

Identify Your Core Desire

People spend most of their time thinking about what they don't want and then wondering why it keeps showing up over and over again in their lives.

Beth was an attractive brunette who appeared to be in her early forties. She came into my office at Miraval for a consultation, sat down, and immediately told me that she wanted to lose thirty pounds. When I asked her why she wanted to lose that weight, she replied that she wanted to fit into her clothes and she wanted to look better than her ex-husband's girlfriend. Those were certainly both reasons, but as we talked it soon became clear that what she really was telling me was that every time she looked in the mirror she felt fat, unattractive, and insecure—and she simply didn't want to feel that way any more.

I asked if she had children. *Yes, two— ten and eight. Are they healthy? Oh, well, you know, they're like every other kid.* But not all kids are sick; are they healthy? *Well, we have a baby sitter, and she calls in for food, so...* Well, I knew what that meant. They were eating pizza and burgers and parking themselves in front of the television every day after school.

As Beth was talking, I noticed that, in the course of our conversation, she kept repeating one phrase: "I'm overweight." I started writing down how many times she'd said that.

At the end of our session Beth looked at me and asked, "So what do I do now?" At that point I handed her the piece of paper I'd been filling with notes, and when she

saw how many times she'd said, "I'm overweight," she was astonished. "Did I really say that so many times?" she asked.

I told Beth that she'd been using her mind to affirm to her body that she was fat. And, furthermore, because your body is the servant of your mind, it has no choice but to listen. If your body listens to your mind telling you how overweight you are, the body is not going to work to make you thin and fit; it's going to work to do exactly the opposite--keep you overweight. It's simply what your mind has been telling it to do.

Then I suggested that we take another look at the reasons she'd given for wanting to lose weight: wanting to fit into her clothes and wanting to look better than her ex-husband's girlfriend. How did she think she would feel when she'd achieved those goals? Listening to her tone of voice and watching her expression as she told me how she'd feel, I could tell that, although she certainly had strong feelings attached to those goals, they weren't deep enough or passionate or—most important of all—positive enough to create the kinds of changes she truly needed and wanted to make.

What Beth really needed was to search more deeply within herself for a real reason to reach her weight-loss goal. We needed a reason that would generate the kinds of powerful, positive feelings that would tell me—and most of all her—that this was more than just a reason, that it was, in fact, her core desire. Perhaps, I suggested, her core desire was to turn her life around. To be truly happy instead of insecure. To be a role model for her children.

Finally, we had hit a chord! When she thought about how she'd feel once she'd achieved those goals, Beth was literally in tears. For her, this was a true, inspirational "aha" moment. She was able to see that instead of using negative reasons, which were

creating negative energy, she could act from a positive reason fueled by a true core desire to be happy and make a better life for herself and her children, and that this would release the positive mental and emotional energy (the magic) she'd had within her all along to achieve her physical goal.

After that, I worked with Beth not only to create a nutrition and exercise program she could realistically follow but also to help her take the key steps necessary to guarantee that her program would become as habitual as getting up in the morning and brushing her teeth. I made it clear that this would take some effort on her part, and that after she left Miraval, she'd have to keep at it for four to six weeks until her routine became automatic. But I assured her that, after thirty to forty days, it would be something she'd continue to do without even having to think about it.

In the weeks after she went back home, Beth phoned me a couple of times to report that she was sticking to her resolve, and then, after four months, she called to let me know she'd lost twenty-five pounds and was closing in on her goal weight. Not only that, but she was feeling so positive about herself that she was also determined to change the way her children were eating and spending their free time after school.

Do You Really Want to Change?

No one can “make” another person change his or her behavior. Only the person himself can control his choices and create that change. All I can do for you in this book is what I do when I'm sitting in a room with a client—to help you to determine what your goals are and what you truly want for yourself, help you to identify your current negative and positive behaviors, and help you to create a plan of action that will facilitate the changes

you want to make. Doing all that is a process—one I go through with my clients every day and that I will be going through with you. The first step, which we'll learn about in this chapter, is to identify your core desire—the self-generated, internal need that will motivate you to finally change.

Change doesn't happen in an instant. In fact most of us, at least initially, are afraid of change. If you don't believe me, just think how many people remain for years in dead end jobs or moribund marriages. Why? Because they may not be happy with the result of their current behavior, but at least they know what that result is. And they're afraid that if they change their behavior, the result may be worse rather than better. Even our bodies hate to change. All our systems and our organs work constantly, every day, to keep things the same. What our bodies seek is *homeostasis*—the maintenance of internal stability. That's a biological fact.

So how do we bring about change for ourselves, mentally and physically? Change is, as I've said, a process. We move from not thinking about change at all to thinking about it, planning it, and then testing various means of creating it.

By now you may at least have reached the point of thinking about change. To move past that point, you need to ask yourself three questions:

- Why do I want to change my behavior (the pros)?

(For example: I want to feel better about myself. I want to look better. I want to do everything I can do live better longer. I want to set a good example for my kids. I want my husband to stop nagging me.)

- Why shouldn't I try to change my behavior (the cons)?

(For example: I'm so busy already that I don't need any more stress in my life. I don't want to be a failure. It's going to be hard for me to be with my friends and stick to my healthy eating plan. The rest of my family isn't going to want to eat this way, so I'll be cooking two meals.)

- Do my pros outweigh my cons?

(Only you can answer that question!)

If your answer to the last question was “yes,” you're at the point of being interested in change. Being interested, however, isn't a strong enough feeling or motivation to get you where you think you want to be. If you're merely interested you're not committed, and you'll most likely give up as soon as you encounter an obstacle or challenge.

Being committed means you'll do whatever it takes; being interested means you'll do what's convenient. Let's say you're thinking about something as simple as changing your hairstyle. You're interested, but you're not committed. Chances are the minute someone questions the idea, or if you can't get an appointment right away, you'll drop the whole thing and move on to some other “interest.”

The Power of the Subconscious

Before you go through the steps that will lead you to discover and connect with your own true core desire it's important for you to understand the power of the subconscious mind so that you will see how Beth's constantly telling herself she was fat was actually causing her to be fat, and how your own subconscious beliefs about yourself may be preventing you from achieving your own most deeply held desires.

Your subconscious mind comprises 83% of your brain mass and is responsible for 98% of your perceptions and behaviors, including habits and beliefs, memory, personality, and self-image. It cannot tell the truth from a lie or the real from the imagined. It accepts as true every thought or image you send it.

The ideas that are fixed in your subconscious have been determined by your education, conditioning, and repetition. They involve all your senses and they affect every aspect of your present behavior. Therefore, if, for example, every time you look in the mirror you're focusing on how fat you are, you will subconsciously be affirming your fatness to yourself, and the consequence of that subconscious affirmation is that your daily behaviors will be directed toward fulfilling what you believe about yourself. In the following chapters I'll be teaching you how to replace those negative subconscious affirmations with positive ones that will lead you to achieve what you do want instead of keeping you stuck in what you don't want.

To show how your subconscious may be driving your behavior and perceptions, imagine that you have a subconscious memory attached to a particular scent or aroma. It could be anything from the scent of your mother's favorite perfume to the smell of burning wood. If your mother's perfume reminds you of her coming to kiss you goodnight, it has a positive connotation; if it reminds you of her going out in the evening and leaving you home alone, it will have a negative connotation for you. And the same goes for the smell of burning wood. If it reminds you of happy family evenings in front of the fireplace, that's good; if you were once trapped in a burning building, that's bad. Now imagine that you're in the middle of a conversation with someone and suddenly you smell that same perfume or burning wood. If your subconscious memory is favorable, the

conversation you are having will strike you as positive, or, conversely, if your associations are negative, the conversation will take a wrong turn. You won't know why, you certainly won't associate the outcome with what you smelled, but your subconscious mind will be affecting what's happening in your life at the moment.

By the same token, if something in your past has led you to believe (on a subconscious level) that you are fat or that you are a couch potato, you will, without realizing it, be making your outward behavior conform to your inner beliefs. Let's say, for example, that your mother used sweet treats to bribe you to behave well. Your subconscious has been programmed to associate sweets with reward. You may be able to override those beliefs temporarily by using your willpower, but, over time, your internal beliefs will always be stronger than your willpower. To create any permanent change in behavior you must first change your negative inner beliefs. Failing to do that is why so many people go on a diet or start an exercise program and ultimately gain back all the weight they lost or simply stop exercising.

The good news, however, is that you can bring your subconscious thoughts and beliefs into consciousness, and once you are able to do that, you can change them.

Listen to Yourself

An essential part of the process of getting to know yourself, understanding the underlying beliefs that have been driving your behaviors, and finding the deep-seated desire that will create your commitment to change is looking deeply within yourself.

The problem for many people is that they've become so used to looking outward for validation and satisfaction that they've lost touch with their ability to look inward. So,

if you've been telling yourself that you "need" or "ought" to lose weight—because, for example, society tells you it's better to be thin, or because a fitness trainer tells you to do it, or even because a doctor tells you'll be healthier if you exercise more—I'm here to tell you that you've been looking for motivation in all the wrong places. Your behavior has always been your choice; it is generated from within. No one else has made you behave the way you do, and changing your behavior must also be your choice, because no one else can make you change or impose a reason to change upon you.

You may have been listening to other people for a very long time: your parents, your spouse, your friends and coworkers, or the many "experts" you see or hear or whose opinions you read in the media every day. You may even have determined what you "think" other people want you to do without their ever having voiced an opinion.

It may be that when you were a kid you thought you knew it all and didn't listen to anyone. But then, as time went on, you became much more attached to the opinions of others. You may even have got to the point where you believe the opinions of others are more important than your own. Now is the time to begin listening to yourself again, because whatever is going on in the world around you is not nearly as important to you and your future as what's going on inside you.

A true core desire is not something you get from without; it's something you already have. In other words, if you are waiting for me or anyone else to provide you with the motivation you lack for changing your behavior, you might as well stop reading right now. It is not within my power to motivate you. It is, however, within my power to help you discover motivation within yourself, and the strongest motivation there is, is

your own true core desire. It's there, it's probably the most powerful untapped resource each one of us has, and once you learn to access it, the riches will flow freely and forever.

The really good news is that you *can* reprogram your subconscious mind—and once you do that your body *will* follow.

Mind Over Body, The Key to Lasting Weight Loss is All In Your Heard

Springboard Press- Date of publication: June 1st 2007

Chapter 1 Excerpt

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