

## ***The Not So Big Life – Chapter 1***

### **Exercise: Preparing Your Not So Big Life Notebook**

As you go through the book and engage the exercises at the end of each chapter, you'll need a place to keep all your notes. So at some point in the next day or so, as you are beginning the process of your life remodeling, it's important to find yourself a notebook that can be dedicated to the task of recording what you learn along the way.

Over the years I've used all sorts of notebooks, from three ring binders, to blank books, to legal pads, to computer hard drives. Because this is such interactive material, it may be easier to use something that allows you to introduce additional pages where needed. But if your heart is set on a particularly beautiful blank book, go ahead. You can always paste in a page or two of extra paper in a particular section if you need to.

The important thing is that the format of your notebook allows you the greatest degree of creative freedom. You are about to embark on a journey into parts of yourself that you never knew existed, so make sure that your notebook is up to the task of receiving *all* your thoughts and insights, allowing you to keep them together in one place, and reasonably organized.

As you read you may be surprised at some of the undigested experiences from your earlier life that rise to the surface. There will be wonderful memories that you'd forgotten, that will allow you to see how you came to be who you perceive yourself to be today. And there will also be some sad, embarrassing, or frustrating memories that you'll probably recall as well. As you explore aspects of your inner world there may even be things that scare you a little, things that have heretofore been hidden from view--the everyday life version of the stash of forgotten treasures under the bed.

This is all part of the process of self-discovery. Being able to see that the monsters under the bed are only illusory is an important part of the process. These monsters are the old and no longer useful patterns of behavior that keep us from engaging in the things we long to do. This is how we get stuck in our lives. We're being run by old fears that make us believe there's no room for anything new, and stop us from becoming aware of the diversity of experience that's available. If such unexpected deliveries arise as you read, you don't need

to “do” anything with them. Just notice them, write them down if you like, and keep reading. Gradually the tools to process what you are recognizing about yourself will present themselves.

At the end of each chapter you’ll find a major exercise that is important to perform before proceeding to the next chapter. Although this means it will take you longer to read the book, if you don’t do these exercises you’ll be accessing only a very small part of what this material has to teach you. By preparing a notebook that you can keep with you as you read, you’ll be creating your own companion to share the journey with, and to assist you when you need it. Over time you’ll also be able to refer back to insights you’ve had in the past in order to help you better understand what is becoming clear to you in the moment.

Each exercise is self explanatory, and will require from one to ten pages in your notebook. But along the way there will be some other things you’ll likely want to keep track of, such as strategies, phrases, questions, and behavior flags that can help you both in the life you are living today, and for the long term—over the years to come. As you progress through the book, you’ll actually be customizing your own Owner’s Manual—the tool we’ll discuss towards the end of our journey together in Chapter 11, that will allow you to conduct your own maintenance checkup each year, and ensure that your remodeling is still functioning properly.

The following list contains the primary sections you’ll need along the way. There may be others you’ll want to add, to personalize your notebook to your particular interests and proclivities. But for now, use the accompanying list of section dividers to help you keep track of the things you’ll want to recall later. You don’t need to do anything with these pages currently other than label them. I’ll explain how to use them as we go, and after a while you’ll be able to tailor what you are creating to fit your specific needs and insights.

Sections you’ll need:

(Allow at least 5 blank pages per section)

Needed Right Away:

Everyday routines to support my growth

Strategies for engaging my everyday life differently

Phrases to keep in mind

Questions to keep asking myself

Personal behavior flags to watch for

Insights and “Aha”s

Issues that seem disturbing to me

Subjects to inquire into

Personal longings and aspirations

General musings

Surprising life events that seem related to what I’m reading

Needed soon for Chapter 2

Significant Objects (allow one to two pages)

Significant Moments (allow about 5 pages)

The other chapters will each require around ten pages, though some you may want to complete more than once over the coming months and years, and therefore will require additional sheets.

That’s all you need to do right now. With your notebook in hand, you are ready to proceed. If some phrase or idea appeals to you, or causes you concern, write it down on the appropriate page. As you’ll see, everything that seems intriguing, exciting or disturbing has the ability to help you see yourself more clearly. And through the process of this seeing, you’ll discover more and more of your real potential, and you’ll find more and more tools to help bring that potential into being. When you look back through this notebook in a month or so, you’ll be amazed at what you’ve discovered. Just like a photo album of a vacation, your Not So Big Life Notebook will help you remember where you’ve been, and what you’ve discovered along the way.