

Excerpted from [Six Keys To Creating The Life You Desire](#)
by [Mitch Meyerson](#) and Laurie Ashner

(Chapter 7)

The Seven Cornerstones for Creating Change



"Master teachers Mitch and Laurie have written a compassionate, powerful guide for anyone who wants to love life to its fullest; particularly useful laser-specific strategies for the self-help reader and psychotherapists.

I firmly desire you read this book!"

-- Harold Bloomfield, MD, author, "How to Heal Depression",
"Making Peace with Yourself" and "The Power of Five"

**(Feel free to forward this chapter to anyone who
you think will benefit).**

Mitch Meyerson

“Why Is It So Hard to Change?” The Reality of Resistance

Cindy, 32, left her coaching session all smiles, bubbling over with ideas. She'd had a brainstorm that was going to turn a mediocre future as a personal trainer in a city already replete with trainers into an exciting adventure. She had an idea for creating a special type of exercise manual and software program that was unique.

If there was anyone who seemed motivated to pull it off, Cindy seemed to be the one. She'd spent months looking at her own ambivalence about success. “I always had to perform for my father. We all did. It hurt me more than I knew. I've been trying to send out this *message—I'm not going to perform for anyone again just to get attention, I'm enough the way I am.* But the only one getting the point of the message was me. Other people just thought, Here's a girl who talks a good game but never really gets past go.

“For thirty two years, my life hasn't been my own. But I don't want to do this project to please or impress anyone. I'm not even going to tell my father about it. I want to do it because it's the kind

of thing that would have helped me when I first started getting into shape.”

She was back in a week, more silent and moody. But her enthusiasm reappeared as she discussed her idea some more. “I’m going to make an outline this week,” she said as she left.

When we asked how her project was going a week later, her eyes grew dark. “You know, I’m really not here for career counseling. Can’t we talk about something else?” She was clearly angry. Suddenly she said, “My father thinks it’s a dumb idea, anyway.”

Why had she told her father after vowing not to? She’d gone to the same dry well looking for water in spite of a wealth of insight. What she hadn’t counted on is how much unconscious and even conscious resistance there can be when one goes about changing a pattern.

Kevin was a member of one of our therapy groups who could discuss personality theory from Freud to Kohut to Adler and beyond in incredible depth. He had read more than many Ph.D. candidates preparing a literature review for their dissertations. He was so insightful about other people’s problems that his sharp analysis

sometimes brought the conversation of half a dozen people to a complete stop as they pondered, "Wow, why can't I think like that?" Still, the other group members called him Mr. Yeah-But. When it was his turn to confront his own issues, it often went like this:

Group: Have you thought of calling a friend to talk when you feel so depressed?

Kevin: Yeah, but, I end up feeling worse afterwards, like I'm wallowing in my problems instead of moving forward.

Group: Have you tried to break your goal down into pieces, so you don't feel so overwhelmed?

Kevin: Yeah, I have a To Do list. I never do it.

Group: Maybe you should call one of us when you feel so stuck.

Kevin: Yeah, but when I call you guys at work, I end up in this whole shame thing about why I'm not working, and why I haven't found a new job yet.

Group: This sounds like your same old stuff with your mother.

Kevin: Listen, she's been dead since '79. Why blame her?

At this point, everyone in the room was frankly bored. Some tried to hide it. Others looked pointedly at their watches and sent invisible hate-bombs at the therapists for letting Kevin talk so long. They resented Kevin for making them relive what life is like in The Land of the Forever Stuck.

Strange, but for Kevin, this was a big moment. Everyone had tried to help and everyone had failed. He felt vindicated as the group moved on to the next person. Here were all of these smart people, and no one could help him.

Alana's type of resistance can be best summed up in the sentence: "I'm too fragile, don't push me." She had many reasons to feel fragile. She had experienced a great deal of loss as a child. Her only surviving parent was a stepmother. She had become so frustrated with her lack of success at college that she'd gone to be tested by an educational therapist. She was shocked to find that she had tested in the superior range verbally, but was a full standard deviation below the mean in performance. The therapist gave her a list of suggestions for overcoming the gap. She hadn't followed through on any of them.

Like many people, Alana wanted to change her patterns, and knew that change would be the best possible thing for her, but felt too tired, too depressed, too vulnerable to take the necessary action. She worked hard to better understand herself in therapy, and often announced that she was tired of being a victim and acting like a victim. One day she told us that in an argument with her boyfriend he'd accused her of giving off an aura of fragility, when it was really a way of fending off responsibility on him or refusing his requests. "You're saying, *Look at how I've suffered; how can you expect any more from me?* Then when I give up on you, you tell me I'm treating you like a child and that I'm trying to control you. What do you want from me?"

There are those people who love change, who crave the stimulation of something new and different. But our suspicion is that there are a lot more of us like Cindy, Alana and Kevin wanting to change, but battling resistance.

Cindy's resistance sprung up on her after she'd made a commitment to make a change. Kevin and Alana had to battle resistance from the start. Their experience validates the point that insight alone is not curative.

We've watched numerous clients go through similar scenarios. All three of these clients made headway, in spite of their resistance. They didn't do it overnight, and they didn't get rid of it completely, but they all moved forward, and so can you. You *can* overcome resistance and create the life you desire.

If one of the six keys helped you recognize the origins of your chronic dissatisfaction including its payoffs and its ultimate frustrations, you've done half the work. But you're going to have to battle resistance to change. Change is an easy thing to decide and a difficult thing to do. It's the daily struggle of change that defeats most people. You have insight. You have motivation. Then you come face to face with one of your old triggers and there's suddenly a moment of choice. Do you move forward, or fall back into old patterns?

This is a chapter about the steps you can take to overcome resistance.

*Our dilemma is that we hate change, but we love it at the same time.
What we want is for things to remain the same, but to get better.
Sidney Harris*

Seven Cornerstones for Creating Change

1. Realize Your Best Thinking Got You Here.

If your life isn't working the way you want it to, stop doing the same things over and over expecting a different result. Say enough is enough, and mean it. If all that thinking and analyzing isn't getting you where you want to be, consider that maybe it's a sign of resistance to solving the problem than a real desire to change. Your best thinking may be setting you up for continual disappointment. Do your thoughts allow you to recycle old family maps of negativity, overgeneralizations or scarcity? Then enough is enough.

Half the struggle with never enough thinking is an inflexible attitude of *It should be enough; I shouldn't be having this problem; I wish something would just magically happen in my life to make me feel good about myself.* If you don't have the kind of life you desire, your very first step in being empathic with yourself is to admit it. Stop telling yourself you "should" be happy. Stop trying to count your blessings. As therapists we have met many clients who were beautiful and didn't believe it, intelligent, but felt they weren't smart

enough, successful but felt inadequate. Therapy would have gone nowhere if we only tried to convince them that they were all these things that they couldn't see.

One of our clients told us that in one of his many quests for an answer to his malaise, he went to see a man who advertised himself as a spiritual guide. "He said to me, *Son, you must learn to drink wine from an empty cup.* You know, he hit the nail on the head, but not the way he thought. I'd spent my whole life looking for wine in empty cups! It was time to say, okay, obviously the way I think I should go about things got me right here. Why not simply look for a glass that's full, instead of trying to make the best of what's empty?" This may mean you realize you have to give up on your own prescriptions for getting your needs met, and take a leap of faith to try something new that someone else has suggested, or that you've heard of or read about. It may feel uncomfortable. You may want to hold on to your own thinking in a battle to be "right." But remember, being right and being happy can be two very different things.

2. Turn Your Problems into Possibilities

There's an old joke that goes, "Two shoe salespeople were dispatched to a remote African country. In just a few days, their employer received telegrams from each. One read: "Get me out of here--no one here wears shoes." The other read: "Send more inventory--no one here owns shoes."

This story illustrates a great truth: It is not events that shape our experience as much as our personal "take" on these events. All of us view the world with tinted sunglasses filtered by the beliefs of our family and culture. It is critical that we become aware of these beliefs. With desire and determination we can take a second look at our personal "take" on reality and decide which beliefs are serving us well and which are sabotaging our search for satisfaction.

Sam, a 47-year -old teacher, recalls an event that caused him to learn how to turn a seemingly unsolvable problem into an opportunity for personal transformation. "It was a day I had been waiting for most of my life, a true passage to adulthood, the purchase of my first house. Always one to be careful, I visited the perspective house three times. I checked every nook and cranny

for possible problems. The owner seemed very honest and responsible. I was particularly impressed with all the built in closet organizers on every floor. Here's a guy after my own heart. And the roof deck enchanted my wife.

"My most important concern was finding a home in a quiet area. Every time I came back to visit this home I listened for noise. There was none. I asked the owner about noise. He said, "Occasionally you will hear a little noise from the post office or during the garbage pickup. It's no real problem."

"We bought the house. The nightmare began as my wife and I awoke, startled by a mail delivery truck at 4:00 am honking its way through the alley on its way to our neighbor--the post office. In the next two days we learned that there were mail pickups and deliveries throughout the early morning as well. If that wasn't bad enough, I was awakened again at 6:30 am the next day by the garbage pickup, right outside my bedroom window.

"I was livid. How could I have missed all of this obvious noise? For the next month I was full of rage. This is the old pattern for me—Victim. I started yelling "I hate this place, we have to move!" terrorizing my wife who could only think that the boxes were barely unpacked.

“ After a month or two of complete rage, I began looking for solutions. I really didn’t want to move, at least not right now. I loved the neighborhood and the house. My own best thinking had gotten me here. My thinking was that I should get up at ten each morning, and the rest of the world should wait until then to go about its noisy business.

“My first attempt at a solution was to install best sound insulation I could on the windows (although this worked marginally at best). Next I bought a white noise machine to mask the sound. Still frustrated, I finally realized it was time for a major change, but this time in me.

“My wife wasn’t bothered at all. The early morning sounds woke her, and she thought of them as city life, which she craved. She got up at six anyway. For years I have seen myself a night person. Getting up before 9:00 am was rare. Yet over the years I was aware that staying up late left me tired and sluggish during the day. I read where Depak Chopra said that optimal health will occur if we get up around 6:00 am and go to bed at 10:00 PM. I thought that’s nice for him, but I can’t do that. My instinct knew he was right. I just couldn’t get the motivation.

"Then it hit me --this is the motivation. I was going to awaken with the noise anyway, so why not get up by my own design and use the morning hours to my advantage? At first I had my good days and bad. My plan was to get up at 6:30 (before the garage pickup) and workout. There was a lot of resistance. The transition took me about 3 months.

" I have never felt better. Getting up earlier has given me more energy throughout the day and also helped my to fall asleep earlier and easier. While there are still times the noise upsets me, I feel proud about my ability to take control and turn this problem around. I look back and realize a lot of wasted energy in my life came from being a late sleeper."

Here's how other clients have turned their problems into possibilities:

Problem	Possibility
1. My career is going well, my family life is good, if not perfect. But I still feel empty, like I should do more or be more than I am.	1. Maybe all is not as well as I try to tell myself. Maybe there's a part of me that I haven't been able to express that could open up to a whole new path.
2. My marriage is in deep trouble and has been for years. Do I leave or do I stay?	2. Whether I leave or stay, what can I learn about myself and how I interact in relationships. Instead of blaming others, what can I really say I need that I'm not getting?
3. My mother's bout with cancer is ruining my life. I'm expected to be there for her constantly. I feel guilt, guilt, guilt. I'm a terrible daughter.	3. Is it possible that I can't be everything to everyone? Why do I need to feel terrible about myself to get motivated enough to call my mother? What's the message here?
4. I'm always on a plane, or in a taxi headed somewhere, always in motion. My wife is on my case for traveling so much.	4. What do I get from being away that I don't get from being here? What am I running from? What am I running to?

<p>5. My friend Sally didn't return my phone call I felt hurt and discounted. I generally withdraw and end relationships this way.</p>	<p>5. I could see this as a chance to practice my assertive communication skills and ask her why she didn't return my call. No matter what she says I can view my call as personal growth and a validation of my feelings</p>
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3. Learn to recognize the moment of choice.

Kara, 42, was achieving the first career success she'd ever known since she'd left a job at an advertising firm to go off on her own, but she had a guilty secret that kept her from enjoying it. "I'd spend six hours at my computer pounding out ads, slogans and schedules for media buys, the sun would start to go down, and more than anything else, I wanted a glass of wine."

But the glass of wine was turning into two and three. If the slogans weren't coming easily, the ads seemed uninspired, or her clients were calling with negative feedback it was more. The wine seemed a soothing release. "I felt it helped me get up the nerve to

be more creative. I've created a number of ads clients loved, when I was absolutely drunk."

Every morning Kara would wake up ashamed of how much she'd drank the night before. "I knew I was playing with fire. I was becoming more and more successful, and more and more often drunk. Suddenly people were respecting me, I had more business than ever, and one of my ads was actually up for an award. I didn't want to lose that. I didn't want to drink anymore, but the decision kept unmaking itself. Five thirty would roll around and a voice would go off in my head: "You don't really have a problem with alcohol. You couldn't accomplish so much if you did. You need it, just this once, to loosen up so you can get past this block. You deserve it." Then I'd hate myself. With the life I wanted, drinking to the point of being drunk didn't fit. But it was the only thing in the closet."

Five-thirty, Kara recognized, was her moment of choice. She could try to change her pattern. Or she could go to the convenience store for a bottle of wine. "I learned to call my husband at 5:30 to tell him about my frustrations that my ads weren't good enough, rather than drink to make the fear go away. Sometimes I just got up and went to see a movie by myself to get my mind away for

awhile. The voice in my head sometimes said, “If you stop drinking you’ll never have another creative thought. You’ll lose your ability to write. You’ll never be the life of the party again, and make everyone laugh.” That was resistance. I finally told myself, “ You can go back to drinking someday if that is really true. But you’ll never know if you need all this alcohol, unless you try to do without it for awhile.”

Kara isn’t alone in finding that there’s a certain time of day that makes her lose her resolve. A study was recently done that found that 4:30 in the afternoon is the time of day most dieters slip and fall off their diets. People in the study learned to use this knowledge. They prepared and found ways past it.

Many of our clients have learned to recognize the moment of resistance—and the moment of choice following it. Look at your own patterns. When are you most likely to say, “What’s the use?” When you set a goal, and you don’t follow through, don’t beat yourself up over it. Did you feel yourself give up at some specific moment? What was that moment? What happened and what did it mean? Don’t analyze—quantify. If like Kara you find that it’s a specific time of day, think of the possibilities for overcoming the resistance now that you have that kind of information. Kara found a

lot of things she could do in the early evening to offset drinking. Her favorite is walking to the coffee shop for a cappachino to break the pattern. Whatever your issue is, you, too, have ways to combat resistance once you quantify it.

4. Empower Your Vision Instead of Your Problems

Dwelling on problems empowers these problems. Get in the habit of asking yourself: Am I focusing more on the problem than the solution? A good rule of thumb is to spend about 20% of your time analyzing and understanding the problem and 80% of your time acting on the solution.

Gayle admits, "I married a man who excited me, stimulated me, challenged me, and often let me down. I learned a lot about why I was drawn to such a person in the first place. I had to do some work on myself if this marriage, barely six months old, was going to work. I spent hours on the phone with my sister, trashing him. My brother-in-law would get on the phone and then we'd have a real trash fest, with a man's point of view thrown in. Boy, did he make me feel good! But I felt lousy the next day when I realized that it was easy for him to tell me to move on and get a divorce.

“Trashing him over the phone with my family didn’t help. I had a lot of resistance about learning how to get along with another person and giving up some of my fantasies about marriage. My resistance was: *I married you in spite of your flaws, we’ve only been married six months and this should be our honeymoon, so how dare you?* My family gave me no solutions at all, besides get out.”

Sometimes you need to get out. And if Gayle eventually comes to that point, she will get out. But she’ll feel better about it if she concentrates on solutions more than rehashing the problems.

5. Expect resistance, but don’t cater to it.

This means, be open to help. The idea that you don’t need any help or support to make changes in your life is a trap. While there are people who crave change, and love the stimulation of trying something new, it’s not the majority of us, we believe. Most people will resist change if they don’t get some coaching and support. We know many clients who haven’t created the life they desire, because they wouldn’t reach out for any help. They had friends who would have listened, provided support, money, contacts. Are you willing to ask for help? If not, why not? What’s

underneath the resistance? What good does it do to go it all alone?

Help can be as simple as a phone call to a friend, "I'm starting to forget why I'm trying to accomplish this, can you help remind me?"

A hallmark of successful people is their ability to take in and use feedback from others. We all have blindspots when it comes to our personal habits and patterns. Consider the possibility that if you feel stuck in your life, "your best thinking got you there." Perhaps it's time for a new perspective.

In psychology, feedback is often referred to as "mirroring". This essentially amounts to a reflection of how people see and experience you. Here are some examples of mirroring:

"Sally, I notice that you are always trying take care of others. You seem to have trouble putting out your own needs."

"Jane, you've been talking about having children for two years now, what's stopping you from discussing this with your husband?"

"Jim, whenever I give you feedback about how you back down when you confront someone, you get defensive."

6. Create Goals that Take Resistance Into Account

"The reason most people don't reach their goals is that they don't define them, learn about them, or ever seriously consider them as believable or achievable."

Denis Waitley

Resistance easily gets the best of us if our plans are sketchy, and our goals broad and unfocused. How can you create a plan of action that tends to discourage resistance? Try the following.

Begin with what, why and how. First, decide exactly **what** you want (be clear and specific) --write it down. Next, get clear on **why** you want each of these goals. Write down these reasons and share it with another person. It is important to remember that the stronger the why, the more assurance you will have of overcoming any resistance and achieving your goals. Last, write down specifically **how** you will achieve these goals. Include dates of

completion. Plan to do something everyday to move towards these goals.

Read these examples, and then create your own.

Example 1:

What: My goal is to work out for 30 minutes three times this week

Why: Because when I exercise I feel better, look better and have more energy

How: I will go to the health club on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at 7:30

Example 2:

What: I will get up at 6:30 each morning

Why: When I get up at a consistent early hour, I fall asleep easier at night. I have more time to work and to play. I am more creative in the morning hours.

How: I will set my alarm every evening and commit to getting out of bed whether I feel like it or not. I will jump right into the shower.

Example 3:

What: I will be more honest about my feelings with my husband

Why: When I hold in my feelings, I tend to get depressed, anxious or resentful. When I express myself I feel a sense of relief and self-esteem

How: I will find a mutually convenient time and ask him if I could talk about something personal. I will tell him I'm working on being more expressive so that I don't tend to get depressed or anxious. I will use I statements and other skills for effective communication.

7. Give Change a Chance.

It's not easy to change a pattern that may have persisted twenty or more years in your life. When you don't get results right away, you may figure, *This doesn't work, so why bother?* That's human. But moments when it doesn't work reveal an opportunity to practice compassion and understanding for ourselves. If change were an easy thing to do, everyone would do it. We would all be perfect.

Be persistent. Remember: You are doing the best you can. None of us wants to be miserable. When we fail to reach our goals we often keep doing the same things louder and harder. What we really need is to stop and learn what we are missing. Solving a

problem will create relief for a day. Changing a pattern will create change for a lifetime.

Sometimes change doesn't bring us everything we thought it would. One of our clients lost 100 pounds. It took her nine months, and she did it slowly and in a healthful way. "But I'm still depressed," she told us, astounded because she always felt that after losing weight she'd be happy for once and for all. She admitted that she was beginning to think *What's the use?* again, which had always been a precursor to a binge in the old days. Here was a moment for compassion and empathy. She could always go back at some point to her old diet patterns. But why, today? For now the goal was to just live with herself for a little while. See what transpired. Perhaps this change in her weight wasn't the absolute antidote to depression, but what else could it bring into her life?

You, too, can work past your resistance and see what transpires. It will be a lot more exciting than dwelling on problems. It will be a lot more adventurous than doing what you've always done. It will be much less boring than giving into your resistance and then coming to a day when you say, "Why didn't I just take that risk? Why didn't I give myself a chance?" You can. You will.

You can begin today. All you need is a little leap of faith and the knowledge that what we resist, persists.

*"The real voyage of discovery consists not
in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes"*
Marcel Proust



Mitch Meyerson is a consultant, author and coach. Over the last 20 years has been helping clients break through barriers in their personal and professional lives.

He is the author of six personal development books and audios including *Six Keys To Creating The Life You Desire*, *When Is Enough Enough? When Parents Love Too Much* and *Designing The Life Of Your Dreams*. His books appear in over 21 languages and he has been featured the Oprah Winfrey show.

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What the Critics Have to say

Six Keys to Creating the Life You Desire

"Master teachers Mitch and Laurie have written a compassionate, powerful guide for anyone who wants to love life to its fullest; particularly useful laser-specific strategies for the self-help reader and psychotherapists. I firmly desire you read this book!"

-- Harold Bloomfield, MD, author, "How to Heal Depression", "Making Peace with Yourself", "Healing Anxiety with Herbs", and "The Power of Five"

"Making your dreams come true is truly possible if you take the first step of reading Mitch Meyerson's and Laurie Ashner's wonderfully clear and readable book. Their six keys really do unlock doors to your dreams and then lay out the path to attaining them. You'd never think that true fulfillment can be bound between the covers of a book, but it is in this book. You'll enjoy reading it nearly as much as living your dreams as they come true."

-- Jay Conrad Levinson, author, "Guerilla Marketing" series of books

"This workbook is a highly useful tool for therapists as well as self-help readers. The inventories and strategic exercises will be a welcome addition to any treatment program that is focused on enhancing life satisfaction. This is a book that can make a real difference, that can finally explain why we so often struggle without reaching fulfillment and how we can finally break through these obstacles to our deepest desires."

-- Matthew McKay, Ph.D. , author, "Self-esteem"

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-- John Bradshaw, author, "The Family", "Healing the Shame that Binds You", and "Homecoming"

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-- Booklist

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"Mitch Meyerson is one of the most outstanding coaches in the nation, if not the world. His depth of understanding the ways to motivate action and implant ideas is superb."

--Jay Conrad Levinson, acknowledged Father of the Guerrilla Marketing Book Series

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