CHAPTER ONE

SHUT UP!

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"What? You just told me to shut up?"

Yes, I sure did. Someone needs to. Someone has probably needed to tell you that for a long time. In fact, maybe they already did but you were so busy talking you didn't hear them. If you're like most of the people in the world you are probably talking so much you cannot even hear what is being said. As my dad always told me: "You are broadcasting when you ought to be tuned in." In other words, shut your mouth for a minute and pay attention.

That is most people's biggest problem, including yours. You have been so busy talking and making noise that you never stopped long enough to pay attention to what others were telling you. You probably missed all the important lessons that life was screaming at you because you couldn't hear them.

> "Most of us are so busy running around creating the soap opera and drama we call our lives that we don't hear anything."
>
> —Louise Hay

In the New Testament there is a story about Jesus traveling in a fishing boat with his disciples. A big wind comes up, the waves rise, and all of the disciples think they're going to die. They awaken Jesus from his nap, whining and crying, and he says, "Hush, be still" (Mark 4:39 KJV). Then he goes on to talk to them about their faith. (But he first has to make the winds, the waves, and the disciples hush.)

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When I was growing up, I was often told to "Hush!" I knew exactly what it meant. In fact, the word "hush" has been shortened to "shhhh." (I bet you didn't know that, did you? See, you are already learning stuff.) When you hear "hush" or "shhhh" you know it means to be quiet. Actually I think if those words of Jesus were being translated today, they could just as easily be, "Shut up! Be quiet! I'm about to teach you something."

And that is exactly what I am saying to you here. Shut up! I am about to teach you something.

SHUT UP AND LISTEN

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It's impossible to listen while you are talking. It just can't be done. It's like sneezing with your eyes open: You can't do it. That's why I begin this book with "Shut up." It's so you can finally stop the chatter and listen and learn something. After all, the goal really is to teach you the things you can do to create success in your life, but you are going to have to listen to learn them. You can't learn while you are talking. You can only learn when you are listening. When was the last time you really got quiet and listened? I mean really listened? You should try it some time. You might be amazed at what you hear and even more amazed at what you learn. Jimi Hendrix once said, "Knowledge speaks but wisdom listens."

Listen to Others

Where do you start? I know that's an issue because we live in a noisy place full of people talking. And I will agree that much of what is being said isn't worth listening to. But some of it is. So give this a shot: Listen to your spouse or significant other. I don't mean the kind of listening you do when the TV is blaring in the background or when the kids are screaming in the back seat. I mean the kind of listening when you can be alone, shut out the

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noise, and really listen and communicate. This special exchange will take you to new heights in your relationship.

Listen to your kids. Parents think that all they do is talk and listen to their kids but the facts prove different. The average parent spends less than three-and-one-half minutes per week in meaningful communication with their children. Which means in a 50-50 give and take, only 90 seconds per week is spent listening. No wonder our kids are such a disaster; we aren't listening to them. You would be amazed at what they would tell you if you would just shut up and listen to them. I know how hard it is to communicate with your kids. I have been there. Especially when you are the parent of a teenager. Sometimes, the last thing your teenager wants to do is talk to you. Usually it's just easier not to talk to them because all they do is make monosyllabic grunts in response to you. Tough. Make them talk. Bug the hell out of them and force the communication if you have to. Both of my sons went through periods when they hated talking to me. How sad for them. I just kept talking and forced them to listen. Then I made them talk and forced myself to listen, even when what they had to say was hard for me to listen to. For instance, one time my son, Tyler, told me I ought to listen to my own speech. Ouch!

Most people think communication is about talking. That is only a small part of it. Listening is the biggest part. Become very good at it with those you love.

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Listen to Your Customers

Earl Nightingale said, "All of the money you are ever going to have is currently in the hands of someone else." In business, we call that "someone else" the customer. They have the money. They share it with us when we serve them well. One of the ways you serve your customers well is by listening to them.

You might be saying you don't really have customers, but we all have customers. You might not call them customers, but you

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still have them. You might call them patients, clients, co-workers, or the audience, but they are still your customers. Listen to them. They have all of the information necessary for you to serve them, solve their problems, and make them happy. Do those things and you will be rewarded.

Listen to Those Who Know More Than You Do

Someone knows more than you do. That may be hard for you to believe but it's true. And some of those who know more than you will happily share that information with you. Folks who have made it are usually more than willing to help others, but they never get asked. The fact is, few ask and even fewer take action when they have been given the answer. How stupid is that? When you ask someone who knows more than you do, take their advice and do what they tell you to do. Remember, they know what to do and have done it, you don't!

By the way, do you want to know a quick way for finding out if someone knows more than you do? Look at their results. Results never lie. If their results are better than yours, then they know something you don't know. Or maybe they are just willing to do more than you are willing to do. In any case, pay attention to that person to determine why their results are better than yours.

Spend some time with those who are doing better than you. Watch them. Listen to them. Figure out what they are doing and then go do it yourself. If you duplicate their effort, then you will duplicate their results. As my friend Joe Charbonneau said, "Do what the masters do and you will become a master."

Listen to the Experts

Great speakers, teachers, philosophers, and other experts have information that is readily available in many formats. Don't think you have to know the great teachers to learn from them. The

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bookstore, library, and Internet are full of everything you need to know to become more successful in any area of your life.

Listen to Great Music

I love great music. It can take me back in time to when I was a kid, or to a place I enjoyed with my wife, or can transport me to a calm meditative place. It can make me smile, make me cry, make me laugh, and put me to sleep. I use music to entertain myself, to inspire me, and to relax me. You can too.

My personal favorites are Leon Russell, Elvis, Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson, Van Morrison, classic country, and classic rock, but I enjoy about everything. But I will promise you this, just because I'm listening to it, I won't play it so loudly that you will be able to hear it in your car when I'm playing it in mine!

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Listen to Your Self

Notice I did not say "yourself." I said "your *Self*." I don't mean you should talk to yourself and listen to it—although you do that all the time. I'm talking about listening to your *Higher Self*. The "better you" that knows what you ought to be doing. You might call it your conscience. You might call it your gut. Some people call that *Higher Self* God, and they might be right. I don't really care what you call it; I just want you to listen to it. It's smarter than you are. It's tuned in at higher levels than you are. It knows! So listen to it. You also might try doing what it says.

Sometimes, You Should Not Listen

"Wait, first you say to listen and now you are telling me not to listen. Make up your mind. So are there really things I should not listen to?"

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Yes. Just like there is a list of things and people you should listen to, there is also a list of things and people you should not listen to.

- Do not listen to someone who is broke telling you how to be rich.
- Do not listen to a fat doctor who smokes telling you what it takes to be healthy.
- Do not listen to someone telling you how to be successful when they are not.
- Do not listen to a preacher telling you that you are a worthless sinner.
- Do not listen to people who put other people down.
- Do not listen to office gossip.
- Do not listen to anyone who puts you down for any reason at any time.
- Do not listen to someone who is more interested in selling you than serving you.
- Do not listen to only one side of an argument. Listen to both sides before making up your mind.
- Do not listen to someone with bad results telling you how to get good results.
- Do not listen when someone says, "Do as I say, not as I do."

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One more, and this one needs additional explanation. I told you to listen to your *Self*. And you should. But be very careful when you listen to yourself. No one will ever talk as badly about you or to you as you will to yourself. Do your best to control that negative self-talk. When you catch yourself saying things like "I could never do that" or "I'm not good at that" or "I'm so stupid"—STOP! Regroup and restate what you should be saying to yourself: "I can do this!" and other things that move you closer to the result you want, not further from it. Be honest and deal

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with the facts of your actions and your capabilities when talking to yourself. Don't be negative unless it's true, and then use that truth to take action so you can move to a better place.

"Okay Larry. I get it. Some of this is stuff I already know. In fact, most of this stuff is the same old stuff you promised I wouldn't be hearing. When do we get to the good stuff? What's next?"

Are you ready for the good stuff? I'm almost there. But we have to lay some groundwork first. This is all foundational work. Don't worry. It's about to get ugly.

So what's next? Easy. Stop whining.

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