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Introduction

The main purpose of the book is to help you discover and fulfil more of your potential and to be the best that you can be.

The inspiration for the structure of the book came to me when I started publishing a weekly blog to the Be First Class website a couple of years ago. I've taken some of the most popular blog titles, adapted the content and added some new material. The chapters are a mixture of topics that affect personal and professional lives.

Modern life is busy, so I've written the book with short chapters in a style that will enable you to fit reading and reflection into a busy schedule. I've divided it into 52 chapters which contain insights, stories and tips. Each chapter also includes a thought provoking and inspiring quotation and questions to help you reflect and find the right answers for you.

It's your very own personal development programme. You can choose to focus on one chapter each week or at a slower or faster pace to suit you. Alternatively, you can read the book cover to cover and then go back to complete the various exercises and answer the questions. The choice is yours.

My wish is that by me sharing information and knowledge you glean an insight or take away a piece of information that has a positive impact on your life and results. Hopefully your insight will also make a positive difference to the lives of others. Your example could be a source of inspiration and encouragement to other people to be the best they can be. It can be like a positive ripple. I hope you enjoy reading the book.

Best wishes, Stephen.

1. What untapped potential are you yet to discover?

“Focus on your potential instead of your limitations.” Alan Loy McGinnis.

A source of great enjoyment for me is helping people to find hidden strengths and talents and to help them discover and use more of their potential. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to do work that I love and to support people to “be the best they can be.” It’s hugely satisfying for me to observe people grow, develop and flourish.

When I first start coaching clients on a one to one basis, it’s quite common for them to be quite self-critical and hard on themselves. Many of them talk about what they aren’t very good at and setbacks and disappointments they’ve experienced. Some play the comparison game, comparing their progress and results in life to others, such as old school friends, family members, colleagues, neighbours etc.

This way of being isn’t helped by the instant gratification society that we now live in. Lots of people feel a pressure to perform and compete influenced by the media they read and watch or the marketing messages they are bombarded with on a daily basis.

Some clients talk about what they don’t want and don’t always find it easy to articulate what they do want. Some find it challenging to clearly state or acknowledge what they have accomplished and achieved in life. Deep down people know what they desire but haven’t always given themselves permission to pause, reflect, take stock and unearth the right answers for them. Some have been conditioned to believe that to do this would be too self-indulgent. Others have never been encouraged to “be the best they can be” or had access to the right support to stretch and challenge themselves. Over the years I’ve found that when clients do take the time to focus on their needs and desires they find the process hugely rewarding. They get significant clarity and discover hidden gifts and treasures.

Although we may share some habits, beliefs and interests with other people, we’re all unique and have the choice and chance to write our own life scripts. We all have the opportunity to reduce pressure on ourselves when we quit comparing our results in life to that of others.

Instead we can choose to review our progress against the goals and standards that we set for ourselves. I firmly believe that the right answers for our unique life experience rest inside all of us. However, to discover the right answers, occasionally we need to create some space to reflect and ask ourselves some key questions.

A great illustration of how answers can be close by and right under our nose is the following story that I came across many years ago which was told by Earl Nightingale. He was a great speaker and author and known as the "Dean of Personal Development."

Earl Nightingale talked about a farmer who lived in Africa and became tremendously motivated about looking for diamonds. An abundance of diamonds had already been discovered on the African continent. The farmer got so excited about the idea of finding millions of pounds worth of diamonds, that he sold his farm to head out to the diamond line. He wandered all over the continent. Years slipped by as he constantly searched for diamonds and wealth, which he never found. Eventually he went completely broke and threw himself into a river and sadly drowned.

Meanwhile, the new owner of the farm picked up an unusual looking rock about the size of a country egg and put it on his mantle as a sort of curiosity. A visitor stopped by and started exploring the rock on the farmer's mantle. The farmer was astounded to be told by the visitor that that the funny looking rock was about the biggest diamond that had ever been found.

The new owner of the farm said, 'the whole farm is covered with them' and sure enough it was. Prior to going off in his search for diamonds, the original farmer was literally standing on 'Acres of Diamonds' until he sold his farm.

Earl Nightingale said that each of us is right in the middle of our own 'Acre of Diamonds' if only we would realize it and develop the ground we are standing on before charging off in search of greener pastures.

Reflection time:

Pause for a few moments and reflect on the following questions:

What brings you the greatest happiness and satisfaction in life?

What personal accomplishments are you most proud of?