



SIMPLE STEPS



*Ten Things You
Can Do to
Create an
Exceptional Life*

Dr. Arthur Caliandro
WITH BARRY LENSON



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to Create
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Author's Note



When I encounter a book like this, I first read it for what the author has to say. I underline sections in red and often write in the margin words and phrases that seem relevant for me. In this way, I can later open the book and, at a glance, read again the words and ideas that seemed most helpful and poignant to me.

This process affords me the chance of absorbing the wisdom of the ideas. Over time, the thoughts that meant the most to me may become part of my consciousness. They eventually may become me—or perhaps I will become them.

Just reading a book like this quickly, and once, won't be helpful. If that is what you do, the best that can happen is that you will get a general sense of what the author believes. I hope you will do more than that with *Simple Steps*. I hope you will make this book your friend.

In time, as you live with the ideas this book contains—of kindness, quiet, forgiveness, and the rest—they will become your new reality—and you will become a new person.

Introduction



Would you like to enjoy an exceptional, fulfilling life?

I think most people would answer yes to that question.

I often recall a story told by a college professor about one of his former students. On the first night that young man was on campus at a welcoming reception at the professor's house, he suddenly blurted out, "I'm going to make my life a miracle."

And he went on to do well in his life and career.

I am drawn to the spirit of that young man. He wanted to live an exceptional life. He wanted his life to be special.

I believe living such a life is possible for anyone who chooses to do so, regardless of circumstances or age.

Yet doing so is not easy for anyone. In his books, the author Scott Peck accurately describes life as both difficult and complex—an enormous challenge. Or, as summarized in my favorite definition of life:

Life is a series of problem-solving situations.

The success or failure of our lives depends on how effectively we meet and solve whatever problems lie before us. And those problems can be quite complex. As some wise person once said, there are no simple problems after kindergarten.

We can be given charts and procedures, systems and formulas, for making our lives better. Yet complex answers seldom solve complex problems. We can best deal with the process of change by taking simple steps, one at a time, and doing so with thoughtfulness and patience.

I have learned that each change in life, each part of one's journey, starts with movement in the heart and mind. Real change comes from deep within, and it comes in one's own time.

Some of the wisest advice I ever heard was given to me at a New Year's gathering one year. I was in a small group of people, and we were discussing resolutions for coming year. A man in my group suggested to me that success is most likely when we make just one resolution, focus on it alone, and then patiently give it plenty of time.

That advice has worked for me on many occasions—from my resolve to lose weight to the more difficult challenge of forgiving someone who had hurt me. Yet in all cases, a singular focus and a patient heart can make miracles happen.

Your life can dramatically change for the better when you make the decision to take simple decisive steps like these, one at a time.

Decide to adopt a positive attitude.

Resolve to be kind in all circumstances.

Refuse to give up despite all obstacles.

Leave the past behind and move on.

Steps like these can ultimately change your life for the better. We'll explore them—and more—in the pages that follow.

Elation, empowerment, and excitement about life can begin today. It can surely happen, in the thoughts and insights we are about to share together in this joyous little book.

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Simple Steps





CHAPTER ONE

Your Attitude Is Your Future

Attitude stands as the one area of your life where you are in complete and total control.

External events can change what you do with your life, how long you live, where you live, and other factors. Other people can force you to accept their routines or ideas.

Attitude is different. No one can make you accept an attitude you don't want.

Each of us has the power to choose a positive attitude, or a negative one. Of all the Simple Steps we'll explore together in this book, I put this one first. It is the bedrock beneath all the other steps that follow.

Your attitude is your future, pure and simple. Choosing the right one will profoundly change your life at once, today.

Decide on Your Attitude



In May 1985, the Dutch Consulate asked my church to sponsor a Sunday service commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the liberation of Holland. It was an inspiring day. Volunteers hung banners in the church, the choir sang special music, and many dignitaries attended. Among them were the American pilots who had dropped food into occupied Holland—and the farmers who had received that food.

For these people to meet face to face was extraordinarily emotional and meaningful. There were tears and embraces. For depth of emotion, I can't recall too many occasions to compare with it.

After the service, a commemorative luncheon was held, where I had the opportunity to be seated at a table with several people who were new to me. Among them was a woman of about sixty. She was a very lovely, elegant person—pleasant, warm, and gentle. Yet, from the lines in her face, I sensed that her life had been interesting and challenging.

As we began to talk, her story unfolded. She told me that she had been sent to a German concentration camp when she was a teenager. While there, she saw the smoke come from the chimneys of the gas ovens. That smoke represented the bodies of every member of her family, since she alone had survived.

She described the scene to me when the day of liberation finally came and she walked into freedom, owning nothing more than the clothing she was wearing. She told me that, at that moment, she did something that would affect the rest of her life.

“I had a decision to make. My life was ahead of me. I could decide to live a happy life, or an unhappy one, full of resentment and hatred. I decided I would be happy.”

She went on, “It hasn’t been easy. Not one day or night has gone by when I haven’t either had a nightmare or some harrowing memory of those four years. But I have had a very good life. I am a happy woman.”

No one looking into this woman’s eyes would ever accuse her of being superficial, a Pollyanna—someone who chose to see only artificially positive aspects of life, while shutting out all knowledge of the negatives. She was a realist who chose to be positive. And that is something to aspire to.

She knew, even in the darkest of days, that her attitude was the factor that would determine whether her life would sink down into misery or rise up into fulfillment. She saw that her attitude was her future. And that the choice was hers alone.

Each of us, regardless of circumstances, has that power.

Take that step. It’s the first—and possibly the most profound—of the many we’ll share together in this book.