



## ***Stepping Stones for the Good Life***

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### ***Boost Your Empowerment and Personal Energy Now--With Just Two Words***

From the Desk of Glenda Haskell, *Life Coach*

Can you think back on a time when you knew you “should” do something but you just didn’t do it? If you’re anything like me, this happens more often than I would like it to.

In *Energy Leadership*, the author Bruce Schneider, Ph.D., offers a four modality scale he calls the Range of Engagement. The modes on this scale range from “I won’t” to “I choose,” increasing in levels of engagement (or commitment) as one moves up the scale. Below I describe these four modes.

Related to the general topic of energy, Schneider also describes two basic types of energy: *catabolic* (negative) energy, and *anabolic* (positive) energy. These two terms are drawn from the field of science with respect to chemical reactions within living organisms. Catabolic reactions release energy, whereas anabolic reactions store energy. *Energy Leadership* is a book about how to recognize levels of energy in both ourselves and other people, and how to shift our energy levels and to help others do the same thing.

Of the four modes on the scale, described below, the only purely anabolic (positive) mode is the top mode on the scale, the “I choose” mode which, as you have probably guessed, are the two words I refer to in the title of this piece.

#### ***I won’t (Engagement level 1)***

In this state, we have no or very little energy. There is a clear and pronounced absence of autonomy or choice.

#### ***I have to (Engagement level 2)***

Although we have more energy in this state, we perceive our actions as responding to an external force. Choice is still absent.

#### ***I need to (Engagement level 3)***

In this state, we operate with more energy than “have to” and we also perceive ourselves as having some choice and some internal power—but limited.

#### ***I choose (Engagement level 4)***

In this mode, which of the four modes presented here, is the only mode in which we experience truly anabolic energy, we experience a great deal of energy and internal power and we perceive of ourselves as having a lot of--possibly complete--choice.

Once I became aware of this continuum I figured out a simple technique that is a quick and easy way to move into the “I choose” mode of engagement.

<b>Step 1. Identify the mode that best matches your current level of engagement.</b>
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As I think about this continuum, it occurs to me that there are other phrases we use beyond “I won’t,” etc. For example, we use language such as, “I don’t want to,” “I hope to,” (I often hear this from my clients) “I could,” “I might,” and “I would if...” As I see it, each of these phrases expresses ambivalence,

at best, and is rooted most likely in the “I won’t” mode, with only the potential for moving into one of the higher modes of engagement.

**Step 2. Consciously shift to “I choose” and also state one or more reasons why.**

In adding one or more reasons why to *choose*, you focus on the ways you’ll benefit from switching to this most empowered of the modes.

I’ll offer an example from my own life. As a person who loves to grow things (that “green thumb” thing), I have houseplants, outdoor flowerbeds, and a small vegetable garden in the backyard. Honestly, at times it’s a lot to take care of, especially during dry spells in the summer. With my houseplants, days can pass when I say to myself several times a day, “I *should* water my plants.” At that moment, what I really mean is, “I *won’t* water my plants.” At least not yet.

During the past few weeks, I’ve been catching myself when I tell myself I *should* water my plants. Instead, I shift immediately to something like this: I *choose* to water my plants right now because I’m going to feel relieved, glad, and more at peace after I’ve given them the water they need. I’ve used this technique for numerous small tasks--with great success. Why not try it in your life?

As I’m writing this piece, it also occurs to me that for larger tasks we procrastinate on, we could shift to a higher engagement mode with “I choose to spend *five minutes* on this task right now.” But that’s what George Kao calls the 5-minute method, the topic of a future *Stepping Stones*. Watch for it, and happy choosing!

*Note: I recommend Energy Leadership for coaches and for anyone else who wants to become more aware of and in charge of his or her energy levels. Dr. Schneider is the founder of the Institute for Professional Excellence in Coaching (iPEC).*