

Navigation

Guidance For Life's Challenges

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About The Author

Charles T. Alexander is the CEO and founder of Enhancement Services LLC. A minority owned enterprise specializing in Training, Career Counseling, and Motivational Speaking. Mr. Alexander has over 15 years of corporate management experience with several Fortune 100 companies. He obtained a Bachelor Degree in Biology/Chemistry from Tuskegee University and a Masters Degree in Business from Kettering University.

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Contents

Dedication	xiii
Acknowledgement	xv
Inspirational Messages	xix
The Best Investment	1
Dealing with Pain	5
Goal Setting	10
Distractions	14
Forgiveness	16
Dealing with Conflict	20
Career Counseling Tips	25
Authors Closing Thoughts	32

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my parents who have always: loved, supported, and encouraged me to be all I can be. I have lived my life trying to make you proud. Your many sacrifices have not been in vain and I truly appreciate everything you have done for me. I love you both.

A very special thanks to my closest friends and mentors who have helped me navigate through the storms of life. Tony, Gordon, Dave, Kevin, and Ron you gentlemen epitomize the true meaning of friendship in words and deeds. An extra special thanks to my mentors- Greg Battle & Darryl Branch for your guidance, encouragement, and words of wisdom. Thank you.

Kaden and Myles I love you!

Acknowledgement

I am a vessel for my master to be used for his edification and his divine purpose.

Teach, Reach, & Touch those that are in need.

A Better Place

I shed a tear for no one will know

The pain I feel as life's pressures grow

Searching my mind as well as my heart

While the pains of life seem to tear me apart

I fall to my knees and stretch my hands up to the sky

Lord come save me is my desperate cry

The lord says arise; I hear you my son

It's only my will that must be done

Now dry your eyes and come follow me

I have a better place where I want you to be

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My Love

My love for you runs deeper than the 7 seas
and it flows like lava erupting from a volcano
consuming and touching everything in its path

My love is no ordinary love it can't be
explained by the natural laws of science because
my love has no beginning and has no ending

My love transcends time and space so no matter
where you go or what you do my love is always there
to embrace you

My love is like a gentle breeze on a hot summer night
it's refreshing and invigorating to the senses

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The Best Investment

If you were asked what is the best investment. What would you say? Would you say investing in the stock market, real estate, or maybe family? All of which are potentially good investments. However, none of them are the Best Investment. The Best Investment is the investment that you make in yourself. Let's examine how investing in yourself affects your career, family, and many other facets of your life.

Career Affects

In today's tough economic times there are millions of people either unemployed or under employed. Quite frankly it's an employers market which means that companies can be very selective with hiring decisions. Those individuals that meet the specific criteria and sell themselves during the interview process have a better chance of obtaining the position. There are two pathways that need to be addressed when investing in yourself and the direct impact on your career.

The first pathway deals with individuals that are currently employed. I use an analogy when coaching my clients. I instruct them to think of a mechanic. The mechanic has a variety of tools to be able to successfully complete his job. The comparison is that individuals need to have several tools in their professional tool box to effectively complete their job requirements. These may include enhanced computer skills,

Navigation – Guidance For Life's Challenges

professional certifications, Six Sigma, speaking and understanding other languages, etc. Each individual has a responsibility to keep their professional skills up to date. Many companies offer in house training, on line training, bring trainers in, and send employees out for training. If your company doesn't do any of the above get on the internet, go the book store, or go to your public library. Do whatever it takes to continue to keep your skills up to date and to learn additional skills that you can put in your professional tool box. I also tell clients that your skills and tools are transferable which means you can take them wherever you go- a new job or even a new profession. In today's economic uncertainty no company promises you life long employment but each company offers you skills that can keep you employable for a life time.

The second pathway is for those individuals that are currently unemployed, under employed or looking for a career change

If you like your current career

The most important thing is to invest in networking and develop your network. Your potential network is anyone you know. It can be: former colleagues, people at your church, relatives, your doctor, social organizations, and professional organizations.

Get involved in organizations in your field. This will allow you to stay abreast of current happenings in your field. Consider doing some volunteer work to help keep your skills sharp. Volunteer work is also a great way to expand your network

Charles T. Alexander

while meeting new and interesting people. You may be leading a project or leading a team in a non-profit organization. The benefit is that you are using some of the same skills sets that you used when you were employed. You may need to take additional training classes, course work, or get certifications. The key point is to keep your skills up to date and continue to look at ways to put additional tools in your professional tool box.

If you dis-like your career

Take some time to think and then decide on what you want for your next career. What qualifications are required for the new career such: as training, education, and experience? Take a look at your current network. Is there anyone in your existing network that is in the career field that you are interested in? If so give them a call or set up a meeting to discuss what they do in there field. Another option is to network with someone that's currently doing what you want to do. If none of the above are options then use the internet, book store, or public library to research the information you need to get into the new career. You have to put forth the due diligence and investment in your self to make this a reality.

Family

If a person makes a positive investment in themselves then there are some direct and indirect benefits to the family. One of the benefits is a healthier outlook on life. The self

Navigation – Guidance For Life's Challenges

investment may translate into a more optimistic approach when facing life's challenges. In many cases self investment builds confidence and helps to raise or repair self esteem. It sets a positive example for others to emulate such as children, family members, and friends. The actions you take in bettering yourself may be an inspiration to another family member to encourage them to invest in themselves.

If you don't invest in yourself. How can you expect anyone to want to invest in you?

Self Investment Suggestions

- ♦ Learn another language
- ♦ Additional Schooling
- ♦ Start or join a book club
- ♦ Take up a new hobby
- ♦ Join a gym
- ♦ Volunteer work
- ♦ Travel to new places
- ♦ Professional organizations
- ♦ Social organizations

Dealing with Pain

We all experience pain in our day to day lives. Our experiences with pain began as children. How many of you fell and bruised your knee or your parent scolded you for not doing what you were told to do? Can you reflect back on how you felt? It was probably hurtful or painful. There are several different types of pain ranging from physical, emotional, and even mental. As I am writing this chapter; I have been contemplating how much of my pain I want to share. It takes courage to be transparent and share your faults, flaws, mistakes, and other not so popular things that people tend to conceal. I have decided that if sharing some of my pains helps just one person then it was worth the risk.

I can remember as a child growing up in a “stable family” with my mother and father. My mother was very spiritual, hardworking, raised the kids, took care of the house and had a job outside the home. I refer to my mom as a Super Mom. My dad was an excellent provider, hard worker, and always protected his family. I also want to point out that my parents have been married for 50 years this year. An awesome accomplishment for two people that came from humble beginnings in a small town in Alabama. Now what does this have to do with pain? During my childhood alcohol was an ongoing cause of pain to me. I saw how alcohol would cause arguments, fighting, and abnormal behaviors in my household. I was hurting and I felt helpless. I dreaded the weekends because that’s when the activities would take place. I often

Navigation – Guidance For Life's Challenges

wondered what a child could do to stop his father from abusing alcohol. I tried to talk with my dad and begged him to stop. It was unsuccessful. The next thing I did was begin to pray about the situation. I would ask God to do something-anything to stop my father from drinking. We often hear the statement that God works in mysterious ways. Well my prayer was answered when my mother received a phone call stating that my father was in a bad accident but he was still alive. This was the turning point in my father's bout with alcoholism. There were a series of procedures that my father was forced to comply with. In the end my father gave up alcohol. I saw the negative effects of alcohol and how it caused so much pain in my family.

Lessons Learned

My lesson learned was not to drink alcohol because I didn't want to consume anything that would not have me in control of my own body. I also didn't want my family to have to endure some of the mental and emotional pain that I endured. Pain is a catalyst for change.

It was my junior at Tuskegee University when I found out that my grandmother had become ill. My grandparents lived 2 hours away in a small town in Alabama. As a child; I would spend some of the summers in Alabama with my grandparents. I want to paint a picture; I was in Alabama for 2.5 years living only 2 hours away and I can count the number of visits that I made to see my grand mother. How could I say that I loved someone but I only visited a handful of times over the course of 2 years and I was so close to where she lived? After I found out that my grandmother was diagnosed with cancer I would go to visit

couple times a month. My grandmother was a healthy woman who had faded to almost skin and bones. The last visit before my grandmother passed away was extremely painful. In my heart I felt that this was the last time I would see her alive. The last thing my grandmother said to me was that she loved me as she squeezed my hand. I recall walking out of her bedroom and going into the living room and crying like I have never cried before. I was an emotional wreck. The guilt that I felt was overwhelming. Why did I not spend more time with my grandmother? I had no bona fide explanation except that I was selfish. I took for granted that she would always be there. I prayed and asked for forgiveness but I couldn't forgive myself.

Lessons Learned

As time passed I moved from feeling guilty and beating myself up to what will I do differently in the future. My lessons learned were to spend as much time with family and loved ones as possible. Tell the ones you care about that you love them and appreciate them. More importantly show them that you care and love them through your deeds and actions. Don't take people or things for granted because change does happen.

The most painful experience that I have gone through in my adult life was my divorce. Why was it so painful? Well I felt like I failed. I was angry because I never wanted to be a part of the "statistic" another person who's marriage didn't work. I looked at my parents who at the time had been married for 43 years. They had much less than what my ex wife and I had. However, the things they did have were a common vision, a never give up attitude, and they supported each other through good and bad

Navigation – Guidance For Life's Challenges

times. My divorce was emotionally, mentally, and financially painful. The divorce was even more complicated because I had just welcomed my first born child. The effects of the divorce caused me to miss my sons' first steps as well as his first words. Unfortunately, I can never relive those moments; a tough pill to swallow. I'm not a marriage counselor. However, I do recommend counseling if there are marital issues that a couple is experiencing.

Lessons Learned

I want to focus on my lessons learned as it relates to dealing with the painful experiences of a divorce. The first lesson I learned was that it takes both individuals to want to make things better. I also learned that you cannot change people. People only change if there is a benefit to them for changing. Caution- people usually don't like when change is forced on them so be mindful if you're trying to change someone who really doesn't want to change. That individual may lash out, become resentful, or completely shy away from the matter. Marriage is a business that begins with a contractual agreement that is signed by both parties and ends signed legal documents by both parties. I'm not downplaying the spiritual aspects of marriage or the concept of love or being in love. I emphasize the business side of marriage because it is a legally binding agreement that is easy to get into and sometimes hard to get out of. Legal agreements have terms and conditions that must be adhered to. The same holds true to people being in a marriage; both have roles and responsibilities that must be met for the marriage to work. The average person has a "list" of characteristics that they are looking for in a mate and that's good. After you meet the person that best fits your desired

Charles T. Alexander

characteristics focus on the things you don't like or irritate you. Ask yourself if those irritating characteristics never ever change can I continue to be with this person. If the answers are yes then great; if no then you may want to re-evaluate. I also learned that marriage is a special bond if shared between two individuals who: love, support, encourage, challenge, pray/worship, communicate, respect, plan, and continue to date like you did when you first met.

Pain is and will continue to be a part of life. The key question is how do you respond and react to the pain that you are going through. Some pain is good because it's the gateway that transitions us from an existing state to a new and sometimes better state of being. Pain the catalyst for change.

Navigation – Guidance For Life's Challenges

Goal Setting

Our day to day lives are filled with demands on our time, resources, and energies. Many of us have things that we want out of life but for some those things never come to pass. Why is that? Shouldn't you just be able to say or think about something and it magically appears or happens in your life? That would be nice but those types of things only happen in the movies and our dreams. Goals are the first steps in obtaining the things you want in your life.

What are Goals?

A goal is something that you put effort towards. Goals are the end result of what you want to obtain in your life. Goals are like driving down the expressway; in the distance you can see your destination but you still have to get there. However getting to your destination or goal involves a plan that must be completed before arriving to your destination or goal. Let's examine the plan using the analogy of being on an expressway heading toward your destination.

The Plan

The driver has to keep the vehicle on the road

The driver has to watch his speed

The driver has to make certain he has adequate fuel

Charles T. Alexander

The driver has to know when to exit the expressway

The driver has to know the address

A goal is something that you want out of life that will require efforts and a plan to bring about the desired result.

Why are Goals important?

Goals are the driving force that pushes us to want better, do better, or make positive changes in our lives. Goals are a catalyst for change by helping us to move from one phase to a more positive phase in our lives. If you don't have a goal then how can you truly measure what you're doing or how you have done? I want to point out that goals are all around us in our daily lives. If you are employed you have goals on your job that are a condition of continued employment. If you're in school you have goals (targets) that you must meet to pass. Goals are an important part of our lives; sometimes they may not seem like goals but we all have targets, expectations, and things that we are being held accountable for.

S.M.A.R.T Goals

In order for a goal to actually be a goal it has to be written down on paper. The writing down process is the baseline that every thing will be built upon. It is also a point of reference to keep

Navigation – Guidance For Life's Challenges

one focused on what the goal is; as goals sometimes change or get off track. What are S.M.A.R.T Goals?

S- Specific

M- Measurable

A- Achievable

R- Realistic

T- Time Specific

Goals have to be Specific stating what you want the desired outcome to be. Goals have to be Measurable; a way to quantify the improvement or achievement. Goals have to be Achievable; within the realm of a persons capabilities. Goals have to be Realistic; something that an individual can do. Goals have to be Time Specific; a time frame to complete the goals must be set and monitored.

After you have established goals and are working toward your goals. It is important to monitor and track the progress of your goals. The best way to track and monitor your goals is to write down your progressive steps toward your goals. You may also want to use key milestones toward achieving your goals. Example- lets say you want to loose 30 pounds in 6 months. A good milestone would be to track your weight loss in 10 pound

Charles T. Alexander

increments. It is important to celebrate key milestones or positive events along the road to achieving your goals.

Whatever your goals are just make sure to write them down, create an action plan to achieve those goals, obtain the resources you need to assist you with obtaining your goals, and don't give up while pursuing your goals. Set backs and disappointments are a part of life but the setbacks just make the victories that much sweeter.