

INTRODUCTION

That which is most important must never be at the mercy of that which is least important.

—Goethe

You have a major presentation to give. Your budget is due. Your boss anointed you the go-to person for every request that comes into your understaffed department. You have just been given a new plum project. Somehow, you meet all the external demands of your life. You manage to juggle till you drop and then wonder why you have a nagging sense of incompleteness despite all that you've accomplished. Your cup runneth over—right onto your freshly dry-cleaned suit.

Does this sound familiar? The little trade-offs you make to get things done accumulate and have an insidious way of leaching away your creativity, passion, and sense of fulfillment. Instead of feeling connected and contented, you feel stressed and out of balance. You'd really like the opportunity to find out whether less is more.

I've been there. I have run myself ragged thinking that if I just get this other thing out of the way, I'll have time to do something for myself—spend more time hiking in the beautiful Colorado Rockies where I live, explore new spiritual paths, or take tai chi lessons again. I'm thrilled to tell you that I've been able to do all these things and more—without the benefit of winning the lottery!

It truly *is* possible to become a more effective and engaged leader in your workplace and to live a richly textured life that brings you great fulfillment without chronic burnout. No, I'm not in the huckster business; this is not a “miraculous cure for whatever ails your life in 30 days

or your money back” kind of offer. It’s also not a fairy-tale ending. You can’t get there via a yellow brick road, a magic carpet, or a twitch of your nose.

Your *Life’s 2% Solution* is the lifelong transformation that you will gain as you implement your *2% Project*—a simple, practical strategy that requires just a pinch of time and a whole lot of heart. Your 2% Solution can change your life dramatically, but only with your consent and participation. It guides you in discovering your inner passion and creativity simply by reallocating 2% of your time each week. By dedicating just 30 minutes a day (or an equivalent amount in bigger, weekly clusters) toward satisfying an inner yearning, you will transform your life. You will gain an inner sense of well-being, and most important, you will no longer be at the mercy of superficial routines competing for priority.

By giving yourself the gift of spending 2% of your time intentionally devoted to what you truly love through a well-tested process called the 2% Solution, you will enjoy profound rewards. You will leave behind a fragmented life that pulls you in too many directions. Even when all the things pulling on you are good things, it creates tension and frustration. But if you add meaningful focus, you will live a profoundly meaningful life filled with *passionate equilibrium*—the exciting combination of passion expressed while maintaining your equilibrium or balance.

.....
NO “SMOKE AND MIRRORS”

When we try something new, most of us want concrete proof that it will work—no smoke, no mirrors, no spin, just a simple demonstration that it really works. I have gathered substantial evidence that undertaking an intentional 2% Project—the action that gets you to your 2% Solution—is a transformational experience. My own 2% Solution began as an effort to align my work and my values. This soon evolved into a passion for helping others achieve an integrated engagement with life through their own 2% Solutions. For the past five years I have been interviewing professionals of all ages and from

many walks of life about their 2% Projects. These stories are ones of joy and relief, of pain and transformation, and of learning to live in the flow. I have included some in this book to provide wisdom, humor, and inspiration as you embark on the path toward creating your own 2% Solution.

In 1993, my husband and I created our firm, Collaborative Growth, as a way of extending our support to those willing to step forward and achieve inspirational growth. In my research, I have found many people who have engaged in a variety of life-changing projects. What was the common thread? All of these people devoted at least 2% of their time for several months toward a project that has had a profound impact on their lives. Some of them started their 2% Projects in their workplaces when their organizations began making a concerted effort to engage their employees more fully. Others took it upon themselves to initiate their project to bring their *Esprit d'Core*—their true selves—alive after deciding that they were no longer satisfied in unfulfilling lives.

.....

LIFE'S 2% SOLUTION: INSIDE THIS BOOK

You can choose to make an important difference in your life by implementing a 2% Project on your own. The guidance and exercises in this book are structured to help you succeed. It is not necessary that you join a group, hire a coach, or take any other formalized action. Many people work through this type of project and make the adjustments in their lives by themselves, as it is an intimate and very personal experience. Others choose to work in groups or to work with a coach. This is a choice you should make based on your personal needs, your learning style, and your circumstances. Regardless of whether you go after your 2% Solution alone, with a friend, a coach, or in a group, success comes from rolling up your sleeves and diving into your commitment. This is all about the quality of what you put into it, not about the quantity of time you give. Remember, you only need 2% of your time!

Within these pages you will find all you need to guide you in realizing your *Life's 2% Solution*, including these features and benefits:

- **Defining Moments**, which highlight key concepts and definitions
- **2% in Motion** profiles, which feature true stories of how to implement a 2% Project to achieve *Life's 2% Solution*
- **Activities and questionnaires** to help you identify your strengths and weaknesses and give you a personal inventory of the road ahead
- **Inspirational quotes** to buoy you along the way
- Discovery of your **Esprit d'Core**, or your spirit at the core of your being
- A **10-Step Action Plan** designed to help you reach your goal

In addition, you will engage in skill development to support your 2% Solution. Emotional and social intelligence, or EQ (for Emotional Quotient), is at the top of my list of most-needed skills. *Emotional intelligence* is based on ways of being intelligent that differ from the cognitive factors we typically measure with IQ. Whereas IQ involves analytical abilities and reasoning skills, EQ includes self-regard, empathy, and optimism—essential skills for building a happy life. For this reason, each chapter contains an **Engage Your EQ** skill-building activity, which draws on the work of experts such as Reuven Bar-On and Daniel Goleman.

Because of the wealth of material their systems offer on how to better understand ourselves and our world, we will be tapping into the work of some of the most forward-thinking people of our time. In particular, Don Beck's work on Spiral Dynamics integral, Ken Wilber's integral worldview, and the spiritual practices of those such as Father Thomas Keating have been very influential in my work. I recommend you consider them as well in your 2% journey.

In addition, you will find examples to help you identify and expand your strengths, for we know that successful application of our intelligence comes about only when we rely on our strengths. It is indisputable that enhancing our natural strengths is the strategy to bring our

gifts to light. This is how we know we're *in the flow*, or as some people say, "in the zone."

You will find activities to assist you in growing the skills we discuss. I recommend you create a 2% Journal and record your responses there.



Success through a 2% Solution is usually a long and winding road, but it's well worth it. There are four fabulous, life-changing benefits that come from implementing your solution:

1. **Zest Appeal.** When you live from the zest of Esprit d'Core, you give your life the fullness and happiness that spontaneously flows from being committed to giving a voice to your inner wisdom.
2. **Congruency.** When you align your values with your daily living, there is true internal accountability, which creates authentic living that arises out of deep and honest personal reflection. It doesn't have to take a lot of time, but it does have to be honest.
3. **Identity.** When your identity is centered on your internal truth, you don't lose your bearings as normal lifecycle losses come your way. By learning to cope when you lose your outer labels, you know who you really are, without a photo ID.
4. **Passionate Equilibrium.** When you feel your passion for life renewing your world with balance and grace, you know you're living with passionate equilibrium.

In *Life's 2% Solution*, you'll meet real people living complicated lives like your own. They have used the 2% Solution to do things they thought were impossible. Some have fallen in love when they thought they were hopelessly single, while others quit decent jobs and hit pay dirt. Some traded in hefty heartaches tied to jumbo compensation packages for the simple life, while others healed long-standing, festering wounds from childhood, left addiction for sobriety, or grew in their spirituality. Their stories are inspiring; their results are transformational. I am honored to know each one of them.

Each of us seeks to live purposeful and happy lives. Once we meet our basic survival needs, we are universally called to a higher destiny that unfolds for us if we use our strengths to live authentically, aligned with a unique personal calling that fulfills our heart's desire. This is the essence of our humanity and is at the very core of a strong 2% Solution.

The 2% path takes courage—no doubt about it—yet the payoff is tremendous. The freedom you will gain from successfully completing your 2% Solution could range from the marvelous to the miraculous. Developing yourself through your 2% Solution gives you the opportunity to transform your life and live with passionate equilibrium. Some part of you knows this truth or you wouldn't be reading this book right now. Go for it—and enjoy your adventure in great living!

— Marcia Hughes
October 2005