



# Why You Don't Have Clarity

## How To Get Clarity and Hold On To It

Feel free to share this guide with anyone you know who really needs some clarity in their life, their business, their health or their relationships.

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## Note from the Author

This guide is my gift to you. The resulting clarity will be a gift you give yourself.

Share this guide with anyone who could benefit from it. If you would like to quote from it feel free, just be kind enough to give me an attribution.

*Kenneth Vogt*

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## You and Your Muck

**“All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was.” ~Toni Morrison**

**Water** -- it's central to life. Why, your body itself is 70% water. Most of us see clean, clear water every day. We bath in it, we drink it, we even use this precious substance to hydrate our house plants and irrigate our lawns.

Pure water has one fairly unique quality: it is **perfectly clear**. You can see right through it. Drop a dime in a glass of clean water and you see that dime perfectly all the way at the bottom of the glass.

Here you are, inhabiting a body that is 70% water. So are you clear 70% of the time? Less? A lot less? How can that be?

Have you ever seen disturbed water, maybe in a river, a ditch, or a street gutter? Whatever is at the bottom gets churned up and everything become murky, even muddy. It may well be 70% water, perhaps even more, but it becomes opaque, obscure, unclear.

It doesn't take much for our natural inherent clarity to be entirely fogged in, clouded over, or contaminated. That's right, **you started out clear**. It may have been so long ago now that you can't remember it. But do not doubt that at one time you were a crystal clear glass of water with a dime showing itself perfectly all the way from the bottom of the glass.

# It's Time for An Attitude Adjustment

## Take Responsibility

**"The greatest day in your life and mine is when we take total responsibility for our attitudes. That's the day we truly grow up." ~John C. Maxwell**

Where did all this uncertainty, confusion and ambiguity come from anyway? Who or what did this to you? While it might be comforting to place the blame on some big external conspiracy, that's not how it is. It's a hard fact of life that **your lack of clarity is entirely of your own making**. No, you didn't purposely set out to become unclear but you are its source nonetheless.

Buried in this truth is some very, very good news: if you have the power to obscure your clarity, you also have the power to once again reveal it. The very lack of purpose that allowed this foginess, this cloudiness to prevail gives you an essential clue to the way out. It is by once again owning your clarity, on purpose, that you can be certain, confident, and clear. But to regain your clarity is going to require something from you.

## Frank, Forthright Honesty

**“If humanity does not opt for integrity we are through completely. It is absolutely touch and go. Each one of us could make the difference.”**

**~R. Buckminster Fuller**

This kind of honesty is called **Integrity**. While you could apply this in a moral sense, that is not the kind of integrity we are talking about here. Think rather about physical integrity. Have you ever watched Star Trek? Whenever the Enterprise was under attack by phasers and photon torpedoes, you would hear some ensign urgently reporting the current state of “structural integrity”. No, they weren't talking about the moral rectitude of the hull, they were talking about whether or not the hull of the ship was going to be able to protect them from the cold harsh vacuum of space. Structural integrity meant they got to go on living; no structural integrity, no life. **Integrity, therefore, is a profoundly practical thing.**

### Integrity With Yourself

The first place you need to apply integrity is with yourself. If you are not honest with yourself, your clarity will be deformed. When clarity is threatened, it starts with a warping of the truth. You can see things but they are distorted or corrupted. Sometimes you can still figure out how things really are but sometimes not. If it gets worse, things become obscured or even completely hidden. **It is within your power to stop this darkening trend by being honest with yourself.**

How can you apply this? Let's say you want more clients for your business. Are you doing what needs to be done to attract those clients? Do you perhaps excuse yourself, saying

something like, “I made five sales calls but nobody bought”? If you know that five is far too few, didn't you just obscure the truth by implying that you made the required effort?

Perhaps five is enough. But you know that they were not five *qualified* prospects. Didn't you just deflect the truth by implying that you called on the right prospects?

Let's say five is enough and they were all qualified. But if you approached them unprepared, didn't you just hide the fact that you ensured you were likely to get unfavorable results?

This is just a brief object lesson which demonstrates that when you avoid the truth with yourself, the outcome is always a lack of clarity. You didn't set out to create a lack of clarity but it was completely of your own making. Fortunately, it is also in your control to undo. When you choose to be honest with yourself, you will be drawn to get prepared and talk to enough of the right prospects. Clarity (and no doubt in our example increased sales) are the natural results.

### Integrity With Others

Once you are honest with yourself, integrity with others will come much more easily. Even if you are routinely honest, one area where a lack of integrity may sneak up on you is in making promises and commitments.

We all love to be on the receiving end of promises and commitments. They make us feel safe and loved. So naturally we like to pass out safety and love like so much candy. But the sweetness is in the taste. If we don't deliver, others are worse off than when they started because we have yanked away from them some little bit (or large amount) of love and security that they were counting on.

It doesn't matter if it is your child or your boss. When you start making promises that you don't know you can keep, your reality gets clouded. You are now living in some wishful world

rather than the real one. If you start to get clear that you will not be able to deliver, another obscurity agent enters: worry. (More on worry will be covered later.)

This is not a very supportive environment for clarity. So make a commitment, not to every request made of you, but to integrity with others. We will cover some tools that make this possible in a moment but for now, start by making **your choice to live in integrity**. It is the only foundation worthy of clarity.

## Gratitude

**“Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.”**

**~Melody Beattie**

So now let's build on that foundation of integrity with gratitude. Gratitude encompasses **thankfulness** and **appreciation**. Why would gratitude help with clarity?

Recognizing that **everything you have has been given to you** and that the universe owes you not one single thing clears up many misconceptions that cloud people's thinking.

Some folks may be resisting this right now as they are thinking, “Wait a minute, I've busted my tail for what I've got and I had to earn every inch of ground I've covered. Who am I supposed to be grateful to anyway?”

It brings to mind a joke. A scientist approaches God and says, “I have discovered how to spontaneously generate life from inert dirt! I guess that makes me just as much a Creator as you.” God replies, “That sounds wonderful. Can you show me?” The scientist says, “Sure. I'll just start with this dirt here...” But God interrupts, “Wait, get your own dirt.”

Whatever we possess or have achieved, it didn't happen in a vacuum. **You built on that which already is.** Sometimes it is obvious who gave us our start: a loving parent, a wise teacher, a generous friend. Some things are readily there for the taking: highways, telephones, the internet. Other things just seem to have always been there (although of course that isn't strictly true): the earth, the air, the physical laws.

**You don't have to know the source to be grateful.** Chances are you don't know who built some of the roads you drive on every day. You may have your doubts about a Creator of the universe. But you can't doubt that the universe is here, readily available to benefit you. While it is useful to direct your gratitude toward someone, it is valuable even if you don't have a "target".

What gratitude really is is **engagement with the universe.** You will never be clear until you engage with "what is". The more of "what is" is involved, the clearer you become. Gratitude is a handy way to facilitate that engagement. It's free and fast, simple and easy.

## Love for Yourself

**"Don't forget to love yourself."**

**~Soren Kierkegaard**

With gratitude you focused your attention outward. Next, let's look inward. You might be inclined to be grateful to yourself for all the hard work you have put in to get you where you are today. That is not such a bad idea. So give yourself that pat on the back. But don't stop there.

Chances are you are disappointed with yourself for one thing or another. Maybe you failed at something, you didn't do something you should have, or you did something you now regret.

You may have a long list of all of those things. Lingering on such matters fogs your clarity and it distracts you from the work at hand. So what to do?

Just this: **Forgive yourself.** Right now. Unconditionally and irrevocably.

**Forgive it all:** every failure, every screw up, every lazy inaction, every selfish deed.

You may be reaching for a “reason” to forgive yourself. The lack of an adequate reason may be why you haven't forgiven yourself already. But **forgiveness is not reasonable** and it is not supposed to be. **Reasons are not only not required, they do not apply.**

You are who you are right now. You can be no one else nor anything else. Accept yourself as is, here and now. Can you be better? Sure. Can you be more? Undoubtedly. But not yet. In the next moment, the next day, the next year you will be something new. You are the acme of creation, all of existence has conspired to create you, the pinnacle of sentient life in this moment. Stand in awe of the wonder of that which is you and stop second guessing. It is messing with your clarity.

## Passion

**“Passion is the genesis of genius.”**

**~Anthony Robbins**

Ok, so here you are all full of integrity, gratitude and love for yourself. Up until now this has mostly been about getting rid of hindering traits, things like dishonesty, thanklessness, and self-loathing. It's time to add some things in their place: **hope, imagination and vision.**

All these characteristics are the product of **passion.** How does passion promote clarity?

Passion gives you a clear view to the horizon – and beyond. It opens your heart to imagination, that creative source that freely jumps the gap between what is and what could be. It gives you the strength to believe in things that don't yet exist, things that not only could be but will be.

When you engage passion, the superfluous and the unnecessary fall away. Passion steadies you in such a way that you can focus. And **focus** of course is a key facet of clarity.

## Prepare

**"The best preparation for the future is the present well seen to, and the last duty done."**

**~George MacDonald**

Now that you have your head in the right place, it is time to soften up the ground for some **real progress**. With the proper outlook installed you can now tackle preparing your body, your mind and your environment for enhanced clarity.

## Get Physical

**"I'm not out there sweating for three hours every day just to find out what it feels like to sweat."**

**~Michael Jordan**

Too often a lack of clarity is about your body being out of balance or stressed. Fortunately the symptoms are usually quite clear and the antidotes are straightforward.

We could tick off a bunch of symptoms like cable television drug commercials do but you already know how you feel. So here are some actions you can take that will **help prime your body for clarity**:

### ***Take a walk***

It's amazing what a stroll around the block can do for you. If you are stuck in a large building, go up and down a flight or two of stairs. If you are confined to a small space,

stand up and do some squats. If you can't do squats, then walk around your chair. Stop looking for excuses. Get out of your chair **at least once every hour. Move!**

### ***Take a nap***

Just **twenty minutes** laying down can make all the difference and twenty minutes is enough. Pay attention to that magnificent machine called your body. **It will tell you what it needs.**

You have to be self-regulating here though. If you know you are prone to stay in bed all day, this is not the tip for you. In fact, you need to go back to the last tip.

For the rest of us, when you are feeling stressed to the point that giving up twenty minutes sounds impossible, then know that you are no longer being productive and you cannot make clear choices. Of course if you are in the middle of doing surgery or giving a sales presentation, that isn't the moment. But the fact is you have to **schedule down time.**

Even if you can't lay down, a few minutes of quiet with your eyes closed will give your body a chance to recharge. Go sit in a toilet stall if that is your only option. **Bodies operate on cycles. Honor those cycles.**

### ***Get some sleep***

Assuming you aren't working third shift, **nighttime is for sleep.** Human bodies are wired for it. Create a quiet, comfortable, dark environment to the extent you can. **Keep a regular sleep schedule.** If at all possible, **go to bed at the same time and, especially, arise at the same time every day.**

**Get enough sleep.** For most of us that means eight hours a night but you may need a little more. **Listen to your body.** It will tell you.

### ***Eat healthy***

Eating healthy seems to be in the eye of the beholder these days. There are diet plans being promoted everywhere, often with contradictory advice. So here is a little light on the subject from the renowned author Michael Pollan:

*Eat food, not too much, mostly vegetables.*

That doesn't sound so hard to understand or to implement now, does it? When Pollan says "food" he means things your grandmother would recognize as food. That lets out high fructose corn syrup and aspartame, sodium nitrite and butylated hydroxyanisole. (I'm not saying Grams isn't smart enough to know what these things are. The point is she knows they are not *food*. If in doubt, give her a call. You are probably overdue anyway.) If your dinner's ingredients look like a chemistry exam rather than a grocery list, you know there is a problem.

### ***Drink water***

Dehydration is an awful thing to do to your body. You wouldn't do it to your pet. In fact, does your pet know better than you when to hydrate up? For most people it will be a difficult thing to drink too much water. So whatever your habit is now, **up it a quart for the day**. Your brain needs H<sup>2</sup>O to function clearly.

### ***Balance your meds***

Alas, we live in a drug-driven world. This is not doctor's advice in this guide, so talk to the professionals. But you don't have to be a physician to know when your meds are not working for you. Don't put off that doctor's appointment and don't ignore your physician's instructions for when and how to take your prescriptions. Partner with your doctor to get the most out of your medical care with the least amount of chemical assistance necessary.

And here are some things you must *avoid* to give you the best possible opportunity for clarity:

***Don't oversleep***

Oversleeping leaves you groggy and unfocused. Staying in bed when you don't want to face your lack of clarity is just a downward spiral. Get up, feed the dog, and get moving.

***Skip the junk food***

The path to lethargy and torpor is paved with potato chips and candy bars. Right about now you might be thinking, "Yeah, yeah, I've heard this all before." Did you listen before? If you go to your cupboards or your freezer will you find cookies and cupcakes, ice cream and pizza rolls? That's why you are hearing this yet again. You aren't listening and it is costing you clarity. It is time to fix that.

***Drink less alcohol (or none at all)***

This is not a diatribe against alcohol. No one is calling you an alcoholic. But chances are you are familiar with the impact alcohol can have on clarity, and not just any old clarity but your personal clarity. Maybe you don't need to be clear while watching Monday Night Football and that's at your option. But if that nightly nightcap is turning into three and you either don't go to bed or you can't seem to get up the next day, the hit on your clarity is costly. So dial it back or dial it off if you want more clarity.

***Take less drugs (medicinal and recreational)***

The drugs you take and the reasons you take them are up to you. You have to assess the impact that they have while weighing the benefits. Even doctor-prescribed drugs can have a negative impact if not correctly dosed or properly administered.

Additionally, you know if your experiments or escapes are hindering your productivity and your clarity. Be aware and make choices that enhance your clarity rather than reduce or destroy it.

## Eliminate Distractions

**“Happiness can only be found if you can free yourself of all other distractions.” ~Saul Bellow**

What do you find distracting? Some people need quiet, so anything making sound (a television or stereo blaring, children shrieking, traffic rumbling) needs to be mitigated. For others, some music or images in the background actually helps. You might actually be less distracted knowing where your kids are by the noise they make. Maybe you find the pulse of the city energizing. So take a distraction inventory.

Once you know what you find to be distracting in your environment, brainstorm ways to lessen those distractions or eliminate them. Get the kids to play outside, ask your spouse to turn down the volume on the TV, or suck it up and buy an air conditioner so you can close the window and block out that street noise. Yes, sometimes you will have to invest to get clarity. It might be money, it might be time, it might be traded favors (honey, you take the kids to the park today and I'll watch them tomorrow). It will be worth the price.

## Declutter

**“I have a notion that if you are going to be spiritually curious, you better not get cluttered up with too many material things.” ~Mary Oliver**

Ah, we sure love our stuff. Paradoxically, we even love the stuff that we hate because we love to have it there to hate. It's a dilemma. “Why throw that away? It's a perfectly good {something that isn't good for much of anything}.” Some of our stuff isn't even stuff, it's people or habits or ideas. Let's take a look at how we can **simplify** our environment with the objective of enhancing our potential for clarity.

## The Outer Clutter

### *Television*

**“I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book.” ~Groucho Marx**

I'm not all that old (really, I'm not) but I remember black and white televisions and black and white television programming. When I was a kid there were five regular stations: the three commercial networks, the public network and the local station. Oh yes, and there were those two strange UHF stations that came in all grainy and warbling that I'm pretty sure were being broadcast from somebody's shack out behind their garage. And it was distracting even then.

*But now...*

There are hundreds of stations. Due to all this competition for your affections, the effort and investment that goes into television programming is staggeringly large. And they have gotten very, very good at hijacking your attention.

So what to do? I must now utter a heresy:

*Turn off that television.*

There, I said it.

Do you refer to {insert some program's name here} as “your” program? Are you the director? the producer? an investor? It's time to face a cold hard fact: it's not “yours”. Why build you life around it? Technology for once may actually come to the rescue here in the form of a digital video recorder. At least that way you can view it on your schedule rather than the station programmer's. But give some consideration to just letting it go. The reality TV crowd will be fine without you.

To boil it down:

- cut it out
- cut it back
- at least schedule it on your own terms

**“Getting information off the Internet is like taking a drink from a fire hydrant.” ~Mitch Kapor**

If you are old enough to be interested in the topic at hand then you’re not so young that you can’t remember a time before the internet. The internet is more pervasive than even television. As such, it is unlikely you can just turn it off. So how can you manage it?

It seems like every device worth over ten bucks now comes with web connectivity. Even the applications we use on these devices (like Google and Facebook) span different areas of our lives, so it is challenging to compartmentalize them. What is required then is mindfulness.

If you use Facebook for work, it doesn't mean all your time on Facebook is for work. Think of these applications like “work clothes”. Sure, you get up for work in the morning and put on your work clothes. But you realize you aren't yet at work until you arrive at the job site or punch in. You also realize that if you hit the grocery store or the pub after work still dressed in your work clothes, you are no longer working. So be aware what your activity is, not just the clothes you are wearing or the tools you are using.

You have to have some discipline about this. Before you start bristling at that nasty word “discipline”, consider that you don't find it too difficult to not drink on the job and you aren't pained to not run errands when you are at work. If you are choosing to be at work, then do that: work. If you are choosing to socialize, cool, then socialize. Just do so with awareness. There are tools out there to hold you accountable, reminder apps that will ding every twenty minutes so that you can once again make a mindful choice as to what you intend to be doing right now. Just Google “reminder app” and the latest and greatest will pop up.

Your desktop, your laptop, your phone, your tablet, your {whatever got invented last week} are just tools. Remember, you are their master. This is the one time you are allowed to be merciless. Require them all to bend to your will.

### *Video Games*

**“Playing video games is starting to cut into the rather unbelievable amount of time people spend watching TV.” ~Bill Gates**

Games used to require one of three things: a ball, a board, or a deck of cards. No more. Now they require computers and consoles and controllers. **Video games are literal space invaders.** They have invaded our living rooms, our bedrooms, our televisions, our computers and even our phones.

I'm not telling you not to have fun. In fact, later I will be espousing recreation and relaxation. It just goes back to **who owns your time**, you or Electronic Arts. The insidious thing about video games is their compelling nature. They are made to be played for long periods of time. You used to go outside and play ball. The game was over in half an hour. Now, it take forty seven hours to get up to level twenty two so you can get those gold coins and medallion badges and...wait a minute, none of that stuff is real!

Shall we add one more scary detail? These consoles are now all internet connected. As if Rockstar and Zynga didn't already have their hooks into you deep enough...

Awareness. Mindfulness. You've heard it before. It continues to be relevant. If you want clarity, you've got to switch off that console.

## Shopping

**“The model of ownership, in a society organized around mass consumption, is addiction.”**

**~Christopher Lasch**

In western society, when we speak in the most ubiquitous terms of people, we are most likely to refer to them as consumers. It is a more common reference than even citizens. In fact, in the eyes of many the thing that makes you a useful citizen is that you **consume** (or at least that you pay to consume).

Billions of dollars go into encouraging you to consume each year. Why, one company alone (Coca-Cola) has an annual marketing budget of \$3,000,000,000. That's right, three BILLION dollars per year to hawk sugar water.

All these marketing messages are targeted squarely at your reptilian brain. They want automatic, practically autonomic reactions from you to mindlessly spend.

Aside from the fact that this is costing you lots of money, it is also costing you lots of time. Shopping is time consuming. That means it is also focus consuming. Furthermore, the more you spend, the more you have to earn, and earning is also time and focus consuming.

Retailers track how much time you spend in their stores. They design them like roach traps: easy to enter but hard to escape.

So what is a lowly consumer to do? Our adversaries have immense budgets targeting our most vulnerable natures. Dare I say it? **Mindfulness** applies once again.

Shopping is required to live. We have to buy food weekly, clothes seasonally, and other items periodically. Shopping, in moderation, can even be a valid form of recreation. Just like Facebook time, we need to be aware of what kind of shopping we are doing. Is this shopping trip life-sustaining or is it life-draining? Did it start out the former but then quickly devolve into the latter?

**The answer is to budget your shopping time.** Note I said time, not money. I promise if you give yourself no more than two hours per week (don't freak out, set you own time limit) and you have to go home without enough food because you just couldn't resist the shoe sale at Nordstrom or the power tool extravaganza at Sears, **you will quickly find your priorities.**

### *Substances*

**"My actual intake of different substances was far below what people thought it was, no matter how weird or outrageous they think I am." ~Peter Fonda**

**Everything you put into your body alters your physiology and your state.** Some of those things have a well-earned bad reputation:

- alcohol
- drugs (legal and otherwise)
- junk food
- nicotine
- caffeine

We've already covered the first three so let's zero in on the last two, nicotine and caffeine. "Addictive" would not be too strong a word to use for either of these two substances. Neither would "drug". People try to use both nicotine and caffeine to induce clarity. But any positive results in regard to clarity are usually short-lived and definitely artificial. Aside from the fact that it is difficult to control the level of these substances in your body, the best you can hope for is **a temporary altered state that might resemble clarity but in fact is merely a poor facsimile.**

A better approach would be to examine why you "need" those substances in the first place. That is where the clarity-hinderance is sourced. Do you need that venti latte or Super Big Gulp of Pepsi plus that cigarette every morning just to get started because you failed to get your proper rest? Do you need a pick-me-up not because the workload is high but because you skipped a nutritious breakfast?

I know, it sounds like I'm channeling your mother. But Mom was on to something. **Start looking for the root causes instead of just reacting to the symptoms.** Often you don't have to look very far to see what is blocking your clarity.

### *People*

We love our family, friends, workmates, schoolmates and neighbors. Unfortunately they regularly act as anti-clarity agents. Mostly it's not on purpose but that is cold comfort as the impact is the same. Let's examine three types of people in our lives who can really throw a monkey wrench into the clarity machinery.

#### ***The Confused***

The Confused don't like clarity. It conflicts with their world view and their self view. To maintain their outlook they have to take out your clarity with extreme prejudice. It has little to do with you. Your clarity is just collateral damage. So how do they do it to you?

They question things that are already agreed upon and accepted. They stir up doubt. They foment chaos. They may make it sound like they do all this for your protection. Don't be fooled and don't be manipulated. **It is your responsibility to protect your own clarity.**

### ***The Aimless***

The aimless don't care about clarity. Clarity has, in their view, the negative tendency to result in responsibilities and requirements. So they will downplay anything that is heading toward clarity. "Come on man, just one more round. When'd you get to be such a stick in the mud?" To their mind, purposelessness is just easier, less demanding and more instantly gratifying. But you know better. **Emptiness is weak tea compared to clarity.**

### ***The Opposers***

Perhaps the most insidious are the Opposers. They are actively hostile to your clarity. Their aim is to destroy it. They may bring any number of dysfunctional means to bear: intimidation, condescension, even active aggression. They may brandish power over you or use coercion.

Remember, experience does not equal clarity. Neither does intelligence or education or authority. That is not to say that each of these qualities are not useful and desirable. It's just that a mere child can be clear. A student can be clear. A working stiff can be clear. All these other qualities while desirable are poor substitutes for the sublime state of clarity.

So what can you do about the Confused, the Aimless, and the Opposers in your life? The short answer is: get them out of your life. In some cases this might mean finding a new circle of friends or even a new job. It might mean moving to a new school or a new town. The apostle Paul wisely wrote: **Bad associations spoil useful habits.** Clarity is the most useful habit you will ever possess. You must count the cost and choose.

There are circumstances where removing a certain person from your life is not an option. So what can you do in that case? Take a stand for clarity. Make it clear that you are not going to give up on it, not even to please them. This does not require you to be mean or tactless. Just communicate in a straightforward fashion that you are not merely deciding to be clear, you are choosing it. Deciding requires reasons and reasons can be argued. But **choosing is not dependent on reasons. You choose clarity *because you can*.**

When we are done with the television and the internet and the video games and the shopping and the substances and the people, we often take one final devastating step: we become consumed with guilt over all the time and money and attention we have already squandered on all of those distractions. **Guilt is clarity kryptonite.** You had occasion to give in to one or more of these indulgences. That moment came, and it is now gone. So let it go. Don't allow it to get in that one last clarity-destroying dig.

## The Inner Clutter

### *Whining*

**"The tendency to whining and complaining may be taken as the surest sign symptom of little souls and inferior intellects." ~Lord Jeffrey**

Whining is robbing you of clarity by relentlessly demanding your focus. If you are waiting with bated breath for some multi-step process to stop whining, I'm afraid I have some disappointing news. It's only one step: Just stop it already. That's it. It is a weak indulgence. It is not worthy of you. **Cut it out.**

## Worry

**“Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It empties today of its strength.” ~Corrie Ten Boom**

After my treatment of whining you might be a little concerned about what I might do with worry. Fear not. Worry is a different matter that requires a more nuanced approach.

**Your mind in some sense has a mind of its own.** You can't just tell it to stop worrying. Oh, it will placate you for a moment. But the second you take your attention off it, out pops another worry. What's a worrier to do?

Here is a simple but effective method. Write out a worry list. Do not hold back. Make it long and detailed, juicy and vivid. When you are satisfied that all your worries are enumerated and each is described in graphic detail, then tell your mind, “Thank you for sharing, I will consider this list in depth on {some date} at {some time}.”

**Now set your list aside and do not look at it again until the specified date and time.** Make that date and time as far into the future as you comfortably can, maybe even a little further out than is comfortable. Whenever the urge pops up to worry before that date, tell your mind, “Thank you for sharing, as you know we are getting to that on {some date} at {some time}.” After a while you will be able to merely tell your mind, “Thank you for sharing.” Your mind just wants to know it has been heard. Stick to this and the worrying will subside, possibly even disappear.

What do you do when the time and date arrives? You get yourself the fattest black marker you can lay your hands on. Then you take that marker to your list and obliterate any worry that no longer concerns you.

Do you still have worries? Compile a new list, set a new date and time, and repeat. Do you have new worries? No problem, add them to your list. The important thing is to get them off the top of your mind. That ground is reserved exclusively for clarity, no worries allowed.

## Act

**“Actions speak louder than words but not nearly as often.” ~Mark Twain**

So now you have prepared your mind, your heart, your body, and your environment for some luscious clarity. You have an empty slate, a green field, an open road. It is now time to take **action**.

## Energize

**“The energy of the mind is the essence of life.”  
~Aristotle**

Imagine your handy little cell phone. It is a useful miracle of modern ingenuity. It has the potential to keep you in touch with customers and suppliers, friends and family. We get rather attached to our phones and all that convenience. In normal usage however it eventually runs out of juice. And aren't we annoyed and dismayed when we turn to our trusty phone, only to find the battery is dead?

“Dead” is kind of a strong word. It isn't really dead, in fact it is quite easily “resurrected” by charging it up. Every cell phone comes with a charger as a matter of course. Some of us even have more than one charger, maybe one at the office and one at home and even one in the car.

You need to be regularly charged up yourself. While your cell phones chargers have to all be basically the same, you are actually more flexible. Consider some ways that you can energize:

- meditate
- crank up the music
- sing
- dance
- stretch
- exercise
- read
- enjoy some solitude
- help somebody

This is not an exhaustive list by any means. In fact, make your own. Pick out the things that are most appealing to you or the ones that experience tells you work the best in your case. The resulting energy will power your coming clarity.

## Organize

**“In all chaos there is a cosmos, in all disorder a secret order.” ~Carl Jung**

Earlier you cleared your environment but now it is time to order it. Create a comfortable, functional workspace. Consider the area of life in which you seek clarity. What information, tools, and people can facilitate your clarity? Bring them into your environment, and into the right place in your environment. Have them at the ready so that when the moment arrives you can call on these things to enhance your clarity. **One caveat:** this is not license to junk

up your environment again. You don't bring in every possible thing that might be useful in some imaginable scenario. Think: **essentials, the minimum required** but all that is required.

By “environment” we mean more than that which physically surrounds you. For instance, having access to a key person may mean no more than having ready access to a phone number or email address. Additionally, some people find praying or meditating is beneficial in bringing them into alignment with a spiritual aspect that is the sister of clarity.

## Create

**“Everything comes to us that belongs to us if we create the capacity to receive it.”**

**~Rabindranath Tagore**

Finally you have arrived where the rubber meets the road. Now you will **discover clarity as an act of creation**. We say “discover” because it was there all along. The creation isn't of the clarity itself but rather of a new awareness of that clarity. Your awareness may come in a lightninglike flash. It may be like the dawning of the day, slow and strong. However it arrives, welcome it with gratitude. So how do you begin creating your clarity?

## What Result Are You After?

**“However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.” ~Winston Churchill**

Oddly enough, you start at the end.

If you don't know where you intend to arrive, you will never get there. **You cannot skip this step.** This is the place where many clarity-wishers go off the tracks. It would seem that a satisfying result is what everyone is after, so why would anyone try to skip this step? It is really quite simple: to keep their options open.

**“Really, what are the options? Levi's or Wranglers. And you just pick one. It's one of those life choices.”  
~Harrison Ford**

**Options are a trap.** They look so real. But nothing is real until it is chosen. Options are mere probabilities and probabilities are not (yet) reality.

**Choosing is an act of creation** and is therefore very powerful. When you pick amongst all the options you send a signal that you are ready to receive. Until that signal is transmitted, no clarity can be had. It is up to you.

## One at a Time

**"I have made it a rule never to smoke more than one cigar at a time." ~Samuel Clemens**

It's not just that you must choose only one result. You must also focus on the results you choose one at a time. Chances are you would like clarity on more than one thing and in more than one area of your life. If you would like to succeed at finding clarity in lots of places, then **stick to one thing at a time.**

**Multitasking is a myth.** For those of you who think you are good at multitasking, consider that **you are merely good at *surviving* multitasking.** Survival is a rather low place to set the bar.

Multitasking dilutes focus and, as noted earlier, focus is a key facet of clarity. You may find it hard to give up on multitasking but consider this: **it is multitasking that is largely responsible for your lack of clarity.** Which one do you prefer, clarity or multitasking? There are replacements for multitasking. **What replacement can you offer for clarity?**

Don't worry, all results will be examined and pursued. So now that you have your intended results in mind, let's examine them each more closely, one at a time.

### *Benefits of Success*

**“Write your injuries in dust, your benefits in marble.”**

**~Benjamin Franklin**

First let's talk about **pleasure**. Who doesn't like pleasure? When it comes to results, pleasure is measured in benefits. What **benefits** does this particular result give you? You want to examine both quantity and quality. One high quality benefit can be worth more than lots of common benefits. But don't knock a result that only has common benefits so long as there are enough of them.

### *Consequences of Failure*

**“Without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more unintended consequences, and failing to achieve anything useful.” ~Margaret J. Wheatley**

Now let's talk about **pain**. As much as we like to move toward pleasure, **we are even more motivated to move away from pain**. Results that protect us from painful consequences are very compelling. Again, take inventory and pay special attention to the quality of the consequences. The uglier they are, the more driven you will be toward the result that protects you from that consequence.

## Write It Down

**"A verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on." ~Samuel Goldwyn**

If you aren't already doing so, write all this down: the result you intend, its associated benefits, and the consequences of failing to attain your result. This is another step people love to skip. But if you want clarity **it is imperative that you write it down**. Why? Because that which is unwritten can remain vague without it being obvious. However, if you write down fuzzy results, with foggy benefits and uncertain consequences, the lack of clarity is dragged into the harsh light of day.

Some folks have a real capacity for avoiding clarity, so another thing bears mentioning. Is what you wrote down clear? Would someone else understand it without additional explanation? Would they agree that it is clear? I am not talking about your best friend or your spouse or your mother either. Would a stranger get it? If not, it's rewrite time. There is no shame in having several drafts ahead of your final document. **This is important. Commit yourself to getting it right.**

Done right, a “result summary” won't have to be very long. Here is an example:

Result: I weigh 190 pounds

Benefits:

- My clothes fit again.
- I breathe freely.
- My wife thinks I'm sexy.

Consequences:

- I have to buy a whole new “fat” wardrobe.
- I get winded just walking up a flight of stairs.
- My wife thinks I'm a fat slob.

Our intrepid result seeker now looks at this summary and realizes that having his wife think of him as a fat slob is almost unbearable. He just got crystal clear on what he intends and why he intends it.

If you seek clarity on more than one result, create a result summary for each. It will be worth the effort.

## Prioritize

**“The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities.” ~Stephen Covey**

Now that you know your intended results and their relative values to you, you can readily prioritize them. Remember, you will be focusing on them one at a time so prioritization is essential. Don't be dismayed if practical considerations require you push a highly desirable result down the list while others float higher. **Pragmatism is a close friend of clarity because clarity happens in the real world.** Don't worry, none will be left behind.

## Deadlines (The Good and The Bad)

**“The only deadline is the one you give yourself.”  
~Mark Thomas**

Let us consider two premises that appear to be at odds: “Deadlines are essential” and “Deadlines are harmful.”

### *Deadlines are essential*

Deadlines are essential because tomorrow never comes. It is always and only right now. If you don't set a deadline for achieving some purpose, there is always more “tomorrow” out there. It can remain unresolved forever.

Have you ever said, “I'm working on it”? We like to receive credit for going toward a result. But what would be more productive is to recognize, “I have not yet achieved it.” The danger of merely “working on it” is it doesn't even require progress as long as you are making effort. Effort without progress is indeed work but it is worthless.

Deadlines have a way of focusing one's attention. They compel you to make choices instead of “keeping your options open”. Remember, options have no power, only a selected choice does.

### *Deadlines are harmful*

Deadlines are harmful because tomorrow never comes. It is always and only right now. Did my editor just goof up? Didn't I just say those exact words about the necessity of deadlines?

My editor rocks for leaving that just as it is. Some areas of clarity are infinitely unfolding. Some areas of growth have no finish line. Do you want to be a better cook or parent or fisherman or spouse or what have you? When do you suppose you should set your deadline for such a thing? Some efforts should be allowed to unfold unhindered by artificial devices. So how can you tell the difference between an essential deadline and a harmful deadline?

### **Measurement (The Good and The Bad)**

**“Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.” ~Marianne Williamson**

Oh no, the difference lies in another dichotomy: “Measurability is essential” and “Measurability is a trap.”

### *Measurability is essential*

The benefit of measurability is self-described. If you can measure something, you have a ready means of determining progress, lack of progress, or even backsliding. You can determine velocity and the remaining distance before indulging in that satisfying act of checking the box that it is done.

When you step on the bathroom scale, you can see if you lost weight or gained weight. You can compare it to last week's accomplishments. You can “do math” to validate your efforts and tactics. So the moral of the story is: Measure the things leading to your result.

### *Measurability is a trap*

The temptation with measurement is to measure whatever is easy to measure. Even our doctors fall prey to this ready trap. Do you have “high” cholesterol? What is it high compared to? It is compared to an average. That average is of the cholesterol levels of persons who have succumbed to certain undesirable outcomes, outcomes like heart attacks and strokes.

Does everyone with “high” cholesterol always have a heart attack or a stroke? No. Do persons with “low” cholesterol sometimes have heart attacks or strokes? Indeed they do. The problem with this kind of measurement is it is not direct.

That doesn't mean that indirect measures are not valuable. They just should not be confused with direct measures.

Some desirable things defy measurement but the pull to measure something, anything is strong. So we pick out something we can measure and treat it as valid. Measurability in itself is not proof of suitability.

For instance, my father once lost 60 pounds of unhealthy fat and kept it off on a diet that was actually quite high in calories. Wait, aren't we *supposed* to use calories as a measure for a weight loss diet? In the case of this diet, the measure that was more useful was of carbohydrates.

I'm not advocating for any particular diet nor am I telling you that your doctor's concerns about your blood pressure, sugar levels, or any other measurable figure are invalid. It's just

that you need to be aware of the validity of the relationship between a measurable and the result you seek.

Some very worthy results are not measurable at all. Tell me the scale for lovingness, or joyfulness or peace. There is none. A measure looks at the gap between *here* and *there*. For the most powerful things in life, there is no here and there. So don't get hung up on measurement where no measurement can apply.

### Leave Out What You Don't Need

**"Less is more." ~Ludwig Mies van der Rohe**

I am going to trust that you are a good little soldier and you have done everything I have asked you to do up until now. If you look back at the results you say you seek, can you state with conviction and certainty that you truly intend to have them all? Are you strongly compelled by the benefits as well as deeply repelled by the consequences? Are these really your choices?

Listen to that little voice in the back of your head if it is squeaking, "Um, I'm kind of not really feeling, you know, *that* one." It's possible in such a case that you need to put a little more effort into your result description to get the little voice on board. But it is also possible that you don't really want that result after all.

How could that happen? There are lots of reasons. Maybe you *used to* want it but you have grown beyond it. It could be that it's just an old habit. Or it might be a result that someone else wants for you that you allowed them to impress or even impose upon you. It could also be that upon closer examination, that result just doesn't cut the mustard.

Learn to say "no", especially to yourself. Some results are just not worth the effort. Maybe you don't really need both a Porsche Carrera and a Royce-Royce Silver Cloud.

If your little voice is now charging straight to the foreground and is screaming at me, "I do too!", cool, you need both. Just do a reality check with yourself. This may sound a bit recursive but you must be clear about what you intend to be clear about.

### Read It Every Day

**"It's the repetition of affirmations that leads to belief. And once that belief becomes a deep conviction, things begin to happen." ~Muhammad Ali**

So you've vetted your results and you've prioritized them. You've assigned deadlines where they are appropriate and you know what to measure, if anything. Don't you see the difference in your clarity already?

So now, stay engaged. Stick to your highest priority result. Read your result description daily, just the top one you are working on now. Remember, you are going after your intended results one at a time. This is a serial effort.

Paste a note about it on your bathroom mirror, on your refrigerator, in your car, in your brief case, on your desk or workbench, in your closet, or anywhere else you will see it regularly or it makes sense.

What if the result you are after is not one you want the world to see? Maybe you don't want to publicly describe your intention to get rid of that persistent rash. That's ok, just post it

where you can. Or use a code. Have fun with it. Let people wonder about your intention to be free of tribbles by March 1.

## Enroll Your Tribe

**“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” ~Henry Ford**

There is great power in public scrutiny. If you can enlist the world to help you, it is like turning up the floodlights that beam on your desired result. So tell everyone you intend to start that business, double your sales, lose 20 pounds, or stop drinking soda pop.

It is one thing to make yourself publicly accountable. But it is even better to roll out the support team. Think about who among your friends and family will stand by you and with you. There are even online communities of strangers who stand together in support of each other in various areas of focus. Use those human resources. Talk to people who will help you and support you. Remember to watch out for the Confused, the Aimless and the Opposers. Go for the Clear, the Purposeful, and the Promoters.

## Enjoy the Path

**“Let him who would enjoy a good future waste none of his present.” ~Roger Babson**

Clarity isn't about enduring a brutal, heartless grind or engaging some driving ambition. It is really about being present, being here, and being now. When all the dust settles there is nothing else to see but what is. If what you see is not to your liking, then do something about

it. If there is nothing to be done, then by all means do nothing. Clarity will make actions obvious and acceptance of the unchangeable palatable.

Clarity makes whatever is right now just as acceptable as your most ambitious intentions. It makes the path between the two exciting and intriguing. So enjoy where you are, where you are going, and how you will get there.

## Follow Up

### Take Time Off

**"A vacation is what you take when you can no longer take what you have been taking." ~Earl Wilson**

So you've done everything right, you wrote it all down, you told the world, and you've worked your plan. And then, it happens: the fog returns! What gives?

It's all ok. In fact, you are right on schedule. You just need a break. Periodically you have to punch out and go home for a little while.

We live in a society that encourages you to go until you burn out. But which would you rather do: go on vacation or go to court-appointed rehab? Is this even a question? Take some time off already. Your clarity will get a boost.

## Recharge

**"I think people ought to do what they feel useful at the time. If I do things because I ought to do them, I switch off." ~Matthew Macfadyen**

Vacations, as great as they are, can't happen every day or every week. You need to recharge on a more frequent basis.

So find a supportive method or medium that works for you that you can engage in regularly while not allowing it to take over. Play a round of golf. Cook a nice meal. Check out some new music. Listen to your muse.

Recharging is even useful on the micro level. Take note when it is time to stop for a minute or to change to another task for the interim. Then, when your tank is refilled, head back to your chosen priorities.

## Refocus

**“When you're successful, things have a momentum, and at a certain point you can't really tell whether you have created the momentum or it's creating you.”**  
~Annie Lennox

Every once in a while it is time to revisit your chosen results. Do you still intend what you used to intend, or has it just become a habit or a point of pride? There are no awards for getting what you used to want. It makes life quite hollow to seek victory for victory's sake.

Momentum has a nasty habit of satisfying only itself. It is a powerful tool but it can turn on you and serve only its own ambitions. Make sure that you are the master of your motion.

So each year, put everything on the table. Or even better, take everything off the table. Make your dreams earn their way back into your consciousness.

There is no virtue in retaining a goal that no longer serves you and no vice in replacing one or just letting it go. Do what you are going to do mindfully.

So there you have it, your roadmap to clarity. Clarity doesn't come free. Sometimes it won't be easy. But it is of the highest possible value. Clarity drives away fear. Clarity draws in resources. Clarity is worthwhile for its own sake. So be clear and share your clarity with others. I've quoted a lot of insightful people in this guide. So here is a final quote from me:

**“There's nothing you can't be with true clarity.”**  
~Kenneth Vogt

## In Gratitude

Thank you for taking the time to consider this guide. I now encourage you to take the next step and apply these methods in your life.

If you have received some value from this, there is something you can do to help: spread the clarity!

You could:

- Email this guide to three friends
- [Click to share it on Facebook](#)
- [Click to tweet about it on Twitter](#)

And of course if you haven't already,

[sign up for free updates at www.VeraClaritas.com](http://www.VeraClaritas.com).

Cheers,

*Kenneth Vogt*

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