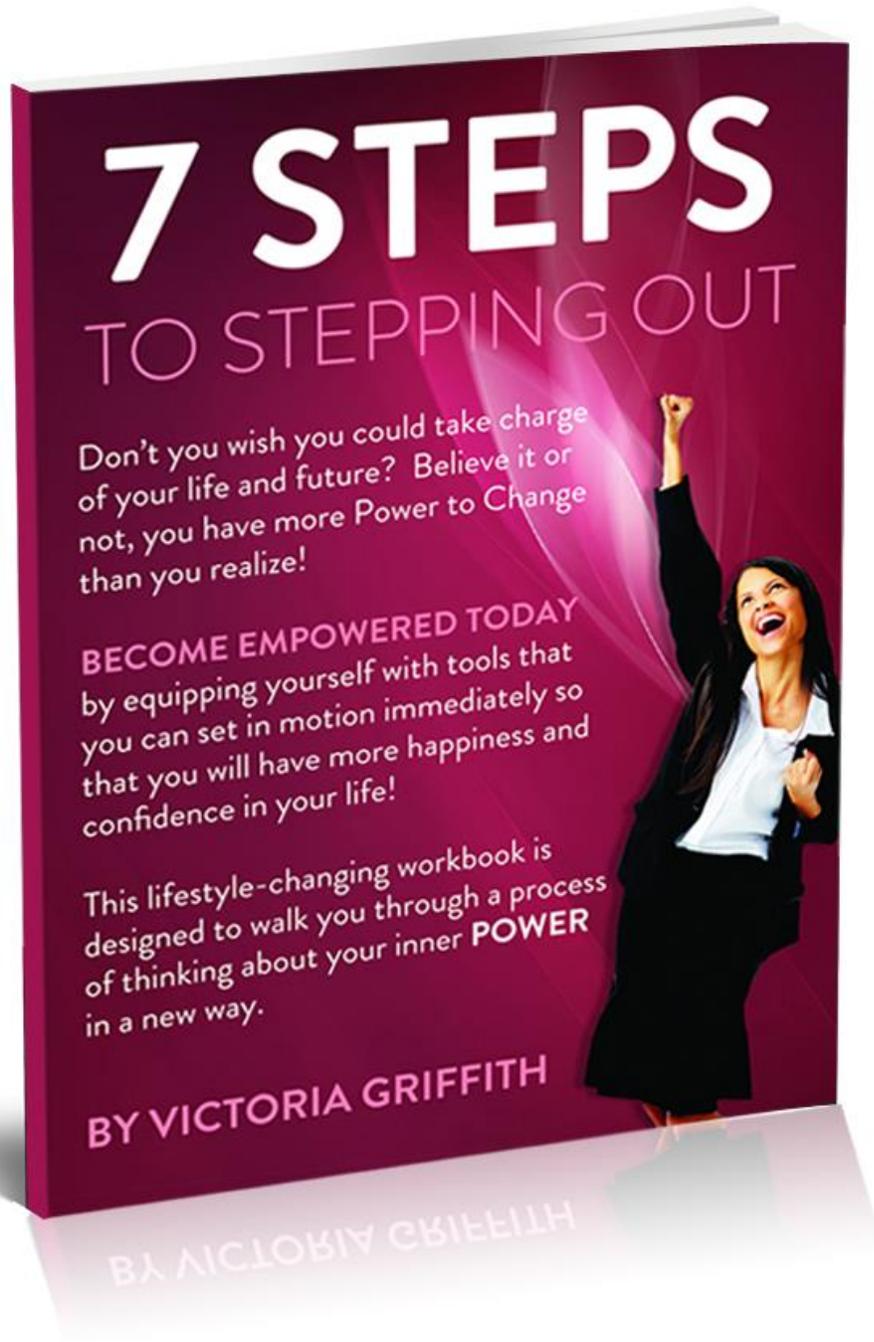


## 7 Steps to Stepping Out



7 Steps to Stepping Out ebook

# ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

## Table of Contents

Introduction

Step 1: Know Yourself First

Step 2: Getting Self-Confidence

Step 3: Know What You are Aiming For

Step 4: How to Stop Procrastinating

Step 5: Stepping out of your Comfort Zone

Step 6: Developing Social Confidence

Step 7: Practicing Resilience

Your Challenge

# ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

## **Introduction**

Are you frustrated with your life but feel powerless to change it?

Are you afraid of making a wrong decision that will affect your future?

We all have talents, strengths and dreams. These make us unique from everyone else, but sometimes our past disasters make us hesitant to step out and embrace those exceptional parts of ourselves. So, instead, we hold back and continue to limp along in life, wishing it could be different, but afraid or unsure of how to fix it.

You are not alone. More people than you can imagine are feeling exactly as you do. It's as though the power to make their own choices has been taken from them, but they don't know how or when that happened. All they know is that life seems to be passing them by and they are just standing there, watching.

**Don't you wish that you could take charge of your life and future?** Believe it or not, you have more power to change than you realize!

**You have the power to step out of the box** you are stuck in and move toward your real potential. You can step away from your past and move beyond your limitations!

### **This e-Book will show you how!**

This is a lifestyle-changing workbook that is designed to walk you through a process of thinking about your personal POWER in a new way.

***7 Steps to Stepping Out*** will challenge you to explore what having power in your life means to you. You will understand what personal power is and discover how you can begin to transform your perspective of yourself and create the life you truly deserve.

**Read this book** and *BECOME EMPOWERED TODAY* by equipping yourself with tools that you can set in motion immediately so that you will have more happiness and confidence in your life!

7 Steps to Stepping Out ebook

# 7 Steps to Stepping Out

## Step 1: Get to Know Yourself First

Who are you, really? No, I am not asking a philosophical question, but a realistic one. Before you can move ahead in your life, you need to be completely aware of yourself.

“Who you are” is a combination of your past experiences, your successes and failures, your hopes and dreams, your culture and family background, your education and career, and your spiritual faith. All your happy memories as well as the traumatic events in your life also have a profound effect on shaping “who you are.”

In order to “Know Yourself,” you need to recognize that your past has created a self-image for you that may or may not be completely accurate. You have to first figure out which memories and perspectives of yourself are true and which have been formed *for* you. Part of your self-image may have been formed when you were younger and didn’t really understand what was going on around you. You just took what people said and what happened to you at face value. You may not have realized when people were joking or when they were taking out their frustrations on you. You may have been the target of a jealous or vindictive classmate. These could have easily have made you feel unsure of yourself and your own abilities.

So, if you *feel* inadequate or incapable of accomplishing anything worthwhile in your life, you have to first sort out whether what you feel is based on fact, opinion, a misunderstanding or even a lie. If you have believed someone else’s lie about you, then that could drastically affect your self-image.

Every person’s self-image is a psychological “box” that he or she lives inside. Your “box” is the perspective from which you view the world and other people. It is your own narrative, or personal story, of how you measure up to your own expectations and those of others. Depending on how traumatic your past has been, your box can either give you a start for your future or be a prison for life.

Robert Scaer, in his book, *The Trauma Spectrum*, tells us, “Trauma is an aberration of memory. It freezes us in a past event that thereafter dictates our entire perception of reality.”(1) Because of this possibility, each of us needs to take an honest look at what happened in our past to see if it has warped our self-image in some way.

**“Trauma  
is an aberration of memory.  
It freezes us in a past event  
that thereafter dictates our  
entire perception of reality.”**

Robert Scaer, MD,  
*The Trauma Spectrum*

ing Out ebook

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

You may feel as if your “box”—your self-image—is all that you are, and that you are stuck being this “person” forever. Don’t believe it for a minute! Who you are is *much, much more than your internal picture of yourself*. Your “box” does not include your creative thoughts and ideas, the people and things you love, your talents and special gifts, your intuitions, the challenges you give yourself or your dreams for the future. Your box is only a static picture, like a snapshot taken with a camera, of your past experiences. A photo can’t show motion or change. Your “self-image” is only a collection of impressions from your past. It cannot begin to express who you *really* are today and your potential for tomorrow.

So, from now on in this book, when we refer to the image of yourself that came from your past, we will call it your **“old” self-image**. Your **“old” self-image** is an internal picture of yourself that sums up your past, but it doesn’t have to limit your present—or your future.

### **Getting to Know Yourself**

You discover who you are by stepping *outside* your “box”—beyond your old self-image, beyond what others have told you about yourself, and beyond what you think your limitations are.

If you don’t start exploring who you are beyond the boundaries of your old self-image, your “Box” will eventually become a prison with you trapped inside.

Worse yet, if you limit yourself to your boxed-in self-image, the other parts of yourself—“who you really are” and “who you want to be”—will fade away and never be realized because they were never acted upon. The time to act to change yourself is NOW!

Imagine that you are a runner in a race. You are starting at the starting line with all the other runners. When the gun goes off, you run with all your might to the finish line.

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(2)

This starting line is your “box,” your old self-image. It is the place where you are in your life right now. Would you ever dream of just staying at the starting line while everyone else rushes off toward the finish line? No, you wouldn’t. Yet, in life, too many people are so trapped in their “old” self-image—their “box”—that they never get off the starting line. *Don’t be that person!*

The equation below expresses how you can transform your old self-image into a *new* self-image that will empower you for your future. Memorize it:

**My “old” self-image + who I *really* am + who I *want* to be = My “new” self-image**



Your Past (your box)

Your Present

Your Dreams

Your Future

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## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

Did you know that your inner self, your mind, your imagination and your passions can empower you? These parts of you are always active and dynamic even when you feel defeated and powerless. Here is where you connect with life, create new ideas, respond to your surroundings and feel deeply about things. Your spirit, mind and emotions contain the energy and power you need to move beyond where you are now. But right now that energy—all that inner potential—is bottled up inside you with nowhere to go. That is why you feel so frustrated. You know that you can be *more* than what you are right now. You ache inside to explore your potential, but are nervous about trying. What if you aren't smart enough, strong enough or persistent enough to be successful? That is what your inner power is for—to give you the ability to go where you have never gone before.

You have to consciously release your inner Power. Otherwise, nothing in your life will ever change. Start by listening to your own ideas and your deep longings. Imagine what you could be if nothing held you back. All this makes up “who you are.” If you start trusting “who you are” beyond your “box,” these active parts of yourself will unleash power to help you achieve your dreams.

### **How do I release my Inner Power?**

The energy to run that race is already in you. It is dynamic and alive and totally separate from your past. It is just waiting for you to give it a direction to go. But first, you have to figure out *exactly* where you want to go with your life. What is your life's dream?

Think about what it is that you love most in life. What energizes you? What makes you happiest? These will give you clues to as to where you should be headed.

Your personal power enables you to stretch beyond where you are right now. I always picture a cat waking up from a nap. It opens its eyes but lies there for a moment longer. Then it stretches out its paws out as far as they can reach. It even arches its back, thoroughly enjoying the sensation of stretching before it gets up.

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***



When you first step out of your box, beyond your old image of yourself, you need to stretch like a cat—just to imagine the possibilities for yourself and your future. The best way to do this is to ask yourself questions that crystallize what it is that you really want from life:

What do you love to do? When are you happiest? Do you have talents, gifts or natural knacks that you would love to develop? Maybe you're a pretty good singer or have always wanted to learn to play a musical instrument. Do you enjoy sketching or tinkering with projects? What relaxes you? Gardening, sports, shopping, volunteering in your community, jogging? What excites you? Are you passionate about people, business, investing, sales, teaching, coaching, inventing, traveling?

Write down your answers to these questions

As you jot down the things that make you feel alive, you will learn “who you really are” and “who you want to be.” You will have taken the first of 7 powerful Steps toward reaching your potential!

# 7 Steps to Stepping Out

## Step 2: Getting Self-Confidence

### What is Self-Confidence?

First we need to get an idea about what “Self-Esteem” is, because our “Self-Confidence” is based on our “Self-Esteem.” These two terms sound like they should mean the same thing, but they don’t. You must have “self-esteem” BEFORE you can have “self-confidence.”

Self-esteem is belief in your own worth and value. As a person, you automatically have value and worth. *Don’t let anyone ever tell you that you don’t!*

Low self-esteem is the fear or “belief that you are worthless or inadequate.” (1) Is this something you are struggling with? You aren’t the only one. Low self-esteem comes from being constantly told, “You’ll never amount to anything” or “How come you never do anything right?” Often this creates a distorted, shaming self-image that carries through into adulthood and leaves the person with a low self-esteem. You will recognize that this is part of the “old self-image” we talked about in Step 1.

Until you believe that you have value and are worth being respected and listened to, you will struggle with self-confidence because your mental picture of yourself doesn’t tell you that.

Once you know your own value and worth, your mental picture of yourself will change. You will start to see yourself from the inside as a person who is as valuable to the world as everybody else. When you accept this truth, you will have a healthy “self-esteem.”

All of us have areas in our lives that we are less secure in. For example, I like to write, but I am really lousy at balancing my checkbook. The fact that I can’t handle numbers as well as I can handle words does not reduce my value or worth. My self-esteem is based on the fact that I am a human being who has the potential to be more than I am today. I deserve a chance to try to reach my potential just like everyone else in this world. This gives me value and allows me to feel worthy. It doesn’t matter whether I am an expert at anything or not. What matters is that I deserve the chance to try my best and see what happens.

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

“Self-confidence is a belief in yourself and your abilities, a mental attitude of trusting or relying on yourself.” (2) This is different from self-esteem because it recognizes that you also have skills, talents and abilities that you can depend on to help you accomplish things in life.

**How do I get Self-Confidence?**

You are unique. Even if you were a twin, you would still be a separate and completely different person and that means that you can offer something to the world that no one else can.

**Your uniqueness is something that you can have confidence in.**

No one thinks exactly the way you do. No one solves problems the way you do. Just as your fingerprints don't match anyone else's, your brain and emotions and deep inner self are different from theirs, too. This makes you unique. Be proud of that.

Some people feel so trampled by others and by the circumstances of their life that they feel worthless. They can't imagine that they have anything to offer anyone. But they *do*, just as you do. They just have to find what that is, and so do you.

**How confident do you feel in who you are and what you can do?**

As you move past your old self-image, your self-confidence will grow, but it takes persistent action on your part. At first you may be nervous or hesitant stepping out and trying something new. The first time you help out with a community event or sit in on a college class or learn a new skill, your old self-image will flood back into your mind and tell you that you can't possibly succeed. You may even feel like you are having a panic attack over this. **DON'T LISTEN** to the worn-out tape of your past failures. According to Zig Ziglar, "failure is just an event, it's not the person".

Your insecurities have **NOTHING** to do with what you are doing now. You are not the same person you were back then. You can be self-confident in your ability to try new things and succeed at them.

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

### **Your Self-Confidence is Tied to your Talents and Abilities**

Special talents can range from playing the piano to having a green thumb to baking cookies that melt in your mouth. Or you may be a creative writer, be able to motivate and encourage others, or know how to invest money without losing your shirt. Your special ability can be the spark that inspires your future!

Wouldn't it be fantastic to be able to do what you love all the time? Turn it in to a career or a business or a retirement income? Maybe you just love being with people. There are tons of ways you can bless the lives of others by just being there to listen, share in their activities or encourage them. What a fulfilling experience that would be! Maybe you are the type of person who enjoys fixing things. You could start a business as a designer or contractor.

What is your special talent or knack? Start thinking creatively as to how you can take a part of what you love to do and benefit others with it.

A great way to see what your talent might be is to get on the Internet and start searching with keywords that relate to what you love doing most. Another way is to attend your community's networking events. You can get great ideas from just casually talking with business owners/coach or mentor. This can open doors you didn't even know were there.

If you think you have a talent but worry that it isn't good enough compared to other people. Your problem isn't a lack of talent. It's a lack of self-confidence.

If you don't have confidence in your talent or ability, maybe it is because you have never had the opportunity to be trained in that area or to use your talent in a real life setting. You have heard the saying, "Take the bull by the horns." This means facing any fears you have and grabbing hold of them to bring them under your control. When you grab the horns of the bull, you prevent yourself from being hurt by them because now you control them. You steer the incredible energy they are attached to toward what YOU want done instead of being pushed back by them.

Don't be afraid of making a mistake. Expect to make mistakes. No one is perfect. Some of the top entrepreneurs of our lifetime made dozens of mistakes before achieving their successes. They didn't let any of those mistakes slow them down or knock them away from their goal. They just kept getting back up and trying something else until they discovered what worked.

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### Great “Mistake” Quotes to Live By

Here are some great “Mistake” quotes for us to live by, courtesy of the people who made them!

Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new. *Albert Einstein*

If you're not making mistakes, then you're not doing anything. I'm positive that a doer makes mistakes. *John Wooden*

The only man who never makes a mistake is the man who never does anything.  
*Theodore Roosevelt*

Failure is the key to success; each mistake teaches us something. *Morihei Ueshiba*

You build on failure. You use it as a stepping stone. Close the door on the past. You don't try to forget the mistakes, but you don't dwell on it. You don't let it have any of your energy, or any of your time, or any of your space. *Johnny Cash*

A man must be big enough to admit his mistakes, smart enough to profit from them, and strong enough to correct them. *John C. Maxwell*

A smart man makes a mistake, learns from it, and never makes that mistake again. But a wise man finds a smart man and learns from him how to avoid the mistake altogether.  
*Roy H. Williams*

To help yourself, you must be yourself. Be the best that you can be. When you make a mistake, learn from it, pick yourself up and move on. *Dave Pelzer*

The greatest mistake you can make in life is continually fearing that you'll make one.  
*Elbert Hubbard*

Even a mistake may turn out to be the one thing necessary to a worthwhile achievement.  
*Henry Ford*

The biggest mistake people make in life is not trying to make a living at doing what they most enjoy. *Malcolm Forbes*

—<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/a/alberteins109012.htm>

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

Select the quote that inspires you the most and post it in your home where you can see it every day (there are even more quotes on the website). Knowing that smart people don't lose their momentum because of mistakes will help you keep any that you make in perspective.

These entrepreneurs and famous people had self-confidence in their dreams, in their own abilities and strengths, and in the belief that they had the unique combination of talent and guts to reach their goal. So what if they made a few mistakes? Even when they messed up royally, their self-confidence was not destroyed. They just got back up, learned what they could from that whopper of a mistake, and continued along their road to success, a better and stronger person.

If we have this same approach, our mistakes will not damage our self-confidence—because our self-confidence is not based on our failures but on our potential.

Whatever your special knack or ability is, start developing it as soon as possible. Take lessons or classes to fine-tune your skill. Practice faithfully. Research and study so that you are confident in what you know. Explore ways to use your talent in real life situations.

As you become more skilled in your talent, your self-confidence will grow by leaps and bounds, because you will be sure of what you can do. In Chapter 3, we will discover ways to link your self-confidence to your talent and your future success.

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

### **Step 3: Know What You are Aiming For**

You may have heard the saying, “If you don't know where you are going, you will never get there.” (1)

This snippet of wisdom comes from Neil R. Gordon, a successful financial entrepreneur. Before we step out into our future, we should have at least some idea as to where we are going. So far in this book, we have been working at stepping away from our old self-image and moving toward new possibilities. To do that, we need to have a solid picture in our mind as to what our goal is. If we have no real goal, then we won't be able to accomplish it.

So, what is your goal for your life? Have you figured it out yet? We know what we DON'T want—and that is what we used to be, held back by other people's ideas about what we can and can't do, plagued by our past mistakes and failures. We don't like feeling insecure about ourselves. We want to feel sure of ourselves and excited about what we can accomplish in life. That will happen as we work toward the goal we have set for ourselves.

Your life dream is your goal. But if your dream is only a vague idea, it could slip away and be forgotten, like sand slipping between your fingers at the beach. So, let's make your dream real and tangible. If you think of your dream as a goal, it will be easier to achieve. The most effective way to do that is to write it down and then break it down into manageable tasks.

Suppose your goal in life is to be a teacher. Say, for example, that you already know that you love teaching children because you enjoy helping your own son and daughter master skills, like riding a bike and learning to count to 50. Or maybe you have a natural knack for understanding how machines work and would love to become a qualified engineer who works on high tech equipment. Look at what you love to do now on a small scale and imagine how you could do the same kind of work on a larger scale or in a different setting. This could be your goal. Take time to think creatively about your abilities and see how they could be developed into your dream. Write down all the possible things you could do based on what you have a knack for and then narrow them down until you have one goal that you can put all your energy into achieving.

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

The key to reaching your goal is to picture the gap that is between where you are now and where you want to be. This gap is the distance you need to travel to reach your goal or life's dream. You need to fill it with specific tasks that will enable you to finally reach that goal.

Imagine a bubbling stream in the woods. It is too wide for you to jump over, but you notice that there are stones in this creek that are large enough to step on so that you can walk across the stream.



The gap separating you from your goal is like this stream. You can't just jump from where you are in your life to your goal, but if you pay attention to the resources out there, you will find that they make great stepping stones that will allow you to walk across the gap to reach your goal.

### **“Breaking Down” your Dream or Goal**

These resources are tools that you can use to build up any of your skills related to your goal. When we talked earlier about “writing down” your goal and then “breaking it down” this is the process you need to go through. You have already written down your goal in life. Now start writing down the smaller actions that you need to take to reach that goal. These are the

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

stepping stones in the stream. Your stepping stones can be taking a class, researching on your own, participating in programs and activities that relate to your goal, even getting a job in that field.

To reach the other side of the stream, you had to take advantage of the stones. Is it smarter to walk on the stones or to slosh knee-high through the stream? Trying to be macho and avoid the stones, you not only get wet, but you could risk a sprained ankle and bruises from slipping on the unseen rocks beneath the surface. These could slow you down or keep you from reaching the other side.

As you are crossing the gap toward your goal, you know now that you have to set up several smaller goals or tasks for yourself as stepping stones. You may need to invest several months or even years to gain the skills you know you need. Never feel that the classes, activities and jobs you commit to are slowing you down. Each of these sharpens your expertise, fortifies your talents and abilities, and builds up your self-confidence as you move toward your dream.

Suppose your dream is to run your own company someday. At your current job, you seem to have a knack for business, but, because you are in an entry position, no one wants to listen to your ideas. To achieve your dream of becoming a CEO, there are a number of smaller goals that you need to accomplish first: 1) You decide that you have to work hard toward earning a promotion. That way, your suggestions will be taken seriously and acted upon. This will give you experience as a leader. 2) You also research to find out what skills you would need to successfully run a company someday, and you start listing them. 3) Based on your list, you decide to get a degree in business or management (or whatever specialty your dream business will be in) so that you will be qualified to be the head of your own company.

This is why you should treat your dream like a goal. It allows you to plan out exactly what you will need to reach it. Take time to think logically about your dream. You may be very good at your particular talent, but you realize that having more education, skills, and experience under your belt would make you more confident in yourself and recognized as capable by others. You want to be prepared to be successful. If you skimp on your preparation, you are only hurting yourself, not speeding up the process. You want to fully embrace your dream by getting the right training first. Figure out what tasks you need to do now, so that at the right time, you will be able to confidently step into your dream.

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

### **What if I have more than one life's dream?**

Your dream for your life may actually be a number of smaller dreams. One of your dreams may be to travel. At the same time, you want to help disadvantaged youngsters through “Big Brothers” or “Big Sisters.” Your hobby is drawing and you want to develop that talent. You also enjoy running and hope to be in a marathon someday. Plus, you’ve always secretly wanted to rebuild a classic car. Does this sound like too much? Well, it’s not. When you start thinking about your life’s dream, you may discover that you actually have a lot of dreams. It’s a big world and you may want to try a number of new things. There is no top limit to how many dreams you can have or how many things you want to accomplish in life. If you want to set several life goals, you may want to narrow it down a bit, or just prioritize them and plan out how and when you hope to reach each of them. These dreams give your life purpose, something to strive for, a level of excellence to achieve. You have a right to go for it!

Whether you have one giant dream for your life, or have interests in several fields and want to explore them all, the process is the same: Be determined to step out from your past failures, figure out what makes you happy, and see if that can be shaped into your life dream—or dreams!

### **Linking your Dream to your Purpose**

An essential part of knowing “Where” you are going is knowing “Why” you are going. This suggests that you should have a purpose for your existence and for the actions you are taking.

Have you figured out what your purpose is? What difference are you trying to make in this world? We hinted at this in Step 1. You are unique and can do things in this world that no one else can. This places a responsibility on your shoulders to be the most and best that you can be. What you say and do in this life should have a positive effect on someone else.

Your purpose may line up with your dream. They may be one and the same. Usually, though, your purpose is part of your dream or inspires and motivates it. For some people, their purpose in life may be separate from their life’s dream, but it still gives them a reason for living.

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

### **Finding your Purpose**

Your purpose in life is the underlying motivator for everything you do. It goes hand in hand with your dream. A doctor's purpose may be to ease people's pain or to encourage them to have a healthier lifestyle. A lawyer's purpose may be to rescue people from being falsely accused or to help put away criminals. The CEO of a company may want to be successful enough to be able to continually reward his employees. People who want to be the best parent or teacher may have as their deep-down purpose preparing children for the challenges of life.

Maybe your purpose in life is to help other people. You could find several ways to do that. For example, you could work as a home health aide, coach a youth volleyball team, and volunteer in a local political campaign. Every one of these is not only an expression of your talents, but it also lets you fulfill your purpose. As you interact in roles like these on a regular basis, you will gain self-confidence because you know you have a purpose and can see how you are making a difference in the lives of others.

### **Fueling your Purpose with your Power**

Your personal, inner power stems from your "purpose." Without a purpose, your personal power will eventually dissipate and be useless.

Since your inner power comes from deep inside you, it has a spiritual quality. People who make God the center of their life find that their inner power comes from Him. They tap into His endless, infinite love and omnipotence. Their own inner power connects to Him and enables them to pull strength from Him.

Everyone has a spiritual center, whatever their beliefs. Your spiritual center is where your inner power emanates from. When you have a purpose for your life, it will focus that inner power to enable you to accomplish far more than you ever thought you could.

As you decide what you are aiming for in your life, decide on what your purpose is. Let this be the inspiration for your life's dream. Let your life's dream an expression and fulfillment of your reason for being.

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

### **Step 4: How to Stop Procrastinating**

Whenever people have to start something new, they tend to procrastinate. It seems so hard to make yourself take that first step...

Procrastinating is “the elephant in the room.” This idiom always cracks me up when I try to picture it. We talk about not being able to see the elephant in the room when it is an obvious problem that we don’t want to deal with. We try to live as though it weren’t there. Our friends and family can see the problem, but we just keep on living as though it weren’t interfering with our life.

Procrastinating is an “elephant in the room.” We want to do something to change our life situation, but we really don’t want to get moving and make any real changes. So we tiptoe around the elephant that is blocking us from trying something new—from stretching toward our future potential.



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## 7 Steps to Stepping Out

Procrastinating keeps you stuck in your comfort zone. Here, you come up with great excuses for not moving ahead. Procrastinating marks the boundaries of your comfort zone. This is the area of your subconscious where you can sit comfortably without expending any mental, emotional or physical energy. In your comfort zone, you don't have to make any tough decisions. You can gripe about your situation. You even feel secret pleasure in complaining about your lot in life. This is the place where you dream up excuses for not getting ahead in life instead of dreaming up ways to get ahead.

Your choice at this point comes down to two options: Do I want to have a better life or am I going to keep doing what I have been doing, even though it hasn't been working? Did you know that this is Albert Einstein's definition of *insanity*: "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results"?

Be honest with yourself now: Have you been repeating the same strategies in your life hoping that next time it will work out better? Following Albert Einstein's logic, we have to change our behavior in order to get a different result from our efforts. Einstein is considered one of the smartest people who ever lived. Maybe we should take his advice seriously. If you want your life to improve, you have to change something that you are doing now. That is why these 7 Steps are so vital for your future. They will enable you to make a change today that will make your tomorrow better

—and your tomorrow will be *more* than just *better*—it will be exciting, rewarding, fulfilling and worth living!

Okay, so we get the message: DON'T PROCRASTINATE!  
**But how do we stop procrastinating?**

First, figure out exactly what you are afraid of doing. Otherwise, you would not be procrastinating about it. Write this down so that you can objectify it. When you turn your emotional fear into words on a piece of paper, it is no longer unmanageable. You can start dealing with it.

Second, write down the action you are planning to take to overcome what you were afraid of doing. For example, if you are afraid of talking in front of a group of people, you could ask someone who does that all the time for some tips, or you could take a speech class. If you want to turn your hobby into a second income, but are afraid of making an expensive mistake, you could attend a networking event in your area and ask business owners what *they* would do. Write down the positive action that you will take to overcome your fear.

## 7 Steps to Stepping Out

Third, write down all the positive things that can happen if you stop procrastinating. What if you discover that you actually *enjoy* talking to a group of people—as long as the topic is something you are experienced in? Or when you start researching, you may find that your hobby has the potential to be a real money-maker. These are great outcomes! All it takes is taking a chance on yourself and your dream.

Also have a “pat on the back” ready for yourself. This is a reward that you give yourself for achieving this step. It could be as simple as the words, “I *knew* I could do it!” or “I sure showed them!” Or you can reward yourself with something tangible. You could throw a party for your friends, or start up a Success Journal and write down all your successes. This way you will never forget the first time you stopped procrastinating and made yourself step out.

Fourth, you also have to be realistic. This means being prepared for either succeeding or failing at this first attempt. Procrastinating is a hard habit to break. It might take a few tries to get the hang of it. So, prepare yourself by writing down all the things that you imagine could happen if you don't succeed with this action. Look over your list and cross off all the negative scenarios that aren't realistic, like “if I don't pass this course, I'll just die of embarrassment.” Or “I'll never stand up in front of people again.” Next, cross off all the negative outcomes that you know are merely leftovers from your old self-image. These are the echoes from the past that told you you'd never amount to anything. You believed those lies then, but you don't anymore! You are breaking free from your box. These old memories have no power over you anymore unless you allow them to. Don't let yourself be trapped again in your box just because you made a mistake or didn't succeed quite yet.

Finally, DO NOT FEEL GUILTY if your first attempt at this isn't quite as successful as you had hoped it would be—the reason doesn't matter. Some of the actions you take will be wildly successful, others not so much, and still others will be flops. If you get discouraged, read over the famous “Mistake” quotes in Chapter 2 and go online to the BrainyQuote.com website to read more of them. Failures, whether big or small, are *not* the end of your dream and your life. Instead, make them the catalyst that boosts your determination to try harder.

Mistakes and failures are also signals that you might need to make a slight course change in the direction you are going. The helm of a giant ocean liner controls the rudder of that ship. The rudder only needs to move slightly in the wrong direction to steer the ship way off course miles later. It is best for the helmsman to make the course correction as soon as he discovers his mistake and get the ship back on course. It works the same way in your life. If you ignore the mistakes in your life, you could end up so far off course that you won't even be

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

able to see your dream anymore. But if you catch the mistake early, you can make the fine adjustments to get your life moving once again in the direction of your dream.

There is always some level of risk when you step out and try something new. Yes, there is risk that you might fail or make a mistake, but there is an even *better* chance that you will succeed. Why? Because when you step out, you are combining together your natural strengths, your new skills, your determination to reach your goal and your own inner power.

You are a force to be reckoned with! No more need for procrastinating. Instead of relying on wishful thinking and hollow hoping, you are moving ahead—armed with a new perspective on life, strengthened by the new things you have learned about yourself, and stepping out in a clear direction. Equipped like this, you will find a way to succeed.

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

### **Step 5: Stepping out of your Comfort Zone**

In Step 4 we talked about how procrastinating can hold you back. We even looked at practical steps you can take to stop procrastinating. Stepping out of your comfort zone is a major part of this process. Since this is not always easy to do, we need to take a closer look at it.

Your comfort zone is the area within yourself that gives you peace. It is where you can almost be on autopilot and still function. You are so used to doing certain things that you don't really have to think about them as you do them. For some people, that could be typing or washing dishes. For others, it is watching TV, jogging or puttering with a hobby.

Your comfort zone involves more than just everyday chores or repetitive behavior. It involves portions of your mind, your emotions and body. When you are doing a familiar task, your mind is governing your actions, but you have done this so often that you don't have to actively think about it as you work. Your mind tells the muscles and nerves of your body what to do. The repetition allows your mind, emotions and body to sink into a comfortable "groove," so you are in a more relaxed state than if you were doing an unfamiliar task.

While your mind governs these activities, it is only paying partial attention. Your whole brain is not needed to repeat a familiar activity. It may be relaxing and even refreshing to pull weeds in your garden, play your favorite game on the computer or exercise on your bike. These activities are in your comfort zone, and when you are stressed or feel insecure, you will retreat to them.

The emotions you feel when you are in your comfort zone are not fully engaged either. You feel contented when you do these activities, but your deep emotions are not involved. Very little emotional energy is being expended when you are in your comfort zone. If you happen to be exercising, you will be utilizing a lot of physical energy, but your exercise euphoria is only one aspect of your whole emotional self.

Part of your deep inner self—your spirit—is also involved when you are in your comfort zone. Your inner self is where you evaluate each activity you do as it relates to what is most important to you. If you believe in God, your spirit will either affirm that what you are doing at the moment is right before God, or it will make you feel uncomfortable. If you believe that

7 Steps to Stepping Out ebook

## 7 Steps to Stepping Out

your inner self connects with all of nature, you will evaluate your actions in light of those values. When you are in your comfort zone, your spirit is telling you either that you are okay at the moment or that you should be doing something else.

In order to “Step out of your Comfort Zone,” you must engage your *whole* self—your thinking, your passions, your body and your deepest self. Get them in gear! NOW! In order for you to reach for your life’s dream, you have to activate your mind, emotions, body and spirit. You have to get OUT of your comfort zone!

Don’t use your Comfort Zone as an excuse. Excuses like: “I could never do *that*,” “I really don’t have time,” “That’s too much trouble,” and “I like my life the way it is” will hold you back from your dream. They will keep you trapped in your comfort zone.

If you allow yourself to make excuses as to why you can’t step out of your comfort zone, for the rest of your life, you will always wonder if you could have achieved your dream— if only you had tried, risked a little and gone for it.

Making changes to your life can be a little uncomfortable. You will definitely have to dedicate time and energy to them and stop retreating back into your comfort zone. Make up your mind right now that you are going to step out of your comfort zone to get to where you want to be!

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

### **Step 6: Developing “Social Confidence”**

Your “Social Confidence” springs from your own self-confidence, but it also depends on how far you have come with the other steps we have mentioned in this book. This means that your Social Confidence hinges on how far you have stepped outside your box and out of your Comfort Zone.

How many times you have stopped procrastinating, made a conscious decision to act and then followed through? The more often you do this, the more self-confidence you have because you can see how the actions you have taken are paying off. A little self-confidence leads to more self-confidence. Once you know what you can do and know that you do it well, it’s yours forever. No one can take that away from you.

**Once you know what you can do  
and know that you do it well,  
it’s yours forever.**

Social Confidence is a little different from self-confidence because it is a measure of how confident you are when you are in social settings. Social confidence is how well you express your confidence in who you are now, what you have accomplished, and what you believe you can do in the future. These are topics that will invariably come up when you are relating to people in social situations, from parties to business meetings to religious and community events, and even the dreaded class reunion.

Depending on your past experiences, you may have second thoughts about functioning confidently in certain social settings. Even if you have no problem going out to dinner or to a club with a few of your friends, you may be more than a little nervous if there are too many people there that you don’t know or who travel in different social circles than you do. What do you say to them? What if they ask about how your life is going?

The first way to develop Social Confidence is to remind yourself that the new person you have started to become is real. You are emerging from the ashes of your past. You are different now. You have learned to block out the cruel words that had swirled around in your

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

head for years, telling you that you are less than what you think you are. You KNOW that you are MUCH MORE than what others thought you could be. Besides, it is not *their* dream that you are aiming to accomplish. It is *your* dream, so their opinions really don't matter anymore.

Once you get a grasp of how different you are now, your new-found self-confidence will start becoming "Social-Confidence." Up to now, you have been arguing with yourself about who you really are and what you hope to be. Now, as you move forward toward your dream, you are relating to other people in new situations. Maybe it's the teacher in the college class you are taking, or the strangers sitting with you in the assertiveness seminar you signed up for. You are starting to have a new perspective on your own life. In these settings, you get a chance to verbalize and share your hopes and feelings with other people who are doing the same thing you are—reaching for their dreams.

The second way to build Social Confidence is to write down the positive steps you have taken so far. Having a written record of your progress reaffirms that progress. Keep a log of each action you are taking to reach your goal. Also jot down how you felt before, during and after you did each task. Once you have written this down, it becomes crystallized in your mind and heart and gives you something concrete to talk about when you are out with other people. This way you can honestly share your passion for your dream. You will have the words on the tip of your tongue to explain your goal in life and the things you are doing to get there.

The third way to get Social Confidence is to talk about your dream. Even though you may feel that you are so new at this that you really don't know what you are doing, don't let that stop you from talking about your dream with others. The more you share about yourself and your goals, the more determined you will become to achieve your dream. You will gain social confidence because you really and truly believe what you are saying. When people talk from the heart, others know it and feel with them. After a while, you may be so enthusiastic about your dream and what you are doing to accomplish it, that you will start up conversations to get others to talk about their dreams, too. Being in social situations will become so much fun that you will forget that you were ever nervous.

The fourth way to gain Social Confidence is to be a good listener. A good listener hears what others are saying, empathizes when appropriate and encourages when the other person needs support. Even more than this, a good listener listens for the wisdom of others, sparks feedback and is willing to internalize good advice. When you are in social settings, be a good listener who does all these things. When you listen intently and empathize, you connect with that other person and build trust. This could lead to a great friendship or business connection that may help you reach your goal. Be willing to admit that you don't know everything. Your

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## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

social confidence does not rely on how much you know about lots of topics. Instead, it relies on how honest you are with yourself about your strengths and weaknesses. As a good listener, you can start shoring up your weaknesses by gleaning bits of information from the people you listen to. Yes, some people in these social gatherings will be showing off their egos, but others will be sharing very useful information. Listen for kernels of truth, smart ideas and useful bits of advice from experienced people at these gatherings. Pretend that you are a sponge soaking up anything and everything you hear, so that you can reach your goal faster.

The most effective way to build Social Confidence is to purposely put yourself into social situations: classrooms, workshops and seminars on topics that interest you, community and religious programs, political campaigns, volunteer organizations and networking events, to name a few. Let your inner power be the force that gets you out there among people. You know that meeting with other people is what you need to do, so rely on your personal power to step into these situations. You are strong on the inside if you believe in what you are trying to do.

If you are nervous at first to go alone, bring along a friend, relative, or co-worker and make a fun time of it. Bringing along a companion does *not* diminish your inner power in the least. Actually, you will feel more empowered because, by attending the event with a friend, you put yourself into a new social situation. As a result, you have more social confidence.

The suggestions in this section are tools to boost your social confidence. Pay attention to how you feel as time goes on. Having social confidence not only makes you feel great, but it also opens up doors for your future success.

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

### **Step 7: Practicing Resilience:**

I could tell you that once you take these seven steps, you never have to think about them again, or that you will never have any setbacks, but I won't. Because everyone's life has setbacks sooner or later: a sudden illness or life-changing accident, a financial struggle, a divorce, being laid off from your job, a family crisis. These can jar you so hard that it feels as if your whole world has just collapsed.

This is why Step 7 of our seven steps is "Practicing Resilience." Resilience is the ability to bounce back after a setback. Resilience is using your own new-found power to get back on the saddle after being thrown by your horse.

Most of the time, our setbacks are much less dramatic than these. They are usually doors that are suddenly shut in our face or situations that block our path toward our life's dream. When we are forced to stop in our tracks, we need to practice resilience. Resilience is not getting mad and throwing a fit. Resilience is not giving up in despair. It is not saying, "Why me, God?" Instead, we grab hold of our inner power and use that strength to logically evaluate the situation, see where we might have gone wrong, correct the mistake if we made one, regroup, and—this time—try something a little different. Throughout it all, we never lose track of our goal. Our dream is still intact and very much alive. All a setback means is that we have to approach our goal from another perspective.

A term for this is "lateral thinking." Lateral thinking is a form of brainstorming. It allows us to explore all the alternative ways of solving a problem before we commit to any one of them. Most people jot down these alternative solutions by using cluster diagrams like this one:

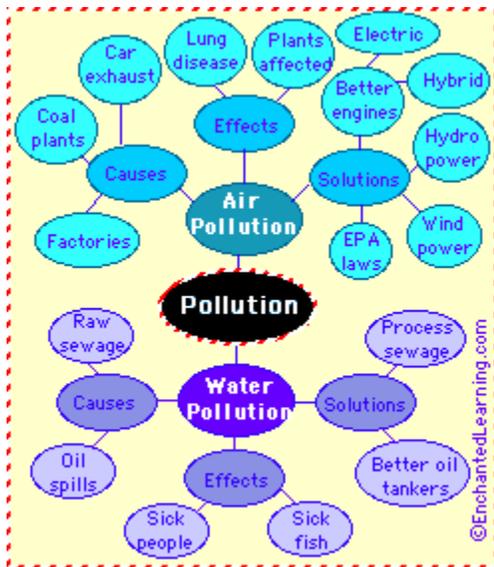
## 7 Steps to Stepping Out



When you are stumped by a problem, try brainstorming possible solutions. Below are a two other examples of ways that you can get your ideas on paper. Keep shifting your ideas around until you come up with several realistic solutions:



## 7 Steps to Stepping Out



You can try grouping your ideas into overlapping circles to see which solution addresses more than one issue, or, connect ovals with lines to see how various factors relate to each other. This way you can get a clear overview of potential solutions. A great resource for visualizing your brainstorms is <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/graphicorganizers/cloud/>. Here you can click on templates to put your ideas in so that you can plan out what to do next. Thinking like this is “resilience” in action. It will prevent even the worst setback from destroying your self-confidence, your new self-image or your momentum.

You have come a long way since page one of this book! You have taken an honest look at yourself, decided what you want to change and reached for goals that you never could attempt before. Although circumstances can occasionally stop you, you can choose to make it a temporary pit stop. Your resilience will enable you to come at the problem from a different angle and move past it. Your resilience will let you keep moving toward your life’s dream.

## 7 Steps to Stepping Out

### Your Challenge!

I am so proud of you! Look at how far you have come from being trapped inside your past to stepping out and actively moving toward your future. This all happened when you discovered that you have the power to change yourself. This power is a vibrant part of you. It separates you from your past. Some people never realize that they can “take the bull by the horns” and completely shift the direction their lives were going—but *you* have!

In **Step 1**, you took an honest look at your old self-image and decided that it was *not* a reflection of who you are and who you want to be. In **Step 2**, you discovered that you have self-esteem simply because you are unique and that gives you a legitimate place in this world. Your self-esteem is the foundation for your self-confidence. As you develop your talents and strengths, your self-confidence keeps growing.

**Step 3** gave you tools to visualize your life’s dream. It is no longer a wisp of smoke that you can’t grab a hold of. Now the dream of who and what you can be is real and reachable. **Step 4** taught you how to stop procrastinating. There are no more elephants in *your* room! You are not going to let anything hold you back now. **Step 5** showed you how to use your personal power to get out of your Comfort Zone. Some people live their whole lives in their comfort zone, always afraid to act, never daring to take a step toward their dreams. You have reached the point where you are no longer afraid to be uncomfortable for a while—as long as it moves you toward your goal in life.

**Step 6** opened your eyes to see that stepping out means relating positively to other people. Before this, you were turned in on yourself, only seeing what you couldn’t do. By interacting with people *en route* to your dream, you find out how much you have in common with them and what you can learn from them and them from you. This enhances your Social Confidence.

Your final step, **Step 7**, allow you to be flexible and respond to each new challenge. No more knee-jerk reactions from you. Your personal power makes you resilient. You are like the rubber band that never stretches out. You are like the boxer who confidently bounces back and forth on his toes, maneuvering into the best position to deliver the knock-out punch.

## ***7 Steps to Stepping Out***

My Challenge to you today is to absorb each of these 7 Steps into your everyday thinking. Work on them one at a time and do exactly what they say. Make them tools in your own toolbox for dealing with life's good and bad surprises.

You have discovered that you have the power to step out and away from your past. You can discard your old ways of handling whatever life throws at you. Now you are focusing that inner power of yours to stretch yourself in the direction of your dream. Moving toward your dream has dramatically changed your life.

When you complete this book, you will sense that you have been transformed into a new person who has the inner power to reach your dream. You will be able to face any new crisis or setback because you are confident in who you are and your strengths, talents and new skills.

As you use your personal power, you will experience what it feels like to be confident, happy and fulfilled. Always rely on that power, because it has the potential to catapult you to wherever you want to go! If you dare to Believe.

# 7 Steps to Stepping Out

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