

A green plush frog is sitting on a wooden bench. The frog's mouth is open, showing a red interior. A brown beer bottle with a blue label featuring cartoon characters is lying on the ground next to the frog's leg. The background is dark and out of focus.

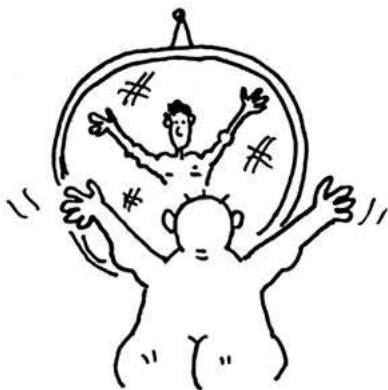
Prince to Frog ... and vice versa

Applied psychological techniques
to change yourself - or others.

Angelos Rodafinos, PhD
Author of Idiots are Invincible

Prince to Frog ... and Vice Versa

Change yourself—or others—using applied psychological techniques



Angelos Rodafinos, PhD

Author *Idiots are Invincible*

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Make sure you read [Idiots are invincible](#)! The fool proof ‘Ro’ method for solving problems, dealing with challenges–and enjoying the process.

Kind Words

Your book has literally changed my life. E. Tzavara

I paid 20 Euros and lost 18 kgs! Hmm, how much did a kilo cost?
A. Toubides

Incredible writing style, with so much humour, that someone may indeed consider changing his/her habits. Check it out. I do not know the author; I was just impressed and wished to express it. Andria's blog

It was a touch in my soul. I would really like to get a Stress-Visa. You are unique. You make me laugh and at the same time, you help me help myself. Thank you for coming into my life! Zoe

Your book has been a pleasant company to me. You helped me see things from a different perspective. X. Alexiou

I wish to congratulate you on your writing style. I have read several related books and I would consider yours in the top rank. J. Anastasiades

I am so enthusiastic about your book! Easy to read, without complicated terms and theories, excellent humour! I found myself laughing while reading it at the beach, I could not stop. Others were watching me, wondering what was happening! Alexis G.

If you could cast a spell on Angelos Rodafinos, what would it do? – Make him write a third book! P. Megremis

Find many more at rodafinos.weebly.com/reader-comments.html

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Special Thanks To

The Author (i.e., Me)

Attention! The 'Idiots' Are ... Out and About

Dedication

To the ‘Winners’ of the American College of Thessaloniki, my students at City College/Sheffield University, and Swinburne Online, and to all those who devoted a significant part of their precious time on earth to read or listen to what I had to say.

Keep growing and enjoying!

Dr Ro

Preface

We are all born beautiful babies, adored by parents and friends, with specifications and potential to become real princes. However, at some stage, in our 30s or 40s—for others even earlier—most of us, instead of ‘princes’ we turn into ‘frogs,’ due to the maladaptive thoughts and habits that we adopt along the way.

How can one revert to a prince again? One solution is to wait for something magical, e.g., the kiss of the princess. The other is to read this book.

The book addresses change-related topics, provides examples and step-by-step guidelines for effective change, and answers questions such as:

- Is change necessary?
- Can we change behaviours? Can we change others?
- Why don’t people change?
- When do people change?
- Changing beliefs, changing actions
- Behaviour change theories
- How long does a new habit take?

As JF Fog sums it up, behaviour changes involve efforts to a) stop or decrease a behaviour, or b) start or increase a behaviour—once, over a time span, or long term.

What about you? Is there something you would like to change?

- Do you text while driving?
- Do you waste too much time on social media or watching the Electronic Income Reducer (TV)?
- Would you like to stop smoking or drinking?
- Would you like to improve your nutrition?

- Do you find it difficult to adhere to your exercise schedule?
- Do you want to get over a relationship?
- Would you like to study more or to complete your assignments on time?
- Are you constantly late to work, school, or appointments?
- Would you like to be able to get up on time?

If you answered yes to one or more of the above statements, you are in good company. Most people would like to change one or more things in their lives—if only they could find a way to change.

If you are not happy with yourself or with the conditions in your life, do not lose hope, because you can change. If you follow certain steps, you can change your thoughts, your emotions, and your actions.

Yet, if you do not change your direction, you are probably going to end up where you are heading (quote made in China). Or as the late Zig Ziglar put it, *‘If you keep on doing what you’ve been doing, you’re going to keep on getting what you’ve been getting.’*

How it all started

Following six years of postgraduate studies in the US and Australia, I returned to Greece in 1993. By then I had already travelled around the globe three times. The cultures, the ideas, and the people I encountered challenged and shifted my way of thinking. Soon after, I started lecturing at tertiary institutions. Out of personal interest and in my spare time, I established a student club. I baptized it *The Winners’ Club* or W.C.

I wanted to share my learnings and my ideas about the many ways of thinking about a given issue. My first audience was a small group of young and curious students. The group grew larger, and the enthusiastic feedback I received motivated me to offer similar training sessions and workshops to business companies. I realised that helping others expand their mind added meaning to *my* life.

Since then, I delivered several thousands of lectures to students, managers, executives, teachers, and general audience, both face-to-face and online. Eventually, I realised how boring attending a lecture or reading textbooks could be! When learning is not fun, motivation, persistence and achievement can suffer dramatically. I have invested a lot of effort to inject humour and fun into my presentations and books, to assist people to learn and grow while enjoying the process. According to their testimonials, this light play-and-learn approach works better than traditional lectures or dry textbooks.

More people kept asking for presentation notes. I decided to put the material together into this book—and then another book, *Idiots Are Invincible*. It took me more than three full years to produce what you are now reading. I first published this book in 2000 in Greek. Since then, it has been translated to Bulgarian and English. It became a popular self-help guide, which assisted many readers to change the conditions in their life—or their attitude about life. I have updated and rewritten the content several times to reflect current themes.

So, Does It Work?

The material of this book is based on an applied psychology and behavioural change course I developed and taught for several years. The course is about stopping or decreasing unwanted (e.g., smoking), and initiating or increasing desirable (e.g., exercise) behaviours, using applied cognitive and behaviour modification techniques. Researchers have tested these techniques with success in educational settings, fitness centres, business organizations, hospitals, mental health institutions, and prisons.

I asked students who enrolled in the course to review their life and examine its fit with their core values. They identified discrepancies between what is really important to them and their daily actions. I then asked them to select a target behaviour, develop a change plan, sign a behavioural contract, and make a public commitment to change. They had to follow up and report their progress during the semester in front of their classmates, which served as a kind of group therapy.

In the years that I taught the course, I saw hundreds of students accomplishing challenging changes, first in their thinking and eventually in their behaviour. According to their testimonials, they maintained a significant portion of these changes until today.



*Dr Ro's program has been an enormous success
for hundreds of students (not this one).*

According to my not-so-modest estimates, I have helped several thousands of my students, readers, and seminar participants accomplish significant positive changes in their lives, or at least change the way they think and deal with their daily challenges. Many of them were kind enough to keep in touch and share their successes with me. Such feedback¹ brings me joy and gives meaning to what I do.

The book can serve as your manual for the accomplishment of changes in your thinking, your behaviour, and your life. Much like my students, you will learn the basic psychological principles and theories for change and then get your hands-on behavioural modification techniques. You will examine your values and your life. You will imagine desired improvements, and design a course of action to achieve your goals. You will then identify potential obstacles, and sign behavioural contracts. Your witness will hold you accountable.

¹ Read some of the success stories at rodafinos.weebly.com/reader-comments.html



Just sign here ...

Who Should Read the Book?

Anyone interested in behaviour change and in improving their lives or in the lives of people around them (which probably includes everyone). In particular, the content should be of interest to:

- general audience, independent of their professional or academic level and education;
- employees or managers in the private and public sector who wish to change things in their organization and/or the people around them;
- parents who are looking for effective ways and ideas to guide their children;
- educators, who, by profession, lead and inspire many others;
- partners who wish to resolve issues and improve their relationship, etc.

Happy changing!

Dr Ro

Author Idiots Are Invincible & Prince to Frog

22. Change in Action: Your Turn!

Man who stand on hill with mouth open will wait long time for roast duck to drop in. –Confucius

We tend to forget, neglect, or resist change. As mentioned earlier, people are experts in inventing ‘reasonable’ excuses. They use them to convince themselves and those around them that the ‘circumstances’ justify violating the rules or breaking their promises. ‘If you only knew what I am going through; besides, one more cigarette won’t do any harm.’

Loopholes

If the program is not concise and carefully designed, people will find all sorts of loopholes. That is why we ask people to record *all* the cigarettes they smoke. The list of drinks includes every alcoholic beverage, beer, or glass of wine. Everything counts; the candies, the two spoons of sugar in the coffee, the honey in the tea, even the ‘innocent’ soft drink that contains 40% sugar.

My students use their ingenuity in finding original excuses when they are late in submitting their work and apply for extensions. The deal is clear from the beginning of the semester. I will not accept delayed work unless they come up with a new excuse, one that I have not heard before. To cover all bases, I publish a list of the ones I collected through the years so that students can check theirs before applying for an extension. This system works in general. I must admit that, from time to time, I happily grant an extension for delayed work and add the new excuse on the list. The creativity of the students is endless!

I know, you are not like my students; right?

I am not so sure. For this reason, I strongly recommend that you complete and sign a behaviour modification form. A written, detailed, and specific contract, apart from guiding you through each step, will formalise the agreement and help you commit and take the program seriously.



*You thought you would get away without paying
notary fees, didn't you?*

In the following pages, you will find two sample contract forms, together with explanations and examples. Your task is to review these and select the one you prefer. Print the form and complete the details under each of the sections detailing the steps you will take to accomplish your goal. Alternatively, you can use the online version you can find on my website, and you and your witness will receive an email copy.

Feel free to invite friends, relatives, and colleagues to join you in setting and pursuing changes for themselves. If they have not read this book, you can coach them during their program. Challenge them with the wheel of life and prompt them to examine how they are doing in areas such as health and fitness, work and finances, relationships, emotion regulation, etc. Would they like to change any bad habits, such as drinking and smoking, or innocent ones, such as pimple popping, nail-biting, etc.?

Enough with helping others, let us get back to work. The first contract form that follows is slightly longer. It draws on the excellent program of Watson and Tharp (1993), as adopted by Weiten and Lloyd (2006) in their equally excellent book. I have used the form for several years with my students in the Applied Psychology course.

My Contract

I understand that 'If I keep doing what I have been doing, I will keep getting what I have been getting.' Thus, I hereby solemnly declare that I will work hard on my goal(s) following the steps below.

The behaviour that concerns me is ...

The situations under which I engage in this behaviour include ...

The people I am around when I give in to this behaviour are ...

The emotional state I am in when I give in to this behaviour is ...

The reason I think I give in to this behaviour is ...

The emotions I have after giving in to this behaviour are ...

The reactions of those around me when I behave this way are ...

The immediate adverse effects of this behaviour are ...

The long-term negative consequences if I continue this behaviour are ...

The immediate benefits if I change this behaviour are ...

The long-term benefits if I change this behaviour are ...

Alternative options to meet the same need include ...

I intend to reduce the frequency of the unwanted behaviour above by doing the following ...

Every time, day, week, month I follow my schedule, I will reward myself with ...

Every time, day, week, or month that I do not follow my schedule, I will punish myself with ...

If I finally achieve my goal, I will ...

My goal is to change this behaviour by ... – ... – 20...

Today, ... – ... – 20... I declare that I will start my plan by taking the first step, which is to ...

The Declarant (signature)

The Witness (signature)

This second contract form by Ziglar is briefer and possibly simpler to use. Here is a blank copy, followed by a set of guidelines and two completed example contracts; one by someone who wanted to lose weight and another by a salesperson who wanted to improve her work performance.

1. GOAL IDENTIFICATION

2. BENEFITS OF ACHIEVING THIS GOAL
3. OBSTACLES I NEED TO OVERCOME TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL
4. SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE NEEDED TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL
5. WHO CAN HELP ME?
6. ACTION PLAN
7. REWARDS/PUNISHMENTS
8. ACHIEVEMENT DEADLINE
..... /..... /.....
The undersigned – The witness
(Signatures)

Guidelines

The form that follows includes brief instructions and examples for each of the eight steps, which will remind you what kind of information you should enter in each one.

1. GOAL IDENTIFICATION
What do I wish to have, do, or become? E.g., ‘To get better at my job.’ That is too generic as a goal. You need to define ‘better,’ and make your goal specific, measurable, and achievable. You can improve required skills, get organised, stop multi-tasking, improve your relationships with colleagues, listen better, etc.

2. BENEFITS OF ACHIEVING THIS GOAL
Am I willing to invest the time and effort required to achieve this goal? Why? What will I gain? How will achieving this goal help me have, do, or become what I want?
3. OBSTACLES I NEED TO OVERCOME TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL
E.g., lack of energy, time, money, knowledge, control, infrastructure, reactions by colleagues. What can I do to deal with these obstacles, if they do materialise? How will I respond?
4. SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE NEEDED TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL
What do I need to learn and practice? Communication, IT, or time management skills.
5. WHO CAN HELP ME?
E.g., peers, colleagues, superiors, family and relatives, associations, teams.
6. ACTION PLAN
a. I will ... b. I will ... c. I will ...
7. REWARDS/PUNISHMENTS
Each time, day, or week that I follow my plan, I will reward myself with ... When I do not follow through, I will punish myself by ...
8. ACHIEVEMENT DEADLINE
..... /..... /.....
The undersigned - The witness
(Signatures)

Example A: Weight Loss

This challenge sounds familiar to most of us. Review the example below, and then draw your plan, tailoring it to your needs.

1. GOAL IDENTIFICATION
Lose 5 kg and become 68 kg, with 80 cm waist. (Is the goal specific, measurable, realistic?)

2. BENEFITS OF ACHIEVING THIS GOAL
Energy and vitality, improved appearance, increased productivity, fewer illnesses, better mood, quality of life, and self-esteem.
3. OBSTACLES I NEED TO OVERCOME TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL
My love for sweets, pizzas, and hamburgers, my hectic work schedule and fatigue, poor eating and exercise habits, low self-control, bad company.
4. SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE NEEDED TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL
Knowledge about nutrition, physical exercise, behaviour change theories.
5. WHO CAN HELP ME?
E.g., a trainer, a ‘buddy,’ a cook or housekeeper, a dietician, a psychologist, Dr Ro, Mr Google and his online groups, societies, and communities.
6. ACTION PLAN
a. I will go for a 30’ jog every Mon-Wed-Fri, at 7 am. b. I will eat smarter and focus on salads, nutritious snacks, low-fat products—never after 8.00 pm. I will chew slowly, place the fork on the other side of the plate after each bite, and eat only at the table. c. I will post a photo of ‘gorgeous me’ in a swimsuit on the refrigerator door. Before opening the fridge, I will glance at the picture and ask myself, is this what I want to look alike?
7. REWARDS/PUNISHMENTS
Each day/week I follow through, I will reward myself with ...
When I do not follow through, I will punish myself by ...
8. ACHIEVEMENT DEADLINE
..... /..... /.....
The undersigned - The witness
(Signatures)



Hey gorgeous!

Example B: Improving Sales

1. GOAL IDENTIFICATION
Ten sales per week; 20% success rate.
2. BENEFITS OF ACHIEVING THIS GOAL
Improved finances, mood, and relationships, personal satisfaction, recognition, feeling of success, less stress.
3. OBSTACLES I NEED TO OVERCOME TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL
Lack of time, low administrative support, poor customer service, medium quality of products, cost of marketing and advertising.
4. SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE NEEDED TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL
Further training in prospecting and cold calling, understanding of the competition, knowledge on building and managing a sales team, handling objections, closing the sale skills, motivation, enthusiasm.
5. WHO CAN HELP ME
The telemarketing and customer service teams, my manager, my peers/friends, a coach, a librarian, online sales experts.
6. ACTION PLAN
I will make 15 cold calls, and three sales presentations per day, develop a sales team, organise weekly training sessions for all staff.
7. REWARDS/PUNISHMENTS

Each day/week I follow through, I will reward myself with ...
When I do not follow through, I will punish myself by ...
8. ACHIEVEMENT DEADLINE
..... /..... /.....
The undersigned - The witness
(Signatures)

Test: Consumerism

Sarah recently acquired her first credit card. With the plastic card in her wallet, she feels empowered as she can easily purchase anything she wants, which makes it hard to constrain her consumerism mania. She starts buying luxurious accessories, most of which are unneeded. The invoice arrives at the end of the month; her husband must pay for it. The couple starts fighting, and the relationship deteriorates.

Sarah's friends organised a relatively inexpensive sailing weekend to the islands. She would love to join, but it seems she will not have the money required. Can you help Sarah change her spending behaviour, using the principles of behaviour modification we discussed? What steps do you suggest she takes?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Compare your answers with the recommendations listed in the footnote below.²

Reminders

When you have prepared your contract, doublecheck whether you followed the instructions correctly and whether your goal is in line with the principles we have described.

When drafting their program, people can make seemingly small but significant errors in one or more of the eight steps of the contract. Common ones include:

1. People tend to set multiple goals, try to do too much in a short time, or their goals are not personal, measurable, and specific. They do not tailor their plan to their needs. They forget to set short-term goals, milestones, and checkpoints to ensure the program is working and make the appropriate adjustments if needed.
2. They do not establish a baseline so that they can assess their progress during the process.
3. They do not prepare well enough to anticipate and deal with potential obstacles, glitches, and setbacks. As a result, they give up and quit in the first instance they violate the program. Yet, the cigarette they smoked, or the cake they ate, do not signal the end of the program. We should all expect errors and view them as a sign to

² Goal: control spending money with the credit card. Baseline data: amount spent per month. Benefits: improved finances, sense of self-control, less marital conflict, sailing trip. Obstacles: love of shopping, the sense of satisfaction after each purchase. Skills/knowledge needed: information regarding the interest cost, managing your finances, and compulsive behaviour. Who can help: spouse, friends, an accountant? Action plan: change of daily route to avoid favourite shops, behavioural contract with husband or friends, weekly rewards before the sailing trip, alternative activity to replace shopping, diary-keeping (Quinn, 1995).

get back on track or to check if something in the program needs improvement.

4. They do not acquire sufficient knowledge and information about the behaviour they want to change.

5. They fail to identify and enlist the right support personnel, or they hang around the wrong crowd. They want to change their habits and behaviour, but they fail to persuade their family, partners, or peers to assist them. E.g., by buying, cooking, and eating healthy meals. They fail to find buddies who will join them at the library, push them to go to the gym when they are feeling tired, and pull them away from late dinners and drinks in Greek tavernas.

6. Their plan is not detailed and specific enough, or they use the wrong approach. We often get trapped, like a fly in a room who keeps banging on the window glass. Although we try hard, we cannot find the way out, which is usually one meter away. If you get caught up in such a predicament, take a step back, detach yourself from the situation, and take a fresh look. Time to change your approach, what you do, or how you do it. If what you have done with your program has not brought the desired results, you should probably re-examine your choices and change your strategy. Because if you continue to do what you did until today, you will inevitably continue to get what you have been getting. Ask, listen, and learn from others. Imitate those who have succeeded in the field you are interested.

7. The reward or punishment is not appropriate. Penalties are not strong enough, or the intervals between the behaviour and the reward or the punishment are excessive. For instance, you have scheduled rewards at the end of each month or the end of the program only. Participants have not found a partner to administer the agreed rewards and penalties. Or they cheat or reward themselves before completing the program.

8. The duration of the project is too short or too long.

For these reasons, it is highly desirable to review the program with the help of a specialist (e.g., behaviour change specialist, counsellor, dietitian, coach, trainer), and pilot-test it for a few days or a week before you embark upon it.

Now, repeat after me:

‘Because I know that nothing is going to change if I do not change my thoughts and behaviour, I will post this contract in a prominent place—and make sure I will follow through!’

Add your signature (the real one, OK?), get your witness to sign it, and start today—not on Monday!

Ideas never work ... unless you do!

Progress Check

Goals should be flexible. A couple of weeks within the program, you should check the schedule, evaluate your progress, and make the appropriate adjustments, if needed.

Even if you do not accomplish your goal by the end of your program, you can always go back and re-evaluate all steps. Using your newly acquired experience and wisdom, examine what worked and what did not, and design a new, improved and possibly more realistic program. If the goal is significant to you, you should not quit—which is the subject of the following chapter.

The Author (i.e., Me)



Dr Ro

I help others change their reality or manage their perceptions of reality, while they are having fun in the process—and, no ... I am not a drug dealer! I am a Behaviour Change Specialist, an Author, and a Keynote speaker.

I have lectured in general, applied, social, and work psychology at several Universities, and have been Program Director Social Sciences at Swinburne University, and Head of the Department of Psychology at City College, International Faculty of the University of Sheffield for nearly a decade. I have published numerous articles in academic journals and popular magazines, while I have appeared on several TV and radio shows. My first book *Prince to Frog ... and Vice Versa! Applied Psychological Techniques to Improve Yourself—or Others* has become a popular reading guide for people of all ages and backgrounds. My second book *Idiots Are Invincible* deals with stress and problem-solving.

Today I (probably) live in Melbourne or Thessaloniki and work online.

Training and Consulting

A professional speaker and consultant for organizations and individuals, Dr Rodafinos presents numerous seminars and workshops on topics related to change, stress and time management, motivation, communication, persuasion and negotiation, management, team building and cohesion, public relations, success and happiness, exercise, nutrition, etc.

Kind Words from Workshop Participants

The worst part of the seminar was ... the break! –Nikos Anthopoulos

I really believe business around the world need to hear a voice of calm, positive, and realistic opportunities during tough economic times. I was most impressed with your positive and enthusiastic presentation style. –Bill Lewis, President Extension Management Inc., USA

Congratulations on the presentation you delivered in Sheraton Sofia on Wednesday! It was exact, having in mind the audience, with humour, positive and easy-to-get message. –Draga Paskova, Human Resources Manager at Interamerican, Bulgaria

Today I thanked God for giving me the courage to get up and come to your seminar. I want to thank you as well for reminding us of the simple but fundamental truths in life. –Chris Vovori

A wonderful presentation. We wish it were more than six hours! I was not tired at all. It was interesting with lots of variety. –Panos Rogaris, Managing Director, Hellenic Telecommunication Insurance Co.

I regret that you are not in Sydney, because if you were here, maybe I could attend some of your lectures. They were one of the most interesting during the whole ExecMBA program of City College, Sheffield. –Marietta Kostadinova, MBA

Contact Details³

To organize a book show, a lecture, or a workshop for your company, club, association, high school, etc., view Dr Ro's

³ Experience has taught me that people change addresses and phones in just the time you happen to need them. If you happen to need me, I will probably have to change address and phone (to confirm my prediction above). So, if you cannot contact me at the above addresses, I suggest you do a quick Google search: 'Rodafinos and home page or contact.'

schedule, to connect with him online, or to download free eBooks and presentations, visit

the official site www.rodafinos.weebly.com

Facebook www.facebook.com/rodafinos

Or contact Dr Ro via email: arodafinos@gmail.com

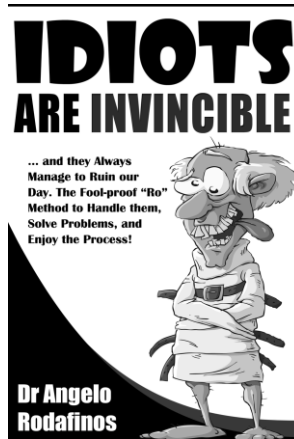
or SKYPE: Rodafinos

Clients

Dr Rodafinos' [list of clients](#) includes companies, educational institutions, fitness, health centres, etc.



Attention! The ‘Idiots’ Are ... Out and About!



Idiots are invincible: The fool-proof ‘Ro’ method to deal with stress, solve problems, and enjoy the process!

SUMMARY: The book helps readers from all walks of life who want the best information on dealing with stress and solving problems, to improve their life or the way they perceive it. It is filled with practical advice and examples presented with a large dose of humour. PS: Who are the idiots? The others, of course! Managers, colleagues, teachers, drivers, friends, spouses, mothers-in-law etc.

MORE: A ‘normal’ life is not always a ‘happy’ life! ‘...grant me the courage to change the things that I can change, the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference between the two,’ is a popular motto by Alcoholics Anonymous. Most of us fail in the third part, as we hopelessly try to change things that are not amenable to change or unworthy of our time and energy.

Dealing effectively with either major life events or daily stressors requires the ability to maintain composure, take a time-out and ‘talk sense’ to oneself. Several applied psychological techniques,

combined with examples and exercises assist the reader to make positive changes towards a) either solving problems or b) altering the way s/he sees the situations.

The author presents the ‘Ro Method,’ a simple but effective problem-solving process, and moves on to describe the day of ‘Don Stressote,’ a modern Don Quichote de la Mancha and Ro graduate, who attempts to apply the theory in everyday life situations.

www.rodafinos.weebly.com

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