



VGM Playbook:

Developing Your Skills
for Next Level Leadership



Conquer Your Mind and Get Out of Your Own Way

By Lindy Tentinger, Senior VP of Marketing, VGM & Associates

Everything in this world is fleeting. Everything. Life is hard—it literally kills us all at some point. Knowing the first two statements are true, how do you begin to live differently today? What are the things you can work on to be a better leader, at work and at home? I have been asking myself these questions for a long time now.

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I have noticed some of my closest friends and colleagues in the same boat—rowing and rowing and seemingly getting nowhere. This could be with a business, job, parenting, relationship, you name it. As I’ve listened to stories and lived my own, I continue to search for ways to master myself because my own mind is the biggest part of the battle. How do I get out of my own way and achieve all the great things I want to achieve and leave this world a better place than I found it?

It sounds easy to change your mindset or conquer your thoughts. However, consistently being in the frame of mind to take yourself to the next level in life is something I am sure very few people accomplish in a lifetime. I tend to take bits and pieces of things I’ve read or seen and put together my own puzzle in terms of helping myself with anything. My mind challenge has been no different. Below are the things I’ve learned so far to start to truly live above the daily grind and constant worry about tomorrow:

1. Focus First on Staying True to Who You Are, Who You Want to Be, And What You Want to Do

It should be very easy to make decisions if you know your values and never deviate from who you are at your core. What are your non-negotiables? What do you stand for? What truth will you speak even if your voice shakes? This includes doing all the things you want to do while on this earth.

Quit talking, and pick one thing and do it. Just one. I made a list of every area of my life and every role that I play that is vital for keeping me true to myself. Tip: if you write it down it magically becomes easier to focus on and accomplish.

Leadership Challenge: Whether it’s fighting for a special cause, finally taking that trip to Europe, signing up for golf lessons, learning a new language, getting your kids through college, running a marathon, or writing that New York Times Bestseller, follow through on one of your “want to dos” this year.

2. Never Put the Key to Your Happiness in Someone Else’s Pocket

No one is responsible for your happiness but you. Relying on someone else for it is the surest way to be disappointed. Another lesson here is that no matter how hard you try, you cannot be the source of someone else’s happiness, either. If I had a superpower, though, that would be it!

Leadership Challenge: Answer this simple question for yourself—what makes you happy?

3. Smile and Laugh Until Your Face Hurts

“Let your smile change the world, but don’t let the world change your smile.” That is a sign I look at every morning by my mirror. I have a ginormous smile and an obnoxious giggle (or cackle I guess you could call it?) when you really get me going. At times I have been very self-conscious of both. I was told recently that my son shares my exact laugh. I never noticed that before, but one thing I did notice many times was how much his laugh makes me smile. So, I have decided to smile and laugh my own crazy laugh as much as I possibly can.

Leadership Challenge: Text at least one funny GIF to someone this week.



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4. 24 Hours at a Time—Nothing More

Life is granted to us in 24-hour chunks for a reason. You CAN get through the next 24 hours and then the next 24 hours and then the next. We are not guaranteed tomorrow. We are all one phone call, text message, or media blast away from tragedy that personally impacts us. This is why we have many “before this” and “after this” moments. These are the lines drawn in the sand when we experience something that changes things so profoundly that nothing is ever the same afterward. And, no one is immune to these things. We were reminded of this recently with the tragic helicopter crash that killed Kobe Bryant, his 13-year-old daughter, and seven other precious lives.

Living for 24 hours at time allows us to enjoy surprises as they come.

I have been working on the 24-hour rule for a good year—not that I haven’t always tried to live this way—but it has been one of my main focuses. I don’t do this perfectly every day. I do take a deep breath and remind myself of living for the day when my mind starts to get too far ahead of itself. Living for 24 hours at time allows us to enjoy surprises as they come. Living for the day helps with worry. Worrying only makes us suffer multiple times instead of just when it happens—if it even ever does.

Leadership Challenge: If you notice your mind start to creep beyond this very moment, keep re-directing it back to the present until it stops.

5. EVERYTHING in Moderation

If you put the word “too” in front of anything regularly, it’s not good. Too much or too little. Stick to the 80/20 rule. Not just with food and exercise, but with everything. You can literally under- or over-indulge on anything. Give yourself a break and then get right back on track.

Leadership Challenge: Identify one thing in your life with “too” in front of it.

Don’t be afraid of the conversations you are having. Be afraid of the conversations you are not having.

6. Everyone You Meet Knows Something You Don’t

You will benefit from having a conversation you didn’t want to have or shy away from having. A quote that sticks out to me is “don’t be afraid of the conversations you are having. Be afraid of the conversations you are not having.” How true is this? It applies to all areas from the stranger sitting next to you on the airplane to your kids to your significant other to your co-workers. Put yourself out there, smile and ask someone a simple question in order to learn a whole lot. You never know who you will meet or what it will lead to.

Leadership Challenge: Initiate a conversation with a stranger in the next month. Jot down what you learned.

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7. Have a Forgiving Heart

Holding grudges literally kills our soul. Try hard to put yourself in someone else's shoes when you find it is difficult to give grace and forgive. No one is perfect. We sometimes unintentionally hurt others (sometimes intentionally too, I know) and, unfortunately, often hurt the ones we love the most. Give the benefit of the doubt. Most of the time it is a lack of communication or simply different perspectives. We assume that others think the exact same way we do. It is human nature. However, that is not true. The biggest distance between two people is misunderstanding. Love unconditionally. Be the nicest to those who aren't the nicest to you. This will set you free.

Leadership Challenge: Make a list of who you need to forgive. Work on the list every chance you get.

8. If You See Something in Someone, SAY IT

There is nothing worse than suppressed thoughts and feelings. You also just might make someone's day when you express yourself with compliments or appreciation. I read this every single day to remind myself:

- Missing someone? CALL
- Want to see someone? INVITE
- Want to be understood? EXPLAIN
- Have a question? ASK
- Don't like something? SAY IT
- Like something? STATE IT
- Want something? ASK FOR IT
- Love someone? TELL THEM

Leadership Challenge: SAY IT to one person this week.

Fair warning: the list I made is not an easy list to follow. I do better at some over others depending on the day, but I am constantly trying to live my life this way.

However, just one small win every day will add up to a big difference. A difference where your mind is clear to notice and enjoy all the little things or surprises. A difference where you worry less and tackle the hard stuff as it comes, instead of the constant what ifs. A difference where you dismiss how you want things to be and just let them be as they are. A difference where you make one heck of a difference in the people's lives you touch day in and day out. A difference that distinguishes a leader from the pack. That leader is you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lindy Tentinger

is Senior VP of Marketing for VGM & Associates. Prior to joining VGM,

Lindy worked at a global business process outsourcing (BPO) company. She built the company's marketing department from the ground up and led both sales and marketing through a digital transformation and a re-branding/positioning launch. Her marketing leadership helped gain global exposure and year-over-year revenue growth for the company's multiple brands. She is well-versed in many industry verticals including healthcare, financial services, utilities, government, telecommunications, and higher education. Lindy also has vast experience managing and developing processes and systems for request for proposals (RFPs). Lindy holds a Bachelor of Arts in electronic media from Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa. She obtained her MBA with a marketing concentration from Bellevue University in 2013. Connect with Lindy via email at Lindy.Tentinger@vgm.com or follow her on [LinkedIn](#).



