



TAKE LIFE BY THE HELM!

*Proven Strategies
for Gaining Control*

*How to Live a Courageous,
Adventurous and Deliberate Life*

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How to Live a Courageous, Adventurous and Deliberate Life

Chapter 1: Wake Up and Set Sail

You can sometimes see it in the eyes of those around you: That vacant, distant, somewhat bombed-out stare.

And you can sometimes hear it in their words. They avoid *absolutes* when talking about their plans, their dreams, what they'd like to do. There are too many "ifs." Too many "maybes." Too many "some days."

Way too many "I don't know."

What's going on here? A contagious disease? Some mysterious epidemic that's gone unreported in the media?

Their Eyes Tell the Story

No. The sad truth is your loved ones and co-workers—most of the people you come in contact with, in fact—*have simply lost control.*

They've lost control of their lives. *Poof!* If they ever really had it in the first place.

And the grim reality is, *they know all about it.*

These are people who aren't where they thought they'd be by now. Or achieved anywhere near what they hoped they'd achieve. Few conquests animate their faces during the day. Their lives simply don't mesh with the spectacular dreams of their youth.

And they have no idea what to do about it. That's the thing. Time is passing them by, and they can't figure out how to right the ship.

That's what you're seeing in their eyes.

Having said that...

What Do People See When They Look In *Your* Eyes?

That's really the question, isn't it?

Does confidence come beaming out of your baby blues?

Do people see ironclad purpose in there?

Determination and courage? Passion and compassion?

Does excitement and humor dance in your pupils?

Or...are your eyes...*just like everyone else's*?

Are you seen as just another person living a life of, as Thoreau so eloquently put it, "quiet desperation"?

The Real You Is Waiting Deep Down Inside

It's not your fault, you know. Not really. At least, it hasn't been, up to this page anyway.

Down deep inside, you've probably realized that there's a whole lot more to your life.

But no one's ever shown you how to access it. No one's ever taught you how to bring it to the surface.

No one's ever handed you an instruction manual, in other words.

So there, inside, the real you sits...waiting patiently...ready for a day that may never, ever come.

There are times when you may even catch a glimpse of your real self. There's that longing to be the person you always intended to be...those wonderful gifts and talents you see quietly rusting inside...the courage you need to live a magnificent life...the eagerness to achieve the success of a lifetime.

But then, by stark contrast, there's your present-day reality. The job you couldn't care less about...the dull monotony of your everyday routine...your safety and complete lack of risk-taking...the way you blame and criticize others without giving it a second thought.

It's a life the *real you* pretty much despises.

Another life is waiting.

It's a life of excitement...of victories and defeats...of the same kind of exhilaration you'd feel if you were up there in the crow's nest of an ancient tall ship, surveying the spectacular sea, feeling the delightful sting of ocean wind in your grinning face.

Speaking of the sea, maybe you've heard that a ship is safest in the harbor...but that's not where a ship is meant to be.

A ship is meant to be out there on the ocean, propelled by the wind, slicing through the waves, braving the storms, crossing the sea en route to exciting ports.

Okay...but...aren't there risks out there on the ocean? *Sure*. Couldn't something go wrong on the high seas? *Of course*. Isn't it possible that you could even, worst-case scenario, *sink*?

Yes, sinking in the middle of the ocean is a distinct possibility.

But couldn't you also **face down all those threats and obstacles on the way to having the absolute adventure of a lifetime?**

YES!!!

Well, here's some breaking news: **The real you is just aching, screaming even, to have an adventure like that!**

Here's a story you need to hear, something that happened to me...

Get Your Freak On

It was like a place you'd only see in the movies. The clear, turquoise water, gentle rush of the waves and warm sand between my toes left me feeling like I never wanted to leave.

As I walked along the beach, I stopped to look at a local vendor's wares.

This particular guy was barefoot and shirtless with long dreadlocks that looked like they hadn't been washed since the last episode of *Seinfeld*. He said "ya mon" after every sentence, and that was timed with a rhythmic nod of the head.

I told him I was looking for the right souvenir to remind me of my time in Belize.

He smiled and said, "My friend, your worries are over." For some reason, that didn't reassure me.

He came around the table and stood by me. "I have the perfect ting for ya, mon." He then picked up a Tiki mask, held it up to my face and in a soft yet intent voice said, "Look at dat, can you see it, mon? Can you hear whaditz saying to you?"

I started edging away, wondering what the guy was smoking. Or drinking. Or smoking *and* drinking. That was before things got...well...*really weird*.

He came so close to me I thought he was going to give me a kiss (and his breath was anything but minty fresh). He looked right into my eyes—right into my soul, seemingly—and, holding the mask up, asked if I could, "Hear it?"

"Hmmm. No. Can't say I hear anything at all."

Then he asked if the mask carving was asleep or awake.

"Well, if I had to guess, I'd say this pricy piece of carved wood looks asleep to me. But I don't..."

"Right, mon!"

He continued his disturbing gaze. Then: "This is the mask of the sleeping prince, and before he can become a king, he has to do what?"

Feeling all at once that this question had become significant, as if, in some fantastic, inexplicable way, my future hinged on me providing the right answer, I muttered...

"Wake up?"

"Yes, mon! Wake up! Like dis mask, you are a sleeping prince, and it is time for you to wake up. You must never forget dat you are one of God's beautiful creations. You are beautiful, mon! And you must now wake up to become the king you were born to be."

His words seemed to echo in my head long after he had finished speaking them. I felt frozen in place.

“You are here to do tings dat only you can do, mon!”

He then grabbed my hand, put it on my chest, and said, “You feel dat?”

I felt my heart. Yes, it was still beating.

“I do.”

“Your heart beats today for a reason, and you must find out why. For it’s dat ‘why’ dat will reveal your purpose. Your hell will be meeting, one day, the person you *could have been* and the contributions *you could have made*. **So wake up and become!**”

I was struggling to keep up.

He then asked in a suddenly accent-less, matter-of-fact way, “Now do you want the mask or not?”

I was momentarily speechless (which doesn’t often happen to me). After fumbling for words, I managed, “Sure. I’ll take it.”

I had difficulty getting to sleep that night.

Lying there, I thought of the many people I’d known who had incredible gifts and potential, yet seemed forever mired in their lives.

They were my friend’s sleeping princes.

And I couldn’t help thinking of the people I’d known who we’re doing wonderful things with their lives. These were the kings and queens he mentioned.

What I first deemed a “freaky situation” turned out to be one of the most powerful sermons I had ever heard.

I was determined then and there, on that hotel bed in Belize, to finally wake up to my true self!

Three Metaphors to Help You Wake Up and Set Sail

Throughout the book, I'll be using three nautical concepts, three metaphors to help give you a clearer idea of how to gain control of your life and become your true self.

First, is the concept of *The Helm*.

Second is the *North Star*.

Third is the *Lighthouse*.

Navigators of yesteryear, old captains at the helm, used the stars to chart their courses and make corrections along the way. Likewise, people who enjoy lives of greatness are not only at *The Helm* but, like those old time mariners, have their own *North Star*, their own constant, to help get them where they're going, eventually being directed safely, and in detail, into the harbor by their *Lighthouse*.

Let's take a closer look at these concepts.

First...*The Helm*...

So what exactly is *The Helm* in the context of this book?

The Helm refers to you being in control. It means using the power of your free will to deliberately choose your course no matter the circumstances. Being at *The Helm* means *you directing your thinking* to overcome the inevitable challenges that come your way.

Did you catch that? Directing your thinking? That means you actually being in charge of what goes through your mind.

What a concept. Your ultimate freedom depends on this. On grabbing *The Helm* and taking ownership and responsibility for your life without excuse, rationalization or blame.

This means living a life of honor grounded in truth and reality. *Reality?* That's the way things really are, not the fairy tale illusions we often construct.

While most everyone wants this—to be in control of their lives and live an honorable life—*few have any idea how to go about it.*

Fortunately, this book aims to teach you just that. Day by day. Year by year.

Second...*Your North Star*...

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The mariners did, of course, use stars to guide them toward their ports. You couldn't just pick up a GPS at your nearest Radio Shack back then.

One star commonly used was the North Star. Why? Because it was and is a glorious *constant* in the sky. Mariners could count on it to direct them to where they wanted to go. But the use of this constant in their lives wasn't exactly a luxury.

It was, without any exaggeration, a matter of life or death.

Think about it. Old time sailors were smack dab in the middle of the ocean, this endless watery expanse where nothing at all is stable, an environment that could change by the second. Yet, somehow, in some way, they learned to navigate this forlorn setting with precision.

All we can now say is, "Wow."

By connecting to the North Star they found a reliable, dependable way to get back to their lighthouses and ports, time after time.

So, okay, let's say you choose to take *The Helm* (assume ownership of your life while dispensing with the blame, the excuses and rationalizations), and you chart your course using the *North Star* (which means listening to your God, a higher power, the universe, your conscience, core values or your guiding principles).

In that case, so far so good.

The *North Star* is that loving voice inside you that's hopeful, reassuring, incredibly wise, astonishingly accurate—and, yes, sometimes really, really annoying—persistently nudging you towards doing those things you don't want to or don't know how to do.

The very same things that seem impossible, in other words.

Sadly, rather than take advantage of this wonderful asset, most of us spend our entire lives learning all the ways we can shut it up.

That ends here. On these pages, we'll help put you back in touch. You'll learn how to steer in the right direction for you, and you alone, using your own personal *North Star*.

Alright, next comes...

Third...Your Lighthouse...

Once you start paying attention to it, your *North Star* will direct you right toward your own *Lighthouse*.

Your own “purposeful contribution,” in other words.

Like a real-life lighthouse, your own *Lighthouse* will give you the *specific* direction, bearing and clarity you need to hone right in on your success.

In the same way a lighthouse shoots a powerful directional beam to mariners approaching the harbor, your *Lighthouse* will help spotlight your unique gifts, your greatest strengths (and weaknesses), and where you should go from here. And it will clearly separate the trivial and insignificant from your own personal brand of greatness...and shine light on the sacrifices it will take for you to achieve that greatness.

Combine all three metaphors—*The Helm*, your *North Star* and your *Lighthouse*—and you’ll have a powerful formula for success, an unstoppable force for good.

That’s what this book can give you.

Caution: This Guide Book Is *Not* For Everyone

You probably should know that at the very start.

I didn’t write this book to make you feel all warm and cozy.

Not that I’m trying to make this transformation particularly hard on you, understand. That’s the last thing I want. It’s just that sometimes, to get at the core truths of your life, you need to come face to face with realities that can be...well...*a bit disturbing*.

See, to accomplish great things, you need to get past your old, negative way of thinking. You’ve probably heard that saying, “if you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you always got”?

That’s why I’m challenging the way you do things. And think of things.

On the other hand, if you’re just looking for a book that tells you I’m okay, you’re okay, and everything in life is just peachy keen, here’s my suggestion:

Close the book cover right now and place it in a spot where you won't likely come across it again for another year.

Maybe then you'll be better prepared to actually *own your own success*.

Seriously, and no offense at all intended, but you'll start moving ahead in your life only when you have the courage and commitment to take the next step. Maybe that sounds a bit trite and cliché.

It's true nonetheless.

There's the oriental saying, "When student ready, teacher appear."

Hopefully, *grasshopper*, the book now in your hands is that teacher.

My Promise To You

This book is dedicated *to helping you absolutely, positively seize control of your life for maybe the first time in your life*.

I promise to share all of my specific ideas, tips and techniques to help you seize life by *The Helm*. They've worked for literally thousands of people in the real world, as well as myself. If you ever get stuck somewhere in the process or have a question, please don't hesitate to email me at doug@dougspeaks.com.

You can also find a wealth of specific supportive material at www.dougspeaks.com.

Remember, I'm pulling for you here.

From Your Darkest to Your Brightest Days

As a psychotherapist, executive coach, chief operating officer, husband, parent, son, karate guy, little league soccer coach, dog lover, fan of underdogs everywhere and, yes, taker-outer-of-the-trash, I've been on an adventure to learn how people from all walks of life find meaning and fulfillment under the most trying of circumstances.

I've worked with people in the darkest days of their lives where they could see no way out. There was the professional woman paralyzed by rage after the brutal rape and murder of her daughter...a dear friend who overcame a severe drug addiction that cost him his business and nearly his family...the

parents gripped with despair because of the loss of their 21-year-old daughter due to medical negligence...the married couple so trapped by resentment and bitterness they couldn't even sit in the same room together...the overwhelming remorse a father had over the son who chose suicide...the woman who lost everything a mere 24 hours after her husband walked out on her.

Then there was the man with the million-dollar idea who would rather have his teeth yanked out by pliers, one at a time, and without anesthesia, then give a public presentation.

In each of these cases, my clients had reached a dead-end. They felt trapped and suffocated...yet somehow, against all odds, still managed to overcome their panic enough to prosper. They didn't just survive their challenges; they used their seemingly impossible circumstances to propel them to a greatness they could never, ever have imagined.

Now let's take a little voyage to Pirate Island and see what's going on there, okay?

Deep within man dwell those slumbering powers; powers that would astonish him, that he never dreamed of possessing, forces that would revolutionize his life if aroused and put into action.

—Orison Swett Marden