

As leaders, it's incredibly difficult to be intentional about the 'inputs' we feed our mind, and ultimately, our soul. That's understandable. We are wired to want to keep abreast on current global events, the latest corporate scandal, or even the latest Hollywood buzz. In fact, it's in our DNA to actually want to be at the forefront of this gossip, drama, and commentary.

However, as our friend Tim Sanders points out so vividly, our life and leadership are really an overflow of what we feed our mind. The posture of our mind and emotions is clearly evident in how we lead our teams, our companies, and our families. Some of the situations in our leadership that we wish we could "take back" may actually be tied to a specific piece of negative food that we fed our mind.

Feeding our mind toxic information may be the very thing holding us back. Our mood state, our energy level, and our overall health are tied directly to the quality of information we take in. Can you imagine your leadership without contaminated thoughts?

So, how can I be more intentional about this, you may ask? Spend time giving thanks to those you lead, or who lead you. Read books that speak to truth or wisdom as it relates to your leadership. Trade water cooler gossip for face-to-face encouragement. Take time out of your day to turn off the noise and spend time in silence and meditation. If you are a person of faith, pray for situations that you are struggling with or that are holding you down. Cancel your cable and give that money to the hungry in your city. There isn't a right or wrong answer, yet just beginning with one thing may be the thing that starts the engine in your mind!

Leaders, this is so important. Instead of following the model of reality TV, political radio, or harmful news, let's look to the example of Billye. And maybe, the very essence of true greatness in our personal leadership is the ability to remove ourselves from the negative input, and gravitating to good stuff to feed our mind. In this excerpt, let Tim help you get started on this journey! Your life and leadership may not look the same.

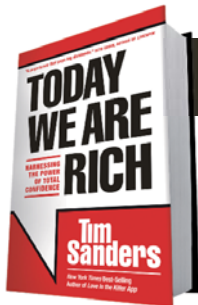


# TODAY WE ARE RICH

**HARNESSING  
THE POWER  
OF TOTAL  
CONFIDENCE**

**Tim  
Sanders**

*New York Times Best-Selling  
Author of Love Is the Killer App*



Enjoy *Feed Your Mind Good Stuff*, the First of Seven Principles in my new book, *Today We Are Rich*.

"Tim shows you how to unleash winning behaviors, like gratitude and persistence, to achieve the one thing we all need in order to win: confidence."

DAVE RAMSEY, host of *The Dave Ramsey Show* and best-selling author of *The Total Money Makeover*

When you possess a confident outlook, you perform at your highest level. When you believe in yourself, the people you rely on, and something ultimately greater than yourself, you will be able to do what you once thought was impossible.

Confidence is a function of lifestyle, driven by a guiding set of principles. Read this book and discover what Tim learned from his grandmother Billye—concepts handed down from the masters of motivation.

Today, Tim shares these principles with thousands of people yearly. He's seen them turn lives around, propel careers forward, and steady high-potential people during difficult times.

Living by these total-confidence principles helped Billye and Tim rise above personal and financial losses. They can change your life too.

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## 4

### [ PRINCIPLE 1 ]

## FEED YOUR MIND GOOD STUFF

Billye got up with the chickens at the crack of dawn and yet kept bankers' hours. What did she do during the hours in between? She fed her mind good stuff.

During my childhood, I observed her morning routine hundreds of times. When she got out of bed, she would walk out on her patio and slowly stretch. Then she'd sit down in her easy chair in the living room and read the Bible for about fifteen minutes. After pouring her first cup of coffee, she'd read a book, a devotional, or the latest edition of *The Midnight Cry* or *Guideposts*. Meanwhile, the *Clovis News Journal*, the town's local paper, would sit on the front porch with the rubber band still on it. After a half hour or so of mindful reading, Billye would make notes in her journal, mostly insights from the morning's study.

On many mornings, she followed her reading with a phone call to one of her closest friends, who followed a similar morning mind practice. They talked about what they had read or thought about and often giggled, too. Billye's final piece of the prework morning was a long prayer as she knelt in front of her easy chair. Afterward, she'd get up, eat breakfast, and get ready for a hard day's work.

Billye never watched television during the day. When she occasionally tuned in to the news, she trusted only a few news sources, such as Walter Cronkite or Edward R. Murrow. "The rest of them," she'd say, "are scare merchants, selling soap by dirtying our minds." She watched only movies or television programs that had positive themes and avoided violence or vulgarity with the switch of a channel. To her, the *R* in an *R* rating stood for "rubbish."

Billye was just as judicious in her response to what others tried to put in her head. She avoided "gossip snipes" as if they had an infectious disease. She even dumped negative-minded friends after one too many offenses. When one of the ladies at our church asked her why a loving person would quit friends over the words they used, Billye would paraphrase Dr. Norman Vincent Peale from *The Power of Positive Thinking*: "What comes out of the mind is what you put in the mind. You must feed your mind like you feed your body."

Her positive-intake plan wasn't selfish—it was purposeful. The filter she put on what or whom she listened to wasn't prudish—it was prudent. The secret to

positive thinking, she had learned, lies in consuming the right mind food. From waking thoughts to the edge of sleep, she fed her mind mostly good stuff.

Rick, a friend of mine from my Yahoo! days, had a different morning routine—one much more familiar to many of us. When he woke up—usually springing out of bed right after he slapped his alarm off—he fired up the coffee pot and booted his laptop. He downloaded his e-mails, many of which had come in earlier that morning from the East Coast. He'd answer a few, fill his coffee cup, and weed-whack through the rest. After that, he'd hit the home page of Yahoo!, *The Huffington Post*, and a few blogs he followed, and then graze. Often he'd get sucked into a social-networking site such as Facebook or Twitter until he realized that he was running late for work.

As he drove to work, he listened to morning talk radio, much of it either crude or political. While he waited at stoplights, he checked his e-mail on his phone or answered texts from coworkers. At lunch, he worked out in the gym while watching CNBC and then pored over the newspaper while he ate. In the evening, he watched the evening news over dinner and, following that, a slew of reality shows or sitcoms. After dinner he'd surf the Web for an hour, answer any e-mails he'd received since he left work, and then try to get some sleep before the alarm went off again the next morning.

When I met with Rick, he complained that he was becoming increasingly



depressed. The first thing I asked him to do was describe his “information-intake day,” and after he did, in my best imitation of Dr. Phil McGraw, I asked him, “How’s that working for you?”

Rick’s problem was his mind diet. It wasn’t thoughtful, and it didn’t take his perspective into account. And that’s ironic because Rick is a health nut. He doesn’t eat refined sugars, red meat, processed foods, or non-organic fruit and vegetables. He scrutinizes menus for details about ingredients and presses servers for nutritional information about items he’s considering.

When it comes to mind food, however, he piles it on like rock candy and double cheeseburgers.

When I shared with him the mind diet I’m about to share with you, it led to a radical change in Rick’s attitude and level of confidence. When he realized that his mind “ate,” just as his body did, with good or bad results, he changed his information lifestyle, got some new friends, and took back his point of view.

You should be as careful about what you put into your mind as about what you put into your mouth. Your mind is a machine. When you ingest a piece of information, your mind goes to work, chewing on it, digesting it, and then converting it into a thought. When good stuff goes into your mind, good thoughts emerge. People who maintain purposeful mind diets

of positive stimuli think healthy thoughts.

The reason it is so important to feed your mind good stuff is that the resulting thoughts determine your success or failure, your happiness or misery, and most important, the circumstances of your life. Those who do not have a diet plan for their minds are subject to their worst memories and the world's constant fear chatter—and those result in disturbing thought patterns.

That's essentially the premise behind Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich*: "Every man is what he is, because of the *dominating thoughts* which he permits to occupy his mind. . . . We are what we are, because of the vibrations of thought which we pick up and register, through the stimuli of our daily environment."<sup>1</sup>

And Hill wasn't the only one to write about the importance of our thoughts. James Allen wrote his groundbreaking book *As a Man Thinketh* in 1903, with Proverbs 23:7 as its premise: "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (KJV). The premise of his book was simple, yet profound: "Good thoughts bear good fruit; bad thoughts bear bad fruit."

In *The Magic of Believing*, Claude Bristol revealed that we have two minds: the conscious mind and the subconscious mind.<sup>2</sup> Almost seventy years of psychological research since the book was published support his hypothesis. Thoughts become reality because of our subconscious mind, which produces

our feelings, instincts, and actions.

The conscious mind is the always-on machine that reacts to stimuli and steers the subconscious mind. It's smaller, designed to quickly analyze and interpret. The subconscious mind is the larger of the two, a massive cerebral hard drive that stores every observation, experience, or interaction in your life. By design, your conscious mind stores far less in order to preserve operating room for interpreting fresh stimuli.

Trying unsuccessfully to recall a name, a band, a movie, or a book when it's just on the tip of your tongue likely drives you crazy. Eventually, sometimes much later, the word or phrase you seek comes to you, almost like magic, and you feel an incredible sense of relief. You're unstuck! That's the work of the subconscious mind, retrieving the information from the vault. You hadn't really forgotten the information; you had just sent it to your subconscious mind to free up room in the conscious mind for taking in new information.

The subconscious isn't just a mass storage device either. Maxwell Maltz wrote that it's also the creative mechanism that generates your basic instincts, intuitions, actions, and reactions. Thoughts create beliefs in the conscious mind; once sent to the subconscious, those beliefs become feelings and actions.<sup>3</sup>

If your subconscious computes that you will likely succeed at something, it brings all your powers to bear to make it come true. If it computes that you'll

fail, it will generate behavior to make that come true—that's what it means to be self-destructive.

Your thoughts also shape how others see you, react to you, and further inform your self-image. Your thoughts, and their resulting emotions, leak out for others to decode via their subconscious minds, which run their nervous systems. That is why your body language betrays your spoken words. It's also why you can suffer a negative outburst that reveals your true feelings—no matter how much you tell your conscious mind to maintain self-control.

James Allen put it best when he wrote, “We may imagine that thought can be kept secret, but it cannot; it rapidly crystallizes into habit, and habit solidifies into circumstance.”<sup>4</sup> You think, you act, and your actions create a series of events that shape your day-today life.

Think about a time when you were in a mind funk. The more you thought about how you felt, the more upset you became. When you were with friends, you were a ticking time bomb of emotions. You tried to suppress them, but you almost always failed and ended up saying something you wish you hadn't.

Even if you can keep your mouth zipped, your body language betrays you. You fold your arms, roll your eyes, or fidget nervously. Other people interpret your actions as hostile, and they distance themselves from you or return your negativity with their own hostility. This only makes you feel worse, and you

drop into a vicious cycle of bad-thought-driven behavior.

Finally, thoughts also have an impact on your physical health. The subconscious mind tells the body what to do, how to feel, and which chemicals to create. When the subconscious mind converts a negative thought into fear and stress, the body produces the stress hormone cortisol. Over time, production of this hormone can lead to heart disease and digestive issues.<sup>5</sup>

And although modern science has made great progress in understanding how emotional stress affects physical health, writers were already seeing a connection decades ago. Maxwell Maltz humorously pointed out, “Someone had said that the greatest cause of ulcers is mountain-climbing over molehills.”<sup>6</sup> And Dr. Peale wrote, “Many people suffer poor health not because of what they eat but from what is eating them.”<sup>7</sup> **The problem with so many people I encounter who complain of aches and pains is that they have indigestion of the soul.**

In my personal experience, positive thinking is the key to health. I believe my own health is shaped by my thoughts the way a sculpture is shaped by its creator. I am very careful about my mind diet and consider myself a healthy-thought nut.

## KEEP A MIND FOOD JOURNAL

Many nutritionists and weight-loss professionals say that the first step in any diet program is to take inventory of what you are taking into your body. In 2002, I decided that I needed to lose weight and get in shape. Over a four-year period, while traveling the world for business, I had been eating too much fattening comfort food, and as a result, I had expanded my waistline by six inches! My “spider belly” looked funky on my small frame, and I realized that I needed to change my ways.

When I started on my plan of action, my diet consultant’s first piece of advice was to write down everything I ate. *Everything*. In a journal I logged every item I put in my mouth. When I reviewed it a few weeks later, I was horrified. The vast majority of what I had recorded was garbage: refined sugars, processed foods, and simple carbs. No wonder I had been putting on pounds! Keeping that journal was a powerful first step, and it helped me to shave forty pounds and four inches off my waistline in less than two years.

Now here’s an exercise for you: For the next few weeks, log everything you are reading, listening to, or watching. If you want to get the most out of this book, purchase a small journal you can carry with you. It will be useful for your mind diet as well as for other exercises I’ll give you later. Record the source, the author (if applicable), and the tone (positive, helpful, neutral, negative)

of everything you take into your mind. Next to each entry, note how much time you spent on it. The same goes for people you spend time with. Log their names, their tone, and how much time you spent with them. Also—and this is important in the age we live in—note how much time you spend on the Internet on activities not related to work. Now, circle all the negative or useless information and influences you’ve “consumed,” and highlight all the positive or helpful ones. Quickly scan your entire journal to form an initial impression of your total intake, positive or negative. If you find many more circles than highlighted items, you need to focus your efforts on eliminating those “foods” from your mind diet. The longer you do this, the more aware of your mind diet you’ll be, and the more control you’ll have over it. For many people, the early results will be alarming, just as much as my food diet journal was for me!

### **FILTER OUT THE NEGATIVE**

Now that you’ve seen just what your mind diet consists of, you are ready to eliminate junk mind food and negative influences from your diet. They are toxins and fillers that cannot coexist with positive information. They often expand and squeeze out any good stuff you’ve downloaded into your mind.

Think of curiosity as the driver of your news-of-the-weird cravings. In an attempt to “keep up” with what’s going on in the world, you can’t help but click on a link to the latest news on Lindsay Lohan or on the latest virus that’s going

to infect the world. But much like I had to do in my weight-loss program, you'll have to conquer your cravings through willpower.

I believe that most television news coverage is not intended to inform you—it is designed to glue you to it so you'll watch the ads and buy the products sold. Longtime broadcast journalist Ted Koppel wrote that to be effective, a news feature must be a “ladle dropper,” meaning that it requires Mom to drop her ladle in the soup when she hears the headline and run to the TV to pay attention to the gory details.<sup>8</sup> That's why positive stories don't usually drive ratings. They don't scare us enough to hold our attention. Watch the local television news every night, and you'll hear about car crashes, murders, political scandals, sports, and the weather (which you can gather in a minute at weather.com).

Avoid gossip the way you would the flu. It's a socially acceptable form of pornography that is hurtful. Other people's misfortunes should never be a source of entertainment. When you encounter a Web site, broadcast program, or magazine that peddles gossip, stop reading or watching it immediately. Beware of celebrity-focused publications. They promote voyeurism, a particularly cruel form of media.

When it comes to Internet usage, be purposeful. Don't just graze, clicking around until something grabs your attention. You'll eventually stumble onto



a disturbing news item. In Las Vegas, the casinos have a rule that works: Keep the bettors at the table long enough, and they will always lose. If you insist on reading around the daily Web, follow Maxwell Maltz's rule of thumb: "Glance at negatives, but focus on positives."<sup>9</sup>

Next, filter out negative people and their nasty attitudes. They are often more credible to you than the media and can produce just as many negative thoughts. You know they are negative because of the mix of good, bad, and gossip in their language. If they constantly pick on you, complain, and gripe about the state of the world, you need to warn them that you are on a mind diet and are taking in only what is good for you. Then, if those people remain negative, stop hanging out with them.

Frenemies, town criers, and Chicken Littles are all poison to your outlook, so trim them from your social circle, your work, and your time online. You have this power. You may not be in a position to trim *all* contact with negative coworkers, but often you can choose whom you sit next to, pay attention to, and invite into your conversations. In extreme cases, you may need to "break up" with a friend or loved one. You may need to change churches or civic groups. You may even need to consider quitting your job.

Don't provide an audience for "fire starters," people who like to cause

problems that only they can solve. They enjoy seeing you get upset at their nasty news, and you often reward them by thanking them for keeping you in the know.

If you spend time on Facebook, a social-networking site on which you can connect with old friends and make new ones, be judicious about the quality of your feeds (the items that appear when you log on). If people post something negative, click on the Hide button next to it. If they consistently post upsetting or negative updates, unfriend them (there's a link for this at the bottom left corner of their profile). I know this sounds harsh, but you have to ask yourself,

*If my mind turns toxic, what good can I be to anyone else?*

Of course, there are some people you simply can't eliminate from your life: family members or neighbors. It may be that you have a job you are unable to leave. In those cases, learn the art of "ignoring" others. Like the kids in the classroom scenes from the *Peanuts* movies, transmute their chatter into indecipherable *wah-wah-wah* sounds. You may have done this when you were growing up and your teachers repeatedly lectured you. If so, you can do it again!

#### WHAT IS THE GOOD STUFF?

I am not suggesting you stick your head in the sand, stop reading current-

events coverage, and consume only inspirational or spiritual materials. The point of the good-stuff mind diet is to be highly selective about how you stay informed.

Read newspapers with an editorial style that's intended to enrich your point of view and give you necessary information that's also relevant to your life. Personally, I appreciate the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. Both have reputations to defend, and combined they give me a snapshot of the real world. *Fast Company*, *Fortune*, *Success*, MPI's *One+*, and the *Harvard Business Review* are also great sources of constructive knowledge for me.

Listen to or watch broadcast programs that take this same approach. Although I find many radio talk shows banal,<sup>10</sup> most National Public Radio (NPR) content is very good: insightful, helpful, and positive in tone and intention. Oprah Winfrey and Dave Ramsey both offer helpful content as well.

Most important, read good books. If your mind diet is weighted heavily toward reading good books, you'll enlighten your perspective and gain wisdom over time. I recommend this mix in your mind diet: 25 percent media, 50 percent books, and the remaining 25 percent social and workstream (offline and online).

Books, by their nature, offer a depth of knowledge and completeness of ideas that can build you up, especially if you are reading the right ones. Good books

tend to fall into four categories:

- › inspirational (philosophical, psychological, or spiritual)
- › instructional (personal or professional guides)
- › history or reference (in both nonfiction and novel form)
- › future or trends (how the world is changing)

Invest some time at your local bookstore or library perusing the stacks of books for positive mind food. If you can, invest twenty dollars a month in this plan.

Apply this to your social life too. When you look for friends, evaluate their outlook, not just their proximity or relevance to your practical needs. When you find a conversation partner who lifts you up, commit to spending more time with him or her.

One last diet staple that will feed your mind correctly is other people's joy and happiness. **Regardless of your life's path, you have the opportunity to empathetically soak up positive thoughts from others—even strangers.** For example, for most people, the airport is a stressful place where harried moms and business-class bulls can easily negative you out. But if you are willing to twist your conscious mind's noticing knob, you can also discover families reuniting, kids enjoying themselves, and laughter.

Over the last year, I've been doing this to improve the emotional quality of my travel life. For example, I notice soldiers returning from the Middle East,

who are frequently recognized by pilots, flight attendants, and travelers. In airport gate areas across the country, soldiers in their brown “salad suits” receive standing ovations as they walk through the terminals. I often stop, notice the recognition they are receiving, and soak up the pride they are feeling. It brings a joyful tear to my eye and loads me up with some positive energy.

During the holiday season or at birthday parties, you also have the chance to witness others in joy mode and to celebrate with them. The same applies when someone at work receives an award.

This is what my dog likes to do: If I come home in a good mood or get excited about something, he gets in on the fun, no questions asked. He’s designed that way, and he’s got a great personality as a result.

## MIND FOOD FROM THE VAULT

When I was growing up, we had livestock on our farm, which gave Billye a ready source of illustrations for the various forms of mind food. “Cows eat grass and chew on their cud,” she said. Her point was that there’s new food and there’s “regurgitation.” For humans, the cud is our stored memories and the attitudes and beliefs we’ve formed around them. We code and store memories very quickly and then call them up later to chew

on.

Much of our thinking starts with a memory, likely our number one source of mind food. It can be a memory from a moment ago (a reaction) or a memory from years ago (a reflection). We keep our memories in two vaults: our conscious mind (think of it as a computer's random-access memory [RAM]) and our subconscious (the mass storage device that serves as our ultimate backup).

The key to managing our thoughts, then, is to manage what memories we call up from the vault to redigest. Even when we manage the external mind food to a tee, in our in-between times, the vault can fill our minds with fear, resentment, and worry.

Be deliberate about calling up memory mind food, because idle thoughts allow your subconscious to run wild and dredge up random memories, many of them accompanied by negative emotions. Fear is a very powerful emotion, one almost impossible to ignore once it's been allowed to enter the psyche. This fear begs to be served, and without a plan on your part, it is fed to your mind to chew on again.

Be aware of memories entering your consciousness, and when they appear, ask yourself, *Am I bringing up a nutrient or an irritant?* Oftentimes the irritant appears noisily and has a physical manifestation, such as hot cheeks, a pit in

your stomach, or a clenched fist. A nutrient can feel like a cool drink of water or a gentle high after a long run.

When you sense you are about to feed your mind a bad memory, spit it out. One way I do this is to see the negative memory as a headline on a whiteboard. Then, with my mental eraser I wipe it off the board. If it continues to try to present itself, I consciously say to myself, *Delete, please.*

We need to avoid the reintroduction of a bad memory that we've thought about before. Often we continue to generate thoughts of regret by reliving our mistakes, and we become trapped in what Billye called the "woulda shoulda coulda" trap. The more we chew on the painful past, the more details the subconscious coughs up, and the more it expands in our thinking. Once we've learned a lesson from a mistake, we need to declare the details "useless memories" and discard them. Store the insight; delete the details.

The healthiest mind food is success experiences. These are times when you displayed courage, cunning, and tenacity. You were masterful. You effortlessly performed above your own expectations. The results were positive, feedback glowed, and your confidence soared. Maxwell Maltz wrote, "We learn to function successfully by experiencing success. Memories of past success act as built-in 'stored information' which gives us self-confidence for the present task."<sup>11</sup>

Try this exercise the next time you are about to face a challenge. Instead of worrying, relive a relevant success experience where you excelled. Think of how courageous, creative, and/or forceful you were. Relive how well it turned out then, and consider how similar that situation is to your present task. If possible, carry a picture from the experience in your wallet or stored on your smart phone. Realize that you are the same, if not a better, person today than you were then.

A few years ago, I used this type of mind food to bolster my confidence as I prepared for a speaking engagement for the Central Intelligence Agency. Its organizers selected me to speak at a leadership event of hundreds of agents and staff and talk about the findings in my second book, *The Likeability Factor*.

During my pre-event interviews, the organizers stressed how discerning this audience could be and how often they were unimpressed by outsiders. They even shared a few stories about previous high-profile speakers who had bombed in front of this group. As much as I had prepared for the talk, I had a hard time shaking off my nervousness.

Ten minutes before I walked onstage, I relived a success experience from 2004. I vividly recalled the details surrounding my first talk for a branch of the United States military, the marines. Then, too, I was warned that the group could be difficult, especially when the speaker was a civilian. After



much preparation, I gave a highly customized talk that resonated with the audience and garnered a sparkling letter of recommendation from a brigadier general.

Once I had reexperienced my talk for the marines, I visualized a copy of the recommendation letter. I could see General Catto's signature and the United States Marine Corps logo in the upper right corner. I told myself, *You rocked them then, and you'll do it again today. You are the same guy and have done just as much work to prepare for this talk as you did for that one.*

Doing this changed everything, and I relaxed and started to look forward to the talk. I confidently stepped onstage and gave the intelligence community a lively talk about personality, reading others, and making a connection. Much like my talk for the marines, it was well received, and I've been invited back again, proving that nothing succeeds like success.

Beyond success experiences, thoughts of happy times are good mind food for idle moments. Carl Erskine, a famous pitcher for the Brooklyn Dodgers, commented that bad thinking got him into more trouble than bad pitching did. He said, "One sermon has helped me overcome pressure better than the advice of any coach. . . . Its substance was that, like a squirrel hoarding chestnuts, we should store up our moments of happiness and triumph so that in a crisis we can draw upon these memories for help

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and inspiration.”<sup>12</sup> Every positive emotional moment should be recognized, saved in high-definition, and stored in your conscious mind for easy access. It’s easier than you think to ignore such moments or to let them get pushed out to the edges of your memory.

Now here’s the upshot of feeding your mind positive memories: You push out the bad ones. As I mentioned before, your conscious mind has limited room to operate. When it gets full of the good, the bad can’t find a foothold to generate thought patterns. Napoleon Hill observed, “Positive and negative emotions cannot occupy the mind at the same time.”<sup>13</sup>

## **PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER**

It’s time to apply the “negative out, positive in” approach to your daily mind diet. Start in the morning with your mind’s breakfast. This is the most important meal because it sets the tone for your day and instructs your subconscious about what it should notice, process, and store.

After your waking-moment exercise (we’ll talk more about this in chapter 6), get out of bed slowly, giving your mind time to acclimate. If you usually spring out of bed, rush to get to work on time, and can’t imagine how you’ll be able to have a good mind breakfast, then get up earlier. To give your mind a chance to relax and ease into the day, you need to move s-l-o-w-l-y when you wake up.

Do not go online for the first hour you are awake. Do not check your e-mail. That can wait. I live in California, three hours behind the East Coast. I used to worry that if I didn't read my e-mail or the day's developments first thing, I'd miss out. But I didn't. Over the last five years, I haven't missed a single opportunity because I waited one hour to subject myself to the randomness of e-mail and Internet news. Don't read the newspaper until lunch; it, too, can wait. You'll never appear dumb at work because you haven't read the latest earnings announcement, obituary column, or sports section.

Instead, do your early-morning reading in books or other high-quality publications. Study them, then purposefully think about what they mean. Make notes on what you learn. As a rule, I usually spend half the time reading spiritual and inspirational material and half reading instructional material. Between those two reads, I start my day with a positive mind-set.

At the end of your lunch hour, snatch five minutes of positive thought time to review what is going right and what positive things you'll accomplish before the day's end. Take a midafternoon break (go outside if it's a nice day). Dale Carnegie used to walk a few blocks to a church to meditate for ten minutes every afternoon, especially when his workday was stressful. When you meditate, don't try to solve a problem; just let your mind clear.

Let your gym or commute time be good-book reading/listening time. Don't

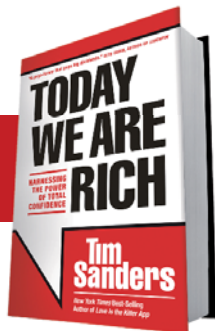
graze on whatever media those venues provide. When you get home from work, don't automatically switch on the TV. A few minutes of network television can undo a day's mind food management efforts. Before bed, read a little more, but don't try to consume complicated or overly provocative content.

I've started with this principle because your mind is the key to how you think and how confident you will be. Try this daily plan, and you'll soon begin to see your thought patterns become largely optimistic, hopeful, and constructive.

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