

Peter Bregman

Bestselling Author of *18 Minutes*

Howie Jacobson, PhD

**You
Can
Change
Other
People**

**The Four Steps to Help Your
Colleagues, Employees—Even Family—
Up Their Game**

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

PETER BREGMAN

HOWIE JACOBSON

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Peter Bregman

Bestselling Author of *18 minutes*

Howie Jacobson, PhD

You Can Change Other People

**The Four Steps to Help Your
Colleagues, Employees—Even Family
—Up Their Game**

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We dedicate this book to the memory of our fathers:

Gerry Bregman 13 December 1931-23 April 2020

Joel R. Jacobson 30 July 1918-26 December 1989

Peter: Papa, every page in this book is inspired by the gentle, sweet way you always brought out the best in people.

Howie: Dad, you showed me how to be a warrior for positive change and a steadfast champion of the underdog.

FOREWORD

As one of the founders of the field of business coaching and an executive coach for more than 40 years, my mission has been simple: to help great leaders get even better through positive, lasting behavioral change. It's been an incredibly rewarding career. I've coached CEOs at organizations like Ford, the World Bank, Best Buy, Target, the Girl Scouts, and many others. I get paid very well; I work with amazing people; I contribute to positive change in the world.

But perhaps my biggest thrill is when I help someone “against the odds”—someone whose colleagues and family members may have given up hope that they will ever change—because, while the mission is easy to understand, the practice of changing is infinitely harder.

Think about all the ways you've attempted to enact change in your own life: losing weight, spending more time with family, listening better, exercising more often, drinking more water, staying focused on long-term goals. How many of these goals have become permanent?

From my research with leaders, clients, and colleagues, the typical answer is “None.” There is a period of high motivation and through sheer force of will, you'll remain conscientious on drinking your water, mustering the energy to go to the gym all week, or making an effort to listen intently during conversations.

Then life takes over. You get busy, unexpected events happen, and you justify all the reasons you can't remain focused on your goals this week. Months later, your gym attendance is inconsistent at best, and no one thinks you've improved your listening.

Worse yet than having failed at making these changes for your own life, how often have you tried to change the behavior of a parent, child, friend, partner, spouse, colleague, or employee? How did that go for you?

The sentence beginning “If only you just ...” does not normally lead to a productive conversation around positive changes and strategies to help the person you care about do things differently. In fact, more often than not, it results in the person becoming instantly defensive, angry, and resentful!

And yet with my coaching tools and skills and mindsets at the ready, miracles do happen! My clients shift longstanding patterns of self-sabotage. They adopt and maintain positive new behaviors that help them achieve their ambitions and aspirations.

Words cannot describe how meaningful, how satisfying, and how joyful this work is. You just have to experience it for yourself.

What I can put in words, however, is how absolutely *possible* it is. Yes, you CAN change other people. I do it all the time. So do Peter and Howie.

And the book you're holding in your hands right now will give you everything you need to master the process.

Because it is a process. It's methodical, not magical or manipulative. It doesn't take any particular personality trait other than a sincere desire to help and the humility and discipline to learn something new and practice it diligently.

In fact, the principles in this book underpin what I and other top coaches do to help our successful clients get even better. What Peter and Howie have done in these pages makes what we do accessible to you, to use at work, at home, and anywhere you want to help those you care about achieve their potential. They've taken what most people

consider to be a frustrating, ambiguous process and formulated the four key steps to change—for both yourself and others.

Working with Peter for many years, it's been our business to change other people's behaviors in ways that get noticed by the people around them. I have been ranked as the #1 executive coach in the world for many years, and Peter is my successor to that title. His expert knowledge is evident from the way he's laid out the methodology for leading people to change without throwing up those usual blocks of frustration and resentment. These steps guide you to be the kind of leader who encourages and builds their team to get the best results from them, empowering these individuals to grow and improve.

Read on and learn how to become a better leader, partner, parent, and friend today. You can start having the same impact on your world as the most sought-after coaches have in theirs.

Life is good.

—Marshall Goldsmith
New York Times #1 Bestselling Author of *Triggers*,
Mojo, and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

PART ONE
A NEW WAY TO HELP
PEOPLE (BECAUSE THE
OLD WAYS DON'T WORK)

CHAPTER 1

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO CHANGE OTHER PEOPLE: BRIAN'S \$170,000,000 TURNAROUND

When my client Brian Gaffney stepped into the role of CEO of Allianz Global Distributors, a financial services company with over \$90 billion in assets, the company was losing \$30 million a year. Not only was Allianz struggling, but the entire industry was in turmoil (many other asset management companies were closing their doors) and morale was low.

“My team is made up of incredibly talented people,” Brian told me a short while after assuming the role. “But most of them have issues that are getting in the way of their effectiveness. One is rubbing people the wrong way by clumsy communications. Another isn't being clear with direct reports and isn't managing people effectively. A third needs to be more proactive; he isn't having hard conversations that need to happen. A fourth is brilliant but sloppy, and several people are commenting on the risk to his credibility.”

So we went to work. And under Brian's leadership, a declining company made a complete turnaround. In the period that we worked together, he turned that \$30 million loss into an annual profit of \$140 million.

Here's what's really important about this story: Brian's turnaround at Allianz happened with the same leadership team that had been losing \$30 million a year.

In other words, in a few short years, under Brian's leadership, the same people who were struggling with all

those issues—the people who were leading the company to a damaging, unsustainable loss—*changed*.

And it was Brian who helped them change. By doing and saying specific things. Things that moved strong-willed individuals in positive, productive ways. Things that had a business-saving impact on revenue and profitability.

What Brian did was not magic. Neither was it the product of Brian's charisma or powers of persuasion. It was straightforward, methodical, and replicable. And you can do it too, in your world.

What you need is a process.

CAN YOU REALLY CHANGE OTHER PEOPLE?

You can't change other people; you can only change yourself. It's a truism.

Only it's not true.

I¹ know this—with 100 percent certainty—because it's my job to change other people. As an executive coach for CEOs and senior leaders in organizations of all sizes, my success depends on it.

Helping others change and improve when it's hard and when they may not want to (at first) can look and feel like magic, but it's not. It's a skill—a set of repeatable steps—that I've studied, developed, and honed over 30 years of practice. And it's teachable because I've taught it to people who have become some of the best coaches in the world.

By the time you finish this book, you'll have that skill too, which is important, because we all *need* the skill. No matter your role at work and in life, your success is dependent, at least in part, on the success of those around

you. In many situations, it would be great for *you* if people changed for the better.

Just about all of the time, though, it would be better for *them* too: an employee who's more capable than they realize, who could be taking on bigger projects. A bright colleague who, if only they spoke up and shared their perspective, could have a positive impact on the team and, consequently, their success in the company. A boss whose visionary strategy would finally get traction if they focused more, resisting the distraction of bright, shiny objects.

For many of us, helping people change is not just a nice-to-have skill; it's a requirement. If you're a leader or manager in an organization, it's your job to change others: to transform squabbling coworkers into a capable team. To turn excuse-makers into responsibility-takers. To help high-potential contributors overcome dysfunctional habits and achieve their potential.

Changing others is perhaps the most important capability a leader can develop.

And yet it's a capability that most people lack. We avoid difficult conversations or handle them in ways that make things worse. We generate resistance rather than change. We point out how we want people to improve, but we lack the skills to get them there. We try to help and end up doing their work for them, making them dependent on us, when we should be helping them grow their independent capability. When emotions run high, we can even damage those relationships.

We feel stuck between a rock and a hard place: caring too much to keep our mouths shut, yet regretting the ineffective and hurtful things we say.

If only there were a third option.

There is. In this book, I will show you exactly why what you've been doing hasn't been working, and I will teach you what to do instead.

I'll share my process, which I call the **Four Steps**. I have yet to find a more elegant, kind, and effective method for helping people make the changes they want and need to make in their work and their lives.

Rather than inviting resistance, the Four Steps generate ownership. Rather than fostering dependence, they create independent capability. Rather than strain the relationship between you and the person you're helping, the Four Steps grow and deepen your relationships.

The ability to help other people change, even when they've been stuck for years, and even when they don't believe they can, is a superpower. Up until now, this superpower has been an esoteric skill set, honed and used by some of the world's most effective coaches. In this book, I'm going to deconstruct that superpower so you can practice and master it.

Using the Four Steps, I helped one CEO of a high-tech company grow revenue from \$350 million to over a billion as its stock price soared from \$19 to \$107. At another company, the senior team began working together, helping rather than criticizing each other, and their stock price tripled in a year. When leaders skillfully help each other—and the people around them—up their game, exceptional results follow.

When I teach the Four Steps to CEOs and their leadership teams, the positive results cascade throughout the organization, generating independently capable teams that perform at much higher levels than before. People work together better and accept more accountability. People own

their mistakes and failures, set and achieve higher goals, and resist the temptation of behaviors that get in the way.

Over years of doing this work, I discovered something wonderful: The C-suite leaders I work with reported that not only are they more effective at their jobs, and not only are their employees stepping up and becoming leaders in their own right, but their personal lives are easier and more satisfying as well. They stopped fighting with, and micromanaging, their kids. They had more empowering conversations with their spouses. And they found themselves helping others dig out of ruts that were sometimes decades in the making.

My coauthor, Howie, in addition to his work with business clients, also uses the Four Steps to help people change destructive lifelong habits and regain their health. While doctors acknowledge that lifestyle can be as powerful as drugs and surgery, most don't offer this option to patients in the belief that they won't comply. Yet Howie's clients change their lifestyles all the time. One became a competitive triathlete, losing sixty pounds in the process. Another reversed his type 2 diabetes and reduced his blood pressure meds by 75 percent through dietary changes, daily exercise, and meditation practice. A third finally got off the binge/diet/binge cycle, for the first time in her life maintaining a healthy weight free “from the impending doom of relapse.”

Let's banish the pain that comes from trying to change others in frustrated, angry ways—complaining, attacking, and manipulating them to get them to act differently. Those tactics cause tremendous damage. They don't feel good to anyone involved. And they *don't* work.

The Four Steps *do* work. And they heal relationships as people become allies instead of enemies, choosing skillful support over clumsy, destructive criticism.

Once you begin using the Four Steps, your world will feel lighter. You'll be happier. The people around you will be happier. You'll all get more done.

I wrote this book because that's the world I want to live in. A world where we build ownership, capability, and courage all around us. Where, rather than lashing out as annoyed critics, we reach out as allies. A world where we help raise people up to be the best they can be. And where they make us better people in return.

I'm grateful that you're taking the time to read this book. Thank you.

A TOUR OF THE BOOK

Before you start using the Four Steps, it's important to understand why they work, which I'll cover in [Part One](#).

PART ONE: A NEW WAY TO HELP PEOPLE (BECAUSE THE OLD WAYS DON'T WORK)

First, I'll debunk the myth that people resist change and explain why so many of our efforts to change others fail ([Chapter 2](#)).

Then I'll introduce you to the four powers that a person needs in order to change: ownership, independent capability, emotional courage, and future-proofing ([Chapters 3-6](#)).

If someone doesn't change, they are missing at least one of these powers.

And when you use the Four Steps to help someone change, what you're really doing is igniting these powers in them so they change themselves. In [Part Two](#), I'll teach you to do just that.

PART TWO: THE FOUR STEPS

This is the practical “how-to” portion of the book. To illustrate the Four Steps, we'll follow one scenario all the way from the initial problem to a detailed plan of action. You'll listen in on the conversation at the beginning of each step. Then we'll debrief that step in the following chapters, exploring underlying principles, dos and don'ts, and exceptions.

Here's a brief description of each step:

Step 1: Shift from Critic to Ally ([Chapters 7-13](#))

This is the magic move. It gets you to the place where your conversation partner² agrees to receive your help. You'll learn how to initiate conversations that help others change. Even better, you'll learn to recognize and capitalize on “silver platter” opportunities, times when people come to you already open to you helping them change—everyday opportunities that are easy to spot once you know what to look for. Start with this step and you'll move quickly past any potential resistance, well positioned as a trusted guide to help your partner change.

Step 2: Identify an Energizing Outcome ([Chapters 14-17](#)) This step shifts your partner from focusing on the problem to focusing on the outcome they want. It's a deceptively simple reorientation that moves people from frustration to excitement. For many years I didn't think this was such a big deal, but my clients tell me focusing on the desired outcome is not an obvious thing to do when they're mired in a difficult situation. It reliably gives them the right focus, exposing new and creative ways forward.

Step 3: Find the Hidden Opportunity ([Chapters 18-22](#)) In this step you return to the problem, but

now you use it as an opportunity to achieve the outcome in a creative or unexpected way. Here's where you can help people change so that they not only get out of the mess they're in, but emerge at a whole new level of functioning.

Step 4: Create a Level-10 Plan ([Chapters 23-27](#))

In this final step you help your partner generate, refine, and commit to a specific action plan to achieve their energizing outcome. You're going for a "Level-10" plan, where they know exactly what they're going to do and are confident they can do it. This final step turns insight into action and intentions into impact.

Those are the Four Steps: Ally, Outcome, Opportunity, Plan. If you're into mnemonics, think of "Ally-OOP," which, appropriately, sounds like the basketball pass that sets your teammate up for a slam dunk.

The companion website to this book (BregmanPartners.com/change) shares sample "partner dialogues" that demonstrate the Four Steps in different contexts. You'll find typical Four-Step conversations around hard issues that vary by domain (work and personal), power dynamic (supervisor/employee, spouses, parent/child, friends), and topic (work performance, health, relationship, personal goals). Before you have your first Four-Step conversation with a partner, read the sample dialogue that is most similar to the situation. It will help you find the right words to say and what kinds of responses you might expect from your partner.

Although I share important principles about personal change, especially in the first few chapters, this is not a conceptual book. *You Can Change Other People* is a user's manual, meant to be as practical as possible.