

ANNELIESE MONDEN
CHANTAL SMEDTS



BE YOUR OWN LEADER

AT HOME AND AT WORK

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INTRODUCTION

Ever since Descartes made his famous statement ‘je pense, donc je suis’ (I think therefore I am) we have become a little bit misshapen. Our rational thought became so important that everyone’s mind began racing. We mapped out the universe, we dissected the human body, we put everything neatly into tables and graphics. Fascinating treatises were written, great philosophies born, erudite intellectual discussions conducted... But there was one thing we overlooked: namely, that a person is much more than his brain box alone; there are also things like heart and intuition. The more we use our head, the more we lose contact with our body and our feelings.

In recent decades, hard- and software were added to the equation. The internet has given us access to unlimited information. We can make an opinion about anything and everything known worldwide. What’s more, it all happens much more quickly than ever before. According to Moore’s Law (Moore was the founder of Intel), the processing power of a computer doubles every two years. To do what a smartphone can do today, we would have needed a whole room full of computers back in 1980.

The result? Our heads are almost exploding from all the information we nowadays need to assimilate at lightning speed. We are tired out by endless discussions and endless reasoning. We have reached the limits of ever more thought, ever faster action, and ever more efficient living. An unpleasant feeling of emptiness seems to be creeping up on us, slowly but surely.

That feeling is strengthened by the high level of expectation placed on us by others, by society and by ourselves. We want a diploma, a well-paid job, a warm family, three holidays a year, membership of a

fitness club, a marathon medal and, if at all possible, to dine out at least twice a week. We are constantly on the move, trying to fulfil five roles at once, and we are so focused on what we are doing that we actually lose ourselves in the trivia of the day. Before we know it, we are simply living to achieve all the many different things that are expected of us, even though we have long forgotten who or what is at the basis of those expectations. We are no longer in control of our own lives.

Do you recognize a number of these things? There is a good chance that you do. Our aim in this book is to help you press the 'stop' button. We want to take time to get back to basics. Who are we, really? What motivates us? What do we want to achieve? What makes us feel good? What is important? These questions may seem simple, but the answers often lay buried deep inside us. You would be amazed how many people never think about these key life issues. And that's why burn-outs are so common today. This book will show you how to develop the resilience you need to take back and retain control of your life, even in difficult times.

In the first part – 'I am' – we will pause to consider at some length exactly how you can discover the core of your being. This is a necessary exercise. Because if you don't know who you are, what you want and what you believe in, you are drifting rudderless through life, irrespective of all the impulses and expectations that bombard you daily. You are no longer leading your own life. You no longer know what is essential and what is irrelevant. You no longer know where your priorities lie. As a result, you will find it more and more difficult to make the important decisions that can move your life in the direction you want it to go.

It will only be at the end of part 1 that you will be able to properly fill in your new identity card, with head held high and both feet firmly on the ground. At that moment, it will be no problem for you to say with confidence 'I am...'

In part two – 'I do' – we will teach you how to become your own leader, the director in the film of your own life. The objective is simple: with your identity card in your pocket, we are going to take a walk through every aspect of your life and check to make sure that your actions, your daily activities and your relations with others are as well attuned as they possibly can be to who you really are. Because it is only when your being and everything you do are in perfect harmony that you will be able to feel really happy and successful. Only then will you be able to exude authenticity and leadership.

In this book, we are going to bare our souls. We will commit to a fresh perspective and take inspiration from the start of our life – to when we were still babies. What do babies do? They eat, they drink, they poo. When something is wrong, they cry. But when they start to realize that interaction with others can be fun, they begin to laugh. That, in all simplicity, is what being human is all about. And that will be our starting point.

With this book, we want to help you to become the leader of your own life. But who is 'we', exactly? We are Anneliese Monden and Chantal Smedts, the inspiration behind the Qlick coaching company. For more than 10 years we have been guiding people who want to work at improving their personal development. To make this possible, we too have had a long way through the same process, to reach the point where we can be passionately engaged in doing the things we really love. We are both highly driven, but with different backgrounds: the one a leader in a large multinational, the other an entrepreneur and owner of a flourishing business with several branches. We combined our different experiences and life lessons to create a coaching trajectory that we would now like to share with you in this book. In doing so, we will not simply be following the highway of reason, but will also be taking detours into fascinating, unexpected and slightly less logical byways.

In other words, this book will be your coach. It is a 'be-and-do' book, which will show you how to achieve greater authenticity and self-confidence. It will help you to increase your resilience and allow you to make important decisions in keeping with who you really are. Perhaps you are considering a career switch? Or maybe you want to improve your communication with others? Perhaps you are at a crossroads in your personal or professional life? Or maybe you don't feel comfortable with yourself and just want to reflect for a moment about where you are going? Whatever it is, this book can help you to discover the right way.

But be careful: it won't be easy to find the answers you seek and the energy you need. Becoming the leader of your own life demands effort and perseverance. Sometimes it will be necessary to look at yourself critically, rather than looking for excuses in others or in the setbacks you have encountered in the past. You will need to have the courage to move beyond mere reason and learn to trust your intuition, your heart, your gut feeling. Once you are prepared to get down to essentials, we are ready to begin. Coaching starts at the moment when you want and are able to take full responsibility for your own life.

We will give you insights, working methods and exercises based on our experience. We will also take you inside our own coaching practice, with numerous concrete examples from real-life case studies. These are not dramatic stories, but illustrate recognizable, day-to-day situations.

Together with you, we want to discover how you can show others in the most authentic way possible just exactly who you are. For you, 'Je pense, donc je suis' will become 'I do as I am' – and vice versa.

'You are...': that is the starting point.

That is how you become your own leader.

TIPS FOR THIS BOOK

The world around us has become so efficient that it continually pushes you to take action after action, so that you rarely stop to think what is important or who you really are. This book seeks to deliberately reverse that process. It starts with who you are and only then moves on to what you can or should do, because we are convinced that this will make your life simpler and, ultimately, happier. All too often we search for happiness outside ourselves, so that we end up getting lost in the minutiae of the thousand and one things we have to do.

Therefore, we will start with ‘I am’ (which Michael Hall, Executive Director of the International Meta-Coach System, calls our internal powers) and then go on to ‘I do’ (the ‘external powers’, according to Hall).

We make use of the metaphor of a film director, to ask ‘who are you as a person?’ (I am) and ‘how will you direct your film?’ (I do). At the end of the road, you will see whether or not you have earned your director’s diploma.

MODULE 1: ‘I AM’

This is the search for the core of your being, the real ‘you’. It starts with the things that are important for you, what motivates you, and how your different objectives in life interact. Each chapter contains a number of insights and tips to help you discover who you are. At the end of each chapter there is a section ‘Coach yourself’: a series of self-reflection questions that you can also find if you send an email to info@qlick.today.

Module 1 ends with **your identity card**, in which you can amalgamate all the insights you have learned about who you are. Your identity card mirrors your true identity, the real you: ‘I am...’

MODULE 2: 'I DO'

This is all about the things you do, about how you can take action and how you can communicate with others in ways that will move you closer to the real you.

Once again, you will find insights and tips to help you achieve this and a set of self-reflection questions that are also available online.

Module 2 ends with the award of **your director's diploma**, the skills that you need to lead your own life. You are going on a journey, and you take with you... your identity card and your director's diploma.

Enjoy this wonderful voyage of discovery!



Director: your unique 'you'

Starring: you

Location: your life

Also featuring: the people you meet on the way

Entrance fee: the price you are willing to pay

I AM



WHO I REALLY AM, WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO ME,
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRIT, HEART AND GUT FEELING,
WHAT DRIVES ME (PASSION)
HOW THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS INFLUENCE ME

1. A FIRST CHECK-UP

Congratulations. The fact that this book is in your hands means that you want to become the director of your own life. But before you can start, you first need to undergo a thorough but necessary check-up, to make sure that this is really something for you...

BORN TO LEAD YOUR OWN LIFE

You are ready to take responsibility for yourself and your actions



Note to the director

You are ready to follow a trajectory that will allow you to draw up your own identity card. But before you can do that, you need to be certain that you have the right mental attitude for this journey. Because if that's not the case, this book won't work. So make sure you read this chapter carefully before you go any further.

Are leaders born or can you learn how to become a good leader? It is a question that has been asked many times and there are many different answers in the professional literature. To be clear, this is not something we are going to discuss in this book. We are not interested in your calling card or your LinkedIn profile. Our starting point is your life. You were born to lead your own life. In other words, you are already a born leader.

In this sense, leading is much more than just learning a few skills. To take your life fully into your own hands, you need to search for your true identity: this means who you are, not just what you do. You can compare it with a chef. Just because you have a chef's diploma doesn't mean that you will automatically be successful in the world of fine dining. Being able to cook well is certainly a good basis, but if you can also

create a story around the food you make, a story that truly reflects who you are and how you live your life, this will not only make people curious but also inspire them. Then the crowds will flock to your restaurant, not only to sample your delicious dishes, but also to see how you have decorated the rooms, how you work in the kitchen, how you respond to your staff and your guests. Then they will buy your cookbooks, not only to try out the recipes at home, but also to learn more about you as a person and your way of life.

WHAT ROLE ARE YOU GOING TO PLAY?

Look at your life as though it is a film and ask which role you want to play. A supporting role? The leading role? Or do you want to be the director? If you have the feeling that you are always doing things that other people have decided for you, then you are really only playing a supporting role in your own life. After a while, this will probably give you an uncomfortable feeling. And so it should. You can hardly be satisfied with such a minor role when you are capable of so much more.

Perhaps you frequently make your own decisions, but find it tiring. In your heart of hearts, you know that you only take those decisions because that is what other people expect of you: your colleagues, your boss, your partner, your friends, your parents. You may be playing a leading role, perhaps even a starring one, but it takes a heavy toll on your strength. It is not always easy to do what others want you to do, often because it is not really what you want to do at all. It is not in keeping with who you truly are. That takes a lot of energy, so in this role you will regularly need time for yourself to rest and recover.

If you are the director of the film of your life, you are in control of everything, so you can make the choices you want to make. You can choose the work you like and how you want to organize it. You can choose the friends you want and decide how to spend the weekend. You determine what is important and what is not. As director, you have the power to decide how every scene in the film of your life will look. If you currently think that your film is not going to be a blockbuster, perhaps it is time to take responsibility and finally sit down in that director's chair.

A LEADER WITH FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

Directing your own film means more freedom. But it also means more responsibility. If there is a situation in your life you are not happy with, it is the easiest thing in the world to blame someone else. 'I don't feel comfortable in my job, but I only do it because that's what my parents want'; 'I find it hard to complete projects successfully, but that's because my colleagues are always one step ahead of me'.

Directing your own film means more freedom, but also more responsibility.

If you always look for the cause of things that are wrong in your life in others or if you expect others to solve your problems for you, then you are actually putting yourself in a victim's role.

You are not directing your own film. It is time to stop looking for the answers to your problems outside yourself and start asking how you can do things better or differently.

As director, you need to be responsible for 100% of your film. 95% is not enough. Imagine what might happen if you have no control over that final 5%. What if you forget the lighting? Or forget to order the publicity posters? The consequences of that 'forgotten' 5% can be large and irreversible: booing in the cinemas, not enough people at the box office, financial problems, loss of face and reputation... You can only be satisfied with 100% control. Perhaps you think that 5% is just a small difference, that it's not really important. But imagine that you are trying to read a book and 5% is missing! If you want to make proper use of this book – and direct your film in the best possible way – then only 100% will do. There are no excuses for anything less. Otherwise it will not work.

We would like to illustrate this with an example from our coaching practice. So let us introduce you to Guido. He is fed up, because he has no real satisfaction in his job. So where do you think he is going wrong?



Guido is down in the dumps. He feels that he is being used at his work and has almost had enough. His boss is always demanding and he seldom gets a compliment, even though he thinks he sometimes deserves one. He mutters to himself: 'My work is not appreciated. My boss is the kind that never gives compliments. But there's nothing to be done, I suppose.' Guido shrugs. 'This is frustrating,' he says. 'I am losing my motivation.'

This fragment is taken from a real-life case study. It illustrates perfectly how people often push the responsibility for their problems onto others. Guido thinks that he does his job well, but it gives him no satisfaction, because he never gets a compliment. Viewed from the perspective of 'take responsibility for your own actions', this is faulty reasoning. Firstly, you are paid to do a good job. That is what every employer expects. In Guido's position, you therefore need to ask yourself if you are doing things right. If the answer is 'yes', you can use this as a source of satisfaction and motivation to do even better. You don't need to wait for confirmation from someone else and you should certainly not assume that your boss is 'not satisfied', simply because you never get a compliment. Maybe he is, as Guido suggests, the kind of man who never gives compliments? Or what if he shows appreciation for your work in a manner that you don't realize or expect? Or perhaps he is simply unaware of how important a few encouraging words can be for people like Guido? That would be a pity, of course, but to use it as a reason for supposing that you are doing something wrong is taking matters too far. If you are someone who needs feedback, then there are other ways of dealing with the situation. Let's look a little further.



'What options do you have to change things?' I ask. 'It is what it is,' he answers with a bitter tone in his voice. I say nothing, waiting for my previous question to sink in. I probe a little deeper. 'What about just asking your boss whether or not he is happy with your work? You could

also use the opportunity to tell him what's troubling you.' I can see from Guido's expression that he is digesting what I just said. Slowly, he begins to say: 'Yees, I suppose I could just ask him what he thinks of my work.' Guido straightens his shoulders and his voice becomes less hesitant. He sees a way to take the situation into his own hands and this is instantly noticeable in his body language.

You can safely assume that everyone has options to bring about change in their life. Of course, blaming someone else means that you don't need (or even see a need) to change or to accept responsibility for your

If you want to be happy in the long term, stop playing the victim's role.

own actions. For many people, this is the easiest solution in the short term. But if you want to be happy in the long term, you need to take yourself out of the victim's role, face up to your responsibilities, take the initiative, decide what you want to do and take action. If you think it is worth

changing, then do it consciously and be aware of the likely consequences. If you don't want to change, you need to say that to yourself and accept that you are 100% satisfied with the current situation. But stop pointing the finger at others. They can't live your life for you and they don't determine your happiness. You do that for yourself.

Think about the things that are stopping you from doing this. Is it ignorance, or fear, or laziness, or concern about the possible reaction of those around you? In the final analysis, it doesn't really matter. You no longer need to look to the past. Your future lies ahead of you. All you have to do is dare to take the plunge. The choice is yours.

INNER ACCEPTANCE

We often hear the comment: 'But I don't have the power over all of these things. There are too many other factors involved.' Let's just examine this for a minute. It is true, of course, that you don't always have control over everything that happens to you. For some people things always seem to go right, while for others they always seem to go wrong.

But what you can control is how you react in any given situation. This is what we mean when we say you need to take 100% responsibility.

If you take 100% responsibility, you will soon learn the secret of inner acceptance, no matter what happens. Acceptance is a conscious decision to 'go with the flow'. This gives you new strength to work your way through difficult periods. If, however, you are not able to control your frustration, anger or fear, you will quickly use up all your energy, so that you have none left to help you overcome those moments of stress and strain.



Jim looks at me. It is his third coaching session. He talks about a company takeover and the restructuring of several other companies. He has big plans, which clearly give him energy. I listen and notice his left hand is shaking. It was something I'd noticed in the previous session as well. Suddenly, Jim stops talking. He looks at me and smiles. 'By the way, I have Parkinson.' The words come easily and spontaneously, as if he is announcing some everyday fact. I am taken by surprise – something that doesn't happen very often. I look at him and see the person, the businessman, the huge energy. At the same time, I discover a little piece of vulnerability that he now wants to share with me.

I have deep respect for the focus he is able to set on the positive things in life.

Jim is an example of someone who is the director of his own life. We can't control what happens to us, but we can control how we react to it. Jim takes 100% responsibility for the things in his life, no matter how difficult they are.

But let's be clear on this point: we are not saying that you should behave like some kind of superhuman, devoid of feelings and emotions. Nor are we saying that you should never be sad or should not show to others that you are going through a grieving process. What we are saying is that if

Many people only take action to change their life after they have been through a dramatic experience. We say: don't wait for it to happen. Take action now.

you live a responsible life, if you do what you like doing, if you are surrounded by the right people, you will develop the resilience to rise above setbacks and sadness, or at least find a way to give them a place. Equally important, this resilience is something you can work at every day. So that you can be strong if something untoward happens tomorrow.

Many people only take action to change their life after they have been through some dramatic experience. We say: don't wait for it to happen. Take action now.

Do you really want to be the director of your own life? If so, you will need to realize that you, and you alone, can create your own happiness. If you are ready to do this, then you are also ready to start your journey with us.



Coach yourself!

What role do you play in your own life?
 How do you direct your own life?
 What is stopping you from taking 100% responsibility for your life?
 When did you last push responsibility for your life onto someone else?
 How do you deal consciously with the inner acceptance of difficult situations?
 Write down the insights that you will later include in your identity card.

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