

Introduction

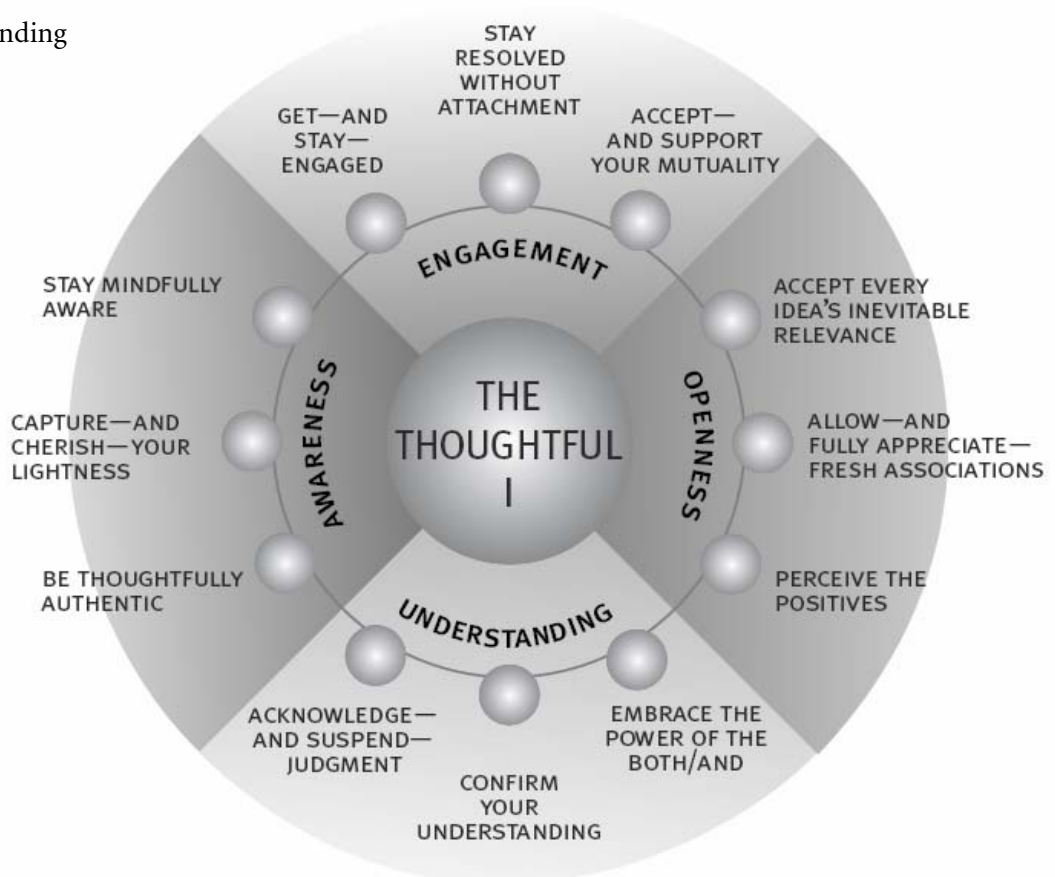
Remember the drill?

“Class, please list all the vowels,” your teacher would say.

“A, E, I, O, U, and sometimes Y,” you and your classmates would respond.

In this book we are building on this age-old mnemonic device, presenting what we call the 5 + 1 vowels of personal power. They are:

- Awareness
- Engagement
- Integrity
- Openness
- Understanding



And as for the “sometimes Y,” we discuss it in the conclusion, entitled, with some poetic license, “And Always Why.” Why “why”? Because for all of us, our philosophy of life is both the foundation and the result of how we interact with the issues of our lives and the people in our lives.

In this book, we take the vowels—A, E, O, and U—and describe three practices of each that will help you achieve mastery of awareness, engagement, openness, and understanding. I, meanwhile, has a chapter of its own and is front and center throughout this book as it works to coordinate and integrate all of the practices.

The 12 practices will enable you, step by step, to access more effective, more powerful, and more creatively energetic ways of relating. They will enable you to liberate your creative energy and transform your relationships. They will enable you to reconnect with your innate ability to create. They will improve your physical, mental, emotional, and even spiritual well-being.

Using these practices is not magical—the process is not one of hocus-pocus but of experimentation, discipline, and constant vigilance.

The *results*, however, *are* magical. Once you apply the practices to yourself and then put them to work in a relationship, you will be well equipped to apply them to other relationships, until the patterns, and wonderful relationships, become a natural part of your life. “Things go better with Coke” was one of Coca-Cola’s famous taglines. The tagline or constant theme of our work and this book is: *As energy flows, the better life goes.*

The Energy Exchange

Reality conspires against our individual and shared energy. This starts early in our lives, soon after we exit the womb. When children are born, were they able to speak, they would probably say, “I’m in shock. I’m coming out of a warm, wet tank and now it’s dry and uncomfortable.”

(*Bob*) My daughter, Rome, was born by caesarian section. I remember her coming out feet first like a big corkscrew. She appeared to be a small, blue Shar-Pei dog with a huge mass of red hair. Within five minutes, the blue was gone, and a bunch of the Shar-Pei folds were gone. I could see through Rome’s crying the beginnings of her attempts to become engaged with her environment.

I was fortunate to be able to take parental leave from my management-consulting firm for three months and watch Rome’s rapid progression. Day by day she became increasingly **aware** of and **engaged** with her environment. She was totally **open** to life around her and

was continually seeking to **understand**—learning, for example, that certain cries prompted certain responses.

After returning to work, I continued spending lots of time observing her and playing with her. Rome was clearly open to everything. And then, beginning at about 15 months and continuing through her early years, the shoulds and shouldn'ts began to settle in. My wife, Dorothy, and I tried to stay as open as possible, yet the structures continued to form. By the time she was four, it seemed to us that she had developed a set of rules.

The premise of *The Energy Exchange*, and of this book, is that, like Rome, we are all born bundles of creative energy. When we are little, we live in the present moment. Our memory of the past is short and we have no sense of the future. Everything is now. In our natural state, energy flows freely within us, between us, and in our environment. We're born with the capacity for **awareness, engagement, openness, and understanding**.

However, as we develop our own understanding of the world, we extend our list of shoulds and shouldn'ts, works and not-works, "goods" and "bads." The things that work for us become our laws and the things that don't become our taboos. Together these form the basis of our beliefs, many of which become *limiting* beliefs. We begin to apply our past judgments easily and instinctively to current situations, and a lot of what we do becomes automatic.

Soon we begin to live in the past and in the future, failing to leverage the real power of life: the present. Most of us have heard the child's lament, "I can't wait until my next birthday!" With external and internal forces working to obstruct our natural energy, it's not surprising that it's a challenge to remain aware, engaged, and open, continually seeking to understand.

That's where our conscious mind comes in—what we will introduce as our Thoughtful I—which we use to reconnect with our native talents and actively manage our awareness, engagement, openness, and continued quest for understanding.

5 + 1 Ways to Liberate Your Creative Energy

The practices associated with each of the vowels of power in this book will help you liberate your creative energy. Let's take a quick look ahead at the 5 + 1 sections of the book.

I is for Integrity and the Thoughtful I

The Thoughtful I—our conscious thought—*integrates* all the other practices in the vowels of personal power. It intervenes between emotion and response, stays engaged and aware, keeps us positive and open, and helps us take effective action through richer understanding.

A is for Awareness

As we become more *aware* of ourselves and those around us, we learn to handle difficult situations and communicate our feelings with authenticity and tact. We can prevent ourselves from falling victim to overwhelming and negative feelings.

The AWARENESS section of the book explores these three practices:

- Stay Mindfully Aware
- Capture—and Cherish—Your Lightness
- Be Thoughtfully Authentic

E is for Engagement

Once we become more aware of what's happening inside and around us, we learn to stay *personally engaged* with ourselves, in our relationships, and as we move toward our goals.

The ENGAGEMENT section of the book deals with these three practices:

- Get—and Stay—Engaged
- Stay Resolved Without Attachment
- Accept and Support Your Mutuality

O is for Openness

As we move toward greater *openness*, our Thoughtful I begins to see exciting new possibilities. We learn to embrace and accept all the new ideas and possibilities that come our way.

The OPENNESS section of the book describes these three practices:

- Accept Every Idea's Inevitable Relevance
- Allow—and Fully Appreciate—Fresh Associations
- Perceive the Positives

U is for Understanding

The more we *understand*—not just *know about*—a situation, the better we can frame our responses and the better we can take appropriate action. The Thoughtful I and understanding will help us get to a point where we develop a more complete understanding that is physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually nuanced.

The UNDERSTANDING section of the book presents these three practices:

- Acknowledge—and Suspend—Judgment
- Confirm Your Understanding
- Embrace the Power of the Both/And

And so ... let the journey begin.