

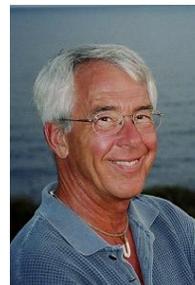
## How to Live Your Truth in a World that Would Rather You Didn't

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For over 30 years, **Bradford Glass** has offered leadership for individuals, teams and businesses - as a manager, as an educator, and as a coach. He teaches the art of personal authenticity to those with the courage and desire to take a stand for their own greatest potential in life. For a window into living your own greatest potential, visit [www.RoadNotTaken.com](http://www.RoadNotTaken.com)



### Introduction – the title and the terms

*Live your truth:* your unique truth is energy deep inside you; it asks you to listen and honor. It shows up as a **vision** of what's possible. A vision is not a plan or **goal**; it has no end point. It's a *way of being* in life. You **become** a vision, not **do** it. Because the energy of your truth/vision lives inside you already, you don't need to use force or will. You **allow** it to manifest – using awareness and intention. Therefore, a vision is a *possibility* you live **into**, not an *expectation* you live **up to**. You do that not by 'trying harder,' but through conscious awareness ... yet at a level far deeper than the consciousness needed to get through an ordinary day.

*In a world that would rather you didn't:* society doesn't *want* you to think for yourself; taking personal responsibility represents a threat to the mass culture of compliance, consumerism and greed in which we live. In fact, the more you **do** think for yourself and live with commitment and purpose, the *greater* society's pressure for you to stop.

A few questions. Notice how the questions themselves may touch you.

Is your life today a perfect reflection of your truth and potential?

If you're not living your own life today, whose life *are* you living?

What's the *story* you tell yourself about why you can't?

Will your story still work for you 30 years from now?

What are you willing to do to create and live a new story?

What are you willing to do to *deny* yourself of your new story?

As you might know, many of us have pretty good "**stories**" for why we don't have what we want. "I'll live that way when I have enough money, when my kids are done with school, when other people think I'm ok enough, when **I** think I'm ok enough, or when Mercury gets out of retrograde." Nonsense. You'll have what you want when you **believe you can have it**. The challenge you experience today as "life," which you may *believe* is a struggle between you and the world, is in fact a struggle between you and your **unconscious** thoughts – thoughts that have left you seeing the world, and yourself, as being much smaller and far more disconnected than they really are. So it's not life's circumstances that challenge you, but the way you *see and think* about life's circumstances. By misidentifying the enemy, you let yourself off the hook for the greatness inside you.

### Background: My Premise

"A bird sitting in a tree is never afraid of the branch breaking, for its trust is not on the branch, but on its own wings." By shifting perception and perspective from "**reacting to** life's circumstances" (*external* world determines how our lives go) to "**responding from** self-trust and vision" (our *innate* truth is the energy with which we greet every challenge) we live with self-confidence, authenticity, resilience and freedom.

## Background: Problem Statement

What holds us back from our dreams and potential? Stress, anxiety, and resentment (Buddhist “suffering”) caused by an unconscious, yet futile, obsession with making life (ourselves, others, world) conform to ***the way we think it should be*** – to a point of *denial* of ***the way it truly is*** ... which leaves us believing more strongly in our **limitations** than in our **potential**. We were **taught** to see *what should be* rather than *what is*. You should be nice to others; you should do well in school; you should get a good job; you should make a lot of money; you should control how life goes; life should be fair, you should get over it! We come to believe life is *conditional* – only if we get it right do we gain approval of others, and then feel “OK.” We never question this, so little changes.

Here’s the way this “story” has left many of us today (adapted from Gestalt theory of human development):

- We tend to **use** what we’re good at. We **got** good at it either because it was innate *or* because we “adopted” it (from old lessons about “should”) so as to gain approval of others
- When things get tough, we tend to **overuse** what we’re good at – an unconscious response, based in fear, need to control, or self-defense
- Over time, we **habituate** what we’re good at; it’s now unconscious background, a comfort zone. It becomes a “prevaling strategy” we use **independent** of circumstances – even to a point of believing this is who we really are – a “false self” made up of what we’re good at
- **Over-relying** on what we’re good at costs us – it limits effectiveness, blinds us to new choices, and leaves us stuck and/or stressed from trying harder
- Yet **none** of this is “truth;” it’s an artifact of the unconscious mind and its voices in our head. The problem is that we **listen** to them!!! And this “thinking” **created** the world we now experience as “life”
- We’re at our greatest risk of failure when we blindly continue to use what has worked in the past
- **Awareness** is the catalyst for change – **noticing** our patterns ... of use, overuse, and the triggers that shift us from use to overuse.

This is how you **create** your reality by how you see and think, even if (especially if) it’s all unconscious. A path to a life you love is not found in knowing more or trying harder, as often suggested, for you’re neither stupid nor lazy. Nor does it come from changing life’s circumstances, a futile pursuit. It results from a shift in perspective ... toward (1) greater awareness, (2) clarity of perception and (3) broadening of perspective. The missing element, then, is **consciousness**. Mark Twain said it best: “It ain’t what you **don’t know** that gets you into trouble. It’s what you **know for sure** that *just ain’t so*.” And much of **what we “know for sure” ... “just ain’t so.”**

By getting to know the [unconscious] thinking that creates your reality, you can learn to make new [now conscious] choices that create a reality that is uniquely your own – and in the process, **discover** who you truly are ... your authentic truth. Stop “fixing stuff,” and fix the **thinking** that **created** the stuff!!

## What Holds Us Back?

An unconsciously-adopted societal rule book, which values: (1) doing over thinking (2) answers over questions (3) compliance over creativity (4) busyness over silent **reflection** (5) social acceptance over personal responsibility (6) money over happiness (7) drama over meaning (8) expedience over completeness (9) productivity over fulfillment (10) scientific reason over subjective knowing (11) ‘what’s wrong’ over ‘what’s possible’ (12) external validation over inner truth (13) knowledge over experience (14) our limitations over our potential.

Society’s game might be defined this way: *if you know more, try harder, stay busy, look good, don’t rock the boat, and get it right, you’ll make a lot of money so you can buy a lot of stuff and then you’ll be happy.* Our name for the game? The American Dream. (The original American Dream once promised “freedom of spirit.” What happened?)

## What Pulls Us Forward?

(1) Natural curiosity and wonder about life’s (and your) mysteries, (2) willingness to allow life’s experiences to change you, (3) tolerance for the unknown, uncertain, paradoxical, (4) acceptance that **truth** is context-sensitive and thinking-dependent, (5) an innate, personal longing ... energy that wants to express itself through how you live and work.

Summarizing the forces at work here:

- we’re **biologically** wired for curiosity and wonder.
- we’re **culturally** wired to deny whatever we find.

## The Path Forward

If the path to living your truth can be viewed as a process, here are five “phases” you negotiate along the way. You don’t simply “do” these, but rather, you “become” them.

- 1 **Accept.** Gain complete clarity and acceptance that “the way it is” today just **is**. Release *all* judgment; it just **is**. This is true about everything in life, including who you are, and who you’re not. It simply **is**. Because we generally lack depth of awareness as to how we do what we do, we tend to live in *judgment* of ‘what is.’ We see *what’s wrong* instead of *what’s possible*, what ‘should be’ instead of ‘what is.’
- 2 **Understand.** Gain complete clarity and acceptance that “the way it is” is a **natural consequence** of your *thinking* up until now. You are the causal factor in “the way it is.” Included is your “interpretation,” which is the life story of your *thinking*, not of *reality*. Know your truth. Make it conscious. We blame life for our struggles, but it’s how we *see & think* about life. To create meaningful change, we need to change the *thinking* that created “the way it is.”
- 3 **Envision.** Create in your mind, then continually replay to yourself, a bold, powerful vision of a life you’d love to live. (This can be done at any level – a lifetime, a job, a project, a conversation, or even being a competency you desire). This is powerful only to the extent that you have previously claimed “what is” *and* your thinking. Envision living a life that fully expresses your truth in the world. This brings *rational* and *emotional* energy together, creating **meaning**. Envisioning is powerful because it creates a memory of the future; when you show up living your vision, you act as if you already knew it to be true.
- 4 **Act.** Nurture *conditions* for your vision to manifest. Take one action toward your vision each day. Let go of how it turns out; focus instead on **being** it. With each step, listen for **feedback**, a natural information flow in every living system that will guide your next step, and the next. *Be with yourself*. No need to set another goal or agenda again, or plan an outcome; and you don’t have to manage yourself to them.
- 5 **Sustain.** Sustain your vision and inner truth for a lifetime by adopting personal practices in three areas of life: (1) extreme self-care, (2) honoring your thinking, not the opinions or demands of others, as the measuring stick for your life, (3) connecting deeply – with yourself, nature, higher power, and community of support. These practices allow you to “be with yourself,” *becoming* your vision.

## Practicing Your Way to Your Dreams

While you may believe that reading about new ideas will change you, the fact is that only personal *felt experience* of those ideas can do that. You don’t learn to ski by reading books; you learn to ski by coming down the mountain. You develop felt experience of your thinking by *getting to know* your thinking. You get to know your thinking by becoming a regular, conscious observer of it. The process is “practice.” “There **is** no path; paths are made by walking.”

A *practice* is an exercise done regularly and purposefully, with an intention of *interrupting* the incessant flow of your mind’s unconscious chatter, so you can get to know it. Practices are never “done.” That’s because practices don’t force change directly; they *create conditions* where change occurs naturally. Compare building a house to tending a garden. You *make* a house. But with a garden, you *nurture conditions* (soil, sunlight, water, etc.), then allow growth to happen naturally (you don’t *make* roses grow). This approach is opposite the “know more, try harder” command-and-control model we’re so used to.

If there’s an obstacle to getting to know your thinking, it’s the unconscious mind, whose job it is to *protect* you from change. It sees change as a threat, not as a possibility, so until you interrupt its flow with conscious awareness, you keep doing the same things the same way. In effect, you practice being who you *don’t* want to be. If you’re not living your vision today, it’s because, through unconscious habit, you’ve mastered *not* living it.

But as an observer of your thinking, you gain a perspective on your consciousness that you could never get as a participant alone. You *see* your thinking at work. When you *notice* your thoughts, you notice the ones that “protect your edges,” the ones that keep your context small. As you *notice* the edges, you *get to know* the edges, and in so doing, you develop a new power of choice – to learn from them instead of retreating. Awareness of your thinking changes your thinking. By releasing thinking that is “not you,” the true you emerges, just like Michelangelo’s David emerged from the marble – “all I needed to do was remove that which was ‘not David.’”

Although we don’t like to admit it (which causes its own set of problems), we’re off course 95% of the time. Life is a continual process of adjustment – check in with vision, take a step, check in with feedback, see a new reality, correct the vision/steps. Practice becomes the path.

## Practices for Personal Transformation

By adopting these self-reflection practices, you may find your consciousness progressing down the path noted here.

- **Silence** – open a pathway to inner contemplation
- **Contemplation** – become aware of your own thinking
- **Conscious Awareness** – broaden perspective, clarify perception
- **Clarity** – experience truth – about yourself, others, and life
- **Personal Truth** – choose thoughts that honor your truth
- **Self-Trust** – trust your thoughts to guide your choices
- **Personal Freedom** – experience life as your own
- **Peace and Meaning** – be connected with all life

**Practice: The felt experience of silence.** We're often taught that being silent means we're unproductive, so we learn to fear it. Silence focuses your awareness on the present moment and opens you to deeper listening of your true self. Claim 15 minutes each day. Sit alone in a place you love, in nature if possible, without distraction, ideally a place you can visit each day, so you can get to know it and call it your own. Relax your body; take three deep breaths. Gaze at a simple object nearby, or close your eyes. Then breathe naturally. That's it. There's no right or wrong; just be present for 15 minutes. At first, and maybe for some time, you may notice thoughts continue to flood your mind. No need to fight or judge them. With some practice, you'll find your mind calming. You'll likely come to love (and seek) silence. As the practice of silence intrigues you (it will), up the ante: how about no radio, TV, news or malls – for a week? If you feel better (you will), another week.

**Practice: Observe your thoughts.** As you *notice* your thoughts, you realize you not only *have* them, but have a *relationship* with them. *Stop* what you're doing several times a day. During a few moments of quiet reflection, replay in your mind thoughts you've had since the last time you stopped, as if a movie with you as its *audience*. *Listen* to what they tell you. Just notice; don't try to change them. With *regular* practice of self-observation, you will (1) come to know your own thoughts, (2) hear subtle messages of your inner truth, (3) see that only your thoughts determine your reality, (4) release the judgment you've create by confusing *what should be* with *what is*, (5) see life from a far broader perspective, (6) make new choices easily and naturally (simply because you now *can*), (7) get so good at this that you'll see thoughts *as* they occur.

**Practice: Envision your future as a movie.** In addition to being *audience* in your life's story, you're also the *director*. This affords you separation between you and your life, so you see and create with less attachment to details. As all directors know, *anything* can come next. You simply change the script, creating a story that evokes your greatest potential. This is *not* about planning or predicting a future, but about *giving your dreams energy, so they have space to manifest*. Sit quietly where you feel inspired. In your imagination, create your future as a movie, with you as its star, living the life of your dreams, evoking the heart, soul & spirit of the "you" you may never have dared to expose, even to yourself. Imagine where and how you live, how you relate to others, your community of love and support, making a great living doing exactly what your heart and soul love most. Do this exercise regularly, each time adding detail, making changes as you like. Fall in love with your movie. You need sell only one copy – to yourself! Regular practice envisioning your future creates a "memory of the future," energy pulling you toward it, manifesting the vision as reality.

**Practice: BE your vision.** Take one action step toward your vision each day. Let go of the outcome; focus instead on *being* it. Just do or be one thing that energizes your dream. Instead of judging each step, just listen – for *feedback* – a natural flow of information inherent in every living system. No need to make up goals, plans or steps ahead of time; they actually constrain you. Far easier, *and* more powerful, is to let the natural feedback from being your vision guide your next steps. It will. Your daily action steps are significant because each step takes you into your deepest truth – exciting, rewarding, and genuine; and because you're never more than one step from "home." This simultaneously frees you from the tyranny of goals and outcomes, and grows trust in your own inner truth over the opinions of others.

**Practice: The felt experience of self-care.** We're often taught to care for others, commonly to the exclusion of ourselves. Caring for yourself creates self-trust, evokes emotional intelligence and improves your connection with others. Create your own personal daily ritual to honor and respect the many dimensions of your being. If you're unsure how to start, choose from these ideas: *Physical*: walk, do yoga, eat well. *Mental*: read, quiet time to think. *Emotional*: be around loving people, journal, have fresh flowers in your home, create fun. *Relational*: join communities of like-minded others, build support systems. *Soulful*: a practice of silent time in nature, watch a sunrise. *Spiritual*: time in nature, inspiring music, connect with a higher power.