
Welcome to SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS™ — THE E-ZINE
A Newsletter About Creating What Matters Most in Life & Work
Bruce Elkin, Personal/Professional Coach
<http://www.BruceElkin.com>

Volume 2, Number 10, August 3, 2004. All rights reserved.

"What is it you plan to do with this one wild and precious life?"
— Mary Oliver

Greetings from a hot and sunny Saltspring Island. We've had a heat wave here with temperatures in the low to mid-nineties. It's tough on westcoasters who without central air. Thank goodness we don't get the high humidity that other places get.

I'm sorry for the long delay between issues but my rental cottage has been turned upside down. Ownership changed hands and the new owners thought it needed painting and a few days of minor repairs.

Alas, a few days has turned into six weeks. I'm hoping it'll soon be over and things will settle into a new normal. What that'll be, I'm a little uncertain about. Higher rent? Put the cottage up for sale? Something else all together? I just don't know.

I try to practice what I preach, take each day at a time and focus on the results I want to create. I've always thought that worry was the interest you pay on trouble before it was due and this morning my wise friend Lyn told me that. "Worrying is praying for what you don't want."

That's great advice and a nice segue to this issue's feature article, which is about doing what you can with what you have, and doing so by shifting from a worry-driven problem-focused approach to life to a vision-driven creating approach.

To make up for the long hiatus that has emerged out of my house repair, I'm running a new, 3 part series called, "Your Ordinary Self Is Good Enough." This weeks feature article is Part 1 and is called "The Cure Can Be Worse than the Disease."

If you like what you read here, please forward the intact newsletter to friends and associates. (That's how we grow.) If you'd like to receive the newsletter regularly please e-mail me at belkin@saltspring.com or go to <http://www.BruceElkin.com/newsletter.html> and sign yourself up.

There's no charge and it takes only a couple of seconds to sign up. You can also remove yourself at anytime at the above URL.

Enjoy!

IN THIS ISSUE
=====

1. New Article Now Up On The Simple Living Network Newsletter
2. Need A Speaker? Consider Bruce. New association with ProSpeak International
3. Feature Article: Your Ordinary Self Is Good Enough: Pt. 1: The Cure Can Be Worse than the Disease
4. My Bookshelf
5. Simplicity and Success -- The Book!
6. Ask the Coach: Questions and Answers
7. Basic Coaching Package Information

- 8. Small Print: Copyright; Getting On and Off the List
- 9. The Last Word: Quotable Quotes

MY NEW ARTICLE IS FEATURED ON THE SIMPLE LIVING NETWORK

=====

The Simple Living Network is by far the most comprehensive and useful website for those wishing to access the tools and information they need to craft simple, integrated and successful lives. They also offer one of the best-written newsletters on the net. With 250,000 subscribers, they must be doing something right!

This month, I'm very proud to say that my article "CHORDS OF LIFE: Creating Simple, Integrated, & Successful Lives -- In Harmony With Life Itself" is the featured piece. To access Chords of Life, please go to

<http://www.simpleliving.net/news/default.asp?category=Article>

There are also excellent articles by Wanda Urbanska, Cecile Andrews, and Linda Breen Pierce — three leaders in the simplicity movement. And a reprint of one of the classics of simplicity, Living Simply In A Complex World, By Dr. Bradford W. Swift. I'm proud to be in such good company.

To learn more about The Simple Living Network and to access the huge array of resources they've brought together for simplicity seekers, go to

<http://www.simpleliving.net/default.asp>

You won't be disappointed!

2. NEED A SPEAKER? CONSIDER ME, BRUCE ELKIN, DYNAMIC SPEAKER!

=====

I'm, fun, entertaining, educational, and can challenge conventional ways of thinking and doing in positive, constructive ways. Here's some examples of happy clients:

"You have a remarkable ability to communicate."
- Richard Yank, Senior VP

"The most valuable program I have seen in terms of all- communication Strategy."
- Sandy Carter, VP, Human Resources

"Unbelievable effect and impact. ... You have a skill industry can use."
- Al Redmond, Senior Vice President

Over the years, I've done hundreds of workshops and dozens of keynote and mini-key note speeches. I love doing these talks and workshops, mostly because it lets me connect face to face with clients and subscribers.

Recently, I've entered into an alliance with PROSPEAK INTERNATIONAL, one of North America's premier speaker's bureaus. To get a sense of my background and competency as a speaker, please go to

<http://www.prospeak.com/speakers/elkin.html>

You can book me for speaking engagements, large or small through the ProSpeak website or by calling their main office.

If you have questions about topic applicability and customizing a talk for your particular group, feel free to contact me directly at my number below.

Thanks for thinking about me as an entertaining and education speaker for your next event. Much appreciated.

3. FEATURE ARTICLE: YOUR ORDINARY SELF IS GOOD ENOUGH — A 3-PART SERIES

=====

"You need only to claim the events of your life to make yourself yours.
When you truly possess all you have been and done...
you are fierce with reality."
— Florida Scott-Maxwell

PART 1: THE CURE CAN BE WORSE THAN THE DISEASE

In my coaching work, I help people create simple, integrated, and successful lives — in spite of the problems, circumstances, and adversity they face. However, I often run across those who think they can not learn to create until they fix who they are.

Such people believe that they can't produce the results they care about until they develop more self-esteem, increase their self-confidence, process issues about their past, feel better about themselves, develop more determination, or solve their most pressing problems. Some believe they must do all of those things before they can even think about creating what they most want to create.

Such beliefs are dangerous. Unexamined, they become self-fulfilling prophecies. Believing that they can not create the results they want, those who hold such beliefs fail to try. So they don't produce results. This proves to them that they were right — they can't create what they want with who they are. This is unfortunate because the truth is you do not have to fix yourself before you can create what matters.

Your ordinary self is good enough.

As the title of the first self-help book I ever read (back in 1975) put it, I Ain't Much Baby, But I'm All I've Got. Your ordinary self is what you have to work with, and it is all you need to begin to create results you want.

Along the way, you may discover that there are things you need to learn, skills to develop, attitudes you adjust, and new ways of doing things that you need to experiment with. However, you will be able to do those things much easier as part of the creative process than you would by framing them as problems — or worse, seeing yourself as a problem — and thinking you have to fix things before you start to create.

Creating is not problem solving. Problem solving is about focusing on what you don't like and don't want and trying to get rid of it. Creating is about focusing on what you do want — on what matters to you! — and bringing it into being.

Throughout history, creators have used who they were to create outstanding results. Many lacked self-esteem or confidence. Most had unresolved issues of some kind. All probably doubted their abilities at some point.

Most creators are ordinary individuals who learn to create extraordinary results — in spite of the problems and circumstances they face. To do so, they master not only the skills and processes of their particular field (painting, music, literature, architecture, entrepreneurship, etc...); they also master the generic skills and structure of the creative process itself.

Rather than focus on what doesn't work and what they don't want, creators focus on what they do want and what they can already do. Then, they leverage their current skill, competence, and

confidence into results by resolving the creative tension they set up by holding a vision of a desired result in tension with an accurate and objective description of the current reality of that result.

By starting with small steps, creators build patterns of success. They increase both their competence and confidence. They gradually teach themselves what they need to know and do to complete their creation.

Those who don't know how to create are stuck trying to produce results through problem solving. It rarely works.

Relief Not Results

In my book *Simplicity and Success*, I described Celia and Alverjo, a couple who tried to create a simple life by seeking relief from fast-paced city life and work styles. They cleared out clutter, sold off possessions, and moved to the country. However, as AI said, "Once the relief wore off, all that simplicity left a big hole."

Celia and Al were not able to fill that hole because, along with the clutter, they also unintentionally tossed out such things as engagement, flow, meaning, achievement and respect. Merely getting relief from what they didn't want failed to bring them what they truly did want. Their life became too simple, too austere to sustain.

This is a common occurrence in problem-focused approaches. Most problem solving does not directly address the problem or its deeper causes. Rather, problem solving focuses on decreasing the intensity — the pain, conflict or bad feelings associated with the problem. The goal of problem solving is almost always temporary relief, not lasting results.

Even when people try to fix themselves, they usually only succeed in getting relief from intensity. Take, for example, a headache caused by stress at work. Taking a painkiller might help you relieve the intensity of the pain you feel, but it does not eliminate the stress that caused that pain. Indeed, by relieving the pain, it enables you to keep doing what caused it in the first place. However, when the medication wears off, you find yourself back where you started, maybe even more stressed and a little closer to ulcers.

The Cure Is Often Worse Than the Disease

Not only can focusing on relief lead to the problem resurfacing, and often with more intensity; it also leads to bigger and worse problems. For example, people who use alcohol or other drugs to relieve stress often end up with an addiction problem. Their cure for stress leads is worse than the disease it was meant to alleviate.

It's not just individuals who suffer these kind of counter-productive effects of problem solving. This pattern occurs at the social levels as well. For example, as difficult as it might be to believe, when Daimler and Benz introduced the automobile to Victorian Europe they touted it as "the solution to pollution."

At the end of the 19th century, its designers promised that the horseless carriage would rid Berlin, Paris, and London of the fine, foul dust caused by the pulverized droppings of the millions of horses that lived and worked in those cities. Today, however, a glut of horseless carriages fouls our air and clogs streets and freeways around the world. Rather than a panacea for pollution, the car has become a leading cause of the health-destroying toxic smog that causes so many of us to flee the cities for the suburbs.

Moreover, in their search for relief from smog, few suburbanites realize that their "solution" requires them to increase their dependence on cars and SUV's, compounding the problem they wanted to avoid. In many areas, smog has now engulfed the suburbs as well as the city. As the fact of global warming becomes clear, it becomes frighteningly obvious that the Victorian solution to pollution has become one of the major challenges facing humankind. The cure has become far worse than the disease.

Naive Interventions

Systems thinkers label such bizarre results "counter-intuitive effects of naive interventions." Such

interventions are almost misplaced problem solving. The action taken is naively focused on the intensity of the problem rather than the final outcome desired.

It is easy to find examples of such naïve but dangerous forms of problem solving. The overuse of antibiotics, for example, which has led to the growth of deadly, antibiotic resistant "superbugs," is one of the most dramatic and frightening examples of a cure becoming worse than the disease. Here are other examples:

- Numerous studies show that the "dieting" solution to the "problem" of being overweight actually leads to long-term weight gain by the majority of dieters.
- A growing body of research shows that — by teaching people how to cope with ever increasing amounts of stress — corporate stress management programs often change low-level stress into acute breakdown. People learn to cope with more and more stress until they simply can take no more. The results are often catastrophic.
- A British government task force discovered that the prime cause of traffic congestion in Britain was building new motorways. Doing so encouraged and made it easier more people to drive.
- And, finally, a study on the results of the US Drug Enforcement Agency's "War On Drugs," done by the conservative Rand Corporation, reports that "the ultimate outcome of DEA activity was to raise the profit margin on cocaine, increase the incentives for dealers and thereby increase rather than decrease the traffic in crack."

In each case, a condition (problem) was identified and action (intervention) taken. In each case the solution created a more serious problem than the one it was intended to solve. The cures became worse than the disease.

The Seductiveness of Relief

Relief is seductive. Purveyors of it make it sound simple, easy, and effective. "Take this and your pain will go away." "Buy this and you won't be depressed or anxious." "Enroll in this workshop and fix yourself in a weekend."

In a marketing course I started but quit, the instructor said that the key to selling something to someone was, "Find their pain, stick a pin in it, and then show them how your product or service will get rid of the pain."

Some of the glossy, new simplicity magazines appear to be much more about relief and feeling good in the moment than they are about creating real and lasting simplicity. They are full of ads for upscale cars, designer clothes, expensive electronics, chic furniture, and elaborate closet organizers that no simple liver I know could afford.

One such magazine has a section titled "Solutions: Life's Little Complexities Resolved". A sub-section is titled "Four Problem Solvers for \$50 and Under" and includes single use sunscreen and an electronic stain eliminator. Buying such items is supposed to simplify your life. Right!

Underlying all such message, however, is the deeper message that your life — and you, your ordinary self — are not good enough as you are. Not until you buy all this neat stuff. Then you'll be able to do what you want to do. Right!

These magazines are like journalistic aspirin for those caught in the bizarre conundrum of trying to fix themselves and their lives through upscale consumption. Their approach is easy seductive, and addictive. It also fails to produce truly satisfying or lasting simplicity. It is like a drug. As time goes by, you get less from it but crave it more.

If, metaphorically speaking, this kind of simplicity becomes your drug of choice, you are likely to find yourself in a repeating pattern of worse then better then worse You will get temporary relief or pleasure from buying an electronic stain remover but when the relief passes, you'll be back where you started with a larger credit card balance.

As pleasure fades, stress increases. You have to work more to make more money so you can buy

more stuff to get relief from the stress of working more. You find yourself on what Ben Neal calls the hedonic treadmill, pumping hard and paying dearly but going nowhere. Over time the neat new stuff becomes clutter. Real happiness does not even appear on the horizon.

Such a pattern is neither productive nor satisfying. At best, it produces the simplicity on this side of complexity. At worse, it erodes your own power to transcend life's complexities on your own and to create the rich, integral simplicity that truly matters to you. Instead of simple, your life becomes complicated. Instead of creating the life you long for, you waste precious life energy trying to fix something that isn't broken — you.

The good news is you don't have to fix yourself, solve your problems, or get rid of what you don't like and don't want before you can determine and begin to create what you'd truly like to have in your life. Your ordinary self is good enough. Attempts to fix what isn't broken are another kind of "naïve intervention." The cure can easily become worse than the disease. A vicious circle of more misplaced problem solving ensues.

However, you and your life are not problems that must be fixed. They are the raw material out of which you create the life you most want.

Psychologist Carl Jung recognized the process of transcending the pain of problems when he wrote: "All the greatest and most important problems of life are fundamentally insoluble.... They can never be solved, but only outgrown."

Describing the process he observed in his patients, he said, "This outgrowth ... required a new level of consciousness. ... It was not solved logically in its own terms but faded when confronted with a new and stronger life urge."

One of the most powerful life urges we experience is the urge to create, and creators often report that, immersed in the creative process, their problems do fade away.

In the next issue of *Simplicity and Success*, I'll zero in on how psychology and psychotherapy can sometimes take the form of naïve interventions and misplaced problem solving.

We'll ask, "Is Growth Always Good?" And we'll see how creating can help those who are stuck in therapy regain the understanding that their ordinary self is good enough, and in spite of problems, bad feelings and a lack of confidence, they can create results that matter to them.

4. FROM MY BOOKSHELF

=====

There are several very good books with which you can deepen your understanding that "your ordinary self is good enough."

INNER EXCELLENCE: Spiritual Principles of Life-Driven Business, and ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: Exploding the Myth of Having It All by Carol Orsborn

In both of these books, Orsborn stresses that authenticity, freedom, and change all arise out of your ability to recognize that you are just fine as you are. She feels strongly that your ordinary self is good enough and that if you accept that, it becomes much easier to integrate values and quality of life with ambition and desire for success.

CREATING, by Robert Fritz

This is the follow-up book to Fritz's *Path of Least Resistance* and is best read as such. However, it is dense with the deeper principles and processes by which creators bring desired results into being. He, too, stresses that you start creating with who you are and what you have. Your ordinary self is good enough. Creators teach themselves the creative process and then they apply it to creating what truly matters to them. You can too.

5. SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS: CREATING THE LIFE YOU LONG FOR

=====

I'm pleased to announce that I've finally topped the 1000 sales mark with *Simplicity and Success*. It's been just one year since the book came out and it was one of the best selling books on Saltspring Island last year. However, most of my sales have come from off the island, as far away as Europe, India, and Australia.

Reviews have been great:

- "Wonderful!" says Greg Seaman, Editor of Eartheasy On-Line Magazine
- "Highly Recommended!" says David Heitmiller, co-author of *Getting A Life*
- "Exciting and Challenging." says Wanda Urbanska, Host of the PBS Series, *Simple Living With Wanda Urbanska*
- "Absolutely profound," says Hank Lewis, COO, Large National U.S. Law Firm
- "The gift-book-of-the-year," says Paul O'Brien, from Sacramento
- "The best book my brother's ever written," says Bill Elkin.

Simplicity and Success subscribers qualify for a discounted rate on the book. I'd love it if you'd buy it for yourself and for friends and family. Deeper discounts on orders of three or more. Even deeper on group orders of 12 or more.

If you'd like a personalized, signed copy of *SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS*, send me: Canada: \$20 plus \$4.00 S&H; or US: \$15 plus \$4 S&H. Cheque, MC or VISA.

For more information about *SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS: CREATING THE LIFE YOU LONG FOR*, go to: <http://www.bruceelkin.com/simplicity-book.html>

6. ASK THE COACH

=====

I love questions and comments. Please feel free to send me questions and suggestions. Some I'll reply to in the newsletter, others I'll reply to by e-mail. Send your questions to belkin@saltspring.com

7. MY BASIC COACHING PROGRAM

=====

I'm interviewing now for new clients for August, and for September to November.

In my coaching, I help you integrate what your heart truly wants with the ability to also want what you have and open yourself to the joys and possibilities of creating what matters.

One of the best ways I've discovered to help people do so is my 8-week coaching program. Since developing my basic 8-week coaching program, I've seen a significant increase in the results my clients produce and in the ease with which they produce them.

This coaching program integrates basic skills for creating outstanding results in almost anything. It also builds mastery of a dynamic life-planning framework through focussed practice and timely feedback.

It's a great launch platform for independent professionals and for those starting new businesses or wanting to integrate their business and/or career needs with their greater life goals and plans.

It's also useful for anyone in mid-career who is stuck or stalled, not living up to what they know is their potential but don't know what do or where to go next.

If you'd like more information about my Basic Coaching Package, send me an e-mail at belkin@saltspring.com with "Coaching Package" in the subject line.

You can also e-mail me to set up a 30 minute coaching session to help you clarify whether coaching would help you create what most matters to you. There is no charge, no pressure and no obligation.

NOTE: I have 2 spaces open for August and 4 more coming open for new clients in September.

8. THE SMALL PRINT: Copyright; Getting On and Off the List

=====

Unless otherwise noted, all material in this newsletter is written and edited by Bruce Elkin. Copyright © Bruce Elkin, 2004. All rights reserved.

Feel free to reprint, copy, or distribute SIMPLICITY and SUCCESS™ intact, but please provide this copyright notice and make sure a link to <http://www.BruceElkin.com> is included. Thanks!

Only subscribers receive this newsletter. I never rent, sell, or give away names or subscriber information. Your privacy is paramount. I have your name because you have contacted me, are already a client, or because we have participated in the same discussion lists. If you do not want to remain on my list, please let me know and I'll immediately delete your name.

To add yourself to the list or to remove yourself, please e-mail me at belkin@saltspring.com I'll do it immediately.

9. THE LAST WORD: Quotable Quotes

=====

"If you hear a voice within you say 'you cannot paint,' then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced."
- Vincent Van Gogh

" No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."
- Eleanor Roosevelt

" People often say that this person or that person has not yet found himself. But the self is not something that one finds. It is something that one creates."
- Thomas Szasz

Well, folks, that's it for this week. Thanks for reading. Please keep passing the intact newsletter along to friends, family, and colleagues. I truly do appreciate all your help.

If there's anything in this newsletter that you want to question or comment on, please do. I'm delighted to receive e-mails and will reply quickly.

I hope you have a great week and are enjoying the season, wherever you are.

Until next time, all the best.
Cheers!
Bruce

Bruce Elkin: High Performance, Full Potential Coaching
Author of SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS: Creating the Life You Long For
< A book about organizing life, work and relationships around what most matters to you.

<http://www.bruceelkin.com/simplicity-book.html>

" Find what you really care about and live a life that shows it."
— Kate Wolf

141 Seaview Road, Saltspring Island BC V8K 2V8 250 537-1177
FREE SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS e-NEWSLETTER
<http://www.BruceElkin.com>

[close window]