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BEGONE!

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# EXCUSES BEGONE!

HOW TO CHANGE LIFELONG,  
SELF-DEFEATING THINKING HABITS

Dr. Wayne W. Dyer



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For Tiffany Saia.  
The light from which  
I *Shine On* . . .



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# INTRODUCTION

I spent the year 2006 immersed in the ancient teachings of Lao-tzu, studying his monumental tome, the Tao Te Ching. I read, meditated, lived, and then wrote an essay on each of the 81 verses of the Tao, which many have called the wisest book ever written. That collection of essays is titled *Change Your Thoughts—Change Your Life: Living the Wisdom of the Tao*. I learned, and to this day, practice, *what* to think, although all that Lao-tzu taught me in that year is beyond my abilities to describe completely.

I find I now choose thoughts that are flexible, not rigid; soft, not hard. I think with humility, not arrogance; with detachment, not attachment. I practice thinking small and accomplishing big things, as well as thinking in harmony with nature, rather than with my ego. The idea of not interfering replaces meddling and

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advising. I prefer peaceful solutions over the notion of fighting to solve disputes. I opt for contentment, rather than ambition; arriving, not striving. And most significantly, I choose thoughts that are congruous with the Great Tao (God), rather than the illusions of self-importance conjured up by ego.

*Excuses Begone!*—the book you're presently reading—was also influenced by that eminent master Lao-tzu. Since the Tao Te Ching taught me *what* kind of thinking harmonized with my higher self, I asked Lao-tzu for advice on *how to change* long-established habits of thought. I realized that knowing what to think does not necessarily clarify how to go about changing a lifetime of habitual thinking. Thus, I've drawn on Lao-tzu's wisdom by contemplating his teachings and asking for his guidance on what it takes to bring about a change in the long-held habits of thought that manifest as excuses. Through a process of writing that felt as though I were being directed by a force larger than myself, the *Excuses Begone!* paradigm evolved with what appears to be the cooperation of this man named Lao-tzu, who lived some 2,500 years ago.

This paradigm works! I've taken many people through the seven questions that constitute this exciting new paradigm, and I've seen powerful changes take place to my—and their—delighted amazement. (I've even worked the paradigm on myself and turned some habits of thought around almost magically.) By examining the support system that individuals have erected over a long period of time, often going back to early childhood, and putting these timeworn thoughts through the seven steps in this paradigm, I find that excuses begin to fade away. They become replaced with thoughts that speak fervently, almost shouting, *Yes, you can change any excuse pattern, no matter how long or pervasive the conditioning process has been!*

I've seen men and women give up a lifetime of being overweight or addicted to all manner of substances by simply applying the principles that are inherent in the *Excuses Begone!* approach to life. If you're truly serious about changing any long-established habits of thought that have led you to use excuses as your rationale for staying the same, then I encourage you to follow the practices presented in these pages.

The great poet Rainer Maria Rilke once observed that “behind the world our names enclose is the nameless: our true archetype and home.” I would add, “Behind the world your excuses describe is the Great Tao; let yourself be lived by it, and all of those excuses will fade away so that you finally come home once and for all.”

— **Wayne W. Dyer**  
Maui, Hawaii



*Don't believe  
everything you  
think!*

## PART I

# IDENTIFYING AND REMOVING HABITUAL THINKING

*“Every human being’s essential nature is perfect and faultless, but after years of immersion in the world we easily forget our roots and take on a counterfeit nature.”*

— Lao-tzu

# YES, YOU CAN CHANGE OLD HABITS

*“I wasn’t kissing her. I was whispering in her mouth.”*

— Chico Marx

(Response to his wife when she caught him kissing a chorus girl)

*“An excuse is worse and more terrible than a lie . . .”*

— Alexander Pope

It’s been said that old habits die hard, implying that it’s next to impossible to change long-standing thought patterns. Yet the book you hold in your hands was created out of a belief that entrenched ways of thinking and acting can indeed be eradicated. Furthermore, the most effective means for eliminating habitual thoughts is to go to work on the very system that created, and continues to support, these thinking habits. This system is made up of a long list of explanations and defenses that can be summed up in one word: *excuses*. Hence, the title of this book is really a statement to yourself, as well as to that system of explanations you’ve created. It is my intention that *all* excuses be . . . gone!

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*Can I make dramatic changes in the way I live? Is it possible to change self-defeating thoughts and behaviors that have been my constant companions for as long as I can remember? Can I really do a U-turn and deprogram myself when I've never known any other way to think and act? I've been depressed [or stubborn, overweight, scared, clumsy, unlucky, or any other descriptor you choose to insert here] my entire life. Is it even feasible or practical for me to contemplate removing these old and familiar ways of being and open myself up to a brand-new me?*

This book is my answer to those questions. Yes, there is a way available to you, right here and right now. You can relinquish any unwanted-but-long-held thoughts that have become your self-definition. *Excuses Begone!* presents a powerful and easy method for removing deeply embedded thinking habits that are preventing you from being the person you want to be.

The power of your beliefs to keep you stuck is enormous. Those deeply ingrained notions act as chains restricting you from experiencing your unique destiny. You have the capacity to loosen these chains and make them work for, rather than against, you, to the point that you can alter what you thought were scientific explanations for your human limitations and characteristics. I'm referring to things such as your genetic makeup, your DNA, or the early conditioning imposed upon you when you were an embryo, infant, and young child. Yes, you read that correctly. *Your beliefs, all of those formless energy patterns that you've adopted as your self-image, have the ability to change dramatically and give you the power to conquer unwanted traits, or what you unhappily presume to be your fate.*

The implacable sciences of genetics, medicine, psychology, and sociology may cause you to feel helpless about overcoming "proven" facts that are said to determine virtually everything about you. "I can't help the way I think . . . I've always been this way. It's my nature and it can't be changed. This is all I've ever known. After all, you take what's handed to you, and you make the best of it." All of these are the laments of those who opt to use excuses to explain their lives away. (**Note:** I will be using the word *excuses* for what many call *conditioned ways of being*.)

Every self-limiting thought that you employ to explain why you're not living life to the absolute fullest—so you're feeling purposeful, content, and fully alive—is something you can challenge and reverse, regardless of how long you've held that belief and no matter how rooted in tradition, science, or life experience it may be. Even if it seems like an insurmountable obstacle, you can overcome these thoughts, and you can begin by noticing how they've been working to hold you back. Then you can embark on a de-programming effort that allows you to live an excuse-free life, one day at a time, one miracle at a time, one new belief at a time!

### ***The New Word on Beliefs***

Have you ever wanted to change some facet of your personality, but another part of you insisted that this is impossible because your genetic programming is responsible for how you think, feel, and behave? That latter part of you believes in biologically determined unhappy genes, shy genes, fat genes, and bad-luck genes, among many others. Due to your luck of the draw, it will tell you, you have a set of misery genes, along with a sizable cache of weight-gaining genes, if those are the aspects you want to change. This part means to be helpful—but while it probably wants to protect you from the disappointment of failure, it keeps you stuck in an excuse-driven life. Using the excuse of genetic programming *not* to do anything about the personal characteristics that you dislike is popular and clearly acceptable in today's culture.

So, using the aforementioned genetic predisposition as a rationalization, living in constant or unnecessary terror might be explained as your having an overabundance of fear cells, which you're stuck with. Thus, a formidable excuse is formulated. No wonder a part of you gets indignant when you attempt to be brave, since it believes, *I can't change my biology*. A sense of powerlessness ensues when it comes to altering anything about yourself that has become so established that it feels like who you are. This is particularly true when you observe traits and characteristics that

have been with you for as long as you can recall. As if to further cement the idea that you've "always been this way" into your total worldview, the limiting part of you asserts: *There's nothing that can be done about it; after all, I can't change my basic biology.*

Excuse me—thanks to the principles I share in this book, you most certainly can!



The belief that we cannot change our biology is beginning to be challenged by scientific scholars engaged in cell-biology research. It seems that humans *do* have the ability to change and even reverse some of their genetic blueprints. Openness and curiosity, along with a desire to be free from excuses, are the basic prerequisites for learning about the exciting evidence concerning genetic predisposition.

One of the pioneers of the new way of understanding DNA, Bruce Lipton, Ph.D., is a cell biologist who taught medical students before resigning to do research and lecture full-time. In a groundbreaking book called *The Biology of Belief*, Lipton writes that life is not controlled by genes—in fact, his research led him to the conclusion that they're strictly blueprints. The invisible, formless energy that constitutes the genes' environment is the architect that turns the blueprint into this mystery we call life. Listing hundreds of research results, he concludes that the old medical model depicting life's essential building blocks as physical particles is misleading; incomplete; and, in most cases, false. Treating illness more or less exclusively with drugs or surgery to facilitate a healing begs to be reexamined.

Lipton's conclusions led to his resignation from the University of Wisconsin's School of Medicine because he discovered that what he'd been teaching (the model of physical particles as the controlling force in life) was incorrect. He realized that both the human body and the universe itself are mental and spiritual in nature. There's a field of invisible energy with a total absence of physical properties that creates the particles that we call "cells,"

and this invisible field is the sole governing function of the body. So, since the body is not exclusively a physical machine, we can all find out how to control and impact our health.

Even more astonishing is Lipton's understanding that our personal belief systems, including our perceptions, have the capacity to trump our genetic inheritance and our cellular DNA. It's possible to influence the infinitesimally tiny particles we've come to believe are the ultimate determiners of our lives. That is, when we change the way we think, and learn new ways of perceiving, we can actually change our DNA!

In other words, you can impact and alter your genetic structure by modifying how you see yourself and your place in this glorious mystery called life. *Your perceptions have the power to change your genetic makeup—your beliefs can and do control your biology.* This may sound radical or even impossible, yet it is this awareness that will lead you to say good-bye to the excuses you've unwittingly adopted.

I encourage you to immerse yourself in *The Biology of Belief*. You'll be inspired to reset your mind to the possibility that your beliefs carry far more weight than you realized in determining what you can do, what you'll undertake, and how far you're capable of going. Let's take a look now at another piece of research that will help you realize what you're capable of achieving.

### ***The Placebo Effect***

That the mind controls the body is hardly up for dispute. You've probably heard of documented studies where sugar pills given to a control group believing that they're a remedy for, say, arthritis, turn out to be as effective as the drug being administered for the arthritis. This placebo effect apparently occurs due to a belief in the effectiveness of the pill. But consider how powerful the mind is when it goes beyond administering a sugar pill to the world of surgery:

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A Baylor School of Medicine study, published in 2002 in the *New England Journal of Medicine* evaluated surgery for patients with severe, debilitating knee pain. (Moseley, et al, 2002) The lead author of the study, Dr. Bruce Moseley, “knew” that knee surgery helped his patients. “All good surgeons know there is no placebo effect in surgery.” But Moseley was trying to figure out which part of the surgery was giving his patients relief. The patients in the study were divided into three groups. Moseley shaved the damaged cartilage in the knee of one group. For another group, he flushed out the knee joint, removing material thought to be causing the inflammatory effect. Both of these constitute standard treatment for arthritic knees. The third group got “fake” surgery. The patient was sedated, Moseley made three standard incisions and then talked and acted just as he would have during a real surgery—he even splashed salt water to simulate the sound of the knee-washing procedure. After 40 minutes, Moseley sewed up the incisions as if he had done the surgery. All three groups were prescribed the same postoperative care, which included an exercise program.

The results were shocking. Yes, the groups who received surgery, as expected, improved. But the placebo group improved just as much as the other two groups! Despite the fact that there are 650,000 surgeries yearly for arthritic knees, at a cost of about \$5,000 each, the results were clear to Moseley: “My skill as a surgeon had no benefit on these patients. The entire benefit of surgery for osteoarthritis of the knee was the placebo effect.” Television news programs graphically illustrated the stunning results. Footage showed members of the placebo group walking and playing basketball, in short doing things they reported they could not do before their “surgery.” The placebo patients didn’t find out for two years that they had gotten fake surgery. One member of the placebo group, Tim Perez, who had to walk with a cane before the surgery, is now able to play basketball with his grandchildren. He summed up the theme of this book when he told the Discovery Health Channel: “In this world anything is possible when you put your mind to it. I know that your mind can work miracles.” (Lipton, *The Biology of Belief*)

I believe that this kind of research offers motivating evidence for making a commitment to the *Excuses Begone!* paradigm.

Another recent procedure may completely reverse an old medical model. It seems that a man's forefinger was accidentally sliced off at the top knuckle, and by altering genetic instructions, a team succeeded in regrowing a new half-inch top to his finger in four weeks. Fingers are genetically programmed to stave off infection when an injury like this occurs, so the medical team replaced his sliced-off stub with stem cells programmed to grow a finger—the subsequent new growth included the nail, cuticle, and flesh. This man's DNA was overturned by introducing newly programmed instructions.

In a variety of studies on severe depression, heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, ulcers, and even cancer, the power of the mind to overcome these maladies trumps the conventional medical wisdom of treating the cells rather than the environment in which they reside. The new biology is clearly indicating that beliefs—some of which are conscious and most of which are subconscious (or habitual)—determine our physical and mental health, along with our level of happiness and success.

Author James Allen observed: "We do not attract that which we *want* but that which we *are*." I've contemplated this idea for a long time. Until recently, I accepted the idea that what we are is pretty much formulated by complex genetic input and strands of DNA inherited from our parents and other relatives. But I've changed my mind. My new personal philosophy is that who I am is first and foremost determined by what I believe—and that leads me to consciously focus on the fact that limitations or traits inherited from my ancestors are absolutely not the final word. For me there's now a surprise tucked into James Allen's quote: *by changing my beliefs, I change who I am*. As a result of this shift in my beliefs, I've attracted some new and wondrous features into my life, including being prompted to write this book and share its insights with you.

As you work your way through these pages, remember that *what you are is what you believe, not what you were handed genetically*.

If you stay focused on what you are as a set of beliefs, you will align with the same kinds of energy. As you read on, remind yourself that you attract what you are, not what you want; and what you are is your beliefs, not your cells. As *The Biology of Belief* establishes, your mental activity is strong enough to overcome material particles *and* the influences of early conditioning and programming that you unwittingly adopted through your formative years.

### ***Your Lingering Early Programming***

In addition to our genetic makeup, the other big excuse that most of us use to justify unhappiness, poor health, and lack of success is the family and cultural conditioning we've been programmed with. To that end, there's a fascinating area of inquiry known as *memetics*, which deals with the mind and is analogous to the relationship of genetics to the body. So as the basic unit of genetics is the gene, the basic unit of memetics is the meme (rhymes with "team"). Yet unlike an atom or an electron, the meme has no physical properties. According to Richard Brodie, in his work *Virus of the Mind*, it's "a thought, belief, or attitude in your mind that can spread to and from other people's minds."

Richard Dawkins, the Oxford biologist who coined the word *meme*, describes the process in his book *The Selfish Gene*. My understanding is that memetics originates from the word *mimic*, meaning to observe and copy behavior. This behavior is repeated and passed on to others, and on and on the mimicking process goes. The key point is this: *transferring an idea, attitude, or belief to others is done mentally*. We won't find memes by turning up the magnification on any microscope—they pass from mind to mind via hundreds of thousands of imitations. By the age of six or seven, we've all been programmed with an endless inventory of memes that act very much like a virus. They aren't necessarily good or bad; they simply spread easily throughout the population.

Once a meme is in your mind, it can and will subtly influence your behavior. This is one of the ways you acquire a huge category

of excuses that keep you in a rut. For example: “My memes made me do it! I can’t help it! These ideas [beliefs, attitudes] have been passed on to me from one mind to another for generations, and there’s nothing I can do about the way I think. These memes have been the building blocks of my mind, and I can’t deprogram myself from these viruses of the mind that just keep replicating and spreading. These ideas [memes] are so much a part of me that it’s impossible to ‘disinfect’ myself from the results of all of these mind viruses.” Every excuse you read about in this book is, in reality, a meme that was once planted in your mind.

Richard Brodie uses the word *virus* to describe what happens in the mind through mimicking and imitating. The core purpose of a virus is to make as many copies of itself as possible by penetrating wherever an opening occurs and spreading itself to as many hosts as possible. Similarly, you’re a host for countless memes; they’re the entrenched thoughts and behavioral characteristics of your personality. You’ve spent years repeating and replicating ideas that were traveling from one mind to another, spreading these ideas and beliefs to many others.

Memes die hard because they’ve become who you think you are; shedding them is like trying to discard one of your vital organs, and it taps your life energy. Many memes, in fact, were firmly implanted by your parents during your early family history—it will come as no surprise that they were easily transferred to you from your parents or grandparents. Since ideas get fixed in your mind by spreading from other minds, they become your reality, often for your entire life.

Personally, I find it fascinating that there are invisible little units that I allowed to be implanted in my mind, which continue to impact how I think and behave today. Moreover, I’ve acted on these mind viruses and have passed them on to my children . . . unwittingly, I’ve become a carrier.

Here are some examples that continue to crop up in my life:

I grew up with a Depression mentality. Even though I was born in 1940 at the tail end of the Great Depression, my parents and

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grandparents lived through hard economic times and shared a lot of their scarcity messages with me. *Don't spend recklessly; save for the future because things will only get worse; there are shortages everywhere; food is in minimal supply; don't waste anything; eat everything on your plate; you don't have enough money . . .* these ideas were invisibly passed on to me as I grew up in the Midwest in the 1940s. I mimicked or imitated these ideas and allowed myself to become an instrument of these mind viruses. They grew in me, and I spread them wherever I went, until they became fully ensconced in my mind and many of my actions.

Although I'm now in my 60s, these memes are very much alive today and are still attempting to replicate and spread. To some extent they serve a purpose, although they occasionally work overtime. My world isn't endangered by poverty, for instance, but I'm still a financially cautious person who likes to save rather than dispose of items retaining some usefulness. I respect those attitudes, and they no doubt originated in my childhood by being programmed into my habitual subconscious mind. But do I really need to retrieve used-up toothpaste tubes discarded by my children in wastepaper baskets, and strenuously squeeze out another two weeks' worth of product . . . when I've earned enough to buy the toothpaste factory?!

Here's another mind virus I've noticed lately: I must have imitated sulking when I didn't get my way as the youngest of three boys, or as a child in a series of foster homes, because I remember my adult forms of sulking (pouting and even yelling) when I was in my 30s and 40s. Recently I was alone in my office, feeling frustrated because I couldn't locate something I needed. As my frustration mounted, I became increasingly irrational: I raised my voice, loudly protested (although there was no one else there), used profanity, and stomped through the house until I was distraught and had given myself an upset stomach. This incident lasted one or two minutes, and then I finally calmed down and found the book I thought was the culprit in my private drama.

Why am I admitting to this silly scene, given my desire to be seen as a rational spiritual teacher? Because it illustrates a point

I'm making in this opening chapter. As an embryo, an infant, and a young boy, I must have seen this kind of behavior and mimicked it—the meme infected me, replicating and spreading from a relative or friend's mind to mine. And now, some 60 years later, I could have a built-in excuse for behaving irrationally enough to feel embarrassed by my infantile behavior and for making myself sick. The excuse is right there for me to use: *I've always overreacted to frustration; it's just a part of me. I don't have any control over stomping around and blaming who knows what, using mild profanity, and being immobilized because I cannot tolerate my frustration.* The possibilities are inexhaustible for excusing this behavior, but the question I must ask myself is: *Do I really want to hold on to these habitual behaviors that are ultimately capable of making me sick?*



Just like me, you have thousands of imitated thoughts and actions that were absorbed through contact with individuals in your childhood environment. When mind viruses serve you, it's a pleasure to observe them and express silent gratitude. But when they continue to plague your life, inhibiting you from achieving your desires, then you're on notice to start shedding them. The point is that these mind viruses, or memes, can work against you in myriad ways today, but you can also change them. (I hasten to add here that by becoming aware of my own inclinations to use old, no-longer-sensible-or-practical responses to my frustrations, and by being willing to do the deprogramming work on my long-held thoughts, I now notice those infantile temptations and choose a healthier way. The bonus is that I'm more effective at locating the missing items that used to perplex me!)

Thinking that you'll always be poor, unlucky, overweight, or underweight; that you'll always have an addictive personality; that you'll never attract your soul mate; that you'll continue to have angry outbursts; that you'll always lack musical, artistic, or athletic ability; or that you'll forever be shy because you've always felt that way . . . are *excuses*. And when you see them for what they

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are, you can eliminate them. On the other hand, if you find them to be firmly entrenched personality traits and habits of thinking that can't be challenged, you'll symbolically suck your thumb and cry when life doesn't appear to cooperate. Believe me, though, it's far more energizing and fulfilling to practice the *Excuses Begone!* paradigm. Using a new set of thinking habits will enhance your life and help you attract all that you really are. At the same time, you'll be modeling a new and better way to live for the people in your environment who are unwitting victims of the excuse virus.

You've been a memetic superstar since birth, mimicking beliefs and behaviors from other influences beyond your family and social structure. Influences from your religious training, ethnic culture, television programming and advertising, and the like have become a fixed part of your habitual mind. It isn't my purpose to examine all the ways you've acquired beliefs, since that's something only *you* can do. I'm writing this book to help you gain awareness of the excuses you use for behaving in ways that don't help you to achieve the level of health, happiness, and success you desire. I agree with the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, known for his brilliance as a leader of men and a spiritually conscious being. He is reported to have said, "Our life is what our thoughts make it."

Your behaviors are supported by your thinking patterns; that is, your thoughts truly make or break your life. While some of them are operating on a conscious level and are easy to recognize, others are deeply embedded within your subconscious. However, I prefer to call this deeply programmed or almost automatic second-nature part of you, "the habitual mind."

For me, *subconscious* implies being below the level of creative awareness, a sort of mysterious entity that can't be known. Since the central theme of this book is that anything used to explain thinking and acting in the same self-sabotaging ways is an excuse, it seems to me that calling it "subconscious" is really underscoring this notion: *I can't help it, I can't talk about it, and I certainly can't change it; because it is, after all, below my conscious level, where I do all of my living.*

I personally find it hard to work with a part of myself that's not within my conscious life. Therefore, I choose to call this huge reservoir of emptiness—a reservoir that pushes us all away from our Divine dharma as well as our optimal level of health, happiness, and success—"the habitual mind." And while these types of thoughts might seem to be unreachable, I assure you that they'll come to the surface with an *Excuses Begone!* attitude.

### ***Kissing the Big Excuses Good-bye***

This opening chapter has introduced you to recent research and observations that are increasing our understanding of human nature. My purpose is to help you use this information to alter the parts of your life that are hampered by old science and old thinking. In summary, there are basically two big excuses we all utilize:

— The first one is: *I can't really help the way I am; after all, people can't change their DNA. My genetic makeup is the culprit.* The new biology says that there's an energy field surrounding, and contained within, all of your cells, and this field is influenced by your beliefs. Moreover, it is out of this field that all particles are created—it's the sole governing entity of the body. Something like 95 percent of us do *not* have genetic reasons for illness, depression, fear, or any other condition.

Here in the 21st century, science invites you to stop believing that you're a victim of your genetic makeup, because a large body of evidence demonstrates empirically that your beliefs can change your genes. I encourage you to examine this mind-bending idea at greater depth than I'm able to offer here. There's an invisible part of you that you can call intelligence, higher function, Tao, thought, belief, Spirit, God . . . you choose.

— The second big excuse is rooted in your early history and family conditioning. It impacts you in so many ways that you probably feel it's an impossible-to-be-free-of aspect of your life.

## EXCUSES BEGONE!

Kiss this one good-bye as well. Just because you've been infected with a tradition meme and programmed to repeat it and pass it on to future generations doesn't mean you're unable to disinfect yourself and reprogram your inner world.

These funny little non-things called memes are thoughts that you allow to become your master—and make no mistake about it, every excuse you've ever used is really a meme disguised as an explanation. Yet you can deprogram yourself from these mind viruses. A virus isn't concerned with whether it's contributing to your well-being or your ill-being because it only wants to penetrate, replicate, and spread. But you don't have to be a victim of anything that was transferred from another mind to yours. Your beliefs have made these memes seem like second nature to you. While excuses are just thoughts or beliefs, you are the decider of what you ultimately store away as your guide to life.

A short discourse from the Dhammapada gives a sense of the route individuals travel as they advance toward their own inherent perfection and self-realization. Savor this ancient wisdom and incorporate its message with the modern understanding of genetics and memetics: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought. It is founded on our thoughts. It is made up of our thoughts. If one speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows one, like a shadow that never leaves."



## YOUR TWO MINDS

*“The hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells,  
is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world  
by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way. . . .  
We are spinning our own fates, good or evil . . .”*

— from *The Principles of Psychology*, by William James

Sometime ago I challenged myself to study the process of making dramatic thought transitions, using attitudes and behaviors that had been with me for a lifetime. For several years I scrutinized precisely what I did to undo old patterns in myself. This activity led me to question basic beliefs about the legitimacy of environmental and genetic authority in determining who I am and what I can change. Due to my success in modifying my thoughts and, subsequently, my actions, I developed a new paradigm for eliminating unwanted, lifelong thinking habits. At first glance, much of what I’m sharing here may seem radical and inconsistent with established psychological and sociological academic tenets. So be it. Here is what I believe—this is how I see it!

In a brilliant one-act play by Jean-Paul Sartre titled *No Exit*, the central character states emphatically: “A man is what he wills himself to be.” This idea of willpower is a core theme in much of my earlier writing, and I still strongly subscribe to the belief that we all have within us an invisible force that we recognize as *will*. But I also know that there are many facets of our lives that seem to be beyond the pale of the will—for example, it often isn’t enough to eliminate lifelong habits. Identifying and changing some thoughts, particularly those that have been with us for what seems like forever, requires a brand-new perceptual process.

In contrast to Sartre’s observation, Ralph Waldo Emerson offers this: “Man is a stream whose source is hidden. Our being is descending into us from we know not whence.” In the 1600s, Benedict de Spinoza made a similar observation about the human mind, which I read in my college days and have never forgotten: “[T]he human mind is part of the infinite intellect of God.” I still apply this to myself whenever I question how or why I got myself into one of the many predicaments I’ve brought upon myself throughout my adult life.

The mind that Spinoza is referring to has no form or substance; is always working—even while you’re sleeping—and, most significantly, is your connection to Source. Viewed in this light, it is your personal God component, always with you and always ready to serve you in fulfilling another of Spinoza’s observations: “The mind’s highest good is the knowledge of God.” Yes, your mind is largely responsible for who and what you’ve become, but there’s also a beingness buried within you, in a place where your thoughts originate. Emerson suggests that it’s a mystery, “descending into us from we know not whence.”

These two ideas about human nature combine in you to form what I call *two minds*: The one that’s frequently referred to as your “conscious mind” is what I call “creative consciousness”; and the other is your “habitual mind,” which, as I explained in the last chapter, is what I call the subconscious mind. Yet whether they originate in creative consciousness or the habitual mind, I believe that any thought patterns that don’t enhance and expand your

joyous development are *excuses*. As you'll see, this means that you have far more influence than you've probably been led to believe to rearrange and change ineffectual and harmful beliefs or ideas.

### *Creative Consciousness*

In this paradigm, the conscious mind is more accurately described as the *creative* conscious mind. This close-to-the-surface, nonhabitual mind makes endless decisions about what you wear, what you eat, what appointments you keep, what time you go to bed, and thousands of other daily choices in your life. This invisible and “placeless place” is the part of your brain that makes and cancels plans, adds new ones, and thinks continuously. This creative consciousness is always there, to the point that even when you want to shut it down, it can be extremely difficult to do so . . . the thoughts just keep coming. What an immeasurable benefit to consider that this vast, mysterious mind is really part of the Source that creates everything, as Spinoza suggests.

So if your mind is a creator, just as God's mind is a creator of the universe, then it can perform at the absolutely highest level imaginable. The creative force asks for nothing and has no ego—it's simply an instrument of giving, providing and offering at all times with no consideration for itself. Put another way, the highest calling of your conscious creative mind is to be the human equivalent of God's mind. Yet you'll probably agree that most of your thoughts focus on the relatively tiny universe of your human self!

Rest assured that you can choose to learn how to shift your everyday thoughts away from *What am I doing? What can I get? and How quickly can I get it?* to Spinoza's concept of discovering the highest-functioning, all-knowing part of yourself. This may sound like a tall order, but I guarantee that reprogramming your creative conscious mind is really a simple matter. The endless thoughts of *me, me, me* are close to the surface and highly susceptible to change. (You'll have the opportunity to practice this when you study the paradigm for eliminating excuses in the third part of this book.)



The creative conscious mind can do almost anything you instruct it to do: It can change thoughts at your bidding, practice affirmations you create, wander in blissful meditation at your invitation, and learn almost any new skill at your insistence. It can think of everything you direct it to. Through discipline, effort, and continual practice, it can also accomplish almost anything you focus your thoughts on.

The problem with creative consciousness is that its constant shifts and changes can overwhelm/flood you. It's often referred to as "the monkey mind" because it keeps flitting about almost continuously, first having one thought, then another, and then still another. Most of this close-to-the-surface mental activity is the ego's attempt to dance to the beat of rhythms and influences that are outside of you, which are probably unwanted and unnecessary, and running your life without your permission. Your creative consciousness has developed a weak connection that's full of static, so its signals from a part of the infinite intellect of God are silenced by an ego-based accompaniment that broadcasts: *What's in it for me? How do I look? How much money can I make? How can I get ahead? Whom do I have to please? Why are there so many demands on me?* On and on these thoughts come, then go, then come right back.

There's statistical evidence that the conscious mind occupies approximately 5 percent of the total workings of the brain, leaving 95 percent to the realm of the subconscious. Percentages interest me less than the ability to sense your mind as not some amorphous component of your being that's constantly changing from one ego-based thought to another, but rather as evidence of your nature, or your connection to the infinite intellect of creation. This style of magnificent respect alerts you to your ability to access the highest function of your mind.

### ***The Habitual (Subconscious) Mind***

According to Tor Nørretranders, the author of *The User Illusion*, the subconscious mind has been calculated to process millions of environmental stimuli per second versus only a few dozen environmental stimuli per second that the conscious mind can process. Conventional psychological wisdom says that much of what you believe about yourself, along with almost all of your daily actions, is programmed into your subconscious or habitual mind. You spend a great deal of your time operating on automatic pilot, so to speak. In fact, you could visualize your two minds as co-pilots: the conscious mind is aware of its thoughts but is a minor player, like a real pilot in training; while the subconscious takes care of virtually everything you need to think, say, or do.

I take exception to this assertion that the habitual mind runs the show, doing everything that the creative mind isn't paying attention to. According to this view, the habitual mind is like a computer running a downloaded program that will play throughout your life—it's been permanently programmed from the moment of conception, and it's next to impossible to get new software to rewrite existing programs. I simply cannot agree that a part of your mind was nourished by ideas, images, and input that continue to be necessary for your sustainability today. It's my contention that this is a false belief that's easily revealed as an excuse. I don't believe that anyone has to live with the belief that they have programming in their subconscious mind that can't be rewritten. I'll explain my perspective on this issue.

If you're the way you are because of something that's subconscious—that is, below your level of waking consciousness—then it's clearly something you can do nothing about. You can't even talk about it, since it's beyond your conscious mind. For the same reason, you can't understand it; you can't challenge it; and, most egregiously, you can't change or fix it. How can you fix something that's totally inaccessible? It would be like attempting to repair a broken watch that was sealed away in a vault: obviously, you'd need the combination to enter into that previously inaccessible space.

## EXCUSES BEGONE!

If something is subconscious and thus automatic, it's believed that you don't have a choice in the matter. And to me, that's the most regrettable thing about this subconscious model: believing that you don't have a choice. The truth, as I see it, is that everything you think, say, and do is a choice—and you don't need to think, speak, or act as you've done for your entire life. When you abandon making choices, you enter the vast world of excuses.

Right now, while reading this book, decide to begin *choosing* instead of *excusing*. You can instantly decide to reprogram and direct your life toward the level of happiness, success, and health that you prefer.



I've had a downloaded pattern since childhood, and it concerns my stroke in my daily swim. Some people who have observed me making my way through the ocean have said that I swim as though I've *had* a stroke. I never paid much attention to what others said until I discovered that the way I kicked my feet (using only my right leg, while my left leg stayed motionless) was putting undue pressure on my back and throwing me out of alignment as I practiced yoga and simply got older.

When I was advised to change the way I swam by kicking both legs simultaneously, my first reaction was to think, *I can't change my swimming style—I've been doing it this way for almost 60 years! I even swam competitively with this "Dyer stroke." This is something I've downloaded into me from thousands of hours of swimming and is a subconscious habit.* Yet after putting to the test the ideas I'm writing about in this book, I was able to rather easily adopt a brand-new swimming stroke, even though I was 65 years of age at the time.

Just like my being able to rather quickly change a 60-year-old habit, you can access the program you're operating with by examining your thoughts. Your habitual mind takes over when you choose to ignore your conscious beliefs, and you just continue to act in ways you've been programmed to. But you *can* shift to your creative mind and explore your options. You don't have to buy

the old argument that a part of you is inaccessible, unreachable, or buried so deep down inside that undoing early programming is impossible. You'll never successfully reprogram your computer, or your mind, by telling it to stop spewing out the same garbage. You're stuck until you change to a new operating system or download some new files . . . but first you have to know that this is an option.

Think of the many ways in which you identify yourself, particularly in the gray area of deeply entrenched thoughts. Identify the programs in your habitual mind that are so outdated that they're hampering your system. Those attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts that don't serve you are excuses, ultimately destined to be sent to the trash bin.

Mark Twain had this wonderful observation about how we change old, unwanted ways of thinking and behaving: "Habit is habit, and not to be flung out of the window by any man, but coaxed downstairs a step at a time." My objective is to help you coax down the stairs those ways of thinking that keep you from living your life at the optimal level. Should this seem daunting, know that it doesn't have to be a lengthy, winding staircase that takes years to traverse. Or, to use the computer metaphor, your internal system is as capable of change as contemporary operating systems are. Freedom from long-established habits, whether they originated genetically or memetically, is attainable with the *Excuses Begone!* paradigm presented in Part III.

Reaching into the part of your mind that works on automatic pilot as a result of early programming and conditioning isn't nearly as troublesome as allowing it to continue to run your life. It's actually quite uncomplicated and won't take a great deal of time to shift from old habits to new choices. You are a part of the same intelligence that creates worlds; in fact, your mind *is* that intelligence. Knowing this, how could you consider a part of you to be unreachable or unprogrammable? *No* part of you is unreachable, no matter how automatic or habitual it may have become.

Certain aspects of your life may seem to be governed by a force that you're unaware of, and you can feel that there's no possibility

## EXCUSES BEGONE!

of choice and that you're imprisoned by your excuse inventory: *I can't really help it; it's just my nature; I've always been this way.* Talk about futility! However, anytime you choose, you can access your habitual mind and begin to reprogram it, changing patterns that may have been useful once but no longer work for you.

### *See Yourself Through a New Lens*

The quote at the beginning of this chapter was written almost 120 years ago by the father of modern psychology, William James, who urges us to be aware of the danger of living as if there are no choices. I am personally convinced that everyone has a capacity for greatness that transcends anything they've been taught to believe, that every being who's ever existed is in fact a portion of the all-creating power of intention. Since we're all pieces of the infinite creative Source, we should continually be telling ourselves, "I came from God, and since I must be like what I came from, I am a piece of the Divine." Trying to imagine the all-creating spiritual force coming up with excuses for anything is impossible, because it is creating from its own consciousness.

Now put *yourself* in this picture. While your mind is part of the unlimited Source, it becomes limited when you believe it to be *fallible, weak, impotent*, or any other adjective that misidentifies with creative energy. When you edge God out in this manner, you invite ego—which is known as the "false self" by spiritual teachers of all persuasions—in.

I invite you to try on a new lens that lets you access your false self with its ton of excuses (many of which I've detailed in the following chapter) and its belief in limitations. As it edges God out, your false self forces you to part with ideas that prove you're a spiritual being having a temporary human experience. Ego gives you a rationale for creating the rationalizations and justifications that eventually go on to direct your life. They become so embedded in what social scientists call the subconscious that your habitual mind turns into an excuse machine.

Allow yourself to look through your new lens by acquiring a set of beliefs that includes your spiritual or God-realized nature. It may feel a little unfamiliar, or even mysterious, at first, but be willing to allow your senses to adjust to this new way of seeing. Transcend the idea that your genetic makeup is static. With your new ability to perceive ego, you'll become a wizard who easily dethrones the dictator of your false self, bypassing early conditioning imposed by people in your environment who have edged God out.

As you get comfortable with this new way of seeing yourself, ask yourself the following question: *If no one told me who I was, who would I be?* Quietly meditate on this by spending some time in the spaciousness of *not knowing*. Imagine that your subconscious mind is nonexistent and there is no storage receptacle for excuses during your life. There's just an open and inviting clear space inside of you—a *tabula rasa*, or blank slate, with a magical surface that nothing adheres to. You might imagine that your everyday conscious mind simply doesn't absorb the opinions of the folks you grew up with. In this little fantasy, there's never been anyone telling you who you are. So who are you?

When I did this exercise, I found that my answer to the above question was quite simply: *I would be anything that I, and only I, decided to be in this moment and all future moments.* As the song goes, "I've gotta be me," and that means jettisoning all of the excuses I've accumulated. My habitual life wouldn't be based upon anyone's early programming, since there wouldn't be anyone who ever told me who I am. Or, as the Tao teaches:

*Look to nature for your sustenance.  
Look to the great mysterious Tao [God] that  
does nothing and leaves nothing undone.  
Observe how the entire universe and all of  
these beautiful Tao-centered creatures work.*

Tao-centered creatures allow. They trust. They live here in the present moment and, most assuredly, they have no need for any excuses.

EXCUSES BEGONE!

### ***Applying Your Fresh Perspective to Common Excuse Categories***

Now I'd like to show you how you can take the fresh perspective you've gained by looking through your new lens. The excuse categories of genetics, memetics, and consciousness are about to be shown the door.

#### **Your New Outlook on Genetic Programming**

I'm sure you're familiar with some variation of this popular excuse: "I can't help it; it runs in my family." New biology, however, has proven that beliefs can override DNA, so move what you thought was a fact to the "excuse file" by altering how you view its authenticity. You can change what you perceive as immutable and beyond your reach by eliminating excuses such as the ones in the genetic excuse category.

As Gregg Braden writes in his astonishing book *The Spontaneous Healing of Belief*:

Paradigm-shattering experiments published in leading-edge, peer-reviewed journals reveal that we're bathed in a field of intelligent energy that fills what used to be thought of as empty space. Additional discoveries show beyond any reasonable doubt that this field responds to us—*it rearranges itself*—in the presence of our heart-based feelings and beliefs. And this is the revolution that changes everything.

Here are two exercises to practice applying these ideas to your genetic program:

1. Be open to the scientifically verified idea that your beliefs have the power to rearrange and change the material world. Start by making this particularly pertinent for you in your physical and personal destiny by contemplating that more things of this nature are possible than you've previously experienced. Allow these new

thoughts about your biology to gently enter your belief system. Encourage yourself to consider your beliefs as things that affect you, perhaps even more than physical particles do. If it suits you, you may even see beliefs as nonparticles in the nonmaterial or spiritual world.

2. Create an affirmation that attests to this new no-excuses philosophy for genetics. Something from the following list would work fine, but feel free to come up with your own:

- *I can change my body's infirmities by shifting my beliefs.*
- *I have the power to undo old thoughts about my genetic destiny.*
- *If I stay with them and live from my heart, my beliefs can inspire new talents if I so desire.*
- *I can heal anything by healing my beliefs first.*
- *I intend to keep my beliefs uppermost, and I refuse to blame anything in the material world for any deficiencies in my life.*

### **Your New Outlook on Memetic Programming**

Again, this is an excuse category that you've probably depended on to justify why life isn't what you really want it to be. These are the big mind-virus excuses: *My family made me the way I am, and I can't change it. My early childhood experience and all of the unfair criticism I received explain why I have low self-esteem. I'm stuck in this place because I've been infected by a multitude of mind viruses and environmental facts that have left me shortchanged when it comes to fulfilling a higher destiny. How can I change what I've imitated and mimicked for so many years? I've been infected by mind viruses, and it's impossible to change.*

## EXCUSES BEGONE!

What follows are two exercises to practice applying to your memetic program:

1. Affirm: *I believe that I am perfectly capable of overcoming any early conditioning I have adopted as a part of my personality and my current life experience.* Know that research is demonstrating that the power of thought is aligned with the universal mind, which many call “the Tao” or “God.” Just hang on to this idea for now—it will become clearer as you progress through this course in *Excuses Begone!*

2. Assert that anything that’s been programmed into you and acts like a virus is perfectly capable of being deprogrammed if you decide it’s worth the effort. Remind yourself that since you’re not presently a victim of beliefs that were modeled for you when you were much younger, using these as excuses is no longer your method. At this point you don’t even have to know how to deprogram or disinfect yourself. All you need to believe is that you have the ability and will begin now.

Here’s an affirmation that will guide you to awareness and answers: *I am much more powerful today than the old programs and mind viruses that I absorbed in my childhood.* Telling yourself this will make your inner teacher appear!

### **Your New Outlook on Creative Consciousness**

The everyday activity of your creative consciousness also proliferates excuses. You might think that you have no control over the thoughts that just keep popping into your head, but consider this radical idea: *Your thoughts are not located in your head.* Thought is an energy system that isn’t found anywhere in the physical world. The universe itself and everything in it is both mental and spiritual in nature. You create a field of energy with your thoughts, and the field creates all of the particles, or what Lao-tzu called “the world of the 10,000 things.” This energy field is an important

function of the body; your conscious mind is always working and connecting to this field from which everything is intended.

Apply these two exercises:

1. Quiet the mind by practicing daily meditation. As Sogyal Rinpoche wrote in *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*: “The gift of learning to meditate is the greatest gift you can give yourself in this life. For it is only through meditation that you can undertake the journey to discover your true nature, and so find the stability and confidence you will need to live, and die, well.” Find a way to give yourself that gift and access your conscious creative mind by eliminating unnecessary, unwanted, superfluous thoughts through meditation.

2. Use positive proclamations daily that are life enhancing and align you with the loving Source of everything. Rather than allowing your thoughts to insist that something is wrong or missing, retrain your conscious creative mind with beliefs such as these: *What I desire is already here; I just haven't connected to it yet. It can't be stopped because my thoughts are aligned with the mind or intellect of God.*

### **Your New Outlook on Habitual Consciousness**

In this category you'll find excuses such as: *I can't help the way I am because I've had so many limiting ideas programmed into me. It's my subconscious, so I can't even reach in there and examine it, let alone deprogram myself.* If you believe that your mind is below your level of conscious awareness, you've created a ready excuse to use whenever it's difficult to change your thinking. And if the self-limiting thoughts have been with you for years, it seems like a perfect excuse. So rename the subconscious mind the *habitual* mind.

## EXCUSES BEGONE!

*Habit* implies that you've made the same choices over time, and your thoughts and behaviors are simply accustomed to a certain way of being. It also suggests that there's room to make your thoughts less automatic and more aligned with the realm of choice. Later you'll read about awareness as one of the keys to bringing these thoughts into your daily experience; but for now, practice the following as you start to eliminate excuses from your habitual mind:

1. Begin noticing what you're thinking as a way to weaken your reliance on the excuse of your subconscious. Repeating these quotes can be helpful: "Every extension of knowledge arises from making conscious the unconscious" (Friedrich Nietzsche), and "The unconscious . . . is dangerous only when our conscious attitude towards it becomes hopelessly false" (from *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, by Carl Jung). Two of the world's greatest teachers state that you can change previously unconscious thinking habits and bring them to your conscious mind. Relying upon the excuse of a subconscious mind is both false and dangerous.

Why not create your version of those quotes as well? Try something like: "I am perfectly capable of reaching into my own mind and changing anything about myself that is supported by my habitual thinking patterns, even if they seem to be automatic at this point in time." Speak your truth in a way that assists your choice to rid yourself of those excuses.

2. Make this a motto for your thoughts: *Do good things, and don't do bad things!* Bad thoughts prompt you to engage in self-limiting behaviors; good thoughts, on the other hand, support your desire and capacity to live at high levels of joy, success, and health.

Here's some advice from ancient China, attributed to a fictional character named Birdsnest:

Long ago in China, there lived a monk who perched in a certain tree every day to meditate. No matter if the tree swayed

in fierce winds and rain, the monk settled himself comfortably, high up in the branches. Because of this, he was nicknamed “Birdsnest” by the village folk nearby.

Many of these villagers passed beneath the monk while hunting or while gathering wood in the forest, and after a time, they grew used to him. Some began to stop and talk of their concerns with Birdsnest. They liked the things he had to say, and soon Birdsnest became known for his kind and thoughtful words.

After some years, the monk’s wise reputation spread throughout the province. Visitors from distant cities hiked to the remote forest for advice. Even the governor of the province decided that he too would like to visit Birdsnest to discuss matters of importance. So one spring morning, the governor set off to find him. After traveling for several days, he at last located Birdsnest’s tree in the dense forest. The monk sat calmly, high in the topmost branches, enjoying the warmth and the birdsong of spring.

Looking up, the governor shouted, “Birdsnest! I am the governor of this province, and I have come a great distance to speak with you! I have a most important question!” The governor waited for a reply but heard only the pleasant sounds of leaves stirring in the breeze. The governor continued, “This is my question: tell me, Birdsnest, what is it that all the wise ones have taught? Can you tell me the most important thing the Buddha ever said?” There was a long pause—just the soft rustle of leaves again.

Finally, the monk called down from the tree: “This is your answer, Governor: Don’t do bad things. Always do good things. That’s what all the Buddhas taught.”

But the governor thought this answer far too simple to have walked two days for! Irritated and annoyed, he stammered, “Don’t do bad things; always do good things! I knew that when I was three years old, monk!”

Looking down at the governor, Birdsnest replied with a wry smile, “Yes, the three-year-old knows it, but the eighty-year-old still finds it very difficult to do!”

## EXCUSES BEGONE!

When it feels difficult to do good things, remember to seek the three-year-old within that Birdsnest referred to. Give yourself the gift of hearing thoughts from a time before conditioning was deeply embedded.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Wayne W. Dyer, Ph.D.**, is an internationally renowned author and speaker in the field of self-development. He is the author of more than 30 books, has created many audio programs and videos, and has appeared on thousands of television and radio shows. His books *Manifest Your Destiny*, *Wisdom of the Ages*, *There's a Spiritual Solution to Every Problem*, and *The New York Times* bestsellers *10 Secrets for Success and Inner Peace*, *The Power of Intention*, *Inspiration*, *Change Your Thoughts—Change Your Life*, and *Excuses Begone!* have all been featured as National Public Television specials.

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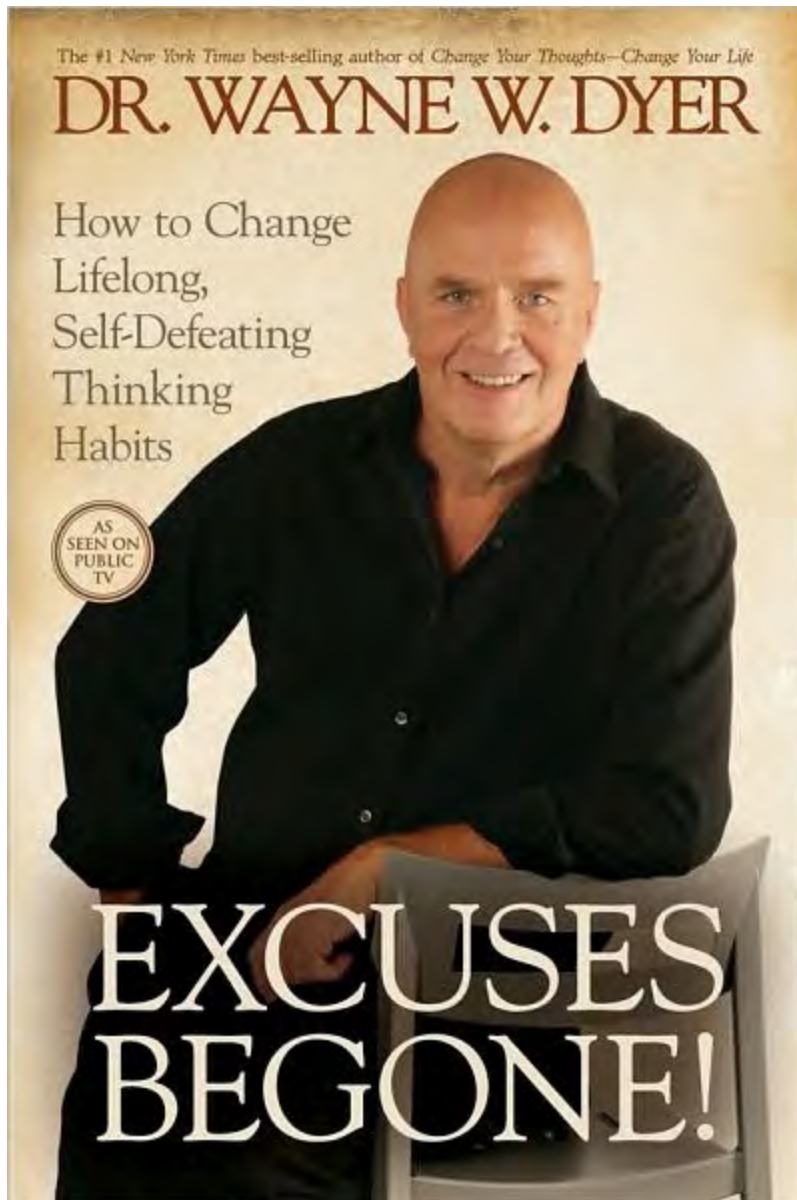
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