

**A Special Edition White Paper**

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**SELF MASTERY AS  
A WAY OF LIFE**

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Old habits die hard, as the saying goes. And one habit that most of us share—and find difficult to both notice and shake—is our tendency to run “on automatic.” Unconscious patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving are often the silent saboteurs of self mastery in our personal and professional lives.

For example, a financial advisor is very clear that she must spend 60% of her day on the phone with clients if she is to retain their business and get necessary referrals. Yet she is continually attracted to working on less important administrative tasks. A president of a remodeling company has a very long list of projects but is easily distracted when employee and client issues arise, keeping him from finishing any of his projects. His list stays long, his employees stay dependent, and he is continually frustrated. A pediatrician who prides herself on being in control of her life now finds her newly established practice growing so fast that both she and her practice are out of control. She’s overwhelmed and unsure. Her pride has been punctured and now she is angry that she has lost control of managing herself, her business, and her staff.

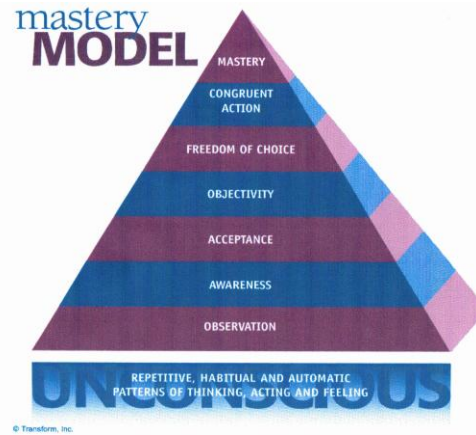
Until we uncover and recognize patterns that have become habitual we cannot achieve mastery—that state of being where actions are guided by awareness and intention rather than habit and reaction. Many times, we automatically act before we apply any awareness to situations, and then we regret our actions or are unaware of their impact on others and ourselves. The key to mastery is the level of consciousness we bring to our thoughts, emotions, our physical presence, and our actions. Developing this level of awareness is a skill that can and must be learned if we are to achieve any level of mastery within desired areas of our personal and professional life.

As we move toward mastery, the results are compelling, rewarding, and powerful. At each of the seven levels of the mastery model, new discoveries are made that can positively impact how we feel about ourselves and the people around us and how we react to and shape certain situations. For business leaders in particular, self mastery is a valuable tool that shapes results, daily quality-of-life issues, and helps gain skills necessary to become the leaders that will take us and our organizations into a bright and visionary future.

# KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MASTERY MODEL

## 1. OBSERVATION

The journey toward self-mastery begins with observing a situation or interaction. Keep in mind that observation is a learned skill that gets easier and refined with practice. You may find at first that your observations occur at the end of the day as you reflect upon situations you encountered. Other observations may come in the form of feedback from your colleagues. As you become more comfortable with this skill, you will find yourself observing more “in the moment” rather than after the fact.



## 2. AWARENESS

Once you begin observing, you can tune into your habitual patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving and their influence over your emotions and actions. For example, the president of the remodeling company mentioned earlier realizes his belief that other people’s issues are more important than his own. He thinks “If I just deal with their issue now, I can get back to my work.” The reality is that by addressing these issues immediately he unconsciously encourages people to continually bring their issues to him—thus keeping him from doing his work. The result is that he ends up staying late into the night working just to stay on top of his task list. Awareness helps us discover the “why” behind what we do. Once we understand the “why,” we are ready for the next step—acceptance.

## 3. ACCEPTANCE

Knowing why we do what we do leads us to realize that we have not been “in control” but rather on automatic, acting from habit, faulty beliefs, and/or assumptions. This realization may be a difficult one to swallow, yet accepting what “is” right now is the launching pad toward self mastery. Acceptance without self-critical judgments, knowing that we have always done the very best we could, is important and opens the door to the next step of mastery.

## 4. OBJECTIVITY

Now that you’re observing and aware and able to understand and accept “why” you do what you do, you can step back and objectively assess a situation or interaction. Is your approach—formulated by your habitual patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving—producing the desired results? Or is it time to choose a different course of action? In the instance of the president of the remodeling company, he was no longer willing to work hours into the night and realized it was time to choose a different strategy.

## **5. FREEDOM TO CHOOSE**

You have arrived at the crossroads. When you're on automatic, there is no freedom of choice. But now you recognize the unconscious habits that drive you—and you can consciously choose your behavior and response. For the financial advisor mentioned previously, this new-found freedom of choice may empower him to establish times when he will be available for administrative tasks. The pediatrician may establish clearly defined roles and responsibilities for her staff, stop doing administrative tasks that her staff should be doing, hold her staff accountable for the results, and let go of the belief that she has to micro-manage in order to stay in control. She may choose instead to meet weekly with staff members and review a series of management reports that inform her of the state of the business.

## **6. Congruent ACTION**

Choosing the next right action and doing it are two different animals. Intellectually we often know the right action to take, but old beliefs may inhibit us from doing them. A sales person knows intellectually that right action for her is to ask the client for a referral, but when she gets in front of the client, she can't get the words out of her mouth. Congruent action means that you choose to act in a certain way and you do it! As you master certain skills, this way of being becomes effortless and automatic.

## **7. MASTERY**

Congratulations! You've crossed the finish line. But remember—mastery is an ongoing process, a continuous practice that is available to all yet utilized effectively by few. As you continue to develop and refine the skills, behaviors, and attitudes that reinforce mastery, you will achieve your desired results and recognize the positive, productive impact on those around you.

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