It is possible to be effectively *doing* while you are delightfully *being*, in your ordinary workaday world. Teaching you how to be maximally efficient and relaxed, whenever you need or want to be, was my main purpose in writing this book (xi) Executives at the top are looking to instill "ruthless execution" in themselves and their people as a basic standard. We need to learn how to focus on outcomes, or what actions to take to make them happen (xiii) Most people will have some major work habits that must be modified. The methods I present in this book are all based on two key objectives:

Capturing *all* the things that need to be done and disciplining yourself to make front-end decisions about all of the "inputs" you let into your life (3,4)

Most of the stress people experience comes from inappropriately managed commitments they make or accept (12) If it's on your mind, your mind isn't clear (13) Something can be on your mind when you haven't clarified exactly what the intended outcome is, or you haven't decided what the very next physical action step is, or you haven't put reminders of the outcome and the action required in a system you trust (15) It's a waste of time and energy to keep thinking about something that you make no progress on (16) we are all inundated with "stuff" which is anything you have allowed into your psychological or physical world that doesn't belong where it is, but for which you haven't yet determined the desired outcome and the next action step (17) You need to get into the habit of keeping nothing on your mind, but in a system for tracking. The key to managing "your stuff" is managing your *actions* (18)

The real issue for most of us is lack of clarity and definition about what a project really is, and what the associated next-action steps required are. Another key issue to how to make appropriate choices about what to *do* at any point in time; how we manage our *actions* (19) Some people have good systems, but don't *review* them consistently enough to keep them functional (24) If things that need to get done are not being managed in a trusted

external system you've created, then those things are resident *somewhere* in your psyche.(27) In time you will notice that your best ideas about work will not come to you at work. The ability to leverage that thinking with good collection devises-paper or digitally- that are always at hand is the key to increased productivity (30) With everything that comes your way that needs doing you will want to <u>Do</u> it, <u>delegate</u> it or <u>defer</u> it to another day (35) I define a project as any desired result that requires more than one action step (37) You don't actually do a project; you can only do action steps related to it (38) So where do all your action reminders go? On "next actions" lists- which, along with your calendar, are at the heart of daily action management organization (41) Everything that might potentially require action must be reviewed on a frequent enough basis to keep you mind from taking back the job of remembering and reminding; a "Weekly review" (46) A weekly review is the time to:

1. Gather and process all your stuff

2. Review your system

3. Update your lists

4. Get clean, clear, current and complete (47)

Something automatic and extraordinary happens in your mind when you create and focus on a clear picture of what you want (68) One of the most powerful skills in the world of knowledge work, and one of the most important to hone and develop, is creating clear outcomes (69) You've got to be able to create a list on the run and review it easily and as regularly as you need to (96) It's important that you record the date on everything you hand off to others (135) Lists are just a way for you to keep track of the total inventory of active things to which you have made a commitment, and to have that inventory available for review (141) You need to trust your calendar as sacred territory, reflecting the exact hard edges of your day's commitments. If you have 50 or 100 next actions pending, keeping all of them on one big list would make it too difficult to see what you needed to see. (143)

When a key person is sitting in front of you in your office, you'd be wise to have all the things you need to talk about with him on her at hand (144) The function of an organization system is primarily to supply the reminders you need to see when you need to see them (154) In order to hang out with friends, or take a long, aimless walk and truly have nothing on your mind, you've got to know where all your actionable items are located, what they are, and that they will wait. And you need to be able to do that in seconds, not days (155) The key is that you must consistently look for any action steps inherent in your project notes, and review the notes themselves as often as you think is necessary, given the nature of the project (162) The problem most people have psychologically with all their stuff is that it's still stuff—that is, they haven't decided what's actionable and what's not (164) Your brain must engage on some consistent basis with all your commitments and activities. Reviewing your system on a regular basis and keeping it current and functional are prerequisites for good control (181)

If your calendar is trustworthy and your action lists are current, they may be the only things in the system you'll need to refer to more than every couple of days (183) If you system is out of date, your brain will be forced to fully engage again at the lower level of remembering. The magic key to the sustainability of the process is the Weekly Review, which mandates doing whatever you need to do to get your head empty again (185) Getting things done, and feeling good about it, means being willing to recognize, acknowledge, and appropriately manage all the things that have your consciousness engaged. Mastering the art of stress-free productivity requires it (202) Everything needed to be done must be captured, objectified, and reviewed regularly in full conscious awareness so that you can put it where it belongs in your self-management system (232)

I suggest that you use your mind to think *about* things, rather than think *of* them (233) I need to trust that any request or relevant information I put on a voice-mail, in an e-mail, in a conversation, or in a written note will get into the other person's system and that it will be processed and organized, soon, and available for his or her review as an option for action (234)

You should be able to hold people accountable for outcomes, and for tracking and managing everything that comes their way (235) I envision organizations adopting a standard that anything that lands in anyone's "ten acres" will be evaluated for action required, and the resulting decisions managed appropriately. Groups and individuals need to install a "What's the next action" culture (236) What's truly impolite is allowing people to walk away from discussions unclear (246) When every project and open loop in an organization is being monitored, it's a whole new ball game (247)

Employing next-action decision-making results in clarity, productivity, accountability, and empowerment (251) Your life and work are made up of outcomes and actions. When your operational behavior is grooved to organized everything that comes your way, at all levels, based upon those dynamics, a deep alignment occurs, and wondrous things emerge. You become high productive. You make things up, and you make them happen (252) To consistently stay on course, you'll have to do some things that may not be habits yet; keep everything out of your head; decide actions and outcomes when things first emerge on your radar, instead of later, and regularly review and update the complete inventory of open loops of your life and work (258)