

Secrets of Personal Mastery

*Advanced Techniques for Accessing
Your Higher Levels of Consciousness*

L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.



"Incredible, inspiring and revealing. Buy this book."

Rob McCarter, M.S., LPC, NCC

*Secrets
of
Personal
Mastery*

Awakening Your Inner Executive

*Advanced Techniques for Accessing
Your Higher Levels of Consciousness*

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Crown House Publishing Limited

www.crownhouse.co.uk

Published in the UK by

Crown House Publishing Ltd
Crown Buildings
Bancyfelin
Carmarthen
Wales

www.crownhouse.co.uk

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First published 2000; reprinted 2001, 2002, 2004.

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Enquiries should be addressed to Crown House Publishing Limited.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue entry for this book is available
from the British Library.

ISBN 189983656X

LCCN 2003113102

Table of Contents

Preface	i
Chapter 1 Taking Charge	3
Foundational Tools for Mastery.	
Chapter 2 Discovering Your Inner Executive	27
Detecting the higher “thoughts in the back of your mind” which program your frames-of-reference and set up feedback loops for your states.	
Chapter 3 Developing Your Executive Powers	57
Identify your response-powers that generate a Power Zone for juicing up your experiences.	
Chapter 4 Commissioning Your Executive	87
Getting your Inner Executive to actually Take Charge.	
Chapter 5 Your Executive “Self”	111
Constructing a Self You can Live With.	
Chapter 6 Setting Executive Policies	127
Developing your personal Modus Operandi or Operating Ideas and Style.	
Chapter 7 Installing Executive Policies and States	151
Making Executive and Meta-States Stick.	
Chapter 8 Executing Executive Decisions	169
Incorporating executive decisions into action via rehearsal, habituation, clarity of understanding, feedback, etc.	
Chapter 9 Aligning Conflicting Executives	193
Eliminating internal conflicts, troubleshooting saboteurs.	
Chapter 10 Managing Higher Levels	213
Put Your Meta-Mind to Work for You. Manage Executive Levels via programs of integration, synthesis, outframing.	
Chapter 11 Executing for Ongoing Development	231
Continual Improvement Frames.	

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Appendices

Appendix A	A Brief History of Meta-States The Mind Mastery Model.....	241
Appendix B	Distinguishing Primary and Meta-States.....	253
Appendix C	Emotions in Relationship to States and Meta-States	255
Appendix D	Design Considerations from Meta-States Interfaces	257
Appendix E	The Meta-Model.....	261
Appendix F	The Meta-States Model	263
Appendix G	The Secrets of Personal Mastery.....	265
Bibliography		269
Index		273
About the Author		277

Preface

*"No man is free who is not a master of himself."
(Epictetus)*

Julie didn't think she had any *personal power*. And from what I could see from the way she lived her life and her everyday feelings, I wouldn't have connected her with the idea of "personal mastery" either. I soon discovered that she didn't even know about her *executive powers*.

"What do you think, Julie; do you want to live out of your own values and visions and let them guide you as your executive powers?"

"Yes, I do," she said in a soft voice.

"Really? I don't think so," provoking her a bit, "I think you ought to be a mirror for the values and visions of others and that you should spend your energy on living up to what others prescribe for you!"

"You do...? No, I don't want to do that. I've spent too much of my life already living that way and I'm tired of it."

"You have chosen up until now to live your life to please others, to conform to their values and visions about life?"

"Yes, I have. That's really the story of my life."

"Up until now?"

"Yes, up until now."

"And what do you say, at this point in your life, does that express *your uniqueness* and specialness? Is that what Julie is about?"

"No, definitely not."

“So it sounds like you’re clear that in order to more fully experience and express your own personal power, you will need to push out the opinions of others so that you can give yourself a chance to actualize your own dreams and passions.”

“Right. But I don’t know how to do that.”

“Really? You sound definite about what you don’t want to tolerate any more. Or, were you just pulling my leg?”

“No, I wasn’t kidding, I really am tired of trying to please others.”

“Well, isn’t that the starting point for you then? That is, to push away and refuse to tolerate being a slave to the values and visions of others, then you’ll be able to identify your own.”

“I guess so. Is that how it happens?”

“Then have you accessed your *executive power* to establish that as your pathway? ... Would you like to?”

“My executive power? I don’t understand.”

“You don’t know about the higher levels of your mind, those executive levels where you set intentions and purposes, where you establish your passions about who to be and what to experience?”

“You mean ‘will power’?”

“No, it’s not that at all. It’s the higher levels of your mind, the part of your mind where you establish your life direction and then build processes for activating that vision in your way of being in the world.”

“That sounds nice ... but ...”

“Julie, suppose ... just for the sake of this discussion that you woke up tomorrow totally free from being dominated by the opinions of others and totally free to choose your own way. Just imagine that ... go ahead, be wild in your imaginations about this ... Good. What would that be like?”

“What would that be like?”

“Yes. Suppose you woke up with all of your executive powers of mind and emotion so that like any empowered, informed, and decisive CEO, you awoke ready and able to live in a way that’s fully congruent with your values.... How would you know that you’re truly free from the opinions of others and that you get to choose to live by your own values?”

“Well, I would be breathing easier ... and I’d be focused on what *I* want to do ... and I’d just act on my goals to make them come true.”

“What would you be doing?”

“I’d be feeling confident enough about myself to call on some people in my field and setting up some contacts.”

“How would that be different?”

“I’d not be worrying about what others would be saying. I’d be focused on what I can do and taking one step at a time to make it happen ... Oh, I’d not be overwhelming myself by expecting my goals tomorrow.”

“Any difference in how you’d be presenting yourself?”

“I’d be speaking with more confidence, more firmly, you know, with a sense of strength in my voice.”

“With the tone of voice that you’re now using? Julie, perhaps you have awoken that executive within. Perhaps the journey has begun ... What do you think?”

Discovering Your Executive Powers

I have written this book to invite you to embark on *an adventure of discovery* so that in the end, you will access your executive powers. Along the way, we will awaken and utilize the higher levels of your mind. The journey will take us into realms of:

Chapter 1

Taking Charge

Foundational Tools for Mastery

Secrets for Personal Excellence

- Who (or what) *controls* your thoughts and feelings?
- *To what extent* do you feel in charge of your mind, your emotions, your body, your talk and language use, and your behaviors? To what extent would you like to?
- *How often* do you *wonder why* you entertain the thoughts that you do or experience the emotions that intrude, whether negative or positive?
- *To what extent* can you get yourself to actually **do** the things that you know you should do and want to do to succeed?
- *How much more resourceful* would you feel and *how much more productive* would you be if you could access and activate your inner executive?

Robert felt that he had nothing going in his life that could be classified as *personal mastery*. Though he was quite knowledgeable in his field, skilled, and personable, though he had made a decent living from it, enjoyed a good relationship with a special lady in his life, and though he wasn't officially "depressed," he felt discouraged, frustrated, and disillusioned about himself and his career.

I asked him, "So, Robert, what stops you from getting on the highway of life and moving on down the road with a sense of vitality and passion?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"What would you have to have so that you could wake up tomorrow morning feeling a sense of personal mastery?"

Chapter 3

Developing Your Executive Powers

The Inner “Power” Trip

*While the executive has come out of the closet,
he or she doesn't seem all that powerful
so it's time to “power up” the executive states.*

Joel didn't feel very powerful. He felt that his wife, Brenda, was always “making” him angry with her demands and dissatisfactions. He also felt that his boss “made” him feel inadequate and inferior. Then there were his parents who, in spite of his 33 years, still “made” him feel like a little kid. And so it went.

After listening to Joel's story, I commented, “Joel, it seems like everybody knows how to run your emotions—Brenda, your boss, your parents, even strangers on the street can ‘cause’ you to have feelings—everybody, of course, but you.

“Yeah, I guess so.” He commented in a not-quite knowing what I was leading to tone.

“Wouldn't it be great if you were let in on the secret that they all know about your emotions and how to make you feel things?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, all of these people can ‘make’ you feel angry, inadequate, upset, guilty, etc. Wouldn't you like to know how to push your own keyboard?”

He did. And so I focused on accessing his inner executive powers so that he could learn the art of “powering up.”

Powering Up

Are you ready to **power up**? Are you ready to get your inner executive to power up as well?

On the road to *personal mastery*, we began with the first secret about using *the tool of thinking itself*. Mastery begins with your ability to appreciate your thoughts as “neuro-linguistic programs.” The power of *thought* itself serves as the foundational component in our mental-emotional mapping of reality.

The second great secret follows immediately from the first. The *stuff* of *thinking-feeling* that we experience at the primary levels generates all of the higher functions of consciousness also. Nothing new is added to the mix. Our higher states and executive operations arise from the power of *reflexivity*. When our thoughts-and-feelings *reflect back* onto prior thoughts-and-feelings, they become more and more layered, and we *move up into “meta” levels of consciousness*. To attain personal mastery we have to discover these higher level structures and learn to manage them to our welfare.

The third secret grows from the first two. As we can reflexively notice, detect, and manage our awarenesses from higher levels, we can always layer yet another level upon things. We can always step outside of our frames and outframe.

So what? This means that we do not have to remain stuck or limited in our thinking or feeling. We need not feel stuck with any particular way of viewing things, belief system, or meaning construct. We can renew our mind by making *new* what and how we think.

Imagine the potentials of these powers. As you discover and explore the possibilities in these first secrets of human consciousness and our higher mental powers, you can begin to develop and use *the power of your self-reflexive consciousness* to re-program the very structure of your life. Of course, if you do not consciously take charge of these systemic processes which create both your meta-states and executive states, the processes will continue to work anyway. But they will be outside of your awareness and thereby control you in ways that you might not understand or desire.

What significance does all of this have on our everyday lives?

It applies to everything!

After all, everything important in making our human experiences rich and fulfilling emerge from this: *meaning*, emotion, motivation, skill, expertise, happiness, relationships, freedom, individuation, connection, transcendence, etc. All of these spring from our higher states of mind. Having established the foundational secrets, we now need only to mark out precisely how to set these kinds of frames in our executive states.

As we engage in this process, let's aim first to develop our first level *powers* of mind. Why? Because out of these will emerge the more profound and extensive higher level *powers*. After all, beyond the primary level, *it is beliefs all the way up* and these belief levels are made out of the same *stuff* as the thoughts of the primary level.

Imagine wasting such powers. Wouldn't that be a shame? Yet many (perhaps most) people end up doing precisely that. In the end, they squander **their executive powers** on minutiae, or they totally abdicate such powers. Or they let those powers create demon states that make everyday life a nightmare. Sometimes we micro-manage our lower mental levels, and thereby waste time, energy, and creativity. Joel did. He gave his powers away to everybody and then complained that they were misusing them on him! To avoid these traps, we need to learn *the Art of Developing our Executive Powers*.

The State of "State"

First, let's talk about *states*. *States* refer to the holistic, dynamic, and systemic experience that arises from "mind," "emotion," and "body," and which together merge to create something more than the sum of the parts. Sometimes we label these states which emerge as our "moods," "attitude," or "disposition" even "personality." States are dynamic, always moving, changing, and transforming and this is especially true at the lower levels.

States are also holistic. By *state* we refer to the sum total of mind-body, mind-emotion-within-the-body-as-a-whole in an environment. So even though we sometimes pull the facets and components of a state apart and talk about our “thoughts,” or our “emotions,” or our “body,” it’s just *talk*. These do *not* actually or literally operate apart from each other.

This means that in speaking about *states*, we use this as a shorthand for a *neuro-linguistic state*, the fully-fledged experience comprising our state of mind, state of body, and state of emotion. From this we experience an overall attitude or mood that’s made up of all of these elements.

In recent decades, the Cognitive Psychologies and Sciences have recognized *the holistic nature* of “thoughts” and “emotions.” So while we may sometimes speak about these two “things” as if separate elements, we can do so only in speech and linguistics. In actuality, they function as part of the same *thought-emotion system*. In fact, they do not radically differ. Those who speak of “thoughts” and “emotions” as two radically different kinds of experiences speak from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and from the dualism of old “faculty” psychology. Today’s neuro-sciences recognize the holistic and interactive nature of “mind” and “emotion.”

This means that within “thought” we have “emotion.” Within anger, you can count on finding *angry thoughts*. Try to experience anger without entertaining any angry thoughts. Within fear, you’ll always discover thoughts of danger, threat, and apprehension. Within joy—pleasant thoughts of delight and fun. Within love—thoughts of attraction, delight, and extension. And so it goes. As we think—so we feel.

Now states themselves can seem quite magical. Once “in a state,” the state itself can seem to have a life of its own. When this happens the state operates in a self-protective, self-fulfilling, and self-organizing way. The neuro-sciences refer to this as a mood-set, a predispositional set of an attitude, *state dependency*, etc. **State dependence** means that all of our psychic functions (thinking, feeling, valuing, believing, remembering, speaking, acting, relating, perceiving, etc.) *operate from* and *in accordance* with the state. More about this in a bit.

Chapter 10

Managing Higher Levels

Put Your Meta-Mind to Work for You

“Speak to the Controller’s Controller.”
(Dr John Grinder)

In some companies we find multiple levels and layers of management. The Post Office, for example, has eighteen levels of government employees. This translates to managers of managers, and managers of managers of managers, etc. When these levels are rigid, closed, authoritarian, buck-passing, etc. then *bureaucracy* typically emerges. When a system is governed by the process of “passing the buck,” “the Peter Principle” (being promoted to a level of incompetency, from Peter Lawrence), protecting the *status quo*, operation by rules and regulations, tons of paper work, inefficiency, etc., then the bureaucracy that emerges tends to be disempowering, dysfunctional, and de-humanizing.

If we create an effective layering of leadership and management, then communication and responsibility flows easily and efficiently as messages move up and down the levels. As a result this creates a sense of group spirit that leads to productivity and human development.

A similar thing occurs in human personality. As we have noted in the previous chapters, our self-reflexive consciousness sets in motion a layering of our levels of mind. We have not only a primary mind, but also layers of meta-consciousness. We think about our thinking, we feel about our feelings, we communicate about our communications, etc.

As previously noted, from this arises systemic processes and emergent qualities. This works to our detriment when we have a

closed-system. If we set a frame that allows no new feedback, no testing of our frame, no updating, we can get stuck in looping around in self-sabotaging and self-fulfilling prophecies. This also works to our benefit. We can set frames that activate and enhance personal mastery that bring out our personal genius for greater productivity and effectiveness.

Contextual Frame of References

Meaning begins at the primary level as we simply link and associate things together. What any thing, event, word, or experience *means* then depends upon what have we *connected* with that item. What does a job mean? It all depends. What idea, feeling, memory, or concept have you *connected* to your “job”? It could mean freedom or slavery. It could mean productivity or dehumanization, it could mean an expression of talent and skill or it could mean being used.

Here we have first level *meaning*. It is the meaning of linkages and associations. Yet *meaning* does not stop at that level. We then create *meanings-about-our-meanings*. The Second and Third *Secrets of Personal Mastery* highlight this power of our self-reflexive mind:

Secret #2

Mastery emerges as we discover our Higher States as Our Executive Operations. *We humans never just think—we think about our thinking, and then think about that thinking. Our thoughts-and-feelings forever and inevitably reflect back onto itself to become more and more layered. Therefore, the secret of personal mastery lies in discovering our higher thoughts-and-feelings and choosing those that serve us well.*

Secret #3

Our Reflexive Consciousness Enables us to always Layer yet another Level upon our current Model of the World. This gives us the ability to always step outside of our frames-of-reference and go right to the top—to our highest executive states. We do not have to be stuck or limited any more than we want to be. We can always outframe. This gives us the ability to truly Take Charge of our mind, emotions, reality, and destiny.

When we make a meta-move to our *associative meanings*, we create *contextual or framed meanings*. So beyond the conditioned *meanings* of associations at the primary level, we have *context meanings*. When we move here, we move into our *conceptual world*—a world of ideas, concepts, beliefs, and abstract understandings. It is a particularly human world and defines us as “a semantic (or meaning-making) class of life.”

This move transports us to our conceptual frames of reference. Here *ideas set our frames*. Here *ideas* create “realities.” Here we enter into a semantic environment of the mind. And in this semantic world, we find meanings emerging from the larger level frames-of-reference.

We see this developmentally in the way all of us learn to become human. The first *context* that we experience comes from our immediate family. There we become socialized by the language and the rules of the culture. Yet the family exists only as a small unit and exists itself within a larger context—the town or city community, which exists inside of an even larger context—the state or nation, which exists within an even larger context—the human race; and this exists within a certain time frame—the twenty-first century, etc.

Contexts within contexts within contexts.

Whatever you *know* also exists within a layered hierarchy of contexts. What you know about *dog* and about the word *dog* has arisen from the contexts that you’ve experienced with such a referent. It also exists within the context of the English language. And that exists within the larger context of how that language grew and evolved over the centuries.

We never know what anything *means*, or what any given person *means* by his or her use of a given term until we know the mental contexts out of which they come, to which they refer, and those from which we come. This makes our mental, semantic contexts extremely important. To lack this understanding prevents us from truly knowing a person. In this, *contexts and contexts-within-contexts* determine and control most of the meanings that run our lives.

Secrets of Personal Mastery enables you to access your executive levels, those ‘higher’ Meta-levels of your mind, and to take charge of your mental-emotional programming. It teaches you that it is not so much *what* you are thinking that controls your destiny and experiences, but *how* you are thinking: your frames of reference determine your experience of life.

As you undertake the various thought experiments in this book you will become the manager of your own mind at all its levels, and that will prepare you for the ultimate development of excellence—accessing your personal genius. Exploring the structures that now organize and govern the very basis of your life, **Secrets of Personal Mastery** takes you through a mind ‘re-structuring’ course that addresses:

- the mind and emotion
- the tragedy of complacency
- madness and genius
- procedures and magic
- personal and interpersonal development
- the excellence of expertise
- identity and existence
- language and semantics
- the mind-muscle connection



“[Michael] ingeniously weaves together theory and application while thoroughly explaining how one might utilize the thirteen secrets of personal mastery in a manner that is incredible, inspiring and revealing. Buy this book; you do want to achieve personal mastery, don’t you?”

Rob McCarter, M.S., LPC, NCC



L. Michael Hall, Ph.D. has authored many groundbreaking works on communication, neuro-linguistics, emotions, and motivation. He is one of the foremost NLP theorists today, and is dedicated to advancing its techniques into new and exciting realms of therapy and personal development. He works as a psychotherapist and trainer in Grand Junction, Colorado.

Cover design Tom Fitton



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