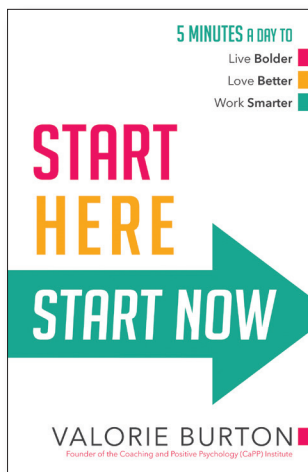


**START  
HERE**

**START NOW**

**BREAKTHROUGH PLAN**

Take 5 Minutes for 5 Days  
to Get Over What's Holding  
You Back!



**VALORIE BURTON**

*Founder of the Coaching and Positive Psychology Institute*

# Day 1

## What Is the Most Important Question You Need to Answer In Your Life Today?



*Go confidently in the direction of your dreams.  
Live the life you have imagined.*

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

### **Point to Ponder:**

You can learn to coach yourself by taking moments to pause and ask simple, thought-provoking questions that move you in the right direction.

One of the reasons so many people can't find the answers they need for the challenges they face is that they ask themselves the wrong questions—or never bother to ask questions at all. As a professional life coach, my primary job is to ask the right questions. I ask the kinds of questions that shift your perspective or help you see the answer, even if the situation is complicated. One of the smartest things you can learn to do is coach yourself in the midst of a dilemma. Here are three simple steps you can follow:

### **1. Get clear about the problem.**

In order to get the answer you need, you need to understand the problem you're trying to solve. Often, the problem that needs to be addressed in this moment is not about the big picture. It's about a detail you have control over in the big picture. Let's say that fear is overwhelming you because you've been laid off and need a job. You may not be able to snap your fingers and land that new job tomorrow, but you can identify a list of personal contacts to start reaching out to before tomorrow with a specific request, such as making an introduction to a decision-maker who can help you. Pinpoint the issue. Then address it with specific, focused action.

## **2. Ask action questions, probing questions, and expansive questions.**

Probing questions help you delve deeper to uncover hidden fears that may be holding you back, such as, “What are you afraid will happen if you move forward?” Expansive questions help you think bigger and start envisioning your dreams: “What would it feel like to double your income in the next 12 months?” Action questions get you moving: “So what’s the next step to move you toward that goal, and when will you take it?”

## **3. Tell the truth.**

Lastly, but most importantly, you’ve got to tell the truth! Coaching is only as effective as you are truthful. Be honest about your fears and your desires, even (especially!) if they scare you. It’s the only way to get to the authentic answers that will guide you on the right path—the one that is uniquely meant for you.

### **My Challenge to You**

Start coaching yourself.

Ask the right questions and you’ll get the right answers.

### **Coach Yourself**

What dilemma are you currently facing? In what situation do you need an answer before you can move forward? What is the most important action question, probing question, and expansive question you need to ask yourself?

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## Day 2

# What Are You Putting Off?



*Even if you're on the right track,  
you'll get run over if you just sit there!*

ROY ROGERS

### **Point to Ponder:**

The instant gratification of conveniences such as e-mail and text messages stimulate the brain. Break your procrastination-prone projects into bite-sized goals that allow you to feel you are making progress.

What have you been putting off? Almost all of us delay necessary actions from time to time. I'm convinced that procrastination is one of the biggest causes of stress in our lives. There is something in your life that you know needs to get done. Often, it's not even something difficult. But you've made it difficult in your mind, and as a result you never get started. Instead, you do everything else you can think of—wash dishes, organize your files, surf the Internet, check e-mail—rather than the thing you actually need to do. Perhaps you're even procrastinating right now. It drains your energy and wastes precious time. "Procrastination is the bad habit of putting off until the day after tomorrow what should have been done the day before yesterday," Napoleon Hill once said.

I challenge you to focus your energy and just do what needs to be done. There are two antidotes to procrastination:

**1. Drop the goal or project, and don't do it.**

**2. Exercise some discipline, and just go ahead and do it.**

Sometimes procrastination is a sign that you don't want or need to do the thing you're dreading, in which case Option 1 is a good choice (this does not apply to filing taxes, paying bills, or pickin' kids up from school, of course!). At other times, procrastination is a sign of perfectionism, stubbornness, or lack of self-discipline, all of which you have the power to change. If this is the category you relate to, Option 2 is your best choice. Don't make the task or project a big deal. Break it into smaller pieces and just get started.

So what is it that you need to do? Don't wait for inspiration—just start! You don't have to feel like doing something to do it. Often, in the process of starting, your mood develops. And even if it doesn't, the feeling of relief after completing a project you've been dreading is well worth it..

### **My Challenge to You**

Stop procrastinating. Get it done!

### **Coach Yourself**

What have you been putting off? How could you break the task into manageable pieces? What step will you take today? By which date will you cross this item off your to-do list?

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## Day 3

# Instead of Being Happy When, Will You Be Happy While?



*Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up  
having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have,  
you will never, ever have enough.*

OPRAH WINFREY

### **Point to Ponder:**

Research shows that only ten percent of happiness is determined by your circumstances. Forty percent is based on what you think and do daily.

It's an art to remain content with where you are while you're on the way to something better. Do you feel worn out as you race toward the finish line of a goal? We hear the cliché all the time: "It's about the journey, not the destination." But living out the cliché can be a challenge! In a world that values the new and improved it can be tempting to say, "I sure will be happy when I get that new job/my kids graduate/I retire/I win the lottery." But what's even better is being able to say, "I sure will be happy while I wait for that new job/my kids are with me/I'm blessed to have a job." Whenever I've noticed a spirit of discontentment rising up to steal my joy, I coach myself with a few questions that help me appreciate the value of here and now.

### **1. What are you grateful for?**

Contentment and gratitude are inextricably connected. Gratitude empowers you to notice the blessings right in front of you. It opens your mind to the little blessings that, if they suddenly disappeared, wouldn't seem so little anymore. Stop talking, thinking, and complaining about what you don't have and start noticing what you do have.

## **2. What's the most important lesson offered to you right now?**

When you're too focused on the future, you can miss the lesson-being offered to you today. Even more important than reaching a goal is who you become in the process of reaching it. What character traits are being developed? What destructive habits are being eliminated? What are you learning that you would not have learned otherwise? Look for the lessons. Appreciate them.

## **3. When you look back on this time a year from now, what will you wish you had done?**

This question is a biggie. When frustration impacts your attitude, you are more likely to make choices you'll later regret. But when you ask yourself this question, you suddenly recognize the magnitude of the opportunity before you. What do you want your legacy to be? Rather than complaining or murmuring about how hard things are, you have an opportunity to face the challenges before you like a champion.

## **4. In what ways have you already made progress?**

Stop taking yourself for granted. Maybe you haven't made perfect progress, but who has? Acknowledge what you have done. Notice your milestones while they are happening. Celebrate them. Treat yourself. Tell the world. Rather than waiting to reach the finish line before you mark your progress, do it with every step you take.

### **My Challenge to You**

Choose to be content right now.

### **Coach Yourself**

In what ways do you struggle with a spirit of discontentment? Take some time to consider and respond to the four questions above.

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## Day 4

# What If It Does Work Out?



*Life is a succession of lessons which must  
be lived to be understood.*

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

### **Point to Ponder:**

Trusting God means getting comfortable with not knowing all the answers.

Fear. It creeps up on us, often without a warning. It asks, “What if everything goes wrong?” “What if I fail?” “What if I never get what I want?” And disastrous answers to those questions can send us down a path of negative thinking that spirals out of control. Psychologists call it catastrophizing. Next time it happens, stop fear in its path with the opposite question: What if it does work out?

What if you succeed? What if you finally get what you want? What if things go right? Asking these questions can give you a sudden burst of energy. That energy is hope. It can feel like a small light in a dark place. What if your idea does manifest into all you have hoped? What if that relationship does work out? What if your persistence pays off in spite of your discouragement? What then? Then perhaps it will all have been worth it.

This is not to say you should never have a contingency plan. But you can't live life by simply avoiding your fears. Living and working with passion means giving your all because you believe in the possibility of success. You hold more closely to your dreams and desires than your fears and doubts. So in this moment, I invite you to consider the challenge or possibility that causes you the most doubt or anxiety. You know the one—that



situation that causes the persistent question, “What if it doesn’t work out the way I hope?” And then ask the opposite question: “What if it does work out the way I hope?”

Imagine your answer in-depth. Take a moment right now and imagine what it would look like for things to work out. Take a deep breath and close your eyes. What would it feel like? Really imagine yourself there. Imagine the people who are with you. Imagine what you are doing. Imagine how things are different from the way they are in this moment.

Now, move forward focused on the possibilities of your success. Allow your motivation to be a spirit of faith rather than a spirit of fear.

### **My Challenge to You**

Choose optimism. Stop obsessing about what might go wrong and put your energy into what could go right.

### **Coach Yourself**

Consider the thing in your life that you most want but are afraid you will not get. What if it does work out? What will that look like? What action can you take that will demonstrate you are operating in faith rather than fear?

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## Day 5

# In What Way Is It Time to Stretch Yourself?



*When you stretch outside your comfort zone, don't be surprised when you feel uncomfortable. The longer you stay in that new zone, the more comfortable you will become.*

VALORIE BURTON

### **Point to Ponder:**

Studies show we fear an unknown outcome more than we fear a known bad outcome. But in order to try something new, we must overcome our fear of the unknown.

As you begin to make changes in your life, don't burden yourself with a long list of goals. Instead, get inspired. Set a goal that stretches you and, as a result, excites you enough that you are spurred to action. A "stretch goal" develops your character by tapping into and cultivating your strengths. It starts with asking yourself the right questions. Here are a few questions to help you find your own stretch goal. Answer them to find the inspiration to forge ahead and stick to that goal:

### **1. What vision feels just beyond your reach?**

It might be something you see for other people, but for whatever reason you don't see it for yourself—even though you want it. Maybe it's an income double or triple what you make now. Perhaps it's exploring your romantic streak or your fun side. It may even be your dream of being disciplined enough to eat healthy and exercise. The goal here is not to choose something that's realistic, necessarily, but to choose something that feels beyond your reach—as though it's not really possible for you. But it is possible. Do you have the faith to believe it? A stretch goal is one that forces you to reach higher than you think you can. If you don't have to stretch for it, it's not big enough for this exercise.

## **2. What specific, measurable, and time-sensitive goal would bring you closer to that vision?**

Now for the fun part. Get specific about the goal. Make it vivid. Describe it in a way that allows you to measure your progress and know when you have reached the finish line. And most importantly, give yourself a deadline. You know what happens when there's no deadline, right? It's always something you'll start tomorrow. Before you know it, a year has passed and you set the same goal again! "I'm going to have more fun and enjoy my life rather than treating every activity like a burden" is a great vision. Break that down and say, "I'm going to travel for pleasure more. Once every three months, I'll take a fun trip, even if it's just a weekend road trip. And my first trip will be four weeks from now."

## **3. Whom will you tell?**

Don't keep your vision and goal to yourself. Tell somebody. In fact, tell multiple people—supportive people. Negative people tend to throw water on your passion and excitement: "That sounds hard." "You've never done that before!" You don't need those comments. Find someone encouraging—someone who may even want to do this exercise with you. Don't keep it to yourself so you can quietly drop the goal if you don't achieve it. Commit to it. Sharing your plans makes it more likely that you'll actually carry them out.

**My Challenge to You**  
Stop playing it safe. Stretch!

### **Coach Yourself**

What vision feels just beyond your reach? What specific, measurable, and time-sensitive goal would bring you closer to that vision? Whom will you tell?

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This resource is based on the book by Valorie Burton,  
*Start Here Start Now.*



For more information, visit:  
[www.ValorieBurton.com](http://www.ValorieBurton.com)