

How to Transform Your Life With IMPACT

How to Transform Your Life With IMPACT: Unlock the Best of You
ISBN: 978-17-385225-0-7

This edition published in Great Britain in
2024 by Whalebone Publishing.
First Edition published in 2021
through Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing

Whalebone Publishing is the publishing imprint
tradename for The Book Writers' Resource Ltd

Produced in the UK by The Book Writers' Resource
www.tbwr.co.uk

Copyright © Mark Evans
www.conversationswithimpact.co.uk

Mark Evans has asserted his right under the Copyright, Design and
Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the author of this work.

Disclaimer:

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of
trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated
without the author's prior consent in any form of binding or cover and
without a similar condition, including this condition, being imposed on
the subsequent publisher.

Illustrations by Dave Johnson.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of Annie Hersey 1949–2022.

Contents

Introduction.....	ix
I is for IMPACT.....	1
The Conversations With Impact Questionnaires.....	7
Bridge of Curiosity	19
M is for MEANING.....	21
The Meaning Map	32
The Observing Self activity	47
P is for PATTERNS.....	53
The Cliff Edge.....	56
A is for ACCEPTANCE	85
Fantasy-Reality Gaps (FRGs)	88
The Triangle of Possibility.....	115
C is for CHALLENGE	117
The 0–10 Challenge	139
The Stretch Zone.....	145
T is for TRANSFORMATION.....	147
The Ship’s Rope	165
Cave and Continuation Points.....	170
Darwinian Tree	183
The Destination Finder	187
A Final Thought	197

**HOW TO
TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE WITH
IMPACT**
The New Edition

Mark Evans

Introduction

When someone meets me for the first time as a coach or therapist, straight away I want them to feel that I am the right person for them. To achieve this outcome, I need to demonstrate that I can help them to overcome their difficulties and achieve their challenges. I aim for this book to have the same impact on you because I want its title, *How to Transform your Life with IMPACT: Unlock the best of you*, to come true for you.

My book's subject, The IMPACT Model, has been tried and tested over thousands of hours of practise and with thousands of clients (3,500+ at the time of writing). I have seen people use The IMPACT Model to transform their lives from university students to entrepreneurs, business owners, and people in retirement.

The IMPACT Model

The six stages of The IMPACT Model are:

I is for IMPACT: We have all experienced hope and relief when we talk to someone who knows exactly what to say to us. And we have all felt frustration and disappointment when a conversation fails to give us what we need. Persistent difficulties and insurmountable challenges mean our existing conversations are missing the qualities and characteristics we need to get where we want to be. Only 'Conversations With **IMPACT**' can make the difference we are after.

M is for MEANING: Achieving progress depends on us making sense of why things are as they are. Without a clear understanding,

we remain a mystery to ourselves, making progress difficult or even impossible. Demystifying—making sense of why things are as they are—makes change happen and helps us find real **MEANING**.

P is for PATTERNS: Positive change depends on us knowing what we are doing a lot of that isn't working and what we are not doing enough of that is. Answering these two questions so we can understand our **PATTERNS** of thought, behaviour, feeling and relating creates a foundation for change.

A is for ACCEPTANCE: Achieving personal growth can stretch, challenge, and reward us. However, if our goals and expectations are unrealistic, we can become demoralised and exhausted. When this happens, our Fantasy-Reality Gaps (FRG) become too large, and **ACCEPTANCE** is how we close them. Acceptance is not resignation but the first stage of transformation.

C is for CHALLENGE: If we had the answer, we would already be the person we want to be, living the life we want to be living. The **CHALLENGE** is to find out what stands in our way and the strategies and resources we need, using The Goldilocks Principle of Challenge: not too little, not too much, but just the right amount.

T is for Transformation: We all want to reach our final destination when our difficulties and challenges have been dealt with and overcome. And yet, if it were that easy, we would all be there by now. An effective approach to **TRANSFORMATION** takes us to our desired destination by mapping out the journey that will get us there.

Whatever prompted you to buy my book, be it a crisis, a sense of stuckness, or a desire to be more and do more in life, the six stages of my Model contain the ideas, knowledge, strategies and techniques to make the difference you are after.

Why have I written this book?

The short answer is this book is another way I can make a difference in people's lives. Conversations change lives; this book is my conver-

sation with you to change yours. New approaches to age-old human problems are like new maps to old territory. Yes, countless people have visited the ‘territory’ you are on now, but it is constantly evolving, requiring new maps. I believe wholeheartedly that my contribution can add to, rather than duplicate, existing knowledge. If I didn’t, I would not have written this book.

Who is this book for?

How to Transform your Life with IMPACT: Unlock the best of you is for anyone facing challenge or adversity, whether personal or professional. Below is a list of issues clients have brought to me that I have written my book to address. Perhaps you recognise one or more of them?

- Enforced change, such as bereavement, redundancy, illness and divorce.
- Chosen life or career change.
- Personal or professional crises.
- Unlocking and realising potential.
- Growing existing strengths and resources.
- Addressing past, present or future concerns.
- Personal and professional development.
- Boosting self-esteem and self-worth.
- Confidence building and assertiveness.
- Coping with identity, role and status change.
- Achieving mental and physical health and wellbeing.
- Improving relationships at home and at work.
- Developing new skills and abilities.
- Acquiring new insights.
- Overcoming problematic lifestyles.
- Being challenged.
- Finding meaning and purpose.

What is this book for?

This is a book for anyone who wants transformation in their lives, like Laura:

“Hi Mark, it’s been a while, which I suppose is a good thing. Just thought I would get in touch to say thanks for all your help. It has completely changed me as a person and completely changed the course of my life. I’m now working in youth and community work and enjoying every minute of it. So out of my comfort zone working with teenagers, but it’s great. Anyway, not going to bore you with all the details, but just to say thanks for everything you have done for me.”

Laura

Laura’s story is remarkable and culminated, for me at least, in the above message. I worked with Laura for around a year, and her transformation is a testament to what people are capable of with the right information, knowledge and support.

I want The IMPACT Model to be for you what it was for Laura. Firstly, as a manual and guide to take you from where you are to where you want to be, regardless of your start or desired endpoint. Secondly, as a map to help you locate where you are currently on your own journey of transformation, how you got there and the distance left to your desired destination. Finally, I see the Model as a diagnostic tool. Whenever you are stuck or are making progress, you will be able to understand why through reference to its six stages.

How does this book work?

I would love for you to read my book through once and, having gained an appreciation of its contents, read it more systematically, applying The IMPACT Model to your situation. However, if you choose not to do it this way, I have written my book so you can get to work immediately. Also, I am not an academic, and this is not

an academic book, so there is no jargon or impenetrable language to bog you down.

The six stages—because they represent concepts that I believe—are non-negotiable for successful transformation, make sense individually and collectively. Feedback from those who have read my book suggests that most apply The IMPACT Model generally to start with, then dip in more selectively. There is, though, no right or wrong way.

Clients often ask me how long their coaching or therapy will take. In my early career, I tried to be helpful by being specific, but I turned out to be a poor clairvoyant. Now I avoid getting into the prediction game. How long will this book take you to complete? How long should you spend on each chapter or activity? My answer – as with coaching and therapy, I would like you to value and commit to yourself by doing what is necessary.

What if you get stuck on one of the Model's six stages or cannot get past a problem or difficulty? Firstly, don't worry; getting stuck is a normal stage of any transformational journey. Being at a loss to know what to do doesn't mean you are failing; it means you don't know how to proceed, which is a different thing entirely. If my IMPACT Model is about anything, it is about the 'How'. So if you get bogged down, persevere and trust in yourself and my book to provide you with the answer you need. Go back through the chapters and activities. Like great stories, they will give you something new each time to free you and get you back on track.

Activities and Tasks

In addition to the six concepts that make up The IMPACT Model, each chapter features a range of activities and tasks to go with them, supplemented by several standalone activities placed in between chapters. I hope they will lift the Model's six concepts off the page and into your life. A happy brain is a busy problem-solving brain, and my activities and tasks will hopefully make your brain a happy one too.

“Whenever I felt stuck, and my stress levels started to rise, I would step onto Mark’s Bridge of Curiosity. This activity never failed to help. It detached me from an issue so that I could think more objectively. On my Bridge of Curiosity, I never doubted that a way through existed, and it was where I learned to trust myself again.”

Matt.

The role of others

While there is a lot in this book for you individually, there is much that assumes the direct or indirect involvement of other people. Some might play a significant role, while others might be less influential. Either way, others are bound to play a part in your transformation, and I take this into account throughout my book.

For example, the first chapter—I is for IMPACT—addresses your current conversations and whether they are making the difference, you are after. Using my Conversations With IMPACT Questionnaire, you will identify the qualities and characteristics missing from conversations that do not positively impact your life. This information is gold dust. You can use it to transform existing negative conversations into positive ones and, if you decide to talk to someone new, as the starting point for your conversations with them.

There are similar opportunities in the Meaning, Patterns, Acceptance, Challenge and Transformation chapters to think about or involve others as you progress.

Inspiration

Since qualifying as a therapist in 2005, I have worked with some truly unique and inspirational people, and their stories and experiences will crop up throughout the book. I hope they will inspire you as you see how others have made The IMPACT Model work for them. (All identifying details have been changed significantly

to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.)

One story is Laura's, which she kindly wrote for this book. Laura takes you through her IMPACT journey and the personal and professional transformation she underwent. I know many readers of the first edition of this book found Laura's story inspiring.

Laura's story

In the two years or so prior to seeing Mark, I had surgery for cancer and developed an intestinal condition. Before that and for more years than I care to remember, I was suffering from what I now know to be Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder due to two traumatic incidents separated by many years. My professional life (I was in the finance world), while successful, was ruining my health due to excessive workload and ridiculous hours. I had avoided therapy because I saw it as an admission of failure, but my best efforts weren't helping, and neither was my antidepressant medication. I felt suicidal, and if I'm being honest, it was only the thought of my husband and children that stopped me from going through with it. My health became so poor that my GP reluctantly had to take my driving licence away. Looking back, losing my ability to drive was the worst thing of all. Gone was my independence.

I is for IMPACT

My husband and GP asked me to reconsider therapy, so I went on a counselling directory and saw Mark's photo and profile. In our first session, he asked me why I had chosen him, and I said that in his photo, he looked kind. I understood the meaning behind the name of his business (Conversations With Impact), so in addition to kindness, I told him he needed to accept me, not judge me, regardless of what I came through the door with each week (I was convinced that even he would hate me for some things I had done). This was the Conversation With Impact I needed as I was surrounded by people who didn't understand what I was going through and who were full

of opinions about what I should or should not be doing. Although it took me several months to finally talk about some stuff, Mark's focus on ensuring our conversations gave me what I needed meant I eventually did so. One of the traumatic events in my life took place over thirty years ago, and I had never spoken to anyone about it until Mark—that was how safe our conversations made me feel.

M is for MEANING

I'd always seen myself as a miscalculation on my parent's part—an error. My parents were very young when I was born, which led me to the conclusion I came to. I loved my parents, and they loved me, but once too often, they called me their 'mistake', which did little for my self-image. Mark made a connection between my poor mental health and the dim view I had of myself. The knowledge he shared with me about identity and emotions was a genuine missing piece of my jigsaw. Mark talked a lot about my negative self. He suggested this was who I thought I was and that our job was to get me to see otherwise. I'll admit I found this confusing at first as, if this wasn't who I was, then who was I? As it turned out, I was the one who booked the first therapy session. Mark said turkeys don't vote for Christmas, and negative selves don't book therapy sessions. Understanding that my negative self would not have accessed therapy because therapy is a threat to their dominance put me in contact with the parts of me that I now realise were responsible for my recovery.

P is for PATTERNS

Therapy helped me to identify one particularly destructive pattern. I did not consider myself important and was incapable of doing anything positive for myself. For example, I often worked very late, sometimes into the small hours, and I would wait for a night bus to take me home rather than get a taxi. Despite earning more than enough, I saw such expense as an indulgence I didn't deserve. Consequently, I would arrive home very late, grab a few hours of

poor-quality sleep and get up early for work. This pattern of self-neglect was also reflected in my prioritisation of others over myself. The word 'No' was not a part of my vocabulary. No matter who it was or what they wanted, my need for external validation meant I said 'Yes' to every request, even at work. I could only be a 'good' person by helping others, which meant that helping myself would make me 'bad'. My people-pleasing was, I believe, killing me, but until Mark drew my attention to patterns generally and this one, in particular, I had no idea. I still remember the day when I did get a taxi home from work. It was one of the most uncomfortable days of my life, yet so necessary.

A is for ACCEPTANCE

As I said, I would never have considered myself a good person, someone with esteem and worth, but in therapy, I did come to accept myself. Hearing Mark tell me repeatedly that I had worth as a human being eventually sank in. I either accepted what he said, or I had to accuse him of lying. I also accepted that other people and life events had to share some responsibility for who I was and the life I had led. While this had been pointed out, accepting it felt like an excuse. So I stopped rescuing and providing for everyone else. The fear that putting myself first sometimes would result in people abandoning me never materialised. There were some who didn't like being told 'No' and they disappeared from my life, but if that was a bad thing, then why did I feel better? I still gave a lot to my family and friends, but I got the balance right between them and me. I came to accept that fundamentally changing my approach to myself and my life was not a mark of failure but one of achievement.

C is for CHALLENGE

While my overall health was improving, I knew I had to find alternative employment if I was to make a full recovery, which meant changing my career. While not a new realisation, simply thinking

about what this challenge would involve caused me to have panic attacks. However, Mark showed me that my panic was not about the goal of changing career but my strategy to achieve it. In other words, I didn't have one. Over time, I developed a realistic, achievable approach to finding my new career that satisfied my need to see progress without causing me the panic of never finding one. That was my worst fear—that I would never find one. Everything depended on this outcome, and I can't tell you the relief I felt when I knew it would be possible. Mark helped me find a level of challenge I could cope with, so I could figure out what I would do next. Luckily I had an extensive network of contacts—a resource Mark suggested I tap into. One of those contacts resulted in a conversation that led me to my new role: working with disadvantaged young adults to help them in their careers.

T is for TRANSFORMATION

At the end of therapy and, as it turned out, coaching as well, I was a fundamentally different person, leading a fundamentally different life. Virtually everything had changed: my career, the number of hours I work, my relationships and my health. The two greatest days were when my intestinal condition was brought under control, and I got my Driving Licence back. I initially chose Mark because he looked kind, but his IMPACT Model showed me where I had been going wrong and what I could do about it. I walk my dogs and enjoy my holidays, and most importantly, my family no longer have to worry about me not being around.

Laura.

I is for IMPACT

All of us have experienced feelings of hope, relief and excitement when a conversation gives us precisely what we need; and all of us have felt despair, disappointment and frustration when a conversation fails to do so. To overcome our difficulties and challenges, we need to have the right conversations with ourselves and others at the right time. When we don't, those difficulties and challenges persist and possibly worsen.

A conversation can take different forms. It can be interpersonal i.e., involving someone else, and intrapersonal i.e., with ourselves. Increasingly, a conversation can be with someone who sounds human but is 'artificial'. A conversation can occur in various contexts, such as in our heads, homes and workplaces, in the same physical space or virtually where the person we are talking to is somewhere else. I like to think I am conversing with you, the reader, through this book. What defines a Conversation With Impact, however, is not the type but the outcome, and that it makes the difference you are after.

The first stage

The six stages of my IMPACT Model are non-negotiable for successful transformation in who we are, what we do and the life we lead. What is also non-negotiable is the position of I for IMPACT as the first stage. Only by getting this stage right can we make it through the other five because only Conversations With Impact can:

- make the difference we are after: **IMPACT**
- make sense of why things are as they are: **MEANING**
- identify unhelpful, negative patterns and replace them with helpful, positive ones: **PATTERNS**
- find acceptance in who we are, someone with esteem and worth, strengths and potential: **ACCEPTANCE**
- make challenge work for, not against us: **CHALLENGE**
- ensure we complete our journey of transformation: **TRANSFORMATION.**

If it were untrue that we needed Conversations With Impact to flourish in life and build resilience, I would be doing something else right now. There would be no need for coaches, therapists and self-help books because we would already have what we needed to get to where we wanted to be.

In this chapter, which will be a voyage of discovery as you see first-hand why conversations are so influential, I will show you how to:

- have Conversations With Impact by identifying the qualities and characteristics you need
- upgrade conversations, including those you have with yourself (self-talk), which have the potential to become ones that can make the difference you are after
- identify when you need to go outside of your existing support network and find someone new to talk to.

“I thought talking myself down was normal. The idea that I could be nice to myself, not just my team, was alien to me. Over time, I got to experience what it was like to go into meetings with clients or my employees without tearing strips off myself before, during and after. Negative self-talk is exhausting, and as I discovered, directly impacted my performance, which was not something I could afford running a large business. Changing how I talk to myself has made a huge difference.”

Sue

What is a Conversation With Impact?

A Conversation With Impact is one we have with ourselves or others that contains what we need to make the difference we are after. It demonstrates that it is different by including the qualities and characteristics missing from our existing conversations, such as trust, positivity and helpful ideas. And it is this difference that creates the IMPACT because it gives us the experience of a conversation that can resolve the problems we face or help us achieve the goals we have set for ourselves. In my work, I never underestimate the ‘impact’ this has. When I do my job well and give someone a Conversation With Impact, I see them visibly change in front of me as the reality hits them that I can and will help.

A Conversation With Impact always leaves us with more than what we started with, fundamentally changing who we are and what we know because it is based on an effective relationship with ourselves or others that brings new:

- ideas and perspectives
- goals and objectives
- techniques and strategies
- information and knowledge.

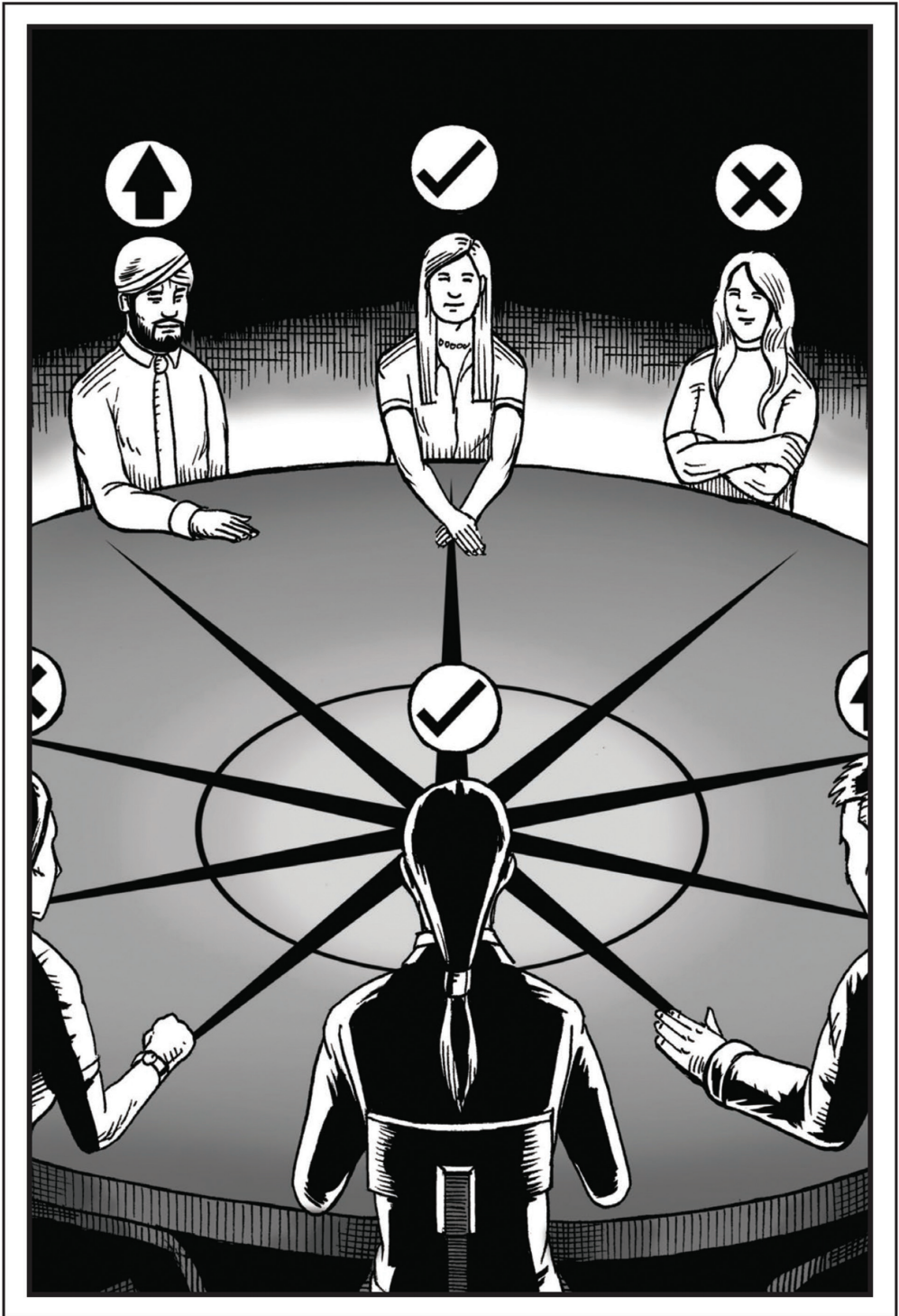
A Conversation With Impact positively influences our other conversations. It removes the pressure from existing conversations

to make the difference we are after, often to the relief of those closest to us; changes how we talk to ourselves and others and what we talk about; and enables us to distinguish between conversations that are worth continuing and those that are not. Finding someone who can give us a Conversation With Impact, or be able to do so for ourselves, means we no longer waste valuable time and energy engaging in conversations that take us further from where we want or need to be.

“I would batter myself with self-criticism. Give myself a daily diet of self-sabotage, ‘That wasn’t good enough,’ or, ‘Really? That’s it? That’s all you have to offer?’ I now understand why I did this and how not to.”

Graham

I IS FOR IMPACT



QUESTIONNAIRE

The Conversations With Impact Questionnaires

Below are my Conversations With Impact Questionnaires, which I designed to help people identify what they need from a conversation to make the difference they are after. The Questionnaire on this page addresses your conversations with others, and the one on page 8 tackles your conversations with yourself. Both include what I consider to be the essential qualities and characteristics of a Conversation With Impact—completing the Questionnaires will enable you to build a detailed picture of your existing conversations and what you can do to improve them.

To get started, I will first ask you to familiarise yourself with the Questionnaires and then complete the activity underneath, which includes how to score each quality and characteristic.

Statement	Score	Statement	Score
I trust the person		They understand me and what I need from them	
I feel respected by them		They have the ideas, knowledge and skills I need	
They do not judge me and accept me for who I am		They believe in me and my potential for change	
Our conversations follow my agenda, not theirs		I feel challenged by them in a good way	
They give me the time I need		I feel they genuinely listen to me	

Statement	Score	Statement	Score
They respect my need for confidentiality		They are truly interested in me	
I can say what I really want to them		They help me set clear, realistic goals and strategies	
They help me make sense of my situation		My conversations with them make a difference	
They keep me focused		They keep me accountable	
They help me find solutions to my problems		They have the X-Factor	

Statement	Score	Statement	Score
I trust myself		I understand myself and what I need from myself	
I respect myself		I have the ideas, knowledge and skills I need	
I do not judge myself, and I accept myself for who I am		I believe in myself and my potential for change	
My self-talk follows my, not others', agendas		I challenge myself in a good way	
I give myself the time I need		I genuinely listen to myself	

Statement	Score	Statement	Score
I respect my confidentiality and do not overshare		I am truly interested in myself	
I can say what I really want to myself		I set myself clear, realistic goals and strategies	
I can make sense of my situation		My conversations with myself (my self-talk) make a difference	
I can keep myself focused		I can keep myself accountable	
I can find solutions to my problems		I have the X-Factor	

Existing conversations

What conversations should you include? The list below gives some suggestions but select those relevant to your issues. In other words, if you enter a daily conversation with the owner of your local shop, this might be one to leave out. Conversations to consider are those with:

- yourself (necessary)
- partners
- friends
- family
- acquaintances
- colleagues
- bosses
- professionals, such as coaches, therapists or mentors

- social and cultural representatives, such as teachers, community and spiritual figures
- artificial interfaces, such as apps and other technologies.

Both Questionnaires work in the same way. Start by listing your relevant conversations. Then, choose a number between 1 and 7 that reflects the degree to which the conversation possesses each quality and characteristic (1=none, 7=all that you need). When scoring your conversations, consider the importance of each quality or characteristic to you. If one is unimportant to you i.e., it makes no difference one way or the other, give it a 7. For those that are important to you, score them appropriately. Remember to keep a copy of your completed questionnaires. You will need them.

The number of completed questionnaires should equal the number of conversations you selected initially.

What did you discover?

It is important to remember there are no right or wrong combinations of qualities or characteristics, which means there are no right or wrong scores. However, in my experience:

- conversations with mostly low scores (3 or below) tend to make things worse
- conversations with mostly medium scores (4 or 5) tend to make little or no difference
- conversations with mostly high scores (6 or 7) tend to make a significant, positive difference.

Looking at your scores, what do they say about your existing conversations? How might they explain the existence and persistence of your difficulties or lack of progress towards key goals and objectives? Or alternatively, how might they clarify the opposite, your consistent ability to achieve personal and professional transformation?

Conversations with yourself

Please do not neglect your conversations with yourself, as they will be the one constant as you commit to transforming yourself. Aim for your self-talk to become as important, influential and pivotal as any other conversation you have. When we don't have anyone else to talk to, being able to give ourselves a Conversation With Impact is essential, and even when we have great support around us, it is rarely enough by itself.

“I learnt what an effective conversation was and that those I was giving myself were very far from being effective. Now my conversations with myself are effective. I have become my own life coach.”

Katherine

Looking at the questionnaire for conversations with yourself and the scores you allocated for each quality and characteristic, consider the following:

- what do you need to find more of?
- what do you need to maintain?
- what would make them Conversations with Impact?

If you have given yourself mostly low or mostly low-to-medium scores, indicating your self-talk is harmful, there are usually good reasons for this, such as low self-esteem, perfectionism or the effect of an unhappy or toxic relationship. If this is what you suspect or discover, however hard it is to accept, trust the whole book to show you what you can do to improve your situation.

If you have given yourself mainly medium scores, ask yourself how you can get them higher. Or, if your scores are predominantly high, what can you do to maintain them?

Conversations with others:

Same people, improved conversations?

Achieving a Conversation With Impact does not necessarily mean changing who you are talking to. If you have identified a conversation that isn't having the desired impact, but has the potential to do so, look at its scores. Which qualities and characteristics, if increased, would turn this conversation into a Conversation With Impact? Share the findings of your questionnaire with the person concerned. They are clearly important to you in some way, and their involvement allows you both to focus on what you need. All I would say is to think carefully about approaching anyone in this situation and how you will do so. Even though you might value their conversations, are they someone you can talk to about this or not? If they are and they agree to try and give you what you need, then great. Agree with them on the importance of ongoing assessment of your updated conversations to ensure they become and remain Conversations With Impact. If you decide not to ask them, that's ok. You can continue to benefit from the relationship, knowing that you will need to find someone else.

Important people, low scores?

What if low scores apply to someone significant to you in some way, someone you have to talk to? As a coach and therapist, I am acutely aware that we can't always change our partner or boss, even if we want to. When it comes to such people and our conversations with them, you have to be kind to yourself, even selfish (in a good way), by asking if:

- you have the ability or inclination to talk to them about what you need
- they are someone who will be receptive to changing how they speak to you.

If you decide not to try, please back yourself in making this

decision. Feeling guilty, deceitful or ashamed can be easy because you lack the courage. Please don't. If you have issues that this person can't or won't help you with, you have every right to seek someone who can and will.

A final thought. If the outcome of finding someone else who can give you a Conversation With Impact is increased self-confidence, this presents you with an interesting dilemma. Do you return to this 'important' person and ask for an improved conversation, assuming they are still in your life? If you do because the decision is more about marking your progress than whether they agree to change how they talk to you, I'd say go for it. If they are amenable, how amazing would that be? But if they aren't, you are now in a position to decide whether this person needs to remain a part of your life. Imagine how amazing that would be, a win-win situation.

"My husband used to criticise me for lacking ambition. My attempts to get him to understand that I just had different ambitions to him, were always rejected. Completing the questionnaire showed me what my husband wasn't giving me: unconditional support. I showed him the questionnaire I did for our conversations. He apologised and decided to support me."

Nina

Need someone new to talk to?

If completing my Questionnaires makes it clear you need someone new to talk to, here are some points to consider. Whoever you find, explain that you are talking to them because your existing conversations are not making the difference you are after. Show them your questionnaires and scores, being specific about the qualities and characteristics you are looking for. If they can provide them, then great, but if they can't, no hard feelings. Finding someone who can give you a Conversation With Impact is important, and what is important is worth taking time for.

Remember, this book is about your transformation into the person you want to be, living the life you want to be living, which are outcomes only a Conversation With Impact can deliver.

What to talk about?

Whether you decide to improve an existing conversation or find someone new to talk to, the next step is determining what to speak to them about, which gives me a chance to introduce the following list of areas that will feature throughout this book. These areas are where we will find both the causes of our difficulties, their solutions and opportunities for our transformation.

- Yourself: identity, role and status; self-esteem and self-worth.
- Home and family life.
- Relationships – personal and professional.
- Work, career and professional development.
- Health and wellbeing.
- Financial.
- Lifestyle.
- Social.
- Cultural.
- Environmental.

To get you started, think about the areas you want my book to help you with. Using a 0–10 scale, where 0 = an area in great shape and 10 = an area in very poor shape, allocate numbers that capture how you currently feel about each area. As a general rule:

- Areas scored 7 or above require immediate attention
- Areas scored 5 or 6 require attention soon
- Areas scored 4 or below can be nurtured or even left alone

This activity aims to be diagnostic. Looking at your scores, what do they suggest you should be talking about and to whom? For example, if your professional transformation is a priority, can you turn to your existing support network, or do you need to find

someone new such as a Careers Coach? Or, if your past is the most pressing concern because of trauma, do you need someone experienced in this field? Remember, only Conversations with Impact can make the difference you are after. There is no point in choosing someone who can't give you what you need.

How to have a Conversation With Impact

At a practical level, the 'how' can happen as soon as you act on your questionnaires' outcomes, e.g., by changing how you talk to yourself, asking a partner for an improved conversation or finding a professional to work with. Once started, focus on the qualities and characteristics you need from these conversations, assessing their impact by regularly completing new questionnaires. If you are not moving forwards, new questionnaires will enable you to find out what is missing and will explain your lack of progress, and if you are progressing, they will show you why. If it becomes clear that your conversations are not having the desired impact, consider how you and the people you are talking to can get back on track by finding more of the qualities and characteristics you need. And if it doesn't prove possible? Be kind to yourself and find someone new to talk to.

At an emotional level, assessing what you are and are not capable of when it comes to having Conversations With Impact will be essential. If you feel confident, then there is no stopping you. However, if you feel unconfident, whoever you speak to must make you feel safe. Talk to a professional like a life coach or therapist if in doubt.* Work with them until you can ask for a Conversation With Impact from anyone.

Whatever your starting point, commit to having Conversations With Impact.

* For information on the differences between life coaching and therapy, the following organisations have lots of helpful information: www.counselling-directory.org.uk and www.lifecoach-directory.org.uk.

What stops people from having a Conversation With Impact?

There are several reasons. Often people don't know that their conversations are the issue in the first place. Or if they have some idea, they lack sufficient understanding of what is missing, or have no way of finding out and consequently can't ask for what they need. Another explanation is that the people they are talking to don't know how to give them the conversation they need or, worse, do know but don't want to.

Stigma, shame, or embarrassment can prevent people from accessing services like therapy, as can the fear of what conversations with professionals might be like.

The more concerning reason is when someone stops themselves from asking for a Conversation With Impact. 'What if my partner leaves me?' 'What if my boss sacks me?' Many of us will have found ourselves in this position due to fear or a lack of confidence, knowing we cannot deal with the consequences of rejection or being ignored. As I said above, in situations like these, the focus must be on addressing what is stopping someone. We all need to reach the stage where we can ask for a Conversation With Impact from anyone we trust to help us.

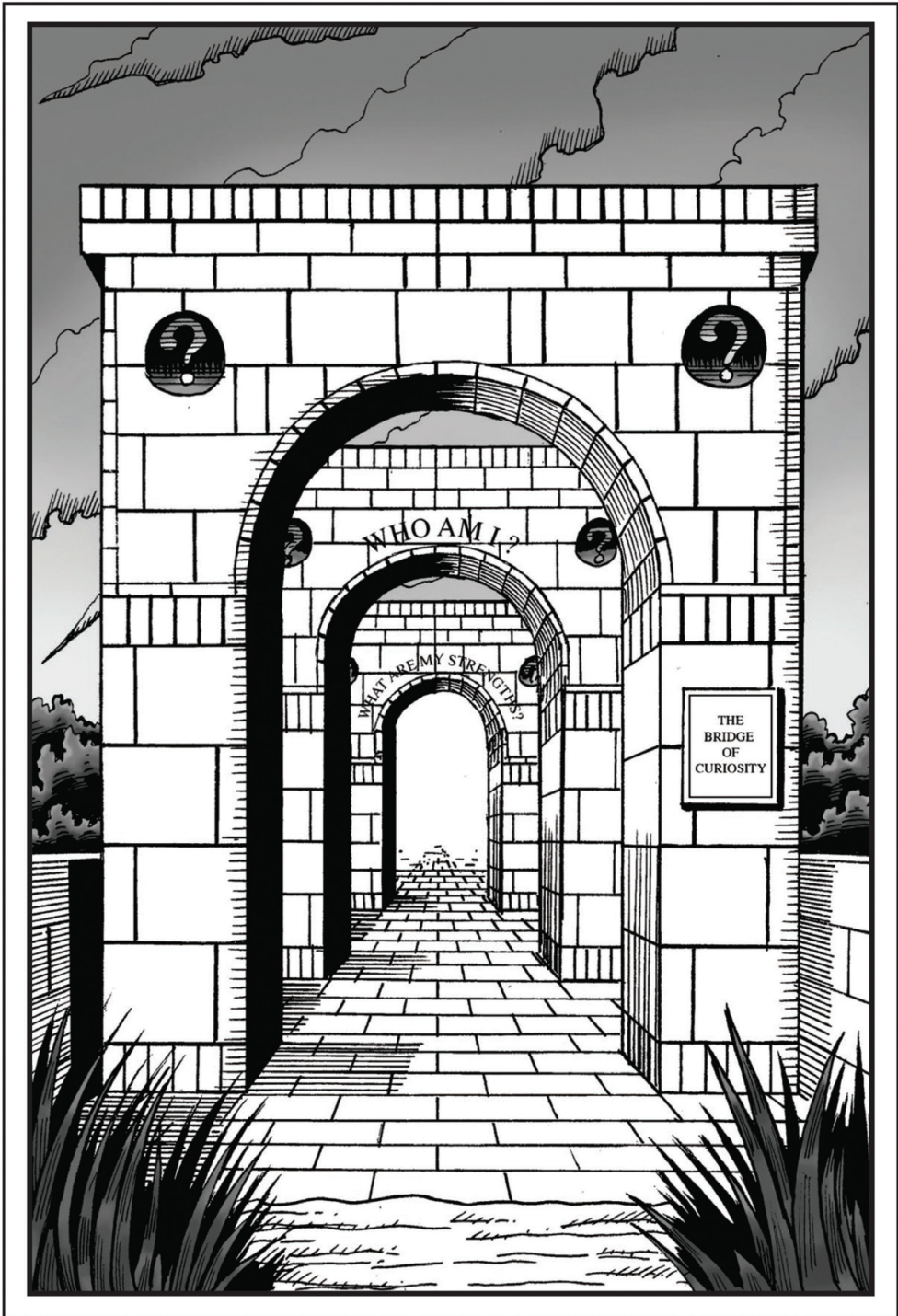
Summary of chapter one

- Persistent difficulties and challenges result from conversations that are missing important qualities and characteristics, which means they can never make the difference we are after.
- Conversations With Impact become possible when we incorporate into new conversations the qualities and characteristics missing from our existing ones.
- The Conversations With Impact Questionnaires can change how you talk to yourself and the people you already know and help you decide if you need someone new to talk to.

- Conversations With Impact are critical for our personal and professional transformation, and we must remove any barriers that prevent us from having them.

“I attended a workshop run by Mark and was struck by the idea that I had never thought about whether my conversations were helpful or not. The biggest change has been in my relationship with my 18-year-old son. He told me he found it difficult to open up to me about his anxiety. He completed a Questionnaire for our conversations and it showed me that I try to fix things and take control of his life, whereas what he needed from me was to listen and ask how I can support him.”

Sarah



THE BRIDGE OF CURIOSITY

Bridge of Curiosity

Where you are now is not where you want to be. Where you want to be is somewhere else, but your difficulty is you don't know where that somewhere else is or how to get there. You know you have to get to where you want to be because staying where you are isn't an option. As you ponder your predicament, a bridge appears in front of you. While you can't see over to the other side, you have a sixth sense that stepping onto it is the right thing to do. You notice the bridge is made of stone and etched into one of the stones on the right-hand side is what you assume to be its name, 'The Bridge of Curiosity.' And then you notice that the bridge is etched with other writings, all in the form of questions.

'Why do you need to get to the other side?'

'What do you not have or know that will get you to the other side?'

'Who can show you how to get across?'

'Who will you be over the other side?'

The more you look, the more questions you see. And the more you see, the more curious you become. And the more curious you become, the more the bridge appears ahead. "Now that is curious," you say to yourself.

An idea pops into your head. You look away from the questions and stop being curious. "Yes," you say, "I knew it!" For up ahead, the bridge seems to disappear into nothingness. You have no choice. Only curiosity will get you over to the other side and where you want to be. And so you let your curiosity get to work, helped along by the questions carved into the bridge. Then, just as suddenly as the first side of the Bridge of Curiosity appeared, so does the other side. Looking straight ahead, you see a beautiful landscape opening up in front of you. Your attention is drawn to a sign that removes any doubt about what you are seeing. It says, 'Where you want to be.' As you reach the end of the bridge, you notice a hammer and chisel resting against its righthand side. Picking them up, you chisel a question of your own into the stone. Then you step off.