

EXCERPT FROM

the art of CHOICE



MOVE FROM HERE AND NOW TO
THERE AND THEN

MAKING CHANGES THAT COUNT
IN WORK AND LIFE

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CHAPTER 13

Move from Here and Now to There and Then

Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.

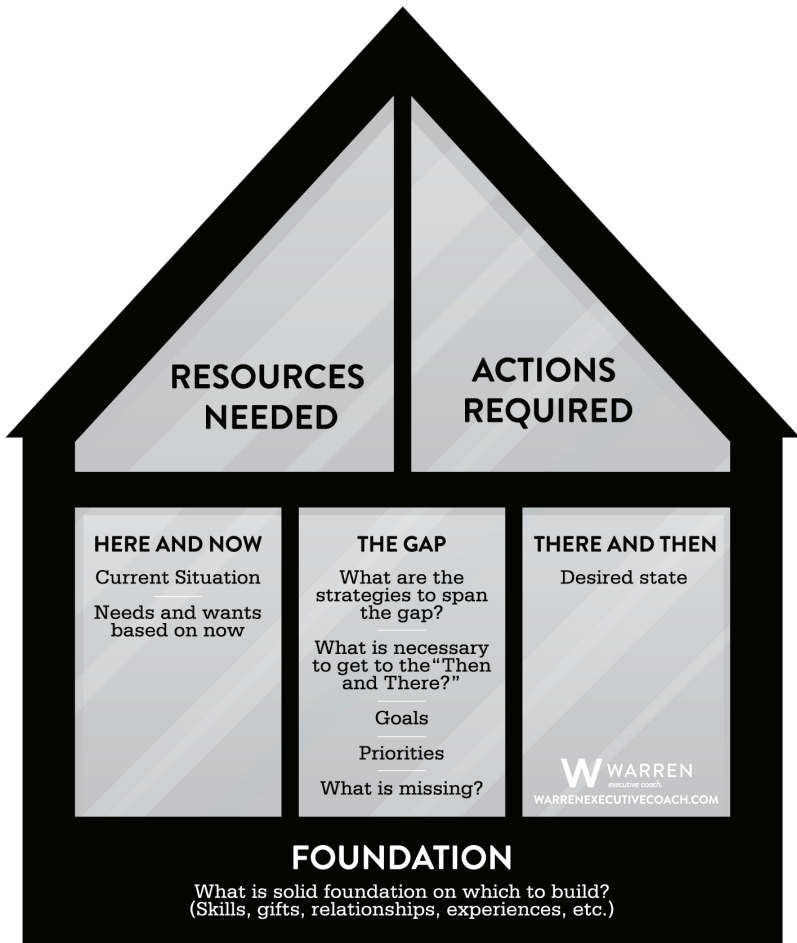
—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

When I was attending Coach U to be formally trained as an executive coach, we were taught several different coaching models. The one I liked best was called the “Strategizing for Success” model. I think of it as “here and now” to “there and then.” The artist side of my brain was thinking about how I could help myself and my clients visualize how one goes from “here and now” to “there and then.”

On the table in our classroom was a stack of multi-colored pipe cleaners. As the instructor talked us through this model, the idea of framing a house (remember, my dad was

a carpenter) seemed to resonate as an illustration, so I proceeded to construct a little house frame with the pipe cleaners. To this day, the model hangs in my office as a reminder of the training.

I created this diagram to illustrate a way of moving from where you find yourself today to where you would like to be. Most people understand a simple house diagram. We all know that a house must be built on a solid foundation, have stable walls to create rooms, and be topped off with a strong roof.



I want you to believe it is possible for you to make changes in your life in order to meet your aspirations and goals. You can choose to move from “here and now” (or, current state) to “there and then” (or, desired state). Ask yourself, “What is possible now?” For some, the choice that needs to be made is a big one. Choosing to shift your thinking from success to significance is large in scope and impact, for example. For others, the needed shift might seem smaller, such as spending less time online. Either way, the changes matter.

Recently, I was on a call with a client who, like so many others, works from home during the COVID-19 outbreak. She was struggling with setting boundaries between her work and her home life because both occurred at the same location, twenty-four hours a day. After a discussion about what it would look like for her to create boundaries and shift her perspective such that she could mentally leave the office and go home, she decided to get in her car and drive to the office, and then come back home to signal the start of the workday. She also created a ritual at the end of the day to symbolize leaving the office and returning home. While we never actually talked about the model or the meaning, through visualizing her desired state, she realized she could do this. She said in hindsight that it was so logical, she wasn’t sure why she hadn’t thought of it sooner; and she described the decision to set boundaries as life altering.

Remember, there are many types of choices:

- To be confident
- To change who you are being
- To find balance
- To have a different management style

- To be a better person
- To do something you once thought impossible
- To not remain a victim
- To leave a meaningful legacy

When considering what choices you need to make, ask yourself:

- What is really holding you back?
- What would life be like if you were successful with your choices?
- What will life be like if you do not make the choice?
- What needs to change about who you are being?
- How can you change what you are doing, but not change who you are?

As you consider the changes you need to make, remember that knowing yourself is key. You can better understand your personality and your motivations through assessment tools and talking with people who know you well. What energizes you? What compels you to go out into the world? Think about what your life might be like if you make the change you're considering. What would it look like if you stay put? In the end, you must believe you can be successful with your choice.

With any major life change, there's a cost. That cost might be dismantling the belief that if you don't work eighty hours a week you'll never get ahead. The cost might be social. For example, you may have to let go of a relationship in order to reduce negativity in your life. Or the cost may be behavioral, requiring you to resist your natural inclination toward being

reserved and instead become more assertive in conversation to make your opinions known. Once you have decided on the change and are at peace with the cost, commit to the choice. Accountability partners can help you with this.

Most importantly, perhaps, think about what it will cost you if you don't make the change. Be willing to let go of the fear. All of us make mistakes, but the most successful of us "fail forward" and learn something along the way. You'll probably experience some discomfort when making a change, but it won't last forever.

Throughout this book I have shared stories that I hope have resonated with you on some level. In these final pages, I offer one more.

In 2019, I was approached about doing a commissioned painting to document a little-known story in our nation's military history. On October 25, 1967, Lieutenant Colonel Gene Smith was flying a mission over Hanoi, Vietnam, when his plane was shot down. He ejected his seat, opened his parachute, threw away his revolver, and smoked a cigarette on his descent. When he hit the ground, he was shot in the leg and captured by the North Vietnamese. After a week of interrogation, he was tossed into a cell, and thus began a five-and-a-half year stay as a prisoner of war in Hoa Lo Prison, which became known as the "Hanoi Hilton." Many pilots and other POWs were in Hanoi Hilton at the same time, including the late Senator John McCain, who was shot down the same month as Lt. Col. Smith. All the POWs endured many years in almost unimaginable circumstances. In order to undermine their will to survive, they were told that America didn't care about them. But the North Vietnamese

greatly underestimated the resolve of these heroes.

Then something special happened in May 1972 that provided a bit of hope that these men needed to keep going until their release. It turned out that America had not forgotten them, and other pilots who were aware of the plight of these men were especially attentive. One of those pilots was Lt. Col. John Chancellor.

John told me about that sunny day in May when he and his wingman, flying F-4 Phantom jets, “buzzed” the Hanoi Hilton (flew a few hundred feet above the ground at very high speed) to send a signal to the POWs that their country was with them. With John as lead pilot, flying reconnaissance planes with no serious air-to-ground weapons, they made one pass over the prison and received enemy fire. Then they made a turn and came back for another pass. This time around, John thought it would be “a good idea” for him to do a “roll over” as he made his second pass over the prison. He turned on his afterburners, which catapulted them out of the area at very high speed and also produced sound and reverberation that was unmistakable to the prisoners and felt by everyone.

Gene Smith said to me about that flyover, “This gave us hope to finish out our time as prisoners.”

Fast forward to an evening in Mississippi in 1986. Both Gene and John happened to be at the same dinner party. They had never met, and did not know they shared a past: one as a POW at the Hanoi Hilton, and the other as one of the pilots who buzzed the prison. Their time together that night came to a close with gratitude and celebration.

Later, when I had the honor of meeting these men, I asked Gene how he was able to endure five and half years as a POW.

“Trust in God, trust in my country, and trust in my

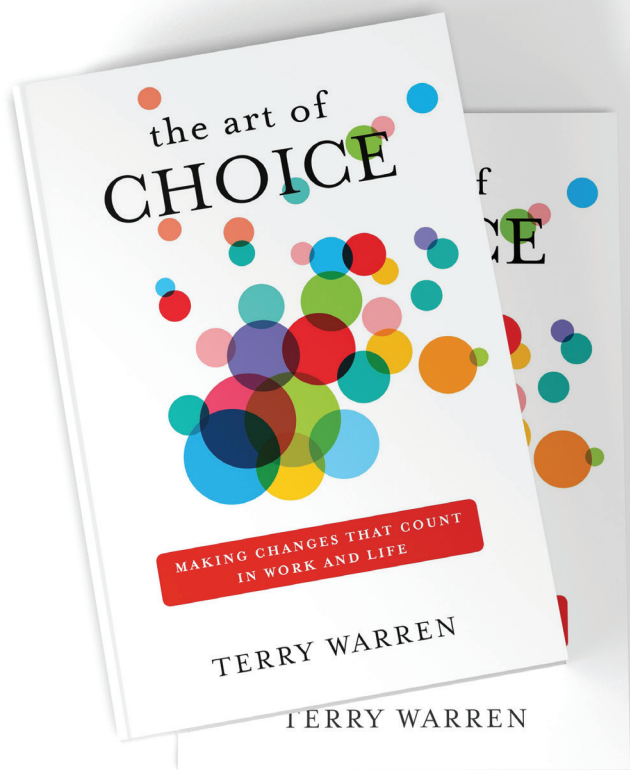
family,” he said. I also asked him to tell me in only a few words what that flyover meant to him. His response was, “It gave us hope.”

POW Gene’s choice was to stay alive in dire circumstances. He was determined that he would live, despite the conditions. John made a choice that came with great risk. He decided to do something to make the POWs know that their fellow soldiers and their nation cared. He was willing to risk his life to do that.

The choices you need to make may seem like nothing compared to the choices of these brave men, but they are very important to you. For me, making choices and being intentional about seeing them through have an essential ingredient list: faith and trust in God; “cheerleaders” in my network; accountability partners; and belief in myself.

Not everyone will consider what the highest and best use of their time might be when facing a career change. Perhaps for you, the choices have been simple because they sounded like fun or seemed like the right thing to do at the time. If, however, you are someone who relies on deep reflection during those times, then you may want to ask yourself such questions as: “What do I want to leave as a legacy in my work or in my life? Which path will afford me the greatest opportunity to have an impact on the greatest number of people?”

In closing, I invite you to trust your own abilities, all the while having faith in something outside yourself. Have hope! What a powerful word. My hope for you is, after reading this book, you will believe it is possible for you to successfully make the choices you want or need to make. May God bless you and keep you, and give you peace.



Find out more or purchase a copy of The Art of Choice at

MakingChangesThatCount.com

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