

# STRONGER TOGETHER

## Sharing of Best Practices



## Journaling Affirmations, Imagination, A Better Life

by Ron Medved

*"All meaningful and lasting change  
starts first in one's imagination."  
Lou Tice*



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When it comes to actualizing The Pacific Institute education and concepts, the journal is my favorite tool. If this paper is anything, it is evidence of my ongoing fascination with application. In other words, what goes on after the seminar is over. In that spirit, we are all practitioners. Here's some food for thought.

## The Present

I carry a briefcase, a smart phone, and an "empty book", or journal. They go everywhere with me.

You can imagine what's in my briefcase: files, computer, pens, and work stuff, no surprise. And everybody's smart phone is pretty much the same, right: contact list, apps, music, and access to the world, phone and internet.

But it's my journal that truly makes my life happen.

My journal is the home base of my imagination. It is where my goals, affirmations, and the regular stream of my ideas find a sure landing. Empty pages fill up with words, pictures, and emotions. It's focused daydreaming, everyday, captured and recorded. Short moments most days and long minutes other days, personal notes made up of reflection, insight, and creativity.

## The Past

I've been journaling for over 30 years and, at last count, I have 78 completed journals in 5 banker's boxes stored in the garage. "The past" is in those boxes, and I know it, which is reassuring. I guess this is the "dear diary" aspect of journaling. The real-time record of the past.

For example, I met my wife Calli in January, 1985 and I recently went looking in my early journals for entries I would have made about her. Sure enough, there they were! After September 11th, I wrote and reflected for weeks in my journal. What did 9/11 mean? What's going on? More importantly, how could I keep my spirits up, stay positive? I have yet to go back and read those pages, but I will.

There are lots of memories there: early reflections, old goals, beginning affirmations, and, of course, emotional history.

I rarely go out to my storage and dive into the journals because, frankly, I become lightheaded. Almost, like the past makes me dizzy, because it somehow it's causing me to look in the wrong direction. But that is just me, for now.

I probably complete two journals a year, and I keep the most recent 3 or 4 journals close to me in my office, as they represent my most current hopes and expectations.

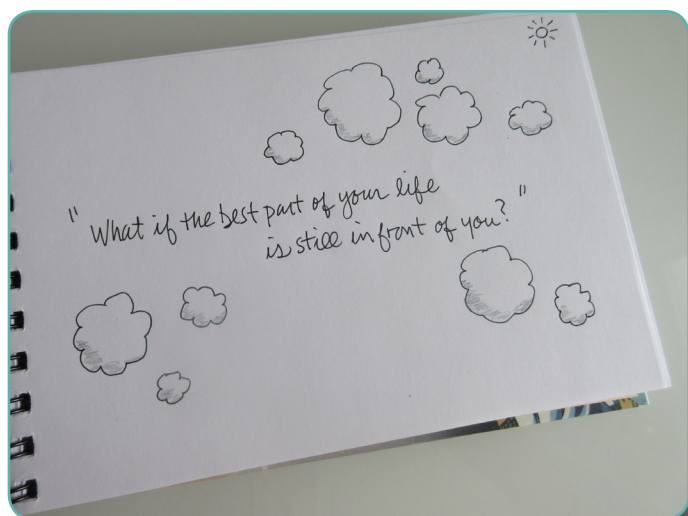
## The Future

All the years I've journaled, I've been intuitively confident that journaling is quietly powerful and effective beyond my own understanding—especially about the future.

In recent years, there is a growing collection of research from psychologists and neuro-scientists that says hand-written, hand-drawn journals create unique, neural pathways in the brain. Different than, say, typing on a computer. What I'm referring to is a way to mobilize brain plasticity, still present to us as adults. Having a brain that's growing and changeable is not just the domain of infants.

Journaling is more than an interesting hobby. It is a practice that fosters an intimate, personal learning. It is a natural springboard into a lifetime of growing and becoming.

I've used journaling to define and re-define balance in my life. Expand my financial comfort zone. Get through mid-life crises. Become comfortable as a public speaker. Stay fit. Pray. Keep on purpose, as a project director. Sharpen my skills as a leader and a manager. Give me an outlet as an artist. And more.



## Affirmations

When Lou Tice teaches his seminars, he's constantly alerting ahead, especially about affirmations (it's coming, it's coming). Lou teaches the affirmation process after he's laid down a solid foundation, the basics of self-image psychology. He teaches us the science underlying the reason why affirmations work. It's very logical and persuasive. Unfortunately, this is often not enough to guarantee that affirmations automatically become a daily practice for our students.

There are lots of opinions on why this is the case. My own son, Shawn, has chided me about affirmations. He loves the education, but does it all have to end up like this, he has said, sentences on a 3x5 card? I counter that it's not about 3x5 cards, not about sentences: the affirmation process is really about your imagination.

Really understanding affirmations—and building them into your life—is a journey. The journal goes along on the trip. Here's the logic.

We learn initially that an affirmation is "a statement of fact or belief." Later, Lou describes an affirmation as a "trigger tool," not an end in itself, but a means to the end.

### This double-meaning is worth exploring.

The affirmation is indeed evidence of the underlying belief. But if we're intending to grow, to go in a new belief-direction, we do need to imagine it first.

When the affirmation is a trigger tool, think about what the affirmation is triggering. In my experience, and as taught in the seminar, the affirmation is triggering  $I \times V = R$  (imagination  $\times$  vividness = the new reality).

Everyday that we affirm the new picture, and the feelings that come with it, the image and feelings morph a little. We're triggering new creativity each day, or each time we affirm. We're in process—building our self-image, or re-modeling it, as the case may be. Brain plasticity, in action.

## The journal is our companion.

Near the end of Lou's teaching career, Lou became fascinated with the idea, what if we start with the emotion, not the sentence. Lou usually taught "words, pictures, and emotions"—in that sequence. But, one day, Lou said, "what if we started with the emotion?"

Joy. Confidence. Gratitude. Why not? Pick the emotion and work from there. I remember Lou practicing this new idea, working it out in his journal. In my journals you'll find sentences, but you'll also find photographs, drawings, questions, key words, pictures cut out of magazines, and found-objects.

I'm experimenting with the idea that anything that triggers  $I \times V = R$  qualifies as an affirmation.

## The Seminar

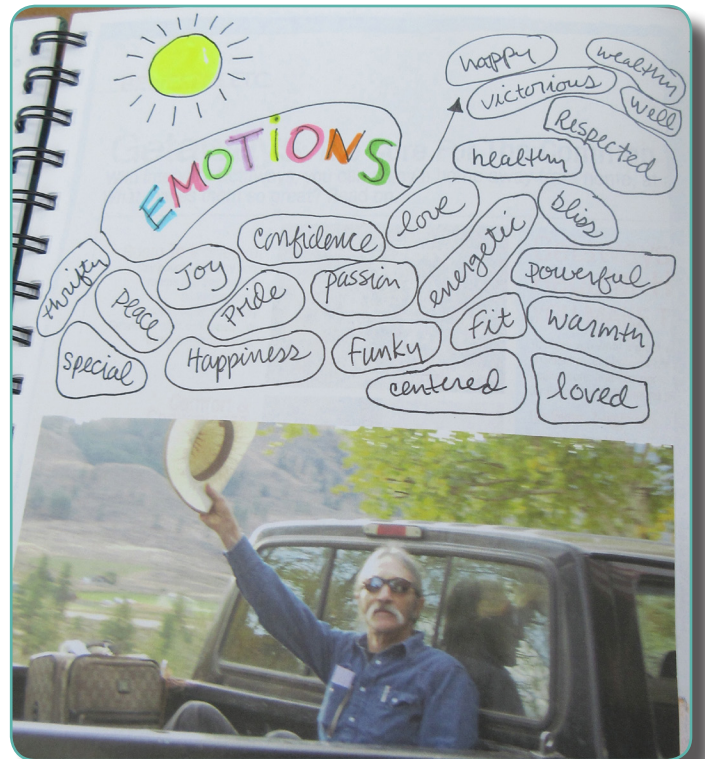
*"People don't wake up in the morning and say, 'I need a seminar.' They wake up in the morning and they say, 'I want a better life.'" Lou Tice*

I don't know what's more famous—Stuart Smalley's skit about affirmations on Saturday Night Live or our teaching of the affirmation process. I'm serious: if we have a shallow appreciation of affirmations, seminar application can be more of a struggle than it needs to be.

In most of the seminars I do these days, I have a follow-up workshop 2-3 weeks afterwards. As we get back together, I do an informal survey with my students: on a scale of one-to-five, how are you doing on the affirmation process? There's always a significant number who are falling short. But it's getting better because of one reason: the journaling process.

During the seminars, I give each of my participants an empty journal. I am now giving the journal out fairly early in the seminar, at about the same time Lou starts to mention affirmations (usually, the self-talk module). As Lou continues to build the framework for how our minds work, I am building a case for application at the same time.

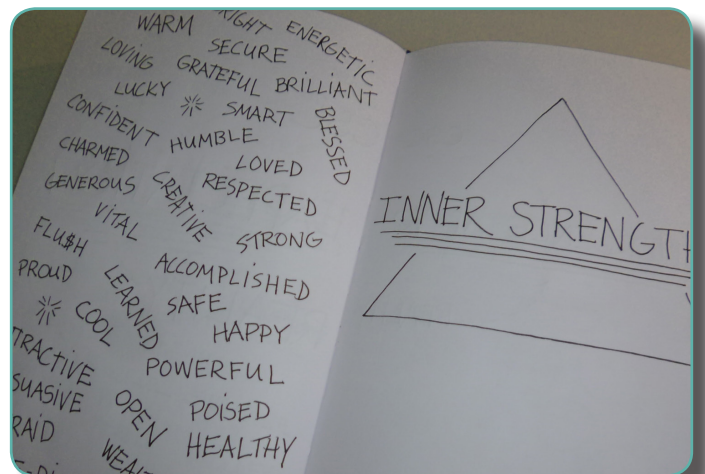
I emphasize three things: (1) the importance of writing things down; (2) the necessity to find regular "quiet time"; and (3) the fact that "daydreaming" is a good thing.



Personally, I spend an hour every day in and around my journal. Most days, I do it first thing in the morning, before anyone else gets up in my household. When I'm talking to my classes, I acknowledge that their life and time availability may be different. At minimum, I tell them, you want to find at least 15 minutes a day of quiet, reflection, and affirmation. More is better, of course.

Those chosen minutes of writing, reflecting, and focused affirmations returns many times during the day during the natural, frequent daydreaming that fills our lives between activities.

But this takes explaining and I do in the seminar: including sharing my affirmations, showing my journals to the class, and actually practicing how to visualize.





# A Best Practice

Most of my seminars are "Thought Patterns For High Performance 3.0" (the two-day format). I'm what you call "old school" in my facilitation. I usually don't use PowerPoint slides and I try to keep my handouts to a minimum. But there is one handout that I give out in the afternoon of the second day that I consider essential.

It looks like this:

Build Your Own Journal - transfer these pages from your TP3.0 workbook:

- Balance Wheel p. XII
- Mini-Balance Wheels p. 90
- Replacement Picture Paragraphs p. 50
- What Does It Look Like Without The Problem? p. 74
- 5 Sample Affirmations p. 95
- 5 Workshop Affirmations p. 97-98
- 10 Accomplishments; 3 Setbacks [Recovery] p. 112
- Folded Paper Exercise / 16 Boxes

Other materials:

- Photographs
- Drawings
- Colored Pens / Pencils
- Scissors And Paste

Here's their homework assignment: I want them to transfer their best reflections and writings from their workbooks into their journals. I say to them, before you put your workbook on the shelf, honor the beautiful things that you wrote.

Then, add your journal to your briefcase and smartphone. Take it everywhere with you, and watch for moments when it's quiet and you can be relaxed. Your imagination will love you for it.

You're now ready for nothing less than a better life.



Ron Medved is a Seattle based 40-year veteran of The Pacific Institute, working with clients around the world on strategies to mobilize the power of their people. He is a former NFL football player and financial advisor. Ron is also co-author with Gregg Cochlan of *World Peace, Really!*, a book about applying cognitive psychology to the cause of peaceful coexistence.