat remarkable feat in itself. The company sells educational products—door-to-door, also known as “direct sales.”

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Yes, literally ringing a doorbell, introducing themselves, making a sales pitch, and assuming the homeowner won't slam the door in their face.

This prompts the question, how could a person who worked for a company that sold its wares door-to-door have such an impact on so many people around the world that they would travel at their cost to thank him? Within the answer lies the very value of this book that you have so wisely chosen to read.

To fully appreciate the answer, you must first understand Dan, and then Southwestern Advantage. I met Dan about thirty years ago at a neighborhood function. We were drawn to each other, perhaps because we are equally height challenged, but more likely because our wives had befriended each other. I learned, over time, that Dan is a bit of a renaissance man: he speaks four languages, plays guitar and piano, authored a book (in addition to this book), is a voracious reader, a marathoner, a yoga student, lover of puns, and someone who knows a lot about a lot.

But when we first met, Dan was somewhat quiet. When he spoke, however, his words rang true pretty much regardless of the topic. As we explored each other's background, he said he sold educational books for a living. He shared that when he was a college student at Harvard,

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he contracted with Southwestern Advantage to sell their books for a summer, and he had been working for them ever since. His company, he explained, contracted with college students from around the globe who did this as their summer work. Dan ultimately became president of the company.

I must now confess that, at the time, I was instinctively skeptical both of the business and its model. My skepticism morphed into admiration as I learned more in the years to come.

Southwestern Family of Companies was founded in 1855 and today it is stronger than ever. Clearly, it's doing something right. That something is it alters people's lives and very much for the better, and Dan has been a huge part of that. Certainly, its educational products have a positive impact, but I am talking about the people who work in the Southwestern program.

Every year, the company recruits hundreds of college students from across the US and from countries as far away as Estonia. It does not hire these students; rather, they are independent contractors, owners of their own bookselling business. They go to a city for a summer where they ring doorbells. They make money as any product-based business does: buy at wholesale and sell at retail.



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No sales, no income. In other words, they eat what they kill. But these students generally make upward of \$10,000 during a summer, and those who are particularly successful can pocket more than \$100,000 for a few months of hard work (see [southwesternadvantage.com/disclosure](http://southwesternadvantage.com/disclosure)).

While the money is important to these college students, over time they realize that even more important are the training and life lessons they receive. Southwestern Advantage provides an intensive weeklong training program, covering an array of subjects: world-class sales training, basic finance, how to maintain confidence despite the frequent rejection direct salespeople experience, recruiting and leading others, and so much more.

This training is solidly grounded in the values, principles, and pragmatic lessons of living a fulfilling, happy, and successful life. These lessons are woven into the week of talks and exercises. Dan has been the heart and soul of this training. One of the seminal moments of a leadership seminar, for example, is Dan's talk on marriage and finding the right person to spend your life with. Through that alone, Dan has changed the lives of many as it is not uncommon for a student to realize the person they are seeing is not the right person for them. Dan quotes his

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wonderful wife, Maria, when he advises, “It is far better to go home alone than to wish you had.”

With this training, a summer of coaching, the hard-knocks lessons learned selling door-to-door with a sizeable profit at the end, the students are changed in profound ways and lifelong bonds are formed within the Southwestern community. Over his fifty years of living in and being an integral part of the Southwestern Family of Companies global network, Dan has been a mentor literally to thousands of successful people around the world. Somehow, he manages to keep up this vast network of friendships, even with those who pursue careers outside of Southwestern.

The foundations of Dan’s mentoring are the principles of life he has discovered during his journey. Those principles are that we actually have complete control over relatively few things in our life, but we have the ability, if we choose to exercise it, to influence a great many other things in our life. We decide, for example, how hard we work, which in turn influences our success; we choose what we eat and whether and how much we exercise, which influences our health. The third principle is that much of the rest of our lives we must accept—*FOR NOW*.

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Why *FOR NOW*? Because we have the ability, over time, to change or significantly influence and often alter our circumstances through our actions, attitude, and determination. Some of the fundamental attributes essential to making such changes include Self-Awareness, Flexibility, Resilience, Perspective, Constructive Self-Talk, and Purpose. When practiced and lived, these attributes will allow a person to lead the kind of life they so choose.

For decades, Dan used these principles of life and the key attributes to mentor and coach a host of fortunate individuals. He was instrumental in helping thousands of people be the best they could be. And so, some eight hundred people came from around the world to thank Dan for how he helped them.

Dan has now given us the wonderful gift he gave to those he mentored—it is in the form of this invaluable book. It beautifully, succinctly, and often humorously explains the principles of life and the key attributes he has used to help so many.

The book is filled with poignant gems that drive home the larger points as well as techniques to hone each of these attributes. For example:

“If you are sad and want to feel *more* sad, it’s easy! Just walk slowly, with your head down and shoulders slumped,

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listening to some of Adele's truly sad songs. But if you want to feel better and have more energy, walk 25 percent faster, head up, arms swinging, listening to '70s disco or '60s Motown. It's pretty much impossible to avoid feeling better." So simple it is almost silly, but Dan is fundamentally right! It works. When reading the book, I was somewhat despondent over a personal health crisis. I did exactly what he advised. I immediately felt better.

"Most of our self-talk is like a puppy that hasn't been housebroken; it runs wherever it wants, brings both joy and chaos, and pees randomly with enthusiasm." And as Dan demonstrates in the book, all of us engage in self-talk. So as Dan puts it, "Who is responsible for being our best cheerleader? I and I alone." Again, faced with my personal health issue, I decided to follow Dan's advice and not be a puppy that hasn't been housebroken. I changed my self-talk to look at the positives of the situation. Again, it helped immensely.

"We must understand ourselves to understand our reactions, and to make internal changes when a situation itself cannot be changed." As someone who has run a large company, I can say that self-awareness is a tenet of effective leadership, which begins by leading one's self.

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Dan has been a huge influence in my life, from encouraging me to make certain changes at Bridgestone Americas while I was the CEO to pushing me to write my book and to learning how to play the guitar. The eight hundred attendees honoring Dan's retirement are a testament to the roles he played in their lives. For those who read this book and who are committed (commitment, by the way, is discussed under the attribute of Purpose) to developing the attributes Dan discusses, the results will be equally life-influencing.

Gary Garfield  
Author of *Driving Results:  
Six Lessons Learned from  
Transforming an Iconic Company*  
Retired, President, CEO and  
Chairman, Bridgestone Americas, Inc.

## INTRODUCTION

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# THE CONSTANT IS DELTA

**Y**ou are somewhere, and in some stage of life, as you read this.

You may be in school, and maybe not.

You may be working, and maybe not.

You may have a clear sense of what you are meant to do with the rest of your life, and maybe not.

Regardless of your present reality, where in the world will you be in ten years? Ten years from now, you might still be in your current community, engaged in basically the same set of relationships and activities. There is, however, a significant chance that you will be far away, doing something very different. If you doubt that, think back to where you were and what you were doing ten years ago.

Where in the world will you be in *twenty* years? You probably just did the mental math and realized that you will be in your forties, or fifties, or sixties . . . or eighties. Or more.

A lifetime of working with college and university students has shown that people in that age group often define *old* as thirty and up. If you're in this group, seeing yourself center stage at forty-something is very hard for you to grasp. More than likely, your parents were in their forties when they reared you. That you are extremely likely to reach that life stage yourself is wake-up-quick news. If

you are currently in your forties, you are closer to sixty than you are to gaining the right to vote.

Where in the world will you be in thirty years? Some of you will be in the Century Club. Maybe you won't even be in this world ... you could be on another one.

Come back to earth. Come back to now. Close your eyes and breathe, with a four-count inhale and an eight-count exhale.

Again.

Again.

Again.

Now that we're back in the present, let's get into our first question: What will your future be like? Not "What will THE future be like?" No one—not even professional futurists—knows the answer to that one. However, we can, with a fair degree of certainty, describe how the future state of affairs will look with an equation.

$$C = \Delta$$

While quantitative types would correctly argue that the symbol C stands for the speed of light in a vacuum, it is often used as well to represent a constant, or unchanging quantity.



The Greek letter  $\Delta$ , delta, often represents various aspects of change.

We can put this equation into words: the constant is change. Put another way, the only thing we can count on staying the same is that nothing will stay the same. Let's look at some examples.

## The DigiSphere

Since no one can really define correctly what it is, my definition of the *DigiSphere* is as good as the next: the universe of stored data everywhere. It is an expanding universe. International Data Corporation estimates that the amount of new stored data will grow by more than twice as much between 2020 and 2025 as the total amount of stored data created since the beginning of stored data.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, a variety of technological innovations streamed together to create this tsunami of stored information. Computers had been talking to one another for a long time before something called a *website* first appeared on August 6, 1991. Even after Sir Tim Berners-Lee and

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210324005175/en/Data-Creation-and-Replication-Will-Grow-at-a-Faster-Rate-Than-Installed-Storage-Capacity-According-to-the-IDC-Global-DataSphere-and-StorageSphere-Forecasts>.

his team of engineers at CERN launched it and called it the beginning of the World Wide Web,<sup>2</sup> awareness of the Internet was largely confined to scientists, other academics, complete geeks, and the military–industrial complex.

About nineteen months later, Marc Andreessen and his team created Mosaic. It was the first true GUI (graphical user interface), and it ushered in our current era of white-knuckle change. Suddenly, simple commands—or clicks with a mouse—could open electronic sites with color and pictures. For the first time, we could fire up our computers and quickly (well, after we waited about six minutes for the machine to “boot up”) see what the weather was outside. Before that, people had to open a window.

Do you have a phone that can take pictures? Now, I know you’re thinking I must have crawled out of some primordial soup to write such a question. But zoom your judgmental lens out a little and ponder the words: a *phone* . . . that can take *pictures*.

What if I were a Time-Traveler from the Sixties (for the record, I *am* a time-traveler from the sixties), and suddenly I showed up right next to you? The encounter might go a bit like this:

<sup>2</sup> <https://webfoundation.org/about/vision/history-of-the-web/>.

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T'TFS: Whoa! What a groovy ride! Hey man, where am I?

YOU: Uh, you're here.

T'TFS: Far out! And . . . and . . . things look a lot different . . . *when* am I?

YOU: It's the twenties. Why do you ask?

T'TFS: Because I'm from the sixties, man!

YOU: Far out! Hey—do you mind if I take a picture of you with my phone?

T'TFS: Don't mess with me, man! I've come a long way and a long time. A picture with your phone? That's not even funny. Next you're gonna tell me you'll *call* me on your *camera*!

Most of us cannot imagine a world where a picture-taking phone isn't the norm. Do you have, say, a thousand images on your phone? (Yes, of your desserts.) And do you ever back up your photos into the digital vault that we call *the cloud*? Sure you do. Those dessert images are priceless and shouldn't be risked by hardware shortcomings.

If we took the estimated 6.9 billion people in the world who have a smartphone,<sup>3</sup> and each only backed up one thousand images, that would be 6.9 *trillion* images up in the cloud. Which means, if atmospheric conditions are exactly right, it will begin raining selfies.

There are other massive continents of stored data in the DigiSphere. Perhaps you have a friend (jk) who occasionally spends time on YouTube. At current rates, more than five hundred hours of content are uploaded to YouTube *every minute*.<sup>4</sup> If a person watched forty hours a week all year long, taking two weeks off to brush their teeth and such, it would require more than 2,500 years to view one week's worth of new content.

Who can do it? We all know people who are likely to die trying.

## **The Geopolitical World**

When I was learning geography as a boy, many of today's sovereign states were colonies of other countries:

- Sri Lanka was known as Ceylon.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/330695/number-of-smartphone-users-worldwide/>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/259477/hours-of-video-uploaded-to-youtube-every-minute/>.

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- Belize was known as British Honduras.
- Zimbabwe was known as Southern Rhodesia.
- Angola was known as Portuguese Angola.
- Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Georgia, Armenia, Belorussia (now Belarus), Kirgizia (now Kyrgyzstan), Moldavia (now Moldova), Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan were a single country, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.
- Germany was two countries, West and East.
- The Czech Republic and Slovakia were a country called Czechoslovakia.
- Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia were under one flag, as Yugoslavia.

Maps looked very different than they do today. Since 1990, more than thirty new countries have been formed. Many of these were due to the breakup of the former Soviet Union and some of its Soviet Bloc satellite countries, whose speed of dissolution shocked even the most seasoned observers.

## **Business**

In the business world, the rate of change leaves even the originators of that change in the dust. Remember that first popular graphical user interface? It was called Netscape Navigator, but only those of us proudly over forty remember that. Despite having had a greater than 90 percent share of the browser market, Netscape Navigator no longer exists as a player in the browser game. Most of us use Chrome, Safari, and Firefox instead. Three of you use Internet Explorer.

Losing a 90 percent market share would be like a queen in her fortified castle waking up one day to find the earth itself had risen up higher than the castle walls. It suddenly wouldn't feel so safe. And she suddenly might no longer be queen. Most people have some memory of companies that were once everywhere and are now nowhere (Blockbuster Video, Circuit City). The older among us remember Montgomery Ward and Woolworth. And RadioShack. And Gateway Computing.

I'll bet not too many of you are familiar with this device.

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No, it's not what they use in a shoe store to measure your feet. This is a slide rule. A slide rule is a calculating device. That clear plastic bit has a thin line on it. The thin line is called a cursor. (You may be thinking I don't know what I'm talking about; cursors, of course, are blinking things on a computer screen.) By moving this cursor and by lining up these scales in a certain way, we can perform many different kinds of mathematical calculations. This one was a high-school graduation present from my parents.

You may have noticed that it is pictured with an oh-so-attractive leather case. And that the leather case has a metal ring on it, which itself attached to a leather belt loop . . .

“No, Dan, you didn’t . . .”

Oh, yes, I did. I wore it on my belt. I walked into class at Harvard and said, “Yo!” in my best John Wayne voice, and we’d have slide rule calculation races. One day I turned to my friend Marc in our physics class and said, “Hey, Marc—what’s that thing in your hand?”

“It’s called a Texas Instruments calculator,” said Marc.

“It’s a fad,” I told him. “It’ll never last.”

Now you’re laughing at me, but the fact of the matter is the slide rule industry ruled the way people calculated. It was the only device people had to help them calculate . . . and it was wiped out in a flash flood of technology. Or maybe an asteroid struck the Earth. Or things just got too warm. Or it was all a hoax. Like the moon landing.

## **Career Planning**

All of us know people who work in tech, e-commerce, or similar fields—fields that are not even twenty-five years old. I have many friends who are career advisors, and I feel for them. How can they advise someone about their careers when twenty-five years from now that career may be extinct while many others that have not yet been invented will employ millions of people?



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What should students major in to prepare for a career in a field that does not currently exist? Science fiction might be a good start. For people working in a career already, how much time should they devote to their current job and how much to learning new skills that might help them navigate through change?

Even without including the uncertainties of generational conflict, economic overload from personal and national debt, persistent societal problems, existential issues regarding climate, and the impact of terrorism, there is still a lot to be concerned about.

With so much uncertainty, what can we do? “Nap heavily,” you might reply. Which would indeed salve our worries for today, but tomorrow we would awaken with the same problems plus one.

This book is structured as a guidebook, or manual, to help us all on the road toward betterness, not bitterness. There are exercises at the end of each chapter that can help you begin to internalize key traits for coping with a future no one can predict. Enjoy the ride, brain turned up to eleven.

As a sound option to denial or seeking to escape by one of the various means that can cushion people from challenging realities, let’s get to know CIA (FN).

## CHAPTER 1

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# CIA (FN)

**N**ot *that* CIA; they already know everything there is to know about you. Instead, CIA (FN) is a tremendously simple (yet tremendously effective) way to sort out and thrive through the twists and turns on life's road. Developed during my early work helping to establish SBR Consulting, part of the Southwestern Family of Companies and one of the most highly regarded sales improvement consultancies in the world, we have shared it with hundreds of clients in dozens of countries over the past twenty years. Leaders and managers in particular have told us it helps them direct and focus the precious resource called *attention* and minimizes flailing around trying to do everything all at once.

Let's break it down. It will be a recurring theme.

Imagine everything that can happen cascading toward us like a waterfall down a mountainside. Near the bottom of the waterfall is a diverter that channels it into three smaller waterfalls, each of which leads neatly to a bucket. The buckets are labeled C, I, and A(FN).

C stands for the set of things we can personally and fully CONTROL. What things are in this category?

For decades, I would start by putting *attitude* on my list. "I can control my attitude" is a common affirmation. Countless books list attitude as something each person

can control if they really want to. I taught the same to tens of thousands of people, in audiences great and small.

But then, not too many years ago, I was driving to work on the interstate, going exactly the speed limit, staying in the proper lane, when I was abruptly hit from behind. Rear-ended! I looked in the rearview mirror; it was a young guy who had clearly been distracted and bumped into my bumper at highway speed.

Neither of us lost control of our vehicles, but I remember looking in the mirror and thinking, *Seriously?!? You HIT me? Don't you know how to drive? Were you on your phone, or picking your nose, or what??* I was glaring in the mirror, practically shaking my fist at the young guy (who was visibly upset). Then I realized what I was doing.

*Oops, I thought, I teach this stuff!*

So let's just say attitude is something we'd like to be able to fully and personally control, but we are emotional beings; no one has a complete handle on that. So let's start over.

### **What can we actually, personally, fully control?**

Well, how about what time we wake up in the morning? And not only when, but *how* we wake up. Some people

like to wake up through multiple iterations of the snooze alarm. I personally think that's like ripping off a Band-Aid multiple times—let's just do it once and get it over with.

What is your first thought in the morning? If you're at all like me, your first thought is often that you wish you could get a little more sleep.

But what if we were to train ourselves to think differently?

In December 2012, my older brother passed away suddenly, joining my sister in premature death. Ever since, I have trained myself to say upon waking: "I am grateful. I have another day." It starts the day with a very different perspective!

In other words, while we cannot always control our attitudes—because we are all reactors to some extent—we can start learning to control our habitual *thought patterns*. As we'll see in chapter 8 on self-talk, our thoughts go a long way toward determining our attitudes and our behaviors.

We can control what we eat and drink, and how much we eat and drink.

We can control our effort.

We can control what we say to other people.

Can we control what other people say to us? Not so much. Speaking of other people, can we actually control them at all?

Well, it kind of depends on the circumstances, and the time frame. If you are big and the other person is small (figuratively or literally), you can more or less control them if you get a good grip. But you've probably noticed those little people can be slippery . . . they get away and then stick their tongue (or worse) out at you. In the long run, controlling other people is actually much more difficult than this. Even if we could somehow control their minds through restricting access to information, the history of totalitarianism is punctuated by people's refusal to stay controlled.

In other words, the number of things we can absolutely and personally control is very few. Vitally important, clearly, but very few.

### **What about the second bucket— the things we can influence?**

There are many things we cannot actually control but which we can INFLUENCE. This is the *I* in CIA (FN). We can definitely influence other people . . . and we often do, either to the good or the bad. Think of all the times an action or a statement we make to others brightens their faces, sends them running, or inspires them to clench their fists. We clearly influence other people. We influence others when:

- We ignore what someone is saying because we are looking too closely at our handheld devices.
- We arrive at a class or a meeting at the last possible minute and check out mentally as soon as it begins. (That is not invisible to the person teaching or leading.)
- All we ever do is criticize.

On the other pole, when we treat people with respect and courtesy, we also influence them.

When we are interested, we will be regarded as interesting.

When subjective decisions have to be made about us (and many such decisions, from essay grades to job promotions to funding for our start-up, will have to be made), the way we have conducted ourselves and worked to influence others is a significant and compelling consideration—for better or worse.

Stop a moment and think about the people with whom you spend time. What kind of influence on them do you tend to have? Can you begin forming the habit of criticizing less and supporting more? You will be surprised at the difference it makes—in everything.



**What about our own  
emotional, reactive selves?  
Can we learn to influence  
our own attitudes? Yes.**





What about our own emotional, reactive selves? Can we learn to influence our own attitudes? Yes. Here are five ways controlling what you *can* fully control can influence your attitude:

**1. *How you stand, move, and manage  
the expression on your face***

Research by professor Amy Cuddy has shown that what she calls *postural feedback*—the signals our brains receive about our feelings based upon our body posture—is persistent and significant.

Want to feel less confident and capable? (I know that’s why you bought this book.) Just get into the smallest pose you can, hunkered down, hands protecting your head, imagining all kinds of awful things are going to happen, like that dream where IT is coming and you can’t move . . . Professor Cuddy’s research showed that just two minutes in this posture causes our systems to release small but measurable amounts of cortisol—the stress hormone.

In contrast, standing tall for two minutes with arms spread like a not-too-happy grizzly bear, or with hands on hips, shoulders defiantly back like Wonder Woman, led to a measurable release of testosterone, leading to greater feelings of confidence. Some researchers dispute

the hormonal and biochemical findings . . . but the feelings of lesser or greater confidence because of these postural decisions have been studied and replicated repeatedly.<sup>5</sup>

If you are sad and want to feel *more* sad, it's easy! Just walk slowly, with your head down and shoulders slumped, listening to some of Adele's truly sad songs. But if you want to feel better and have more energy, walk 25 percent faster, head up, arms swinging, listening to '70s disco or '60s Motown! It's pretty much impossible to avoid feeling better.

## **2. Your self-talk**

*I never talk to myself*, you may be saying . . . to yourself. *Gotcha!*

ALL OF US talk to ourselves. We can't help it. What we can learn is how to make our self-talk *balanced*. Let's face it—most people don't have an overabundance of conviction that they can tackle whatever life throws at them or that the mistake they just made is nothing more than a learning experience.

Instead, most of us dwell repeatedly on the dumb thing we did or the even dumber thing we said.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/decade-power-posing-where-do-we-stand>.

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**Learning to influence our  
attitude through controlling  
our self-talk is a vital skill.**

.....

When others have choice and hurtful words for us, we often take them to heart like arrows. Which is truly worse: the thing that was said or the ten thousand times we repeated it afterward in our own minds?

On the other side, too often we look at our wins as luck or one-offs that are unlikely to happen again. For most of us, that's observably untrue: we do more things right than wrong. But for some reason, our internal judge and jury seem more likely to give a thumbs-down than a thumbs-up.

Learning to influence our attitude through controlling our self-talk is a vital skill. It's ancient too. As Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor nearly two thousand years ago, said: "How the mind conducts itself. It all depends on that. All the rest is within its power, or beyond its control—corpses and smoke."<sup>6</sup> And as King Solomon said in the book of Proverbs: "As a person thinks in their heart, so are they."<sup>7</sup>

Here's a challenge: keep score, just for a little while. At the end of the day, list the first five things that come to mind that you feel you did poorly, not so great, or even

<sup>6</sup> Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*. 12.33, translated by Gregory Hays, Random House, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Proverbs 23:7.

meant to do but didn't. Then list the first five things that come to mind that you are pleased with, proud you did, or received compliments for. Which list is easier? For most of us, unfortunately, it will be the first list. But if you were honest, which list would be longer? Again, unless you are reading this from a very bad place indeed, most of us do more right than wrong, yet we don't give our wins equal airtime.

Why not start? Why not sign up to be your own most important cheerleader?

### ***3. The people you spend time with***

The adage "we become like the people we associate with" rings true for most of us. Starting very early in our lives, most of us are drawn to people with whom we feel comfortable; they become our friends and companions. As we grow up and develop agency (the ability to make and act upon our own decisions), we may migrate toward other people or groups. These people often have a profound influence on us as we seek acceptance.

If the people we are drawn to tend to be pessimistic in their outlook, it's very likely we will become more pessimistic. If they are more constructive in their thinking, that will influence us as well. This influence

goes both directions, by the way. We'll talk about this more in the chapter called "People Knowledge." For now, it's enough to know that by choosing to spend time with people who have certain kinds of attitudes, we will be influencing our own.

#### ***4. The information you consume and the media through which you consume it***

"Communities" and "things in common" have the same Latin root word, *communitas*, which means "the same." Today you are at least as likely to spend time with online social communities, networks, and news sources as those that are flesh and blood. Because most communities have a vested interest in reinforcing themselves (just as we as individuals do), the information and tone of these communities tend to reflect the beliefs of those who are in them.

At the same time, the individuals in the community are influenced by the attitudes of the community . . . kind of a never-ending "like leads to like."

In a fascinating study, political scientists David Broockman of Berkeley and Joshua Kalla of Yale (yes, both bastions of liberal thinking) paid a group of dedicated Fox News viewers (as proven by digital records of their

viewing habits) to watch only CNN for their news for a month. They concluded that this consistent consumption of a different point of view caused them to moderate many of their previously “hard” attitudes.<sup>8</sup> While I am not aware of any reverse studies, it’s likely the same result would occur.

If you find yourself developing extremely angry attitudes against other points of view, consider controlling your media habits by either consuming more variety or by watching less and thinking more (no offense meant).

### ***5. Activities in which you choose to participate***

Most of us realize that every minute we spend in healthy physical activity not only pays dividends in physical health, but also in how we feel emotionally. Yes, it can be hard to get started; overcoming inertia (i.e., sitting around) takes effort. But just think for a moment about the times you successfully “just did it.” Didn’t you have feelings of pride, accomplishment, increased self-respect, and the sense that you were being mentally disciplined? These feelings alone make

<sup>8</sup> Broockman, David, and Joshua Kalla, “Consuming Cross-Cutting Media Causes Learning and Moderates Attitudes: A Field Experiment with Fox News Viewers,” *OSF Preprints*, April 1, 2022. doi:10.31219/osf.io/jrw26.

it worth the effort, let alone the well-documented feel-good hormones (endorphins) that are released through exercise. Knowing you are helping your overall health, appearance, and longevity is icing on the attitude-improvement cake.

In contrast, too many hours spent playing video games, aimlessly wandering around the Internet, and sleeping while the sun is up usually leave you more tired and feeling as though you wasted a lot of time.

The point? There is a LOT we can directly *control* to help *influence* our attitudes, which often explode in unusual and sometimes unwanted directions.

### **We can control some things and influence some others. What about everything else?**

Everything else in the waterfall of events and happenings goes to the third and largest bucket.

A(FN) means ACCEPT (FOR NOW). This includes such things as the economy and global changes. Big stuff, right? Larger than any of us. But this very large bucket does not have to determine our potential impact on the world, nor on our personal peace, if we view it correctly.

*What are you talking about, Dan?* (I am also a mind reader.)



Just this: How many people do you know who squander their precious and limited emotional energy worrying about things they should just accept—FOR NOW—instead of choosing to laser their emotional energy onto things they can control or influence? Examples:

- How our critics see us. We can rage or deny, or we can realize that anyone who is ever doing anything of note will have people who disagree with them. Instead, we can focus our effort and attitude on doing what we *believe* is right (because we have assessed and debated and agonized over it enough).
- The professor who is difficult to understand. We can blame the professor, or we can acknowledge that it's a thing, then go to office hours, do more homework, get tutoring, and study more.
- The pressure of debt. We can submit to this very real thing, or we can accept it for now, and put more focus on our sources of income and our decisions about outflow.
- The weather! Mark Twain paraphrased his friend and neighbor, the writer Charles Dudley Warner, when he said, "Everyone complains about

.....

**Real problems are real.  
That's the reality-based  
underpinning of the *A* in Accept  
(For Now). Nor is this fatalistic—  
that's the encouragement  
in the *for now* part.**

.....

the weather, but no one ever DOES anything about it!”<sup>9</sup>

I don't mean to be cavalier, nor to advise that we plant our heads in the sand. Real problems are real. That's the reality-based underpinning of the *A* in Accept (For Now). Nor is this fatalistic—that's the encouragement in the *for now* part. Very few things in the *accept* box have to stay there forever ...but what changes them is when people intentionally *control* what they can, and *influence* what they can, and eventually gain the ability and the leverage to change what used to be considered unchangeable.

We have limited resources. Let's focus them on what we can *control* and what we can *influence*. Doing this well, and for a long period of time, will ultimately give us the ability to change much of what we may currently need to *accept (for now)*.

Claudette Colvin is not as well-known as Rosa Parks. She was the first African American in Montgomery, Alabama, to refuse to give up her bus seat for a white person, about nine months before Rosa did the same thing. She was fifteen years old. Claudette had been learning about

<sup>9</sup> <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2010/04/23/everybody-talks-about-the-weather/>.

racial violence, and about Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and other antislavery figures from history. She had done a lot of thinking about herself and how she would react in a crisis situation involving race.<sup>10</sup>

Claudette exerted her ability to *control* her voice and her body when she refused to leave her seat. This act of courage helped *influence* others to do the same. Together, they joined in a lawsuit that resulted in the court order that buses be desegregated. Something that had to be *accepted* (for a long time) no longer had to be accepted.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/26/us/claurette-colvin-arrest-record.html>.



## CHAPTER 2

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# SELF-AWARENESS

Socrates said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.”<sup>11</sup> Shakespeare said, “To thine own self be true.”<sup>12</sup> Dan says ... “Do we even know who we are?”

Unless we make a conscious choice to gain self-awareness—to *think* analytically about ourselves—chances are the answer is no.

I was one of those kids who enjoyed a mostly fun, peaceful, and loving upbringing without really giving much thought to who I was and what I believed. A lot of things came really easily academically, socially, musically, and even (believe it or not) athletically.

When I enrolled at Harvard, I almost immediately got caught by my own lack of depth. I had never had to think about who I was. Very smart people asked me what I believed about various issues, and my answers were shallow and improvised. Appearing to know didn’t hold up to the reality of not knowing.

Selling books door-to-door with Southwestern Advantage during the summer after my first year both reaffirmed my strengths and showed me vividly that there was still much, much work to be done. I chose to

<sup>11</sup> Plato, *Apology*, 38a.

<sup>12</sup> *Hamlet*, Act I Scene III.

work long hours per week calling on people who were not expecting me. The lessons came hard and fast, but they were tough to distill. It was like taking a drink from a fire hose. At the end of the summer, I attended a meeting run by Jim Calder, my mentor and district sales manager.

“What did you learn about yourself this summer?” he asked.

“A LOT,” I said. “I mean, a LOT-LOT.”

I had learned that:

- I was capable of motivating myself to work really, really hard for long periods of time. Before that, natural talent and a good memory made it pretty easy to coast ... leaving me wondering if I could actually buckle down and *work*. It turned out I could.
- I had a tendency to feel satisfied with good results when they could have been *great* results.
- I could thrive well outside my comfort zone if I stayed on a consistent schedule and used good self-talk.
- I still had a lot to learn.

After that first summer, another mentor and fellow book man, Sam Wee, urged me to read *Man's Search for*



*Meaning* by Viktor Frankl. Dr. Frankl was a renowned psychologist in Vienna, Austria, during the 1930s. He was highly respected, well-off, and one of the era's intellectual elites. He was also Jewish.

When the Nazis swept through Austria, Frankl was arrested, along with his father, his wife, and almost everyone he knew—all of whom were sent to concentration camps. Frankl was ultimately sent to Auschwitz. While I had read high school history synopses of the horrors of Hitler's "Final Solution," Dr. Frankl's book was the first eyewitness account I had encountered.

The odds against survival in Auschwitz were incredibly stark. Fewer than 10 percent of those who entered made it through the torture, the deprivation, and the feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Frankl learned of his father's death and also that his wife had died at Bergen-Belsen.

Yet he was a trained psychologist and a keen observer of people. Perhaps in an attempt to detach himself somewhat from his own misery, Frankl began to notice things both surprising and seemingly inexplicable regarding his fellow prisoners who died and those who survived. Sometimes a person with relatively good health and physical strength would reach a moment when their desire to

live ran out completely; once that happened, they would soon be dead.

But with others, apparently not as strong nor as capable, there was obviously a determination to cling to life, and despite the death-inducing conditions, many did. As Frankl got to know them, and questioned them about their lives, he found a common trait: *those who survived had a reason to live so powerful they simply refused to die*. This led to his own heightened self-awareness: if he wanted to live, he needed a strong reason to do so.

Frankl became convinced he had to live so he could write a book about what went on in the camps. He reasoned that if he didn't survive, there was no guarantee that *anyone* would survive, and without that the world would never know what had happened. His determination was prescient; even with the war clearly lost, the Nazi high command attempted to destroy and eliminate all evidence of the death camps.<sup>13</sup>

Frankl ultimately survived, and after a period of rehabilitation he wrote *Man's Search for Meaning*. Of the many

<sup>13</sup> Today, in twenty-first-century America, thousands of people deny the Holocaust ever occurred. I encourage them to go to the museum in Berlin—named by the Germans with compassionate accuracy—the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. One by one, the names and photographs of the six million murdered are projected on the walls.

powerful conclusions in his book, one has stayed with me since that first reading more than forty years ago: “When we are no longer able to change a situation . . . we are challenged to change ourselves.”

We must understand ourselves to understand our reactions, and we must make internal changes when a situation itself cannot be changed. That’s why self-knowledge is so important.

What about YOU?

When you think about yourself, what gives you feelings of contentment? What stressors in the environment bring out the best in you (because without some level of pressure, we actually don’t thrive—we degrade)? What stressors make you want to hide or seek means of escape?

How do you handle success, particularly when something truly great happens? Studies of lottery winners show that while many are indeed set for life after the win, many others are surprisingly and rapidly in *worse* shape financially than they were before they won the fortune.<sup>14</sup> The inability to handle good fortune is rooted in a failure to understand ourselves.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/12/29/what-to-do-if-you-win-the-lottery-in-2018.html>.

**How do you handle failure?** While I wouldn't wish failure on anyone, I cannot think of a single person I know who is truly successful who got there without failing—sometimes spectacularly—numerous times. Setbacks are the constant accompaniment of any journey onward and upward.

**How do you recharge your batteries?** Do you seek the company of other people, bright lights and big cities, or do you want solitude and time to reflect more than anything? It's a key differentiator between extroverts and introverts, even when they appear to the world (and even to themselves) as the opposite of what they really are. I credit Susan Cain's book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* with helping me understand that this sometimes-called "great public speaker" is actually an introvert and that it is totally cool.

How do we get better at self-awareness, and what do we do with that info? Here are six ideas.

1. Become an intentional observer of yourself—be both researcher and lab rat. When something happens and you react in a certain way, go ahead and react, then observe yourself reacting. What are the common triggers for

your own common reactions? What gives you joy? What leads to intense discomfort? When are you rationalizing (you usually know, don't you, even when everyone else is completely fooled?)? What kinds of events or people make you feel comfortable or uncomfortable?

2. Think about why that may be the case (but don't think for too long—"Why ask why?" is actually pretty good advice). It could be lack of perspective, or it could be that your true confidence lies in places other than where you thought it did. And it may be that there is a lack of true confidence! That's not a bad finding, it's a good one, because then you can work on it.

3. Ask an objective observer to help. No one is objective about themselves, as much as we might want to be. This is why people who care enough about us to tell us the truth are so vital. Yet if possible, don't include those who love you (such as your parents, partners, and dear friends); it's going to be almost as hard for them to be objective about you as it is for you to be objective about yourself.

If you go this route, an important prelim is to explain why you are asking for assistance; for example: "This will probably strike you as pretty weird, but I'd like to

ask your help as I work to become a better human. I'm aware that I often become (defensive, combative, withdrawn, rationalizing, blaming—whatever your truth might be) when I fall short of one of my goals. I'm not proud of that, and I want to get better. Would you mind sharing what you've seen in me and help me figure out how to do that less?"

4. Study and own your *successes*. They are usually not accidents. Give yourself legitimate credit for your wins! You learned you could overcome adversity and self-doubt and other-doubt, and you prevailed. Begin to build an arsenal of success stories about yourself, and unashamedly retell them to yourself. Even better, go ancient civilization for a minute and *sing* those stories!

5. Learn from your *mistakes and setbacks*. Years ago, several of us sales leaders had the unique experience of an insider's tour of one of America's largest Air Force bases. As we visited the area where antimissile defense systems for fighter jets are developed, one of our team remarked on how young the technicians and military personnel appeared to be. The officer leading the tour said most were in their mid-twenties. A colleague jokingly asked, "Does



**Study and own your *successes*.**

**They are usually not accidents.**

**Give yourself legitimate  
credit for your wins!**



anyone ever screw up?” The officer replied in a serious tone, “Yes, and when that happens, it’s serious.”

We were silenced by that. The officer continued, “Take a look at that sign: ‘Something isn’t a mistake unless you do the same wrong thing twice. Everything else is a learning experience.’”

Only those who attempt nothing never fall short ... and attempting nothing is perhaps the biggest mistake of all. Screw up, fall down, get slapped down—then next time, create a NEW learning experience for yourself. It’s boring to make the same mistake more than once.

6. Speaking of boring ... spend significant amounts of time enjoying the moments of boredom! While this may seem illogical, think for a moment about when you receive flashes of insight or creativity ... don’t they sometimes come while you are just walking aimlessly, emptying the dishwasher, or folding clothes? My friend and Southwestern Advantage alum Kirsten Park turned me on to Manoush Zomorodi’s book *Bored and Brilliant*. It helped me see the power of creative stimulation and self-awareness that can come from NOT being device- or activity-stimulated.



As a nineteen-year-old selling books door-to-door in the Phoenix, Arizona, area in 1975, tooling around in my sexy baby-blue Ford Pinto station wagon (which had only AM radio), I had about an hour's drive each evening after work. The calmness of the desert at 10 p.m. is an amazing thing . . . and each evening there gave me a chance to just sort out what happened that day and to truly think about the things that were important to me. Some might say that kind of drive is boring, but for me it was tonic to the soul: self-awareness.

More on the findings of these long drives later. For now, let's talk about other people.