



# Breakthrough Life Tips

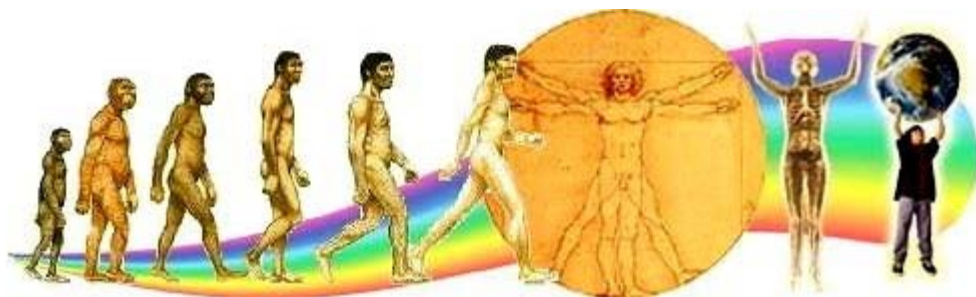
from the Rising Star of Self Help

part 1

He is one of  
the most effective  
personal turnaround  
experts on the planet.

ANNA WHITE talks to Michael  
Norman about his revolutionary  
ideas on how to get past life's problems,  
deal with challenges, and make your dreams come true.

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## ***Why Do Personal Development?***

Part of the nature of humans is to be constantly developing, growing and moving toward a balanced and mature way of being. Our present personality is determined by both who and what we have been and by the person we strive to become. The goal of personal development is to learn and apply that which enables us to attain emotional wellbeing, understanding and effectiveness, and to share this knowledge with others.

Personal development is the conscious evolution of human nature, and yet throughout history it has been sorely lacking! Although it is in our nature to learn and grow, we are held back by our culture, which is predominantly focused on survival needs, each of us in competition with others, and our spiritual inner nature is repressed. The animal rules. We make no room for unconditional love.

Even though the culture may have evolved with technological advancement and administrative complexity, human nature has not moved forward as it might. We are now paying the price for human selfishness and inconsideration. Going forward, the quality of our lives on this planet - even our survival - now depends on each of us taking responsibility for our personal growth.

The human being needs to awaken to the soul that inhabits each body and is our true self and source of inner knowing. Awaken through a process of self-discovery, leading to one's own, self-directed spirituality. We need to become mindfully conscious instead of ruled by the dictates of instincts, past habits and fixed beliefs. We need to throw away dogma, open our minds and reconsider. Instead of fear about our survival and competitive angst, we will then be motivated by compassionate understanding and creative love.

For those that do move forward, the next epoch - that is almost upon us as we move into 2012 - will be a celebration of human cooperation and shared love. It's our best hope for the future - and it's in our hands.

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In an industry already occupied by the likes of Dr. Phil McGraw, Tony Robbins and Stephen Covey, are we in need of yet another self-help guru? The answer, according to a recent study, is no. Americans don't need more self-help; they need better self-help.

Enter Michael Norman —a tall and dynamic personal turnaround expert from Australia who has rapidly built a worldwide following based on his “paid only on results” mantra and his ideas on what he calls “Automatic Change, Without Willpower.”

Recently I interviewed Norman, and it didn't take me long to appreciate his deep and unique comprehension of human psychology. In this two-part interview, we discuss emotions, relationships, moving past fears, dealing with life's challenges, and what it takes to create real and lasting change.

**AW: What's the number one secret to change?**

**NORMAN:** One of the major secrets is that your emotions are the greatest point of leverage. Most people try to change their thoughts and habits directly, and it's actually not the most effective way. Most smokers, for example, try to give up

smoking by attempting to discipline themselves to not have another cigarette. They try to resist their urges, and it's tough work. The easy—and most effective—approach is not to try to control your thoughts or behavior through willpower, but to change the way you feel. If the same smoker learns how to change the

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way he feels about cigarettes from overwhelming desire to disinterest or even repulsion, then suddenly he won't need to fight against his urges—his behavior will change effortlessly, without willpower.

Think about it—how hard it is to act confidently when you don't feel confident, or to thrust yourself full-throttle into life if you feel depressed. It's not easy, because attempting to think or behave in a way that runs counter to the emotional state you're in is hard, no matter how much willpower you have.

On the flip side, how easy is it to act confidently if you really are feeling confident? How easy is it to go out and consume life if you're

feeling passionate, happy, confident, and truly alive? It suddenly becomes not only easy but also effortless, because it's the natural and automatic consequence of the way you feel. This is the number one principle behind what I teach: if you direct your emotions, everything else follows automatically.

**How else do our emotions affect us?**

Well, the emotional state you're in at any particular point in time doesn't just affect your thoughts and behaviors, it affects everything from the decisions you make, to how you perceive the world around you, to even the way other people perceive you. Think about it—if you're tense and anxious when you ask someone out on a date, you're going to come across very differently than if you're comfortable, confident, laid-back, and in a playful state. And you definitely won't get as many yeses either!

I recently worked with a young swimmer who was swimming well



below her best at major competitions. She's the fastest 14-year-old in the world in her event, so she's extremely talented, but for some reason she would lose focus during big races and swim slowly. I did one thing with her to turn her performance around, and it was very simple: I found out how she had felt just before the very best race of her life, and I taught her to automatically feel that same way before every race, especially big races. In her very next race, which was at a major competition, she broke her personal best time by two or three seconds, which is huge. Your emotions are the doorway to unbelievable command over your life.

**Was relaxation the key to her swimming faster?**

Yes and no. It's not that simple. Every athlete has a unique state which works best for them, although there are a lot of similarities between individuals. However, if an athlete is too relaxed, they often lack the edge they need to be alert and perform at their best. Since this swimmer was already very successful, all I needed to do was

help her remember the way she felt just before she had swum her most successful races and then make that the default from then on.

It's important to realize that this applies for many areas of life, not just sports. If you're in sales, or if you're a parent, or a public speaker, whatever you do, there are certain days when you're on top of your game, so to speak, a lot more. This is what sports people refer to as being in "the zone"; a special emotional state where high-quality performance comes easily. If you learn how to go into this emotional state deliberately, whenever you choose, the level of your performance will increase automatically, and you'll become a lot more consistent too.

**You've said that willpower is irrelevant when it comes to real change. Don't you think people need determination to succeed in life?**

I've never said that people don't have to be determined to succeed in life. Determination, motivation, and tenacity are prerequisites if you really want to thrive in any competitive environment in life. Willpower is a different thing altogether. Whenever people talk about needing more willpower, I know that what they're really saying is that they want to be

able to fight harder against themselves. That's not the most elegant model of change. Willpower is only needed if you're trying to behave in a way that runs counter to the emotional state you're in. You need willpower to resist a chocolate cake only if you feel desire for that cake. If you feel disinterested in it, you don't need any willpower to resist it. Again, if you change the way you feel, your behaviors and thinking will change effortlessly. In other words, you don't need willpower if you work in harmony with the way your nervous system is designed.

**Most people would think you need willpower to change the way you feel, though.**

Here's an exercise that will quickly dispel two of the most common misconceptions about how to effectively influence your emotions: If you get easily scared by horror films, then the next time you go to the cinema, I want you to watch a really good horror film. However, as you watch it, I want you to will yourself to feel complete calm and to have pure inner peace throughout the whole movie. Also, consciously keep in mind that it's only a film, and find out if that insight helps you relax and be in control of your emotions! A lot of people have been led astray by the belief that

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insight is useful for change. Most in the field of psychology have gotten lost there too. Even as we speak now, there are millions of people all around the world who are paying hundreds of dollars a session to go through various forms of insight therapy. This is where therapists try to help them "understand" their problem, or work out what caused it and where it came from. Well, head knowledge and willpower are conscious activities. Emotional patterns function at an unconscious, automatic level. This means that trying to change emotional patterns through conscious effort and insight is like trying to lose weight by dying your hair. It's not going to work very well.

**This is a major area where your work diverges from others. Instead of simply telling people what to do, you give them the tools to actually do it.**

Yes, definitely. That's the only way to get results. I'm sure anyone

who's been into self-help for long will have heard such advice as "you must take responsibility for the way you feel", "it's time to get real", or "step up and make a decision to change now." Those things are all nice and true, but unless they're packaged in a way that actually helps people direct their emotions, they're not going to have any effect. This is the reason people can go to motivational seminars, leave pumped up and on a high, but not change for real. They get a wonderful experience but no change in their habitual emotional patterns. Real change only comes from a change in the automatic, habitual emotional patterns that run your life, and this cannot happen consciously.

**Talk about motivation. What is the key to becoming more motivated?**

Well, the thing to remember when it comes to motivation —and I know this seems counterintuitive

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at first— is that everyone is blessed with ample amounts of motivation. Human beings are able to motivate themselves to do just about anything, stupid or otherwise. Millions of people smoke, and they don't have to pump themselves up or go to a motivational seminar to feel motivated to do that. Others can't resist watching their favorite TV program, or collecting stamps, or sleeping in late, playing with their dogs, or whatever. Everyone has activities that they're effortlessly motivated to do, and they're motivated simply because of the way those activities make them feel.

I once had a client whose "presenting problem" was that she was chronically unmotivated and couldn't get herself to do anything. But here's the interesting part: she was also severely addicted to eating chocolate! In fact, her addiction was so bad that she had a high risk of becoming diabetic. Why was she so addicted to chocolate that no amount of willpower, urging from her doctor, or psychological help had been able to put a dent in her problem? Because her problem, like most problems, came down to the automatic emotional responses she associated with chocolate. Whenever she

thought about or saw chocolate, she felt an intense, automatic desire to eat it.

On the flip side, she had big goals that she wasn't achieving. Why? Well, whenever she thought about pursuing her goals she automatically felt fearful. She freaked out about getting her hopes up and failing. So it made sense that she had the problems she did, doesn't it? Those automatic feelings controlled her behavior, her ability to reach her dreams, her health, and her future.

So how did I help her change? Well, I taught her how to replace the fear she felt about pursuing her goals with the same intensity of desire she had for eating chocolate. And then I taught her how to automatically feel unmotivated to eat chocolate. That simple change in emotions was the secret. For years she had tried to change her behavior directly through willpower, and that hadn't worked at all. However, by changing the way she felt about chocolate and the way she felt about her goals, it totally transformed her health and the results she created in her life, effortlessly.

Now I'm the first to realize that almost no one knows how to change

the automatic emotional responses they have in life. But that's not because it's hard, it's because they haven't been taught how. Learning how to change the way you feel in almost any situation is actually fairly easy to do, provided you know how. And given the detailed letters we've received from customers who've sent for our home study program, I'd say we've been pretty successful at teaching this skill—this is something anyone can learn.

**Is there anything you can teach our readers here that will help them get over the fears that stop them from reaching their goals?**

Well, the main processes require a little more instruction than I can cover in an interview like this. But, sure, I can share a quick process that can make a big difference. It's based on the fact that even though fear can hold you back from achieving your goals, it can also be used to propel you forward toward a truly amazing life.

A lot of people talk about "positive" and "negative" emotions. But labeling emotions as being positive or negative isn't very useful, in my

opinion. And it's not at all accurate either. Every emotion is useful in certain contexts and limiting in other contexts. We've already seen how motivation can be a liability in the context of eating chocolate with someone who is on the verge of diabetes. However, motivation is not only an asset, it's absolutely essential in the context of getting stuff done in order to achieve your goals.

Pessimism is generally a very limiting state to operate out of, but there are certain contexts where it's an incredible resource. One of the things that keeps gambling addicts addicted is that they're much too optimistic about their chances of winning. Once you make it so just the thought of gambling makes them pessimistic about their chances of winning any money, it takes away a lot of their desire. It's a much more effective approach to helping people with gambling problems than begging them to resist their desires.

So now, if you have certain fears that stop you from getting out there and really making your dreams come true, or if you're complacent about life, doing the same thing over and

over, then the first part of the process goes like this:

[Editors note: This was transcribed from a conversation. You may therefore find it beneficial to have a friend slowly read the process below aloud to you.]

1. What I want you to do is simply close your eyes, and in your mind, I want you to float into your future, such that you imagine yourself just before your death, looking back on the life you will have lived if you continue to do things the way you have.

2. As you do this, I want you to run through in detail all the things you will have missed out on throughout your life by giving in to your fears. Think of the amazing people you never got to meet, the exciting opportunities you missed out on, the lifestyle you could have had but didn't. As these things run through your mind, think of the amazing relationships you didn't have, the amounts of money you never got to earn and spend, the true joy and satisfaction you could have had if only you'd decided to do things differently.

3. As you do this in vivid detail so that you get in touch with the way it would feel to have lived a life constricted by

your fears, I want your fear of future regret to grow. Because, if you were to live this way, well, it certainly wouldn't be what you could have, it certainly wouldn't be all that's possible for you. Because as you use your imagination to look back over the life you will have lived if you give into your fears, it will not only affect your mind, but also your emotions. Regret is what happens when you allow fears to prevent yourself from going after all that you could be.

4. So while you contemplate it all up close, in huge detail, make sure you take the time to amplify the fear of regret, and to do this well. After all, your life is important, and so are the lives of those you care for. Because as you look back from this place inside the future, is this the example you want to set for your kids about how to live life? Do you want them to grow up learning that it's okay to never move past their fears? Well, you know the answer, and, having this new perspective, as you look back inside your imagination and pay attention to the potential burden of regret... the weight of all the missed opportunities you could have grasped... as the fear grips you that this could all come

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true, I want you to ask yourself **“Is this the way I want to feel at the end of my life?”**

See, sometimes it takes a new perspective to realize that the fear of missing out can easily dwarf the fears that restricted you in the past; fears that used to seem so big before. And what you really need to fear is

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not failure or whether you're really enough or what other people will think. What you really need to fear is missing out on all that you can be, do, give, and experience in life!

One of the things I think a lot of people need to realize is that one of the best things about life is that there's always an opportunity to change things. It's never too late. Even if you feel like you've wasted 60 years of your life, well, that means that the only logical conclusion is that it's time to decide that the last 20 to 40 years are going to be spectacular! History is full of people who turned things around late in their lives and left an incredible legacy. Nelson Mandela, for example, has had a tough

life by anyone's standards. However, the pain he went through prepared him to be the catalyst for the transformation of an entire country and greater equality in South Africa. I don't know if he really knew while he was locked up in jail for all those years, how significant, important, and loved he was going to become later on in his life.

This applies to people who aren't famous, of course, too. A few years ago, I met a remarkable 66-year-old man. This guy ran 10 to 15 kilometers five to six days a week, he could bench-press one and a half times his body weight, he had ripped eight-pack abs, a resting heart rate of 53, and could easily put the average 21-year-old to shame in the gym. He was seriously healthy and made me realize that I wasn't quite as fit as I thought I was. But here's the amazing part: he told me he hadn't always been this healthy. In fact, when he was 55, he had never done structured exercise before, he was literally obese, and he had trouble walking just a few blocks without feeling breathless. One day, during a health

checkup, he got a huge reality check from his doctor, and the fear of dying or being immobile during old age gripped him. That's when he decided enough's enough, things have to change, and he started changing his lifestyle. The rest, as they say, is history. Besides the world-class athletes I've worked with, this guy is actually stronger, fitter, and more toned and muscular at 66 than virtually anyone else I've met. It all goes to show you can turn anything around if you direct your mind and emotions to fully serve you. So here's the rest of the exercise:

**5.** Close your eyes again, but this time I want you to float into a very different future. I want you to look back on your entire life from the vantage point, of this time, having honestly lived the kind of life that you define as being something truly special and rewarding.

**6.** As you look back, I want you to see a life full of the things you always wanted: experiences that were magical, amazing people that made you feel so loved and important, the successes you enjoyed—not just with money, but with your family and your relationships, your career, and the fun and pure enjoyment you experienced each day.

**7.** I want you to take the time, as you look back, to remember the way

you felt along the way. Remember the passion, remember the ecstasy, remember your joy and love, your determination and curiosity about life and learning. As you roll through these things inside your mind, I want you to realize it's nothing more than a tiny sample of all the joys you took the chance to experience, simply because you did what you needed to do to move past the limitations that once held you back.

**8.** And as you take the time to really get in touch, deeply, with dozens and dozens of these wonderful future memories, how do they make you feel? Don't you feel proud about the example you've set for your kids and those around you by having the courage to be who you wanted to be, even though it was a challenge at various times? And how does it feel to know you've truly lived an amazing life, not by anyone else's standards, but by your own? Take the time to remember and really get in touch with the way this all makes you feel.

I want you to relive passionate moments, sensual moments, exciting moments, times you contributed to others and it made you feel so good. As you do this in great detail think of times you laughed, times you truly loved, times you got to play in a life that's truly free.

**9.** And honestly having a solid grasp on how good this all feels, I want you to realize that feelings like this don't come from a having a perfect life—they come from truly having made the best of what you had. Because we all go through challenges, we all go through experiences that could be labeled as “failures.” But perhaps this is the time now to realize that those things are just the very moments that provide opportunities for new growth so the victories feel even better.

**10.** Now, I want you to simply float back into the present such that you look at yourself in your distant future, having lived such a remarkable life. And while you do so I want you

to take a moment to ask yourself “How quickly will I become aware of my new deep and ongoing commitment to make sure I will have genuine reason to feel at least this good, now and into my future?” And with that strange question, when you're done I want you to open your eyes and get to creating this future now.

**AW:** Thank you, Michael. It's been inspiring.

**NORMAN:** My pleasure. We'll talk again soon.

#### **NEXT MONTH:**

In our second interview Norman talks about relationships, self-esteem, arrogance, the only two pathways to change, what makes him tick, and a lot more! To learn more about Michael Norman and “Automatic Change, Without Willpower”, visit

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