

Lift

Becoming a Positive Force
in Any Situation



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An Excerpt From

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A Positive Force in Any Situation

On August 18, 1941, Officer John Gillespie Magee, Jr. of the Royal Canadian Air Force took a new airplane, the Spitfire Mk I, on a test flight.¹ Magee had received his wings as a pilot only two months earlier. As he flew the Spitfire up to new heights of 33,000 feet, he felt inspired to write a poem that has now become the official poem of both the Royal Canadian Air Force and the British Royal Air Force. Short films have been created with this poem as a basis. In its entirety or in part, the poem can be found in songs, on headstones, in presidential addresses, in museums, and in eulogies. Some have even used it as a prayer.

*High Flight*²

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds—and done a hundred things

You have not done—wheeled and soared and swung
 High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
 I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
 My eager craft through footless halls of air.
 Up, up the long, delirious blue
 I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace
 Where never lark, or even eagle flew.
 And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
 The high, untrespassed sanctity of space,
 Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

It is hard to read this poem without feeling at least a bit of the exhilaration that Magee must have felt. These momentary thoughts and feelings inspired words that continue to move others generations after his death. Magee's experience and the poem it generated have "slipped the surly bonds of earth" and "done a hundred things" because Magee "trod the high, untrespassed sanctity of space" with a "lifting mind." If Magee's experience could generate this kind of impact, what impact might we have on those around us if we were also to slip the surly bonds of earth with a lifting mind?

This is a book about how we lift others by lifting our own hearts and minds. When we do this, we become a positive force, whatever our situation may be. Like Orville and Wilbur Wright, who used physical science and practical experience to build the first airplane, making it possible for Magee to rise above the bonds of earth, we can also use social science and practical experience to rise above the constraints of everyday life and lift the people around us.

The metaphor of heavier-than-air flight frames our discussion of how people can become a positive force in any situation. There are many parallels between how airplanes harness the force that makes flight possible and how we can harness the force that makes us a positive influence. The force that pushes a solid body upward through the air is called "lift." We can understand and harness a similar force, which we also call *lift*, in our social lives.³ In other words, like people

who use the aerodynamic force of lift to move upward in space, we can also use the social–psychological force of *lift* to move ourselves and others up to greater heights of achievement, integrity, learning, and love, becoming a positive force in any situation.

In this book we use the word “lift” in two ways. First, lift is influence, an uplifting effect we have on others. Second, *lift* is a psychological state, a temporary pattern of thoughts and feelings in which we are (1) purpose-centered (we have a purpose that is not weighed down by needless expectations); (2) internally-directed (we have a story of how our personal values will guide our actions); (3) other-focused (we feel empathy for the feelings and needs of others); and (4) externally-open (we believe that we can improve at whatever it is we are trying to do). When we experience these thoughts and feelings, we feel uplifted and lift the people around us.

We need to experience *lift* in order to lift others, but the pressures of daily living often drag us out of lift and into more normal states. Normal states are states in which we (1) seek comfort; (2) react automatically to the world around us; (3) focus on our own needs and feelings; and (4) believe that there is little we can do to improve. When this happens, our influence on others is nowhere near as positive as it is when we experience *lift*. Sometimes it is quite negative. And sometimes it can be hard for us to experience *lift* again.

Our purpose is to present four questions that we can use to help ourselves experience *lift* and become a positive force in any situation, and also to use scientific research to explain why asking and answering these questions lifts us and the people around us. The questions are

1. What result do I want to create?
2. What would my story be if I were living the values I expect of others?
3. How do others feel about this situation?
4. What are three (or four or five) strategies I could use to accomplish my purpose for this situation?

These questions are simple, but their power is in their very simplicity. We considered each word carefully, comparing it against scientific research. For example, the question “How do others feel about this situation?” may seem to be simply reminding us to consider the perspectives of others. As we discuss in chapter 8, however, simply considering others’ perspectives is often not enough to help us experience empathy for them. It is important to focus on how other people *feel*, not just on their point of view. And research suggests that including words like “others” and leaving out words like “how would I feel” are also important for different reasons.

Scientific research, then, gives us insight into why *lift* is important, what the characteristics of *lift* are, how our psychological states influence others, and how to formulate questions that capture the nuances required to move ourselves from a normal state into *lift*. Asking and answering these questions is not the only way to experience *lift*. In fact, when we teach people about *lift*, almost everyone can remember times when they have experienced it. Those experiences have usually been unexpected, though. Another advantage of using science to develop these questions, then, is that these questions give us a way to experience *lift* intentionally, in any situation. We ourselves have used them in many situations.

We introduce the science behind *lift* in chapter 2 and continue throughout the remainder of the book. The book is rich in scientific detail, but we do not describe all of the science that is relevant (there is too much to share), and we try to make the science that we do share as practical and engaging as possible. Therefore, in addition to using science to explain how we can experience *lift* and why *lift* has a positive influence on the people around us, we also illustrate how *lift* works by sharing stories from our own lives and from the lives of people we know.⁴ We take you into corporate offices where executives make decisions that affect thousands of lives and into living rooms where people make decisions that affect their children. We take you into community organizations where people work to help others and into the library where we study alone. We take you onto the basketball court and into neighborhoods, on television shows and into the classroom, into

the marketplace and on the front lawn. We take you to all of these places for two reasons. One reason is to illustrate how these questions can be used in *any* situation: we designed these questions to be broad in scope. The other reason is to help this book reach a wide audience. We want it to be interesting and useful to managers leading their people, parents rearing their children, philanthropists helping their beneficiaries, professionals serving their clients, and anyone who cares about influence.

Whether you are a manager, a parent, a philanthropist, a professional, or anything else, our goal has been to make this book as useful, interesting, and accessible to you as possible. One other thing we have done to make it as useful as possible has been to write personal application pages at the end of chapters 1, 4, 6, 8, and 10. Each of these pages contains a list of practical ideas to help you in asking and answering the four questions.

If, as you try to apply these concepts, you discover additional practices that help in applying the concepts, we would love to receive your input. Please share your experiences with us, and any insights you come up with, at <http://www.leadingwithlift.com/stories>. Insights like these could then continue lifting others.

Lift: A Positive Influence and a Psychological State

A Different Kind of Power

Ron, a colleague of ours, became a bit of a legend in his company after only a few months of working there. Like many of the executives in Ron's company, Ron got projects done well and on time. Unlike many of these executives, Ron had an unusual effect on the people he worked with. People loved working together when Ron was involved, even if they began their projects disagreeing with each other. Some executives managed to push their projects through in spite of problems and disagreements. Some executives managed to work well with people but did not accomplish quite as much. Ron, however, managed to move people harmoniously toward exceptional results. He became one of the most influential people in his company.

One day Ron walked out of a staffing meeting and said something that surprised his co-workers. The meeting had occurred at the end of a long week in a stuffy, windowless room. Ron, and everyone else in the group, felt grumpy. They discussed whether people from other units in the business should be moved into Ron's department. Ron did not want anyone else to be transferred in. He argued his point and he won. It seemed like a normal business meeting. When Ron walked out, though, he told his co-workers, "I have given my power away."

Ron's co-workers could not believe him. After all, not only was he one of the most influential people in the company, he also got what he wanted out of the staffing meeting. How could he have given his power away? Even Ron could not answer this question, but he knew something had changed in that meeting, and he knew his ability to influence other people had also changed as a result.

Influence is a topic that most people care about. Managers want their people to give their best effort to the strategic changes they are implementing, employees want their managers to listen to their side of the story, parents want their children to do well in school and make good choices, a woman wants her friend to stop dating a man that she thinks is bad for her, a baseball coach wants a player to change his batting stance, a doctor wants her patient to follow her advice, a man wants his neighbor to cut down a tree that is growing into his yard, and so on. Most of us can understand the desire to be more influential. When we struggle to get people to do what we want them to, we use rational arguments, appeals to duty, rewards, punishments, or any number of other tactics to try to persuade them.¹ If we succeed, we often feel satisfied.

Ron had succeeded in persuading others, but he did not feel satisfied. He struggled to explain what he was feeling. He knew that there was something more constructive, more effective, than simply getting other people to do what you want. The tactics he had used in the staffing meeting may have gotten him what he wanted, but Ron began to see that he had also created "collateral damage"—people felt hurt and relationships had suffered. He had left people feeling weighed down rather than lifted up. The problems that led to the staffing meeting in

the first place might reemerge, or he may have even created new problems. Ron realized that although he had wielded influence in that meeting, the influence was not as positive as he wanted it to be—and he wanted to be a positive influence.

Influence is positive when it (1) invites people toward purposes that (2) meet the needs of the people involved (3) in ways that increasingly reflect their highest personal and social values and (4) adapt to changing circumstances over time. Our reasons for defining positive influence in this way will become clearer as we go along. For now, it is useful to note that even though Ron had trouble explaining what had changed, he could sense that his influence was not as positive as it had been before. The problem was not just his results. Something had also changed inside him. As he struggled to explain what had changed, all he could say was, “I was in a different place.”

Psychological States

Ron learned later that the “place” he was in was a psychological state. A psychological state is the current, temporary condition of our mind—the pattern of thoughts and feelings we experience at a given point.

A person’s psychological state can be simple or complex. A simple psychological state, for example, could be described by a single emotion, such as “happy” or “sad.” A complex psychological state can include many thoughts and emotions at the same time. For example, if a teenager receives an invitation to take the last spot on the school soccer team as a result of a good friend having been kicked off the team, then that teenager’s psychological state might involve a complex blend of happiness over the good news, a resolve to succeed, concern for the friend, fear of the challenge, and guilt for accepting.

Scientists study psychological states to understand what states people experience, what leads people to experience particular states, and how particular states influence other people. This last question is particularly important. As researchers come to understand the answers to that question, they are discovering that our psychological states can influence other people in surprising and sometimes even dramatic ways.

Bill, a colleague of ours, told us a personal story that is a good example of this. Bill and his mother had not been getting along, let alone enjoying each other's company, for a long time. In any situation, Bill knew what his mother would say, what his response would be, and how the argument would unfold. He did not like it, yet he could not stop himself.

Bill went to a retreat and ended up working with a counselor. The goal was to improve his relationship with his mother. After much effort, Bill began to feel more positively toward his mother. By the end of the retreat he was anxious to see her. He reports the following experience:

I took a deep breath and walked into the kitchen. I saw her before she saw me. I thought about the sacrifices she made and how much I loved her. She turned and looked at me. She opened her mouth. My stomach tightened and I thought, "Here it comes." She paused and smiled. Then she went on with what she was doing. I was stunned. That was not what she was supposed to do. I was different and now she was different. From then on the relationship totally changed. I never said a word, but I was different, and somehow she sensed it.²

Bill's relationship with his mother changed without Bill's saying a word because Bill was in a different psychological state. At the retreat, he had worked hard to consciously appreciate her positive characteristics and the sacrifices she had made over many years. This less angry and more loving orientation was probably communicated in his facial expression, his posture, and in other nonverbal ways. These nonverbal signals of love and appreciation provided Bill's mother with a new set of cues to interpret. When people receive unexpected cues from others—particularly unexpected emotional cues—they have to make sense of those cues in new ways.³ Thus, without saying a word to his mother, Bill began to construct a new relationship. He changed the relationship by changing his psychological state.

Our psychological states influence others in at least four ways:

1. Our facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice send new and unexpected cues that people interpret and react to in new and different ways.

2. The emotions that are part of our psychological states are contagious. In other words, people often unconsciously mimic, and then adopt, our feelings.⁴
3. Psychological states sometimes lead us to make different decisions or act in different ways than we would if we had been in a different psychological state, and other people are influenced by these decisions and actions.⁵
4. When we take different actions and perform them in different ways, we also generate different results—results that may be more effective, more creative, higher-quality, or more beneficial. People pay attention to and try to make sense of unusual or extraordinary results.⁶

Ron, for example, had experience with all of these forms of influence. When Ron felt positively, his co-workers had to make sense of his positive feelings—especially when Ron was able to look at things positively during difficult times. The energy he brought to his activities was contagious and lifted others. Because of how he felt toward others, he might listen carefully in situations where others would feel compelled to argue their points. And because he achieved exceptional results, people wanted to learn from him or be a part of his team.

Our psychological states influence other people, then, and their psychological states influence us. This means that we humans are not independent creatures. We are relational beings.⁷ Who we are at any time depends on who the people around us are, and who they are depends on who we are. We weave our relationships in the stories we tell and act out with others. Our psychological states are the sum of who we are in a given moment as we play out the stories of our lives. The psychological state that Ron experienced in the staffing meeting affected how he experienced himself and acted as a manager, a co-worker, and a friend. It also affected how positively other people experienced themselves in similar roles. We are constantly influencing and being influenced by others, and the state we are in affects the quality of influence that flows between and among us.

Our purpose, however, is not just to point out that our psychological states influence others. It is to propose that there is a specific psychological state that, if we experience it, will make us a positive influence on those around us in any situation. We call this state *lift*.

Learning to Lift With Mason

Lift is a psychological state in which a person is purpose-centered, internally directed, other-focused, and externally open. To understand each of these characteristics, we share a story about Ryan and his son, Mason. This story illustrates both what *lift* is and what it is not. Ryan begins this story in a normal psychological state, but then changes and experiences *lift*.

RYAN: Shortly before my son, Mason, turned six years old, he and I fell into an unhealthy pattern: Mason would do something wrong, like provoke his sister or refuse to clean up. I would tell him that I would put him in “time out” if he did not obey. He would scream something like “I hate you! I wish you weren’t part of our family! Go away and never come back!” I would then try to calm Mason down and explain to him that he should clean up or leave his sister alone. I explained why “time out” was the consequence for his action. In response, however, Mason would just scream more and sometimes even hit me. Often, I would have to pick him up and take him to his bedroom kicking and screaming. I had no idea how to break this pattern.

One reason Mason and I were unable to break out of this pattern was that I was treating Mason’s behavior as a problem: I did not like Mason’s tantrums and I wanted him to behave the way he had before. His old behaviors were comfortable for me, and I was *comfort-centered*. This desire to stay comfortable is a characteristic of a normal psychological state. In my desire for comfort, what had not occurred to me was the possibility that perhaps Mason was behaving differently because of the changes that had happened recently in his life, such as starting kindergarten. If his circumstances were different, that meant that

my circumstances were different as well. Trying to make people behave the same way in new circumstances is often not the most appropriate way to influence them.

Eventually, I decided to become more *purpose-centered* with Mason. This focus on purpose is one characteristic of *lift*. Instead of trying to make Mason behave as he had before, I asked myself what result I wanted to create regarding his choices and consequences. I decided that my purpose was to help Mason learn how to make responsible choices of his own volition. Once I made this decision, I was no longer interested in whether Mason was behaving in a way that I was comfortable with. Instead, I was wondering how I could help Mason learn to make responsible choices.

As I thought about this, I realized that Mason was already making many responsible choices. He often made responsible choices, for example, when he was clear about what the consequences of his choices were in advance. He was also better at making these choices when my wife, Amy, or I had spent quality time with him that day. On the basis of these insights, I changed the way I interacted with Mason. I tried to anticipate opportunities for Mason to make decisions—such as when bedtime was approaching or when it was time to clean up—and then I made a point of helping him understand, in advance, his options and the consequences of each option. Then I would let him make his own decisions. I also made an explicit effort to spend more quality time with Mason.

My efforts to help Mason understand his choices and consequences and to spend more time with him improved the situation somewhat. Mason appreciated the time I spent with him and in some cases made better choices. But, there were still times when I was not able to anticipate his decisions ahead of time, when he made poor choices even when he understood the consequences, or when I was not able to spend as much time with him as I would have liked. In situations like these, he threw tantrums when he had to do many of the things I asked him to do.

As I thought about the interactions in which Mason would throw tantrums, I noticed another pattern: many of Mason's

tantrums occurred when my requests interrupted what he was doing. If he was building with his Legos or playing a game when I asked him to do something, I expected him to put those things aside and do it. Yet, if I was involved in an activity and Mason interrupted me, I would expect him to wait until I was done with my activity before I did what he asked. I expected him to show respect to me, but I was not doing the same for him. I failed to show him respect because I was *externally directed*. External direction is a characteristic of a normal psychological state. When people are externally directed, they let circumstances (such as the need to get Mason to clean up or to go to bed) drive their behavior instead of their values (such as respect for others' time and activities).

When I realized that I was being externally directed, I decided that I would become *internally directed*. Internal direction is a characteristic of *lift* in which people experience the dignity and integrity that comes with exercising the self-control necessary to live up to the values that they expect of others. In Mason's case, I became internally directed by showing him and his activities the same respect that I wanted from him. For example, when it came to interrupting his activities, I would ask him how much time he needed to finish what he was doing, and then ask him to do the chore that I wanted him to do after he was done. As I showed Mason this increased respect, his tantrums decreased significantly.

One day while I was making dinner for Mason and his sister, Katie, I offered to read Mason a book. Mason was excited and said yes. When I put the meal on the table, though, Mason started hoarding the food, leaving Katie without. Katie started to cry. I asked Mason why he was hoarding the food. I tried to help him understand his choices and the consequences that would result from each choice. Even so, he just screamed at me, saying that he would not be my friend anymore. I was shocked by the intensity of his reaction. I was planning to spend time with him. I was trying to help him see his choices and consequences. I was trying to show him respect. I did not know what to do. In spite of all of my efforts, Mason was screaming again. Bewildered and exasperated, I

almost told Mason to stop immediately or I would put him in time out.

When I was about to threaten Mason with time out, I felt *self-focused* and *internally closed*. Focusing on ourselves and closing ourselves to feedback are characteristics of a normal psychological state. When we are self-focused, we are concerned only with our own needs, feelings, and wants. We see other people as objects that either help us or impede us in our goals. In my case, Mason was an object that was preventing me from my goal of showing that I was a good father.

When we are internally closed, we ignore and deny feedback, such as the feedback that I was getting from Mason that all my efforts to show that I was a good dad were not working. We ignore or deny feedback out of fear that the feedback says something about our worth as human beings. Because of this fear and the frustration I felt, my first instinct was to get angry.

In my anger, I was about to threaten Mason with a time out. Before I did, however, I remembered my purpose: to teach Mason how to make responsible choices. I also remembered that in my previous efforts with him, there were times when I thought I was doing the right thing and yet I was not showing him the respect I wanted him to show me. I had been at least somewhat wrong in those situations. Just as I was about to react, I caught myself and considered the possibility that I might be wrong here as well. As I opened myself to that possibility, I also opened myself up to what Mason was feeling, and to what his needs might be. I became *other-focused*.

A focus on others' needs and feelings is a characteristic of *lift*. When we are open to other people's feelings and needs, we empathize with them and feel impulses to be compassionate. When I became focused on Mason, I realized that Mason's screaming was rather extreme. He must be hurting, I felt, to have such an extreme reaction. Maybe his lashing out was the only way he knew to deal with some pain he felt inside. And if Mason was hurting inside, then I wanted to know why. I was no longer interested in proving I was a good father. Instead I wanted to understand why Mason might be hurting. And once I wanted to

find out why Mason was feeling hurt, my desire to avoid feedback disappeared as well. Instead, I wanted feedback so that I could learn why Mason was feeling this way. Instead of being internally closed, I became *externally open*.

Openness to external cues—to feedback—is also a characteristic of *lift*. When we are open to these cues, we learn, grow, and adapt ourselves to the situation unfolding before us. In my experience with Mason, my focus on purpose, my commitment to act respectfully, my empathy, and my desire to learn from feedback created an entirely new situation. And because I was in a new situation, paying attention to new cues, the unconscious, automatic part of my brain began noticing new patterns in those cues and coming up with new responses faster than the controlled, conscious part of my brain. In other words, I began to have a feeling—an intuition—about what I should do.⁸ My intuition was to read to Mason anyway.

My conscious reaction to this subconscious intuition was to think that reading to Mason was a crazy idea. Why would I want to reinforce his bad behavior? Somehow, though, it felt like the right thing to do, so I took a chance. I sat down and asked Mason if he would still like me to read to him.

My question to Mason was honest. It was not an attempt to bribe him into letting Katie have her share of the food. I could make more food for Katie or find another way to make her happy if I needed to. If Mason said yes and listened to the story without sharing the food, I would have found another solution for Katie. I was acting on how I genuinely felt at that moment.

When I offered to read the story to Mason, he melted. He got out a piece of paper and wrote, "I am sorry. I am your friend. I want to be your friend." He handed me the paper. I told him that of course we were friends. Mason threw his arms around my neck and burst into tears. Then he let Katie have her share of the food. I read him the book while they ate their dinner.

I am not sure why Mason responded the way he did. I suspect that Mason, who was not even six years old at the time, could not have explained it himself. Perhaps he felt guilty because he knew what he was doing was wrong but he was scared to admit it.

Perhaps he wanted to feel he had control over his own life, and once he knew he had control he no longer felt a need to exert it. Perhaps he simply needed to feel loved. Perhaps it was all of the above.

On the basis of the scientific research that we will discuss throughout this book, I believe that Mason wanted to change because I connected with him on a fundamental level that took into account his deepest feelings and helped him work through those feelings in a purposeful, respectful way—even if neither of us could put those feelings into words. What I know for sure is that in a normal psychological state, my intuition was to punish Mason. When I experienced *lift*, however, my intuition was to read to him. And by acting on that intuition, I changed my relationship with my son. Offering to read to Mason was only a part of what inspired Mason to change. Offering to read a book, or to do any nice thing, may not inspire change in another situation. In fact, in another situation I might have had an intuition to punish Mason for his behavior. The intuition was less about what I did and more about who I was.

In the weeks and months following this event, Mason's tantrums disappeared almost completely. He still did things from time to time that I wished he would not do, but his behavior improved and so did mine. I still sometimes act in ways that are comfort-centered, externally driven, self-focused, or internally closed, but I am learning how to experience lift more often. As I do, Mason tends to be lifted by my efforts as well.

Lift, as illustrated in the story of Ryan's relationship with Mason, is the name of the psychological state in which a person is (1) centered on purpose, (2) directed by internal values, (3) focused on the feelings and needs of others, and (4) open to external cues that make learning, growth, and adaptation possible. We use the word "lift" to describe both this psychological state and the effect that this psychological state has on others. In other words, people who experience *lift* tend to lift others as well through their thoughts, feelings, actions, and results. When we experience lift, we become a positive force in the situations

we encounter. We are unlikely to lift others without lifting ourselves, and we are unlikely to lift ourselves without lifting others.

We lift others in the situations where we experience *lift*, but situations change and people often change with their situations. New circumstances often pull us out of *lift* and into more normal psychological states, where we focus on problems rather than purpose, react to our circumstances rather than use our values to drive our behaviors, dwell on our own agendas rather than empathize with others, and avoid the feedback that could enable us to learn and grow. When we do, we weigh people down rather than lift people up. The circumstances of everyday life create strong pressures to pull us back into normal states, even after the most uplifting of experiences. Scientific research and practical experience, however, teach us what we can do to lift ourselves and others once again. Using this research as a base, we offer four questions that we can use to lift ourselves and others, becoming a positive force in any situation.

Four Questions

Ron struggled to explain his claim that he had given his power away, but he was unable to do so. He knew things intuitively that he could not explicitly explain. A few weeks after the meeting, though, Ron attended a training program for business executives titled “Leading the Positive Organization.” In this program he learned about an area of research called positive organizational scholarship (POS). POS is research that examines the best of organizations and the best of human behavior in organizations.⁹ It is similar to positive psychology, in which researchers seek to understand positive emotions, strengths, and virtues, and how human strengths can contribute to better communities.¹⁰ The professors and participants discussed topics such as how to create a culture that helps organizations and their people thrive, tools for fostering high-quality emotions and relationships in the workplace, ways to energize the organization, and new ways to think about positive leadership. Ron learned about *lift* while attending this program.

The concept of *lift* had a particular impact on Ron because he recognized the psychological state from his own experience: *lift* was the “place” that he was no longer in and the “power” that he had given up. He also recognized that the reason he had experienced *lift* so much in his work before the staffing meeting was that a series of difficult life events had pushed him to rise to the occasion and be his best self. This realization worried him: what if he could experience *lift* only when critical circumstances called him to do so? What about the rest of his life and work? Given this concern, Ron felt particularly empowered when he learned that there were four questions, developed from scientific research, that could help him experience *lift* in any situation:

1. **What result do I want to create?** (When people answer this question they become less comfort-centered and more purpose-centered.)
2. **What would my story be if I were living the values I expect of others?** (When people answer this question they become less externally directed and more internally directed.)
3. **How do others feel about this situation?** (When people answer this question they become less self-focused and more other-focused.)
4. **What are three (or four or five) strategies I could use to accomplish my purpose for this situation?** (When people answer this question they become less internally closed and more externally open.)

Our purpose in writing this book is to give you these questions. When people ask and answer these questions, they tend to move out of a normal psychological state and into a state where they lift themselves and others. There may be other questions people can ask, other methods people can use, or other circumstances people can encounter that will also help them experience *lift*. We know, however, from science, from our personal use of these questions, and from others’ use of these questions that these questions are particularly powerful for creating *lift*.

When Ron learned that he could experience *lift* by asking and answering a simple set of questions, he began using them to make sure that he experienced *lift* as often as possible. For example, after learning about *lift*, Ron was supposed to attend a meeting in which he and his co-workers would have to make decisions about how employees would be paid. These decisions were more complicated than usual because Ron's company had just been acquired by another company. The two companies had different forms and procedures for paying people, but there were no directions about how to coordinate these forms and procedures. In fact, the forms and procedures were just one of many problems caused by the acquisition of Ron's company. There were no instructions for dealing with any of these problems, and Ron's boss—who was his company's contact with the other company—was afraid to ask for directions. Ron worried that all these problems would make the compensation meeting a frustrating waste of time.

Ron prepared himself for the meeting by asking himself the four questions. The agenda for the meeting was to decide how to pay employees, but this agenda was problem-focused, given the companies' conflicting procedures and lack of direction. When Ron asked himself the first question, he decided that the result he wanted to create was to come up with an approach for working with the new company regarding how to pay employees that people in both companies could stand behind and work on together.

Ron then asked himself the second question, determined not to react automatically and get frustrated with people while he was in the meeting. When he did, he realized that the value he expected his boss to live was candor: he wanted his boss to have a straight conversation with the people in the other company so that they could find out what they needed to know. As a result, he decided that he should speak to his boss with as much candor as he expected his boss to speak with when he met with people in the other company.

When Ron asked himself the third question, he stopped seeing his boss (and others in the meeting) as either tools to help him achieve his goals or as obstacles preventing him from achieving his goals. Instead, he empathized with the pressure that his boss probably felt in

approaching the people in the company that had just acquired theirs. Because of this empathy, he wanted to support his boss as well as to be frank with him.

When Ron asked the fourth question, he stopped worrying about what feedback he might get for taking initiative in the meeting, or what feedback he and his co-workers might receive from the other company. Instead, Ron was open to using many different strategies for developing new approaches to paying employees, and was eager to learn what approach might be the best.

When Ron entered the meeting, his boss began to work through his agenda, suggesting that the group make the best decisions it could with the information it had. Ron asked if he could stop the meeting. He asked if the group could discuss what it needed to achieve that afternoon. He suggested that the group try to come up with an approach for paying employees that would work out well for both the companies and their employees in the long run. As the group discussed these suggestions, Ron's boss remembered new and relevant information that he had learned from the other company but forgotten to share. This helped the group adapt and specify more clearly what additional information they needed to move forward. Once they were clear about what they needed, Ron's boss agreed to ask the managers in the other company for more information. When he talked to the managers from the acquiring company, the conversation went well. They were impressed by the clarity and objectives that Ron's boss came to them with.

Before Ron's boss brought their questions to the managers in the other company, Ron and his colleagues had believed that the managers from the acquiring company displayed a demeaning attitude toward them. After Ron's boss talked to these managers, however, the feeling changed. Employees from the acquiring company began to invite people from Ron's company to help them in planning the integration of the two companies.

Ron was thrilled by this experience and others like it. He now uses these four questions on a regular basis. He is increasingly purpose-

centered, internally directed, other-focused, and externally open, lifting himself, his co-workers, and his organization.

Anyone can do what Ron did. Social science and practical experiences help us understand how people can lift themselves and others, how people can experience this more often, why asking these four questions can change a person's psychological state, and how one person's psychological state influences other people. Our first step in learning the answers to these questions begins with a history of the science behind *lift*, an explanation of where the word "lift" comes from, and an explanation for why the four characteristics are all necessary for a person to lift themselves and others. This step of the journey occurs in chapter 2.

➤ Practices for Applying the Principles of Lift

The swirl of daily life sometimes makes it a struggle to pause and ask oneself the four questions or to remember what they are. Here are some suggestions:

1. Identify critical activities and schedule a preparation time.

One of our colleagues decided that one type of activity in which he feels it is particularly important to be a positive influence are his meetings at work. He went through his calendar and scheduled ten minutes before every meeting to ask himself the four questions. We can use the same principle in any recurring activity. If you have trouble identifying activities in which extra preparation would be useful, the electronic assessment and development tool at the website: <http://apps.leadingwithlift.com/assess/> can help you figure this out.

2. Put a coin in your shoe.

Another way to remember to pause and ask the four questions is to create a spontaneous reminder. You could put a coin in your shoe and ask the four questions whenever you feel the penny move. You could also

wear a bracelet, a ring, or tie a string around your finger. If you own a personal digital assistant, you can also set up the assessment at <http://apps.leadingwithlift.com/assess/> to send you reminders.

3. **Pay attention to tense emotions.** If we feel strong, tense emotions like anger or fear, and we are not facing any physical danger, then there is a good chance that our influence in that situation will not be positive. Strong, tense emotions are often a good signal for telling us when we should stop and ask the four questions.
4. **Give other people permission to call you out.** If it is hard to be a positive influence in particular types of situations, and there are people you trust who are often involved in those situations, tell them about your desire to be a more positive influence there. Give them permission to ask you to pause in such a situation if they think that you are not being a positive influence. This technique can help you be more accountable for the influence you have on others. It can help other people feel that it is okay to learn from mistakes because of the example you are setting.
5. **Print the four questions on an index card.** If you have trouble remembering the four questions, print them out on a card and carry them with you in a wallet or purse, or tape them onto your computer or refrigerator.
6. **Use a mnemonic.** We can also use mnemonics to remember the questions, such as
 - L ist strategies: "What three (or four or five) strategies could I use to accomplish my purpose?"
 - I ncrease integrity: "What would my story be if I were living the values I expect of others?"
 - F eel empathy: "How do others feel about this situation?"
 - T hink of results: "What result do I want to create?"

Legacy: "What result do I want to create?"

If...: "What would my story be if I were living the values I expect of others?"

Feelings: "How do others feel about this situation?"

Tactics: "What three (or four or five) strategies could I use to accomplish my purpose?"

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