“Are you willing to take the Big Leap to your ultimate level of success in love, money, and creative contribution?”

~ Gay Hendricks from *The Big Leap*

Gay Hendricks is one of my favorite people on the planet. I’m blessed to have him as a friend, mentor and biz partner. And, *The Big Leap* is awesome.

The biggest challenges with writing the Note on it? 1. I keep getting distracted with all the remarkably thought-/feeling-provoking questions and exercises Gay poses throughout the book. (The first time I read it, I filled up a good chunk of my journal while opening into new possibilities in my life and the same thing’s happening now!); and, 2. There are a lot of Big Ideas. :)

Quick overview: The book is all about taking “The Big Leap” beyond what Gay calls our “Upper Limits” as we learn to live in our “Zone of Genius”—a place where time flows and we expand in success, abundance and love every day as we inspire those around us to do the same.

If that sounds like a Leap you’d like to take in this precious Hero’s/Heroine’s Journey of yours, I think you’ll love the book. (Plus, you might dig another one of Gay’s quick-reading, yet deeply transformative books that also moved me: *Five Wishes*. :)

Alright. Let’s Leap right in. :)

**ARE YOU WILLING TO FEEL GOOD ALL THE TIME?**

“Am I willing to feel good and have my life go well all the time? At first glance, you might ask who wouldn’t say yes to all of these questions. Well, for many of us, the idea of all of this positive emotion seems far-fetched to begin with. It is easy for us to just assume that with the positive comes the negative. To that I say, ‘Why not get willing, and see what happens?’ We humans have a long and wonderful history of transcending our beliefs about what’s possible. In the early days of the steam-powered train, learned scientists urged capping the speed at thirty miles per hour because they believed that the human body exploded at speeds greater than that. Finally some brave people risked going beyond that limiting belief and found that they did not explode. I think we’re approximately at that same stage of development with regard to our ability to feel good and have our lives go well.”

Gay opens the book by asking us four questions starting with: “Am I willing to increase the amount of time every day that I feel good inside?” Then: “Am I willing to increase the amount of time that my whole life goes well?” Then: “Am I willing to feel good and have my life go well all the time?” And, finally: “Are you willing to take the Big Leap to your ultimate level of success in love, money, and creative contribution?”

Isn’t it a little weird that we seem to have a built-in limit to just how much goodness we can experience?! I love the vision of scientists saying the human body would explode at speeds in excess of thirty miles per hour. Funny. And, I love the connection to our current notions about the upper limits of our abilities to experience joy, success, love and abundance.
“Am I willing to feel good and have my life go well all the time?”

Think about that. Are you willing to feel good and have your life go well ALL the time? (Or, do you think you’d explode before something like that was possible? :)

As Gay says: “In my view, saying yes to that question is one of the most courageous actions a human being can take. In the face of so much evidence that life hurts and is fraught with adversity on all fronts, having a willingness to feel good and have life go well all the time is a genuinely radical act.”

I say we go for it. :)

A HANDSHAKE DEAL WITH THE UNIVERSE

“You know deep inside you that you will never be fully satisfied until you have anchored yourself in your Zone of Genius. To do less would be to hold back, and long ago you made a handshake deal with the universe that you wouldn’t do that. The seductive comforts of success, though, can lull us into accepting the status quo. In that state of comfort, it’s easy to forget the deal you made with the universe to use yourself fully.”

I love that.

In case you might’ve tried to forget (don’t worry, we can try as much as we want, but we can never actually forget), you made a handshake deal with the universe. It was a very simple deal. You committed to not holding back—to fully expressing yourself in this precious life of yours.

Acorns have an oak tree to become. Kittens have a cat to become. You? You have a radiant human being fully expressing your gifts to become. :)

In his classic book, The Courage to Create, Rollo May (see Notes) puts it this way: “The acorn becomes an oak by means of automatic growth; no commitment is necessary. The kitten similarly becomes a cat on the basis of instinct. Nature and being are identical in creatures like them. But a man or woman becomes fully human only by his or her choices and his or her commitment to them. People attain worth and dignity by the multitude of decisions they make from day by day. These decisions require courage.”

While Abraham Maslow (see Notes) tells us: “Musicians must make music, artists must paint, poets must write if they are to be ultimately at peace with themselves. What human beings can be, they must be. They must be true to their own nature. This need we may call self-actualization... It refers to man’s desire for self-fulfillment, namely to the tendency for him to become actually in what he is potentially: to become everything one is capable of becoming.”

If there’s ONE theme to these Notes it’s to remind you of your highest potential and to inspire and empower you to GO FOR IT.

Gotta love that majestic handshake deal you made with the universe, eh?

So, you honoring your deal? :)

OUR THERMOSTATS ARE SET TOO LOW

“Each of us has an inner thermostat setting that determines how much love, success, and creativity we allow ourselves to enjoy. When we exceed our inner thermostat setting, we will often do something to sabotage ourselves, causing us to drop back into the old, familiar zone where we feel secure...

Unfortunately, our thermostat setting usually gets programmed in early childhood, before we can think for ourselves. Once programmed, our Upper Limit thermostat setting holds us back from enjoying all the love, financial abundance, and creativity that’s rightfully ours. It keeps us
in our Zone of Competence or at best our Zone of Excellence. It prevents us from living in the ultimate destination of the journey—our Zone of Genius.

The coolest way to imagine our Upper Limits we need to Leap beyond: Think of it like a thermostat. If you have a thermostat in your house set to 60 degrees, the moment your house starts to get a little warmer—creeping up to 62, 64 degrees, what happens? The air conditioner kicks in and brings the temperature back to a chilly 60, yah?

Same thing with the level of happiness, love, financial abundance, success, and creativity we experience in our lives. If our thermostats are set low, we’re gonna constantly sabotage ourselves as we bump up against our Upper Limits. Psychologists call this our “Happiness Set Point” and a we talk about this idea in a couple other Notes.

In her great book Happy for No Reason (see Notes), Marci Shimoff says: “Researchers have found that no matter what happens to you in life, you tend to return to a fixed range of happiness. Like your weight set-point, which keeps the scale hovering around the same number, your happiness set-point will remain the same unless you make a concerted effort to change it.”

Marci continues: “In fact, there was a famous study conducted that tracked people who’d won the lottery—what many people think of as the ticket to the magic kingdom of joy. Within a year, these lucky winners returned to approximately the same level of happiness they’d experienced before their windfall. Surprisingly, the same was true for people who became paraplegic. Within a year or so of being disabled, they also returned to their original happiness level.”

So, we have a thermostat that’ll Upper Limit us we expand. Good news is we can learn to become more and more aware of the behaviors we’ve adopted that sabotage us when we’re “heating” up more than our set point is comfie with.

The book is ALL about making the BIG LEAP *beyond* these unnecessarily low set points into a state of ever expanding success, love, and abundance.

WAVING TO OUR FEARS

“Unless you’re very lucky or very enlightened, you’re likely to hear those nattering voices and feel those nagging fears within you. They’re part of the deal. I won’t try to talk you out of them, and you shouldn’t try to talk yourself out of them, either. Just notice the voices and feel the fears. That’s all you need to do with them. You don’t need to rid yourself of them. Where would they go, anyway? All you need to do is acknowledge them, wave to them, let them know you’re aware of them. Then get busy learning to live in your Zone of Genius.”

That’s awesome. I don’t know about you, but I still hear those little voices of fear in my head and those little fear gremlins running through my system on occasion. I love Gay’s visual of simply acknowledging them and WAVING at them. :)

Imagine that! The next time your little fearsicles come out, rather than frantically try to get rid of ’em or ignore them or pretend they aren’t there, why not acknowledge them and WAVE at them.

* WAVES! *

Maybe even throw in a wink and a smile and a little happy dance in their direction. Then get busy doing what needs to be done as you rock it in your Zone of Genius.

Reminds me of a couple of my favorite thoughts on fear. First, the artist Georgia O’Keefe who said: “I’ve been afraid every single day of my life, but I’ve gone ahead and done it anyway.”

And, even Tiger Woods says that the day he’s not nervous stepping up to the first tee is the day he quits.
The fact is that as we play at our edges, OF COURSE we’re gonna have fear. That’s not a big deal. It’s how we *respond* to the fear that’ll determine the quality of our lives. Let’s explore some more great Ideas on how to deal with fear. (Gay’s got a lot of ‘em!!)

**BREATHE INTO YOUR FEAR**

“There’s only one way to get through the fog of fear, and that’s to transform it into the clarity of exhilaration. One of the greatest pieces of wisdom I’ve ever heard comes from Fritz Perls, MD, the psychiatrist and founder of Gestalt therapy. He said, ‘Fear is excitement without the breath.’ Here’s what this intriguing statement means: the very same mechanisms that produce excitement also produce fear, and any fear can be transformed into excitement by breathing fully with it. On the other hand, excitement turns into fear quickly if you hold your breath. When scared, most of us have a tendency to try to get rid of the feeling. We think we can get rid of it by denying or ignoring it, and we use holding our breath as a physical tool of denial.”

This is a REALLY Big Idea: —> “Fear is excitement without the breath.”

We’ve talk about the fact that the very same mechanisms that produce fear also produce excitement in our Notes on *Overachievement* and *The Silva Method of Mental Dynamics*.

It’s a “really” powerful concept. The energy itself is neutral. It’s how we interpret it (via our thoughts/actions) that determines whether we experience excitement or fear.

The fastest way to channel the energy into fear? Hold your breath, imagine everything that can go wrong and don’t take action.

The fastest way to channel the energy into excitement? Breathe deeply and imagine all the amazing things you’re about to experience and just go for it!

Gay says this about breathing into it: “The best advice I can give you is to take big, easy breaths when you feel fear. Feel the fear instead of pretending it’s not there. Celebrate it with a big breath, just the way you’d celebrate your birthday by taking a big breath and blowing out all the candles on your cake. Do that, and your fear turns into excitement. Do it more, and your excitement turns into exhilaration. I find it very empowering to know that I’m in charge of the exhilaration I feel as I go through life. I bet you will, too.”

John Eliot, in his phenomenal book, *Overachievement* (see Notes), says this about just going for it: “The physical symptoms of fight-or-flight are what the human body has learned over thousands of years to operate more efficiently and at the highest level. Anxiety is a cognitive interpretation of that physical response.” He continues: “Exceptional thinkers learn to trust their consciousness. They teach themselves the power of positive action. They don’t stop to think about how great the act is going to be. Instead, they act.”

So, are you feeling some fear?

Take a deep breath and celebrate it as you blow out some imaginary candles and JUST DO IT!!!

... And, don’t forget Emerson’s mojo on the subject: “Always, always, always, always, always do the thing you fear and the death of fear is certain.”

**BREAKTHROUGHS, STABILIZATION AND INTEGRATION**

“I explained that while breakthroughs are important and thrilling, it’s the subsequent stabilization and integration of the breakthrough into daily life that really allow the changes to be permanent.”

I love the whole business of breakthroughs followed by stabilization and then integration. Ken Wilber describes it as “states and stages” and it’s a REALLY important concept to embrace and bring into our lives. (See my Notes on Wilber for a longer discussion!)
The basic idea is very simple and very powerful when appreciated and applied: We often have moments of inspiration or breakthroughs or “state experiences” when we see the world in a new, revolutionary way. Those experiences are, of course, awesome. :) And... They’re only really meaningful if, after the initial buzz wears off, we have the discipline and the diligence and the patience and the persistence (and playfulness!) to create the structures in our lives that enable that breakthrough to stabilize and integrate and become a new way of being or “stage of our development.” Make sense?

So, how can you INTEGRATE some of your “Aha!” breakthroughs into your life?!

SWEATY TEN-MINUTE CONVERSATIONS

“Behind every communication problem is a sweaty ten-minute conversation you don’t want to have. However, the moment you work up the courage to have it, you collect an instant reward in relief as well as open up a flow of communication that will allow you to resolve the situation.”

Gay and his wife Katie are two of the world’s leading relationship experts and I just love this idea. (Check out my Notes on Gay & Katie Hendricks for more relationship stuff!) We’ll get right to point with this one: What sweaty ten-minute conversation do you need to have? Get on that.

And collect the instant rewards in relief and an open flow of communication as you resolve the situation! :)

WORRY

“Worrying is usually a sign that we’re Upper-Limiting. It is usually not a sign that we’re thinking about something useful. The crucial sign that we’re worrying unnecessarily is when we’re worrying about something we have no control over. Worrying is useful only if it concerns a topic we can actually do something about, and if it leads to our taking positive action right away. All other worry is just Upper Limit noise, designed by our unconscious to keep us safely within our Zone of Excellence or Zone of Competence.”

That’s awesome.

You worrying about anything in your life right now?

Check in and see if you have control over it.

If you *can’t* do anything about it, worrying isn’t gonna help. So, um, quit leaking your energy like that!

If you *can* do something about it, what’re you waiting for?!? Get on it. (We’ll wait for you to return after you’ve taken some action to move from worry to resolution. :)

FIND AND FULLY USE YOUR GIFTS!

“On Judgment Day, Mr. Lewin said, God will not ask, ‘Why were you not Moses?’ He will ask, ‘Why were you not Sam Lewin?’ The goal in life is not to attain some imaginary ideal; it is to find and fully use our own gifts.”

That’s fantastic. Another theme we hit on again and again and again is the idea that we need to QUIT COMPARING ourselves to anyone!!!

Buscaglia (see Notes): “You are the best you. You will always be the second best anyone else.”

Emerson (see Notes): “Envy is ignorance. Imitation is suicide.”
Osho (see Notes): “Each person is born with a unique individuality, and each person has a destiny of his or her own. Imitation is crime, it is criminal. If you try to become a Buddha, you may look like Buddha, you may walk like him, you may talk like him, but you will miss. You will miss all that life was ready to deliver to you. Buddha happens only once. It is not in the nature of things to repeat. Existence is so creative that it never repeats anything. You cannot find another human being in the present, in the past, or in the future who is going to resemble you exactly. It has never happened. The human being is not a mechanism like Ford cars on an assembly line. Never imitate anybody.”

So Osho tells us imitation is crime while Emerson tells us it’s suicide. Those are strong words. Are you trying to be someone else? That’s NOT gonna help you take the Big Leap into your Zone of Genius. Answering these questions will though:

What are your amazing gifts?!? How can you fully use them?!? When do you feel most alive? What work do you do that doesn’t seem like work?!?

**BIG LEAPS INTO YOUR ZONE OF GENIUS**

“Discovering your Zone of Genius is your life’s Big Leap. Everything up until now has been about hops, not leaps. Hopping, though it seems safe, is actually hazardous to your health. If you confine yourself to hops, you run the risk of rusting from the inside out.”

So, ready for The Big Leap?

Let’s rock it. :)

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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**If you liked this Note, you’ll probably like…**
Gay & Katie Hendricks
Happy for No Reason
The Magic of Thinking Big
Ask and It Is Given
The Courage to Create
Overachievement

**About the Author of “The Big Leap”**

GAY HENDRICKS

Dr. Gay Hendricks has served for more than 30 years as one of the major contributors to the fields of relationship transformation and body-mind therapies. Along with his wife, Dr. Kathlyn Hendricks, Gay is the author of many bestsellers, including Conscious Loving, At the Speed of Life, and Five Wishes. Gay received his PhD in counseling psychology from Stanford University in 1974. After a 21-year career as a professor at the University of Colorado, he founded The Hendricks Institute, which offers seminars in North America, Asia, and Europe. He is also the founder of a new virtual learning center for transformation, Gaia Illumination University. Learn more about Gay at Hendricks.com!

**About the Author of This Note**

BRIAN JOHNSON

Brian Johnson is a lover of wisdom (aka a “Philosopher”) and a passionate student of life who’s committed to inspiring and empowering millions of people to live their greatest lives as he studies, embodies and shares the universal truths of optimal living. He harts his job.
our behaviors, the challenges we take, and the excuses we make. Sadly, we all have a dream which we never got to make real because of the excuses we constantly come up with. Second, they think that once they realize their dreams, there will be nothing left to strive for. If you want to truly experience success and be happy, you have to cure all of these unhealthy behaviors and beliefs. And then, you have to take the big leap into the life of happiness. The Big Leap.