

USE THIS NOW

An Action Book

**THE POWER OF VULNERABILITY:
RECLAIMING YOUR TRUE IDENTITY**

By Mark Peysha and Cloé Madanes

Based On the Strategic Interventions
Of Anthony Robbins

FOREWORD

Welcome to the Action Book for **THE POWER OF VULNERABILITY: RECLAIMING YOUR TRUE IDENTITY**. This Action Book will introduce and take you through The Seven Steps to Reclaim Your True Identity. It includes a series of eye-opening exercises that will teach you how to apply these principles in your own life, so that you can radically improve the quality of your life and the lives of those you have the privilege to touch.

If you have already watched the film and now have some time to go through this Action Book, get ready for some important insights. If you fully participate and take the time to answer the questions, the entire experience should take a little over an hour. Remember that the time you spend here is a great investment in your self-understanding and your ability to make life decisions. Even if you are short on time, please take a moment to review the Summary and Power Questions for The Seven Steps to Reclaim Your True Identity in the back of the booklet, as they can serve as a great starting point.

Do you ever find yourself really wanting to try or do things that just wouldn't be "you"? Have you ever longed to achieve something that might be within your reach, but you constantly come up against a barrier whenever you try to stretch for it? If you are having trouble mobilizing yourself to do things that you know you might be capable of doing, it is likely that there was time in your life when you made a key decision that has shaped how you experience and look at life, and that decision could be affecting the results you are getting today. However, you can make a new decision and open new doors, which will expand your ability, your choices, and your freedom. This Action Book contains a set of tools that will help you to re-evaluate your past decisions, repair any negative consequences, and empower yourself to make new choices today that will re-ignite your potential. In addition, if you know anyone else whose life seems constrained because of a decision that they have made, you will also find here communication strategies that will help you to help others get what they, too, deserve in life.

The premise for this "INNER STRENGTH SERIES" of films and Action Books is that a single decision can radically change your life, your career, and your relationships. Are there decisions in your life that need to be made—decisions that may have been postponed for a long time? How would you communicate them to yourself and to others? What would change in your life today? How would they change the lives of those who are dear to you? It's time to get started; let's tap into the full resources of your life right now!

Warmly,

Mark Peysha and Cloé Madanes

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INTRODUCTION: SOME QUESTIONS

What do you mean by the phrase, “Reclaim Your True Identity”?

Take a moment to consider this question: Who are you really? If you’re like most people, the question may be difficult to answer. Are you a son/daughter or are you a father/mother? Are you a doctor, lawyer, or homemaker? Are you a brother/sister or an uncle/aunt? Which label would you choose, first and foremost? Most of us wear so many hats in the course of a week that it would be hard to boil our “identity” down to one or two words. Life is so complex these days—we’re too many things to too many people.

The fact is, most of what we call our identity comes, directly or indirectly, from choices we have made: what we choose to focus on, what skills we develop, how we relate to others, and, how we want others to see us—and how they really do. However, we tend to forget that the source of our “identity” is actually a result of these choices, past and present. We become what we think is expected of us and assume an identity that becomes such a part of who we believe we are, it can be very difficult to make real change. One day we became a father or a mother, and, in our efforts to do a good job, we started to conform to our idea of what a father or mother *should* be. We just made two crucial decisions: we decided to have a child, and then we decided how to “act like a parent.” In the rush to “be” parents, however, we tend to overlook that these choices are, in fact, choices. Don’t fool yourself into thinking of your identity as some independent, monolithic thing! The fabric of identity is your decisions.

Because of the specific conditions and pressures you have experienced, you made a key decision that has led you to where you are today. So, what can you do about it now? Should you question your decision or blame the challenges you are experiencing on someone else? Is it possible to change a key decision that’s shaped us, and become more and more deeply entrenched in our habits, even if it’s been a part of us for twenty years or longer? Of course it is; we’ve all seen it happen. People quit smoking after twenty years, become athletes after a sedentary life, marry for love instead of security, learn to trust and communicate after a life of isolation. It is after people rediscover and bring to life the reason *why* they made a key decision in the past—what needs they were meeting and what the benefits and consequences of that decision were—that they are then able to choose more resourcefully for the future. The Seven Steps to Reclaim Your True Identity codifies this process and makes decision making more efficient for you.

“True Identity” does not mean any one of the facets of our identity (mother, wife, executive, athlete), but it encompasses our ability to revisit and change the decisions that define us. All of our lives we have been making decisions that verge on the superhuman: we decided it was time to learn to walk; we decided to learn to read; we decided to become independent from our parents. In each of these decisions, we let go of who we thought we were and rose to another level of being. That’s what we mean by true identity—your ability, at the deepest level, to make the decisions that will allow you to

achieve a new standard and to let go of the things that hold you back. You were never “just” a baby or “just” a kid, and, right now, you’re not “just” whoever you think you are. The Seven Steps to Reclaim Your True Identity will help you rediscover your true identity: your true capacity for making what we call “key decisions.” If you are looking for a change in your life, you’re looking to make a better decision. Get ready to re-evaluate your key decisions and take new, unprecedented actions for a rejuvenated future and a more fulfilling life.

What is a key decision?

We make decisions every moment of every day, but not all decisions are equal. Some run deep and penetrate every aspect of our lives. Other decisions are superficial; we make them, and change them, quickly and without any major disruption in our lives. We call some extraordinarily powerful decisions key decisions because they command and direct other decisions you make in your life. Key decisions are the “keys” to certain “doors” of experience. There are many things in life that you simply can’t experience unless you’ve made the key decision that will open that door for you.

Generally, there are four qualities that make a decision powerful.

1. The earlier the decision, the more powerful it will be.

We make decisions every day, but the choices we make today build and depend on the choices we made yesterday or years ago. For instance, if I decide to drive somewhere today, that decision references a past key decision: to learn how to drive. Therefore, the key decision to learn to drive was powerful in that it affected an entire area of my life. Now, I am able to drive wherever I choose, and that leads to other opportunities. Other key decisions may be influencing even broader parts of your life, for instance, the decision whether or not to live your life as one of goodness, whether or not to trust people (and whom to trust), whether or not to work hard and what to focus work on. We all have profound decisions in our past, and these decisions color every aspect of our lives today. The further back we made these decisions, the more profound and influential they are in our lives. Does this mean that it’s too late to make new powerful decisions now? Of course not. However, we need to go back to the moment we made that decision, to remember why we made it then, and then consciously make a new decision that serves us today.

2. The more urgent the circumstances, the more influential the decision.

Key decisions are usually made in times of emotional intensity and urgency—these circumstances push us out of the comfort zone created by previous decisions and throw us into new territory. Sometimes urgency is created by becoming aware of the potential consequences of continuing to live life as

you've been living it. Other times we make key decisions based purely on our emotions, without clarifying the consequences at all. Either way, key decisions are rarely made in times of leisure. Look back to the crisis moments in your life, and usually there you will also find that you made a key decision.

3. Key decisions set a precedent.

Since key decisions take place during new, unfamiliar, and pressing situations, they set a precedent for how you will respond to similar situations down the road. Important decisions are usually made when you are truly confused about what to do. You come to a split in the road and don't know how to proceed—the future is hard to predict—you have to choose which way to go without knowing where the roads all lead and what lies along them. And it is precisely in these times that you have to rise above your own confusion and uncertainty and recognize the necessity of taking action. When you do, you create a new precedent for the future. When you learn to make these decisions more consciously, you give yourself a tool—a strong base on which to build the rest of your life.

4. Repetition and Reward.

A decision gains strength when it is reinforced, which leads you to make it again. The first time we make any decision, we feel uncertainty about how it will affect us. As we sense greater success with our decision, that uncertainty fades away. Sometimes we are rewarded every time we make that decision and, consequently, we make it again and again. Other times, we never feel the reward. According to Human Needs Psychology, there are six different types of needs—and meeting them gives us that sense of reward. We all find a way to meet some of these needs with everything that we do. However, sometimes we find ways to meet them in ways that serve and sustain us, while other times in our attempt to meet them in ways that lead us to problematic situations. It's up to us to rise above that conditioning and make new decisions that will help expand and enhance our life experience.

What are the Six Human Needs?

Human Needs Psychology is based on the premise that human motivation can be explained by a desire to meet one or more of the following six universal human needs:

1. Certainty

Everybody needs some basic sense of stability about their basic necessities—food, shelter, and other material resources. When people cannot control their physical circumstances they may seek certainty through a state of mind (such as religious faith or a positive outlook).

2. Uncertainty/Variety

People also have a need to change their state, to experience a range of physical and emotional actions and sensations. Therefore they seek variety through a number of means — stimuli, change of scene, physical activity, mood swings, entertainment, food, etc.

3. Significance

Everybody needs to feel special and important in some way. People will seek significance through obtaining recognition from others or from themselves. When people feel insignificant, they may make themselves feel significant by getting angry or depressed. They may also meet their needs paradoxically, by having others recognize the significance of their insignificance.

4. Connection/Love

Humans need to feel connected with someone or something — a person, an ideal, a value, a habit, and/or a sense of identity. Connection may take the form of love, or merely of intense engagement—for instance, one can feel connected by means of an aggressive interaction.

5. Growth

Everything in the universe is either growing or dying — there is no third alternative. People are not spiritually satisfied unless their capacities are expanding.

6. Contribution

Just as people cannot survive without others contributing in some way to their welfare (no baby grew up on his or her own), they cannot be spiritually fulfilled unless they are contributing to others as well.

The first four of these needs are primary biological drives that must be met in some form, whether through a positive or negative behavior. For instance, one can meet one's need for significance (feeling worthy and special) by building something (positive) or by tearing something or someone down (negative). The human nervous system will interpret both of these behaviors as sources of significance, even though one is sustainable and good for the individual, and the other is destructive and harmful. An individual experiences a higher quality of life by finding more positive ways of meeting these first four needs, the needs of the personality, and then moving toward a focus on the last two needs, the needs of the soul, Growth and Contribution. We will return to the six human needs when we discuss how they affect our decisions.

SEVEN STEPS TO RECLAIM YOUR TRUE IDENTITY

Step One: Challenge the Limiting Identity

How Should I Challenge Myself?

First of all, challenging yourself doesn't mean that you should beat yourself up, feel guilty, or think of yourself as "wrong." What you want is to separate what you don't want from the true essence of who you are. Were you surprised at Robbins' directness when he pointed out that Lise had lived her life as a man? Notice that in doing so he challenged Lise's limiting *identity*: her decisions, not her worth as a person. By saying that she had been living as a man, he was showing her that there were other alternatives, other decisions that could be made. Once he had opened that door, he proceeded to walk her through some alternatives, encouraging her when her true self was illuminated.

TR Now, when you do that, is she using masculine energy or feminine energy? See, a lot of people see this as weakness. So, when you went into those places, you did go into some fear. You also put out all kinds of emotions, and he doesn't know how to deal with that. He knows how to deal with another man. So, when you get to be a man, then it's two men arguing, and of course, that's not going to be a really great thing because it's not going to solve anything. What you do is you break his pattern when you go into the feminine. He doesn't know how to deal with you being vulnerable. He doesn't know how to do that. Vulnerability is power. It's not a weakness. If you can be vulnerable and feel, that means you're connected to what's really true instead of, like, trying to protect yourself. And then, you know what? You can break a pattern when you're being real.

L I hate it!

TR Yeah, I know because look at you. You're a man. You've been working to be a man most of your life. I'm not being insulting. Let's just tell the truth. You're a man. Look at yourself—the way you hold yourself, the way you stand. Tell me I'm wrong. I'm not making criticism, honey. I don't have any criticism.

L I know.

TR I want you to have what you deserve. Now, maybe you're masculine inside. I don't think so. You just described to me what you do under enough stress. That's not what a masculine energy does under enough stress. He gets more intense.

Power vs. Balance.

When people look to solve a problem, they usually have two options: power or balance. To choose power is to find a way to be more effective at implementing a current decision—the decision is the right one; it’s just the delivery that needs work. However, sometimes the problem is not a lack of drive and desire. Sometimes, in order to solve a problem, life requires us to create a new dimension of who we think we are. To choose balance is to realize that it’s time to make a new decision, time to try something that pushes you out of the identity that is comfortable, but may not be getting you the results you deserve.

One way to create something new is to go back in time to a past key decision and choose the path you didn’t choose before. Lise is such an example. She remembered moments where her self-control and personal strength failed her and left her feeling vulnerable and afraid. When she stood up to speak with Robbins, she was scared so she went to the identity that made her feel comfortable—she sought power and a way to control her emotions. Robbins saw immediately that, in fact, Lise had overused her capacity for self-control throughout her life, and that cycle of constantly seeking a way to feel power and control was exactly what was limiting her. What she saw as her problem—an overflow of emotion—was in fact her solution in disguise. She didn’t recognize it because she had spent her life thinking of that kind of emotion as “wrong.”

To raise her life, including the quality of her relationships, to a new level, what Lise needed was not more power—she had plenty of that. What she needed now was to seek balance by focusing attention on the parts of her life that she had neglected, the parts she had spent her life trying to overcome—her feelings of vulnerability, the times that she felt open and emotionally exposed. She needed to revisit the key decision she had made in the past that had led her to act masculine, and she now needed to really understand the reasons she had made that decision years ago. Then, she needed to make a new decision today in order to bring greater balance to her life and to feel the more complete fulfillment of living life as her true self.

USE IT NOW: Exercises

Take a moment now to consider the different areas of your life: your career, your family life, your finances, your personal growth, and your relationships. Which area do you spend the most time focusing on? Which area gives you the most satisfaction? Is there some area in your life where you feel unfulfilled? Or is one area particularly frustrating? Is there some area that *could* bring you more of a sense of fulfillment, but you can’t seem to figure out how to make it work for you?

Which areas of your life get the most attention? Put them in order: “1” designates a top priority, “9” designates a last priority.

_____ Career	_____ Finances	_____ Family life
_____ Friendships	_____ Intimate relationships	_____ Physical fitness
_____ Hobbies	_____ Spirituality	_____ Education

Pick your first priority area, your #1. How could you challenge yourself to raise the level you play at, even in this priority area of your life? What would make your new, higher standard worth doing? Why is it important?

Now pick your lowest priority area, your #9. How could you challenge yourself to focus more on and improve this area of your life? What would make it worth doing? Why is it important to do so?

Take a moment to feel the difference between the two areas of your life. What does the difference feel like? How did you feel when you wrote about #1? How about #9?

What you’re feeling here is the range of your motivation—the difference between what you seek and what you avoid. That difference is the result of one or two key decisions.

What do you need now: power or balance? Do you need to focus on #1 or is it #9 that would bring the most enrichment and potential to your life? Maybe it’s one of the areas in-between? Do you need to deliver more on your current decisions, or do you need to step outside of the box? Maybe you’re looking to break through to the next level of your business life, but you’re already a businessperson 95% of the time. Maybe you’re always looking to improve things for your kids or your spouse, but it’s really your career that needs attention? People tend to focus on their strengths—that’s how they achieve in those areas in the first place. But sometimes in order to grow we need to back off from our strengths and develop our weaker areas. If you had to name a weakness, what would it be at this moment?

Does anyone you know ever refer to this weakness? Who? Do they fear or resent it? Do they joke about it? What do they say?

Step Two: Discover and Understand the Key Decision

What has been painful for you?

As we said, key decisions are usually made during moments of crisis. Everybody has had difficult moments in their past and they can often be recalled at a moment's notice. If you reflect on a specific difficult moment in your life, whether in your childhood or as an adult, you will discover things now that you hadn't recognized at the time. Lise had formed a personal identity based on a key decision made in her relationships with her father and her sister. When, as a girl, Lisa saw that her father was imposing a code of conduct that he didn't follow himself, she defied him. When he tried to force her to comply with his rules, she rebelled and sabotaged his efforts. When he finally confronted her, she made the key decision to hold her ground against him. He beat her. In response, she made herself harder and tougher, taking her punishment like a man.

TR Tell me about your father.

L My father was huge—very tall and very fat.

TR Tall and very fat—what was he like, though? Do you know?

L Yeah, he was—he had rules and regulations.

TR Did he live by those rules, or did he impose them?

L He lived by many rules, but some of them, like stealing and lying, he wasn't too strict about. But when it was me, it was very strict.

TR I can see that. How did you respond to these rules?

L I sabotaged them sometimes, and then I got beaten.

TR Yes.

L *If I got caught—I got better and better at not being caught, but... I got caught*

TR *I can see that.*

What other options did you have?

We have all been through difficult circumstances, some of which were almost impossible to bear. However, we rarely recognize that, in those moments, we have made a key decision. We decide to act, or react, a certain way. These are the decisions that have the most powerful influence over our lives and perhaps it is because they are so powerful that we rarely recognize them as decisions. It wasn't until Tony asked Lise what her options really had been in circumstances with her father, that she fully recognized what the decision was that she had made as a child.

TR *When you got caught, and you got beaten, what did you do to deal with it?*

L *I didn't laugh, of course, but I couldn't care less.*

TR *That's right. You got harder, didn't you? And tougher?*

L *(nods her head)*

TR *So, you became a man to try to survive. What would have happened if you would have cried and gone crazy? What would he have done? You don't know?*

L *I have a guess because my sister cried, and he stopped.*

TR *That's right.*

L *I thought it was humiliating.*

TR *I know, honey. I know.*

L *But I didn't want him to win.*

TR *I know, honey.*

L *It wasn't very nice.*

TR *It was horrible. It was abusive. It was wrong. If he was here, I would let him know in ways he would not forget.*

L *But he was a nice man, Tony. He was a nice man.*

TR *He was not a nice man to you.*

L *I loved him.*

TR *I know. You still do.*

L *Hmmm.*

The powerful and difficult decision Lise made as a girl had shaped her entire adult life. But it wasn't until she considered the other options she had had at the time that her decision appeared as a voluntary action. Key decisions are often made amidst such challenging circumstances that most people come to assume that the way they chose to act was the only way they could have gone. As soon as Lise realized that her sister, facing the same circumstance, had made a different choice, it demonstrated that Lise herself had also had other options. Robbins then examined how her key decision had met her needs at the time.

How did the key decision serve you?

If you're like most people, when you think of the difficult times in your life, you'll think of them as things that happened to you. It is rare for an individual to look back on their life and see decisions. It is even more unusual to look back on that decision and then recognize how that decision actually served us at the time. When you look back at your life, here's a useful rule of thumb: anytime you repeat a behavior, it is because you are gaining something from it. Any decision you have returned to has brought you rewards. Either something worked for you in the immediate situation, or sometime further in the past you made a key decision that was reinforced as a pattern. This may be difficult for some of us to realize, but it is a critical step in developing your true capacity and in helping you make more resourceful decisions in the future. Speaking with Lise, Robbins quickly put his finger on why Lise returned to her decision to defy her father.

TR *You became like him, but just not as unjust. Because you loved him, and you figured he wouldn't respect you if you bent. So, if you couldn't have love, at least you have connection. And even if it was violence, at least it was connection because it's much better to have violence and be significant enough to interact than to be ignored. Isn't it?*

L *And I considered it kind of courageous, and he was very much into that. He was talking about courage all the time.*

TR *Yeah, so you tried to become his son in order to get his love.*

L *Aha. Yes.*

TR *Did it work?*

L *Not when I was a child. When I was an adult and achieved, then he was*

very proud of me.

TR *How many saw her face change just now? Raise your hand if you saw it.*

Lise's key decision about her relationship with her father and her sister led to other similar decisions. Once she had stood up to her father once, it became more natural for her to react in a similar way in the future. Lise's sister, when threatened, cried and acted out, and their father didn't beat her again. When Lise was beaten, she felt that she had succeeded in avoiding humiliation. Therefore she judged her sister's reaction to be weak and decided to never be like her. The force of Lise's key decision locked her into certain types of decisions about violence, strength and vulnerability, how to respond to adversity, and certain ways of reacting to the behavior of loved ones.

USE IT NOW: Exercises

Reflect now on a difficult moment in your own life. How did you react? Who else was there and how did they react? What kind of decision did you make? Did you decide to be strong and face the challenge, or did you take a position of vulnerability? What were you feeling? Did you decide to trust others, or did you decide to rely on yourself? Or, did you put your faith in a set of beliefs or values? Did you focus on your feelings on other people's behavior, on external circumstances, or did you just want to get away? You may not have thought this out loud at the time, but at the moment you responded to that difficulty, a powerful decision was made. What was it, if you were to state it simply? What did you decide?

That's your key decision. It's not the only one, of course, but you should use that one throughout the rest of this process. When you made your decision, what response did you receive? How did your decision meet your needs at the time? Rate the extent that your needs were met (1-10) and write how your decision met your needs.

Certainty _____
Variety _____
Significance _____
Connection _____
Growth _____
Contribution _____

Who else was there? How did they react? What were the consequences for them?

Looking back, what other options did you have? What do you think making a different decision would have meant for you? What needs would have been met or not met?

Step Three: Connect To the Key Decision's Consequences

Who else was affected by your key decision?

Every decision carries consequences beyond the immediate situation, just as a stone thrown in a pond affects the entire pond. Not only do the key decisions you make affect other decisions you will make in the future, but they also affect the people in your sphere of influence. Having learned about Lise's key decision to never be vulnerable, and therefore to not act in a feminine way, Robbins asked about her other relationships, in order to learn how they might have been affected by Lisa's choices. He examined each relationship in terms of the principle of polarity.

Every human relationship involves two dynamics — one is imitation, where people identify with each other and put their resources together. The other is polarity, where people test and challenge each other. Both are important for the health and vitality of a relationship. If there is too much polarity, there will be fighting and selfish disagreement. If there too much imitation, people will conform so much to each other that they will lose their individuality and thus fail to challenge each other to grow and learn. This dance between polarity and imitation is especially important in opposite-sex relationships, and is a critical component of romance. Faced with her father's threats and her sister's emotionalism, Lise decided to harden herself towards her father and to reject her sister's vulnerability. This decision led her to be the "strong one" in her relationships. By always being strong and never being vulnerable, she made it difficult for the other person to take a position of responsibility and strength. Robbins immediately questioned Lise about her romantic relationships.

TR Do you pick strong men or weak men?

L My first husband was weak, and he got weaker. He became—

- TR *Well, he'd be attracted to you because you're so strong. There'd be polarity. By the way, can you have polarity that way, yes or no? Absolutely. So, why did that end?*
- L *Well, the therapist said I had worked for fifteen years to create a butler, and when I finally succeeded, I found out I didn't want a butler.*
- TR *That's actually one of the best things I've ever heard a therapist say! You got yourself someone you could control and direct and would meet all your needs, which is what you thought you wanted because at least then you wouldn't have fear. But all that did was make you more masculine, and then you were bored. So, then what was your second husband like? Did you get a masculine man this time?*
- L *No.*
- TR *No? Same thing again?*
- L *It's kind of like the passion goes away.*

Locked into her decision to always be strong, Lise found it difficult to show vulnerability to her husband. Instead of enjoying her full emotional range, Lise focused on controlling her husband, making him her “butler.” Like her father, Lise imposed rules, although with justice in mind. This left little room for the emotional openness and vulnerability that is essential to romantic play, and it made it difficult for her husbands to be strong. Therefore, the passion left the relationship. Robbins then asked about her son.

- L *He's a chiropractor. He runs a nice practice, but he has difficulties in relationship to his wife. She left him.*
- TR *She left him. Why do you think? Why do you think she left him?*
- L *Well, at that time I thought it was because she's a bitch.*
- TR *But what do you think now? Why did she leave him?*
- L *He has made—or not made her, but in one way, made her act as me.*
- TR *That's right.*
- L *And she isn't me.*
- TR *That's right.*
- L *And so the whole thing is really much more f—ked up. I didn't waste all the money. I didn't do all those more crazy kind of things that she went along with... I didn't want to be judgmental towards her, but I disagreed strongly with much of the things she did, you know, like spending—you*

know, going shopping, shopping, shopping, using up money.

TR *Going shopping, shopping, shopping—you mean she didn't go hunting like a man would be?*

L *Okay, okay, but I think he became like his father.*

TR *Yes, and his father was like what?*

L *Well, he became impotent.*

TR *That's right. It sounds like your son probably was masculine, but his idea of what love would become would be in a masculine form from a woman since that's what you've shown him so often, and his father was feminine. And he actually found a girl, it sounds like. But they were fighting to see who was going to be the most girl, so there's no polarity, and she probably left because she didn't have a man with presence. And he probably made himself feel significant by his work since he was so ineffective in his relationship, he'd go to his work. His work would work, and now he's losing half his work and his wife.*

L *Yeah.*

TR *So you diagnosed it correctly. You seem to know a lot.*

L *It's terrible!*

How have others responded to your key decision?

Lise then saw clearly that her decision to not show feminine vulnerability has put her son in a difficult position. It was Lise who expected her daughter-in-law to conform to her own ideas about how to spend money, and she therefore condemned the other woman's shopping. Lise may not have intended to judge her son's wife, but it is very likely that Lise's attitudes left a shadow over the young couple. Because he was accustomed to receiving love from his mother by complying with her rules, and because his own father was emasculated in his relationship with Lise, her son was left without a role model of how to be a strong man in a marital relationship. Thinking that he always had to conform to a stronger partner, the son was unable to take strong action in order to maintain polarity in his relationship with his wife. For the first time, Lise saw how a personal key decision made by a young girl in relation to her father had strongly influenced the decisions and relationships of generations to come.

USE IT NOW: Exercises

Think of your key decision. It controls an area of your life. Is it your work, your family life, your romantic inclinations, your housekeeping, or your financial habits? Who is affected by that decision? Name the five closest people to you and think of ways that they may have been influenced by your key decision.

How many other people other have been affected by your key decision indirectly? Think about all the people in your “pond,” remember, your ability to influence is great. In Lise’s case, for example, it was at least thirteen people: her husbands, her children, her sister’s family, and all of the grandchildren.

How have these other people reacted? How have their lives been influenced? What decisions have they made? Have they gone along with your decision, or have they chosen differently? Have you rewarded or punished them for their choices?

Where are their decisions leading them? Where would a different decision lead them? How important is their future to you, rated from 1-10?

Step Four: Commit to Changing Negative Consequences

If you have been following these steps in relation to a specific key decision of yours, you should now also be more aware of the scope of your influence on the lives of those around you. You may even have discovered that people you care about have been hurt by a decision you made long ago. You may also have realized that your key decision served you well within a specific context (just as Lise’s behavior as a child saved her from feeling humiliated by her father) but that your decision no longer serves you today (just as Lise’s decision to be strong eventually weakened her and her son’s marriages). You may have made a key decision recently—perhaps to protect yourself or to advance

your immediate interests—that may work today but will become a problem for your spouse or your children later on. If you can see ways that your key decision has led (or will lead) to some negative side effects for you or others you care about, then it is time to make an adjustment. This is when you must commit to making a change, now. It may not be drastic—perhaps only a small adjustment is necessary. You may not know yet how to improve things specifically, but the remaining steps will help clarify this. It’s a simple decision. Lise wasted no time in comprehending her role in her family’s future and immediately stepped up to make a change.

TR What are we going to do? Are you and I—are we responsible to do something about this since we have this awareness and understanding or should we just go, “Well, it’s over. There’s nothing that can be done.”

L No. That’s one thing I really, really want to do something about.

TR I know that. That’s why I’m staying with you on this because there are about twenty other things I need to do, and it’s changing the timeframe, but I think this is too important. I know if you don’t do this, you won’t be able to live with yourself, which is already how you’ve felt because you’ve known this even though you couldn’t word it this way. At some level you’ve known this, have you not? And you’ve felt guilty about it I assume?

L Yes.

USE IT NOW: Exercises

Think of your key decision. Why will you absolutely commit to making a change now?

Step Five: Build Up Emotional Resources by Reflecting On Your Successes

Focus on what you can do.

Lise had now seen just how dramatically her key decision had affected her son, but it is also important to emphasize the ways in which she has succeeded in her life. Remember, it is important to separate the person from the problem. If you have been participating and are beginning to feel overwhelmed with regret or guilt, it is time to put things into perspective. The purpose of The Seven Steps is to enhance your ability now to make the best possible decisions today, even if this means going back and remaking old key

decisions that no longer serve you in a positive way.

In order to do this, you must take full responsibility for the decisions you have made, and how these have affected other people. But don't take on more responsibility than is realistic! Lise made a decision as a young girl in very urgent, difficult circumstances; indeed, all of our key decisions were made in times of difficulty. In other words, she did the best that she was able to do at the time. That doesn't relieve her now of doing the best she can do now, though. However, it is not useful to dwell on feelings of guilt and regret for things that lie outside of our control, which includes our past actions. Also, it is important to respect that, no matter how deeply others have been influenced by you, they are responsible for their own key decisions as well! Other people's decisions lie outside of our locus of control. We take responsibility for our choices, and we support others in taking responsibility for their choices; this is the only way to influence them to do what is best for them.

In order to make sure that Lise is in a powerful state, unhampered by excess guilt or regret, Robbins encouraged Lise to "find the gift" in what has happened, and then to enhance that gift. This is a valid way of looking at what's happened so that you can build on your successes. They will both now focus on the ways in which Lise's key decision has stimulated her son to grow.

TR I've been very intense with you in terms of putting this on your shoulders, but I have to remind you that I love that you're willing to do something about this. This is all part of a stage that was important for everybody. And you're never going to know why, and you don't have to. Your son's gift from all of this is he's in touch with the sensitivities of life, and because of that, the feminine side of him is well developed. All we do now is get the masculine side well developed so he's the best man he could possibly be because the truth is we want to develop both parts of all of us, don't we? That makes us more whole people. We just want to make sure when both parts are developed, we live primarily in our essence and we have access to the other. If I was just masculine, you wouldn't be listening to me.

L No.

TR And most of the people here—most of the women here, certainly, would not listen to me, but they've seen there's all this femininity as well. There's a feminine energy. There's a caring. There's a sensitivity in me that's gigantic. And there's a masculine part that's gigantic. And since both are so developed, I can go back and forth to whatever needs it, but what guides me is a sense of mission, which is a masculine force. And there's a discipline and a focus to it. So, we want them both, so can I just remind you that you gave him beautiful gifts? You have given him a sensitivity most men will never have, and every woman wants a man who's masculine, but is also feminine. They want to be with a man who cares

and has a sensitivity of a woman also, but is strong enough to be their man.

You've given him a gift that most men don't have. I have to honor you for that. And your daughter has some strengths she wouldn't have if you weren't her mother. So please take in what you have succeeded at. There you go. Because you can only build on success. Do you agree with me or disagree with me?

L I entirely agree with you.

USE IT NOW: Exercises

Take a moment to recognize and appreciate the way that your key decision has served you. Lise's key decision served her in the short term, by teaching her to be brave and to stand up for what is right, and in the long term, by giving her the strength to break through social barriers: she went on to become one of the first female veterinarians in Norway. Your key decision has also led you to develop a set of skills and talents to support that decision. These skills are yours to keep, whatever you decide now. What are some of the positive results of your key decision?

When one person makes a powerful key decision, the people close to them are pushed to grow. How have people around you have been stimulated by your key decision? If you are planning to adjust your key decision, how can you also express your appreciation to those people and for how they have responded to you so far? What would you tell them?

Every decision involves excluding possibilities. When Lise decided to be strong, she excluded the possibility of being vulnerable and feminine. However, these exclusions are not always accurate. In the course of their conversation, for instance, Lise discovers her ability to be feminine and strong at the same time. When you made your key decision, what other alternatives did you give up? Was it necessary to give this up? Can you think of anyone else who has made a similar decision without giving up the things that you gave up?

What adjustments could you make to your key decision that would allow you to maintain the benefits of the life you have developed, but also allow you to experience the things that you have sacrificed to this point? Who could benefit if you made this adjustment and reclaimed some of those resources?

Step Six: Strategize Ways of Reclaiming Your True Identity

Apologize for the way your key decision has hurt others.

Once Lise had accepted full responsibility for her key decision and the way it affected her children, Robbins prepared her to share her newfound femininity with her son, and to apologize to him for the difficulties of having had a masculine mother. Notice that Robbins guided her through several principles for making an apology:

1. **Appreciate.** It is important that Lise acknowledge the ways that her key decision had prompted her son to grow, and that she express her admiration for the qualities he has developed in relation to her. This is important for Lise, and her son needs to hear it in order to become receptive.
2. **Set context.** Lise hadn't harmed her son directly, but only indirectly, by not living her life as an example of what she was capable of being. Therefore, she should apologize specifically for not living up to her own potential and for the extent that he was affected by her actions. Her job is neither to "repay him" nor to change him directly, but only to demonstrate to him her own willingness and ability to change.
3. **When there has been direct harm.** If you find that a key decision you have made has led to more serious, direct harm to others, it is important that the apology include, on one hand, a sincere show of regret, a determination never to do it again, and a desire to make up for your actions by supporting them now. On the other hand, it is important not to ask for forgiveness — your apology should require nothing from the other person. For more details and advice for cases of serious abuse, see chapter 4 of Cloé Madanes' Sex, Love, and Violence (New York: W.W. Norton. 1990)

After apologizing, Robbins instructed Lise that she should surprise her son by suggesting

a common activity that will concretize her rediscovered femininity: he should take her shopping, and she should be a “giddy girl.” By being an emotional, vulnerable woman in his presence, Lise will prompt her son to take the strong position. This will start to transform their relationship and, by extension, his relations with other women.

TR So, let's just help the next stage. And we're not going to change it all. That's not your job. He's got to find his own way, but you can assist. I think what you have to do with both your children is you have to acknowledge their gift or they won't hear you. They need to know that they have gifts, because right now they know their weaknesses. They don't even know what the weaknesses are. They just know they're there. So, first you must give them their strengths. You need to sit down with them and say, "You know what? I've been living my life as a man, and here's what you managed to pull from that, and I so love and honor you. You've developed a sensitivity in responding to me as being a man to you, and your father, that is beautiful. It's a beautiful sensitivity, but I have done you wrong without meaning to, because I've made you think feminine is weak and ugly because I'm your idea of a woman. And you've never known me, my son. You've never seen the real me. You've seen one part of me, and you've not seen the deepest part of me because I've been covering it up my whole life."

"So, of course, you would think this woman over here is shopping and everything else, and irresponsible, and if you'd been successful to make her like me then you would have had a terrible relationship too because then, she'd be totally responsible and you'd be bored silly. You would have had a business partner. That wouldn't have worked either. I'm just learning these things, and I don't have the perfect answer for you, but I've got to tell you that your mother's a woman. And when you dad comes at me and he's strong enough, I fight, fight, fight, but then, I go inside and I get a little scared and have these feelings and stuff, and I've been hiding those, even from myself... Will you take me shopping?"

Reclaim long-lost possibilities.

So far, Lise has re-evaluated her key decision in a critical light, accepted full responsibility for the decision and how it has affected others, and had shared this sense of responsibility with her son through an apology. Now it is time to strategize specific ways of bringing new experiences to her life and relationships. This is the fun part. In order to prepare Lise for her shopping trip with her son, Robbins brings Lise in contact with the long-lost feeling of being excited like a little girl.

TR Have you ever felt like excited inside, like a little girl excited?

L That's a long time ago.

- TR *A long time ago, but you have felt that way?*
- L *Yes. Yes, I have.*
- TR *So, it's in you then. When did you feel that way?*
- L *Excited before Christmas, when I was a child...*
- TR *Before Christmas when you were a child. That's great. Okay, I'd like you to close your eyes. There you go. And I want you to become a little girl again, and it's almost Christmas. It's the night before Christmas. There it is. The night before Christmas, feel what you were feeling then. How did you move around the night before Christmas? When you were walking around, moving around, how'd you move around? Did you move—yeah, that's it. How did you check things out when you were really excited the night before Christmas? Oh, that's it. How excited were you? Feel it. And what did your voice sound like? Make the sound of yourself as a little girl. Would you say something you said at that age the way you said it?*
- L *I hope it's a pair of shoes.*
- TR *Say something else you would have said back then when you were really excited as a little girl.*
- L *Maybe, a puppy.*
- TR *Maybe, a puppy. Aww, that's it. Look at her face. Can you see her face?*

Use your physiology to find your emotion.

When you want to experience your full emotional range for something, it is important to use all of the resources at your disposal. As they discussed Lise's anger towards her sister, Lise recognized intellectually that she had been wrong. Still, she continued to feel the emotion of being hurt. Robbins asked her to stroke her breasts gently while thinking about her femininity, and then while thinking about her sister. The physical gesture primed Lise to experience her love for her sister in a way that integrated her past resentments, her determination to be more feminine, her recognition of her sister's feelings for her, and her determination to help her sister right now. In your case, when you feel stuck, ask yourself what you could do physically to find your emotion. Maybe you need to stand up straight in a powerful way. Maybe do something with your arms. Maybe make a move of some sort that will bring out the emotion you need.

- TR *I want you to feel all her love for you in your body right now, the love she's had for you since a little girl, the love she's had for you even when she was mean or you were mean. It's still there, isn't it? Feel it to the point that it's overwhelming. That's it. And she's really a girl, isn't*

she? She's the girl you've been trying not to be like your whole life. But you're her sister, and you are like her. You always have been. Aren't you?

L Yes.

TR You love just as much as she loves, don't you? And you want love just as much as she does, don't you?

L Well, I suddenly see that I admired her. I suddenly see that I admired her because of the way she dressed. She was tall and slim and a dancer.

TR But at the same time, she got a lot of attention for that.

L Yes.

TR Attention you weren't getting—so even though you loved her and admired her, you learned not to value those things. You learned to reject those things, and you learned to reject her even though you really love her.

L Um hmm.

TR And she still loved you, and she still does now.

L Yeah. I'm very certain of that.

USE IT NOW: Exercises

When you made your key decision, what other alternatives did you give up? Was it truly necessary to give them up? Can you think of anyone else who has made a similar decision without giving up things you have given up? What could you reclaim for your life?

Think of a time before your key decision, when you were able to enjoy a wider range of possibilities. What did it feel like? What would it be like to feel that way again?

What could you do now, or soon, to surprise yourself and others? How would that affect your relationships?

Step Seven: Take Specific Action and Visualize Benefits

Once Lise had clearly discovered what new decisions were necessary in her life, it was time for her to make an absolute commitment to action. She took the first steps towards action by planning her apology to her son, as well as their shopping trip, and then by recognizing her own love for her sister. Now Lise and Robbins discussed at length the improvements that would spread through the family as a result of Lise's new key decision.

TR *Yes. How are you going to make your sister feel when you go home? How do you want to make her feel? How will you make her feel? What's your mission?*

L *My mission is to—my mission is to make her feel happy. I don't know if that's possible because she's heavily depressed.*

TR *Yeah—you would be depressed too if you'd spent your life without your sister.*

L *Yeah.*

TR *I guess you know about that, don't you?*

L *Yeah. I know. And I'm her bigger sister also.*

TR *Yes, and so it's time for you to be a really great big sister.*

L *Yeah.*

TR *The thing that's going to make her happy is love, and she needs a source that's unconditional and not judgmental, and if she gets that, she'll brighten up. And once she starts filling up with more love and appreciation—*

L *Then there are four children also that will have a more happy mother.*

TR *That's right. So, then the grandchildren will have a different life as well. So, all you got to do is pour a little marshmallows, some chocolate...*

L *And some nuts... I got it!*

USE IT NOW: Exercises

Think now of your key decision: imagine that you are able to go back to that moment in time, feel the pressure you were under, and understand and appreciate why you did what you did. You are a wiser person now than you were then, however, so as you look back, you can recognize options that you didn't recognize before. Feel the options before you. What does it feel like to have all of these options in this situation?

That feeling of having options—you have those options now, where you are. Give them to yourself, and decide to enrich your life with them. How are you going to appreciate these new options? How will you communicate them to the people you love?

Imagine now the people in your life that depend on you. Over time, they have developed certain expectations about you. Odds are, however, that they have not seen everything that you are capable of. How can you surprise them? How are you going to reward others in their reactions to your new decision?

Imagine the people who are directly influenced by you and then think of the people who are directly influenced by those individuals. By acting on your full capacity for making decisions, you will be helping others to experience this ability as well. What are the ramifications, even through future generations, of making this change—for yourself and for the others you influence?

Congratulations!

Remember, when you are faced with doing something that you know, in your core, you can accomplish, but you find yourself shying away, or reverting into the safety of the identity you have created, take the time to go through the steps. When you do, you will be able to discover what decision you've made in your past is limiting you today. Then, you can begin to create a new choice that will bring out new possibilities.

How much can be accomplished in six months? When Lise met with Robbins half a year after their conversation, she had some things to report:

She had a long talk with her son. He fell in love with another woman and is happier than ever before.

Her son's children (grandchildren) are no longer stressed out.

Lise is filled with love for her sister, and is doing much to help her and her family. Lise is helping to reconcile her sister with her eldest daughter.

Lise is making creative arrangements with her sister to "switch roles" in their respective families to make it more fun for everyone.

Lise's sister can no longer say, as she had for years, "nobody loves me." Now she says, "My sister Lise loves me."

Feel free to use The Seven Steps whenever you feel yourself shying away from something you want to do or are capable of doing. You may go through all of the steps each time, or you may find some steps more important than others. Once you go through the steps several times, it will become second nature. The next time you start feeling overwhelmed, ask yourself:

What decision am I dealing with here?

When did I make it?

Why did I make it?

What does it accomplish?

What are its side effects?

What decision could I make now?

The back of the booklet also contains a summary of The Seven Steps to Reclaim Your True Identity, along with Power Questions that will help you navigate this process quickly and conveniently. We honor you for your commitment and participation. May your decisions enrich your life and those around you.

SEVEN STEPS TO RECLAIM YOUR TRUE IDENTITY: SUMMARY AND POWER QUESTIONS

I. Challenge the limiting identity.

- a. What needs to be improved?
- b. Who needs this to change?
- c. What are your current priorities?
- d. Do you need power or balance?
- e. How can you challenge yourself?

II. Discover and understand the key decision

- a. What has been painful for you?
- b. What was your key moment?
- c. How did you react? What did you decide?
- d. What other options did you have? Who else was there?
- e. How were you rewarded for your decision?
- f. Where would a different decision have led you?

III. Connect to the key decision's consequences.

- a. Who else has been affected by your decision?
- b. How have they reacted? What have they decided?
- c. Where will their decision lead them?
- d. How important to you is this person's future?
- e. What lies in store for them if you do not change?

IV. Commit to changing negative consequences.

- a. What new decision could you make today that would serve you better?
- b. Who will be positively affected by your new decision?
- c. What other decisions will become available to you and others?
- d. What will the consequences be of not making a decision today?
- e. Who can be your witness? To whom can you commit?

V. Build up emotional resources by reflecting on your successes.

- a. How did your previous decision serve you and who you've become?
- b. How did your previous decision protect others?
- c. How did your previous decision stimulate others to grow?
- d. Recognize this as a phase of life.
- e. How have you already demonstrated your ability to repair this? Recognize that you are already on the way.

VI. Strategize ways of reclaiming your true identity.

- a. Prepare to apologize to those affected
- b. Speculate how to make a new decision better suited to your and others' needs.
- c. Revisit a time in your past when you had more possibilities.
- d. Step outside of yourself: explore, enjoy, rehearse, play.
- e. Prepare surprises and new activities with loved ones.

VII. Take specific action and visualize its benefits

- a. Make specific plans in relation to others.
- b. The art of the apology—what to do, what not to do.
- c. Visualize their responses.
- d. Visualize your own emotional responses to the conversations.
- e. Visualize benefits for everyone and a new stage of life.

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Anthony Robbins and Cloé Madanes continue to work together perfecting new methodologies of indirect negotiation to foster greater harmony and effectiveness in social systems ranging from families to corporations and government organizations.

The Robbins-Madanes Center for Strategic Intervention is dedicated to the solution of interpersonal conflict, the prevention of violence, and the creation of a more cohesive and civil community.

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