

"*The 3 Gaps* is a simple yet profound book that will enable you to live a better, more fulfilling life and have a positive impact on everyone around you."

—Stephen M. R. Covey, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Speed of Trust* and coauthor of *Smart Trust*

THE 3 GAPS

VALUES

BELIEFS

TIME

Are You Making
a Difference?

Hyrum W. Smith Bestselling author of
The 10 Natural Laws of Successful Time and Life Management

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THE 3 GAPS

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THE 3 GAPS

Are You Making a Difference?

Hyrum W. Smith



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a BK Life book

The 3 Gaps

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*I dedicate this book
to my amazing wife of forty-nine years,
my six children, and my twenty-four grandchildren.
They have all consistently been there
to help me close
my gaps.*

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Foreword

In George Bernard Shaw's remarkable book *Man and Superman* the fictional hero, Don Juan, is faced with an interesting choice. He has been sent to hell and has to consider the consequences of his condition. He has been given a choice to return to heaven, but the devil is persuasively and deftly trying to get him to stay. Hell, in this instance, is described as a very nice place to be—sophisticated, pleasant, easy, and not the fire and brimstone of mythology. In the end Don Juan wisely chooses to return to heaven, a choice scoffed at by the devil, who asks why. Our hero simply answers that “to be in Hell is to drift; to be in Heaven is to steer.” The devil is rendered speechless.

Hyrum Smith has long held a special interest in the principles of productivity and achievement. Hyrum has been blessed with the ability to electrify and enlarge the minds and aspirations of his audiences. His energy forges a compelling pathway to something he calls inner peace; a profound by-product of achieving congruity

between what is of most worth, based on the highest priorities and acts of behavior. As he explains in the following pages, incongruity happens when we veer off the path of what matters most and lose our way. You will recognize that condition; it's a common malady in life—in his life, our lives, organizations, and, perhaps most especially, the life of our nation.

We live in a world of incongruity and confusion. Yet finding inner peace is a process that is surprisingly easy to learn and apply—the remedy for much of the chaos lies within the pages of this book. Will being influenced by the wisdom shared here and applying it in our lives change us? Can our organizations become more focused and productive? Could it heal the nation? Well, that depends. Are we ready to change ourselves? If so, the fruits of that effort will be rich.

We, like Don Juan, can choose to drift or steer through our lives. Although this is not a book that offers heaven as a reward, Hyrum extends an emphatic opportunity for us to steer ourselves in the direction where our highest ideals, great accomplishments, and the contentment that comes from being whole lie in wait. Read on. Make a difference.

*Richard I. Winwood, cofounder of Franklin Covey
and Developer of the Franklin Day Planner*

Introduction

I lived in England when I was nineteen and twenty years old and had the opportunity of listening to Winston Churchill speak. In a speech that he gave just before his death, he indicated that he had been obsessed with the need to make a difference on the planet.

If anyone has made a difference, Winston Churchill has. After all, he probably saved the free world during World War II. As I listened to him speak, I felt like a baton had been passed to me that day, and I decided, “You know what? I’m going to make a difference, too.”

The commitment to that value has affected most of my decisions over the past fifty years. So when the office of then mayor Rudy Giuliani called me three weeks after the events of September 11, 2001, and asked if my business partner Stephen Covey and I would come to New York to lead a workshop for the families affected by the tragedy, I said, “Of course, when do you need us?”

On October 18, 2001, Stephen and I flew to New York. I’d flown into New York hundreds of times, but this time

flying over the East River was a very different experience. The World Trade Center was gone. We flew in late at night and from our window we could only see lights and the smoke that smoldered on. It was a surreal sight.

The next morning at 5:00 a.m., a police van picked us up and took us to Ground Zero, where a tour had been arranged for us by the mayor. After getting through four police checkpoints, we stood on fifteen feet of compacted debris in front of the largest hole I'd ever seen.

As we stood there, a crane pulled an I-beam out of the rubble; it was dripping molten steel on one end. The police officer told us that there had been over forty thousand computers in the World Trade Center and not one had survived the three-thousand-degree fire. It was still burning as we stood there.

Later we were shown into a hotel ballroom designed for a capacity of eighteen hundred people. Four or five hundred additional people stood in every available space. The event began with two police officers and two firefighters in dress uniforms walking in with the American flag. Just that was enough to wipe me out emotionally. The Harlem Girls Choir then blew the roof off, singing three patriotic songs; I have never heard more magnificent music.

By then I was crying like a baby. I was grateful Stephen was up first. When it was my turn to speak, I made my way to the front of the room, stepping over people sitting on the floor. Before I could open my mouth, a firefighter stood up and said, "Mr. Smith, are you going to tell us how we're going to get out of bed in the morning when we just don't give a crap anymore?"

That began the toughest and perhaps most rewarding speaking experience I've ever had.

I looked out at the expectant, shocked, grief-stricken faces and then said to the firefighter, "If you remember one thing I say today, let it be these words: *pain is inevitable; misery is optional*. The fact is, bad things happen to good people. Wars happen. People lose their 401(k) retirement accounts. Tsunamis wipe out villages. Nuclear plants melt down. A lot of bad things happen. We're not going to get through this mortal experience without some pain. But how we choose to deal with that pain is ultimately the measure of who we are and of the success we have in closing our gaps.

"When you compare what happened here on 9/11 to what has happened on this planet in the last one hundred and fifty years, it doesn't even come up on the scope of ugliness in comparison. Does it?"

It was so quiet in that massive room you could hear a pin drop.

"Let's go back to June 5, 1944. Eisenhower is in a bunker in England and says to his generals, 'Gentlemen, we've got to throw more kids at that beach in Normandy tomorrow than the Germans have bullets in their bunkers.' The next day they threw two hundred thousand kids at that beach, and do you know what happened? The Germans ran out of bullets in their bunkers. Eisenhower had estimated within four hundred how many young men he'd lose. How often do we remember that?"

I went on to remind the audience of other tragic and monumental losses: over 400,000 soldiers lost in World

War II, more than 600,000 lost in the Civil War; we lost 50,000 soldiers in just three days at the Battle of Gettysburg. Then there was Korea. Vietnam. The list goes on.

I then said, "Let me tell you why this resonates so much with me. On May 18, 1995, my two daughters were driving home from Salt Lake City. My daughter Sharwan was twenty-four years old and three weeks away from her wedding. My daughter Stacie was twenty-five years old, and she had her two-year-old daughter with her in the car. While traveling down I-15 in Utah, they had an accident that rolled the car. Sharwan was killed instantly. My granddaughter, Shilo, was thrown from the car, killing her instantly as well. Somehow, Stacie survived.

"For the first time in my life, I experienced very deep, unbelievable pain. I had to call Sharwan's fiancé and tell him that she was dead. Stacie's husband, Larry, already knew because he had been on the phone with Stacie when the accident happened.

"Early in the morning before the funeral of my daughter and granddaughter, I sat in my office trying to come up with something to say. How do you speak at your own daughter's funeral? You never expect to outlive your kids.

"As I sat there, my eye rested on a painting in my office that has been there a very long time. It depicts a winter scene in the western prairies with a pioneer couple standing over the grave of a family member they had just buried. As I stared at the painting, I saw something I'd never noticed before. In the background there were other wagons, and people sitting on the wagons holding the reins

of their horses. They were waiting for this couple to finish burying their loved one. That's when I realized what those pioneers knew, and what we all have to learn: We have to move on, or we will not survive. Those early pioneers made a difference for their future generations because they refused to quit."

Even as tears streamed down my face, I could see recognition in the faces of the audience. At that moment, they knew I understood their pain. I told them, "There are times when I still get mad as hell about losing my daughter and granddaughter, but we have to move on. That experience changed me. It forever changed my outlook on life, and I will never forget it. But if I had decided to be miserable, it would have ruined many lives, my own included."

Everyone on the planet has to deal with some pain. Regardless of that fact, misery does not have to be a part of it. If you choose misery, you're done. Your mind shuts down, and you stop thinking about the things you ought to think about, things that could build and strengthen your relationships, your body, your mind, and your business. If you choose misery, everybody around you is also miserable. The end result of misery is hopelessness.

As I looked out at the audience I realized that these people had all made a difference one way or the other in the events of 9/11. Firemen, police officers, neighbors, and bystanders: all went forward against a tide of overwhelming pain and suffering to make a difference.

I have learned that we all want to make a difference, to be significant or to make a contribution in some way

so as to alleviate suffering or to make the world a better place.

This book is about making a difference, starting with you. Just as an airline flight attendant will tell you to put your own oxygen mask on before assisting others in case of cabin pressure loss, getting your own life together by learning what the Three Gaps are and how to close them will enable you to take control of yourself and your life and to make a huge difference in the world around you, both personally and professionally.

Included in each chapter discussing a gap there is a personal story. These true stories come from people I've come to know and admire over the years who have made a real difference in their own lives by closing the Three Gaps.

If you will make a commitment to internalize and act on the lessons of the Three Gaps, we guarantee that you will find new tools to live a more balanced, productive life with an increased ability to make a difference.

Closing the Gaps

Before we can talk about truly making a difference, I need to introduce an important concept. To do that, I want you to think back to 1989 and the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, in which the hero seeks the Holy Grail. Jones follows various clues and overcomes many obstacles to arrive at the ruins at Petra, where he negotiates the traps set to foil unworthy seekers and steps out on a ledge where he can see his goal, a cave containing the Grail. But there

is a chasm too wide to cross; this gap separates him from final victory. In the movie, he steps into the void and a bridge magically appears, allowing him to walk across the gap to his goal. Of course, the gaps we face in real life have to be dealt with differently, but the treasures waiting for us when we close these gaps are very real. One of those treasures is the ability to attain inner peace.

Inner peace comes from having serenity, balance, and harmony in our lives achieved through the disciplined closing of the Three Gaps.

Gaps in our lives drain the power needed to make a positive difference in the world. As I will discuss in this book, when we close the Three Gaps we earn the right to serenity, balance, and harmony in our lives, which will in turn increase our capacity to make a real difference in the world.

The Beliefs Gap



Closing the Beliefs Gap

The Power of the Belief Window

Because beliefs are such a powerful determining factor in our lives, the first gap I want to discuss is the gap between what you believe to be true and what is actually true: your Beliefs Gap.

There was a time when the vast majority of the people on this earth believed that the sun revolved around the earth. When Copernicus suggested and Galileo insisted that it was the other way around, people considered them heretics. The fact that they were right was irrelevant; and, at the time, believing the wrong thing about the sun's relationship to the earth had no serious consequences (other than personal ostracism). Had we not corrected that erroneous belief we certainly would never have had the power to achieve the tremendous scientific advances spurred on by the space program. The correct belief allowed us to make a difference.

Consider the following story.

John walks into the yard of a friend, and is surprised to see a Doberman pinscher that has never been there before. At first he freezes in terror; then he runs out of the yard as fast as his legs can carry him without pausing to wonder how the dog got there or to notice if it is on a chain.

Later, Susan walks into the same yard. She is just as surprised as John to be greeted by a Doberman. Her reaction, however, is to squeal with delight, “Oh! How cute!” She runs toward the dog so she can pet it and scratch it behind its ears.

Why such different reactions to the same dog? It’s all about what I call the Belief Window.

Everyone has a Belief Window. I like to picture it as a small, clear window hanging in front of your face. I imagine it hooked in place so that every time you move, the Belief Window moves with you: you look out into the world through that window and you draw in information from the world through the same window.

On this Belief Window you have placed thousands of beliefs or principles that you assume to be correct. They have accumulated over your entire life and they are not all equal in value. Some are good, some aren’t. Some are rational, some are irrational. Some are productive and some are counterproductive. The number of beliefs on your Belief Window tends to be a function of your age and experience. We put beliefs on our windows because we believe that they are true and that by following them we will meet our needs over time.

John has a belief on his Belief Window that says that all Doberman pinschers are vicious; he has accepted that as a correct principle. So when he is confronted by a Doberman pinscher, his behavior is to run, to evade, to leap tall buildings with a single bound—whatever it takes to distance himself from that Doberman. He doesn't go through an analysis of the situation. Reactions based on one's underlying beliefs are automatic.

Susan, on the other hand, has a belief that says that all dogs are cute and sweet. Her behavior around a Doberman is drastically different from John's because of what she believes to be true about dogs.

Your Belief Window is covered with beliefs, and that window governs your behavior. The issue is,

Do you have correct or incorrect beliefs on your
Belief Window?

Everyone has correct, incorrect, and debatable beliefs that influence behavior. Keep in mind that in using the terms *correct* and *incorrect*, I am not attempting to make moral judgments about whether beliefs are “good” or “bad”; I use the terms only to simplify this discussion, and to indicate how those beliefs affect our lives.

If a belief reflects natural law or reality—such as “vegetables are good for people,” “gravity keeps me on the ground,” or “the world revolves around the sun”—it may be considered as generally correct. Beliefs contrary to such natural laws could be considered incorrect.

In addition to being based on natural laws, the things we believe can be reflections of personal values, such as

“financial independence is important” or “I should treat others the way I want to be treated.”

Beliefs can also simply be a subjective judgment or matter of opinion, such as “European cars are better than American cars,” “broccoli doesn’t taste good,” or “I can eat anything I want and it won’t affect me adversely.” Matters of opinion are not easily categorized as correct or incorrect. Whether your beliefs are backed by strong scientific evidence, grow out of your values, or are completely subjective doesn’t change the fact that *because we believe them to be true, we will act as if they are true*. The key is to identify the beliefs on our window and change those that are incorrect, inadequate, or counterproductive.

Because there is no way to print out a list of the beliefs on anyone’s Belief Window, we need to find another way to determine what those beliefs might be. The only way to do this is to examine the behavior they produce. (It wouldn’t be too hard to figure out what John has on his Belief Window about Dobermans based on observing his behavior pattern whenever he runs into one.) If you analyze a pattern of behavior in your own life that has negative results, you are the victim of an incorrect or inadequate belief. In other words, you have a Belief Gap that needs closing.

In another book, *You Are What You Believe*, I discuss more fully a model of human behavior known as the Reality Model. I will not discuss it in detail here, but will suggest that you pick up that book for a complete explanation.

It suffices here to point out that incorrect beliefs on your Belief Window lead to patterns of behavior that

produce negative results. You will experience stress, emotional pain, relationship disruptions, and/or employment disappointments (among other things) when this is the case.

Let me point out here that all of our beliefs and behaviors are designed to meet basic needs common to all of us. Those generally accepted needs include the need to live (survival), the need to love and be loved (relationship), the need to feel important (have value), and the need for variety. If we are not meeting those needs, we will feel pain in one way or another. (John was no doubt trying to meet his need to live when he ran from the Doberman, and Susan was meeting her need to love and be loved.)

What is important to understand is that even though we put beliefs on our Belief Window that we think will meet these needs, we are not always correct. Perhaps because of a bad experience early in life, or because someone taught us something at an early age, or because we might misinterpret events around us, all of us get beliefs on our Belief Window that fail to meet our needs.

This is a good time to point out that determining whether or not your behavior meets your needs takes time to measure. Something that may seem to meet your needs in a one-time situation takes on a whole different dimension when measured over time. An obvious example might be the use and abuse of alcohol. If you believe that drinking relaxes you and makes you more socially adept, you may try that a few times; it may even work the way you intend it to. But many people have found that,

over time, the results from that belief do great damage to their relationships, employment, and mental health. Remember, results take time to measure.

You can choose to believe whatever you wish; just remember that your beliefs drive your behavior. A correct belief will lead to good results—results that are positive and beneficial to you. In other words, it will meet one or more of your four basic needs over time. An incorrect belief will lead to bad results—results that are negative or damaging to you. It will not meet your needs over time. It's as simple as that.

Let's take another example. Let's say that you have a belief that was mentioned above: European cars are better than American cars. If that is your belief, then you set up your (invisible) behavior rules so that when it is time for you to buy a new car, your choice is rather simple. What kind of car will you buy? Behavior is automatic; it grows out of the principle that you have accepted as true on your Belief Window. Will the results of choosing to buy a European car meet your needs over time? Possibly.

Here is another example. Let's say that a belief that you hold is that you must never lose at games. If that is true for you, then when you start to lose a game, what will be the probable behavior? It could be to cheat, quit, or even throw a tantrum. It depends on the behavior rules that you set up as a result of this belief. Then the question must be asked: Will the results of this behavior meet your needs over time? Probably not, in this case. You may have to replace this belief with an alternative one in order to close the gap and create inner peace in your life.

Some examples of possible beliefs that may be on a Belief Window are:

- Schools should go back to basics.
- My self-worth is determined by things I own, the job I have, and the praise I receive from others.
- Mom and Dad will always love me regardless of what I do.
- My family will never understand me.
- Men are inferior.
- Women are inferior.
- I'm a pawn of outside forces and I can't do anything about it.
- I'm not an addict. I can quit any time.
- Some people are simply worth more than others.

Remember:

Any belief that drives behavior that does not meet your basic needs *over time* is an incorrect belief.

The key to monitoring your Belief Window, to deciding what to accept as correct and what to adjust or discard as incorrect, is to follow these four steps:

Step 1: Admit. To begin the process, you will need to admit two things to yourself. First, you will need to admit that there is behavior in your life that is causing pain, stress, or chaos. It is often easier to identify the pain than it is to see the behavior that

is causing it, but most of us will get there if we are honest with ourselves.

Second, you will have to admit that you must change yourself in order to improve your life. We all tend to externalize; we tend to blame others or outside forces for our pain. We think it so often that we truly believe it. A willingness to admit that we are the problem is the key to progress. (And because *we* are the only persons we can change, putting the blame on others means that our pain will not go away.)

Step 2: Ask Yourself Why. You now need to ask yourself why you are behaving in a way that leads to the negative results noted in step 1. If you keep asking why, and if you are honest with yourself, you will ultimately find the answer. *And the answer to the question “Why?” always comes up as a belief on your Belief Window.*

Why do I run away from dogs? (I believe that all dogs are dangerous.) Why do I make jokes at inappropriate times? (I believe that being funny is the best way to make friends.) Why do I cheat at games? (I believe that my value as a person is based on winning at games.) Why do I continue to hang out with an abusive person? (I believe that I deserve the abuse I receive.) Why am I always late to meetings? (I think my time is more valuable than that of others.)

This may take some time, and it will definitely take some honest self-examination. You will

usually know when you have hit bedrock, when you have surfaced the belief that is at the root of your behavior.

Step 3: Adopt an Alternative Belief. This is the part where you must get creative. You must identify a new belief, one that is an alternative to the belief that is causing your troublesome behavior. The first example above (all dogs are dangerous) could be replaced with a different belief (most dogs are friendly). You can test various alternatives by projecting how you would behave if you actually believed the alternative principle. In this oversimplified case, you would no longer run every time you saw a dog; you would look forward to the experience. (And even if you found the occasional mean dog, it would still fit with your new belief that *most* dogs are friendly.) If that is a better result, better meeting your needs over time, then it is likely that you have found the belief you need to write on your Belief Window.

Now, this is easy to write about, but it is not as easy to do. The reason you have a belief in the first place is because you think it is true, and you are now trying to substitute something you don't think is true. Move on to the next step, and you will see how this can work.

Step 4: Act as If. Up to this point, everything has been an academic exercise. You have examined your stress points and have tied them to behaviors that produce them. You have asked yourself why you

behave that way, and examined the beliefs that dictate your behavior. But none of that has required you to change anything.

You are now at that point. But how do you change a belief that could be the product of years of reinforcement? Once you identify an alternative belief, even if you “know” it can’t be true, you take the most important and most difficult step. You begin to act *as if* the new belief is true.

Neuroscience has taught us that behavior creates neural pathways in the brain. By acting a certain way over and over, those actions begin to feel normal. This is sometimes known as “fake it till you make it.” In the beginning, it will take conscious thought to do this. Over time, it becomes easier and, ultimately, automatic.

I will promise you this: once the belief has been changed, the behavior it produces automatically changes with it. And the pain caused by the old behavior goes away.

Remember, until you change the belief on your Belief Window, your behavior will never change.

Your Belief Window and the Belief Gap

Anytime you’re getting results that are causing long-term harm, such as missing promotions, experiencing unemployment, losing important relationships, struggling with your weaknesses or addictions, or any other form of missing out on things that are important to you, your Belief

Gap—the gap between what you believe will meet your needs and what will actually do so—is too wide. As a result, you are like Indiana Jones, stranded on the wrong side of a chasm. You are not in a position to make a positive difference in the world, and it's time for a change.

The key to closing the Beliefs Gap is being able to put into practice the four steps outlined above. The results in your life flow automatically from your behavior, and that behavior is a function of the beliefs on your Belief Window. This all happens automatically, without even consciously thinking about it; but what you allow on your Belief Window is the key.

If you want results that meet your needs over time,
change the beliefs on your Belief Window!

You close the gap by changing the belief. When the belief changes, everything changes.

Change is almost never instantaneous. It can, at times, feel like two steps forward and one step back. But as you continue to act with your new belief, positive results will occur and you will know that you have closed a gap between something you *believed* would meet your needs and something that *actually will*.

Always ask yourself this critical question:

Will this behavior meet my needs over time?

If the answer is anything but a sincere and confident yes, then begin surgery on your Belief Window.

Thank You For Reading

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