

# Personal Excellence

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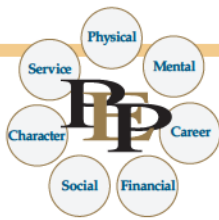
**Peter Block**  
Author and Speaker

**Your  
Dream?**  
**Inner  
Excellence**  
**Create  
Your Future**  
**Six Key Conversations**



*"Personal Excellence is the only reading you'll need to do for continual self-improvement both personally and professionally!"*

—Sharlene Hawkes, Former Miss America,  
award-winning ESPN broadcaster



## GOAL GETTERS



### What can one person do?

One act of community service can spark thousands more. Don't tell me that one person can't make a difference. I know better. As a community activist and lifelong volunteer, I recently learned how *one act of kindness can set off a chain reaction that can span the globe*. It started with me asking a pet food company for a donation of dog food for Red Lake Rosie's in Minnesota, since I'm a professional dog trainer and owner of a pet care business. I called Solid Gold Northland (SGL), and a marketing manager said that they were trying to increase the number of people who *liked* them on Facebook, and that if I could get 40 new Facebook members to click on their *like* button, they'd give me \$200 worth of pet food.

Since I volunteer for six different community groups, I sent a message to all my Facebook friends inviting them to SGL's fan page on Facebook. Somehow, the invite made it to the Facebook page of The Patrick Miracle, a page devoted to the story of a two-year-old pit bull found by a janitor in a dumpster. Their Facebook page has charted over 109,000 "like" clicks from users. When the founders of the page posted my invite, SGL received more than 2,000 new fans worldwide in just 48 hours.

When I contacted them the next week, they were blown away by how quickly the response took off. As a result of the combined outreach, SGL and Chuck and Don's Pet Food Outlet have committed a donation of \$2,000 worth of pet food, and I've helped to forge new friends who care about the same things. And it all started with a simple posting on Facebook because I wanted to help a local animal shelter. It's been magical.

Although I work hard in my volunteer activities, I love serving my community. The people who I serve with all share my values and world view, and they are my friends and my family. The people and the activities fill my life with fun, joy, and a purpose I could never have achieved any other way.

I encourage you to *volunteer your service*. It doesn't take much time or effort to start a movement. It happened to me, and it can happen to you. Give it a shot. Community service is its own reward.

—Lisa Sellman, author, [dreamcatcherpress.us](http://dreamcatcherpress.us)



### Everyone has individual goals, but only about 3 percent have a well-balanced goals program.

An individual goal could be something as simple as getting to work on time or losing 10 pounds. A goals program is a different matter. One reason why people do not have a goals program is an unrealistic or imagined fear that causes them to believe that their efforts will produce failure, so *it is safer not to try*.

This fear, based on *false assumptions*, prevents most people from setting realistic but worthwhile goals. They don't see that *failure is an event, not a person*. Admittedly, there's risk in setting goals because you might not reach them, *but there's infinitely more danger in not setting them*. Obstacles are the things you see when you either don't set goals or take your eyes off your goals.

Also, if you have a poor self-image, you see yourself as either *incapable* or *undeserving* of accomplishing great or worthwhile things in your life. The image or picture you have of yourself dramatically influences your behavior.

As the 10<sup>th</sup> of 12 children raised by a widowed mother in a small town in Mississippi during the Depression, I thought of myself as a *little guy* (small for my age) from a *little town* who would struggle all of his life. I also saw myself as being mediocre as a student. It wasn't until I was in college, taking a course from a professor who was a friend of the family, that I made a serious effort to excel. I spent extra time studying and made an "A" in the subject. That convinced me that I could compete with other students. I saw myself in a positive light.

*When you see yourself in a favorable light, you perform better. With a healthy self-image (not an inflated ego) you set more ambitious goals.*

—Zig Ziglar, [www.zigziglar.com](http://www.zigziglar.com)

## PersonalCOACH



### Create Your Future

Engage in six key conversations.

by Peter Block

**T**O TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE, YOU NEED TO BE OPEN to an alternative future and engage in six conversations that are aimed at building accountability, commitment, and community.

To open yourself to an alternative future, start with the *invitation conversation*. Sequence isn't critical. However, some conversations are more difficult than others, especially when you are just beginning to engage with one another. Certain conversations are high-risk and require a greater level of trust among people than others to have meaning, so start with less-demanding ones.

- **Invitation conversation.** Transformation occurs through choice, not mandate.

Invitation is the call to create an alternative future. What is the invitation you can make to participate and own the relationships, tasks, and process that lead to success?

- **Possibility conversation.** This focuses on what you want your future to be, as opposed to problem-solving the past. It frees you to innovate, challenge the status quo, break new ground, and create new futures.

- **Ownership conversation.** This conversation focuses on whose task is this? It asks: How have I contributed to creating current reality? Confusion, blame, and waiting for someone else to change are a defense against ownership and personal power.

- **Dissent conversation.** This gives you the space to say *no*. If you can't say *no*, your *yes* has no meaning. Give yourself a chance to express doubts and reservations, as a way of clarifying your roles, needs and yearnings within your vision and mission. Genuine commitment begins with doubt, and *no* is an expression of finding your space and role.

- **Commitment conversation.** This conversation is about making promises to others about your contribution to the success. It asks: What promise am I willing to make? And, what price am I willing to pay for success? It is a promise for the sake of a larger purpose, not for personal return.

- **Gifts conversation.** Rather than focus on deficiencies and weaknesses, focus on the gifts and assets you bring and capitalize on those to make the best and highest contribution. Connect with your core gifts that can make the difference and change lives.

These six conversations are vital to take responsibility for shaping the future. PE

Peter Block is author of *Community: The Structure of Belonging*, (Berrett-Koehler). Visit [www.designedlearning.com](http://www.designedlearning.com).

**ACTION:** Engage in these six conversations.