



Pink Bucket Thinking

A guide to choosing your
day-to-day thoughts so
you get more of what you want in life!

TONY BURGESS AND JULIE FRENCH

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ISBN 978-1-909116-41-2

Published in 2014 by SRA Books

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Printed in the UK by TJ International, Padstow

Acknowledgements

We dedicate this book to our parents, our siblings, our wonderful children Jez, Jenny, Molly and Sophie and to young Oliver (Jenny's son and Julie's grandson).

We have had the great privilege of working with so many fabulous people over the years and they have all contributed to our own on-going developmental journey. It was in fact our clients' enthusiasm that generated the stimulation for writing about pink bucket thinking and we thank them all from the bottom of our hearts.

Wonderful Debbie Perkins is our pink bucket artist and her creativity and generosity will always be appreciated.

We are immensely indebted to Sue Richardson and team at SRA Books for their dedicated efforts in helping turn our writings into a ship-shape product that we can feel proud to put our names to.



Thank you to you the reader!

We are well aware that it is you, the reader, who will bring the power of pink bucket thinking to life in ways we may never get to see. We wanted our reach to be wider than the network of people we directly get to support through our training, coaching, mentoring and therapeutic work and you are in effect our channel into making a positive difference in the wider world.

Thank you for choosing this book.

Please consider sharing the messages and opportunities contained within these pages with other people so they too can experience the benefits of living life with a pink bucket perspective.

Thank you!



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Introduction

A simple idea that caught on!

Introduction – A simple idea that caught on!

Have you ever felt like your thoughts are happening on automatic, running your day-to-day experiences in ways that are messing up parts of your life?

Yes? Then you are not alone!

So many people feel like they are passengers on the bus in life instead of being in the driving seat. Maybe there are areas of your life where this is true for you? Maybe you can relate this to times in your past? Maybe you know others who are living this way?

In our coaching and training work – for over a decade now – we’ve been helping people to appreciate the fact that there’s a driving seat you can climb into so you can take charge of your life. We’ve used many ways of explaining this and used stories and metaphors to help people remember that you can *choose* your thoughts and inner responses rather than be victim to them. We find that different stories and metaphors connect with different people and there is one particular metaphor that has unexpectedly caught on, both nationally and internationally, so much so that many of the trainers and coaches we have trained have started using it with their own clients. We’re even hearing of coaches and trainers we’ve never directly trained starting to use it in their own delivery because they’ve seen it used by someone we’ve shared it with. We love that it’s spreading so fast and making such a difference out there!

Its power is in its simplicity. ‘It’ is pink bucket thinking!

As early as 2005 Julie started to take two buckets to our seminars, one to represent people’s unhelpful thinking and inner responses, and the other to represent their helpful thinking and inner responses. She would often physically climb into each bucket in turn and invite audience members to offer suggestions as to the kinds of ‘inner stuff’ (thinking, assumptions, beliefs, self-talk, attitudes, emotional responses, etc.) that might typically *get in the way* of a person progressing and those that would help *smooth the way* to progress. I guess, because it was really visual and quite funny, people remembered it.

When we first started to use this bucket metaphor, the colours of the buckets we used were chosen pretty much at random. We’d just grab a couple of buckets on the way out of the office (always two different colours just to

distinguish clearly between them), take them to the presentation and just use whichever ones we'd happened to take along. After a while, we just happened to have chosen a pink bucket for the helpful inner stuff for a few events in a row and to our surprise, people began to refer to it.

- 'So it's just about remembering to think pink.'
- 'Ah – I get it – I just need to do more pink bucket thinking.'
- 'We've bought some pink buckets for the office to remind us to keep choosing helpful thoughts.'
- 'Can we have our photo taken in the pink bucket?'

And so on!

This prompted us to start to be more consistent in choosing to take a pink bucket for the helpful inner stuff so that the concept of pink bucket thinking could continue to take root in people's awareness as a useful reference point for personal empowerment. Even to this day, the colour of the bucket we use for the unhelpful inner stuff will vary from presentation to presentation. Of course, in reality, the colour of each bucket is actually the least important thing. It was just a happy accident the one that has caught on has been the pink bucket. If for any reason, you don't happen to like pink, you can choose any colour of bucket you want to represent your helpful inner stuff!

So by 2006, pink bucket thinking was becoming a concept; we integrated it into most of our presentations, coaching and training. By 2010, we had set up a basic webpage: www.pinkbucketthinking.com where we had started to post some of the photos of people standing in the pink bucket that we'd worked with. We'd get photos emailed to us and people were really enjoying this aid memoir. We also started to produce some simple merchandise and giveaways as extra memory aids to prompt people to stay in the pink bucket.

By the end of 2012, we'd decided it was time to start writing this book. Simple ideas that work should be put out there far and wide so that the maximum number of people can put them into practice and benefit from them. Pink bucket thinking is one such simple idea that works.

Do get involved in spreading the word further. The more people like you who help others understand they've got choices about their inner stuff, the

greater the difference we'll all make out there in the world. We urge you to use it for yourself. Make it a daily practice to notice 'Which bucket am I in right now?' Start to make better and better choices about how you shape your inner world.

We wish you every success and lots of fulfilment adopting the ideas in this book and we invite you to let us know your own success stories as you enjoy applying pink bucket thinking to your life.

Tony Burgess and Julie French

Accidental co-founders of pink bucket thinking



Chapter 1

Why bother to examine your inner world?

Chapter 1 – Why bother to examine your inner world?

The way your mind makes sense of the world will define your every experience. It'll affect everything.

Your mental filters will determine what and how information is processed and how you will respond. Everything hitting your senses moment by moment has to trickle through your current inner stuff.

It has to filter through:

- Your thoughts
- Your ideas
- Your attitudes
- Your rules
- Your beliefs
- Your self-talk
- Your expectations
- Your meanings already given to things
- Your sense of self
- Your current emotional state
- Your values
- Your direction of focus
- Your representations of your past experiences (memories)
- Your politics
- Your philosophy on life
- Your sense of purpose
- Your motivations
- Your fears and insecurities
- Your passions
- Your intentions
- Your aspirations
- Your religious persuasion
- Your degree of openness to new ideas
- Your inspirations and admirations
- Your personal preferences

- Your habits

And more.

This filtering process helps your mind to shape the vast amounts of raw information that's hitting your senses every second into a mental and emotional representation. This RE-presentation becomes your heavily biased version of reality. Of course, it will all seem so real to you, almost as if no filtering had happened at all. It will seem as if you had direct access to the *only* true version of reality. In fact *none* of us directly experience the raw truth in our day-to-day thinking and experiences. We're all mentally filtering moment-by-moment and representing truth to ourselves. Everyone is walking around with his or her very own unique version of reality. Each of us will experience, respond and behave according to our own particular version of that so-called truth and reality. For example, a comment by a politician on a news programme could be experienced as solid or outrageous, selfless or selfish, ridiculous or inspired ... it all just depends upon who is listening and how they are filtering.

Your heavily filtered representation of reality is generally so convincing to you, it will affect what happens next. Most importantly, it can – and will – affect how much you access your special blend of resourcefulness as a unique and magnificent human being. Clearly, the degree to which you are tapping into your inner resources, will affect what you do and how you do it. Put simply, if you're feeling unresourceful, you are less likely to come up with helpful solutions or you may shy away from taking useful action. However, when you're feeling resourceful, you'll live more fully, step into the arena of life, receive opportunities more easily and make things happen.

Imagine that surrounding your powerful inner resourcefulness you have a whole series of gates that can be wide open, partially open or fully closed. Your inner stuff in any given moment will determine how open or closed your inner resource gates are. Helpful inner stuff will open your resource gates. Unhelpful inner stuff will close them. If your inner resource gates are set wide open then your resourcefulness will be flowing fully and freely. If your inner resource gates are closed tight they'll block the flow of your resourcefulness into your behaviours, experiences and responses. Sometimes, of course, your inner stuff may cause your inner resource gates to be partially open, meaning

only a proportion of your resourcefulness would be able to flow on through. All of this matters! It affects outcomes!

If your resourcefulness is held back, it will skew the odds against you achieving and experiencing what you want. If your resourcefulness is flowing freely and fully, it will skew the odds more in favour of you achieving and experiencing what you want. Given that mental filtering is happening in every moment, every day, every week, every month, every year and ultimately throughout your entire lifetime, you can begin to understand that your inner stuff will have a profound influence upon the quality of your experiences and the levels of achievement you attain in chapters of your life.

Noticing what is going on in your inner world (going on regular ‘inspeditions’*) will help you assess how well it’s supporting you and your life.

Is your inner stuff helping or hindering progress? Is it smoothing the way or getting *in* the way?

When you start to notice more about the effects of your inner stuff, it allows you to make better choices. Given that there’s an almost unlimited number of ways to mentally and emotionally represent any current circumstance, memory, or anticipated future, if your current representations aren’t working for you, you can start to consider what alternative inner stuff might work better. This is where you start to shuffle over from being in the passenger seat of your life and into the driver’s seat; where you start to steer things purposefully towards the experiences and outcomes that you really do want in life.

At an extreme, this can be the difference between living life as victim or victor. On another level, it may be the opportunity for you to simply fine-tune your inner stuff so that you’re experiencing even better results and experiences than you are already.

Let me illustrate with a simple example. If your inner stuff includes deciding ‘I can’t possibly do this’ then your resource gates will probably become partially or fully closed and the low levels of resources flowing through into your behaviour and experiences will be insufficient to make the desired result

* ‘inspedition’ is a term we coined in our book, *Oops! I Dropped A Vowel: 5 Vital Habits For High Achievers* (Lean Marketing Press, 2005) and means: going on a voyage of discovery into your inner world.

happen. This will skew the odds against you achieving the preferred outcome. If, on the other hand, your inner stuff includes a firm belief that 'I can make this happen by applying myself fully to the task' then your resource gates are likely to open and your inner resources will more effectively flow through into your behaviour and experiences. The odds of you achieving your desired outcomes will start to skew more in your favour. Remember that old quote reputedly from Henry Ford? 'If you think you can or you think you can't, you're probably right.' Your inner stuff will either be working for you or against you. Pink bucket thinking is a simple yet powerful metaphorical prompt for you to keep your inner stuff working for you as consistently as possible.

You can, I'm sure, already begin to imagine that choosing your inner stuff can have a powerful, useful and positive impact in so many areas of life. You can improve your relationships with loved ones, your experiences at work and your interactions with colleagues. You can enjoy stepping up your individual or team-sporting performance. You can make more progress on your personal goals. Most importantly, you can be free from the sense that life is just happening to you and enjoy experiencing being the active shaper of your life and your world.

At this point, it will be really helpful for you to stop and ponder for a few moments. Give yourself a subjective rating on a scale of zero to ten as to how well your inner resources are tending to flow into your behaviours, experiences and responses day by day. Ten would represent that your resources are flowing perfectly each day, your resource gates are always fully open and you're firmly planted in the pink bucket in every moment. Zero would indicate the opposite of that.

Go ahead, give yourself a score now. It will be a useful reference point for monitoring your progress as you begin to make important inner changes.

Start getting curious about the shifts you can make to your inner stuff and the benefits that will come from them as you read on into the coming chapters. It's time to consider the kinds of pink bucket thinking that have the power to change your life for the better.



Chapter 2

Noticing how much of your think is pink

Chapter 2 – Noticing how much of your think is pink

By learning to notice and evaluate the usefulness of your inner stuff you can start to shape your future reality now!

As mentioned in the previous chapter, your inner thinking will either be getting in the way of desired outcomes and experiences or smoothing the way to those outcomes and experiences.

The kinds of thoughts (and inner stuff) that smooth the way we'll call pink bucket thinking. For the sake of ease, let's call the *unhelpful* thoughts (and inner stuff) green bucket thinking.**

In our coaching sessions, presentations and training events we usually have our buckets with us as props. When one of us steps into the green bucket we ask an individual or an audience what it's like to be living in that unhelpful inner space. We ask them to offer some of their own unhelpful thoughts (and inner stuff) that tend to get in the way of their progress and desired outcomes.

Here are some common answers that people offer:

- 'I'm not good enough.'
- 'It's too difficult.'
- 'It's been tried before and it didn't work, so it won't work now.'
- 'I have no control over it.'
- 'I'll never make it happen.'
- 'I'm not _____ enough!' (e.g. clever, resourceful)
- 'I'm too _____!' (e.g. old, young)
- 'It's scary!'
- 'I'm not up to the challenge.'
- 'What will people think if ...?'
- 'This'll never work around here!'
- 'They're better than me.'
- 'I don't deserve it.'

** Note that just as the colour pink just accidentally caught on as the bucket colour to represent helpful inner stuff in our seminars, the colour green for our bucket representing unhelpful inner stuff has been randomly chosen here, simply to make it easy to refer to in contrast to the helpful pink bucket. If you happen to like the colour green or your business logo contains a lot of green or your surname is Green or you have any other reason to object to this being the colour of the bucket representing unhelpful thinking, just change the colour to one that you find most appropriate. The colours in this whole metaphor are, in fact, unimportant except to make the whole thing easy to remember and refer to day by day.

- ‘What if I fail?’
- ‘What if it all goes horribly wrong?’
- ‘My neck is on the line.’
- ‘I could look stupid.’
- ‘I’ve never been any good at ...’
- ‘It’s too risky.’
- ‘People will laugh at me.’
- ‘The financial climate is stacked against us.’
- ‘Who am I to think I could achieve this?’
- ‘It’s impossible.’
- ‘I don’t have the confidence.’
- ‘This is all I’ve ever known ... I can’t change now.’
- ‘My parents always said “Know your place!”’
- ‘It’s never been done before.’
- ‘I don’t know how.’
- ‘I don’t have all the answers to make this happen.’
- ‘I can’t be bothered.’
- ‘It’s all too much effort.’
- ‘We haven’t got time.’

Some examples of that thinking and inner stuff relate to self (e.g. I’m not good enough). Others relate to perceptions of the desired outcome (e.g. It’s impossible). Some relate to possible imagined consequences (e.g. It’s too risky). Others relate to other people (e.g. People will laugh at me). Some examples relate to history or past experience (e.g. It’s already been tried and it didn’t work, so it won’t work now). Other examples relate to the way of the world (e.g. The financial climate is stacked against us).

You may relate to some or all of these as examples of inner stuff that has got in the way of progress in your own life. You will most likely have other examples of inner stuff you can think of that have not been mentioned either! Think about it now. In relation to achieving any particularly desired outcomes in your life, what examples of green bucket inner stuff can you bring to mind now that has got in the way of your making progress? Write them down, it will help increase your awareness.

The particular streams of unhelpful inner stuff that have flowed for you may have depended on the context, the period in your life and other factors. A green bucket unhelpful thought in one context or one period of your life may in fact turn out to be helpful in another context or another period of your life. For example, a thought like ‘It’s difficult’ could be fine or even positive if you were proactively looking for a stretching challenge in your life whereas the same thought could be really unhelpful for you in a context or a period of your life when you were already feeling overwhelmed.

It may be that one or more of the examples given in the list above would not be unhelpful for you at all. That’s OK. They are only common examples reported. If you would find any of them helpful rather than unhelpful then that is fine. They wouldn’t appear in *your* green bucket, even if they appear in many other people’s.

There’s no right or wrong answer about what can be in the green bucket as an unhelpful thought. For example, a thought like ‘My friend doesn’t think I can do this’ may be unhelpful and deflating for many people and yet for others it may be helpfully motivating (‘I’ll show them I can do this!’).

Equally, the thoughts in the green bucket are just as *valid* as any other thoughts a person could have. We are not really interested in whether the inner stuff is truth or fact or not because, for you as the thinker, pretty much all of your inner stuff will seem to be true!

Here we are stepping away from arguing whether something is true or false, right or wrong, accurate or inaccurate because people will always be able to come up with some validation for their own inner stuff. Instead, we encourage you to take a step back and consider that even though all your inner stuff seems so real, it is always just a biased, heavily filtered version of truth and reality. With this in mind, let’s focus purely on the pragmatic question of whether any particular strand of inner stuff is working for you or not. Is it helping or hindering you in progressing towards the outcomes and experiences you want in life?

This is a new way to think about your thinking. It is liberating. There is no position to defend. The whole practical purpose of noticing your inner stuff is to consider whether it is smoothing the way or getting in the way of progress.

No more, no less. When you notice some thinking that works for you, you can choose to do more of it, just because it works. When you notice some thinking is not working for you, it gives you an opportunity to ask yourself, what thoughts would potentially work better for me?

When we step into the pink bucket and ask people to share examples of thoughts and ideas that support their resourcefulness and progress, here are some common answers that are given:

- ‘It is so possible.’
- ‘This could be easy.’
- ‘I am up to the challenge.’
- ‘If anyone can do it, I can too.’
- ‘I am resourceful.’
- ‘I can learn.’
- ‘I don’t need to know everything right now; I can discover the missing pieces as I go.’
- ‘Whatever happens, I will be OK.’
- ‘I’ve achieved in the past, I can achieve more now.’
- ‘There are people who could help me.’
- ‘Anything is possible if I put my mind to it.’
- ‘I’m more than good enough.’
- ‘What people think doesn’t matter – they can think what they like.’
- ‘I’m deserving of good things in life.’
- ‘I am anyone’s equal as a person.’
- ‘There are so many things in our favour.’
- ‘I’ve tapped into my confidence before, I can do it again.’
- ‘This is really aligned with my values.’
- ‘I’m ready right now.’
- ‘This is as good a time as any.’
- ‘We can be flexible, learn and adjust as we go.’
- ‘What if this all works out better than we ever dreamed?’
- ‘I’m resourceful enough to bounce back if I need to.’
- ‘I have as much right to go for it as anyone.’

- ‘My friend always used to tell me, “When you really decide something and commit to it, you become unstoppable.”’
- ‘Life is on my side.’
- ‘I’m blessed.’
- ‘I’m going to enjoy the adventure, including the unknowns.’

Of course you will have your own examples and some of those in the list will connect with you as more useful for you than others. Some may even seem unhelpful to you and that’s fine, they just won’t appear in your own pink bucket!

Take some time now to give some thought to any thinking and inner stuff that you may find really useful. The kind of thinking that could really help you to progress towards your desired outcomes and experiences in life. Make a note of them now, because if they work for you, you will want to connect with them often!

Now you have started to consider your thinking and inner stuff in two simple categories: green bucket thinking (unhelpful) and pink bucket thinking (helpful). You now have a ready reference point moment by moment, day by day. What bucket am I in with my thinking right now? Green or pink? Is it helpful and serving me or unhelpful and getting in the way of progress?

This simple awareness can keep choice and hope on the table for you if you ever find yourself temporarily in the green bucket. The fact that there is an alternative (the pink bucket) means that when you’re good and ready, you can start to evaluate your options. You might say to yourself ‘As there are many possible versions of reality and the version I’m playing in my head isn’t working for me (even though it seems so real), I’m going to start to choose my inner stuff more effectively.’ You can then ask yourself an empowering question ‘What alternative thoughts and ideas could work better for me now?’

This is a really helpful question to ask.

Your increased awareness that there are different takes on reality – green and pink bucket thinking – is empowering. It keeps choice on the table. An increased sense of the pink bucket thinking that works for you and others is freeing. You have great options available to you. You’ll become increasingly

conscious of the fact that you can choose your thoughts. Circulating more helpful thoughts will help you access your full resourcefulness more effectively. In turn, you'll get more of what you want in life.

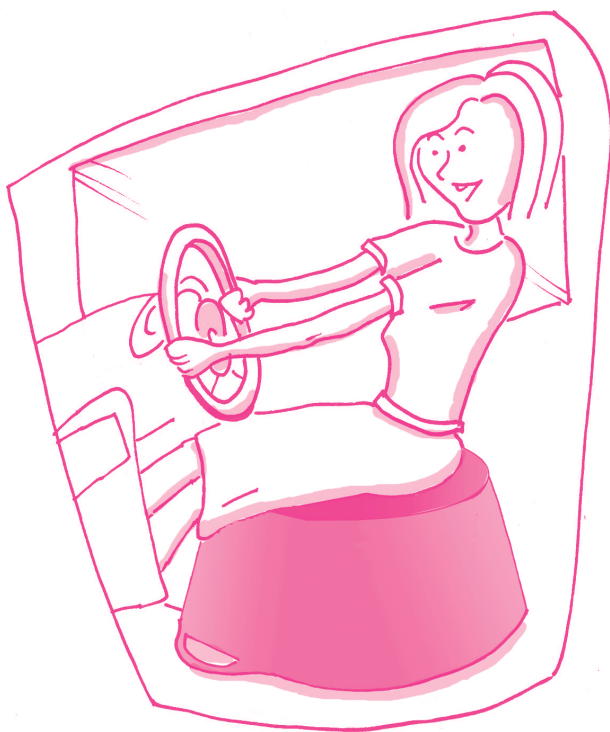
All useful change starts with increased awareness and with this in mind, most of the remaining chapters of this book will consider some key important areas of thinking and will contrast what tends to show up in the green bucket (tends to get in the way for people) and what tends to show up in the pink bucket (tends to smooth the way for people). This will mean you can start choosing to adopt the pink bucket thinking that will help you achieve and experience your desired outcomes more effectively and more consistently.

A note of caution: No matter how aware you become and no matter how much progress you make, the fact that you are human will mean you are likely to sometimes find yourself stepping in the green bucket temporarily. This is OK!

See it for what it is and you'll be free from it even before you choose to step over into the pink bucket for a more empowering experience. See it as your inner propaganda at work. You've simply stepped into the green bucket by mistake or by habit and you can step out again when you are good and ready! Your gates may have temporarily closed on your resourcefulness, and any gate that has temporarily closed – even for a long time – can be opened again as awareness of choice begins to kick in.

It is just like a pilot noticing she has temporarily drifted off her course. By noticing this she can adjust the controls to get back on the flight path again.

Now get ready for the adventure of adopting a great blend of pink bucket thinking!



Chapter 3

Keeping yourself in the driving seat!

Chapter 3 – Keeping yourself in the driving seat!

By taking responsibility for your life and your experiences, pink bucket thinking will soon have you seizing the day!

It is *so* easy to get into the blame game when things aren't going well. Blaming other people, blaming some current circumstances, blaming geography, the weather, the prevailing politics, your upbringing, your finances, your ailments, your god (to name but a few) or to blame yourself.

The thing with the blame game is that it's not constructive. Blaming, in general, is pretty green bucket by nature. It's destructive. It accuses, it frowns upon, it points the finger and creates ill will. Not only does it tend to generate bad feelings and waste emotional energy, it also detracts from coming up with a solution in the here and now and looking ahead. Playing the blame game tends to make a person a victim rather than a victor in life. It tends to have them more often in a mental position of 'can't' rather than one of 'can'.

Now, of course, we're not going to deny that other people, politicians, your health, your upbringing, the financial climate, your education, your culture and many other factors affect how you are getting on in life and how you are experiencing life. These can, of course, have a huge influence in people's lives, including shaping mental and emotional functioning and behaviours. The influences could be helpful or they could be unhelpful and they're usually a blend of both.

So the fact that these influences have impact is not being debated. It's just that getting busy blaming these things (past or present) is to miss opportunities to really make a positive difference in your life. You could instead be considering what you can do to directly or indirectly influence your experiences and outcomes.

Consider how you've ended up with any undesirable outcomes or experiences in your own life, be they big or small. If you catch yourself getting into the blame game – blaming things and people or yourself – stop and ask yourself a great pink bucket question 'What can I influence right now, directly or indirectly?' If it initially seems like there is nothing you can influence, keep creative by asking another good pink bucket question 'If there *are* some

small ways I can start to have some influence here that perhaps I just haven't thought of yet, what might they be?'

Even when, after proper examination, it seems that some outside factors past or present are genuinely having significant and unavoidable impact, you can go on to ask another pink bucket question 'So how can I have a better *response* to this in terms of my own thoughts and feelings?' Or you could ask 'How can I make progress *despite* these uncontrollable factors?' Such questions serve to keep your energies focused in a helpful direction as much as possible.

Let me illustrate this with an example.

Lynn was originally a client of ours and is now a close friend. Lynn has a physical condition called Multiple Sclerosis (MS). When I met her around the year 2000, Lynn was living very much at the victim end of the scale in relation to the MS (in effect, she was living in the green bucket). In addition to the MS, Lynn has had plenty of horrendous and traumatic things happen in her life and it would have been very easy for her to have played the blame game on an on-going basis which would have had her continuing to feel hopeless and helpless. Instead, she decided to take the opportunity I offered to start considering what she could directly influence. One particularly useful area to consider was her inner stuff – her thinking, her attitudes and her inner responses to her life. Gradually she started to make the move from being victim to victor by choosing what she focused on. She started to choose what meanings she gave things, what rules she chose for herself, and how she interpreted things. She began choosing new ways to make sense of her past. She started asking herself more helpful questions. She gained more awareness and took more control of the responses she had to things. And as she mentally and emotionally started to live more in the pink bucket she also improved physically. Her inner resources had started to flow and she started to improve in mind, body and spirit. We have had the joy over the years of seeing her get rid of her wheelchair, then her crutches, then take up swimming and cycling and inspire many people through her talks about her journey to becoming empowered.

She still has the diagnosis of MS of course and she chooses to thrive and celebrate life despite the MS rather than blaming the world for all the

horrible things that have happened in her life. Her life is very different since she discovered and stepped into the pink bucket compared to when she was living in the green bucket.

Let's be clear, we're certainly not claiming that pink bucket thinking can get wheelchair users out of their wheelchairs and cycling 20+ miles a day, though this is certainly what has happened for Lynn. Who knows what can happen for people when they get out of their own way. People are fundamentally magnificent and resourceful beings and when that is tapped into fully, remarkable things can and do happen. Lynn has often said that she never knows whether the MS will have her deteriorate physically again at some point in the future. None of us know, but she says that continuing to focus on what she *can* influence day by day means that *whatever happens* she will go on living as a victor in life rather than as a victim. We find Lynn to be an inspiring example of pink bucket thinking in action and she has definitely dropped the blame game long ago and replaced it with the influencing game.

There are other great examples that illustrate this remarkable human resourcefulness even when a person has been dealt an unfair deal in life by factors beyond their control. With the right attitude (influence rather than blame, can rather than can't, victor rather than victim) they can achieve just as much in life and experience life just as richly. They can do so by focusing on what they *can* do and what they *can* influence and keeping in the driving seat of their life. A particularly strong example is the life story of Nick Vujicic.

In 1982, without any medical explanation or advance warning signs, Nick was born into the world without limbs. Just consider that for a moment. He was born with no arms and no legs. Despite this challenge, which most of us would consider to be formidable, Nick has gone on to achieve more than most people who have fully functioning limbs and he travels the world inspiring millions. His motto is 'No arms, no legs, no worries.' If ever it would've been understandable for someone to play the blame game it would have been in Nick's case, yet instead he inspires people globally to notice how remarkable they are and to live full and fulfilling lives despite any personal challenges they may have. We'll say no more and let you discover the world of Nick Vujicic yourself. You can find lots of information about Nick from a

simple web browser search on his name and I know you will be inspired. Look out for video clips on YouTube and also take a look at his website: www.lifewithoutlimbs.org

Now consider: How much are you playing the pink bucket influencing game compared to the green bucket blame game in your life?

What might be some of the positive consequences in your life if you stopped blaming and replaced this with influencing?

Make a personal commitment to yourself now to interrupt yourself at any time you catch yourself blaming and switch into asking a pink bucket question 'What can I influence here?'

Keep in the driving seat of your life (victor) by focusing your attention on what you can influence rather than what you cannot (victim).

Living in the pink bucket all starts with making such personal commitments! Look forward to the benefits that will start to emerge as you do so.



Chapter 4

Creating a strong positive self-concept for yourself!

Chapter 4 – Creating a strong positive self-concept for yourself!

Pink bucket thinking works best when it feels like it's become part of your DNA.

One of the most damaging categories of green bucket thinking that we've noticed in clients over the years is that of self-loathing, a toxic, judgemental self-criticism that gets in deep. Such identity-level thinking can be easily recognised as it tends to begin with 'I am ...' or 'I'm not ...' and serves to put self in a position of 'just not good enough'.

I guess we've all experienced versions of this thinking to a greater or lesser degree at some point in our lives.

On the flip side of this, one of the most helpful categories of pink bucket thinking is that of self-acknowledgement, self-acceptance and self-love. Again, such thoughts often begin with the words 'I am ...' yet in this case serving to provide a solid, positive self-concept from which useful behaviours and responses emerge regularly.

Your self-concept is like a beacon to keep aligning with. Psychologically, you are drawn to keep in line with who you think you are. So if you set goals and have aspirations that are misaligned with your self-concept (e.g. I want to achieve something truly remarkable and yet I believe myself to be untalented and unresourceful as a person) it is a bit like trying to walk somewhere with a huge elastic band attached to your back – you may make some difficult progress for a while and then you will suddenly be pulled back to 'where you belong'.

Having a strong positive pink bucket self-concept that is aligned with your goals and aspirations means you will be moving with the grain rather than against it and you skew the odds more in favour of you achieving and experiencing what you want in life. For example, if an aspiration is 'I want to achieve something truly remarkable' then a helpful self-concept would be 'I am a remarkably talented and resourceful person'.

For many people, the idea of self-love or self-acknowledgement can initially feel challenging if they have been brought up to be modest or have grown up with messages like 'Know your place', 'Don't get above your station', 'Don't

blow your own trumpet' or 'Don't be boastful'. And that said, you need to know that your self-concept will affect how you show up, what you experience and what results you get in your life. If you want better experiences and better results in life, consider working on giving yourself the gift of a better self-concept. Work on knowing yourself from the pink bucket perspective. It is worth it. It doesn't need to be boastful and arrogant, it is gentler than that. It is to be admiring, acknowledging and appreciative of yourself, just as you might admire, acknowledge and appreciate others from a pink bucket perspective. It is to admit, acknowledge and nurture your greatest talents and qualities (rather than explain them away or play them down). To work on improving your self-concept is like bedding down some good solid paving stones to reinforce a new life-enhancing pathway you are choosing to walk. It makes walking the path easier and gets you to where you want to be more reliably day by day.

So first of all, in relation to what you want to experience and to achieve in life, consider what your current self-concept is like. How many 'I am' phrases fall into the pink bucket, smoothing the way towards experiencing and achieving what you want? And how many 'I am' and 'I'm not' phrases might fall more in the green bucket, getting in the way of you experiencing and achieving what you want? Are there some that are acting as that huge elastic band attached to your back that will halt your progress and pull you back sooner or later?

Write on a piece of paper right now as many 'I am ...' phrases that feel real to you currently and then circle those that are green bucket ones and underline those that are pink bucket ones. All useful change begins with awareness, so taking stock in this way helps you to understand how well your self-concept is currently serving you or hindering you.

Often we help clients to shape themselves a more useful self-concept with an extension to this simple 'taking stock' exercise above.

All of those phrases you circled as green bucket thinking can now be translated into a more useful form that has less of a hold on you psychologically. The idea is to turn those unhelpful 'I am ...' phrases into more transient, past tense, activity-based or experience-based phrases, usually including verbs (or '-ing' words) rather than identity (self-concept) ones. Let me illustrate with an example:

If you had these on your list of green bucket thoughts:

- ‘I’m not confident.’
- ‘I am a terrible business person.’
- ‘I’m too old to adopt new ways.’

And yet your goals actually require confidence, some good sense of business and innovative thought and activity, you would do well to change the phrases to:

- ‘I have not been accessing/experiencing my full confidence yet in this context.’
- ‘I’ve been struggling to fully understand/appreciate aspects of business.’
- ‘I’ve been telling myself my age matters.’

This psychologically leaves some hope on the table. It allows you to consider questions like:

- ‘How do I work on accessing more confidence in this area?’
- ‘How can I develop my business thinking and skills?’
- ‘Who can I learn from?’
- ‘How might I embrace new methods?’

For as long as the green bucket thoughts are attached to your identity ‘I am ...’ or ‘I’m not ...’ there will be a tendency for you to fall into line with them. If each of these is instead considered a temporary ‘doing’ or ‘experiencing’ then you can consider how you can flex and develop to make progress, filling any perceived gap.

Give it a go now – translate any unhelpful green bucket identity statements into transient, past tense, activity-based or experience-based phrases. Then see what progress-oriented, solution-focused questions you can generate as a result to fill any perceived gaps.

So the lesson here is that all inner stuff that falls in the green bucket needs to be separated from your identity. Translate them into ‘-ing’ words that flag up their temporary nature and capacity for change. Examples are:

- ‘I’ve been thinking ...’
- ‘I’ve been telling myself ...’

- ‘I’ve been focusing on ...’
- ‘I’ve been experiencing ...’
- ‘I’ve been perceiving ...’
- ‘I’ve been interpreting ...’
- ‘I’ve been imagining ...’
- ‘I’ve been listening to my inner propaganda which said ...’
- ‘I’ve been struggling with ...’
- ‘I’ve not been coping so well with ...’
- ‘I’ve not yet been performing as well as I’d like in the area of ...’
- ‘I’ve not been accessing ...’

There is a flipside to separating green bucket thinking from your self-concept. It will also be really helpful to make any useful pink bucket thinking that is activity-based or experience-based into part of your positive self-concept. This will psychologically give it ‘stickability’ and longevity rather than a sense of it being potentially transient or temporary.

Again, let me illustrate by example.

If some pink bucket thoughts included:

- ‘I have achieved success in the past so I am sure I can do it again.’
- ‘I got pretty creative on that other project even when people didn’t think there was a way forward.’
- ‘I previously managed to drum up enough courage to get out of my comfort zone and make things happen.’

It could be useful for you to use this as evidence to create some identity ‘I am ...’ statements for yourself such as:

- ‘I am an achiever.’
- ‘I am a successful person.’
- ‘I am creative.’
- ‘I am courageous.’

Acknowledging such characteristics in yourself tends to encourage such characteristics to show up more often. Reinforcing such self-concepts will help you pull out of the bag behaviours that are consistent with that identity.

Sometimes a characteristic that has not always shown up when you needed it may feel hard to assign to your self-concept. For example, if sometimes you have messed up (who hasn't?) then it may at some level feel incongruous to reinforce in yourself 'I am a successful person'. There may be an inner battle where a part of you is saying 'No you're not' each time you think 'I am successful'. With this in mind, we have developed a pink bucket way of helping our clients to work on reinforcing a helpful identity without provoking that inner battle.

Basically it involves using a slightly different phrase instead of 'I am ...'

Examples that lower resistance include:

- 'At my very, very, very, very best, I am ...'
- 'The real me is ...'
- 'When I get myself in the pink bucket I am ...'
- 'When I get the gates open on my resourcefulness I am ...'

Using such phrases is a good way to acknowledge your own greatness without it feeling incongruent.

Go ahead now and see what you can capture on a piece of paper by placing one of the suggested phrases at the top of the blank page and then using the rest of the page to repeatedly complete the phrase. Keep completing it with different endings until you have captured lots of characteristics that can serve you as part of your self-concept. See example below:

'At my very, very, very, very best, I am ...'

- Kind
- Considerate
- Talented
- Confident
- Resourceful
- Loving
- Lovable
- Courageous
- Flexible
- Skilful

- A great communicator
- Respected
- Respectful
- Dynamic
- Inspirational
- Someone who makes things happen
- Persuasive
- Determined
- Capable
- Conscientious
- Credible
- Self-assured
- Creative

And so on.

Enjoy creating a list of qualities that you know have shown up when you've been at your best and keep them alive day by day by referring to the list and adding to it and reminding yourself by saying them in your head or out loud with conviction! In short, remind yourself 'This is who I am when I get myself in the pink bucket ...'

Another pink bucket exercise you can use to reinforce a positive self-concept is to regularly complete the sentence 'Things I really appreciate about myself are ...'

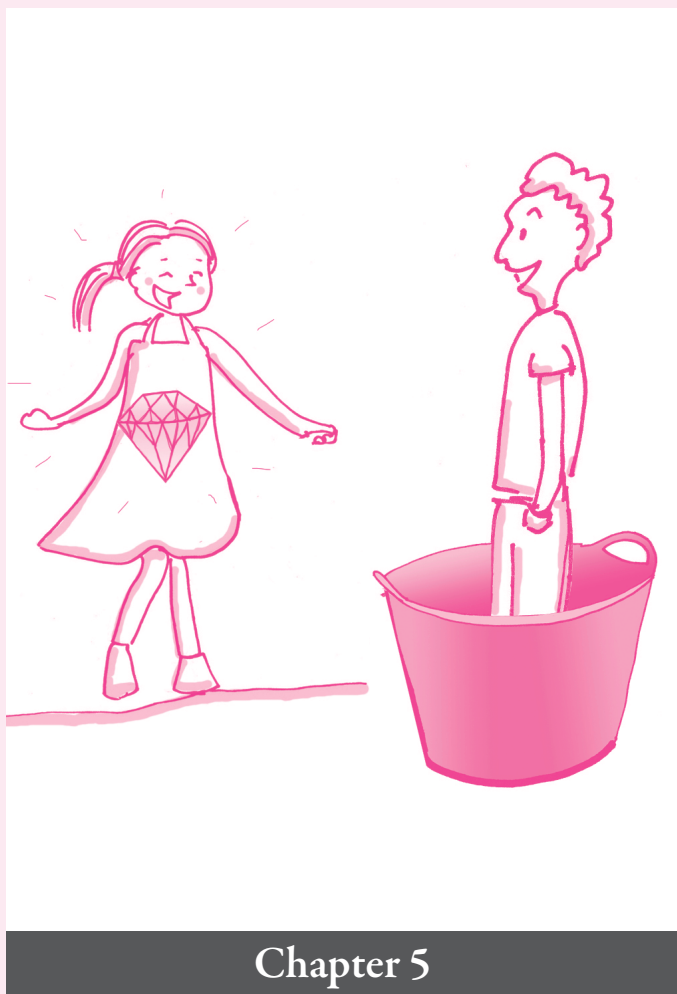
Or alternatively 'Things I really love about myself are ...'

Or 'Things I can acknowledge about myself are ...'

Working on reinforcing your positive, helpful self-concept is a really worthwhile activity. It's soul-nourishing!

The truth is that you are a magnificent blend of characteristics and talents that no one else on the planet has in quite the same way. You are unique and have a purpose in life that can only be perfectly fulfilled by magnificent you! You are world champion at being *you* and everyone else is taken anyway, so play to your strengths, acknowledge yourself, love yourself and *be* yourself!

Enjoy seeing yourself increasingly from the pink bucket perspective!



Chapter 5

See the diamond in people

Chapter 5 – See the diamond in people

Having a pink bucket perspective on other people is a crucial part of living your life in the pink bucket. When you see the best in people you are more likely to tempt the best in them to come out and play.

I'm sure you'll be able to remember your school days where an individual student may have somehow gained a bad reputation with teachers. The student's name may have become associated with trouble and even teachers who had not yet met or taught the individual could be triggered into expecting the worst just at the sight of that student's name on the register. This mental activity of expecting the worst and seeing the worst in the student would almost certainly leak into their interactions with the student. This would, in effect, be setting up a self-fulfilling prophecy. The teachers see the worst, expect the worst and communicate the worst. Their minds are primed to notice the worst, interpret things in ways that mean the worst. They assign worst possible intentions to any behaviours observed and ultimately tempt out the worst in that individual student.

You will realise of course, that this green bucket perspective on other people can happen in so many other contexts beyond schools. It can happen in families, in organisations, in sports teams, in relationships between doctors and their patients, in the military, in prisons, in pretty much any situation where people interact with other people.

What we see in others and expect from others influences how we relate and connect to them, how we go on to experience them and ultimately what we get from them.

What if you were to discipline yourself to adopt a working assumption that there's wonderful treasure within every person! A unique and priceless treasure that is permanent and can be believed in, sought out and unearthed if it is not already obvious and on display. This is a much more pink bucket perspective and it affects what happens next.

Believing in that inner treasure that resides in people and being willing to look out for it or even actively seek it out is going to be crucial to unearthing it. And when you unearth it, its true worth can be discovered and revealed.

Believing in a person's potential and seeking it out even when they neither believe in their own worth nor display their true value readily in their day-to-day activities may require some determined effort. Yet persisting with this pink bucket perspective can be immensely rewarding. It can wake people up to their most delightful potential and can reveal their full unique value in its true glory. And when they shine, pure and magnificent, everyone around them (including you) has the potential to gain too; it is like the world just got a little bit brighter.

Think back to the example of the student carrying around a bad reputation. It may well have been that there was one particular teacher who took a more pink bucket perspective, seeing more potential in the student than any other teacher did. Maybe that teacher believed in that student more than most. Maybe they were certain there was more to this student than the reputation that came in before them. Maybe they saw possibilities others had missed. Such pink bucket mental activity would have certainly leaked into the teacher's interactions with the student. For this teacher, the student may have started to show some new behaviours and responses as a result. Maybe for this teacher the student began to shine. Perhaps for this teacher the student started to allow his or her true potential to be expressed. Maybe the teacher, seeing the best in the student, served to hold up a mirror, allowing the student to see himself or herself in a better light.

Although seeking the treasure or seeing the diamond in people does not guarantee that they'll give you their best, such a pink bucket perspective does at least give them more opportunity to do so. It increases the odds that they'll shine brightly. It at least sends an invitation to the best in them to come out and play. It shines a light on their magnificent potential. It provides a clear reminder that it resides within them, that it's available to tap into and could contribute great value to the situation and to the world. If we are going to trigger a self-fulfilling prophecy to unfold, it might as well be one that is worthwhile! I invite you to commit to being the one who sees the best in people in your day-to-day interactions, both at work and in your personal relationships. Notice how much more you start to get from your relationships with people when you do so!

There's an activity that goes hand-in-hand with the pink bucket attitudes of

seeing the diamond in people and seeking out the treasure within people. It is the activity of *speaking* highly of people (especially when they are not present).

In our coaching and training work, we get to work with a lot of teams within organisations and one of the surest indicators that a team isn't functioning as a cohesive and collaborative unit is when people are talking ill of each other behind each other's backs. In some teams this reputation-damaging gossip is happening daily and it is a very green bucket activity.

This is not something that can only happen in teams of course. This green bucket backstabbing activity can equally emerge as an acceptable culture in all kinds of communities, social groupings, families and educational settings.

This kind of negative communication can be toxic towards the reputations of those being talked about. It can also encourage others to join in (for the sake of rapport and connection in the moment). It can quickly become an acceptable norm that allows and even models the activity of putting people down. This may become an accepted way for people to let off steam. Equally, it may be done to deliberately promote an 'us and them' perspective to bring some temporary in-the-moment sense of connection and solidarity against the person(s) talked about. Whatever the underlying reason or intention, the key effect of this green bucket activity is that it eats away at trust.

Consider this: If you were in the habit of talking ill of others, what might be the assumptions of listeners about what you might be saying when *they* are not around? A part of them is likely to be thinking 'Gosh I wonder what they say about me when I'm not in the room.' Running people down conversationally is a behaviour that is rife in some teams and communities and is damaging both to people's enjoyment of life and also to the degree of collective success that a team or community can attain.

At the very least, we ask you to consider being the person who opts out of such green bucket conversations. Be the one who does not take the bait that is dangled in front of you. Be the one who refrains from validating the toxic comments offered. Be the one who stays out of negative gossip.

This is not the same as ignoring unhelpful interpersonal issues. It is different to sticking your head in the sand about behaviours of others that might need

discussing to resolve important matters. It is really a shift of emphasis about what is acceptable and unacceptable in communications.

‘Knocking’ people is different to constructively discussing ways to connect better or improve things. It is really a matter of how respectful you are being of others. To ask of yourself ‘How respectful am I being towards the person I’m talking about?’ is a good way to keep in the pink bucket. To ask yourself ‘Am I in danger of damaging a person’s reputation with this conversation?’ can again get you considering whether it is appropriate or not.

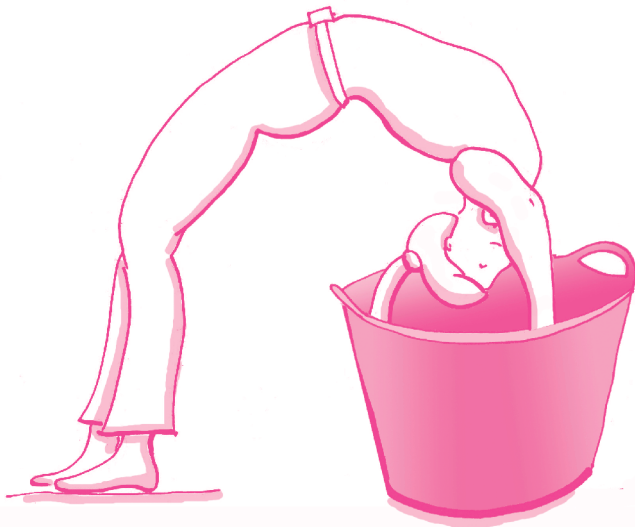
Asking yourself ‘Could I raise this with the person directly or with the person at least present?’ can be helpfully thought-provoking. And asking ‘What is the most respectful way I can take this forward?’ again helps you take a pink bucket approach.

In the ‘busyness’ of life there are so many opportunities being missed to sing people’s praises, to speak highly of people, to share with others news of someone’s contributions, positive qualities, talents and intentions. Whole days can go by without any positive gossip at all in some teams, groups and communities. Great contributions go unspoken about. Praise is left unsaid and assumed understood. There are so many opportunities for pink bucket gossip and yet so often those opportunities are left untaken.

Imagine the positive impact you can have by becoming a trendsetter for positive gossip. What if you led by example, always taking opportunities to sing a person’s praises to their face and also behind their back? What if before speaking of others you always get in the pink bucket first? What if you challenged unhelpful or disrespectful gossip, nipping it in the bud quickly? How would it be to stimulate a change in the culture of a group, team or community towards more respectful conversations about people?

If you are serious about getting the best out of people, engaging people, connecting with people, resolving people issues and collectively achieving with people, you’d be doing yourself a great favour to make it your business to see the diamond in everyone you meet and to speak of those magnificent diamond qualities at every opportunity.

Enjoy adopting and promoting this pink bucket perspective.



Chapter 6

Optimism, calamity and solutions

Chapter 6 – Optimism, calamity and solutions

We all have biases in our thinking and sometimes those biases can be working for us (pink bucket) and sometimes they may be getting in the way (green bucket). Increased awareness of our own biases helps us to be ready to adjust our thinking to serve us better more often. In addition to increasing self-awareness, what if through purposeful practice you could choose to create some *new* biases in your thinking that'll serve you more effectively and more consistently?

Let's consider some of the biases that tend to show up in people's thinking.

There are many people in the world who are very adept at what we call 'calamity thinking'. Of course we acknowledge there's a time and a place for usefully anticipating possible calamities that could unfold in life. In the world of project management, for example, the activity of thinking of possible problems up-front and then constructively looking at ways to avoid them, minimize their likelihood or to deal with them effectively (if they should arise) is all part of the job. This is in fact a very solution-focused approach. The calamities are only dreamt up so that safeguards can be put in place to keep progress smooth. It is designed to protect against potential nasty surprises. This is a pink bucket approach when it is in the right balance for the project to be as successful as possible and for people to experience the journey in desirable ways.

Contrast this to the kind of calamity thinking that has the solution-focused element missing. So many people torture themselves and keep themselves stressed, anxious and stuck in procrastination by dreaming up problems that may never arise, pitfalls that may not exist and disasters that will probably never emerge. When the person is not in a solution-focused mindset, such thoughts just end up circulating round and round in their head, having them feel helpless in the hopelessness of the situation. This often prompts a lack of productive activity due to fear of the potential consequences. At an extreme this can lead to people being afraid to do anything out of their immediate comfort zone. This is clearly not working for many people in terms of them achieving the things they may want to achieve. It may also be preventing them from having the fulfilling experiences they want to have day by day.

Calamity thinking without a solution-focused component is such a waste of

energy. It drains people and achieves nothing but ‘stuckness’ and bad feelings. Most people we have worked with over the years in our capacity as coaches and trainers have tended to have a habitual form of thinking taking one of three forms:

1. Calamity thinking without solution-focus (leading to a sense of helplessness and hopelessness).
2. Calamity thinking with a focus on solutions and safeguards.
3. Optimism with little attention or focus on potential problems (and with a confident sense that whatever happens, things will work out fine).

There is no right or wrong about these styles of thinking. They are all as valid as each other and that said, we have noticed interesting pattern differences in terms of achievements and experiences for people with those different thinking styles.

Those who tend to engage in calamity thinking without solution-focus tend to feel anxious or disheartened a lot of the time. They often feel disempowered and sense that the world is stacked against them. They’re often making less progress than others in terms of fulfilling their ambitions and making progress towards their goals. They can feel like a passenger on a scary car journey where they simply don’t trust the driver. In that sense, of the three styles mentioned, this tends to be the most green bucket one. It is just not ‘working’ for them.

In contrast, those who tend to engage in calamity thinking that also includes a focus on solutions and safeguards can certainly be making good progress towards their goals and fulfilling their ambitions. At the same time there can be a danger that their emphasis on playing it safe or covering every possible base can be at the expense of momentum. These people may also miss out on some of the enjoyment they might otherwise have had on the journey if they had been more optimistic and went with the flow. Again there is no right or wrong and anyone who tends to think this way might wish to consider where it works for them and where it might be useful to flex into a different thinking style. So there are pink bucket elements to this style of thinking that definitely work for people (when they do) and there are green bucket dangers too.

For people who have a tendency to think in a style full of optimism with

little attention or focus on potential problems, they will often tend to experience the world very positively (pink bucket) and often they are making good progress towards their goals and ambitions because they see nothing in the way of them doing so. The danger here is they may have not anticipated some very real problems that may catch them off-guard or by surprise whereas others may have seen them coming. This can sometimes interrupt progress and cause more work than if safeguards had been in place. At the same time, they quickly get back into a resourceful state and tend to optimistically seek a way forward and can soon get back on track to achieving and enjoying the ride. Experientially, this is almost certainly the most pink bucket style of thinking and it can sometimes steer a person into some unexpected obstacles (green bucket) that could have been avoided.

Of course, whether a style of thinking is working or not is not just about the individual's own goals and experiences. We must also take into account whether it is collectively working when someone is part of a team or a group, family or community. Sometimes a style of thinking can become green bucket because of the unhelpful effects it has on others. An example would be where an optimistic thinker is working with someone who readily anticipates potential calamities. The danger here would be that the person who prefers to think optimistically can feel drained by the other person. Equally, the calamity anticipator could have their anxiety levels hugely increased when working with an optimistic teammate. (What are they going to do next? Have they checked for possible problems?) Of course a pink bucket approach here would be to value individual differences and preferences and look for where different styles of thinking can complement each other. Let the person who prefers to think optimistically generate wild and exciting ideas and then let the person who is good at anticipating problems and solving them knock those wild ideas into a workable plan that can convert them into an unfolding reality.

Respecting each other's needs is key here. For example, respecting that someone who thinks optimistically by preference may need us to share their enthusiasm before picking out potential problems. Or respecting that a person who easily spots potential problems may need some time and some evidence before they feel reassured that an idea is workable. Remember there's no right or wrong. There's only thinking that is working or not in a particular context,

on a particular journey, with particular people.

We ask you to now consider any biases in your own thinking. Is your thinking more often like 1, 2 or 3 and how well is that working for you?

When it is working, in other words when it is getting the results, outcomes and experiences that you and others want, do more of that thinking. And be honest with yourself about when it is not working. When it isn't, consider trying out a different style of thinking to see whether it works better for you and those on the journey with you.

Are there times where it could be useful for you to work on being more optimistic?

Are there circumstances in which you could benefit from being a little more solution-focused, asking yourself how *can* you make this happen rather than focusing on all the reasons why you cannot make it happen?

Might it be useful in some situations to pause and constructively consider potential pitfalls that could arise so you can be ready for them before optimistically taking action?

The pink bucket perspective is always the one that is working best given the context, the desired outcomes, preferred experiences and the combination of people. He or she who flexes best will tend to land in the pink bucket most often*** (see also chapter 11).

Enjoy noticing and flexing!

*** For those interested in helping to improve interpersonal flexibility in the workplace, we highly recommend Everything DiSC® (a Wiley brand) profiles and training materials. We often use these tools when we are working with organisations. See www.aha-disc.co.uk



Chapter 7

How do you mean?

Chapter 7 – How do you mean?

The meanings you assign to things you experience and encounter will affect how you feel, how you respond and will, to some degree, affect what happens next. Some meanings reside in the pink bucket. Others reside in the green bucket.

There are virtually limitless meanings that can be assigned to whatever is going on in any given moment. Despite this, there's a strong temptation to consider that any specific meaning we've assigned is the *only* one or the *correct* one.

Meanings that people give to things are always debatable. This is good news. If the meanings you tend to assign are working for you, if they're keeping you resourceful, achieving, responding constructively and having the kinds of feelings and experiences you want in life, then stick with those pink bucket meanings. If, on the other hand, the meanings you've been giving have tended to get in the way of progress, blocked your resourcefulness, slowed down or prevented achievements or messed with your enjoyment of life, then you may wish to consider whether there are more useful meanings that you could assign that could work better for you.

Again there's no right or wrong meaning. Rather than arguing about who has the correct meaning (which may never be resolved), I invite you to keep pragmatic and steer yourself towards always giving the most *helpful* meanings to things.

Let me illustrate this with an example. John misses his flight that was due to take him to a lovely holiday destination. He was due to be meeting his fiancé Karen for a well-earned break. Missing his flight has already happened and there is nothing that he can do to change that fact. It just is what it is (until of course John assigns meanings). How John assigns meanings to this fact will affect what happens next.

Let's look at a handful of possibilities. John decides that missing his flight means ...

1. The whole thing is a total disaster and is clearly a bad omen for his future relationship with his fiancé.
2. Fate/destiny is looking after him and that missing his flight has probably helped him avoid an unfortunate circumstance ('everything happens for

a reason'). Perhaps he would have otherwise ended up sitting next to someone who he did not enjoy sitting with, or his luggage would have been damaged, or he would have experienced some unnerving turbulence, or some interpersonal conflict may have arisen if he had taken that flight.

3. He is letting his fiancé down and that this is a clear reflection of his worthlessness as a husband-to-be.
4. He has an opportunity to use his initiative and to prove to himself and his fiancé how resourceful he can be under pressure as he makes alternative travel arrangements (with ideas of negotiating an upgrade while he's at it).
5. A perfect opportunity for him to call the resort to arrange some lovely relaxing spa treatments as a surprise for Karen whilst he sorts out his travel arrangements so that by the time he arrives she'll be delightfully relaxed, chilled out and feeling special which will in turn enhance the holiday experience for both of them.
6. Nothing at all – it simply is what it is and nothing more.
7. Karen will inevitably feel neglected and that this is going to be a relationship-damaging mistake.
8. He is an idiot and that he can't trust himself with even the simplest of tasks.
9. He is going to be stressed out for days and that his holiday is now ruined.
10. He will have extra time to finish off the last of his work-based tasks in the airport so that he will be able to give total attention to enjoying his holiday with Karen without distraction, from the moment he arrives.

Of course any of these meanings could be argued to have validity and cannot be proven easily to be true or not true in that moment. And simply in choosing a particular meaning, a chain reaction is set in motion that ultimately will generate its own evidence through a self-fulfilling prophecy.

If John perceives the missed flight to mean an opportunity he will:

- Most likely remain in good spirits,
- probably take the very opportunity he perceives (and possibly be in a better position to notice other ones),
- expect good things to come from all this,

- keep resourceful and arrive at his holiday destination in a good mood.

All this will influence how he shows up when he meets Karen, how he interacts with Karen and will also help shape how she responds. This will generate the evidence that proves he was right all along to have assigned the positive meaning that he did. This will encourage John to engage in more pink bucket thinking in future.

In contrast, if he perceives that missing his flight means something inescapably dreadful, this may:

- Sap his energy,
- blind him to the opportunities around him,
- negatively bias his interpretations of what follows,
- have him feeling less resourceful,
- prompt him to be on the look out for more doom and gloom that he knows will inevitably follow.

This can easily lead him to confirm to himself that the meaning he initially gave was correct right from the start, thus encouraging further green bucket thinking in the future.

At any time you find yourself feeling unresourceful because of the way you have interpreted a situation, ask yourself the questions:

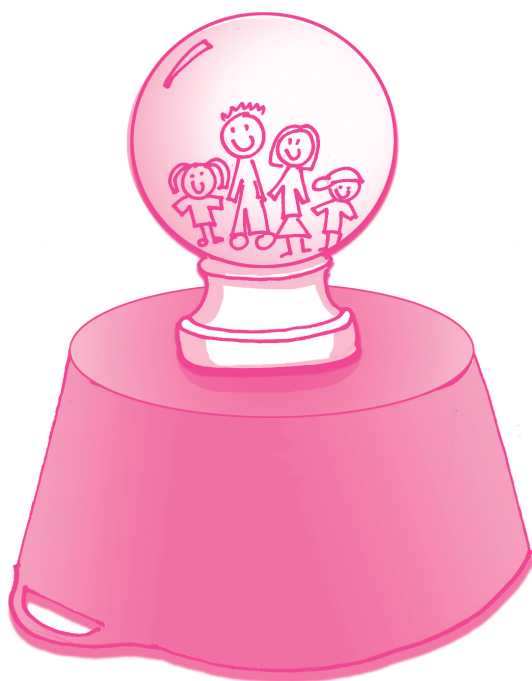
- ‘What meaning have I given to this?’

And ...

- ‘If there were a limitless number of possible meanings that could be given to this situation, what would be a more useful meaning that I could give it in this moment?’

Start to nurture within yourself a position of knowing that meanings are made up, meanings are a matter of perspective, meanings are ‘up for grabs’. This position is where you appreciate that some meanings are helpful and some are unhelpful and whatever meaning is attached will influence what happens next. From that pink bucket perspective, you can keep really pragmatic about meanings and proactively choose ones that keep you resourceful (rather than simply accepting as truth the meaning that first pops into your head).

Enjoy noticing the meanings that you give to situations and enjoy experimenting with choosing those pink bucket ones that serve you best.



Chapter 8

Clarity about what you *do* want

Chapter 8 – Clarity about what you *do* want

The pink bucket has a direction to it. It is in the direction of whatever you want to experience and achieve. The green bucket is pointed in the opposite direction.

Let's imagine for a moment. You feel sick and tired of a situation. You've had enough of a particular thing happening. You really hope that you don't mess up again like last time. You dread picking up that conversation you have been having with a particular person. You don't want to feel stressed about a specific matter anymore. All of these perceptions can initially be motivators for change. And once a decision to change has occurred, things tend to begin improving much more effectively and easily when you start to consider what you *do* want to happen instead. It gives a target outcome for your mind to steer you towards. If you simply persisted with focusing on what's not working and allowed only those outcomes that you *don't* want to happen to circulate in your mind, it would be like standing on a ledge and telling yourself:

- 'Don't feel scared.'
- 'Don't feel terrified.'
- 'Don't look down.'
- 'Don't panic.'
- 'Don't faint.'
- 'Don't slip.'
- 'Don't stumble.'
- 'Don't lose your balance.'
- 'Don't fall.'
- 'Don't think of dying a horrible death.'
- 'Don't freeze with fear.'
- 'Don't mess this up.'
- 'Don't think about how high up you are.'

The mind wants some instruction and if the key words are what you don't want, that is really all it has to go on. You could be bringing on more of the very outcomes and experiences that you don't want. Think of the key words echoing through your brain and nervous system informing every neuron of

what it needs to attend to next:

‘Don’t panic!’

‘Panic! ... Panic! ...’

‘Panic! ... Panic! ... Panic! ...’

‘Panic! ... Panic! ... PANIC!’

All this is pretty green bucket thinking. I’m sure you’ll agree! Your mind could really benefit from having clear direction as to what you *do* want it to focus on instead.

Standing on a ledge, it could be much more useful to be telling yourself:

- ‘Stay calm.’
- ‘Keep focused.’
- ‘Look for options.’
- ‘Keep resourceful.’
- ‘Think of the best ways to get to where you want to be.’
- ‘Be safe.’
- ‘Nice and steady.’
- ‘You can do this.’
- ‘You can get to a safe place.’
- ‘Take careful solid steps along the ledge to that point of safety.’
- ‘Focus on where you’re going.’
- ‘You’re going to be OK.’

The intention is pretty similar to the first train of thought I gave as an example. Both trains of thought are aimed at keeping the person safe; to get them out of the fix they’ve found themselves in and into a better situation. However, the second train of thought provides better instructions to follow. This is pink bucket thinking because it simply works better!

So at any time you may notice your motivation is to end something unpleasant or avoid something undesirable, be thankful for that motivation and then ask yourself ‘So what *do* I want to experience?’ or ‘What *do* I want to happen?’ or ‘What do I want to achieve?’ And then focus on those things and the benefits they will bring.

This can work at all kinds of different levels. It can apply to when working on specific goals ‘I am committed to having £X per month to spend on charitable donations by the beginning of next year.’ Or you can use the principle to prime yourself to have particular inner experiences in your day:

- ‘I’m ready to access my confidence.’
- ‘I’m going to handle this meeting calmly.’
- ‘What can I feel grateful for in this moment?’

Another level can be about specific day-to-day results you want to make happen:

- ‘I’m going to secure that deal.’
- ‘I’m going to listen respectfully and learn more about this person’s needs.’
- ‘I’m going to find an opportunity to speak with my boss today about matter X.’

And so on.

Developing this habit of bringing your mind around to focusing on what you do want is something that does take some deliberate attention and intention at first and then it gradually becomes more and more second nature. Thinking in that pink bucket way starts to shape your language too. When this happens, you are more likely to steer other people’s attention and focus in the direction of positive helpful things rather than unhelpful things. The benefits can reach far beyond your own personal achievements and experiences. For example, if you are a parent, then saying ‘Walk carefully’ will send a much more useful message to a child than ‘Don’t trip over.’ Or if you are a manager, saying ‘You will be more than up to this challenge’ would be more helpful to say to a member of your team than ‘Don’t you worry about messing up.’ Or if you are giving a presentation, saying ‘You can be assured that all of these learning points will start to easily fall into place for you by the end of the session’ would be a more useful communication than ‘Don’t worry about this, there’s nothing to get stressed about in terms of learning the points I am going to be presenting.’

This may seem a really simple, even picky point and yet so much communication and thinking is in the direction of what people do not want to ex-

perience and outcomes they do not want to see happen. Becoming someone who thinks and communicates in the direction of desired experiences and outcomes will really help you and others to progress towards getting more of what you want, more often, more easily and more consistently.

Enjoy noticing the direction of your thoughts and communications and then pointing them in helpful pink bucket directions!



Chapter 9

Your relationship with the past

Chapter 9 – Your relationship with the past

Your past can be your friend (pink bucket) or your enemy (green bucket), depending upon how you relate to it.

There are lessons from the past that can help guide the present and future. There are things to celebrate from your past that can remind you how resourceful you are. There may be chapters of your life where you were feeling disappointed, disheartened, disturbed, lost or helpless.

Experiences in your past will have helped shape you and your current life and you have choices about how you relate to the past from this point onwards.

In purely pragmatic terms, it's going to be far more useful to use the past to *support* you living in the present and to *inspire* you and *empower* you (pink bucket thinking) rather than to torture you, limit you or haunt you (which is much more green bucket thinking).

If you have some issues related to the past, for example, if you have experienced any traumas and they have continued to affect you in unhelpful ways, it may be useful for you to consider getting some therapeutic support to help you free yourself. This will, in turn, enable you to channel your focus and energies into the present and future. It can be a truly liberating experience.

I have worked as a therapist for many years and I know that when people simply try to push down and ignore things that are still disturbing them from their past, they tend to find it harder to be fully alive in the present. Better to have a really good clear out so you have far less mental clutter and a cleaner mental operating space for being in control of your life.

Your choice of therapeutic approach and your choice of a therapist is a very personal one and there are plenty of good people out there who can help you work on clearing unhelpful past stuff.

My own personal preference when helping people to deal with past issues is to use a blend of methods from Neuro Linguistic Programming, often shortened to NLP (co-developed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder – see www.richardbandler.com and www.johngrinder.com) combined with Havening Techniques™ (co-developed by Dr Ron Ruden in collaboration with his

brother Dr Steven Ruden – see www.havening.org).

If you do not have obvious therapeutic needs to clear up stuff from the past, you can still benefit from examining how you are relating to your past.

First, here are some pretty unhelpful green bucket ways in which you may have sometimes connected with the past:

- Re-living in your mind previous mistakes and setbacks and things you might have considered failures and then connecting all that to yourself as a person (e.g. ‘That didn’t work therefore I am a failure’, ‘That showed how useless I am’, ‘I’m clearly not cut out for successful relationships’). Such activity can leave you feeling inadequate and unresourceful, hindering progress in the present. Also see chapter 4.
- Going over and over in your head times where people gave you disempowering messages or some criticism that you took to heart.
- Using experiences from the past as evidence to justify not taking useful action in the present (‘I can’t do this because I tried X, Y and Z in the past and they didn’t work’).
- Giving events or experiences from the past unhelpful meanings (e.g. ‘The fact that X didn’t work out means the world is stacked against me’ or ‘Because that happened it means my chances at a successful and fulfilled life are effectively over’). Also see chapter 7.
- Dwelling on things from the past (that you can no longer influence), wishing they had turned out differently (‘I wish I could turn the clock back’ or ‘If only X had happened’).
- Looking back at habitual ways you have done things and deciding that these are the only way to do things.
- Looking back to compare the present time with the past (with the present being judged less favourably in the comparison). ‘In my day, you’d have never needed to consider such things ...’ or ‘Back then, it was easier to make a success of yourself ...’ or ‘If only times were like they used to be’, etc.

Such thinking is simply wasting (sapping) energy – energy that could otherwise be applied to enjoying and appreciating the present and making progress towards your goals and other desired outcomes.

Of course, not all reflection on the past is unhelpful. Here are some more useful pink bucket ways you might want to consider connecting to your past:

- Looking back at anything you considered to be mistakes, setbacks or failures with a positive curiosity. Asking yourself what could be learned from those times so that you can do things better in the future.
- Re-living times where things turned out great and connecting these to your sense of yourself as a person ('I helped make that happen ... I'm so capable and resourceful!', 'I survived that ... what a courageous and determined character I am', 'I made a really positive difference to my friend Paula ... I really am a compassionate and kind person at heart'). Also see chapter 4.
- Enjoy revisiting over and over in your mind those times where people have said empowering things to you and/or given you praise, compliments and positive feedback. Savour those comments, bask in that positive feedback and let it all nourish your soul.
- Revisiting successes (your own and other people's) from the past to re-fuel your confidence for making things happen in the present and future. Use history as a resource bank of inspirations, ideas and methods (e.g. 'I've made things happen successfully in the past ... I have everything I need to do it again in this situation', 'I've adapted to new situations in the past and that proves it can be done – what is going on now is just another example of that', 'History is littered with times where people achieved remarkable things – things that seemed impossible to most people alive at the time. Human beings have built pyramids, generated electricity, landed on the moon, of course we can go on to achieve more remarkable things').
- Giving things that didn't work out well in the past some useful meanings that will serve you in the present and the future (e.g. 'Every setback has given me learning that is bringing me closer and closer to that all important breakthrough', 'Experiencing that, really prepared me to handle things better now', 'If I hadn't been involved in that situation, I may not have made the great decision to ...', 'In retrospect, that whole situation was a gift in disguise ... it could ultimately be the making of me'). Also see chapter 7.

- Re-connecting fully to moments in your past where you felt particular useful emotions or states such as confidence, calm, excitement, joy, determination, purposefulness, self-esteem etc. Imagining yourself actually there re-living positive or empowered moments can help trigger those states and emotions again and reminds your system that those states and emotions are possible and that you can be in control of making them happen inside. You may find it useful to then (in your resourceful state) imagine stepping forward into your future taking your positive emotions, states and resourcefulness with you. Enjoy glimpsing more wonderful future moments in your mind and feeling the empowering feelings in your body (mental rehearsal).
- Actively forgiving yourself and other people (even those who are no longer alive) for anything and everything from the past that may require it. This is easily said and not always as easily done. It is worth working on this because the only person who suffers from lack of forgiveness (often experienced as anger, hate or resentment) is the non-forgiver. To forgive completely does not have to involve saying what happened was OK, it is a process of letting go and moving on. It is mainly a gift to yourself. It frees up energy that may have been eating away at you destructively and that energy then becomes available to channel in more positive directions such as enjoying life, self-appreciation and making progress towards your goals. It is one of the most powerfully freeing experiences that you could create for yourself to forgive everyone for everything and for the first time perhaps in a long time, wipe the slate clean. Again, a therapist or coach could help you with this if you feel you need more support.

I am sure you recognise that it makes so much more sense to use your past as a solid platform to launch from than to use it as a big stick to beat yourself up with.

Enjoy reflecting from the pink bucket perspective and crafting the best possible relationship that you can with your past, so you can be fully alive in the present and feel empowered and ready for your future.



Chapter 10

Let go of neediness

Chapter 10 – Let go of neediness

You firmly decide with clarity to make something happen that you care about and you're determined to achieve it. This is a great example of pink bucket thinking. Now imagine a contrasting green bucket perspective where you *desperately need* something to happen and you're pinning your happiness on achieving it.

There is a fine line between the two and which side of the line you stand will affect everything! The former pink bucket position tends to help you make progress, the latter desperate or needy position tends to hinder progress.

Let me illustrate this by reference to the singles dating game, where individuals may be on the lookout for a suitable partner for a happy long-term relationship. We've all been there at some point in our lives and maybe this is where you are at currently?

Patricia goes into the dating game with real clarity about the kind of partner who would be right for her and confidently senses that the right match will happen all in good time. She already feels 'complete' right now (without a partner) and she'd be delighted to share her life with someone if they had the right blend of characteristics and lived up to her expectations. Patricia knows what she wants. She knows she deserves the best. She knows she can make it happen and she even has a time-scale in mind. And even though Patricia is regularly out there mingling with new people in social situations she enjoys, on each occasion she is healthily relaxed about whether or not she meets anyone she wants to date. She's not going to force things to happen 'this week' or settle for less if the match is not right. She's self-assured and happy in her own skin and only going to make herself available as a potential date on her own terms. If she didn't meet the right person in her whole lifetime then although it may be part of the adventure of life she'd have liked to have experienced, she'd still feel complete as a person. She would still be fulfilled and happy with a high degree of self-worth and a commitment to living life to the fullest anyway.

Compare this to how David is going into the dating game. David is feeling inadequate. He has not had what he considers to be a proper relationship before and he is beginning to think he is getting too old to make it happen

now. Things are getting desperate (in his mind). He is not convinced that even if there's a good match for him out there the other person would want to be in a relationship with him anyway. In fact David thinks he'd be lucky if anyone wanted to be in a relationship with him. He is going out to social events five times a week including regular speed dating events. He is also regularly checking and adjusting his personal profile pages on lots of online dating sites in case the slightest bit of interest has been shown by anybody or in case someone has left him a message. His every waking hour is filled with a strong desire to try to work out how on earth he can find someone who would want to date him and develop a relationship with him. He says he needs to have someone to share his life with if he has any chance of feeling complete or a worthwhile human being.

Patricia is going to have a fulfilling life whatever happens. This is good news. She's in the pink bucket with her thinking! She can go for her goals, create opportunities and be ready to respond when opportunities occur. Her lack of need means that she will only give any signals of interest to any potential date or partner when it suits her to do so. Patricia's blend of clarity, and self-assurance, coupled with her being unattached to the outcome (in that her happiness will not depend upon it) actually increases the chances of it happening!

David metaphorically has 'desperate' written all over his face. He is feeling lacking in himself and this will tend to only attract either those who prey on desperate people or those who are also feeling very needy and insecure themselves. For any other potential dates or partners, David's neediness and desperation will pretty much act as a repellent to them and they'll stay well clear of connecting with him. This will further confirm his lack of self-esteem and his belief that it is all hopeless and he is helpless to change this fact. Because David has pinned his happiness on making a relationship happen, he is inadvertently actually making it less likely to happen!

It's a strange thing and even counter-intuitive to some extent. The more we desperately push to make a result happen, the more the world seems to resist delivering the outcome to us. The less attached we are to any outcome (yet still having clarity, desire and a readiness to act) the more readily and perfectly the world seems to deliver the outcome.

To illustrate this with another scenario, let us imagine that Philip and Sally are sales professionals, selling software packages to design companies. Philip is focused on connecting with people, getting sales and winning top commissions and he is keen and determined rather than desperate and needy for the sales. He is quietly confident about winning sales and knows that any time he does not sell to a customer he is just a small step away from another potential sale. Sally, on the other hand, is feeling desperate each day as she heads out to try to sell software packages to any design company that will buy them from her. Her desperation leaks out in her behaviour and she ends up either pushing too hard for the sale or almost pleading with the prospective customers to buy from her. Both of these are extremely unattractive behaviours and Sally gets increasingly desperate as she fails to hit the spot.

Sally is repelling sales, despite her strong desire for them, whereas Philip is securing them over and over again. The lack of a neediness response in Philip is helpful (pink bucket) and the desperation being expressed by Sally has been unhelpful (green bucket).

Philip really wanted sales. Sally wanted sales *badly*. The difference between the two states of mind made all the difference to the outcomes attracted and achieved.

Of course (as is the case with all points raised in this book) there are exceptions to the general pattern that we see of neediness being unhelpful. Sometimes in the direst of circumstances, a huge sense of need can have someone ‘dig deep’ and pull out some extraordinary resourcefulness to save the day.

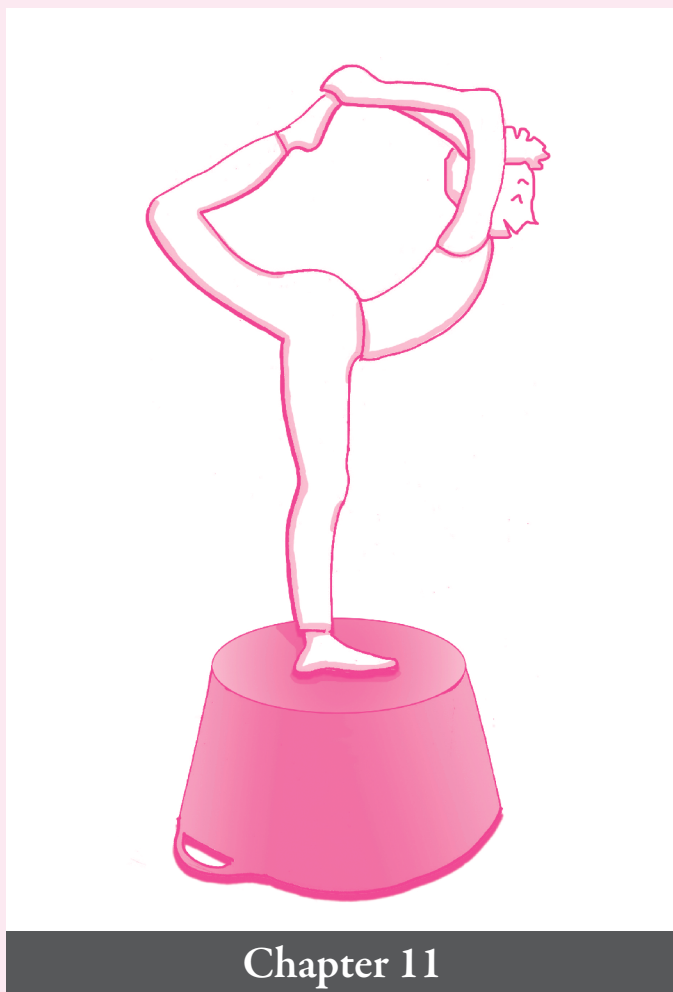
The key for you is to notice where neediness is present (if at all) and to ask yourself honestly whether it’s serving you or hindering you in getting what you want in terms of experiences and outcomes in your life. If it’s working for you, keep it and if it isn’t, consider working on your inner responses until neediness has been dropped and a healthier pink bucket state of determination, commitment and purposeful clarity is in its place. Great things start to happen when:

- You’re able to remind yourself that most of the time your life doesn’t depend on you getting a particular outcome.
- You realise that happiness and fulfilment is something you can access

from within rather than relying on attaining something 'out there'.

- You nurture yourself at the identity level (also see chapter 4) and you know your self-worth is not defined purely by the results you achieve.
- You allow yourself full permission to commit to focused, determined, and inspired action in areas that matter to you.

Celebrate your increasing awareness about any neediness patterns of thinking that may be playing out and use this as a prompt to playfully experiment and get yourself back in the pink bucket.



Chapter 11

Be willing to flex and adapt

Chapter 11 – Be willing to flex and adapt

To reiterate a point made at the end of chapter 6: He or she that can flex most will probably turn out to be a winner! Flexibility is, for so many contexts, a core ingredient in pink bucket thinking.

Ironically, something that never changes is the fact that change is happening in and around us every second of every day. Change is part of what drives evolution of species and moves mountains over millennia. It's the variety that keeps life interesting and the unexpected twists and turns of events that keep us on our toes. It's what heals and repairs our bodies and has seasons phasing one into another. It's the new opportunities sparked by technological advancement and new discoveries prompted by curious minds. Change is the common ground where history, our current lives and science fiction and fantasy meet. It is a catalyst for learning and provides the contrast for counting our blessings. Change is inevitable (unless of course ... that changes).

With change being the 'norm' in the world, staying rigidly attached to one way of doing things 'because you've always done so' and being closed to considering new ideas and approaches or to adapting to new circumstances is rarely a helpful stance to take. Most often we could consider this to be an example of green bucket thinking.

Staying curious about what works best for you and for others, for the environment that surrounds you and for the world at large will help you to make good choices and keep adapting and thriving.

Dreaming of change, imagining change, being open to change, desiring and driving change has led communities at war to negotiate greater peace. It has led to human beings becoming astronauts and travelling through space. It has allowed the Internet to evolve into a major communication route for millions who are thousands of miles apart. It has prompted the development of all kinds of technologies that have improved and saved countless lives.

Of course we totally acknowledge that change isn't always for the better and when we have a preparedness for change we're going to keep ourselves ready to adapt, flex and adjust to keep firmly in our flow of resourcefulness.

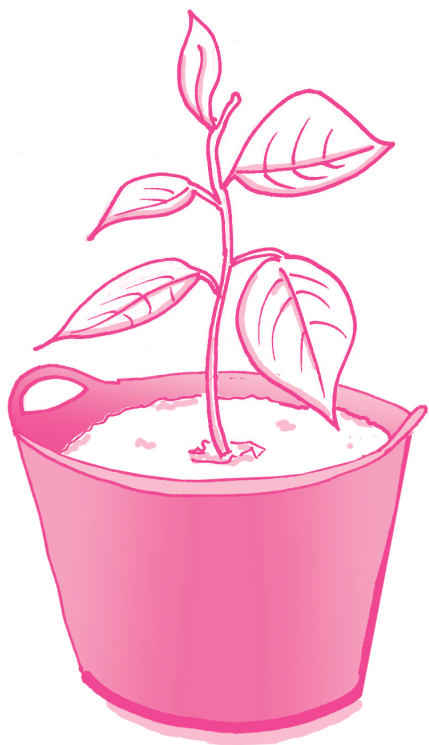
Change for the sake of change, welcoming destructive change, putting up with lowering of standards, approving damaging change, giving in to imposed change ... these are far away from the pink bucket approach I am suggesting. Helpful pink bucket mental and emotional positions on change include a readiness to respond to noticed change, openness to weighing up pros and cons of proposed change and a willingness to experiment with prompting change when things aren't working so well or could be better.

Consider where in your life you are resisting change, where you may be fearing change, where a lack of change is having you settling for mediocrity or living less fully than you and your loved ones deserve.

- Where are you feeling stuck in your life and what if you dared to consider changing things?
- What if you entertained accepting or even welcoming some changes that already happened without your approval if doing so will genuinely bring more peace and joy back into your life?
- What changes could help you get more on track to achieving the goals that matter to you?
- What changes might get you more aligned with the people who you care for?
- What attitudes could be tweaked and adjusted based on new information and experiences rather than defended to the hilt when they're no longer serving you well?
- What could you modify to get you better experiences and results?
- What if you experimented by rolling with the changes more than perhaps you have been doing in the past?
- In what areas might you enjoy becoming an innovator, leading the way in change?
- In what ways could you make change your new friend instead of an enemy?

Of course, as always, there are exceptions to what is being discussed here. There are times where 'sticking to your guns' and stubbornly persisting with a course of action can prevail. There are times where keeping solid and stable values and a sense of purpose becomes even more important in times of flux.

As always, what we are encouraging here is to openly and honestly assess your own relationship with change in the many different aspects of your life and to notice where it is helpful (pink bucket) and where it is unhelpful (green bucket) in relation to your desired outcomes and experiences. If resisting change is ever genuinely helpful for you (getting your desired outcomes), keep doing it. And be sure to notice where embracing change, welcoming change and driving change could be more useful for you too!



Chapter 12

Compassion and kindness bring immediate returns

Chapter 12 – Compassion and kindness bring immediate returns

You may have heard the phrase ‘What goes around comes around’ which pretty much captures the concept – a pink bucket concept – that if you help others you will be helped, if you do good for others you will receive good outcomes yourself, if you send out positive or kind intentions for others you will one way or another get kindness coming back to you in return.

This is not just about simple reciprocity (the person you help helps you back at some point). It can be about your wider reputation or chain reactions of actions and communications that bring benefits back via a variety of routes from a variety of people.

At a more base level there is a more immediate pink bucket reason for serving others and showing kindness and compassion at every opportunity. And that is – it feels good!

Helping people taps into our highest sense of purpose and aligns with most people’s deepest values so it is no wonder that your emotional system provides such an immediate confirming and reinforcing wave of good feeling when you allow yourself to engage in acts of kindness fuelled with genuine compassion. This is your immediate return on investment! There’s different pink bucket chemistry involved in feeling those great feelings and this will not only open your resource gates so that you access more of your greatest self day by day, it may also be nourishing you physically.

There’s scientific evidence proving that kindness brings health benefits, affecting the brain, the heart and immune system in positive ways and may also help counter depression (we recommend the book *Why Kindness is Good For You* by Dr David Hamilton as a good source of further discussion in this area).

If you agree that feeling good is an essential ingredient in the mix for a successful life, then making kindness and compassion a priority in your daily living would definitely bring you an abundant supply.

Whether it be:

- Offering a smile,
- Saying words of encouragement,
- Lending a hand,

- Contributing expertise or funds to those in need,
- Donating blood (or bone marrow, platelets or even an organ),
- Leaving valuables in a will,
- Becoming a volunteer,
- Letting someone step into the queue ahead of you,
- Thanking those who rarely get thanked.

Or something else. Acts of kindness big and small make living life more purposeful and you never quite know how far reaching the positive impact may be.

The more you enjoy welcoming the good feelings that go with helping others, the more you tend to want to help others. Help others, get good feelings. Help more, get more good feelings. What goes around does indeed come around at all kinds of different levels (mental, emotional, chemical and physical, behavioural and spiritual).

It is true to say that most people we know would already describe themselves as kind and compassionate if asked directly and would definitely tend to take opportunities to help people when chances to do so arise. Fewer people *proactively* seek out or *create* opportunities to express their kindness and compassion daily. Not all that many people can truthfully say they have this consistently in the forefront of their mind as a key priority linked to living their life to the full. Interestingly, those who do so most are amongst the happiest people we know.

Consider ...

- If you were to give yourself the gift of putting kindness and compassion higher on your daily priority list, where might you carve out opportunities to do so?
- What if you considered carrying out regular random acts of kindness just because you can? (See www.triggermiles.com and www.randomactsofkindness.org).
- How much extra good feeling can you handle?
- How might including kindness and compassion in your daily activities help you align more with your highest sense of purpose and deepest values?

- What would that mean for you in terms of day-to-day satisfaction and fulfilment?
- How about you challenge yourself to respond compassionately and with kindness even to those you may not naturally warm to or those who have done you a disservice in the past (just because you can)?

Of course we want you to include being proactively kind and compassionate to yourself (also see chapter 4). Putting kindness to others firmly on your daily agenda should be as much about helping yourself to stay in the pink bucket as about helping others get there too. Putting everyone else's needs first and draining yourself of useful energy as a result is unlikely to be a good long-term strategy for successful living. It is also not leading by example to put oneself last on the list. Being kind to yourself could be considered another example of being kind to others due to the fact that you'll be such a great role model for others to be kind to themselves. This self-kindness includes allowing yourself to welcome gifts, help and support from others when you need it. Give yourself full permission to receive and welcome any compliments and praise that other people give to you and take these deeply to heart. You wouldn't tend to bat away a gift when someone has thoughtfully presented it to you, would you? Well, compliments and praise are gifts too. Ones to accept, enjoy and savour. The more you allow *yourself* to be nourished, the more you can access your inner resources to help others. And the more you help others, the more you feel good. The more you feel good, the more fully you can enjoy opening up to welcome the kindness that comes back at you.

Let the pink bucket principles of compassion and kindness infuse your days. And enjoy experiencing the benefits that just keep on coming back round!



Chapter 13

Living in love and the attitude of gratitude

Chapter 13 – Living in love and the attitude of gratitude

OK, we appreciate that this one may sound a bit pink and fluffy on the surface and yet in terms of embracing the philosophy of pink bucket thinking, you really couldn't do much better than to focus on integrating love and gratitude into your daily being.

Love matters. It is at the heart of most world religions and spiritual practices when you strip away any differences that are cultural, political and ideological. It is the theme for some of the world's most popular and moving stories, artwork, films and music. And if we believe John Lennon, we could go as far as to consider the possibility that 'All you need is love'!

The word love can have different meanings and connotations, depending upon the context and where it is directed.

When people say they are 'in love', they usually continue to say what or who they are in love *with*. There is usually an external target mentioned that they are directing the love towards. I'm in love with person X, I'm in love with my career, I'm in love with this place, and so on.

Truly loving something or someone is, of course, a deep and wonderful experience for most people and it can also be painful for some if love isn't reciprocated or the target of love is unavailable, temporary or out of reach. This would be a green bucket experience of love. For the purposes of this chapter, we'd like to focus our attention on the pure and soul-nourishing positive experiences of unconditional love. In contrast to the heart-wrenchingly painful experiences that sometimes go with a more attached love, where there's neediness either for reciprocation or for the presence of a person, situation or thing (see also chapter 10).

- What if being in love did not require any external reference?
- What if you could have all of the benefits of the powerful positive feelings of love right here, right now without any need to direct it towards any person or thing?
- What if you could have that almost overwhelmingly great feeling inside you whenever you wanted to?

Those amazing positive feelings of love inside can have you in touch with your most pure and powerful self. It is the domain from which inspiration and

clarity emerges and personal empowerment resides. Experiencing pure love can be like 'being in the zone' or 'being in your flow' and of course it involves being well and truly in the pink bucket! In love, you feel your own personal power connecting with the immense power of the entire universe. In a moment where you're truly experiencing being in love it's as if you've woken up to the existence of perfection.

I want you to consider that being in love can mean *literally* that: Being ... in a state of love.

Giving yourself permission to experience powerful experiences of pure, unattached love is an amazing gift to yourself. And because it puts you in such a useful pink bucket state (perhaps even the most pink bucket state that it is possible to experience), there's massive potential for others to benefit from this gift too, just by being around you.

Whilst we completely advocate enjoying 'directed' love such as being in love with your life, with nature, with your partner, with places, with delightful things and people when it's helpful for you to do so (when it's a pink bucket experience), we also invite you to consider practising 'non-directed love'. In other words, how about working on accessing the state of 'being in love' simply because of its pure personal value as a powerful experience?

You see, the great thing about non-directed love is that it doesn't require anything or anyone else to be present for you to experience the full value. It depends upon nothing else except your own capacity to take yourself into the experience.

Love is one of those purest, highest quality states, along with feeling at peace, enjoying a total sense of freedom, experiencing heart-felt gratitude, letting go into a state of acceptance or positive surrender, tapping into great joy, being 'in the moment' and feeling 'complete'.

So assuming you may see some value in accessing feelings of pure love in order to be more in touch with your greatest resourcefulness and personal power, how do you go about being in love?

We make no pretence at having *the* right answer to this question. Part of the joy of life's journey is to discover your own personal ways to access those

higher-level experiences in life. You will have your own perfect blend of ways to take yourself into a state of being in love. Start by having a clear intention to access intense positive experiences of love and also to discover what works for you.

Below are some possible practices to consider experimenting with that have worked for us and also for many people we've worked with as we've supported them on their own success journeys.

Here's our first suggested practice:

1. Gently bring to mind something very pure and natural such as a beautiful lake or mountainside or a sun-filled sky, a meadow of flowers, a perfect beach or a calm still ocean. Allow yourself to be drawn into the loveliness of this pure mental experience and give yourself permission to notice where your feelings of pure love begin inside. Allow those feelings to spread and grow inside and imagine 'turning them up' until those feelings are delightfully intense and powerful inside. Anchor those intense feelings to a simple action (such as pressing your forefinger and thumb together on one hand). By repeating this process often, your chosen action can start to become a personal switch to help trigger those powerfully positive feelings again in the future. To test the power of your anchor action after repeated associations with great feelings, simply choose a moment when you feel neutral and then perform the action. If it has become a useful anchor it will trigger the start of some positive feelings. If you do not get that experience, it simply means you need to make the association stronger. Repeat the described exercise of association until the action becomes a useful switch for you. (This kind of anchoring activity is a well known NLP technique.)

Here's another practice we suggest for you:

2. Say out loud or in your head (or some prefer to write it down on a page) phrases that work for you in triggering feelings of love. Try these and any others that come to mind:

- 'I am so in love.'
- 'I have so much love inside me.'
- 'I am connecting to the love within me.'

- ‘I *am* love.’
- ‘I *love* you’ (no need to be thinking of anyone or thing).
- ‘I *so* love you’ (again, no need to be thinking of anyone or thing).
- ‘I have *so* much love to give.’
- ‘I have *so* much love to experience.’
- ‘I welcome love.’
- ‘I invite love to bubble up inside me now.’
- ‘I give myself permission to *feel* loving feelings.’
- ‘Love ... Love ... *Love!*’

Be sure to put emphasis and tonality into your words, as you say, think or write them. Say, think or write it like you mean it! Imagine turning up any great feelings that result and anchor them to a simple action (as previously described).

We also recommend the following practice for accessing feelings of love:

3. Give yourself permission to imagine yourself feeling totally connected to some higher power (a god or the power of the universe or whatever way you choose to represent this). Let your mind and your heart tell you that you are part of this incredible force for good and imagine feeling the immensity and perfection of eternity in time and space. Some people like to imagine floating around in outer space in a wonderful peaceful state. This may help you start to access the feelings of love that can emerge. Again, as you feel any great feelings, notice where they are in your body and imagine turning them up or allowing them to spread and intensify (and anchor them to a simple action as previously described).

Here’s another practice we recommend to you:

4. Allow your mind to represent ‘pure love’ in your mind’s eye as a cloud of colour and positive energy. You can represent this in whatever way your mind chooses to enjoy it. There can be delightful sounds, smells and movement too. When you feel most compelled to do so, either step into this representation of love or imagine inviting it to completely surround you. Allow yourself to be immersed in its powerfully positive energy. Turn up any great feelings as you experience them and again consider anchoring them to a simple action (as previously described).

Of course these are just ideas. People are often really good at coming up with their own ways when they give themselves full permission to get imaginative and curious. We know that you'll find the best ways for you! We encourage you to make this a daily pink bucket practice to have those feelings most readily available to you and to maximize the benefits for yourself.

Closely linked to the powerfully positive feelings of being in love are deep pink bucket feelings of gratitude.

Most people we meet, if asked directly, would say that they are 'grateful' or even 'really grateful' for things and people in their lives. And they mean it. Of course there is a difference between you *knowing* that you are grateful for aspects of your life and *experiencing* the full and amazing feelings of gratitude that could be accessed to go with that knowledge. Many people in the world are not making time to proactively trigger in themselves the hugely rewarding feelings of total gratitude, and yet it can put you in an amazing emotional and mental state. A state that opens up the gates on your greatest personal power so you can enjoy being you at your most wonderful.

Those who decide to proactively access feelings of gratitude as a daily practice report that it is a truly enjoyable and empowering experience that helps them to keep a positive perspective, to appreciate the present moment, to let go of neediness and to notice the full value of what is present in their lives. In other words, it helps them to keep in the pink bucket. Many wonder why they hadn't started sooner!

If accessing deep feelings of gratitude feels like a state that could serve you, even for the pure enjoyment of it, start counting your blessings day by day with heart-felt gratitude, and use a tonality that clearly conveys you mean it.

If you're alive today, reading this now, you have been blessed with the gift of yet another day! Not everyone made it to today, so be grateful you are here!

If you have a roof over your head, food in a fridge, access to clean running water, a choice of clothes to wear, a right to vote and to free speech, a passport, access to some level of health care provision, access to some form of education and you are living in a place where there's no war on the streets around you, then you are one of the luckiest people on the planet. So many people do not

have the things that we lucky ones might easily fall into the trap of taking for granted! So let's celebrate what we have!

If you also have any of what follows, you have even more to be grateful for ...

- Do you have a job or some form of income (even if from the state)?
- Are you reasonably healthy?
- Do you have people in your life that love and/or support you (e.g. family or friends)?
- Do you have people in your life that you love and/or care about?
- Do you have access to transport (e.g. own a car or a cycle)?
- Do you get a chance to engage in leisure activities?
- Are there people you enjoy helping and supporting?
- Are you able to notice that you are making a positive difference to something or someone?

Give yourself the gift of noticing what you *do* have in your favour and take some time to get some fabulous feelings of gratitude flowing.

This can be as simple as spending some time reflecting on what you have available in your life. Simply say it out loud, in your head or in writing. Express some heart-felt 'Thank you' phrases:

- 'Thank you for my life!'
- 'Thank you for the food I have to eat.'
- 'Thank you for the clean water I have on tap.'
- 'Thank you for my freedom.'
- 'Thank you for my capacity to feel so grateful.'
- 'Thank you for my ability to experience being in love.'
- 'Thank you for ...'
- 'Thank you, thank you, thank you!'

Just keep going!

You don't have to be saying 'Thank you' to anyone or anything in particular. You could be saying it to some higher power, to your highest self, to the universe, to an empty room or to nothing. Just as you don't need any external thing or person in order to access being 'in love', there doesn't need to be an external person or thing to be grateful to in order to access the feelings of

being ‘in gratitude’. It can be simply a pink bucket experiential gift to yourself. Of course if you prefer to, you could be directing gratitude towards those to whom you are grateful. You can imagine expressing your gratitude in the direction of your god, your relatives past or present, your friends, yourself, your lucky stars, the powerful universe, or whatever or whoever else you choose.

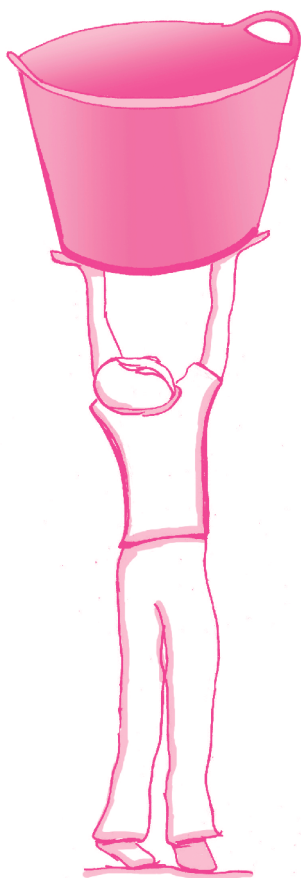
Remember, the tonality is important if you’re going to trigger the feelings. If your body is going to release some good chemistry inside then it needs to believe that you mean it!

Say it (or write it) with more and more heartfelt feeling and enjoy allowing the feelings of gratitude to spread. Again if you want to associate the powerful feelings with a simple action, anchor it through association (as previously described). This way, you can start to create a useful future trigger for your feelings of gratitude. The more you do this the more the action will serve as a positive trigger.

Many people report that feelings of being ‘in gratitude’ feel very similar and just as powerfully positive as feelings of being ‘in love’. Maybe experiences of gratitude, like deep compassion (see chapter 12) are in fact just different aspects of what we call love. If so, it should be no surprise that people report feeling just as positively powerful when experiencing these pink bucket states.

Other aspects of being ‘in love’ that you may want to give yourself permission to experiment with experiencing are the feelings of freedom, joy and inner peace. Use your powerful imagination and the power of your words to find ways to experience these different facets of pure and perfect love too! It’s from these most delightful states that inspired action emerges – a pure and abundant, intuitive inner guidance that steers you gently and wisely into the direction of your most purposeful living.

Enjoy the adventure of finding your own favourite ways to access these wonderful pink bucket states, and allow yourself to make this a daily practice, just because you can!



Chapter 14

Doing it *your* way when living in the pink!

Chapter 14 – Doing it *your* way when living in the pink!

By now, we trust that you've enjoyed considering what kinds of inner stuff can work for you in your life and that you also have greater insight into what is not working.

Of course we've only shared with you some illustrative examples of the kinds of mental positions and inner activities that could be considered to be pink bucket thinking. We wanted to give you some hooks to hang your inner experiments and observations from. There's no one right answer and we certainly do not intend to prescribe anything to anyone or to presume what is going to be useful to you.

If you disagree with anything in any chapter then let go of the suggestions in there and carve out your own most useful path. Ultimately, what is useful for one may not be useful for another. We mostly want to encourage you to start to notice more about what's helpful and what's unhelpful for you in your own life. We wish to encourage you to adopt the basic principle of doing more of the inner stuff that is smoothing the way towards the outcomes you want to achieve and experience in life and to do less of what hinders such progress. The chapters in this book are simply our attempt at sharing some of the inner stuff that seems to really work for many of our own clients and also for our clients' clients. Every point could be argued. Every possible winning approach can have its exceptions. Every individual reading this book is delightfully unique and in being so will need to discover his or her own particular best fit when coming up with the perfect pink bucket blend! That is the adventure of life!

Keep asking yourself what thoughts, assumptions, beliefs, ideas, inner talk and other inner stuff already works for you. Consider what else could potentially enhance things further for you. Then commit to take action to reinforce the pink bucket inner stuff that already works for you. Commit to adopt other pink bucket inner stuff that intuitively appeals to you. Drop any green bucket stuff in there that is not working. It's the application of learning and new levels of awareness that really makes the difference.

Enjoy keeping yourself deeply curious about finding new and stimulating ways to stay out of the green bucket and into the experience of pink bucket thinking!

About the authors – Tony Burgess and Julie French

Tony Burgess is a founding Director of the Academy of High Achievers.

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As an experienced trainer, speaker, firewalk instructor, coach and therapist, most of Tony's time is now spent designing, co-coordinating and delivering performance-enhancing and life-enriching programmes for people who are hungry for more success and fulfilment in their lives.

Tony has worked with business leaders, teams within organisations, entrepreneurs, educators, students, sports people and members of the public to help them to tap into and release the full potential of their personal resources, preparing them to attain whatever outcomes they set out to achieve and much more besides. He also trains other trainers, coaches and therapists to integrate powerful methods into their existing toolkits.

Tony has a degree in psychology. He has specialised in helping people to thrive in their endeavours by teaching them powerful mental fitness techniques and offering them super-effective connection and communication tools.

Tony is a specialist in utilising a powerful blend of applied psychology and he often draws on his expertise in the areas of NLP, DiSC® and Havening Techniques™ in his work.

Tony's core philosophy is based on 'living his truth' with underpinning values of 'loving kindness' and 'inspired action'. By congruent example he constantly strives to inspire others to 'shine' brighter.

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Julie French is a founding Director of the Academy of High Achievers. (www.aha-success.com)

Building on a successful earlier career as a senior manager leading large teams, managing multimillion pound budgets and operating at board level, Julie now works with companies and organisations that are keen to develop their people and improve their internal relationships. She has high levels of experience and expertise in the areas of leadership, people management, team effectiveness, handling conflict and effective communication.

Julie is a well-respected and highly competent executive coach, master practitioner and certified trainer in Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), a certified trainer in Everything DiSC® and is also a certified professional speaker and firewalk instructor. Combining exceptional listening skills with a creative and empowering approach, Julie assists organisations and individuals to realise their vision.

As well as her speaking, training and coaching, Julie has been involved in facilitating board meetings, mediation in the workplace and mentoring individuals to handle challenging conversations.

Julie has trained many other trainers and coaches how to incorporate powerful tools and methods into their professional day-to-day work.

Julie loves life and one of her most delightful characteristics is in 'exploding warmth' wherever she goes!

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Together

Tony and Julie deliver on stage seamlessly. As partners in business and in life, day by day they are living and breathing their passion for helping people achieve at the highest level. It adds a whole different dimension to a conference or event to have the two of them enthusiastically and professionally delivering together in such a natural and free-flowing way. In terms of connection with an audience, the male-female combination on stage helps ensure that the message gets through easily and effectively to all who are watching and listening.

Tony and Julie are available to speak at events in the UK and internationally. They're also available to facilitate training and to deliver coaching and therapeutic support, helping individuals and teams to get out of the green bucket and increasingly live with a pink bucket perspective.

Experience Tony and Julie directly – book them for your event or find out how you can access their coaching, training or therapeutic work:

www.aha-success.com

www.aha-disc.co.uk

www.ditchyourtrauma.co.uk

www.love2firewalk.com

www.pinkbucketthinking.com

Other books by Tony Burgess and Julie French:

Oops! I Dropped A Vowel: 5 Vital Habits For High Achievers (2005, Lean Marketing Press)

Beliefs and How To Change Them ... For Good! (2011, SRA Books)

The book *Beliefs and How to Change Them ... For Good!* offers a 6-step process for effectively and authentically ditching your unhelpful inner stuff and replacing it with more helpful inner stuff that works for you. Many people find the process in that book to be a key method for helping them convincingly shift from the green bucket to the pink bucket.

Both Available on Amazon.