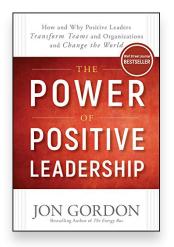


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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Jon Gordon is the author of 17 books, including 5 best-sellers, on leadership, culture, sales, and teamwork.

The Power of Positive Leadership

THE SUMMARY

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Chapter 1: From Negative to Positive

I'm not naturally a positive person. People think I am because of my books and talks, but the truth is that I have to work hard to be positive. It doesn't come naturally to me. I find it ironic that I would write a book like this—and that my life's work centers on the importance of positivity.

At the age of 31, I was a fearful, negative, stressed-out, and miserable husband and father to two young children. My wife had enough. She gave me an ultimatum: Change or our marriage was over. I knew she was right that I needed to change. I knew that I was allowing the stress of life and fear to get the best of me.

I told my wife I would change and began researching ways I could be more positive. I began to practice positivity and write about the things I was doing. I began taking "thank you" walks to practice gratitude, enjoy the outdoors, and feel grateful instead of stressed. This was a lifechanging practice and not only energized me physically, emotionally, and spiritually, but also provided time for many profound insights and ideas to come to me.

Since then, I've had the opportunity to work with many Fortune 500 companies, businesses, professional and college sports teams, hospitals, schools, and nonprofits, and I've met many amazing positive leaders and I've witnessed firsthand the power of positive leadership. I've

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seen how they have led, inspired, and transformed their teams and organizations. I've observed the impact they have had and the results they have achieved. I've also researched many positive leaders throughout history and learned about their paths to success.

There is indeed a power associated with positive leadership, and my goal in this book is twofold. First, I aim to explain how and why positive leaders make a difference. Second, I intend to provide a simple framework filled with practical ideas that will help anyone become a positive leader. It's one of the most important things a person can do because one positive leader will inspire many others to become positive leaders as well.

I realized that my one decision to be a positive leader not only impacted my life but also my marriage, my children, my team at work, and everyone around me. My hope is that you too will discover the power of positive leadership in your own life. I know that being a positive leader doesn't just make you better; it makes everyone around you better. You can start today!

Chapter 2: Real Positive

It takes a lot of work to create a world-class organization. It's hard to develop a successful team. It's not easy to build a great culture. It's challenging to work toward a vision and create a positive future. It's difficult to change the world.

As a leader, you will face all kinds of challenges, adversity, negativity, and tests. There will be times when it seems as if everything in the world is conspiring against you. There will be moments you'll want to give up. There will be days when your vision seems more like a fantasy than a reality. That's why positive leadership is so essential.

When some people hear the term *positive leadership* they roll their eyes because they think I'm talking about Pollyanna positivity, where life is full of unicorns and rainbows. The truth is that we are not positive because life is easy. We are positive because life can be hard.

Positive leadership is not about fake positivity. It is the real stuff that makes leaders great. Pessimists don't change the world. Critics write words but they don't write the future. Naysayers talk about problems but they don't solve them. Throughout history we see that it's the optimists, the believers, the dreamers, the doers, and the positive leaders who change the world. The future belongs to those who believe in it and have the belief, resilience, positivity, and optimism to overcome all the challenges in order to create it.

The research is clear. Positivity is about more than having a positive state of mind. It's also a life changer and gives people a competitive advantage in business, sports, and politics. While pessimists are complaining about the future, the energy vampires are sabotaging it, the realists are talking about it, and the optimists are working hard with others to create it.



Because optimists believe in a positive future, they actually *delude* themselves into working more to make it possible. Their belief makes them willing to take actions to achieve it. As a result, positive leaders invest their time and energy in driving a positive culture. They create and share the vision for the road ahead. They lead with optimism and belief and address and transform the negativity that too often sabotages teams and organizations. They believe in what's possible, so they act and do, connect and create, build and transform their team and organization—and change the world.

Chapter 3: Positive Leaders Drive Positive Cultures

As a leader, you are the driver of your bus and you have a big role and responsibility in creating the kind of journey you and your team will experience.

Your Most Important Job. You must create a positive culture that energizes and encourages people, fosters connected relationships and great teamwork, empowers and enables people to learn and grow, and provides an opportunity for people to do their best work. Culture is not just one thing. It's everything. It's where all success and great results begin.

Culture Beats Strategy. Your culture that will determine whether your strategy is successful. If you lose your culture you will lose your way.

Know What You Stand For. Once you know what you want to be known for, decisions are easy to make and you are on the right path to positive results.

More than Words. Everyone has a mission statement, but only great organizations also have people on a mission.

Positively Contagious. As a leader, the energy you put into your team and culture determines the quality of it.

Create a Culture that People Feel. When your team hears about the mission and also feels the mission, they'll be on a mission.

Invest in the Root if You Want the Fruit. Of course you should measure your fruit (wins and losses), but do so knowing it's simply a byproduct of how well you are nurturing the root (culture).

You Must Keep Building Your Culture. A culture will not sustain itself. Your culture must become stronger than all the forces trying to sabotage it.



Chapter 4: Positive Leaders Create and Share A Positive Vision

Positive leadership is all about seeing and creating a brighter and better future. Some scoff when leaders share bold ideas, imaginative goals, and seemingly impossible dreams, but ideas, imagination, and dreams are the fabric positive leaders weave together to create the future and change the world.

A North Star. The vision a positive leader creates and shares serves as a North Star that points and moves everyone in an organization in the right direction. The leader must continually point to this North Star and remind everyone that this is where we're going.

A Telescope and Microscope. As a positive leader, you need to carry a telescope to help you and your team keep your eyes on your vision, North Star and big picture. The microscope helps you zoomfocus on the things you must do in the short term to realize the vision in your telescope.

Dabo Swinney's Vision. When Dabo addressed the trustees after being named interim head coach of Clemson football in 2008: "My vision is that we will create a program where all the football programs you mentioned want to be like us."

Keep the Vision Alive. The fewest number of people quit a marathon in the first mile. And the second fewest runners quit in the last mile. The most people quit a marathon in the 20th mile. They have run far and still have a long way to go.

Make the Vision Come Alive. After the people on your team identify what the vision means to them, ask them what their personal vision is and how it can contribute to the bigger vision of the organization. Then ask them how you can help them on their journey.

My Vision. I love learning and talking about the power of a vision because it's a vision that has driven me to overcome all the obstacles I have faced to do the work I do now. I've experienced the power of a vision in my own life and I know what is possible when you see it and act on it.

Chapter 5: Positive Leaders Lead with Optimism, Positivity, and Belief

The research shows that optimism is a competitive advantage, but we don't need research to tell us what we already know to be true. You don't have to give up. You don't have to settle for the status quo. You can see a brighter and better future and work to create it.

Believe It and You'll See It. People often say they'll believe it when they see it. But in order to see results you have to believe they are possible.

If You Don't Have It, You Can't Share It. The fact is, if you don't have optimism and belief, you can't transform your team and organization with it. It starts first and foremost with you.



Feed the Positive Dog. We all have two dogs inside of us. Each day we can feed the positive dog or the negative dog, and whichever one we feed, grows.

Talk to Yourself. Dr. James Gills accomplished the remarkable feat of completing a double triathlon six times, the last when he was 59 years old. When asked how he did it: "I've learned to talk to myself instead of listen to myself."

It's All How You See It. I've learned that you can dwell on the past or look forward to making the next opportunity great. You can see life as a game of failure or opportunity.

Tell Yourself a Positive Story. The stories you tell yourself determine how you respond to adversity and how you live your life. When adversity hits, you can choose to tell yourself and the world a positive story and work to create a positive outcome.

Challenge or Opportunity. Challenges are going to come your way. Your job is not to get stuck in the mud. Don't sink to a lower level. Keep your head up. Look for the opportunity and the good that is coming your way.

Shark or Goldfish. When the waves of change hit, we can resist change or we can ride the way to a successful future. Instead of being like goldfish and waiting to be fed, embrace the change and look for food like sharks do.

Think Like A Rookie. The curse of experience is longing for the "good ole days" and complaining about the way things are and being unwilling to change. Think like a rookie, forget the past, and create your good ole days right now.

Defeating Murphy. When bad things happen, it can lead you to expect more bad things to happen. Erwin McManus: "We can become stronger when the world becomes harder." So when adversity hits, don't run from it. Face it. Take it on and keep moving forward.

Inside Out. Your circumstances and the events that happen outside you in the world are not meant to define you. You are meant to define your circumstances. When you see that the world has no power over you, you will lead more powerfully in the world.

Distort Reality. You will lead more powerfully when you realize that you have the power to distort reality. What would your team achieve if you shared your optimism and belief with them and distorted their reality?

Leadership is a Transfer of Belief. How you see the world determines the world you see and experience. What you believe is possible, and the beliefs you share with your team and organization have a big influence on what you create, build, and accomplish.



Lead with Faith Instead of Fear. Ultimately, being a positive leader is all about leading with faith in a world filled with cynicism, negativity, and fear. Your people are filled with fear, doubt, and uncertainty, and it's your job to inspire them with faith.

Be an Over-Believer. Dabo Swinney at Clemson is so full of genuine belief and faith that he shares it with everyone around him. He believes in his players more than they believe in themselves. He never stops believing and sharing his belief with his team.

Don't Stop Believing. Great teams are collectively positive. They have a collective belief and contagious optimism—and it starts with you. When you believe, you can inspire others to believe. If you believe your best days are ahead of you, they are.

Your Leadership Journey. If you start the process by building a positive culture, sharing the vision, feeding yourself with positivity, creating your own reality-distortion field, and leading with optimism, you and your team will be well on your way to creating a positive future.

Chapter 6: Positive Leaders Confront, Transform, and Remove Negativity

Positive leadership is not just about feeding the positive, but also about weeding out the negative. One of the biggest mistakes leaders make is that they ignore the negativity within their team and organization—you must address the negativity. Confront it, transform it, or remove it. Being positive won't guarantee you'll succeed but being negative will guarantee you won't.

Your Positivity Must Be Greater than All the Negativity. Every one of us will deal with negativity and naysayers on our journey. Not everyone will have the same vision as you. Not everyone will believe in your dreams. Not everyone will get on your bus. But to succeed, your positive energy must be greater than all the negativity.

No Energy Vampires Allowed. Don't let anyone on your team act like an energy vampire. Stay positive through your adversity and challenges.

Why Wait? To build a winning team you must create a positive culture where negativity can't breed and grow, and the sooner you can start confronting, transforming, weeding and removing it from your team, the stronger and more positively contagious your culture and team will be.

The First Step Is to Transform. The first step in dealing with an energy vampire on your team is not to remove but to transform. No one really wants to be an energy vampire. These people are likely negative for a reason. Listen with empathy and love, and try to understand and transform.

Start at the Cultural Level. Set the expectation that people who drain the energy of others will not be tolerated. One person can't make a team, but one person can break a team.



Remove the Negativity. Not everyone is willing to change. Your job as a leader is to feed and weed, weed and feed.

Sooner or Later. When I owned a few restaurants, I definitely kept a few energy vampires on my team longer than I should have. If I could do it again, I would let them go sooner.

Lead from Where You Are. The first rule is to be more positive than any negativity you face. Learning to stay positive when surrounded by negativity is a great training ground and, as you develop your own positivity and ability to deal with energy vampires, you will grow as a person and a leader.

Implement the No Complaining Rule. The rule is simple: You are not allowed to complain unless you also offer one or two possible solutions. When a team focuses on solutions instead of complaints, performance rises to a higher level.

Michael Phelp's Positive Leadership. (To his team before the 2016 Olympics in Rio): "This is what we have to do, and if there is a negative comment, keep it to yourself. The more positivity we have as a team, the better off we are going to be. As soon as I said that, we all became closer and then we really started getting going."

Don't be Negative About Negativity. As a leader, you have to confront negativity, but you must do it in a positive way. Even more importantly, you must model positivity. Positive leadership is about developing relationships, and being the kind of leader people want to follow.

Chapter 7: Positive Leaders Create United and Connected Teams

Positive leaders unite instead of divide. They are able to get everyone on the bus and moving in the right direction. They are able to create *unity*, which is the difference between a great team and an average or dysfunctional team.

Connection Is the Difference. As a leader, you not only want to be part of a connected leadership team but you also want to make sure you are connecting with everyone in your organization. A lack of connection between leaders and their team leads to lack of commitment, below-average teamwork, and sub-par performance and results.

Team Beats Talent When Talent isn't a Team. One of the reasons why being united is so important is because the more connected you are, the more committed you become. You won't have commitment without connection.

Dabo Swinney's Safe Seat. Dabo placed a stool in the team meeting area, and after every practice a different teammate sat on the Safe Seat while the team gathered around him in a circle and asked



him questions about his life, his heroes, his defining moments, and his challenges. The stool is a safe place for players to be vulnerable and share their hearts—and it paves the way for meaningful relationships.

Collaborate and Facilitate. The old dictatorial style of leadership no longer works. Telling people to do it "because I said so" doesn't engage, connect, and unite people. The great leaders of today lead by collaborating and facilitating. Positive leaders don't succeed on their own. They succeed by getting people to work together. This generates more connection, ownership, and buy-in.

Don't Let Your Reptile Eat Your Positive Dog. Besides selfishness, the enemies of unity and connection are busyness and stress. Research shows that when we are busy and stressed, we activate the reptilian part of our brain, which is associated with fear and survival. As a result we focus on what is urgent rather than what matters. If you know anything about a reptile, you know that they will never love you.

Chapter 8: Positive Leaders Build Great Relationships and Teams

The first step in uniting people and being a leader is not saying, "Follow me." It's being someone your team wants to follow. People follow the leader first and their vision second. What you say is important, but who you are is even more important. To unite others, you have to be someone people want to rally around. To connect with others, you have to be someone who creates connections.

Love Does. Leadership begins with love. It's not a noun—it's a verb. It's about leading with and sharing love. It's about putting love in action. Your people what to know if you are for real. Show them you are by the way you love them.

Love Is the Greatest Leadership Principle on the Planet. Love is what separates good and great. Good teachers know their lesson plans. Great teachers know and love their students. Good coaches know X's and O's. Great coaches know and love their players. Good sales people know how to sell. Great salespeople love their clients.

Rules without Relationship Lead to Rebellion. Far too many leaders share rules with the people they lead but they don't have a relationship with them. So what happens? The people they lead disengage from the mission and vision of the organization.

Communication Builds Trust. Communication serves as the initial foundation in building a great relationship. Unfortunately, most relationships and teams break down because of poor communication. If you don't have communication, you don't have the commitment and trust you need to build a great team and create the future together.



Where There is a Void of Communication, Negativity Fills It. Negativity breeds and grows, resulting in negative contagious energy that quickly spreads. Communication is essential in developing relationships and trust, but it also prevents rumors and negative energy that can sabotage an organization.

Leading by Walking Around. A great way to fill voids in communication is to get out of your office and interact with the people that you lead. Walk around and look around and see who is talking to who, what the energy is like, and what is the overall mood of the team.

Listening is Communicating. The best communicator is not always the most eloquent speaker, but rather the person who has the ability to listen, process the information, and use it to make decisions that are in the best interest of the team and organization. The best listeners truly hear what a person is saying and trying to convey.

Enhance Your Positive Communication. Positive leaders communicate in such a way that they make people around them better. "Shouting praise" means you recognize someone in front of their peers, and "whispering criticism" means you coach them to get better. Both build better people and teams.

Be an Encourager. With so many people telling us we can't succeed, we need to hear people telling us we can. Truett Cathy asked: "How do you know if a man or woman needs encouragement?" His response: "If they are breathing."

Believe in Others More than They Believe in Themselves. The difference between success and failure is belief, and so often this belief is instilled in us by someone else. You can become that person for the people you lead. It's amazing what people will accomplish when they know you believe in them.

Help Your Team Become Unstoppable. Since I played lacrosse in college, I encouraged my daughter to play, but by pushing my expectations and frustrations on her, I almost caused her to quit playing. But then I became a positive leader who encouraged and believed in her—and she became unstoppable.

Connect One on One. Positive leaders do more than just communicate, they connect heart to heart. Organization and team connection is the result of individual connection. The greatest leaders I've been around connect with those they lead.

Be Committed. Every leader wants committed people on their team. We all want a committed team. But if you want commitment, you must be committed. If you want commitment from your team, you must show your commitment to the team. What does commitment look like? Like putting the needs of others before your own.

Serve to Be Great. A team feels a leader's commitment when the leader takes the time to serve them. When you serve your team, you help them grown and they help you grow. You can't serve yourself and your team at the same time.



Doing the Laundry. Making the time to serve my family is how I showed I am truly committed to them. Everything in me wants to focus on me, but as a leader, I was at my best when I focused on we.

It's not About You. Servant leadership is about looking for ways to develop the strengths of each team member. It's about leading with humility. It's about committing yourself to others.

Commit to Coach. One of the reasons I like spending time with coaches is because I love the way great coaches commit to their team. They give everything they have to help their players become all they can be.

Commitment Requires Sacrifice. To build a great team and organization and to change the world, people have to know and feel that you would run into a burning building to save them. They have to know that you are willing to sacrifice yourself for their gain.

When You Help Others Improve, You Improve. Great leaders serve the people they lead. There are countless ways to help others improve. I can't tell you what you should do, but I can tell you that when you commit to being a positive leader dedicated to others, you will be well on your way to transforming your team and the world.

Elite of the Elite. Seal Team Six is looking not just for someone who performs at the highest level (the elite), but for someone who while performing at the highest level also looks out for his team members, making them better in the process (the elite of the elite).

Positive Leaders Care. It all comes down to caring. If you don't love, you don't care, and if you don't care, you won't make the time to unite, communicate, encourage, connect, commit, serve, or sacrifice.

Develop Your Caring Trademark. Great leaders have a unique way to show they care that causes them to stand out in their work and in the world. When you show you care in your own personal way, you will stand out in a world where many have seemed to forget to care.

The Sandwich. I learned from my mom that real positive leadership is about serving others by doing the little things with a big dose of selfless love.

Chapter 9: Positive Leaders Pursue Excellence

Positive leaders care about others and are optimistic about the future, so they are always looking for ways to make it better. They pursue excellence, build greatness, and often try to accomplish the impossible. These efforts are not for the faint at heart.



Humble and Hungry. Positive leaders don't think they know it all. They are life-long learners who are always seeking ways to learn, improve, and grow. They know that the minute they think they've arrived at the door of greatness is the moment it will get slammed in their face. They have a passion and burning desire to continuously improve and grow.

There is no Finish Line. At 80 years old, George Raveling, the legendary Hall of Fame college basketball coach, reads 50 books a year and asks himself often, what do I need to know that I don't know? What do I need to unlearn to learn? He's still learning, growing, and improving. So can you at any age.

Demanding without being Demeaning. Many think that positive leaders are nice, undisciplined, happygo-lucky people who smile all the time and believe that results are not important. But this couldn't be further from the truth. Competition makes you better. Being positive doesn't mean you don't have high expectations.

Love and Accountability. If I had to pick the most important section of the book it would be *right here*. When you love people and hold them accountable, it's amazing how fast things can move in the right direction. But if you have accountability without love, you won't have real commitment, buy-in, loyalty, passion, or great teamwork.

Love Tough. If your team knows you love them, they will allow you to challenge and push them. Instead of tough love, it needs to be love tough. When you love someone you want to help them improve. It means you challenge them to reach their full potential.

Craftsmen and Craftswomen. A carpenter just builds something, but a craftsman puts in more time, energy, effort, and care to build a work of art. Instead of just showing up and going through the motions, a craftsman works to build masterpieces.

The One Percent Rule. A simple rule I share with leaders and teams to help them create excellence: "Give one percent more time, energy, focus, and care today than you gave yesterday." You can improve and get better today.

Clarity and Action. Excellence is what positive leaders strive for, but you can't achieve excellence without the clarity that leads to focused action. As a leader, don't fall into the trap that the idea or plan has to be complicated to work. Simple is powerful. Action leads to results. Optimism without action equals today's fantasy. Optimism plus clarity and action equals tomorrow's reality.

Chapter 10: Positive Leaders Lead with Purpose

People think that hard work is what makes us tired. Hard work doesn't make us tired. A lack of purpose is what makes us tired. We don't get burned out because of what we do. We get burned out



because we forget why we do it. Happiness doesn't come from the work you do but rather from the meaning and purpose you bring to your work. Live your passion and purpose, and happiness will find you.

Find and Live Your Purpose. Your job may not be your ultimate purpose, but through your leadership you can use it to be a vehicle to share your greater purpose. Most of all remember that if you are a leader, you have a purpose and it's to inspire others to live theirs.

Share the Purpose. When I speak to leaders I encourage them to share a vision and a purpose in one statement. I believe they are stronger together. The vision is where you are going. The purpose is why you are going there.

Inspire Others to Live Their Purpose. Sharing the purpose is important but it's futile unless it inspires purpose in others. You want to let everyone in your organization know why your organization exists and why their work matters.

Purpose Driven Goals. One of the great ways I have discovered to help people to live with purpose is to help them create purpose-driven goals. The truth is that numbers and goals don't drive people. People with a purpose drive the numbers and achieve goals.

One Word. A powerful and practical way to live with purpose throughout the year is to pick a word for the year that will inspire you. Pick a word—serve, love, dream, invest, go, execute, fearless, life, relationships—and then know why you chose it. Imagine if you had a word for the year and truly lived it. How much greater impact would you make?

Life Word. In addition to choosing a word for the year I also encourage leaders to select a Life Word. I chose positive. One friend chose passion, another chose inspire. We realized that if we could help people identify their Life Word, it would inspire them to live their highest purpose and leave their greatest legacy.

Leave a Legacy. Researchers asked a group of 90-year-olds what they would do differently if they could live their lives over again. Most said: Reflect more. Take more risks. Leave a legacy that would live on after they die.

Give People Great Stories to Tell. You won't live forever, but your impact on others lives on after you are gone. One's legacy is carried on through love shared, lives touched, and stories told. The people you lead will be telling stories about you years from now. You can't escape it. They will be telling stories, so give people great stories to tell about you.

Life and Death. Nothing clarifies your purpose like a near-death experience. I don't recommend one, but it does work. When we walked off the plane following an emergency landing, I left more inspired than ever to live my purpose and leave a legacy with my life.



Chapter 11: Positive Leaders Have Grit

The number one predictor and factor of success is not talent, title, wealth, or good looks. It is grit! It's the ability to work hard for a long period of time towards a goal; to persevere, overcome, and keep moving forward in the face of adversity, failure, rejection, and obstacles. When life knocks you down, grit won't let you stay down.

Know What You Want. I believe true grit starts with knowing what you truly want. When you know what you want and you can see it, you will work hard and persevere in order to achieve it.

Know Your Why. Purpose not only fuels positivity, but it also drives grit in a big way. When you know your why, you won't let obstacles get in your way. When your purpose is greater than your challenges, you won't give up.

Love it. If you don't love it, you'll never be great at it. If you don't love it, you won't work to overcome all the challenges to keep doing it. The love and grit that you possess on the inside will create the life you experience on the outside.

Embrace Failure. You will fail along the way, but don't allow failure to define you or stop you. Failure is a big part of your path to success. It's not your enemy. It's your partner in growth. It doesn't define you, it refines you.

Keep Doing Things the Right Way: Trust the Process. I've had conversations with a variety of coaches who have taken over programs and had to build them. They kept doing things the right way, even when the results weren't showing up yet. Don't focus on the numbers. Trust the process. When you keep doing things the right way, eventually the numbers will rise, the wins will come, and the outcome will happen.

Ignore the Critics; Do the Work. Positive leaders don't lead because they want recognition or enemies. They lead because there is something they must do, build, create, transform, and change. They lead because it it's who they are and what they are meant to do. True grit leads to true success.

Chapter 12: Lead the Way Forward

We don't have to allow negativity to rule over our lives and our teams. Today we can decide to address problems, find solutions, and find a way forward.

Yes, there's a lot of negativity in the world. Yes, there are many problems that haven't been solved yet. But instead of focusing on all that's wrong, you can realize that this is your time to make things right. With all the negativity in the world, what a great opportunity you have to be a positive leader and influencer.



Your one decision to be a positive leader will not only impact your life, but your relationships, your family, your friends, and your team. A life touches a life that touches a life. A person changes and they help others change. A leader inspires others and develops more leaders.

The seed you plant today becomes the harvest you enjoy tomorrow. You may not see the harvest but don't let that stop you from planting seeds. There are seeds to plant, lives to change, teams to transform, problems to solve, and a world to change. When you become a positive leader, you will not only make yourself better, but you will also make everyone around you better—and that's a great place to start!