



so let's go **RUNNING...**



The monthly magazine, written by runners for runners.

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WINNING STRATEGIES – Workbook (Midgie Thompson)

Reviewed by Michaela Halse

Life is a journey. Every little element of life is a journey, from putting the kettle on to make a cup of tea, putting the tea bag in the cup, waiting for the kettle to boil and then pouring the boiling water into your mug, and then adding milk and sugar (to taste), to the larger life events such as buying a house, or having a baby, or choosing your child's school. Every action starts with a decision (conscious or not) to begin a process and finishes with the end result, whatever that may be.

Some of these processes are so natural to us that we do them without thinking and they comprise tiny elements of our day, such as making a cup of tea, or having a shower, or making the bed. Others are life changing and we carry them out very consciously because their outcome will have a massive impact on our lives.

So, what would it be like to live a life without any goals or aspirations? To aimlessly drift? Sometimes it's good for us to do this, and we take holidays to get away from the pressure of everyday life, to relieve ourselves from the stress of deadlines and the expectations on us to achieve and produce a tangible end result to whatever it is we are working on, whether that's a self-imposed target, or something demanded of us by others, such as our boss, or our parents or some other authority.



Holidays are great and we all need a break. But to live a life totally without structure, without goals, without aspirations, without routine and without expectations is unrealistic, unhealthy and ultimately impossible.

So, how do we focus on our goals? How do we go from thinking about something we want to achieve, to actually achieving it? Making a cup of tea is easy. We've all done it a thousand times and we do it without thinking about it. But what if it's something much, much bigger? Like buying a house, having a baby, getting married, losing a lot of weight, or taking up running as a complete beginner, or - as a very less than average runner (as I would describe myself) perhaps planning to run a marathon, or even to motivate myself just to turn up at the Cyclopark for 'Cyclorun' every Sunday morning!

Midgie Thompson describes her own journey from being very ill with a glandular fever type illness to running a marathon. You can't run a marathon unless you believe in yourself. Believing in yourself is something we sometimes all struggle with. We don't believe we're good enough, or strong enough, or smart enough, or tall enough, or thin enough, or fit enough, or pretty enough, or rich enough STOP!! All this negativity just serves to drain us of our energy and sap our self-confidence.

Midgie goes on to describe her strategy which is broken into four components:

- Goals and motivation
- Values and beliefs
- Self-management
- Life balance

Goals and motivation...

To want to do something, you have to be motivated. To be motivated without a goal though is to be a bit like a balloon you've blown up and then let go, it whizzes around aimlessly burning energy and releasing hot air!! So ask yourself, what do you want to do, what is your goal? It could be something huge in which case its achievement could seem absolutely unattainable but Midgie's smart strategy allows you to tackle this in small, more easily absorbed, stages.

She challenges the reader to write down at least 100 things you dream about being, doing and having. One hundred things is a lot of things! So let's assume you can do that, and then out of that list, you choose ONE to pursue as a goal. Now goal and target setting is all pretty trendy at the moment and Midgie is not afraid to jump on

that bandwagon. There's a series of acronyms to help you define your goals and it's helpful to take some time to think about these and write down your thoughts as you do so.

So, goals should be SMART, PURE and CLEAR. That is:

Specific/**S**imple – What do you want to achieve?

Milestones/**M**easurable – How will you measure your progress/success?

Achievable/**A**ttainable – Do you have the resources necessary or can you get them?

Results/**R**ealistic – Is your goal realistic and in line with your other priorities?

Timing – What's the timescale?

Positive – Stay positive! Imagine yourself having already achieved your goal. How do you feel?

Understood/**U**nder your control – Do you need any one else's help?

Relevant/**R**ight size – Is it manageable and relevant for what you want to do?

Ethical/**E**cological – What effect will it have on others once achieved? Any unintended consequences?

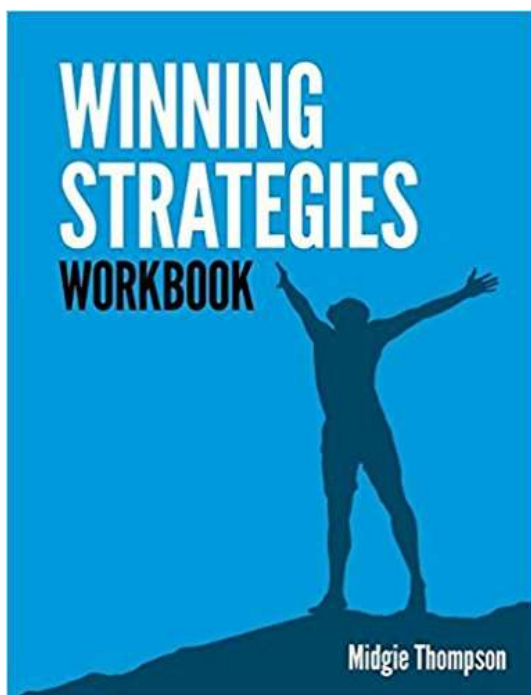
Challenging/**C**orroborative – It needs to be challenging or it's pointless.

Limited/**L**egal – It should be limited in scope and duration, and legal.

Emotional – You should make an emotional connection with your goal. Feel the passion!

Appreciable/**A**ppropriate – Break large goals down into smaller parts so they can be achieved more easily.

Refinable/**R**ecorded – Refine and modify your goals if you need to. Write down your action, progress and reviews.



Midgie gives the reader a series of exercises to do in relation to goal setting. Pick a few simple ones to begin with until you feel comfortable with the formula and then you can apply it to the goal of your dreams!

Values and Beliefs...

Midgie's next step is to help the reader identify his or her values and beliefs related to his or her goal. Our values are the core of what we do and what is important to us. Our values dictate our thoughts, our behaviour, what we say and the impact and effect that our words and actions have on other people around us.

Midgie takes us on a journey to investigate where our values come from. What's really important to YOU? Our values are something we are not born with. We learn them, we are taught them, we follow by example and develop our own set of values.

Our values are a sort of moral compass. Someone who commits a crime of burglary for example will not care about the impact that their behaviour has on other people. Other people wouldn't dream of even stealing a paperclip! Values are about strength of character, they are about how we behave around people, to

other people and in reaction to other people, but they are also intrinsically about how we behave when we are alone. Integrity is at the root of all values.

Midgie gives the reader a list of common core values and asks the reader to identify 10 which you may choose as your highest priority. Take some time to think about this. Write down your thoughts and ideas about how your behaviour affects others, but can also motivate you.

A lot of space in this workbook is dedicated to looking at our own personal standards, our beliefs and ideals. If we believe we can't do something, then we won't be able to do it. Midgie uses a strategy used in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy about changing thought processes. Our thoughts become our actions. If you are scared to do something, the chances are you won't do it. But WHY are you scared? These are the thoughts Midgie asks the reader to look at. What truth is there in our certainty that we might fail at something? What evidence is there? We are challenged to look at these automatic thought processes, and examine them – why are we having these thoughts? Let's turn them around. Instead of automatically assuming that you can't do something, like a running a 10k for example, because your knee will give out, you'll come last, you'll get blisters, you're worried about the toilet arrangements on the course, you haven't got time to train let's turn that around into something more positive. Could the opposite in fact actually be true? Turn your negative statement into a positive one. OK, I have a dodgy knee but what could I do to help myself manage that condition? I'll take blister plasters with me and make

sure the trainers I wear are worn in. I'll wear proper socks. I'll minimise my chances of blisters. Who cares if you come last? Think of all the people who are NOT doing the 10k, and didn't even try.

Believe you can do it, challenge your confidence issues and trust yourself! There is a delightful quote in this part of the book by E. E. Cummings...

“Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight, or any experience that reveals the human spirit”.

Could you be bold enough to start to follow your dreams?

Self-Management...

We all live busy lives. We are juggling priorities at home, work, school, college. Time management is about identifying what you have to do, knowing what your priorities are and focusing on taking the necessary action. It's a lot easier written down than done! Midgie asks the reader to list all the activities you might do on a regular basis and the time you spend on each, and then prioritise them from most important to least important.

She goes on to ask us to look at our weekly timetable and to build a structure around it to outline what you are going to do and when rather than aimlessly drifting from task to task, and half completing one before starting another.

Another element of self-management is our emotional well-being. We all know about mental health and how a health mind equals a healthy body. Midgie looks at *personal* energy. This is your essence, your character, your mind, your soul. When you're with someone who is very negative, how does it make you feel? Do you feel drained of energy? When you're with someone who is happy and radiant, how do you feel then? Do you feel energised and motivated?

Midgie gives the reader a series of exercises to do which help you to identify situations and people which drain your energy, and then how to deal with that. Can you avoid them? Can you get help in some situations? Could you take a different approach?

Life Balance...

Life balance is exactly what it says it is on the tin. We all know what it is but how do we achieve it? Midgie gives us a Wheel of Life template to complete. The Wheel of Life allows us to break down the components that make up our life balance. Life balance is about what defines you and what is important to you. It's about how satisfied you are with each element of your life and how things could be better or different, and what changes we could make to achieve that. And then HOW we make those changes.

The biggest section of this workbook looks at mental preparation and how you can develop techniques to change your performances by changing your thinking, your attitude and ultimately your actions. Self-confidence is something we all have in varying degrees and it gets knocked by our negative life experiences. These negative experiences then impact upon our thought processes and we believe that because we failed once, we will fail again. Not true! We can succeed at whatever we put our minds to. We just have to believe that we can do it.

Midgie gives the reader a series of exercises which look at strengthening your confidence, believing in yourself, feeling positive about yourself and how you need to remember how amazing you actually are. She helps the reader to create an “anchor for confidence”. In this example, she uses the anchor as the connection between a trigger and a response. Anchoring is when our feelings and emotions are strongly associated with a sight, sound, words, gestures, tastes and smells.

If I were to go through the whole workbook, it would take up the whole of this magazine, but I hope I've managed to give you a flavour of what it's about and how you can use it to enhance your confidence and change your thought processes. You should take some time go through in detail the exercises Midgie has given and really challenge yourself to think about them. It won't be easy- but anything worth doing isn't easy, and the outcome can only be positive. Remember though, it's a journey and it's a challenging one. Remember that you are YOU and don't compare yourself to anyone else. And something else, when preparing for a big physical event, we concentrate so much on our physical fitness and ability that we sometimes overlook the fitness and aptitude of our minds, and the performance of our minds is as, if not more important, than our physical ability. With strong mental preparation, we can influence the physical performance of our bodies in anything and everything we do, from a one hour gym class to a 26.2 mile marathon. This workbook gives you the tools to build the ability and skills to establish routines, stay focused on your goal and mute any negativity, whilst at the same time giving you the power to know how to turn any negative self-talk into positive, supportive comments.

“One day you will wake up and there won't be any more time to do the things you've always wanted. Do it now”.