Chapter Six
The Power of Thought

We are all very fragile. Even though we would like to believe we are mentally strong and secure with our lives, a simple thought can make us feel completely miserable or elated.

The power of a thought can make a woman believe she is pregnant when her womb is empty. Her body can take the shape of a woman fifteen weeks expectant and yet a scan can reveal that her mind has fabricated all of the symptoms.

We have all experienced rejection and loss. Losing a great relationship or a partner can have a devastating effect on our bodies. We lose our appetite and energy and our stomachs churn over fifty thousand times a day, all because we have a powerful thought of loss. Yet, nothing has physically happened.

Thought is powerful enough to turn our lives upside down. We can assume that the reverse must be true. Having a positive thought can have an equally strong effect.

When I lived in England, I read a story of a man who was unemployed for eight years. He had been to countless interviews and was never offered a job. He estimated that he applied for over one hundred and twenty jobs, and seldom received a response. He lost his confidence and his pride, and spent most of his time in bed. He had little energy or motivation to do anything positive with his free time. He had lost the will to live.

A typical Saturday night was spent in front of the TV. He would get out of bed at six o'clock p.m., eat whatever was cooked for him and start watching television, starting with the lottery at seven p.m. One night, he sat there with his lottery ticket clutched in his had, watching the numbers come up until his ticket matched all six drawn. He had won fifteen million pounds.

He was ecstatic, dancing around the house, screaming at the top of his voice. He opened the front door and danced in the garden. He ran along the street singing at the top of his voice. He visited his neighbors and promised them all the best party they had ever seen. He came back and called his family and talked about all the things he was going to do, cars and houses he was going to buy. The thought of him being a millionaire completely changed his idea of life.

Later on that night his wife came home from late night shopping. Her husband was shaved, hair washed and dressed in his best suit. He told her to put on her best dress; he had booked a limousine to take them both to the most expensive restaurant in town. He had two glasses of champagne in his hand and wanted to toast to their new life. His wife was in shock.

"What is going on?" she asked!

"I have won the lottery, dear! Fifteen million pounds! I had all six numbers."

The wife's face dropped and she fell her to knees. She had stopped paying for the lottery tickets months ago because she did not believe they would ever win. They could not afford the cost to gamble every week, and she had made the decision to use the money for food and bills rather than waste the money on a long shot.

This is an unfortunate story, and I doubt the husband ever forgave the wife, but the point of this story was that a simple thought could transform our outlook, energy level, motivation, and inspiration. If we could train our minds to feed off positive thoughts, we would be much happier in our lives, instead of focusing on the areas that are wrong with our lives.

If we expand the idea of placing positive thoughts in our subconscious mind, we must also visit the power of hypnosis. Many millions of people around the world have visited a hypnotist to resolve an issue, smoking being one of the most common problems. But what is hypnosis and how does it work?

Did you know that most, if not all, of us drift into a state of hypnosis everyday? How many times have you driven your car and arrived at your destination without knowing how you got there? You were in a state of hypnosis, which occurs when you are concentrating so much on what you are doing that you don't realize how much time has gone by…like reading a book, watching a movie or making love. In other words, hypnosis occurs when you stop thinking and just let go.

Hypnosis has worked for millions of people. People who are obese can lose weight just by the suggestion that they will be totally satisfied with smaller portions. Smokers can become non-smokers with the suggestion that they have never smoked and have no recollection of ever previously smoking. These suggestions are all made to the subconscious mind.

Hypnosis is not just for simple suggestions; it has also been used in surgery for patients who do not want or cannot have anesthesia. The patient is presented with the

suggestion that the feeling of pain experienced is actually a good pain, and although they still feel a pressure or pulling, they are under no severe feeling of discomfort.

Dermatologists have also used suggestion to cure psoriasis in a group of patients. Patients were asked to visualize the potentially disfiguring skin disease disappearing without any medication. Although some of the patients did not respond, others had a complete remission.

We know that a thought can make us happy or sad. We also know that a thought or suggestion can help cure bad habits or even physical ailments. So, we can assume that it is feasible to develop a method of using meditation to focus our minds, and using the power of suggestion to resolve physical issues!

All through my life I have been trying to pull together explanations of how the mind can change our lives. Bookshops are full of "self help" books that explain parts of the equation but seem to be padded with discussions on religion, faith, and the power of color, flowers and

everything else under the sun. I could never find one book that could tie all aspects of what I needed in my life and how to develop a method of achieving it.

Just how powerful is the mind? What are the limits that have been tested and recorded? I was beyond the simple autosuggestion programs available; I was searching for how our minds can change the body, heal ailments and transform our lives.

As I was growing up, I had the body of a stick insect. No matter how much I ate, I never put any weight on. I had been working out since I was fifteen and still looked as if I had spent my life in a prisoner of war camp. I adopted a high fat, high protein diet, and the only thing that grew in size was my face. I was completely frustrated. I often blamed my dad, as he reminded me of a mountain goat. He had a huge appetite and endless amounts of energy, yet never gained a pound.

One day, I was sitting in the sauna after another long workout. I just sat there thinking about the routine I had just completed and the protein that I needed to consume

in the next twelve hours. The door opened, and a man walked in and sat down. He was probably ten years older than I, and was built like a Greek god! He had a small waist, huge chest, muscular shoulders and legs that would support a small building. I was in awe, and asked him how long he had been training. "A couple of years, once or twice a week," he said.

I was even more amazed. "So what is your secret? Diet? Special workout? What? Twice a week is not enough to sculpt a body like yours…"
He laughed and thanked me. "Long story," he said, and walked out.
"Must be steroids," I thought, "and he is too embarrassed to tell me."

A few weeks later, I was in the gym working out and saw him performing some bench presses. The weight was moderate and maybe thirty to forty percent less than I was lifting.

I continued to watch him throughout his entire workout looking for clues, but no obvious secrets were revealed on why he looked like a professional body builder.

As the weeks went by, we would occasionally talk about a variety of things that were going on around us. Any opportunity I had to slip in a question about diets, training, or sports supplements was met with the same type of response, which was, "No! I do not take anything special."

Finally, one day we had a fire alarm where we all had to leave the gym.

We stood outside for around thirty minutes while we waited on the alarm system to be checked. I told him how I had been trying everything to change the shape of my body, as I was extremely unhappy with my appearance. He looked at me and said, "You need to think about what you do. When you perform an exercise, you need to visualize that body part being stressed during the exercise and growing as you push the weight.

It's not the weight that counts, it's the motion. If you can imagine yourself getting bigger after very workout, you will notice a difference."

He continued by telling me not to continually look for changes every day, just imagine them. Weight lifting is only the vehicle that allows the transformation to take shape; the mind provides the instruction to the muscle on what it should look like. He went on to tell me that he once watched an interview with a French body builder who had the most amazing sculptured body. He had been asked the same questions that I had been asking him.

The French athlete explained to the host of the TV program that he had a local artist draw his face attached to the image of his ideal body. He then photocopied the drawing and had one drawing in each room of the house. He also pinned the drawing on the ceiling of his bedroom, and he dreamed everyday that he actually looked like the drawing. He worked out three times each week and maintained a reasonable diet. The host

of the TV program questioned the accuracy of the story and obviously disbelieved the body-builder. The athlete stood up, pulled the drawing out of his pocket, stripped down to his pants and posed in the same position as the drawing. The picture was a perfect match to the athlete's body, and the drawing was dated five years previous. He also pulled out photographs showing the way he looked around the same timeframe. The audience was amazed!

The man I spoke with at the gym believed in what he saw and used the exact technique to perfect his own shape.

We have heard how a simple thought can change our mental state, how a suggestion can ensure we do not feel excruciating pain, and how a positive suggestion can even cure an unpleasant skin condition. It is therefore feasible to believe that we can continue to shape our lives, both physical and mental, if we have the need to make it come true.

This last story is obviously far-fetched, and because it was part of an entertainment program on TV, then suspicion

and disbelief are even more rampant, but if this story were published in a medical journal, would you be more inclined to accept it?

We have all heard of the placebo affect and many of us have read articles and reports on how patients can react to a placebo in both negative and positive ways. A study was done in the United States on twelve unfortunate cancer patients. All twelve were told they would undergo chemotherapy, but only six were actually exposed to the treatment.

Of the six that were not, three of them experienced hair loss and five of the six had regular bouts of vomiting even though none of them were exposed to treatment. All twelve were informed of the symptoms prior to treatment, and those six placebo patients manufactured the symptoms in their minds.

Now I dare you to tell me that the body builder story was any more far-fetched than the placebo experiment. How crazy are we as a race that we can manufacture

enough negative thought to force our bodies to lose body hair? Well, it happens every day in our lives! Here is an experiment for you all:

Tomorrow, I want each of you to carry a small piece of paper and write down the number of times you have a negative thought and note the subject. Just write down the number of times you think you are inadequate or can't complete a job. Write it down when you question your position, your role, or if you are a good friend or parent. Write it down when you think badly of a colleague, boss, family member or friend.

At the same time, on the other side of the paper, write down the number of times you have a positive thought. You must be honest.

We live in a negative society and all those negative vibrations we generate attract more of the same. Later on in the book I will explain how to combat this situation.

My continuing career in IBM

I was now enjoying my new position within IBM, and experiencing business travel to Ireland and Turkey on a regular basis.

My dream of business travel to the Far East was still lodged firmly in my mind, though. I subscribed to a publication called Business Traveler, which highlighted the top hotels around the world. I made a list of the top twenty hotels that I wanted to visit: hotels like Shangri-La in Singapore, Peninsula in Hong Kong and the Okura in Tokyo. But they sometimes felt like an unachievable dream as I sat gazing out of my office window into the wet and windy winter days of Scotland.

I needed to make it happen. There was just too much to see around the world and I had a deep need to see everything. The desire was sometimes very uncomfortable. I was never satisfied, I was always restless, there were always better things to see and do, and I felt frustrated that my life was not moving faster.

When I was in my twenties, I never appreciated each day. I was always looking to next week, or next month, or the next promotion. My mind never rested. I was continually thinking about how to achieve my goals and my dreams, which in hindsight was a mistake.

Although I achieved most of my goals in my life, on reflection, I should have taken more time to enjoy and celebrate the small things in life: my kids, for example. By the time I realized how precious they were, Joanne and David were twelve and ten years old.

The passion I had to succeed was like an addiction; it burned furiously, and my mind was in top gear looking for ways to achieve my goal of becoming an executive and sitting in the back of those limousines.

Responsibilities in IBM were changing. My next dream was becoming closer; I could feel it. IBM moved PC manufacturing and design responsibility from the United States to the United Kingdom.

This would mean that the procurement team in Scotland would need to support the overseas vendors around the world.

The opportunity was available within twelve months of starting off my dream. The IBM laboratory in England was given the mission of designing the PC displays required for worldwide manufacturing for IBM's PC division. This was excellent news for me, as procurement would be responsible for working with the overseas manufacturers in Asia, the destination I most wanted to visit.