

PART I

Living with energy

“*The first principle of success is desire – knowing what you want. Desire is the planting of your seed.*”

ROBERT COLLIER (1885–1950), AUTHOR OF BESTSELLING
‘THE SECRET OF THE AGES’

“*All the things I really like to do are either illegal, immoral, or fattening.*”

ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT (1887–1943), AUTHOR, CRITIC AND
COMMENTATOR FOR THE NEW YORKER MAGAZINE

CHAPTER 1

What do you want?

You probably bought this book because you recognised from the title that you're someone who has a catalogue of what seem to be watertight excuses about why you fail to take care of yourself properly. Let's face it, we tend to be overcommitted to work (inside or outside the home), and under-committed to our own health, our families and friends, and the pursuit of happiness. It's easy to lose sight of what we really want out of life because there are *so* many demands on our time, we rarely pause to think about it. We get up each day, jump onto the treadmill we call life (currently cruising at about 90 miles per hour), and just try to hang on all day without flying off the back. We forget that there are only 24 hours in each day, and we *cannot do it all!* We have to make choices about how to spend our precious time and energy. Reading this, you might protest that you don't *really* have a choice about how you spend your time (children or relatives to care for, mortgage to be paid, deadlines at work, laundry piling up, weeds growing), but you *are* making these choices every day of your life, whether you like it or not.

The proactive life

There is a world of difference between living life in a way that you consciously choose, and simply reacting to the tasks, chores and events that come your way. That's why this first chapter is entitled: 'What do you want?' Because unless you know what you really want out of life, you won't be able to live with maximum energy. And you might spend the rest of your days with the mantra 'There's never enough time!', feeling

“It is remarkable how many smart, highly motivated, and apparently responsible people rarely pause to contemplate their own behavior.”

STRATFORD SHERMAN AND ALYSSA FREAS, FROM THE WILD WEST OF EXECUTIVE COACHING, *HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW*

like a Cinderella, never able to finish all those chores before you get to the fun stuff.

Let me clarify that when I talk about living the life you really want, I *do* mean taking the consequences into account. So before you point out that if you were doing what you really wanted, you'd be in the Caribbean drinking tequila and sunning yourself, let me share a story with you.

For years, my father-in-law from my first marriage made fun of my running and healthy eating. He himself had high blood pressure, a high cholesterol level and did not exercise regularly. He liked a high-fat diet, and socialising in restaurants and pubs was an important part of his life. That's what he *wanted to do*. Then he had a series of strokes and sadly



ended his days aged 79 in a nursing home. Just a few months before he died, he took my hand, looked at me very intently, and though he could barely speak, said – ‘keep running’. I understood completely what he was saying. I felt for him so totally in that moment, and I wonder if he wished he’d lived his life differently – proactively pursuing better health.

Now, how you live your life is a personal choice, and many people insist that they would rather burn out and die young than to live a ‘boring’ healthy longer life. That’s fine, of course, if you drop dead of a heart attack and go quickly. But my father-in-law is a typical case of someone who had to spend the last five years of his life in nursing homes, unable to walk, and eventually, to speak, feed or dress himself. He died very young in my view, leaving a beautiful widow who missed him terribly.

This may seem a bit of a heavy story for an opening chapter, but my aim in this book is to help you shift your mindset about how you create energy and vitality – permanently. That won’t happen by glossing over reality. Throughout the book I will provoke and challenge you constantly to examine your life, your habits and the stories you tell that limit your potential.

“Most people are so busy knocking themselves out trying to do everything they think they should do, they never get around to what they want to do.”

ANONYMOUS

Create it!

I’m urging you now to think deeply about, articulate and visualise what you want out of life, because that is the first critical step toward getting rid of your excuses and enjoying more energy. You don’t have to have perfect answers right now, just open your mind and answer the questions below, or download a clean copy from www.stop-making-excuses.com. I promise you it’s worth the effort to create some strong images that will create a ‘pull’ toward the choices that will energise you and make you happy.

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**Why did you buy this book?**

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**What would you like to have the energy for that you currently don't?**

Examples: to run for a bus with ease, do some evening reading without falling asleep after the first page, take up an instrument, learn another language, play more games with your family, think creatively, or have more patience

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**List three things currently in your life that bring you sustained happiness:**


If you don't think you have three, don't worry. You will by the end of this book!

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**What other things would you like to have in your life that will make you happy?**

Go on, be daring!

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**What sorts of feelings would you like to experience on a regular basis?**


Examples: family love, romantic love, being respected, career fulfilment, sense of achievement, excited anticipation, contentment

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**How fit and healthy would you like to be when you're 70? What will you look like? What activities will you do?**

If you're already over 70, how about when you're 90?

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That's it! You've just started creating your new energised life. This book will enable you to make everything you've written a reality – but **you** have to do it, because no one else will do it for you. Read on for the tools and knowledge you need . . . starting with the next fundamental question in

*“Whatever you want to do, do it now.
There are only so many tomorrows.”*

Chapter 2: What do you value?

UNKNOWN