

Unlock the 3 Secrets of Attentional Leadership® to Eliminate the Noise, Find Your Flow, and Unleash Your Genius



In the new world of work and life, mastering yourself and leading others demands awareness, intent, and focus. *The 3 Secrets of Attentional Leadership®* equip you with the framework, method, and tools to master your attention and focus on your current WIN (What's Important Now).

Drawing from decades of research and real-world experience engaging with leaders, athletes, students and other high performers, this book offers a step-by-step guide to:

- **Identify your “One Thing”:** The key factor that moves the needle on everything.
- **Fail Faster & Better:** Iterating towards mastery and rapid growth.
- **Scale your Influence:** Leading yourself and others from the inside out with confidence.

Based on foundational research, real-world stories, and practical tools, *The 3 Secrets of Attentional Leadership®* will help you coach yourself and others to achieve greater flow, sustained peak performance and impactful leadership.

Whether you're an executive, elite performer, coach, or simply ready to take a strategic pitstop to optimize your personal and professional development, this book is your starting point and gateway to unlocking lifelong performance, influence, and change.



“Few people have gone as far and as deep studying what liberates people from mediocrity as Bruce Jackson has. Pay attention!”

—Nathaniel Zinsser, PhD, CC-AASP, former Director, Performance Enhancement Program, US Military Academy (West Point). Author of *The Confident Mind*



Bruce H. Jackson

THE 3 SECRETS OF Attentional Leadership

“This book belongs in the library of anyone serious about elevating performance and the human condition”

Dr. Jim Loehr, New York Times best selling author
of *The Power of Full Engagement*

THE 3 SECRETS OF Attentional Leadership

Optimize Your Performance, Influence,
and Leadership from the Inside-Out



Bruce H. Jackson
MBA/MPA, PH.D

Foreword by
STEPHEN R. COVEY

Advance Praise

“Being in the zone is what the Olympics are all about. The three secrets found within this book will help you discover and focus on that ‘one thing’ like an Olympian.”

—Noelle Pikus-Pace, US Olympian (Skeleton)

“Dr. Bruce Jackson is an international expert in leadership and optimal performance. His new book offers effective and essential skills for improving performance. I recommend it to parents, teachers, coaches, students, and athletes. Get this book and Find Your Flow!”

—Christopher Barden, PhD, JD

“Summitting Mt. Everest with nineteen people, including the first blind man to achieve the feat, is about knowing your assets and liabilities—both inside and out. In the summit of life, you need to do the same analysis. Read and apply the tools in this book and plan for your personal summit.”

—Jeff Evans, Everest Expedition Leader, speaker, physician assistant

“Going far beyond theory, this book breaks down the process of high performance into steps any dedicated person can accomplish.”

—Susan K. Perry, PhD, author of *Writing in Flow*

“The 3 Secrets of Attentional Leadership is dedicated to helping you identify common factors of high performance. It’s a must-read for people interested in beginning their self-development journey.”

—Alan Fine, CEO/President, InsideOut Development

“No fluff. No psychobabble. Just a solid, transformational guide for life and leadership.”

—Dr. Kerry Joels, International Organizational Consultant

“Having worked with the world’s best performers, I can tell you that while everyone is unique, the process toward mastery is very much the same. In this book, Bruce gives you a front row seat into your own process and the steering wheel to drive toward self-mastery, higher performance, and greater influence.”

—Dr. Leonard Zaichkowsky, Retired Professor Boston University. Author of *The Playmakers Advantage* and *The Playmakers Decisions: The Science of Clutch Plays, Mental Mistakes, and Athlete Cognition*

“The 3 Secrets to Attentional Leadership offers a road map that will benefit newcomers to self-development and seasoned leaders who are looking to coach themselves toward breakthrough.”

—Rod B. Streets, MPA, CMA, CFM
Chief Financial Officer, Alterman

“The Attentional Leadership framework is straightforward and was easy for our managers to understand and apply in personal and business situations.”

—Jeff Weber, VP People, Ancestry.com

“It’s a treat to have an extremely important, yet complex, subject such as flow made accessible via insightful analysis. This book’s practical roadmap enables anyone who is serious about performance to expand their flow.”

—Dr. Jack Zenger, CEO, Zenger-Folkman, coauthor of *The Extraordinary Leader* and *The Inspiring Leader*

“Few people have gone as far and as deep studying what liberates people from mediocrity as Bruce Jackson has. Pay attention!”

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Author of *The Confident Mind*

“The Attentional Leadership framework extends beyond personal strategic planning. It has been fundamental in guiding our organizational strategic planning, enabling us to pinpoint our key ‘WINS’ as an organization.”

—Linda Michels, Executive Director, American Association of Gynecologic Laparoscopists (AAGL)

To all those who seek to discover the
Hero within, those willing to chip away
at the rough spots, walk through the
refiner's fire, iterate and evolve, and strive
to discover their true greatness—the music
within—all for the purpose of giving it all
away—this book was written for you.

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Contents

Prologue	13
Foreword: The Universal Human Quest	14
Preface: Today I Am Born Anew	16
Introduction: Design and Flow of this Book	20
The Three Secrets	21
A Comprehensive Framework	22
Sizzle and Steak: A Pracademic Approach	22
Five Progressive Sections	23
 Section I: Discovering Flow	 25
 Chapter 1: Life-Changing Moments	 26
From Mundane to Miraculous Moments	26
A Very Bad Day on the Court	27
When Elements Conspire	28
What Was Different?	29
Do You Find Flow or Does Flow Find You?	30
A Proxy for Life and Leadership	31
788,400 Hours: That's All We Get	32
Placing Attention with Intention	32
The Wisdom of Children	33
Absorbed in the Moment	34
Racetracks and Pit Stops	35
 Chapter 2: The Nuts and Bolts of Flow	 37
Find or Fashion Your Swing?	37
Flow Through the Ages	38
Flow: A Brief History	40
Benefits of Flow	40
Positive Performance Psychology	41
Flowing Into Happiness	42
Finding Your Flow Through Attentional Leadership	43
 Chapter 3: Experiencing and Understanding Flow	 45
Moments, Arenas and Examples	46
Flow: A Universal Experience	47
So Many Arenas/So Many Strategies	48
Investigating Your Flow	49
Flow Factors: Assets or Liabilities?	49
Tapping into Anti-Flow Experiences	49
Tapping into Flow Experiences	50
Navigating Your Headwinds and Tailwinds	50

Chapter 4: Dissecting Flow—Understanding the Magic Butterflies	52
What Moments Are Made Of	53
Flow Factors and Characteristics: The Big 9	54
Looking Under the Hood of Your Ferrari	59
Engaging the Adventure and Taking the Dive	60
Believing in Principles	62
Splitting Moments into “What” and “Who”	62
Seeing Flow Through 3, 5, and 15 Dimensions	64
 Section II: The First Secret—The One Thing that Moves the Needle on Everything	 67
 Chapter 5: Alignment 1—Future: From There to Here	 71
Long Future: Missions, Vision & Legacy	72
Short Future: Goals, Planning & Time Maximation	74
Chapter 6: Alignment 2—Internal: Full Engagement	78
Spiritual: Principles, Purpose & Virtues	79
Philosophical: Beliefs, Values & Ethos	82
Psychological: Thoughts, Images, & Perspectives	86
Emotional: Awareness, Control & Generation	94
Physical: Nutrition, Exercise & Energy	96
Chapter 7: Alignment 3—External: Place, Things & People	100
Personal: Adequate Resources, Optimal Environment & Locus of Control	101
Interpersonal: Optimizing Relationships	103
Team: Synergy with Others	104
Organization: Right Arena	105
Community: Thriving in the Ecosystem	107
Chapter 8: Alignment 4—Historical: From Then to Now	110
Short Past: Metrics, Analysis & Reflection	111
Long Past: Cultivating Successes, Harvesting Failures, & Challenging Assumptions	113
Chapter 9: Alignment 5—Pulling It All Together: Eliminating Interference	121
Focus: Where, When, and How Long? Strategic vs. Performance	122
Chapter 10: Discovering Your One Thing	127
Less Depth Greater Light	127
Four Phases of Self-Mastery	128
Trading Light for Focus	128
Leaning Into Conscious Incompetence	129
Opening and Closing the Aperture	130
Opening the Aperture Using the ALI 1080° Sweep Assessment	130
Closing the Aperture Using the FOCUS Planning Process	131
Narrowing Your WIN's	137
Three Ways to Boost Flow	140
Identifying Your “One Thing”	142
Focus on Your Biggest WIN	143

Section III: The Second Secret—Failing Faster and Better	155
Chapter 11: Iterating Toward Success	156
Langley & the Wright Brothers	157
Five Important Lessons	158
Five Elements of Iteration	160
Five Types of Correlation	161
Measuring Your Progress: Doing and Getting	163
Using Scorecards	163
Identifying the Right Measures	167
Finding Flow Through Intentional Practice	168
Talent Not Required but Mindset a Must	169
Translating Values into Virtues	169
Section IV: The Third Secret—Scaling Flow and Influence Through Attentional Leadership®	175
Chapter 12: Finding Flow in Relationships, Teams, Organizations & Beyond	177
Finding Relational Flow: Winning Gold by Focusing on Others	177
Finding Team Flow: Global Elections Company. IT Leadership Team	179
Finding Organization Flow: International Surgical Society	180
Three-Dimensional Leadership	181
From Notes to Chords and the Music of Leadership	182
All the World's a Stage	183
Section V: Living Life in Flow	185
Chapter 13: Creating a Life of Flow	186
There's No Finish Line	187
One Summit After Another	188
Lifelong Learning & The Greatest Coach You'll Ever Have	190
Building a Life that Flows	191
The Hourglass of Your Life	191
Leaving Your Legacy	193
Living a Life in Crescendo	194
Exceeding God's Expectations	194
Epilogue	196
Endnotes	197
References	203
Afterword: Finding Your Music Within	208
Acknowledgements	210
Appendix A: Big Ideas to Remember	212
Appendix B: Attentional Leadership Resources	216
About the Author	216

PROLOGUE

Inspired is the person who envisions the future yet engages the moment, and does so with the end in mind.

Humble is the person who strives for truth, whose beliefs follow truth, whose thoughts follow their beliefs, whose feelings follow their thoughts, and whose actions align them all.

Immersed is the person who optimizes their arena—aligning with others in the teams, organizations and communities they serve.

Wise is the person who measures progress, analyzes outcomes, and learns from every experience—who cultivates their best, harvests their worst, and challenges every assumption along the way.

Mindful is the person who can see the forest and the tree—placing their attention with intention deliberately on their WIN—attending to that “One Thing” towards mastery.

Persistent is the person who, through struggle and strife, victory and defeat—discovers new truths, and knowledge and progresses toward the measure of their creation.

Dedicated is the person who, as a rough stone rolling, ever engaged on an upward slope—seeks to unveil their music within.

Content is the person who does these things—in the arenas and on the stages for which they have been called—in the service of others—for something larger than self—their legacy affirmed.

Foreword

Universal Human Quest

The universal human quest is to discover and realize our potential. In every arena, the human spirit seeks to identify the unique contributions that it was designed to make.

In my study of effective human behavior and relations I have discovered this: the elements of success are common to all men and women, girls and boys. There are principles and practices that, if understood, can be applied by anyone to maximize their effectiveness on the job, on the playing field, and in life.

In your life you may have experienced moments—even hours, days and weeks—where tremendous focus, meaning, enjoyment and purpose graced the stage you were performing on. You may have discovered that these were special moments where everything just came together and gave you a glimpse of what you were made of and what you were designed to accomplish. You may have recognized these moments as “peak experiences” or “moments of flow.” I can attest: Our greatest growth and highest effectiveness come from our best and most profound moments—our *moments of flow*.

When I wrote *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, my objective was to illuminate and simplify the key principles of individual, interpersonal and collective effectiveness. The elements that comprise this effectiveness are many and vast, and yet they are unique and personal to each person. As you read, study, and apply the methods for finding your flow within this powerful book, you will come to understand yourself and your environment more deeply.

Finding Your Flow is a book with a grand goal and purpose: to help raise your level of awareness regarding the building blocks of effectiveness, then to help you sort out these building blocks in order to identify your most important personal development plan of action. You might, therefore, think of this book as a primer for your personal development and leadership training.

The motivated reader who seeks flow to improve performance in any life arena can use this book as a starting point and framework for a lifelong pursuit of self-understanding, excellence, happiness, and for living life in crescendo!

—Stephen R. Covey, bestselling author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

A decade ago, my father, Dr. Stephen R. Covey, reflected on the insights from Bruce's inaugural work, *Finding Your Flow*, highlighting the continuous quest for excellence in our lives and in the lives of others. In his latest book, Bruce expands and elevates these ideas with great clarity and sophistication—offering a practical framework and method for uncovering your “wins” and paying attention to what matters most.

My work in trust through the years has demonstrated the fundamental role it plays in fostering confidence and flow within ourselves and our relationships, which is pivotal across our personal and professional lives. While trust in ourselves (and in others) is the foundational factor in building personal, interpersonal, team, organizational, and even community flow—it is but the first of many factors that elevate the human condition.

In this practical book, Bruce invites you to engage in a strategic pit stop and deep dive into the multifaceted elements that significantly shape your own greatness—while simultaneously bringing out the very best in others. Enjoy this journey of self-discovery as you identify your personal brand and elevate the lives of others in the process.

—Stephen M. R. Covey, The New York Times and number-one Wall Street Journal bestselling author of *The Speed of Trust* and *Trust & Inspire*

Preface

Today I Am Born Anew

In Og Mandino's book, *The Greatest Salesman in the World*, Hafid reads Scroll One:

Today I begin a new life. Today I shed my old skin, which hath, too long, suffered the bruises of failure and the wounds of mediocrity. Today I am born anew, and my birthplace is a vineyard where there is fruit for all. Today I will pluck grapes of wisdom from the tallest and fullest vines in the vineyard, for these were planted by the wisest of my profession who have come before me, generation upon generation. Today I will savor the taste of grapes from these vines, and verily I will swallow the seed of success buried in each, and new life will sprout within me.¹

So, how do we shed an old skin and start a new life? By placing our attention with intention on the key dimensions that will make the greatest difference and committing to their mastery—for a long-term purpose. As you will come to discover—flow builds upon flow—and success upon success. They are self-perpetuating! Leveraging your attention to find your flow is not only about peak engagement in a chosen arena; it is a way of life—even a gateway to happiness and self-actualization.



The Eye of Horus has long stood as a symbol of protection, perception, and insight in ancient Egyptian mythology. It offers timeless wisdom about the importance of focused awareness—whether on ourselves, our relationships, or the broader world. Just as Horus used his eye to restore balance and safeguard his realm, we, too, must sharpen our focus to guide ourselves, our families, our teams, our organizations, and our communities through the challenges we face.

The Eye of Horus serves as a powerful metaphor for what it means to optimize, lead, and master ourselves—all in the service of helping others do the same. Its many meanings speak directly to what we need to do to address our modern-day challenges:

Protection and Awareness: The Eye of Horus symbolizes the watchful gaze that protects and nurtures. In leadership, this gaze represents constant awareness of our internal and external environments, and of our future in relationship to our past. By focusing on What's Important Now (WIN), we protect our energy and clarity, shielding ourselves from distractions that could sideline our growth and progress.

Balance and Restoration: Horus's eye, once lost in battle and later restored, represents the healing and balance that leaders must cultivate in themselves. As we face setbacks, we must restore our focus and help others do the same, recovering alignment and maintaining the flow needed to thrive.

Holistic Focus and the Six Senses: The Eye of Horus is divided into six parts, representing the senses—sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell, and thought. This metaphor emphasizes the need for leaders to have a holistic focus, fully engaging not just their minds but their bodies, intuitions, and surroundings. Being present in this multidimensional way allows us to lead ourselves and others with full awareness of where we've been and where we're going.

Perception and Vision: The all-seeing Eye of Horus stands for heightened perception and vision—both essential for effective leadership. Leaders, like the

Eye itself, must develop the ability to see beyond immediate challenges, leading with insight and foresight. By scanning the broad dimensions of the future, the internal and external worlds, and the past, leaders align all elements in service of the present moment and its most pressing needs.

The Eye of Horus also offers a timeless lesson in self-mastery and leadership. It teaches us to restore balance, maintain focus, and perceive with clarity as we guide ourselves and others toward greatness. In mastering our attention, we unlock the potential not only in ourselves but also in those we lead, creating a path toward thriving both personally and professionally.

We are all performers. From the athlete, pilot, salesman, engineer, retail clerk, teacher, or anyone seeking to optimize what they do, we all expend energy within our craft to engage, perform, excel, and make a difference. The only difference is the arenas we choose to engage in. While most arenas are technically unique, the principles of peak performance and flow are similar. Whatever insights you gain in one arena can be transferred to others. As you seek to extend your internal and external influence over time, you can reference your flow moments and reflect upon those Flow Factors applied at various moments and times that contributed to each experience. By doing this, you generate an evolving and sophisticated understanding of your current Personal Flow Formula—one that you will use to direct your attention and energies on your next WIN (What's Important Now).

By mastering the principles and practices in this book, you will become a high performer in any arena where you seek influence—even greatness, and by doing so, discover the joy of being at one with your purpose, your craft, and most importantly—yourself.

Your Commitment to Excellence

As I learned from the great Olympic psychologist, Dr. Terry Orlick, no great performance or outcome can occur without a commitment to excellence. No matter how much you dream and desire to become your best, achieving anything worthwhile requires clear commitments, promises, and goals. These commitments clarify your values to yourself, your loved ones, and for purposes larger than yourself. Beyond self-actualization, these relationships and purposes sustain us through our own Hero's Journey.²

Start your journey with the three secrets to performing, influencing, and leading from the inside out. Commit to giving your full effort and focus within your most valued arenas and relationships. Consider making a personal commitment:

I, _____, commit to:

- Completing this book.
- Doing the 1080° Sweep™ Assessment.
- Identifying my Personal Flow Formula.
- Defining my first WIN and focusing on that “One Thing” that will elevate my work and life.
- Completing the FOCUS Planning Process.

Choosing a learning path and iterating through it, knowing that this will help me improve my performance, my game, and my life, and discover the best of myself while helping others do the same.

Few have said it better than Theodore Roosevelt at The Sorbonne on April 23, 1910:

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”³

Regardless of your race, gender, age, nationality, beliefs, or how you identify, you have both the right and the opportunity to discover your unique greatness and the deep fulfillment that comes from being fully aligned with the arenas where you are meant to thrive, contribute, and serve.

Introduction

Design and Flow of this Book

Kurt Lewin, the famous organizational theorist, said, “Nothing is as practical as a good theory.” And Oliver Wendell Holmes remarked, “I wouldn’t give a fig for the simplicity on this side of complexity, but I would give my right arm for the simplicity on the far side of complexity.” We might therefore conclude that while good theories are useful, they must be simple enough to apply in everyday life.

Flow theory is based on a straightforward idea: everyone can achieve a profound state of focus and involvement. This state is reached by reducing obstacles—what we’ll call “Flow Liabilities” (typically the absence of a factor or skill such as unclear goals, poor resilience, or not learning from mistakes)—and enhancing positive factors, or “Flow Assets” (optimizing a factor or skill such as those referenced).

Whether eliminating a weakness or optimizing a strength, this requires knowing What’s Important Now (WIN)—hereafter simply called WIN. This is the essence of Secret #1. But it’s not enough just to become aware of the many principles and practices that inhibit or contribute to your flow, you must know how to put them into practice—that is why *Finding Your Flow*® requires the use of *Attentional Leadership*®, which is the skill you will learn throughout this book.

My journey has taken me beyond merely exploring flow theory. I had the privilege of being mentored by the master of the theory, the late Dr. Mihaly

Csikszentmihalyi and many others. I've spent years looking deep into people's experiences, from various disciplines, ages, cultures, and walks of life, to identify the principles, strategies, and practices used to attain and sustain flow in just about any work and life arena you can imagine.

The Three Secrets

After years of researching, teaching, coaching, and consulting with individuals, teams, and organizations, I have come to realize that there are *two secrets* to achieving flow, and they require placing your attention with intention on your WIN, the essence of Attentional Leadership. Yet there is a *third secret* that emerges as you master the first two, and it is this: everything you apply to yourself applies to serving and leading others. It's an inside out journey. The very skills you use to become your best self are the same for helping others become their best self.

The **first secret** requires deep self-reflection and is highly personal: it's about identifying the "One Thing" that, when improved, could significantly impact the arena you are engaging. As you might imagine, there are hundreds of things each of us could work on to improve our flow and performance, but there are a few that matter most given your current circumstances. For instance, you may lack clarity of purpose or vision and placing attention on these would move the needle on your performance the most.

The **second secret** is the willingness and discipline to fail faster and better—or to engage the iterative process on that "One Thing." This is a universal secret—one that all change and success are predicated on. There are exactly five elements to it, and five types of correlation between what you are "doing" and what you are "getting" as you seek change and mastery. When you are clearly focused on your current WIN, say it's clarifying your vision, learning and spending time to optimize it is the price to be paid for making it an embedded Flow Asset.

The **third secret** is the simple yet profound understanding that everything you can do for yourself can be applied in the service of others: that your influence is scalable from the inside out—like moving from notes to chords and chords to music—from a framework of understanding to a system for scaling excellence via influence and directed attention. This principle is equally relevant if you are working from larger scale change and moving inward toward the individual.

When you understand these three secrets your life will never be the same.

Why? Because not only will you have these three keys to optimize yourself and others—you'll also be given the framework, methods, and tools to coach and develop yourself and others for the rest of your life.

A Comprehensive Framework

The first half of this book is designed to help you understand and internalize flow, and to assess your *Flow Assets* and *Flow Liabilities*, identify your *Personal Flow Formula* (to see what's most and least important now), and discover that “One Thing.” In doing so note that this book is self-reflective and self-prescriptive—designed to point the way and provide direction while giving you the steering wheel.

As you tour the fifteen dimensions and corresponding **Key Factors**, note that we have built factor-specific exercises and resources for each of them. Because this book is designed to raise your awareness of these many Flow Factors, which I often call them, it is easy to jump into the first one that seems interesting—taking you down a specific path. If that is the case, feel free to take a pit stop at any time and work through any of the Flow Tools of interest to you—or, if you want to be more strategic, wait until you've completed the 1080° Sweep™ Assessment, as it will point you to strategic tools and resources relevant to your current situation. You will find these PDF exercises and curated library of resources on the ALI website: www.attentionalleadership.com.

Sizzle and Steak: A Pracademic Approach

This book seeks to balance the “sizzle” and “steak”—a praca-demic approach, speaking directly to you with clean, simple, and actionable strategies.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of factors influence your flow and performance every day: unclear purpose, minimal feedback, lack of support, a negative self-image, unbridled negative emotions, a bad night's sleep, the weather, a rock in your shoe, uncomfortable clothing, the temperature in the room, what's on the news... The list is infinite. My focus is to help you understand flow at progressive levels of breadth and depth, with dimension and factor-specific resources and exercises to help you get started on a specific learning and practice pathway.

Five Progressive Sections

I designed this book to start you on your journey into flow through the exercise of Attentional Leadership®—a process of expanding and contracting your awareness toward the future, within yourself, within the social and physical contexts that surround you, and your past—all in the service of your present-moment focus. There are five progressive sections.

Section I explores the foundational concepts of flow, a state where you feel fully immersed and engaged in what you're doing. You'll learn how flow can transform everyday experiences and enhance performance across various aspects of life. Through practical insights and strategies, you'll discover how to cultivate flow by identifying and leveraging your personal strengths and addressing any barriers that might impede your progress. This section aims to equip you with the tools to harness flow, improving both your personal fulfillment and effectiveness.

Section II introduces “The First Secret,” guiding you to identify the “One Thing” that can profoundly impact your life and work. It explores the Five Alignments—Future, Internal, External, Historical, and synthesis—to strategically refine your Focus. You'll set visions, align personal values, leverage your environment, and learn from past experiences to develop a comprehensive strategy for identifying and cultivating your “One Thing.” This is supported by tools like the 1080° Sweep™ Assessment and the FOCUS Planning Process™, which help you achieve peak performance.

Section III unveils “The Second Secret: Failing Faster and Better,” focusing on iterative learning to accelerate improvement. Through examples like Langley versus the Wright Brothers, it introduces the five elements of iteration and how to apply them effectively. This section covers measuring progress with tools like scorecards and emphasizes the importance of the right metrics. You'll discover how intentional practice can cultivate flow and why a growth mindset is crucial. By translating values into actionable virtues, you'll learn to turn failures into steppingstones for success.

Section IV introduces “The Third Secret: Scaling Flow Through Attentional Leadership,” emphasizing how to extend flow into relationships, teams, organizations, and beyond. You will explore how Attentional Leadership

across various dimensions can enhance collective achievements and effective leadership. This section highlights the transformative power of focusing on others and demonstrates leadership as an art form that harmonizes individual contributions into collective success.

Section V “Living Life In Flow,” guides you through the journey of integrating flow into every aspect of your life, emphasizing that there is no final destination, but rather a series of ongoing achievements and learning opportunities. You will learn strategies for self-coaching, lifelong learning, and building a life that continually flows toward excellence. This section also explores the metaphor of life as an hourglass and encourages you to think about the legacy you want to leave, urging you to live a life in crescendo, always striving to exceed expectations and achieve greater heights.

Good luck and enjoy the journey.



About the Author

Dr. Bruce H. Jackson has dedicated his career to the development of individuals, teams, organizations, and communities that seek to maximize influence, leadership, and change.

Bruce is the founder of the Attentional Leadership® Institute—a strategy, training, assessment, and coaching firm dedicated to helping individuals, teams, and organizations achieve peak performance.

Formerly a consultant/educator/coach serving Korn Ferry/Hay Group, the Center for the Advancement of Leadership, InsideOut Development, Learning Strategies Corporation, BlueEQ, and others, Bruce works with global associations, Fortune 500 companies, colleges/universities, and non-profit institutions to develop and implement principles of performance, leadership, and change—for professionals, students, and public servants alike. On the side of philanthropy, Dr. Jackson directs the C. Charles Jackson Foundation and Charlie Life & Leadership Academy—advancing leadership centers, programs, training, and research throughout the world to develop a new generation of emerging and influential leaders.

Bruce earned his doctorate in Human and Organizational Systems from Fielding Graduate University, where his research led to the development of Attentional Leadership Theory™ (ALT)—a holistic and multi-dimensional approach to address strategic change.

Bruce earned master's degrees in counseling psychology (Boston University), Business Administration (University of Minnesota, Carlson School of Management), Organizational Development (Fielding Graduate University), and Public Administration (Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government)—all of which provided a broad and deep understanding of human capacity building, leadership development, and organization effectiveness within diverse industries and arenas.

Bruce, his wife Marta, and their three children currently live in Highland, Utah.