

# **Special Report**

**Overcome Performance Nerves:**

**How to connect with your true  
confidence as a presenter or  
performer!**

**Special Report:**

## **Overcome Performance Nerves:**

### **How to connect with your true confidence as a presenter or performer!**

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**Special Report:**

## **Overcome Performance Nerves:**

### **How to connect with your true confidence as a presenter or performer!**

#### Introduction

Hello



I'm Tony Burgess and I welcome you to this Special Report.

You may have obtained this special report because you are already a well-established presenter or performer and you have experienced some kind of 'confidence knock' for one reason or another. It may be that you are only just beginning to consider a career as a presenter or performer or you are early in your career and you want to give yourself the best possible launch into your exciting journey. It is possible that you are not a professional presenter or performer at all. You may have a particular project that is going to involve you presenting or performing and you want to get yourself ready and fully confident to make it happen. Perhaps you are in a role where you are supporting *someone else* who wants to

overcome performance nerves and who wants to re-connect with their full inner confidence.

If your current position fits one of those above or you are interested for reasons I haven't even thought of yet, I congratulate you for being one of those people who *takes action* when presented with an opportunity to step up and make something happen. I guarantee that by choosing to read what is in this report with an open heart and mind, ready to soak up what is offered like a sponge for success, by choosing to adopt it and practise it regularly, to integrate it into your daily activities and also share it with others, I can help you to connect fully with your true inner confidence allowing you to get out there with a real sense of freedom to perform at your personal best.

The information held within this report will have benefits that ripple out well beyond your presenting or performing activities. The practical approaches that I will disclose can help you step up to become a more confident partner, lover, parent, friend, supporter, colleague, networker, innovator, leader, business person and 'opportunity seizer' too . I know this because I have worked, using these approaches and methods, with people that have had goals in all of these areas (and more besides) and they have achieved consistently solid results.

A bit of a historical context for what is on offer to you in this report:

I am one of the founding Directors of Academy of High Achievers Ltd (Aha!) and for many years I have specialised in training coaches, trainers, therapists and other change-facilitators in the mastery of mind techniques and communication skills that fully prepare them to help their clients to overcome anxiety and fear and to unlock and connect with their true inner confidence. I have also been using the expertise directly in the form of personal and professional break-through coaching sessions with my own clients since the mid 1990s.

Looking back to when I studied Psychology at University, I was fascinated by what I was learning and then when I left after graduating I was really hungry to *apply* psychology to make a positive difference to people's lives. My degree hadn't really prepared me for such practical application although it had given me a very good academic grounding in understanding people and what makes them 'tick'.

It was when I trained a couple of years later in how to use hypnosis and related mind technologies to help people experience significant positive change that I got my first taste of just how powerful applied psychology can be. I got hooked very quickly because I discovered as I experimented

with the techniques I had learned, that these mind tools work effectively and reliably in a very wide range of contexts and situations.

I have since been lucky enough to have had the opportunities to use my skills to help a large number of people to deliver at peak performance and enjoy the journey along the way. I have found it particularly rewarding to use the tools to help people to '*get out of their own way*' – in other words, to overcome their fears and re-access their full confidence to perform at their personal best.

It is especially gratifying for me to help facilitate a break-through when the need someone has expressed is very high, for example where their career or their personal fulfilment is potentially at stake. This of course means that the benefits are huge when the break-through happens and I like to challenge myself to help get the change completed as quickly as possible so that the person can get back to freely doing what they love best as soon as possible.

With this in mind, I have honed my methods and techniques so sharply over the years that I now most often facilitate a complete breakthrough into total confidence in just one or two tailored sessions.



Confidence defined:

The very fact that you have attained a copy of this report suggests that you can probably relate to the kind of situation where someone is facing a performance opportunity and as they anticipate stepping up to the challenge they experience an overwhelming sense of ‘I can’t do this’ or a strong sense that they are likely to mess up or ‘fall apart’ in some way.

Many people would describe such an experience as a ‘lack of self-confidence’. I have also already referred to this kind of experience as *‘getting in your own way’*.

*‘If only I had more confidence...’* you might have almost heard the person exclaim, *‘...it would have made all the difference!’*

Confidence: noun - faith in one's own ability; self-assurance

*Source: Chambers 21<sup>st</sup> Century Dictionary*

Your confidence is an *experience*. It is an experience of knowing your full resourcefulness, of sensing your ability to handle things well, of recognising your true potential.

The degree to which you experience your confidence can make all the difference to the quality of your performance and the outcomes you achieve.

Imagine what it would have been like to have stepped up to that opportunity, task or challenge fully believing in yourself and your abilities to deliver a peak performance. Such an experience would have freed you to access your resources and '*smoothed the way*' for you to take effective action.

In fact, experiencing confidence is a key ingredient of personal success in pretty much any context that you could bring to mind.

An experience of confidence works best when the person experiencing it remains open to *noticing what is and what is not working* (without self-blame), is willing to *adjust and hone* activity accordingly and is open to *continual relevant learning and development*.

For you to experience maximum gain from reading this information, you will need to understand its specific *relevance* to you and you will also need to be willing to *take action* and apply what you learn where it matters most to you.

### Getting Prepared for Maximum Benefit

To get yourself prepared for maximum benefit straight away, ask yourself some simple questions:

- 1) In what specific area(s) would it make a huge difference to experience more of my total confidence?
  
- 2) For each area, what would be the *undesirable consequences* for you if you made no change, took no action and you did not take this opportunity to increase the level of confidence that you experience? For each area, consider what would be the undesirable consequences in the short term, medium term and long term. Now imagine the consequences unfolding enough to feel the 'hurt'.
  
- 3) For each area, what will be the *desirable rewards and positive consequences* of deciding today to apply everything useful that you learn - taking positive action so that your experience of personal confidence is raised significantly? Imagine the benefits emerging as you experience more and more personal confidence. Imagine it until it excites you.

### Describing your confidence most helpfully

The *language* that you use to describe something that you have been experiencing will *programme* your mind unhelpfully or helpfully (in relation to what you want to achieve). Awareness of the power of the language that you use in your thinking and speaking will help you to choose words that will programme your mind clearly in the direction of the outcomes that you want.

People often say things like:

‘**I am** not very confident’

‘**I am** anxious’

‘**I am** a self-doubter’

‘**I am** not a confident person’

‘**I have got** no self-confidence’

‘**I have got** low self-confidence’

The interesting thing about such statements is that psychologically they *seem* ‘immovable’ or permanent. The language, in effect, is programming the speaker’s mind to believe in its permanence or to believe that it is difficult to make changes.

‘**I am...**’ statements refer to the speaker’s identity.

Often people adopt their unhelpful ‘**I am...**’ identity statements because other people have directed unhelpful ‘**you are...**’ labels at them over and over again.

Other times, people just make up their own unhelpful ‘**I am...**’ statements themselves.

Either way, to encourage positive change, it can be very useful to ‘loosen up’ any unhelpful identity concepts so that they seem more ‘fluid’ and transient. It is *easy* to do this by turning identity statements into ‘activity’ statements.

Examples of activity statements could be ‘**I’m *doing*** low confidence’, ‘**I’m *experiencing*** low confidence’ or ‘**I’m *feeling*** low confidence’.

This turns the identity statement into one about behaviour, activity or experiencing.

As soon as the ‘problem’ is stated as ‘just behaviour’, ‘just activity’ or ‘just experiences’ then it psychologically seems that it could be *modified* into different, more helpful behaviours, activities or experiences. It gives the person a sense of ‘hope’ that there are *alternative* ways to behave or experience that can be learned, adopted and can get better results.

The '**I have got...**' phrases could be described as 'existence' statements in that they suggest that confidence literally exists (or not) as a 'real thing'.

They tend to suggest that a person either has or hasn't got the amount that they need of this 'real thing' and that they are stuck with the amount they have 'got' (or 'not got'). This again tends to psychologically seem 'immovable' or permanent. Again, to 'loosen up' the concept so that positive change seems more possible, converting them to the 'activity' statements that I have mentioned already above. '**I'm *doing*** low confidence', '**I'm *experiencing*** low confidence' or '**I'm *feeling*** low confidence' would again be more helpful alternatives.

Of course, this basic yet powerful psychological effect works just as well *in reverse* when you want to 'stabilise' a *positive* concept or make it seem more permanent.

'**I'm *feeling*** confident' suggests a *transient* state (like it is an exceptional moment and soon the person could be back to thinking '**I am** a self-doubter') and it could be very useful to *stabilise* the 'confidence' by converting the statement to '**I am** confident' or '**I've got** loads of

confidence' which psychologically make the confidence seem much more permanent and stable – like it is definitely 'here to stay'.

Begin to notice the ways in which you are describing your experiences of personal confidence and 'play' with the language patterns as suggested.

This will ensure that you are programming your mind most usefully.

### Stepping into a new moment of opportunity

Another element of the way a person refers to their personal confidence (or an experience of a lack of it) is in terms of the way they discuss it in relation to *time*.

I am sure that you will agree that one of the best things about anything unhelpful that has happened in your past - is that it is now *finished!*

It is over!

You are now in a *new* moment with lots of choices available and opportunities for doing things differently.

It does not matter *how long* a person has been doing the same pattern of behaviour in the past; in a new moment, with new information and a clear

decision to make new choices, new patterns of behaviour can be established quickly.

Let's say that you had been taking the same route to work every day for 25 years. You would at some point have begun to make the journey almost on autopilot because it was so familiar. However, if some new information became available today that told you that there was another route to work – a shorter, quicker and more attractive route – you would be able to change your pattern of behaviour straight away (as long as you were informed how to get to the new route). It would not matter whether you had been making the journey on the 'old' route for a week or for 25 years, you could still make the change immediately in a new moment, couldn't you?

It is the same with experiencing your personal confidence. It does not matter how long you have been experiencing low personal confidence in any context, you are in a new moment right now, and when new, more useful ways are made available (eg: to begin to experience your true high levels of personal confidence) and you are shown how to adopt these new ways, you can begin to make the changes immediately.



Knowing that every new moment offers new choices and knowing that any unhelpful aspects of your past are over, you can begin to describe your experiences of personal confidence in ways that empower you most.

Commit to begin to refer to any experience that is unhelpful as ‘transient’ and in the past (because it is over – even if it happened a moment ago – and you have new choices in this moment). So ‘**I have** low confidence’ or ‘**I am** low in confidence’ becomes ‘**I have been doing** low confidence’ or ‘**I was doing** low confidence’ or ‘**I used to do** low confidence’. This helps programme your mind to accept that you have new choices available in this moment and that the old pattern can stop right now ready to be replaced with more helpful alternatives.

Focus on what you *do* want to experience:

Often when I am coaching people and I ask them what they want, I am given a long list of all kinds of things that the person *doesn't* want. ‘I don’t want to be stressed’, ‘I don’t want to mess up anymore’, ‘I don’t want to be broke’, ‘I don’t want to be scared’....and so on.

This is fine in terms of drawing a line and making an initial decision to make a change and it is also *sometimes* useful when you want to kick-

start more activity – it can be a useful motivator *away from* something undesirable at certain points along the journey.

It is also really important that you are *steering yourself in the right direction* and you need to have a *clear and precise target* as to where you *do* want to be heading, otherwise the only information the brain has to act on and steer towards is the very things you don't want in your life. For much of the time, the most useful thing to keep your focus on and your activity oriented towards is the outcome you want and the direction you want to head in.

Dwell often on where you are going – it is part of your self-programming. It is telling your mind and body 'This is where I want to go!'

So get used to turning those 'I don't want...' statements into statements of what you do want. For example, '*I don't want to be getting scared*' could be changed into '*I intend to experience calm and confidence*' or something similar.

Be sure that you are filling your head with outcomes like the following:

*'I am a naturally confident person at my core and...*

*...I intend to access my full confidence more and more often'*

*...I intend to experience my full confidence so I can deliver my personal best whenever I choose'*

*...I intend to step into my true confidence every time I take on a new challenge'*

...and so on

Rather than:

*'I don't want to have fear anymore'*

*'I want to stop feeling afraid'*

*'I don't want to panic when I am preparing to go on stage'*

*'I don't want to have that sick scared feeling when I think about performing in public'*

I learned this lesson very quickly when I was first learning to ride a motorcycle.

It was my first day of riding on proper roads (previously we had been taught the basics on a car park).

I began to focus my attention on things that I didn't want to hit. I focused on lamp posts, the curb, parked cars, and bumps in the road. My mind responded immediately and sent messages to my body which sent messages to my motorcycle. I steered directly towards the very things that I wanted to avoid. It was the only thing I had given my mind to focus on, so my system was full of the things to be avoided. What we tend to fill our heads with, we tend to attract or steer towards.

I immediately switched strategy to focusing on where I *did* want the motorcycle to take me – in the centre of my lane, smoothly staying in line with the best quality road surface, looking ahead to where I wanted to go next. My mind responded, my body responded, my motorcycle responded – I was now going where I *did* want.

It has been a useful reminder for me ever since when working towards my goals and when making intended changes in life and it has certainly helped me to access more of my personal confidence.

A useful model for Personal Confidence – Recognise your inner diamond and open your belief gates!

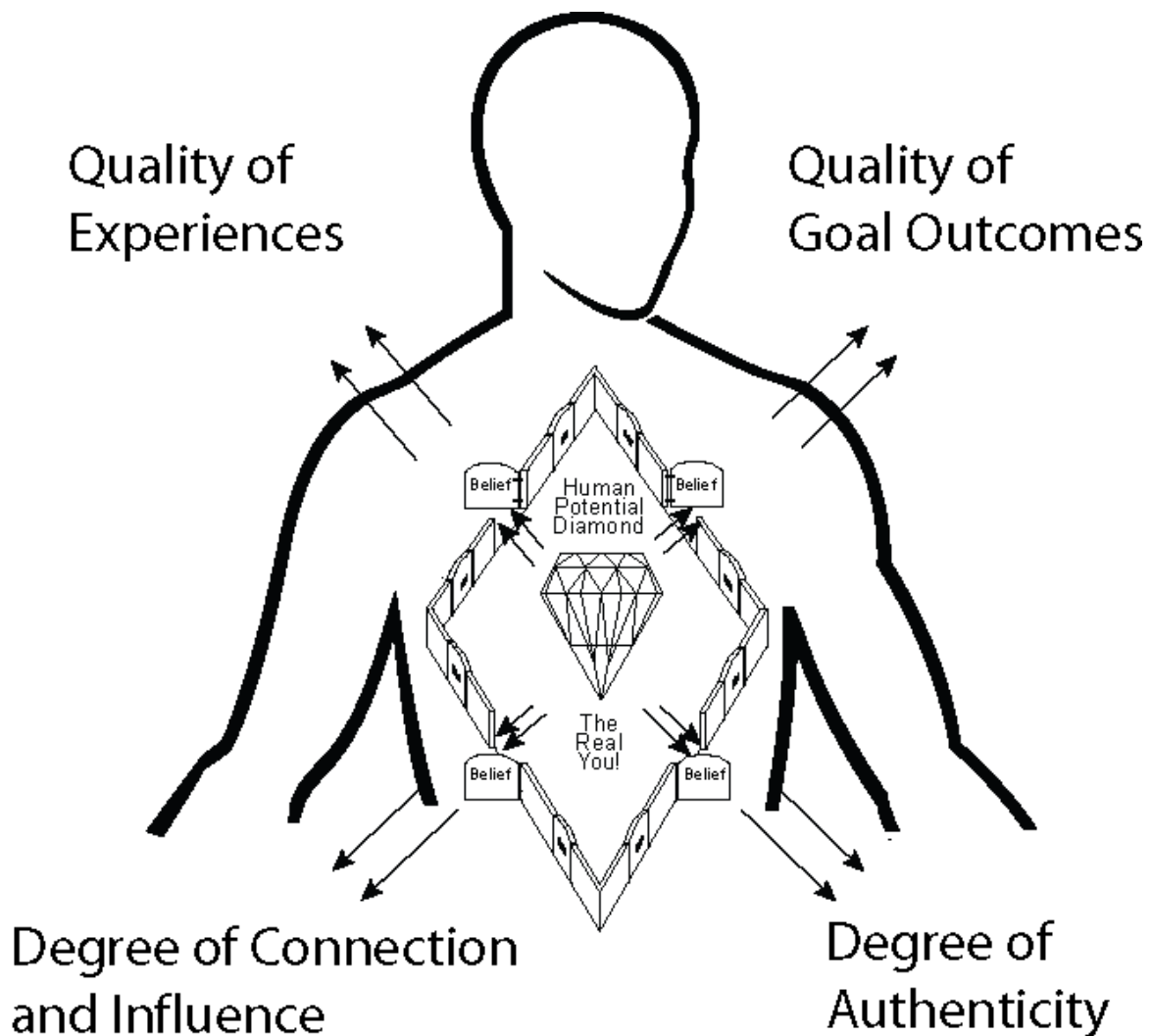
The French-Burgess Belief Gates Model (next page) captures the key psychological principles that help you to programme yourself most usefully for positive change (such as connecting with your true confidence).

It is based on the useful assumption that people have far more potential to thrive than they tend to give themselves credit for. It assumes that in fact, every person has massive potential for achievement.

This is represented in the model by an ‘inner diamond’ which constantly shines brightly in every person. Shining out from this magnificent inner diamond are all of your wonderful personal resources including your personal confidence.

You were born with this diamond and it is with you throughout your life, shining brightly. As a new born baby when you came into the world, you had free-flowing confidence. You would scream when you felt like screaming, you would giggle when you felt like giggling, you would even empty your bladder and bowels whenever you wanted to...

**French-Burgess Belief Gates Model of Human Experience and Achievement**



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... You did not worry about what others would think of you – you just did whatever suited you best in the moment. You had no fears to speak of (newborns show a startle response only to two situations - a sudden loud noise, and the sense of falling backwards – all other fears are learned through life experience).

As you developed from a baby into a young child, you probably started to learn to grasp things with your hands, learned to walk and learned to talk. Even though this whole process took many ‘failures’ before mastery, you picked yourself up and kept going over and over again until it began to work for you better and better. That takes a lot of personal confidence!

Your diamond was shining out resources and they were getting through into your activities and experiences and you were making things happen!

As time passed by and you grew up and developed into an older child and then into an adult, you received *programming* from your own direct experiences and also from other people, and from other external sources of information (such as books, the education system and the media). This ‘programming’ formed an ‘outer shell’ around your inner diamond.

This ‘outer shell’ was made up mainly of programmed (learned) beliefs and assumptions about the world. Beliefs about what is possible and what is impossible, about what is easy and what is difficult, about what is good and what is bad, about what is acceptable and unacceptable, about who you are and what you are capable of (or not), about the way the world is, and so much more.

Some of this programming will be *helpful* and some of it will *get in the way* of you achieving what you want.

The model shows that the ‘outer shell’ is made up of lots and lots of ‘gates’ that represent the programmed (learned) beliefs that the person has adopted.

Some beliefs will create ‘open’ gates which allow the diamond’s shining resources to continue to get through into the person’s activities, behaviours and experiences leading to great outcomes.

Other beliefs may create ‘closed’ gates that prevent the diamond’s shining resources to actually get through – they get blocked – and it *seems* to the individual and also to others looking from the outside as if those resources hardly exist at all. In such cases, the person gets outcomes and experiences that *fall short* of what they are capable and short of what they deserve.

Of course, gates can be anything from totally closed to totally wide open. This means that a person may have none of their resources (including their confidence) getting through in a situation, they may be just partially getting through, or they may be getting through at full ‘brightness’.



The degree to which gates are ‘open’ or ‘closed’ will vary from person to person (according to the programming and learning they have experienced so far) and will also vary from context to context.

It is highly likely that if you can think of an area in which you have been ‘doing’ low confidence, you can also think of situations in which you are already living your true high confidence.

Assumptions of the model in relation to confidence:

The French-Burgess beliefs gate model, applied to personal confidence assumes:

- All people are, always have been and always will be highly confident *at their core*.
- People who have been experiencing ‘low confidence’ in any (even many) contexts have simply got belief gates shut (blocking their true confidence resources from getting through)

- People who are experiencing ‘high confidence’ have belief gates that are open (allowing their true confidence resources to shine through brightly)
- The degree to which a person experiences their personal confidence in any context is an indication as to the degree to which their belief gates are currently open or closed.
- Belief gates may open and close depending upon beliefs, thoughts and assumptions about the context (so it is perfectly possible for their confidence resources to shine through to varying degrees in different situations – i.e. feeling high in confidence in one situation and low in confidence in another situation)
- Closed belief gates can be opened by adopting new beliefs, new ways of thinking or new ways of experiencing a situation (by doing things differently). This is good news because it means any experience of ‘low confidence’ need only be temporary. New choices and learning new ways will open gates and free the person to experience their full confidence again.

- It is possible for open gates to close and for confidence to be blocked as a result of any unhelpful new programming (or learning). The great news here is that the resources are still there – *always* there - the gates will just need opening again. It can be considered to be a *temporary* block.
- When someone experiences high confidence, they are experiencing who they really are. When someone experiences anything other than high confidence, they are experiencing a block to who they really are – they are simply getting in the way of their own magnificent potential. My good friend, Richard Wilkins (of the ‘Ministry for Inspiration’) has a lovely way to describe this kind of situation where an impoverished version of the person is being expressed – he describes it as simply being ‘a case of mistaken identity’ (in our model, the *real* you is hidden behind closed gates!)

We have helped many, many clients using the principles captured within the French-Burgess Belief Gates Model, from psychiatric patients, to sports people, to nurses, to couples, to parents, to teachers and their pupils, to presenters, performers and entertainers, to business owners and entrepreneurs, to employees, to managers, to corporate senior teams. The principles are the same, whatever the context.

### Applying the model

The rest of this programme will concentrate on practical applications of the model to reconnect you with your true confidence.

Key focus points will be on the various ways that you can begin to:

- a) Notice how you may have been *getting in the way* of your true personal confidence (what have you been doing that has been closing the gates?)
  
- b) Notice how you have already been *letting your confidence shine* through in certain contexts (what are you doing that is opening the gates?)
  
- c) Understand how to use a variety of *skills and tools* to open your belief gates as fully as possible in as many contexts as is useful to you. This will allow you to fully enjoy your true confidence and start getting more of the results and experiences that you intend, desire and deserve.

Time to go on an 'inspedition' – What is going on in there?

Step one – Get curious!

Most people have not been trained to notice their thinking or question their thinking or capture what is working (or not) in their thinking. Most people act as if they are passive receptors of their thinking – almost as if they are only in the passenger seat, being taken wherever their thoughts steer them.

Given that your 'inner stuff' (a highly technical term for your thinking, assumptions and beliefs) is key to the level of personal confidence that you get to experience in any context, wouldn't it make more sense to realise that you are actually *in the driving seat* and that you can take the controls and steer things in the direction that you want? Of course it does! And you can begin to learn how to straight away!

The first step is to adopt a state of playful curiosity. You can learn a great deal in this kind of state – including about yourself and your thinking.

To access the state, just close your eyes for a moment and remember a situation where you were being totally fascinated by something, totally

interested in finding something out or in learning how something worked or in what someone was teaching you.

Choose a situation where you were enjoying the discovery.

Allow yourself to be absorbed in the experience until you begin to really feel again your playful curiosity growing inside.

Once you have stepped into a state of playful curiosity at a level that works well for you, you are ready to begin to notice what is going on inside your mind.

Become a curious observer of your thoughts, beliefs and assumptions.

Begin to notice whatever you notice.

### The most important audit you can ever do!

Many people have experienced an ‘audit’ of one kind or another. In essence, it is a way of ‘taking stock’ of what is working and what is not working in relation to a specific desired outcome or goal.

Given the important impact that personal confidence can have on your taking effective action; and given the important impact that your ‘inner stuff’ has on your experience of your personal confidence, it could be reasonably argued that it is *really important* to ‘take stock’ of what is going on in there!

Think of your specific focus area in which you would like to experience your full personal confidence.

Take a piece of A4 paper (portrait) and write the goal or focus area at the top of the page.

Underneath this, divide the page in two with a line down the centre and two headings: ‘Helpful inner stuff’ and ‘Unhelpful inner stuff’ as shown below:

**Goal / Focus Area for ‘Inner Stuff’ Audit:**

**Example Goal:**

**To connect fully with my inner confidence when performing on stage**

**Helpful ‘inner stuff’**

**Unhelpful ‘inner stuff’**

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**(NB - Extend columns to bottom of your A4 sheet)**

Now, allow yourself to start to think about the goal or focus area.

And as you do, simply ‘capture’ your thoughts, beliefs and assumptions about it.

Just ask yourself ‘What do I believe about this situation?’, ‘What am I assuming about it?’, ‘What do I think about it?’ ‘What do I reckon that I know about it?’

Allow the answers to *bubble up* to the surface and then make an intuitive judgement for each thing that comes to mind as to whether it is *helping you* to access an experience of your personal confidence or *getting in the way* of you accessing an experience of your personal confidence.

There are no right or wrong answers here – it is different for everyone.

Just notice what comes up and make the judgement call.

If you sense that a thought, belief or assumption is *helping* you access an experience of personal confidence, then write it in the column titled ‘helpful inner stuff’. If instead you sense that a thought, belief or assumption may have been *getting in the way* of you experiencing your personal confidence then make a note of it in the column titled ‘unhelpful inner stuff’.



Gradually you will build up a picture of your ‘inner stuff’ related to that goal or focus area in terms of how much it helps or hinders your experience of your true inner confidence.

Please note that all of your thoughts, beliefs and assumptions are likely to *seem* true to you. In fact, most people tend to think that their own thoughts, beliefs and assumptions are accurate. The point of this exercise is only to make a judgement as to how well the ‘inner stuff’ is *servicing you* (or not) in terms of accessing your confidence.

Some people like to prompt more of their ‘inner stuff’ to come to the surface with more specific questions during the audit. Here are some questions that may be helpful in stimulating the ‘inner stuff’ to bubble to the surface easier:

- How easy or difficult do I think it will be to make progress in this area?
- How possible or impossible do I think it is to achieve my goal?
- How quick or slow do I think progress is likely to be?
- How resourceful do I think I am?
- What do I think other people will think of me as I progress?
- What do I think I will gain and/or lose by going for this goal?

- How risky or safe do I think this is going to be?
- What am I likening this goal to from my past experience?
- What am I expecting along the journey?
- What am I imagining will happen?
- What am I focusing on?
- What do I think is at stake?
- How enjoyable do I think the journey is going to be?
- How do I imagine that going for this goal will affect me?
- How do I perceive that it will affect other people that are important to me?
- Do I perceive any competition or not?
- How much support do I think I need and how much do I perceive that I have?
- How prepared do I think I am?

Keep going on this task for as long as it seems that you are coming up with useful information.

Now, as you look at your two columns, it may be useful for you to *circle* or *highlight* those thoughts, beliefs and assumptions that you suspect are

having *most helpful* and *most unhelpful* impact on allowing you to access your personal confidence.

The items of ‘inner stuff’ listed in the left hand column are ‘gate openers’ allowing your inner resources including personal confidence to *shine through* into your experience and your performance. The items of ‘inner stuff’ listed in the right hand column are ‘gate closers’ that are getting *in the way* of your inner resources and are *blocking* your true personal confidence from getting through into your experience and your performance.

This is worth noticing!

Below is a snapshot of an example ‘inner stuff’ audit (please note that what appears in each column is only for example purposes – what serves one person may trip up another person - so what appears in the example ‘helpful’ column could just as easily fit into someone else’s ‘unhelpful’ column):

**Goal / Focus Area for 'Inner Stuff' Audit:**

**To connect fully with my inner confidence when performing on stage**

**Helpful 'inner stuff'**

**Unhelpful 'inner stuff'**

I am prepared

I am such a nervous person  
nowadays

I have delivered confidently  
loads of times before

This could go horribly  
wrong

I know I can re-connect with how to  
to do this confidently

Preparation time is running  
out

If anyone can do it, I can too!

People will slate me if  
I make a mess of this!

People tell me I am fabulous!

My career could be in ruins  
if I forget my lines

Janet can help me

This is too risky even to  
begin

I've overcome all kinds of  
challenging things

What if I start sweating  
or shaking badly?

People always warm to me easily

People will be waiting for a  
chance to criticise me

I have survived much more than this

Paul is a much better  
performer than me.

...

...

Later in this report, it will be useful to learn ways to strengthen the 'inner stuff' that is working for you in terms of accessing your inner confidence (ways to open the gates wider and keep them open).

It will also be useful to learn ways to 'diminish' or remove the 'inner stuff' which has been getting in the way of you accessing your personal confidence (ways to open any gates that have been closed).

We will refer back to your 'inner stuff' audit later – so keep your sheet handy!

For you to be willing to start to let go of, diminish, or remove unhelpful ‘inner stuff’ later, you may want some reassurance that it is okay to do so.

### Dropping unhelpful illusions or deluding myself?

Many people believe that what comes up in the ‘unhelpful’ column of their ‘inner stuff’ audit is ‘true’ (which means that you may need some convincing that it is okay to remove or change it).

You may have come across a quote that has been attributed to Henry Ford which goes something like this:

*‘If you believe you can or you believe you can’t, you are right!’*

What is being communicated here is that your beliefs (and other ‘inner stuff’) will, to a degree at least, influence what ‘truth’ actually emerges in the outcome. In essence, what you wholeheartedly believe to be true will be what turns up in your reality and in your results.

Why would this be the case?

Well if you believe in (and focus on and think about) *unhelpful* content, your inner gates will usually close on your inner resources (such as personal confidence) and will prevent you from performing at your best,

severely affecting the chances of a successful outcome. If on the other hand you believe in (and focus on and think about) *helpful* content, your inner gates will be wide open and your inner resources (such as personal confidence) will be shining through fully, enhancing your performance and dramatically increasing your chances of producing a successful outcome.

We have all heard of success stories where an ‘amateur’ has performed in some outstanding way (because they simply *didn't know* that they were not ‘supposed’ to be able to achieve it!).

‘Beginners luck’ is a great example of this principle being demonstrated. A person might take to a new skill easily and achieve great results and then they are gradually ‘taught’ how they should and shouldn’t do things and what could go wrong if they don’t do it ‘properly’ and before long they have all kinds of thoughts, beliefs, ideas and rules that are *getting in the way* of what they were already doing so well and so naturally.

In practical terms, ‘truth’ is negotiable! And what we choose to focus on and believe in can become the foundations for a self-fulfilling prophecy.

You may already be asking yourself what you would prefer to be believing, assuming or thinking instead of your unhelpful ‘inner stuff’,

given that there are a number of possible ‘versions’ of ‘reality’ available to choose from.

Of course, there are some *exceptions* to the idea that it is useful to ‘cherry pick’ our beliefs, thoughts and assumptions.

People have often asked me the question about the boundary between ‘*helpful* thinking’ and ‘*delusional* thinking’.

For example, a person believing that they can fly like superman off the top of a skyscraper by simply flapping their arms is unlikely to lead to a great outcome if they jumped off.

Equally, a person who simply holds on to the idea that they are currently singing beautifully despite many record company owners telling them that it hurts their ears to listen to them is unlikely to win them a recording contract. They would need to commit to making significant improvements rather than holding onto blind faith that all is well despite clear feedback to the contrary.

However, for many, many situations, the unhelpful version of events that we may be currently holding in our minds is just one ‘take’ on reality. It may *seem* real and yet an alternative, more helpful and equally valid viewpoint could exist and be adopted and tested. Such an alternative viewpoint may even already be working for someone else in a similar



context. If it genuinely begins to free up your personal confidence and it gets your resources flowing and you begin to notice better performance by adopting the alternative viewpoint then it is highly likely that you will go on to get better results as a consequence.

Sticking with the same pattern of *unhelpful* behaviour that is consistently failing to get your desired results could be a good definition of *insanity*.

At the same time, *persistence* in mastering a skill despite setbacks (and the presence of doubters) is also a key ingredient in achieving successful outcomes. The difference here is that behaviour is *tweaked and honed* according to *observed results* and *helpful feedback*.

Other people are likely to offer their own beliefs, assumptions and thoughts to you about your goals and your ambitions.

When you consider whether or not to adopt *their* ‘inner stuff’ as your own, do ask yourself ‘*How well is that viewpoint serving them in achieving their own goals and how similar are their goals to mine?*’

Remember, most people considered it to be ‘fact’ that it was impossible to run a mile in under 4 minutes until Roger Bannister actually did so.

Given the fact that for many athletes at the time, their own goal was to

run a mile as fast as possible, it did not best serve them to believe in the impossibility of this feat. This was shown by the fact that soon after Bannister achieved 'the impossible' many athletes 'freed' themselves of that belief and accessed their personal confidence and resourcefulness and quickly went on to perform at that 'previously impossible' level themselves.

As a final point on this matter, some of the items falling in the 'unhelpful' column of the sample 'inner stuff' audit *could* be transferred into the 'helpful' column if you are operating in an open and positive 'solution-finding' mode. Project managers do this as part of their roles in business. They anticipate 'worst case scenarios' in order to manage risk or come up with solutions that *prevent* undesirable outcomes from happening. This practical, solution focused attitude can be useful when planning and preparing, so do consider when it may be appropriate for you to step into such a role.

Where such thinking becomes *unhelpful* is where a person goes to the 'worst case scenarios' in their mind and neither accepts the risk nor finds solutions to prevent them. Then the 'inner stuff' just closes down resources and in effect 'tortures' the thinker. I have met many project managers who 'torture' themselves with 'risk averse' thinking and

imagining ‘worst case scenarios’ in their *personal* lives (when they have stepped out of their solution-focused roles) and it just stops them in their tracks by shutting the gates on their personal confidence.

How exactly are you thinking? Capturing the differences that really count!

Just as most people have not been trained to notice in any detail *what* they are thinking to give them an experience of low or high personal confidence, it has not been part of most people’s traditional education to have learned *how* they are doing so.

This is important. Thinking, believing, assuming, expecting, remembering and all other ‘inner stuff’ has *structure* to it that when captured can be altered to change the experience of the thinker. It can be changed from a ‘gates closed’ or ‘low confidence’ experience to a ‘gates open’ or ‘high confidence’ experience very quickly and easily (with some experimentation and practise).

So what makes up the structure of your ‘inner stuff’?

Your ‘inner stuff’ is generally made up to one extent or another of pictures in your head, sounds in your head, physical sensations and

emotional feelings, some self talk and in some contexts an experience of smells and tastes.

Think of a situation now, in which you have felt relaxed and at ease and confident.

Close your eyes and let your imagination take you there now fully in your mind and body.

You may have noticed that you were picturing things and there may have been some sounds to go with the pictures. Depending upon the context, you may have noticed smells and tastes and feelings. You may perhaps have been ‘thinking things through’ or recalling information by talking to yourself. There is no right or wrong here – just notice!

Now think of another different situation – perhaps one where you have previously had an experience of anxiety.

Again, notice how you are representing the experience.

You may already have noticed differences. Maybe when you thought of one of the situations there was more emphasis on one sense than another

(eg you may have had intense feelings in one and more emphasis on pictures in the other). This is worth noticing!

It is often in the *finer detail* that you notice the differences between the experiences that really count. The more that you can ‘capture’ about these differences, the more you can go on to make helpful changes that will allow you to experience your personal confidence more easily and consistently.

When you capture what is working you can *replicate* it.

When you capture what is *not* working you can *change* it until it works better (often by mimicking what is already working).

First of all – let’s begin with simply capturing the finer detail of the structure of your ‘inner stuff’. Time to get curious!

A body of research, attitudes, tools and techniques called Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) has provided people with a great deal of insight into how changing this inner structure can give them completely different and more helpful experiences to those that they started with.

To put this into practise, look back at your ‘inner stuff’ audit and choose an item from the ‘unhelpful’ column. Read it to yourself and notice how

you represent it inside your mind and in your experience. Then choose another and do the same and continue to go down the list, noticing what you notice. Then do the same with the items in the 'helpful' column.

Where you experience pictures, begin to notice the finer details:

- How many pictures?
- Colour or black and white?
- Large or small picture(s)?
- Framed or not?
- Moving or still?
- Are you seeing yourself in the picture or is it like you are there looking through your own eyes?
- Bright or dark?
- Position of the pictures in your 'minds eye'?
- Sharp and clear or blurred?

Where you experience sounds, begin to notice the finer details:

- Which direction are they coming from?
- Volume?
- Intensity?

Where you experience smells and tastes, begin to notice the finer details:

- Which direction are they from?
- Intensity?

Where you experience any sense of touch, begin to notice the finer details:

- Texture?
- Temperature?
- Which part(s) of your body?
- Pressure?

Where you experience any inner feelings (often referred to as emotions), begin to notice the finer details:

- Where in your body?
- How big or small is the feeling?
- Is it moving or still?
- If you could imagine it to be something, what would it be like? (eg people often talk about butterflies in their tummy or a weight on their shoulders or a knot in their stomach). You can then imagine what it would look like and sound like and so on

Where you experience any 'self talk', begin to notice the finer details:

- Whose voice?
- Volume?
- Where is the location of the voice?
- Tone?
- Pace?
- Rhythm?

Maybe you noticed some trends?

Maybe you even noticed some consistent differences between the way you represented items in the 'helpful' column and the way you represented items in the 'unhelpful' column?

Maybe you have noticed that you tend to use one way of representing more often than others (eg some people may *picture* things in their head more than other people in certain contexts)

All of this is useful information that allows you to begin to get ready to take the controls and to deliberately access more of your personal confidence. Get excited!



### Playing with the structure of your thinking

So now that you have begun to capture *how* you represent things in your thoughts, you can now begin to *play* with this structure to get better results.

Was there anything that was really noticeable when you thought of times when you were accessing confidence?

And was it noticeably absent when you thought of times when you were blocking confidence?

If so, you can begin to replace the ‘blocking’ structure of thinking with the structure that allows you to access your resources.

For example, a client I was coaching, who was a golfer, was seeking my help because he was *doing* some anxiety and experiencing less of his personal confidence when playing against a particular opponent compared to when playing against others. He had previously experienced an ‘embarrassing’ loss when playing against this opponent in the past and he was now convinced that this opponent was ‘way out of his league’. We noticed what was going on in his experience and captured the structure of the representations he was making. One of the key things we noticed was that when he thought of playing golf with *most* opponents, he tended to

mentally ‘picture’ *his opponent* in the space on the left side in his ‘mind’s eye’ and they would only be visible within the ‘frame’ from the waist up. In contrast, he would tend to see *himself* in the picture over to the right and he could see himself fully.

The representations were very different when he thought of the particular opponent that triggered him to ‘*get in his own way*’, providing a ‘block’ to his confidence. When he thought of playing golf against *this* particular opponent, he saw him fully and over in the space on the right of his ‘mind’s eye’ and in contrast he placed *himself* virtually out of sight over to the left.

This made a really big difference to his experience!

The solution was simple.

We made him ‘controller’ of the picture (with an imaginary remote control) and he rearranged things so that he had a different experience.

He moved his opponent over to the left and saw himself step over to the right. He immediately felt far more calm and confident about the prospect of playing golf with this opponent.

It was just like magic.

Whilst he was imagining being the ‘controller’ of this picture he decided that it could be helpful to play about with the structure some more.

So he used his powerful imagination to change things further.

He imagined his opponent shrinking and developing a squeaky cartoon voice. He had him shrinking and shrinking until he was the size of a golf ball and then he picked up his squeaking opponent and placed him on the tee. He then took a powerful swing and sent his opponent hurtling up the course, squeaking with every bounce.

This made my client laugh and he simply could not think of his opponent in the same way ever again. He had effectively removed any perceived threat and taken control and now he had opened his gates on his resources. He reported to me that he felt far more confident next time he actually played this opponent and that he was smiling inside at the idea of his opponent bouncing along the course. He also improved his game against this opponent significantly.

Now this may seem a little crazy and I guess it is. However, it is only as crazy as the mental stuff that was *getting in the way* in the first place and at least this new form of crazy gave him full access to his inner confidence, which in turn improved his performance against this opponent.

There were many ways in which I could have helped this client to open the gates on his resources and changing the structure of his representations was easy and quick.

Consider how you could change *your* pictures to allow *you* to open gates on *your* personal confidence.

Another client used to *do* 'performance panic' expertly when she was asked to stand up and speak to a group of people in her role as a manager. She told me that she would pray for the earth to open up and swallow her up so that she would not have to stand up and speak.

When I found out what she was doing in her mind, I was not at all surprised that she was scaring herself. If *I* had the representations that she had in her head when anticipating standing up to present, I am not sure that I would have stood up to speak at all. She was quite literally playing scary movies in her head!

The audience she pictured were up close, frowning, big and in full colour. There was surround sound on this movie that added intensity. She was right there in the picture feeling very small and surrounded.

We played around with the movie – she became the camera operator and director at the same time, choosing the angles to view things from and able to control anything in the picture that she wanted. She pushed the audience back, faded out their colour, shrunk them down to half their size and put big supportive smiles on their faces. She had supportive friends at strategic points in the audience as she imagined it and she also imagined her favourite comedians at the back of the audience, playing around and making her feel very light hearted. The front row of the audience she gave comical orange wigs.

It was a crazy scene for sure and it was a scene that allowed her to anticipate standing up to deliver in a way that accessed lots of personal confidence.

By preparing herself in this way she was in a much better state by the time she stood up to speak and she performed better as a result. Her feedback from her audience was better than ever before, which in turn provided evidence that she can ‘survive’ such activities and come out smelling of roses. This made it easier for her next time, so she had less deliberate mental rehearsal to do in advance.

Notice what movies *you* may be playing in *your* head and note whether they are helping *you* to access *your* inner confidence or blocking it. Then become the ‘Director’ or become the ‘camera operator’ (or both) and make the changes that make a difference. Play movies in your head that open up the gates on your confidence and that allow you to really shine!

For some people, increased awareness of the qualities of their *inner thinking voice* can offer them all kinds of solutions that will allow them to access more of their personal confidence. An extreme example of this was a client I was working with who had been accessing so little of her personal confidence that she had not left her house for over 10 months. Although this was not a specific performance-related anxiety that she was *doing*, the principles in correcting with it were just the same!

Her resource gates were well and truly shut when I met her. She already had received psychiatric support and had been prescribed some drugs to help reduce her experience of anxiety. However, the fact was that over all the months of psychiatric support, she had still not stepped out of her front door.

When I worked with her, I immediately noticed how *fast* she was moving around and how fast she was speaking. I knew that this was most likely

having an effect on her physiological responses such as adrenalin release, heart rate, breathing rate and muscle tension. The tonality and pace of her *inner thinking voice* were also sending signals to her body to jump into an emergency flight-fight response.

No wonder she was blocking her confidence!

If *you* or *I* were to speak to ourselves in the full-on ‘panicky’ way that she was speaking to herself inside, *we* would probably start to block *our* confidence and start to do some anxiety too. That is just a very ‘normal’ response!

When she became aware that her outer behaviour and speech and also her inner thinking voice were happening at such a rapid pace and that this was affecting her physiology and her experience, we hatched a plan to start to slow things down.

She deliberately began to slow down her movements, her breathing and her speech and soon the pace of her thinking had also slowed.

Within forty minutes of me arriving, she had fully calmed herself and had opened enough gates on her personal confidence to be ready to go outside her home for the first time in 10 months.

This was a simple solution and we didn't even need to know what had originally triggered the 'blockage'.

We only needed to capture *how* she was blocking confidence and then replace it with something that allowed her to access it fully instead. The lady was delighted to be outside in the street and with more practice over another two coaching sessions she was out and about more and more, stacking up evidence that the world was a safe place to operate in. Gates on her confidence opened wider and wider until she was able to live a much more fulfilling life on her own terms.

If you wanted to help someone to access their confidence you would probably adopt a confident voice yourself as you spoke with them (just like if you wanted to motivate them you would use a motivational tone of voice and if you wanted to calm them you would use a calm voice).

Just as this works on the *outside* when speaking with other people, it also works on the *inside* when talking to *yourself* with your thinking voice.

Adopting a confident sounding inner thinking voice can do wonders for the level of confidence that you access and experience.



*Deliberately* begin to step up the tonality of confidence in your own thinking voice and see what positive impact it has for you. This is really easy and really powerfully effective.

Some people can make great improvements to the amount of confidence that they access by playing directly with the structure of their *feelings*. An example is a client I had who consulted me because he was *doing* anxiety when preparing to present himself in interview situations. This was seriously getting in the way because when he was *doing* low confidence, he was forgetting what he wanted to say and was certainly not presenting himself at his best. As we began to notice the ways in which he was blocking his confidence, we realised that he was experiencing a ‘churning’ sensation in his stomach area. He showed me the direction of the churning and said to me that it was as if he had a cement mixer operating inside his stomach. This was clearly not an activity that was working well for him.

Often when people are able to state what a feeling *reminds* them of, it can help point in the direction of possible solutions (for example, when a person talks about having butterflies in their tummy, they can often feel a lot better very quickly by imagining those butterflies settling down and

becoming still or even beginning to fly in formation! It changes the experience and opens the gates to experience more confidence).

This client used an imaginary 'remote control' to slow down his cement mixer gradually until it very soon came to a complete stop.

He immediately felt more calm and confident.

The job was done.

He had a tool for life.

Now he wanted to play around some more and he got curious about what would happen if he began to power up his cement mixer again, this time in the opposite direction.

He began to imagine this happening inside and his face was a real picture!

He began to look energised and he reported that his confidence and his energy levels were growing and growing the faster he powered up his cement mixer.

Again this was simple and a bit crazy.

And it really worked a treat.

Everyone has their own unique solution for opening the gates on their confidence. The key is to remain curious and attentive and to continue to experiment until you hit the spot.

When we have the privilege to help professional presenters or performers who have been experiencing a temporary block to their performing confidence, the principles outlined above apply just as easily and powerfully.

In fact the same principles apply *whatever* the context!

All this great stuff is transferrable!

Once you have used it to re-connect with your true performing confidence and you have freed yourself to access your personal best whenever you decide, you can also apply them in any other context that you choose!

### Raising the bar with your roles

The role that you define yourself as being in at any given moment can significantly affect the degree to which your gates are open or closed on your personal confidence.

For example, many parents will release extra confidence when they perceive that it is important to be a role model for their child in a particular situation. They assign themselves the role of ‘important role model’ and ‘raise the bar’ on the performance that they demand of

themselves and as a result they get into the mindset that opens gates on their confidence.

Of course, it will not *seem* to them that they are doing all of this because it is an unconscious mental pattern – it happens on auto-pilot. However, once someone becomes consciously aware that the role they have assigned themselves on auto-pilot has made a positive difference to their confidence and their performance it then allows them to replicate it *deliberately* in other contexts.

Here is an example. A lady I knew around 12 years ago had been very good at *doing* ‘scared of wasps’. She could regularly be seen during the Summer months, running around waving her arms in the air and screaming when a wasp came near to her. It *seemed* to her that she had no control over it.

Then one day I saw her exhibiting a very different pattern of behaviour. A wasp had flown into the room and she had calmly picked up a small, flimsy bit of paper and causally walked over towards the wasp saying reassuring words to others in the room as she went – ‘*Its ok, its only a wasp*’ she said as she opened the window and wafted the wasp out with the paper. Then she calmly continued what she was doing.

So what was going on in this situation that allowed her to access her personal confidence, whereas in other wasp-related situations she had blocked her confidence?

Well the difference was that when she successfully accessed her confidence she had a group of 30 children in the room with her.

She was a school teacher.

She had in that moment in the classroom assigned herself the role of ‘important role model’ and had raised her expectation of herself so she could perform that role very well. As a result, her thinking opened the gates on her personal confidence and she coped perfectly with the situation and continued what she was doing.

Now when I discussed this with her, she said she had still felt ‘a little bit nervous’, but nothing like how she normally felt when she encountered a wasp. This was *more* than an act. Resources were *genuinely* released when she was being a role model and her performance improved as a result.

Now she had ‘spotted’ that being a role model helped, she had a tool that she could use deliberately whenever she encountered a wasp.

It was so simple. When she encountered a wasp, wherever she was and whoever she was with, she would quickly imagine that she had her class of 30 children with her and would literally ‘step into’ the role of ‘important role model’. This meant that she *interrupted* the old pattern of doing fear and *accessed* calm confidence instead.

Of course, the more that she stepped into this role and actually encountered the wasp in a way where she handled things well (and survived) the more the evidence stacked up in her mind that wasps are safer than she used to assume they were.

Consider: What are the specific performance situations in which *you* have been ‘doing fear’ or ‘doing anxiety’ where *you* would prefer to access personal confidence?

Who would *you* need to be a role model to in order for *you* to raise the bar of expectation on *your* own performance?

Imagine that this person or those persons are present.

Step into your role of ‘important role model’ and let the gates open on your personal confidence enough to start to engage successfully with the activity.

With repetition in this role, as you get results that are pleasing, you will come to release more and more of your personal confidence as the evidence stacks up that it is 'safe' and you can handle it.

At extremes, you will have occasionally heard of old ladies ripping open locked car doors to rescue their grandchildren or performed other seemingly 'super human' acts as they assign themselves the role of 'life saver'. The bar is raised and their resources released and they perform at a much higher level than normal. The resources were always there, it is just that the gates were normally partially closed.

I was coaching an employee in a company who was *doing* anxiety in relation to their performance whilst making cold calls. This was an important part of his new role in the company and he would do all of his other tasks first and never quite get around to making his calls – a great avoidance strategy! And of course avoidance is the surest way to continue feeling 'low confidence' about the situation.

I happened to be aware that starting the following week the company was going to have school students visiting for a three-week period to gain some work experience. I asked the employee what would happen if his boss were to assign one of the students to him for a day with the

instruction that he ‘demonstrate to this young person how to make effective cold calls confidently and competently – this is important – you are a role model to her’.

He thought for a moment and then said:

‘You know what – I know this sounds weird - but I think I would just get on and do it. And I actually think I would do it well. I guess I would *have* to really, wouldn’t I?’

There was the solution. An *easy* solution that would allow him to see cold calling in a different light altogether!

This would allow him to ‘raise the bar’ on his expectation of his own performance and release some extra confidence. From this new role of ‘important role model’ he would be able to engage with cold calling long enough to *break* the old pattern of response (‘doing anxiety’) and begin to *access* a more helpful one (confidence).

We had a ‘dress rehearsal’. I asked him to simply imagine in detail that he had been set the assignment of being a role model by his boss and to engage with the cold calling as if the assignment were true.

He did so. Straight away! And he did it well. And he did it all morning!

I arranged with his boss that in fact he would have a student assigned to him the following week and (just as he had rehearsed) he stepped into that



role of ‘important role model’ and opened the gates on his personal confidence even further. The more he did it the more confident he got and it had all begun with simply defining an important enough role for himself.

I have applied this in my own coaching work to raise my game and to ensure I am performing at the highest level. Whenever I am coaching I am also imagining that there are two *trainee* coaches in the room with me - so my role is now as ‘important role model’ of coaching excellence as well as a coach for my client (which is already very important to me, by the way). This raises the bar and opens up my resources and I perform at my very best each and every session that I apply it. My confidence flows more easily because I have given an extra important reason for me to step up and open the gates.

I remember when I first began organising and running events myself. I ran business networking events and training events and as *host* I was always easily accessing my confidence fully and able to lead and facilitate with ease. And in contrast, when I ever went to *other people's* events as an *attendee*, my level of confidence that I was experiencing was lower. I had closed some gates!

I was still experiencing *some* of my confidence and I wanted to experience the ‘super confidence’ that I was experiencing when I ran my *own* events.

I realised that the only difference between the two situations was the *role* I had assigned myself in each situation.

In one situation I was the organiser, the host, the facilitator, the person to make people feel welcome and help people begin to mingle and get to know one another.

In the other situation, I had defined my job as simply to ‘be there’ as an attendee (without any particular important role assigned).

No wonder I was not opening the gates on my personal confidence. I had given myself no important purpose to do so.

The solution was, again, very simple.

I began to go to other people’s events *as though* I had a *key role* to welcome people, put them at ease, get them talking with one another and get them ready for learning or networking. I assigned the role to myself and it raised the bar on my expectation of myself and opened the gates on my personal confidence.

It made all the difference. I was now experiencing as much confidence at *other people's* events as at my *own*. Wow – how easy that was!

I recently met a man who ran his own corporate finance brokerage. He spoke with me at the end of a presentation that I had given at an event. He told me (clearly and eloquently) that when he was a child at school he had experienced having a really bad stutter. He described that he had simply been unable to get a sentence out. Often, he could not even get a single word out when he tried to speak to someone around the school.

Now here is the interesting bit.

His capacity for speaking clearly and eloquently was there all along and there was a particular context in which it was consistently released. This was in his drama classes when he stepped into 'acting mode'.

As soon as he decided he was 'being' a character, he opened the gates on his personal confidence and his words flowed easily and beautifully, so much so that he often played major parts in school productions.

Remarkably, years went by before it 'clicked' in his mind that his solution was right there all the time. All he had to do was 'step into character' in his mind in order to speak in class or speak to other students or his teachers around the school. So he began to speak 'as if' he was

James Bond or some other character and his gates opened and his personal confidence shone through. He spoke clearly and easily. This was enough to *break* his old pattern that had previously been triggered by his *expectation* of ‘I can’t get my words out in class’.

As time went on he no longer needed to ‘step into character’ to speak out perfectly and easily because the *new* pattern had been *established*. The evidence of him being able to speak up in a wide variety of school contexts had now ‘proved’ to him what he was truly capable of in these contexts and his confidence grew and grew.

Of course he has always remembered the tool of ‘stepping into role’ because he never knows where it might come in useful in some other area of his life. When he discussed all of this with his mother many years later, she reported that she had been *totally unaware* of the problems he had experienced because *at home he never stuttered!* Amazing!

Stepping into an imaginary role is something you may be already well practised at if you are an established professional performer. It can also be applied to access your personal confidence in all kinds of situations. Think of your screen heroes. Think of your sporting heroes, your respected colleagues and confident friends. Imagine what it would be like

to step into their shoes and experience performing as they might do it and experience it.

Imagine it fully.

Feel the gates open and the resources flowing.

Feel their confidence (which of course is simply the trigger to release your own confidence).

Mentally rehearse being in situations from the position of being in their shoes.

Then live a day as if you were them.

Experience an audition, interview, performance or a meeting as if you were them. Feel the confidence flowing. Notice the results. Experience the benefits. Reinforce what you are truly capable of by noticing the outcomes. Soon you will no longer need to step into that 'role' in order to experience your true confidence, it will just happen because your mind will start to make the connection that fully engaging in such activities is totally safe.

Test it out for yourself.

### Step out and expand your personal confidence zone

Avoidance of situations where you have been blocking your confidence would be the surest way to keep that pattern of blocking. You would be giving yourself no compelling reason to make a change.

However, now that you are deciding that you are going to *face* the situations where you have been blocking confidence and use them as an *opportunity to notice* how you have been *getting in your own way*, you can begin to *experiment* with doing *different* ‘inner stuff’ that *frees* you to access your *true* inner confidence.

This can be done by either facing the actual situation ‘live’ straight away or it can be done through mental rehearsal first.

I regularly encourage people to deliberately step outside of their ‘confidence zone’ because as they develop ways of accessing confidence in those situations by facing them and experimenting, they will certainly *expand* this zone. (A person’s ‘confidence zone’ includes all activities and situations where the person already accesses and experiences their true high levels of personal confidence). The great news is that a gate-opening result in one situation can also *generalise* so that you begin to access your true confidence in other similar contexts that had previously been outside of your ‘confidence zone’.

The more reference points and contexts that you have where you have faced something outside of your ‘confidence zone’ then found a way to

access your true confidence, the easier it is to know that you can learn to access confidence in *any* situation.

For this reason, I encourage people to deliberately seek out extreme ‘out of confidence zone’ experiences to step into (with a sense of curiosity and a determination to learn and experiment with accessing confidence) which leads to rapid and massive expansion of their confidence zones when they succeed.

Of course, anything *less* extreme than the situation or challenge faced will *also* get brought into the person’s confidence zone at the same time.

For example, if someone accesses (through experimentation) their true confidence when rock climbing (when they had usually ‘done fear’ at even the thought of it) then they will not only bring ‘rock climbing’ into their confidence zone, they are also highly likely to bring other things that they consider ‘daring’ into their confidence zone automatically at the same time. It allows them to have great reference points for personal ‘break-throughs’. It provides an opportunity for them to be able to say to themselves ‘Well if I can do *that*, of course I will be able to do *this* too!’ Going for the extremes can be a very rapid way of increasing a person’s confidence zone.

Do be aware that the ‘experimenter’ needs to be willing to persist with the experimenting. There may be some moments of discomfort and an experience of the blocking of confidence during the experiments (which is of course just temporary ‘stuff’ and can be labelled as such) before they fully access their true confidence and gain the new empowering perspective.

My colleagues and I regularly run events where clients are given the opportunity to walk on hot coals, walk on broken glass, break archery arrows on their throats, and other ‘extreme’ activities to help them to rapidly expand their confidence zones and incorporate many less extreme activities into their confidence zones at the same time.

When someone has walked safely and confidently on broken glass it becomes much easier for them to step up and access their confidence when preparing to go on stage or preparing to go into an interview, meeting or audition. ‘If I can walk on broken glass, I can definitely rise to this challenge’ is how it works for many people.

Consider: What are the specific areas that fall outside of *your* current ‘confidence zone’ that *you* may have been avoiding facing?



Make a firm commitment to face these situations with curiosity and a willingness to experiment until you learn to access your true confidence and bring them within your confidence zone.

Ask yourself what opportunities *you* may have to rapidly expand *your* confidence zone in a controlled way by seeking out a number of extreme challenges to complete.

Step into the template of the confident person that you really are

How do you know that someone is experiencing confidence if they do not *tell* you so?

It is useful to notice the *signs* that you believe indicate confidence in others. By noticing this you can potentially understand how you can *portray* confidence yourself, even if you are not accessing it fully *yet*.

Some may refer to this as '*fake it until you make it*'.

There are of course benefits to being able to *appear* like you are accessing confidence even when you are not and it is also true to say that 'faking it' convincingly can in itself help to open the gates that allow you to *truly* access it.

Simply adopting the body language, posture, facial expressions and voice tonality of the confident person that you truly are (and that you experience when your gates are open) can help you to appear confident. When you *appear* confident, people *respond* to your confidence and *expect* further confidence, giving you *feedback* that you are a confident person (even if in reality you had not fully felt it in that context yet). This feedback that people are experiencing you as a confident person is a gate opener, helping you to *genuinely* experience more of the confident person that you truly are.

So what are those indicators most people rely upon to decide that someone they encounter is accessing their full confidence?

Here are a few common indicators that give the impression at least that someone is accessing their confidence (which may or may not be actually true – they may of course be simply successfully ‘faking it’ for effect).

- Standing tall (upright, head up, shoulders back)
- Muscles look relaxed
- Eye contact is given and received
- Clear, steady, voice
- Open gestures

- Steady movements
- Engages in communication and action readily when appropriate
- Even breathing, generally apparent as ‘belly breathing’ rather than high in the chest

Deliberately deciding to adopt these kinds of indicators into your repertoire and purposefully practising them and ‘acting them out’ when you need them can in itself help you to access more of your true confidence and help you to begin to *really* feel it even before you start to get the feedback and the results that open more gates and strengthen this positive loop.

By ‘doing’ confident behaviours in this way, you *remind* yourself who you *really* are – a confident person – and prompts gates to be opened so your confidence can shine through more easily.

Enjoy ‘doing’ confidence in ‘out of confidence zone’ contexts and notice how you move from deliberately ‘doing’ confidence to naturally experiencing ‘being’ confident as you persist and receive supporting feedback and results.

'Model' other people that are accessing their true confidence

Whenever anyone can currently do something better or easier than you currently think you can, they are usually worth 'looking into' if you want to make improvements in the areas in which they excel.

This includes the skill of accessing personal confidence.

How someone else easily and effectively accesses their personal confidence could potentially help you to do the same if you replicate what they do or at least use it as a template.

My clients are continuously providing me with new solutions and techniques that work for them and I can then offer them on to other clients to test for out themselves.

Who do *you* know that is accessing their full confidence in a situation where *you* would like to access more of *your* confidence?

Take the time to find out *how* they do it.

Biographies and interviews are a great source of how celebrities have accessed their inner confidence and other inner resources to make things

happen. Of course, it could just as easily be someone like a neighbour, colleague, associate, friend or family member that is worth ‘looking into’. And when you get the opportunities to, make sure you ask your ‘models of confidence’ some questions directly –most people will be flattered that you want to ‘look into’ them so that you can ‘model’ them to get great results.

Ask really good questions – find out what they are believing, assuming, expecting, focusing on. Find out how they represent that on the inside (see earlier section titled *‘How exactly are you thinking?’* for ideas as to what to ‘capture’).

*Observe* them when you get a chance to.

How do they present themselves? How do they behave? How do they speak? How do they respond to others?

I hold a belief (only because it works well for me) that if any one person can achieve something, I can learn to replicate it if I choose to engage in sufficient openness to learning, careful study and enough motivation and dedication to see it through to completion. This may be a useful belief for you to try out for yourself. It certainly helps you to engage in the process of noticing, discovering and then taking on board and testing out what is

working for other people. You can add them to your own repertoire of gate-opening tools and techniques that will help you access your true personal confidence.

Have fun 'looking into' people!

Also remember that you can 'model' *your own* excellence from contexts where you are *already* fully accessing your true personal confidence.

'Capture' what you are doing that is helping you access your confidence and *replicate* it in other useful contexts.

### The power of 'what ifing'

I have noticed over the years that most human beings are expert at asking lots of 'what if...' questions of themselves.

Such questions are powerful.

The only issue is that most people ask these powerful questions in ways that keep them *doing* 'fear' or *doing* 'stuck' because they close gates on their personal confidence and other inner resources. (Exceptions would

include the project managers who are in their role of curiously finding great positive solutions to the ‘what if’s – as mentioned earlier).

*‘What if they hate me?’*

*‘What if I mess up?’*

*‘What if I lose all my money?’*

*‘What if I fail?’*

*‘What if I get embarrassed?’*

*‘What if I can’t find the right words?’*

You can imagine how easily these kinds of questions could trigger people to block their personal confidence. Also, in relation to the section titled *‘Focus on what you do want to experience’* earlier, it would usually be more useful to be filling your head with ‘What if...’ questions in the direction of what you do want so that your mind can steer you there.

If you ever notice disempowering ‘What if...’ questions turning up in your self-talk, then here is a useful way forward.

- 1) Tell yourself that the question that you asked is *only* referring to *one possible version* of reality – it is essentially ‘made up’ inner

stuff and there are more exciting and more empowering alternatives available for you to choose and focus on.

- 2) It may be useful for you to calmly and resourcefully *answer* the question properly and fully so that you can actually *accept* the possibility of the worst possible scenario (knowing you could *handle* it) and then get to the task of expecting and steering yourself towards the better outcomes. Eg: '*What if I lose all my money?*' could be calmly and resourcefully answered with '*I will start again and make some more*' or similar. When answered in that way, it 'clears the decks' of unnecessary clutter and frees your mental energy to focus on more useful outcomes.
- 3) Choose some more empowering 'What if...' questions that will now open up the gates on your personal confidence. Keep these ones 'alive' in your mind as exciting possibilities that can support the intended outcomes you have for yourself.

Examples of really helpful and empowering 'What if...' questions that tend to open up the gates on your personal confidence in many contexts may include:



*'What if I can make this happen easily?'*

*'What if this is easier than I've been thinking it is going to be?'*

*'What if once I get started it gets easier and easier?'*

*'What if I am far more resourceful than I have been giving myself credit for?'*

*'What if it is just like those other times in my life where something seemed hard but turned out to be a lot easier?'*

*'What if the fact that (person x) has achieved it is proof that I can achieve it too?'*

*'What if I can achieve anything that I apply my mind to?'*

*'What if I can speak up as confidently as the most confident person I know?'*

*'What if now I have made a firm decision and a clear commitment to consistent action, the outcome I want is completely inevitable?'*

*‘What if all of my other achievements in life have been preparing me to make this happen?’*

*‘What if I have all the support, all the capacity for learning and all the inner resources I need to make a total success of this?’*

*‘What if I am a truly magnificent human being?’*

*‘What if this is nothing compared to (achievement y)?’*

*‘What if the solutions will unfold as I go – I just need to remain focused on where I am going and poised to take appropriate action’*

*‘What if success in this area is my destiny?’*

*‘What if I can make anything happen when I open the gates on my resources?’*

...and so on

(You may find the discussion in the earlier section titled '*Dropping unhelpful illusions or deluding myself*' useful at this point)

Remember also the importance of voice tonality – even for your thinking voice!

The earlier section titled '*Playing with the structure of your thinking*' illustrates the power of the thinking voice that we choose to think in.

Choose your voice tonality purposefully with a particular effect in mind.

If you have found yourself asking *unhelpful* or *disempowering* 'What if...' questions then it may have been that the tone, pace and volume of the thinking voice that you were asking the questions with was less than helpful. People often ask these disempowering questions of themselves in an intense, worried, 'doom and gloom' tonality and this triggers gates to shut on personal confidence *even more* than the words themselves.

When asking 'What if...' questions oriented in the direction of what you do want, ask them with a tone of voice of *excited curiosity*. Practise it and notice the positive effects. You will feel your gates open on your personal

confidence as these new exciting possibilities delight you. Then notice the inner structure of any other thinking that comes to mind – does the question trigger pictures and sounds and feelings that serve you? This would be a great opportunity to enhance the structure of your ‘inner stuff’ even further (refer to earlier sections titled *‘How exactly are you thinking? Capturing the differences that really count!’* and *‘Playing with the structure of your thinking’*)

In the example ‘inner stuff’ audit given in the earlier section titled *‘The most important audit you can ever do’*, most of the items in the ‘unhelpful column’ have a disempowering, gate closing ‘what if...’ question underlying them.

For example, the unhelpful thought in the audit that states *‘people will slate me if I mess up’* is really based on the question *‘What if I mess up and people slate me?’*

A useful exercise now would be to revisit your own personal ‘inner stuff’ audit(s) for important goals or focus areas and then for each unhelpful statement listed think of a *more empowering* ‘What if...’ question that will steer you in the direction that you *do* want to go and will open gates on your personal confidence.

An example:

*'People will slate me if I mess up'* could be replaced with *'What if people are on my side?'* or *'What if everything goes smoothly?'*

Another example:

*'Preparation time is running out'* could be replaced with *'What if it is the way I use the time that counts?'* or *'What if I work most effectively when deadlines are getting close?'*

The great news is... You don't even need to totally *believe* in the possibilities raised by the new questions *yet* (although remember to get excitedly curious in your thinking voice tonality). The next section can help you to really stack up the evidence that makes those possibilities more convincing so that you can get more and more confident in their 'truth' (which will open gates on your confidence even further).

### Become a debate champ

Whatever the new positive 'what if...' questions that you ask of yourself, it can sometimes be very useful to engage in some mental processing that makes the exciting possibilities more convincing to you. (Although

simply saying them over and over and filling your head with them daily with excited curiosity will often go a long way to making them feel real for you).

Have you ever been asked to take part in a debate?

Maybe at school you were asked to argue for something?

Maybe you have seen other people engage in debates?

Sometimes when people are asked to practise their debating skills they are assigned a position to argue for or against that they may or may not actually feel strongly about one way or the other.

Sometimes they may actually have beliefs that are in the *opposite* direction to the one in which they have been asked to argue.

I remember such a situation when I was at school.

At the time I was very much against the use of animals to test any drugs or products for effectiveness and safety. In the classroom debate, I was given the topic of ‘animal vivisection’ and my task was to convincingly debate in favour of its use. I was maddened!

I asked if I could change the topic but of course in terms of developing my debating skills it was the best one that could have been given to me because now I would really need to ‘stretch’ myself.

Anyway, I was determined that I was going to score well and that I would do whatever I needed to do to win the debate – and that involved suspending my true views at the time so that I could engage fully with the alternative perspective and start making a convincing case ‘for’ animal vivisection.

I opened up to ideas that I had not even considered before.

I allowed myself to go to possibilities I had previously blocked.

I stepped into the shoes of those who I had previously considered to be the ‘opposition’ and entertained their views fully.

This was a real eye opener!

I began to realise that the issue was not as ‘black and white’ as I had first thought and that there were some compelling arguments for a practice that I had only ever seen reasons against.

By the time I had constructed the passionate argument that could win me the debate, my actual true views on the whole matter had shifted.

I actually *believed* something different because I had sought out and considered other evidence.

One lesson it taught me is that beliefs are malleable (and can change *quickly*). It also taught me that there are always other perspectives that can give us new choices and new information. This has served me well over the years because I am now less likely to assume dogmatically that I always have the right answer compared to anyone else and also I am able to more easily ‘step into’ new perspectives that could serve me better in relation to opening the gates on my personal confidence.

Of course, by accessing my confidence more effectively through adopting new perspectives I have been more able to achieve my personal and professional goals.

So what has all this got to do with ‘what ifing’?

Well the *new* helpful and empowering ‘what if...?’ questions that you ask yourself could be turned into empowering helpful *statements* that you could offer a debate ‘for’ in order to shift your beliefs and open your gates on your confidence more fully.



So looking at the helpful ‘what if...’ questions, take each in turn and cross out the ‘What if’ at the beginning to turn it from a question to a statement.

By way of example:

*‘What if people are on my side?’* will become *‘People are on my side’*

Now add the word *‘because...’* at the end of the statement.

Carrying on with the example:

*‘People are on my side’* becomes *‘People are on my side because...’*

Now your task is to come up with as many compelling arguments as you can to support the statement as being truth.

List them as they come to mind.

Ask other people for other positive evidence that they can think of too if it helps.

Stack up the evidence in its favour.

(If you experience any little voice saying ‘*yeah but...*’ just give it a silly squeaky voice and laugh at it and carry on)

Once you have a set of compelling arguments in favour of the statement being true, speak them out loud to yourself and the world with a tonality of certainty and conviction. *Feel* the certainty and conviction that your voice triggers inside you.

Repeat this with every helpful ‘what if...’ question until you have a series of wonderfully empowering statements that are supported by loads of compelling evidence that will allow you to accept them as true which will open the gates on your confidence so that you can take positive action supported by these new perspectives.

Enjoy the process and make it part of your mental routine as you move along your success journey.

### Mentally Rehearse your Confident Future

Mental rehearsal of successful outcomes can be a great way to strengthen empowering perspectives and to open up the gates that allow you to access your true personal confidence.

Top sports people know the importance of mentally rehearsing winning performances. Developing a winning *mindset* is as much a part of their training as their physical preparation.

It can work for *you* too - in any area of your life or business (or sport).

Mental rehearsal is simply imagining in as much detail as possible a successful outcome in advance of it occurring.

Some people like to set hours aside for total focus on visualisation exercises each week. Others just take regular opportunities to programme their mind in the direction of their desired outcomes (eg 5 minutes whilst standing in a queue, another 5 minutes when they are in the shower, another 5 minutes when they are walking their dog or waiting for their kids, another 5 minutes at the end of the day before turning off the light to go to sleep and so on).

*Make a decision now* that you will engage in this powerful activity of programming your mind to steer you to the outcomes that you want.

Often the word ‘visualisation’ is used because many people will *picture* the outcomes in detail as they rehearse their positive confident future.

However, allow yourself to experience it *however* you experience it.

Some people talk themselves through it. Others will just have a sense of it unfolding perfectly through their feelings. Just go with the flow or experiment until you find the way that works for you best of all.

*Imagine* yourself with your true confidence fully shining through into your performances and your experiences (gates open).

Allow yourself to *fully anticipate* your confident success in any area that is aligned with your goals or your progress.

Imagine the positive reactions of others.

Imagine yourself successfully handling with ease any challenge that you consider could come up along the way.

Play!

Enjoy it!

You are designing your future!

### Teach confidence to others

As you start to develop new ways of accessing your true personal confidence, begin to teach others. This serves you in different ways. It can make you *feel good* because you are helping people (which is a gate-

opener in itself). It *reinforces* what you have learned and keeps it in the forefront of your mind (which is also a gate-opener on your personal confidence). It also creates a team of people that surround you that will be using the helpful gate-opening approaches which will then support you on your own journey.

Teach your family

Teach your colleagues

Teach your friends

Teach anyone who is open to learning how to access more of their true personal confidence

### Wrapping Up:

So there you have it! A toolbox full of tools to help you to overcome performance nerves and connect with your true personal confidence as a presenter or performer.

My aim here has been to offer you, with clarity, a set of practical ideas and techniques that you can begin to apply straight away in your day-to-day activities and in particular in those areas where you may have noticed a temporary 'block' to your true confidence.

Of course, there can always be more examples, more contexts, more practise opportunities and more discussion about each technique and approach covered, as well as the vast array of related approaches out there that can compliment them.

Please bear in mind that I have attempted to condense an area that we would normally offer within ‘live’ training programmes and coaching sessions (sometimes spread across many hours or several days) into a relatively short and accessible special report that will prompt you to begin to experiment with your ‘inner stuff’ and start to get some really good progress under your belt.

I trust that I have offered through this report something of value to you and the people that you share these ideas with. This is an area that I am passionate about and I am very keen to spread the word far and wide.

I know that as you find opportunities to use your confidence tools and you begin to increasingly thrive through their application you will be able to make a real difference to others by teaching them what you have discovered.

Feel happy to share this Special Report with others who may benefit.

My experience has shown me that some people feel very drawn towards beginning to apply these tools on their own, without any requirement for external support.

Others, although being very capable of applying the tools themselves, really value having some external expert support as they embark on their journey to connecting with their true confidence to present or perform.

Some like to learn how to apply the tools in the company of a group of people who are also looking to experience positive breakthroughs.

I am sure that you will already have some sense as to which best applies to you. We offer individual coaching to support those people who are attracted to learning and applying the tools with some tailored input from us. You can easily contact me if you want more information about these support opportunities.

However you choose to embark on your unique and life-enhancing journey, please promise yourself that you will get out there and start using this stuff straight away – it works!

Enjoy experimenting!

And then enjoy contacting me to let me know of your success stories!

Warmth and smiles

Tony



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