

IMPACT

Final Week of a 3-Week Series, "How to Get Out of Your Own Way"

Rev. Richard Maraj

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For the last three weeks, we've been looking at a book by the neurologist, Dr. Robert Cooper, and a book that we can relate to in its title: "How to Get Out of Your Own Way."

The reality for the majority of us is that our greatest obstacles to success aren't often outside of ourselves, contrary to what we sometimes believe. It's not about the lack of opportunities or lack of education. It's not about the government or the economy or our boss or our ex. You know, our biggest obstacles are not outside of ourselves. They are internal.

And they are usually in the form of the mental patterns -- the negative mental patterns -- that we create in our minds that are actually initiated, interestingly, by our brains ... specifically our amygdala, the part of our brain that is primarily designed for our survival; to keep us alive. And it is those very mechanisms, interestingly, that actually limit our growth and that prevent us and hold us back from going after and fulfilling our goals and our dreams.

The amygdala is always scanning for things that seem like a threat or danger. And originally, in the ancient times or the older times, the danger was like a lion coming to eat you. Something significant trying to kill you. And that is not the case anymore. But still, the brain sends out signals of fear and uncertainty with messages like, *"Be careful. Don't do that. Don't go there. Back down. Walk away. You know, this could be dangerous."*

One of the significant things we all need to do is actually to learn how the brain operates and to understand so we could use it as an ally rather than having it work against us.

And so, in this book, he speaks about five principles to help us get out of our own way. And in the first two weeks, we did -- and I'll do a review in a second-- but direction is one way; focus; capacity; and energy are four of the five ways that we can get out of our own way.

Now, DIRECTION is important in our lives. It's good and helpful for us to know where we want to go. You know, the Bible even tells us how important it is to have a vision, because that is really what helps us channel our creative power and our interest and our energies. When we have a direction -- when we have a destination that we want to move forward with our lives -- it actually is helpful to the brain in that it begins to seek out information and filter information and notice opportunities that support our vision. It helps actually harness and recruit all sorts of power from our brain to actually achieve those goals. It helps reallocate energy and attention and create neural pathways for us to succeed in that direction.

Having a direction is important because it also keeps us from being distracted, which can happen in our lives, take ourselves off course. And he has a couple of cool ways to talk about direction. He calls it "horizon" and "heart."

The first one is to look at the horizon. And he says, when you look for the horizon down the road for your life, it shouldn't be for a year or six months. He thinks it should be at least five, if not more. And the reason he does is because, the further out it is, the further we have to use our resources; the further actually we can go deeper into ourselves and understand ourselves more spiritually and bring forth more of our spiritual gifts and our spiritual talents.

The second one is heart. And he says, you've got to have some sort of feeling connection to where you want to go. You have to understand the "why." And the more our heart is in it, the more we're committed and the more we will be resilient to hang in there when the tough times come.

The second one is FOCUS. The top successful people in every industry are really good at focus, which is the ability to set your mind and your attention on the things that you need to when you need to do it.

With our survival mechanisms, one of the things that we have is a negativity bias. We tend to focus on the negative. And one of the ways he says that we can focus on the positive is start every single day by focusing on our five-year plan; to focus on what that would be like and what it would take to achieve it and what it would feel like once we have it and would utilize it to bring forth more good in the world.

Another important way, he says, to focus -- and he doesn't say it as much as we would, naturally -- is focus on God. Focus on our Source. You know, focus on that deeper spiritual connection and to know our oneness with it.

The third is CAPACITY. You know, Jesus said that, *"It is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom"*; that it is God's desire -- Spirit's desire -- for us to experience an abundance of goodness in all areas. And the only thing that holds us back -- God doesn't withhold anything from us! -- is our own willingness and our ability to receive.

You know, every one of us has an upper limit, it seems, at least in a few areas. We have a hard time receiving. We have a hard time believing that we have the capacity and the ability to receive more good. And he says we have so much more good than we realize. And one of the examples he gives: he says we actually have ... We think we have one brain, but we actually have four. You know, the brain in our head is the intellectual knowledge and wisdom. Our heart is the emotional intelligence and that feeling nature. The gut is the instinctive aspect. And then, the body also has great wisdom and experiences and insights to share with us.

So, a part of our job is to expand our capacity to receive. And so, how much love are you experiencing in your life right now? And how much more can you open yourself and expand your capacity to receive? Because that's really the only thing holding us back from experiencing more goodness and more blessings and more abundance.

And then the fourth one is ENERGY. How do we manage our human energy? Our mental energy? Our spiritual energy? You know, we think if we put more time, more work, more effort, we'll get more and better results. And that is not always the case! Sometimes we deplete our energy and drain our energy. And so, when tough situations come up -- pressure situations -- we tend to panic and run around like chickens with our heads cut off.

And he said the best thing to do in pressure times is have a process. That, if there's a lot of work to be done, go to the process of the four brains. Like in that situation, you would say, you know: What is my clear direction? You know, what is the top priority for me to focus on? What is the best outcome I could think of in this situation? Then go to your heart and say: So what is the meaning? Why is this so important to get done and so meaningful for me? And then go to the gut to say: What is it that I'm not picking up? the insight that I could gain to move through this situation? So, energy can be utilized most effectively when there is a process, particularly when there is a crisis and a tough challenge that we are facing.

A second one, he says, is that the best way to get the most out of our minds and our brains is to make sure we have consistent rest. And we think we can always think our way through. Or we think that if we spend more and more time, well, the answer will come. And that's not the case. Leonardo da Vinci, Einstein, Edison -- all these guys -- realized that resting your brain actually helps you improve at problem solving. It improves your memory. It improves your creativity and inspiration.

And so, the last one we're going to look at is IMPACT. And the section's actually entitled: "Impact, Not Intention." And here's what it says. It says, *"Our lives are shaped not by our intentions, but by our impact."*

Now, I'm a fan of the power of intention. And so, I had some resistance, I noticed, to what he was saying. He said most of us believe that good intentions always move our lives forward. And he said that our best lives do not come forth if we just focus on our intention.

He said we could intend on anything. Like I have the intention of meditating every day for 20 minutes. Or I have the intention of going to the gym five times. Or I have the intention of spending more time with my family. Or I have the intention of forgiving that dirty so-and-so who did me bad. I have that intention.

And he kind of separates that as: the intention is a great way to reveal our desires and our goals and our values, but it is not the thing that takes us home and to cross the finish line. And by IMPACT, what he means really is consistent action. Impact is about what it takes to change that situation. He says, action and only action -- consistent action -- creates change and positive results. Impact comes through action - - and consistent action -- about change.

If you want your life to get better, there must be change. Something must change. You cannot have a better life without change.

You've all heard the one that says, *"If you always do what you've done, you'll always get what you've gotten."* And what he's saying there is: If you want your life to be better, you've got to do something different. You've got to change something in some way.

Robert Cooper says that, if we're not achieving the things we want in our lives, it has nothing to do with talent or skill or ability. It has to do with one thing -- and that is a lack of action. That action is the thing.

I bet you every one of us knows enough knowledge to succeed in whatever area. But I would say and agree with him that one thing that holds us back is: Are we really doing it? Are we putting it into action? And he emphasized this so many times: Are we putting it into consistent action?

The interesting thing is: that action is the thing that gets us over the finish line. Action is the thing that requires change for us to have an impact. But the brain, interestingly, has a lot of resistance to change. Because change from a brain perspective represents uncertainty. It represents risk. It represents the unknown.

And so, whether it's changing a career -- that can be scary. You know, repairing a relationship, starting your own business, deciding to move out of state. Our brain picks all of these things up as scary and even a threat and harm. But when we understand how the brain works, we realize that that discomfort and that uncertainty does not mean that we should stop. It does not mean that that's bad for us. In fact, it often means that that's just a part of the process to move through to something greater and better through our work and our effort.

I mean, even with resistance from our brain, our brains can actually change and be rewired. I think everybody's heard of neuroplasticity: that the brain, right up until we die, has the ability and the potential to be changed. It is malleable. We can create new forms and strengths of neural networks that, once repeated, can truly transform ourselves and our lives.

How many people right at this moment have some area of resistance in your life towards something you're going through? Anybody? All right. And the cool thing for us to realize is that resistance is a part of our spiritual path. That we all have areas of resistance in our lives, and it is always pointing towards something that we need to grow; some area we need to awaken; some area we need to expand and develop in.

You know, we all have something to resist. It's either we are resisting something we know that we should do. Or often, it's resisting accepting something that's happened that we didn't like; that we didn't think should have happened. Again, resistance frequently appears wherever we need to do our greatest growth.

You know, the butterfly must struggle to emerge from the cocoon. A butterfly cannot resist the call to come out of the cocoon or it will die. You know, without struggle, a butterfly cannot develop its wings.

And so there are areas that we have to move through of our resistance and to move through and take the actions.

You know, resistance, he says, prepares and expands our capacity. That, every time we move through fear, our spiritual muscles get stronger. Every courageous choice that we make teaches the brain: *"I survived. I can do hard things. I am larger than my fear."* And when we keep doing it, it actually gets easier and easier and easier.

Imagine if you're walking in a field and there's a lot of tall grass. And you're walking a straight line. Initially, with all the tall grass, it's kind of hard. It takes a bit of work. But if you keep walking that every single day, it gets easier and easier and easier.

And that's how it is like about neural connections. You know, somebody said -- some neuroscientist said - - that cells and nerves that fire together, wire together. That it gets stronger and stronger from a neurological point of view. That, eventually, what was not familiar becomes familiar. What was thought to be hard or even impossible becomes doable and becomes manageable.

And so, what he says: the most important thing to have an impact, to change the focus and the trajectory of your life, is consistent action. Consistent action changes the brain, he says.

I'm sure we've all heard of Carol Dweck. She's the one who did the fixed mindset versus the growth mindset. And she says a growth mindset is in people who believe that abilities and skills can be developed and improved. People who have a growth mindset tend to embrace challenges; tend to be more persistent in setbacks; tend to more believe that they could fulfill their dreams. That, even with any obstacles, they could move forward and fulfill and manifest their good.

You know, growth begins when we believe the change is possible; when we believe that we can improve and better ourselves to achieve our goals.

Our brains are capable of change throughout its life. We just need to have repeated choices; focused attention; and purposeful action.

So here are the five simple steps. And these are going to sound extremely simple ... and sometimes it is! Sometimes we want to make it way more complicated than it really is! And here are the ways to rewire your brain.

Number one is to **NAME THE FEAR**. That, whatever stuckness or stuff you're going through, say, *"Hey, I'm experiencing some fear right now."* It could be fear of being alone; fear of being found out that I'm an imposter; fear of rejection. Fear in the form. And they can come in the form of guilt or anger or shame. It's any of those energies that are fear-based, that are negative, that really pull us down.

And just saying it -- *"I'm feeling some sadness now. I'm feeling some anger now."* Just acknowledging it reduces its power. Eckhart Tolle says that awareness of a problem or awareness of things in our lives that aren't going well -- just awareness alone is the first step towards change and transformation.

Sometimes we think, *"Oh, I don't want to be negative or I don't ..."* No! It's being honest and acknowledging. It actually reduces its power. Sometimes we think, *"If I say it, that'll give more power."* No! It will actually help be liberated from you. All right.

And so the second one is **TAKE ONE SMALL STEP**. You don't have to wait until you're feeling 100% confident to go act and take a step. Actually, it's one of the most powerful things you can do. Even a small step can begin to shake things up within ourselves and open up our levels of confidence so we could start doing even some of the bigger things.

The small things that we could do after we acknowledge and name the fear is: it could be take a 10-minute walk. It could be make a phone call; read one chapter; pray for five minutes; have a difficult conversation. Go do one of those stretch lab sessions. You know, small wins in the brain teaches our brain and gets us accustomed to believe in ourselves -- that we can survive change.

So, last week, I was feeling a little bit overwhelmed. Do you ever have a lot of things to do? And you start thinking in your head, it's like, *"Oh, man!"* You get tired just even thinking about it! So, I ended up, first, I

just wrote down the list. I had it written down: the list. And all I did was make a long-awaited dinner with my stepdaughter and her new husband. And it was a phone call. And then I combined my home and car insurance, which I thought was a phenomenal accomplishment. [Congregants laugh] And I've got to tell you, the overwhelmed feeling dissipated. And I actually, from doing those two little things, felt better about the list and the future things I'm going to have to knock out.

We think things are so much bigger, but it's these small things done consistently -- these small things done intentionally -- that can really transform our brains, our lives, our attitudes, and our mindsets.

And so, the third one is to **REPLACE OLD THOUGHTS**. Like, you ever find yourself saying things like, *"I'm such a loser,"* or, *"I'm really no good at remembering people's names."* We say all these things we don't even sometimes realize them. We need to pay attention to some of the things that we are affirming about ourselves. And so, whatever it is -- *"I'm a loser"* or, *"People always take advantage of me,"* or, *"Life is unfair"* -- that we need to catch ourselves with those and just replace it.

Even as simply as saying, *"I can learn from this."* Or, *"I will be stronger and wiser from this."* *"I can rise above this to a greater experience."* Or, *"I know that there are new ways for me to handle this situation with more confidence."* Or just even saying to yourself, *"I'm a powerful creator."* Or, *"I'm a dynamic spiritual being."* Just replace the harsh judgments that we have.

And usually they're judgments against ourselves. But any form of negativity about ourselves or to other people or our world are not good for us. They do pull us down. It's a lower vibration. And what we want to do is just raise that vibration by affirming the truth about ourselves, and that things can get better. And we can learn; you know, we can improve.

And then the fourth one is to **PRACTICE GRATITUDE**. You know, everybody knows gratitude is a powerful vibration, and the more we can feel it, the more we infuse that energy or expand and awaken that energy that is always there. You know, gratitude has an amazing ability to switch your mindset from negative to positive, from lack to abundance.

And to be able to feel good and appreciate our lives -- regardless of what's going on or what level of success you think you might be having -- just feeling grateful on a daily basis, and appreciating who you are, appreciating your family members, appreciating your work, appreciating your finances, really shifts and makes a difference. It is a fabulous way to help us get out of our way; a fabulous way to help us rewire our brains.

And then the last one is **RINSE, WASH AND REPEAT**. [Congregants laugh] Because we would like to think this is one and done: *"I did that one day, and why isn't it working?"* It's got to be done every day. It took years to get the negative neural patterns. And so, it's going to take us time, you know, to transform and to get rid of these limiting beliefs and have more abundant beliefs.

And so, that is a powerful thing. Are you willing to make it a life pattern? A lifestyle? That this is how I live. When I feel fear come up, that I acknowledge it and take a little step. When I say something like negative like, *"I'm a loser,"* say -- you can do the *"Cancel, cancel"* if you want, and then say, *"I am a powerful child of God."* I mean, feeling gratitude. These little things that we could do in our head throughout the day can absolutely make a powerful difference.

Johnnie Coleman used to say, *"It works if you work it."* And the biggest part is if you work it! And so, are we willing to do that work?

A famous professor of surgery died and went to heaven. At the pearly gates, he was asked by the gatekeeper, *"Have you ever committed a sin that you regretted?"*

"Yes," the professor said sadly. *"When I was a young candidate at the hospital of St. Lucas, we played a soccer game against a team of community doctors, and I scored a goal. It was offside, but it was the winning goal, and we won the championship. And people were so excited, and I got caught up in the excitement of it and being the hero. And now I regret doing that."*

And the gatekeepers said, *“Well, you know, that's not really a very big sin, so you can enter. Come on in to heaven.”*

“Thank you very much, St. Peter,” said the professor.

“You're welcome,” he said, *“but I'm not St. Peter. St. Peter's actually having his lunch break. I'm St. Lucas.”* [Light laughter] [Explains joke:] St. Lucas was the name of it ... anyway. I thought you didn't get it, but I think it's just a bad joke. I think it's a bad joke. [Congregants laugh] Whew! I'll have to rewire my brain on my computer.

So, if you want impact in your life, we've got to create a change. And the only way to create the change is by taking consistent action. You know, action is really praised a lot in the Bible that we don't always pay attention to it, because we don't like to work so hard. We want it to have it the easiest way possible.

But in the book of James, it says, *“Be doers of the word and you will be blessed in your doing.”* *“Faith without works is dead.”* And Paul said, *“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”* The renewing of your mind is inner work. It is powerful spiritual work ... but work that will and can absolutely transform our lives.

You know, our relationship with our brain is something that is vital and is important. Noticing when it's acting in a survival mode mechanism. But even when it's against us, our brains are actually calling us higher -- to a higher level of awareness through direction, focus, capacity, energy and impact. We are not just here to survive, we are here to thrive. And the best way to thrive is to learn how to get out of your own way.

God bless you all.

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