

## “OWNERSHIP” -- THE KEY TO HIGH PERFORMANCE:

### Four Tips for Getting Your Life Back!

by Doug Nielsen, CSP, MSW, LCSW

"I can't stand it anymore!! The stress is driving me crazy! I used to enjoy working here; in fact, I loved it. My boss doesn't get it. My co-workers are clueless and I am doing the job of three people. The worst part is no one seems to care anymore!"

These are the words spoken by a mid-level leader in a recent coaching session. She was discouraged and had lost heart. Actually the root of the word, discouraged, means "to lose heart." She is a well meaning leader who really wants to contribute, but for reasons that are very clear, she just can't bring herself to do it.

Did you know that over 70% of people in the workforce are disengaged? In my experience with 1000's of people, they don't really want to be disengaged, but "being disengaged" becomes almost a matter of survival. To survive, they give what is required and no longer offer that which is inspired.

Can you relate to any of the above? Does your heart desire to be more fully awake? Does it yearn for something more? Do you want to live more fully despite the challenges? I certainly do. I don't want to live with a heart that is barely working. I want to be fully alive. I have to admit at times that this sounds good on paper, but

can be so hard for me to do. However, this is a battle worth fighting for.

We could spend hours identifying the complexities of the situation and why this is the case, but what good would that do? Really!! Instead, let's look at concrete solutions proven to increase your engagement and performance dramatically.

Feel free to use this personally, to share it with your team, and even with your family.

### TRIVIAL VS. SIGNIFICANT

Viktor Frankl, concentration camp survivor and author of the book Man's Search for Meaning, told me, "There comes a time in your life when, you must force yourself to stop entertaining the trivial (*the things you can't control*) and focus on the significant (*the things you can control*)." This practice played a major role in his surviving the death camps.

Honestly, what can you really control? *Yourself!* That's it. Yet if you are like me, you often try to control your kids, your spouse, your co-workers, and the results you want. But when it's all said and done, the only thing you can control is yourself. That's it.

You can make requests of others and you can hold others accountable for commitments made, but you can't control them or the outcome.

So do you throw your hands in the air in frustration and lose heart? No! You apply these 4 tips to getting your life back! It's all based on ultimately taking **100% ownership** for where you are at in life and for your experiences regardless of your circumstances. The following four tips will help you take ownership and stay at the helm of your life:

1. **Own your attitude;**
2. **Own your do;**
3. **Own your words; and**
4. **Own your understanding.**

## **OWN YOUR ATTITUDE**

On a scale from 1-10 (10 being the best) where would you rate your attitude over the last 3 days? How often do you allow another person's mere presence to hijack your attitude? I am amazed at how quickly I can give control of my attitude over to another person or even to such trivial things like the weather.

Owning your "tude" is not just about trying to see the bright side of life, it is about taking 100% ownership for creating your attitude regardless of your situation. It's not overlooking the challenges in life and pretending all is well. It is choosing to see opportunities in those challenges and choosing an attitude that will best equip you to deal with them.

An attitude of depression or cynicism does not bring out the best in you or others and has never been helpful in facing challenges. In fact, research shows that depression and cynical attitudes actually slow the brain's creativity -- creativity needed to face challenges in fresh ways.

Attitude originates in your thoughts and results in action. Simply, you are where you are because of the thoughts you had 10 years ago, 6 months ago, one day ago, one hour ago. Einstein said,

**"Imagination is a preview of what's coming."**

Your thoughts are the best way to predict your future. Do you like what's coming? Identify and refute the almost undetectable thoughts that create your attitude. When it comes to your "tude,"

awareness of negative thinking is the most important step to changing course.

## **OWN YOUR DO**

This is taking ownership for the actions you take. The foundation for high performance is ownership. Without it, success is nothing more than the luck of the draw – like picking the ace of hearts out of a full deck.

Can you imagine what it would be like to work with others who are not constantly blaming or making excuses? Wow! Or, how would it be if rationalizations or justification were not part of your organization's M.O.? Wouldn't that be sweet? Undoubtedly! But now comes the hard question: Are **you** willing to own what you do or not do?

I have personally found that at times **talking** about ownership is a lot easier than **taking** ownership. In fact sometimes I hate ownership...but not for long. **Start** today by taking 100% responsibility for what you do. Don't blame it on excuses of being tired, that you didn't have all the information, or that you were confused. Just own it.

The next time your get pulled over for speeding give the cop a heart attack by owning it. Imagine the reaction!

Another part of "Owning Your Do," is owning your "Should Do." This concept really separates the women from the girls and the men from the boys! This is perhaps one of the biggest factors for all high performers. It is being willing to do what others are not. It is doing what average performers won't do. Jerry Rice one of the best NFL receivers of all time said,

**“I do today what others won’t,  
so I can do tomorrow what others  
can’t.”**

Typically it’s the *small things over time* that propel you into excellence. Take small baby steps. Ask yourself, what actions can I take that others are not willing to take that will make all the difference? Ask yourself this question everyday and watch what happens.

### **OWN YOUR WORDS**

This includes words both spoken and thought. If you say it, you own it. This is very straight forward. If you say it, take 100% ownership for it. Don’t say it if you don’t mean it. If you make a promise, follow through with it and be accountable for your words. It might be justifiably tempting to blame another person or circumstances for not honoring your words -- but don’t do it. Teach your team to say what they mean and help them understand that they, like you, will be held accountable for their words. This will remarkably increase performance.

Another aspect of Owning Your Words, is owning the ones that you didn’t express (your thoughts), but were nudged by your heart to say.

Personally, I know this stuff, but I still can fall into the trap of not saying what I really feel or believe. Why? Because of the “the fear of the peer” as my good friend Kirk Weisler would say.

Every time you don’t say what you really feel moved upon to say, it takes a notch out of your personal integrity -- because in effect you are lying! If someone asks for your opinion and you don’t give it, your self- respect takes a hit impacting how you see yourself. What conversation does your heart nudge you to have, but

for whatever reason you have not? It is time to speak the unspoken.

It gets so old living a life based on other’s approval. So, if someone asks you your view, practice being a “man” or a “woman” and tactfully give your take on the situation.

**“Courage isn’t courage  
if you aren’t a little afraid.”**

### **OWN YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

If you don’t understand what someone says to you, ask for clarification. That’s simple most of the time, but when it really counts, it becomes critical -- like when the surgeon removed the wrong leg because her understanding was not clear. Ouch!

What stops us from doing this more often? You guessed it, “fear of the peer.”

Asking for clarification or ensuring you correctly received the message given is called meta-communication.

Meta-communication is communication about communication. For example, I say to you, “Nice shirt.” You take this to mean I have just made fun of you. This assumed meaning comes because there are so many variables when it comes to communication. So, don’t leave it to chance, be strong and ask for clarification even when it might make you look silly.

### **THE OWNERSHIP ADVANTAGE**

Applying these four ownership tips is critical to keeping your heart engaged – to living with purpose, power, and passion.

When you take ownership for your attitude, your actions, and your communication, these are a few of the benefits you will gain:

- You will be more positive and live with greater optimism and hope;
- You will be able to not only see, but grasp more opportunities;
- You will improve and deepen relationships;
- You will eliminate blame and excuse making from your life;
- You will effectively communicate with others and decrease miscommunications;
- You will have increased energy and get more done in less time; and
- You will increase your performance, your effectiveness, and your fulfillment.

Follow these four tips and gain the **Ownership Advantage** in your life!!

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*Doug Nielsen is a professional speaker, trainer, coach, and psychotherapist with over 17 years experience in aligning people with performance through personal ownership. He is also author of the recently released book, [Take Life By The Helm: Proven Strategies For Gaining Immediate Control](#). To talk with Doug further about gaining the Ownership Advantage for your organization contact him at 801-391-4356 or [douq@dougspeaks.com](mailto:douq@dougspeaks.com)*



