

# *A Formula For Growth*

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*“Why stay we on the earth except to grow?”*

—Robert Browning

**M**ost people would agree with Browning. Unfortunately, growth doesn't always come easily; often we feel “stuck.” If you're feeling stuck, here's a formula to help you get unstuck:

## **Awareness**

Awareness is the knowledge of our strengths, weaknesses, goals, and desires. As we become aware, the picture becomes clear. Vaguely amorphous feelings become focused and gain power, much as a ray of morning light broadens into day..

We increase awareness through introspection, creativity, classes and workshops, counseling, reading, and honest talks with friends, family, co-workers, even bosses. Awareness is a process, rather than a goal.

The force of awareness carries its own motivation. For example, a smoker who experiences severe chest pains (awareness) may quit smoking with surprising ease.

If the stakes are high enough, we translate awareness into action, e.g., growth, without much discipline.

More often than not, however, the immediate stakes are not so high, so obvious or so tangible that awareness creates action. More often, we see the wisdom of changing our behavior while we continue our old patterns.

## **+ Self-Discipline**

To break out of old patterns we need discipline. Athletes have coaches and musicians have teachers to provide both awareness and discipline. Most of the time, though, you're on your own.

How can you be your own coach? Begin by focusing on your goal, visualizing the outcome, and creating a plan (e.g., start with manageable steps, write them down, and keep promises made to yourself). You might enlist a friend as a surrogate coach to help you stay on track.


But sometimes nothing seems to work. No matter what you do, you remain stuck in old patterns. How do you know when to give up? When the effort is not worth the payoff? When your progress isn't commensurate with the time you spend? Or maybe you never give up.

## **= Growth**

We don't achieve every goal we set for ourselves, but we can grow from every attempt we make—no matter what the outcome. For this reason our formula does not

equal “success” or “results.” We won’t always succeed. However, if we choose, we can grow to a new level of wisdom.

So the formula itself isn’t magic. It is, however, a shorthand method to help us remember why we put ourselves through painful and difficult situations, and why we deny ourselves certain pleasures. We like the feeling of working through the equation. We like the feeling of growth. We like knowing that we are better than we were before.



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# *Components of Mastery*

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Often, people attend my presentations looking for new ideas. Sometimes they know what to do, and they're looking for the motivation to do it. This got me thinking about mastery. As a result, I've developed a five-step formula for mastery.\*

Sometimes we're seeking ways to become better at our jobs. Or we want to learn how to have a more fulfilling relationship with someone we care about, manage our time better, close sales more successfully, or lead a more healthy life style. Although you may be good at many things in your life, would you consider yourself a master at them? Even top pros continue to work to become better.

It impresses me while watching the Olympics, to realize that these athletes, many of whom hold world records, still see room for improvement. They all have coaches, they all practice untold hours, they all strive for their own personal best.

Why, a number of years ago, did Bonnie Blair go for her fifth gold medal when she already had four? I think

it was because she knew she could do better. She not only got the fifth gold, but she set a new world record.

In order to pursue and practice mastery, follow these five steps:

**1. *Desire change.***

- ☘ You must believe something must change.
- ☘ You must believe you must change it.
- ☘ You must believe you can change it.

**2. *Explore your attitude about the results of the change.***

Explore both positive and negative results. How will your life be different? What are your fears about the change? What are the benefits it will bring? What will it cost you?

**3. *Know the process to institute the new behavior.***

Just wishing for change is not very effective. When you want to master a new skill, you need to know how to acquire that skill or behavior. How can you learn about mastery in this area? Read a book? Attend a seminar? Enlist a mentor? Get a coach?


**4. *Use the new behavior regularly.***

Practice. Just like Bonnie Blair. Practice does not make perfect. It makes permanent. You could be cementing poor habits. Only perfect practice makes perfect. Few people ever achieve perfection in any endeavor. However, an overriding concern for perfection can mentally paralyze us and make us not practice.

**5. *Enjoy the benefits of change, no matter how small.***

How does it feel when you have glimpses of a higher level of mastery? When you're in the "zone"—even if it's leading an effective business meeting, giving a heartfelt talk, or telling someone you love them—it feels great! Relish that feeling. It will keep you going if you trip and fall on your road to mastery.

*\*I'm sure some of this is from seminars I've attended, books and articles I've read, and conversations I've had with people over the last thirty years. I don't have anyone specific to whom I can attribute any of this to. It's an amalgamation of many sources, none of which I can identify.*



***We have mastered  
certain skills in  
our work and  
life, but there  
are still areas  
in which we  
know we're  
not com-  
petent***



# *Being Coached To Be Your Best*

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**W**hen was the last time you had a coach? In high school or college sports? When you were beginning your career? Maybe never?

I've worked with several coaches. At first I found the relationship difficult. They would tell me to do something that I didn't want to do or was difficult. I argued that their ideas wouldn't work. I wouldn't be able to do it. I'd fail. Then I'd beat myself up.

Finally, with my health and fitness coach, June Anderson, owner of Fitness For Success, I realized that my way hadn't worked, so why was I arguing with her? After all, I'd hired her to help me accomplish what I hadn't been able to achieve on my own. Although I knew what to do, I wasn't doing what I knew consistently enough to produce the results I wanted.

As adults we have mastered certain skills in our work and life, but there are still areas in which we know we're not competent. It was difficult, yet helpful, to think of myself as a beginner in areas in which I didn't yet have mastery. For example, June told me to drink six to eight

glasses of water a day. I had been drinking zero glasses a day. When I drank four glasses I felt bloated and water logged. I tried to convince her that six to eight were too many. She didn't listen. We started with two as my goal, then when I was drinking two, we moved to three, then four. I still don't drink eight glasses every day, but I'm a lot closer than I was.

June knew when to ignore my protests. Gently yet firmly she urged me along with what seemed like simple to apply suggestions, yet they were hard for me to actually do. She saw my capabilities beyond what I saw.

I was rarely exercising more than once a week. My goal in the beginning was to exercise three times a week. I didn't see how I could do it. I hated exercise. I was busy traveling. I was busy fulfilling projects for clients. Now I exercise much more than before. She coached me to go beyond what I thought was possible.

I felt embarrassed that I needed a coach to help me do things I already knew I should be doing. "After all," my ego reasoned, "I'm a professional who runs a successful company, has written several books, and is in demand around the country. Why should I need a coach to get me to drink eight glasses of water? How ridiculous. I should be able to do this on my own."

The parallel to my own work struck me. In my presentations I remind people to do what they already know to do, but they aren't doing it. My audience members are intelligent, accomplished individuals who aren't doing what they know to do. I realized that I help them make