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TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE

In this excerpt from *Shift Your Brilliance*, Simon T. Bailey explores the idea of shifting—to lead yourself in a positive, forward direction in life and to maximize your potential, your brilliance. For years, you may have been vying to position your business for success, or just to have better relationships where you're respected, appreciated and cared for. However, your goal may be evading you, driving you to feel like a failure. If this is how you feel or think, then I invite you to shift or be shifted. Yes, you are a spiritual being having a human experience. Each spirit exists in a matrix where it pulls things toward it while repelling whatever goes against its worldview. In other words, it is you who attracts people, situations and circumstances rather than the other way around. You're already pre-wired to be brilliant; you just need to shift your brilliance to tap into this power.

Why Shift Your Brilliance?

Once you shift your brilliance, you have more control over whatever comes your way, and you can define your future in the present. By taking over the wheel on the road leading to your destiny, you can navigate your life away from obstacles and ensure a smooth ride ahead. You also find the spark that makes you unique.

When you find your inner spark, it allows your mojo, your essence and your swag to fill a room. Why? Simply put, you are no longer in the room; the room is in you. And when you recognize that fact, you become present in the moment. You realize that you exist to give instead of get. Your spark becomes the push, the nudge, the shove that everyone needs as time slips into the future.

This shift creates other benefits, too:

- Letting go of whatever is keeping you back and embracing what will push you forward
- Learning to find significance rather than seek success
- Identifying your purpose in life and what role you play in every situation you go through
- Boosting your self-confidence and realizing that you're not the one damaged here—it's the situation itself that is damaged
- Discovering your passion for your job and going the extra mile
- Building relationships with every side of your business transactions, rather than just selling or buying
- Uncovering the leader within regardless of your title
- Connecting deeply with your company's brand, discovering it thoroughly in the process and promoting it more effectively

- Boosting your productivity because you actually care about your life and work

Your purpose is not about whether you are a “fit” or a misfit. Your purpose is tied to a need or void in the world. The fact is, you are here to meet a need of someone or something. If you look to fill a void in the world, your purpose for existence will manifest itself—and that will make you the right person in the right place at the right time. In other words, it will make you the right fit and this shift enables you to gain control over your life.

7 Tips to Help You Shift and Take Control of Your Life - If you’re ready to take control and lead rather than be led, here are seven tips you should follow:

1. Stay optimistic and exude positive energy despite the surrounding negativity.
2. Work on being happy and become known for it.
3. Remember that there will be those who like you and those who won’t. Don’t waste your time running after the latter. Build yourself to become strong, and they’re bound to come to you.
4. Become more intuitive and tap into opportunities that are all around you in the matrix.
5. Operate with tacit knowledge, i.e., do what you do with confidence rather than just doing a task.
6. Repel inferior energy, especially while you’re building your own, or it will drag you down.
7. Remember that you may be lonely, but you’re never alone. The quicker you realize this, the less likely it will be for you to succumb to depression and other negative thoughts.

So don’t let the world lead you. Take the steering wheel of your future firmly in your hands, shift into the right gear and become the brilliant person you were created to be.

So how do we take back control of our lives? What follows are the key moves we can make.

1. **Make more of your behaviors automatic.** Because our willpower is so limited, our best defense is to rely on it less. Here’s how the brilliant mathematician Alfred North Whitehead put it: “Civilization advances by extending the number of operations we can perform without thinking about them.” A ritual is a highly precise behavior that you perform over and over, at a specific time, so it becomes automatic and no longer requires much willpower to get it done.
2. **Take yourself out of harm’s way.** You can’t easily lash yourself to a mast, but you can selectively avoid temptations. If you want to lose weight, it makes sense to remove your favorite high-calorie foods from the shelves, and to tell the waiter at restaurants not to bring the bread. If you want to get challenging work done, turn off your email entirely for designated periods of time rather than try to resist its Pavlovian ping.
3. **Whatever you feel compelled to do, don’t.** The more powerfully driven you are to take instant action, the more likely you shouldn’t. When the pull is intense, it’s likely you’ve activated your fight-or-flight physiology. That’s great when you’re actually facing a life-or-death situation and need to react instantly. In most life circumstances, it serves you better to reflect before you react.

- 4. Sleep as much as you must to feel fully rested.** For nearly 98% of us, that means at least 7 hours a night. "Fatigue," said Vince Lombardi, "makes cowards of us all." Specifically, it undermines our capacity for self-control, and we're more likely to default to instant gratification. The best sleep ritual is not just to choose a precise bedtime, but also to begin winding down at least 30 minutes before turning out the lights.
- 5. Do the most important thing first in the morning.** That's when the vast majority of us have the most energy and the fewest distractions. Our energy reservoir diminishes as the day wears on, which is why it's so difficult to get to the hardest work late in the day. Conversely, the more focused you are, the higher the quality of work you'll do, and the more you'll get done. I often get more important work done during the first 90 minutes of the morning than in the rest of the hours of the day put together.
- 6. Eat energy rich foods in small doses at frequent intervals.** Food – specifically glucose – fuels willpower. Unfortunately, the body can only make use of a limited amount at any given time, so we need to refuel at least every three hours. Sugars and simple carbohydrates provide a surge of energy that doesn't last, while lean proteins and complex carbohydrates provide a steadier, more enduring source of energy and therefore willpower.
- 7. Do one thing at a time.** With so much coming at us so relentlessly – emails, texts, people, and information – we assume the only way to get to it all is to juggle multiple tasks at the same time. In fact, moving between tasks creates something called "switching time." When you shift attention from one focus of attention to another, the average time it takes to finish the first task increases by at least 25%.
- 8. Work in sprints.** Human beings aren't meant to operate like computers, at high speeds, continuously. Rather, we're designed to pulse between spending and renewing energy. The ultradian rhythm refers to a 90-minute cycle inside us, during which we move from a state of higher physiological arousal progressively down towards fatigue. Focus intensely, ideally without interruption, for no more than 90 minutes at a time. Then take a real break, for at least a few minutes, to relax emotionally, give the mind a rest and physically recharge.
- 9. Ground yourself in your values.** Above all else, it's critical to ground yourself in deeply held values. Knowing what you stand for is a uniquely powerful fuel for behavior, especially when the going gets tough, and the temptation is to take the easy route.
- 10. Say "no" early and often.** The best way to have more time to work on projects that matter to you, like updating your portfolio or finishing a series, is to spend less time doing everything else. If you really don't want to do something at all, it's unlikely your desire to do it will increase by delaying the activity. Saying, "Not Now" when you should say, "No," leads to you carrying around the emotional burden of the task until you complete it and a huge amount of resentment when you finally do the work. (Plus you run a high risk of turning it in late due to your resistance to the project so you probably will annoy the person on the receiving end too.) When in doubt just say, "No."

11. Be disciplined about your 'me' time. Taking time for yourself is as important as sleep. Pampering yourself, doing your favorite activities, or working on your favorite hobbies is a great way to give time to yourself. Meditation, bubble baths, morning walks, etc, etc are all great ways to get some me time. Don't we all deserve the 'guest' treatment? We worked hard for it, right? If you don't care for yourself once in a while you will wear down. Who's going to be there to take care of things when you wear down?

12. Make a habit of trying new things. You never know when that one thing you never tried before will be the best thing ever, be it food, music, movies, books, activities, exercises, drinks, etc. Why miss out on something great just because you didn't want to take a chance or you were afraid of what might happen? You only have one short life here and you might as well live it while you are physically and mentally able.

13. Embrace every moment. No matter if it's challenging or fun - live, feel, and be in the moment with all of your attention. Immerse yourself in to your life and you will feel a part of something more, something big and important. That's because you are! A huge part of your own story and a significant part of other people's stories, live it up!

14. Stop wasting time. We live in a world with many distractions at our fingertips. Nevertheless, know that you actively make the choice whether to stay engaged in one task or get distracted by a mobile game, TV, Facebook, or a text message. Instead of coming home and flipping on the TV because it is an easy way to pass time, do something productive or on your to-do list so you stay in control of the moment. Working out, practicing a hobby, or working on relationships are all productive and enjoyable pastimes.

15. Get organized. Organization is important when you want to take control of your life. If everything is chaos in your head and in your house, then it is difficult to know where to start to solve any messes. Keep everything as neat as possible at home and at work so you don't have to deal with clutter, and remember to put things back where they should be. Make lists, use a calendar and make decisions often instead of putting everything off.

- Read papers, email and mail right away and take action right away, whether that means throwing it out, paying a bill or responding to a letter.
- Set up a daily schedule throughout the week, such as shopping, family time, appointments, task lists, etc.
- Throw things out that you haven't used in six months. Don't hold on to something because you could potentially use it in the future.
- Work on one thing at a time, particularly something small like a closet, organize that first. Then move onto the next thing.

16. Be independent. If you are co-dependent on others for your emotional health, lifestyle, or need them to tell you what to do, you are not in control of your life. Learn to solve your own problems and spend time alone to think and reflect. Only ask for help when you really need it, and learn from the people who help you so you can do more on your own next time.

- Learn to meet your own needs. Get a job so you can support yourself if you live off of someone else. Then move out, and live on your own.
- Ask yourself, "What do I want to do today?" and make your own decisions. Think about what you love doing and what you feel passionately about. Don't rely on others to tell you what to do or like.

17. Take action. You can have all the goals in the world but never get anywhere if you don't take action to achieve those goals. Do what you have to in order to get what and where you want. Take small steps but be sure to do something every day that helps you get closer to your end goal. This could be a mundane task, practicing positive thoughts, doing paperwork or something else.

- Don't get so caught up in the future that you can't enjoy your life now. Enjoy the journey toward your goal, and remember to be thankful for everything that you have achieved right now.
- Do the best you can, whether it's at a project, a test or a pastime. Achievements that take effort make you feel good about yourself and motivate you to achieve more.

18. Be selective about the media you consume. Marketers all across the world are tracking your patterns, buying your personal information and studying your online and offline habits in order to funnel you into purchasing products from the companies that hire them. If you are inclined to cave, and make impulsive, unhealthy purchases – like greasy fast food – they are aware of this, even to the exact percentage of likelihood that you will make this impulse buy. They push ads upon you until your willpower gets weak. This is just one form of mind control being practiced publicly every day. It's manipulative and it was created to be. You have to take back control from these mega-corporations by making strong-willed, healthy decisions that support YOUR best interests. Buy things that benefit you and those you love, not things that benefit big companies that don't care about you.

19. Prioritize YOUR desires ahead of external and internal resistance. You're the one that's got to die when it's time for you to die, so let yourself live life the way you want to live it. Seriously, life is too short to waste profuse amounts of time wondering what other people think about you. In the first place, if they had better things going on in their lives, they wouldn't have the time to sit around and talk about you. What should be important to you is not their opinions of you, but your opinion of yourself. So don't let others get in your way! And don't let your fears get in your way either; they're not there to scare you. They're there to let you know that something is worth it. If a particular pursuit makes you feel alive, stand strong and step forward, no matter what.

20. Flip your perspective from negative to positive. We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses. You've heard this before. Don't let negativity influence you. When others are being negative, ignore them. Keep in mind that how others see things is rarely the truth. There are no facts, only interpretations, and it is our interpretations that make us or break us. If you look at things the right way, you can see that the whole world is a beautiful garden. It's your job to tend to it, and to see and appreciate the roses. Because in the end, the quality of your vision drives the quality of your

living. Train your mind to see the beauty in everything. Positivity is a choice. The happiness of your life depends on the effectiveness of your perspective.

21. Stop looking for and expecting “perfect.” – You are flawed, so is everyone you know, and that’s just as it should be. Seriously, have no fear of perfection; you will never reach it. And don’t expect that others will achieve it either. We’re all imperfect beings filled with flaws and imperfections, therefore we shouldn’t wish to highlight the weaknesses of others at the expense of denying our own. In the end, you will come to realize that perfection, especially in relationships, is only ever found in the beauty and honest appreciation of imperfection.

22. Give yourself a break. – Yes, you have battles out in the world to fight, insecurities to overcome, loved ones to contend with and goals to achieve, but a break from it all is necessary. It's perfectly healthy to pause and let the world spin without you for a while. If you don't, you will burn yourself out. So refill your bucket on a regular basis. That means catching up on sleep, making time for laughter and fun, eating healthy enough to maintain solid energy levels, and otherwise making time for recovery from the chaos of your routine.

23. Loosen your grip on the past. – Sometimes we have to let go of what's killing us, even if it's killing us to let go. Letting go means to come to the realization that some circumstances and relationships are a part of your history, but not a part of your destiny. Cry. Forgive. Learn. Move forward. Let your tears water the seeds of your future happiness. And remember, sometimes the hardest part isn't the act of letting go but rather learning to start over. This is normal. This is a new day. A new beginning. And things will change for the better.

24. The Dalai Lama once said, "A new way of thinking has become the necessary condition for responsible living and acting. If we maintain obsolete values and beliefs, a fragmented consciousness and self-centered spirit, we will continue to hold onto outdated goals and behaviors." Today, make it a point to defragment your consciousness and center your spirit on positive, productive thoughts and habits. Tune out the drama around you and tune in to your own intuition. Free your mind. Smile and be grateful. Life is too short to waste on negativity and those who create it.

What ideas, people and circumstances do you need to free yourself from in order to move forward?

Most people want to be in good health, experience well-being, be satisfied with work, accept themselves, be respected, and have supportive relationships. If your life feels hectic, monotonous, or incomplete, then you need to get back in control. Anything that holds value in life requires time, effort, focus, and is likely to cause discomfort along the way. Be the person you want to be, and live the life you want by learning how to change your thinking, make lifestyle modifications, and be productive.

Define control. Figure out what taking control of your life means to you. Is it the ability to influence your destiny, regulate your present, keep your negative behavior in check, or do you simply want more willpower? Taking control of your life requires working through multiple challenges, including your own perceptions, building self-confidence as well as taking an action. Determine what you want more control over, and that will help focus your energy.

Accept yourself. The first step to succeeding in anything is to know and accept your strengths and limitations. Show compassion for yourself. Accept not only the good but the bad too. Always strive to improve the things you don't like or that you struggle with. Understand why you do what you do and forgive yourself. Self reflection is healthy and positive. Self-criticism and feeling guilty are unproductive behaviors that do more harm than good, so if you catch yourself in one of these patterns, remind yourself that there are healthier ways for you to work things out. Understand that you have done the best you could, and repeatedly tell yourself this.

Think of three things right now that you excel at, receive many compliments for or truly enjoy doing. Write them down.

Get control of your emotions. Emotions can be wonderful experiences but expressing them improperly can harm your ability to attain goals and damage relationships. You need to learn how to understand, process and respond to your feelings in a way that is healthy and helpful to you.

- Use deep breathing and relaxation methods to help you calm down before saying or doing anything in response to a situation.
- Breathe in for five seconds, hold it for five more seconds and breathe out for five more seconds. Do this until you feel your physical responses, such as an increased heart-rate, become less intense.
- Seek a healthy outlet for your emotions like talking to someone, keeping a journal or engaging in active activities like martial arts.

What emotions do you feel you need to control?

Let go of baggage. Sometimes negative thoughts or experiences can be tough to let go — you may have a feeling that they define you, or they may be so habitual you may be afraid to be without them, or you may simply not know how to let go. You must learn that you are not your problems and that they do not determine your worth as a person or how you make choices today. Learning to let go of past baggage will help you become more solution-oriented, broaden your vision, and help you take control of your life.

Practice mindfulness. One way to free yourself from the past is to focus on the present. With mindfulness, you are actively giving your attention to the present moment — how you feel in your body, how the sun feels on your face — just observing. Instead of judging your thoughts (or yourself), you observe and note them. Mindfulness takes practice, but the benefits can be enormous.

What did you observe?

Make amends. If you are haunted by a mistake in your past, then it may help you to make amends. If you judge yourself for the way you teased your little sister, reach out to her (it can be face-to-face or in a letter), apologizing for your behavior. Give her the chance to tell you how she feels. Be aware that making amends may not repair a damaged relationship, but it can help you let go of the past and move forward.

Who do you need to make amends with? Why?

What are some mistakes you need to forgive yourself for?

There are several things you can do to begin this process. You can do these things in whatever way feels right to you. You may want use a journal to list or write your thoughts and ideas as a way to stay focused on what it is you want, to motivate yourself and to record your progress.

1. Think about what you really want your life to be like.

Do you want to:

- go back to school and study something of special interest?
- enhance your talents in some way?
- to do a certain kind of work?
- have a different home space or to own your home?
- move to the country or the city?
- work with an alternative health care provider on wellness strategies?
- make your own decisions about treatment?
- stop putting up with disabling side effects?
- become more physically active?
- lose or gain weight?

You can probably think of many more ideas. Write them all down. You may want to keep them in a journal.

2. List those things that have kept you from doing the things you wanted to do in the past.

3. Then write down ways you could work on resolving each of the problems that keep you from doing the things you want to do and being the kind of person you want to be. As you do this, remind yourself that you are a intelligent person. You have the ability to find ways to resolve problems and to work on resolving them. You can resolve these problems slowly or quickly. You can take small steps or big steps — whatever feels right and is possible for you. But you must do it if you want to take back control of your life.

4. In the process of taking control of your own life, you may need to change the nature of your relationship with some of the people in your life. For instance, instead of your doctor telling you what to do, you and your doctor would talk about your options and you would choose the ones that felt best to you. You may need to tell a parent or spouse that you will make your own decisions about where you will live, what you will do and who you will associate with.

What are some relationships you will change and why?

5. Know your rights and insist that others respect these rights.

Your rights include the following:

- I have the right to ask for what I want.
- I have the right to say no to requests I can't meet.
- I have the right to change my mind.
- I have the right to make mistakes and not be perfect.
- I have the right to follow my own values and standards.
- I have the right to express my feelings, both positive or negative.
- I have the right to say no to anything when I feel I am not ready, it is unsafe, or it violates my values.
- I have the right to determine my own priorities.
- I have the right not to be responsible for others' behavior, actions, feelings or problems.
- I have the right to expect honesty from others.
- I have the right to be angry.
- I have the right to be uniquely myself.
- I have the right to feel scared and say "I'm afraid."
- I have the right to say "I don't know."
- I have the right not to give reasons for my behavior.
- I have the right to make decisions based on my feelings.
- I have the right to my own personal space and time.
- I have the right to be playful and frivolous.
- I have the right to be healthy.
- I have the right to be in a non-abusive environment.
- I have the right to make friends and be comfortable around people.
- I have the right to change and grow.
- I have the right to have my needs and wants respected by others.
- I have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- I have the right to be happy.

What rights do you feel you need to be more assertive with?

6. Educate yourself so that you have all the information you need to make good decisions and to take back control of your life. Study resource books. Check out the internet. Ask people whom you trust. Make your own decisions about what feels right to you and what doesn't.

Who will you ask for support?

Where will you look for more information?

7. Plan your strategies for making your life the way you want it to be. Figure out the best way for you to get what it is that you want or to be the way you want to be. Then start working at it. Keep at it with courage and persistence until you have reached your goal and made a dream come true.

What is your first step to making this change?

What is your next step?