

Article Series

My Personal Experiences With The 13x4 System

By Angela Loëb

[I'm Getting What I Want... And It's Incredibly Easy](http://beradiantsquared.com/im-getting-what-i-want-and-its-incredibly-easy/)

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Since the first week of 2012, I've been using a 13x4 system that I customized for myself, and I've been having remarkable results. I'm more productive – I'm getting what I want... and it's been incredibly easy. In case you don't know what the 13x4 system is, it's a personal effectiveness process that was first conceived by Benjamin Franklin.



The 13x4 Is Born

It was 1728 when Franklin undertook his “bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection.” Franklin chose 13 virtues to focus on, hoping to improve his personal effectiveness and character. It worked because he focused on only *one thing at a time*. He wrote: “I judged it would be well not to distract my attention by attempting the whole at once, but to fix it on one of

them at a time; and when I should be master of that, then proceed to another; and so on till I should have gone through the thirteen.”

Tom Cassidy, my colleague from England, first told me about this concept last year. Apparently, about a decade ago, he'd seen the Franklin 13 mentioned in Frank Bettger's classic business book, *How I Raised Myself from Failure to Success in Selling*. Tom was intrigued. He read Franklin's autobiography and began to apply the 13x4 to his work as a teacher and later as a businessman. He's used it successfully with a wide variety of people, including sales teams, 5th graders, educators and company executives. And, of course, he has his own personal 13x4 system too.

When Tom presented me with the opportunity to help him develop the 13x4 into a user-friendly program for everyone, I didn't hesitate. We've developed e-courses and are co-facilitating a workshop on April 21 to provide hands-on help to people in designing their own custom 13x4. It's time to let the world know about this “secret” for success!

How The 13×4 Works

Basically, the 13×4 is a year-long system with 13 focus areas that you concentrate on for one week at a time. You determine what you'd like to focus on to raise your effectiveness. Then you cycle through them 4 times... $13 \times 4 = 52$ weeks.

Since Tom has a physics background and loves to know how and why things work, he was determined to know why Franklin's idea is so effective. He says it's because of something from rocket science called "The Principle of Least Action." There's also some quantum mechanics involved. While I admit that I barely understand the physics behind it, I can certainly grasp the brain science behind it, especially the part about how the [RAS \(Reticular Activating System\)](#) is engaged in this process.

We Want To Choose Easy

Tom and I both like choosing easy whenever possible, so we've simplified Franklin's idea even further. For example, in this modernized 13×4 approach, there's a slight modification in the physical model. Franklin used a chart, we use a wheel to denote the concept of a cycle.

We also have the advantage of using fantastic technology tools to increase its effectiveness – tools that Franklin didn't have but would probably be inventing if he were with us today! With today's tools, the 13×4 is practically automatic. It takes even less pressure and minimum willpower to achieve results than when Franklin was doing it.

The FAST™ Method

I'm almost finished my first 13×4 cycle of 2012. It's been pretty amazing how much more productive I've become by using this system. And I've been seeing several specific changes in my life and in my personal effectiveness due to the focus areas I've chosen. Over the coming days and weeks, I'm going to share my observations here.

I'm going to capture this using a tool that Tom created called the FAST™ Method. He suggests that you use it to help crystallize your focus areas and identify the tool you'll use to adhere to each. It stands for:

Your choice of
F-ocus
that betrays your
A-ttitude
illustrated by your chosen
S-tory
handled moment to moment by the appropriate
T-ool

And, in fact, it is a great tool for preparing your 13×4. However, what I'm going to do with it is a bit different than the way Tom intended. I'm going to use this tool to analyze how my 13×4 is making a difference for me.

So next time, I'll use it to format my analysis and report the results for my first week's focus, which is *Planning*. Stay tuned!

[Planning On Autopilot Increased My Productivity Exponentially](#)

Published by [aloeb](#) on April 2, 2012 - <http://beradiantsquared.com/planning-on-autopilot-increased-my-productivity-exponentially/>

Last time, in [I'm Getting What I Want... And It's Incredibly Easy](#), I talked about the 13×4, which is a personal effectiveness process originally invented by Ben Franklin back in 1728. I've been using my own customized version of the 13×4 system since the first week of 2012. And as I move into my 2nd cycle for this year, I've decided to share my personal observations and report the remarkable results I've been having so far.

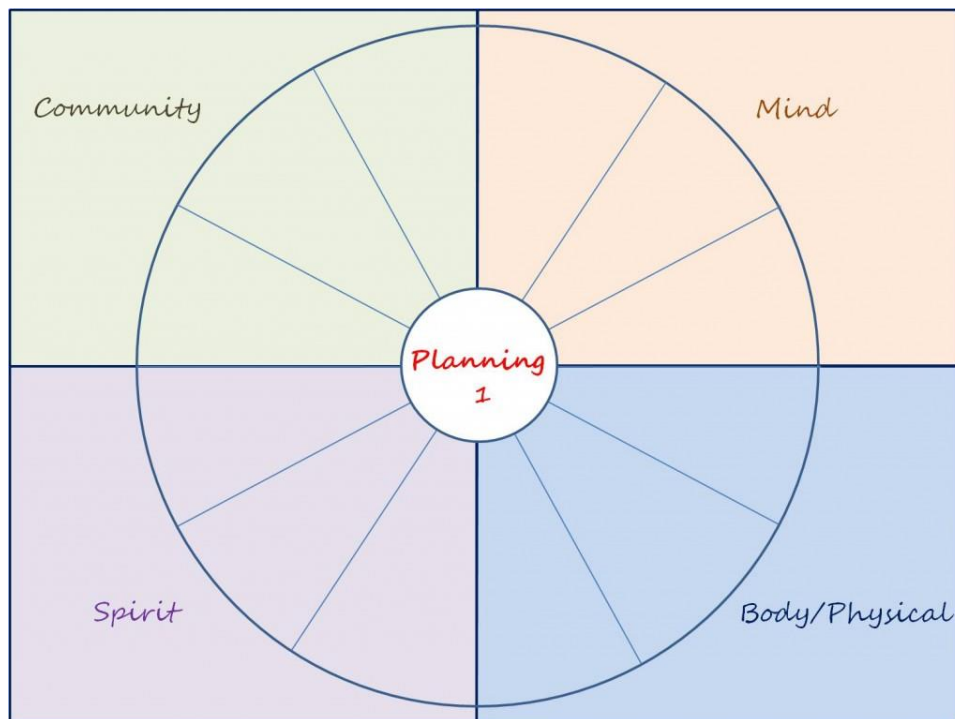
Like I mentioned last time, I'll be illustrating each focus area using the FAST™ Method, which stands for...

Your choice of
F-ocus
that betrays your
A-ttitude
illustrated by your chosen
S-tory
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the appropriate
T-ool

Focus Area #1

The first of 13 focus areas that I picked to concentrate on for one week at a time this year is

Planning. Since this is also the center focus of my 13×4 Wheel™, it's the undercurrent theme for my whole personal effectiveness system in 2012.



By the way, as you can see, I'll be revealing my personal 13×4 Wheel™ one focus area at a time over the coming days and weeks, but if you'd like to see it all at once, jump down to

F-ocus: *Planning*

A-ttitude: What is my approach to this focus area – what do I/we want it to be?

I am eager to move my career transition forward. I've been on a path of transition for the past 5 years. Prior to that I was sorting out what I wanted that transition to be. My daughter is now in college, and I can move out of cruise mode and into hyper-planning mode in order to manifest my vision. I want to increase my planning activities and productivity toward achieving my vision by making this the center focus or gateway focus.

S-tory: What is a story that illustrates the power of having this focus in my life?

I have a tradition of setting aside a day to plan for the next year during the holiday season. That's usually where I would stop my visioning process until the Q2 of the new year.

However, planning has now become an ongoing process ever since I activated my 2012 13×4 system during the first week of the year. Throughout that first week of the Planning focus, I fine-tuned my 2012 goals and thought about what other 12 focus areas I wanted to put into my system. On the last day of the week of Planning I cast my wheel for the next 12 weeks. I chose the order to place them on the calendar. Then I decided what tool I would use for each focus and set them all up on my calendar with reminders. Doing this enabled me to put my next 12 weeks on autopilot. I also decided that I would use my Planning week of the next cycle to recast the wheel and place all the reminder tools on my calendar again.

This week is number 13 – the final week of my first 13×4 cycle for 2012. As I reflect, I realize that I have been planning like crazy even though it's not on the forefront of my mind as I shuffle through the other focus areas one at a time.

Here's a sampling of the planning activities I've been doing without even consciously realizing just how much more productive toward manifesting my vision during Q1 of 2012 than I have been in any other Q1 in previous years.

- *Created a plan for finishing and then successfully published my 2nd book (it comes out later this week).*
- *Planned and got approval to lead an ad-hoc committee for the HR professional association where I serve on the board, and then I recruited volunteers.*
- *Met with my strategy coach who helped me to set timelines for projects throughout 2012.*

- *Wrote plans for BPOs (Best Possible Outcome) for several challenging situations... and achieved a better than BPO on each.*
- *Created a marketing plan to promote several events and recruited someone to help me plan and execute the events and the marketing plan.*
- *Created a timeline and determined subject matter for next two books I want to write.*
- *And, here's a biggie for me... I regularly stuck to my bookkeeping schedule and have even been ahead of schedule for the first time in about 5 years.*

Again, this is only a sampling. I've been even more productive than this list shows!

T-ool: What is a tool I/we can use to maintain this focus area?

All of my focus areas are buoyed by Planning or have this as an undercurrent theme since it's the center focus – the gateway focus. However, the tool that I used for the week of Planning was actually planning. I preset blocks of time on my calendar for each day of the week – Sunday through Saturday – to focus on and perform planning activities.

Next up is week 2 – focus area #2...

[Second Week Of The 13×4 Is Causing Random Urges and Fantasies...](#)

Published by [aloeb](#) on April 4, 2012 - <https://beradiantsquared.com/second-week-causing-random-urges-fantasies/>

In case you haven't read my last two articles in this series, let me explain that the 13×4 is a personal effectiveness process originally invented by Ben Franklin back in 1728. I've been using my own customized version of the 13×4 system since the first week of 2012 and am sharing my observations about how it's literally changing my life and my outlook.

In the last installment, [Planning On Autopilot Increased My Productivity Exponentially](#), I talked about the gateway or center focus of my personal 13×4 system for 2012, which is *Planning*. And even though it was the focus of the first week, it has also been the undercurrent theme for the last 13 weeks. I ended up planning like crazy over those 13 weeks even though I had moved on to other focus areas one at a time and it was no longer in my conscious mind.

Four Domains

If you look at my 13×4 Wheel™, you'll see that it's divided into four quadrants or what we call "domains." You don't have to pick four domains like I have because the beauty of working with one

central focus surrounded by 12 other focus areas is that you can have three domains... or even two if you'd like. And they can be whatever major areas of your life or general overview topics that you want. I chose mine – Mind, Body/Physical, Spirit and Community – based off what Tom uses with only slight variations.

I chose to start with the Body/Physical domain after I was finished with the first week of Planning.

Focus Area #2

F-ocus: *Declutter*

A-ttitude: What is my approach to this focus area – what do I/we want it to be?

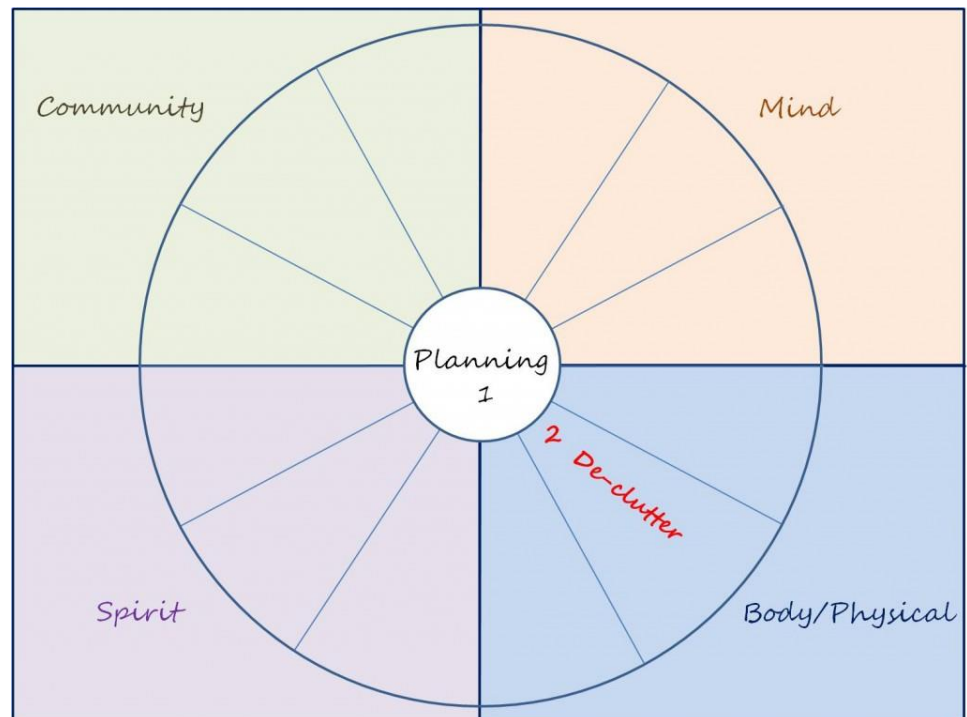
I want less stuff in my physical working and living spaces. It's not necessarily about being more organized, though that would be nice too. Most of us want that, I suppose. In fact, Ben Franklin himself said in his autobiography that he never

quite mastered this one... he called it "order." I am less stressed when I have more open physical space around me. I think of declutter as having room to breathe and feeling less crowded mentally as well. I suspect that declutter will lead to more creativity.

S-tory: What is a story that illustrates the power of having this focus in my life?

The way I process paperwork at my desk tends to go like this: if it's in front of me where I can see it, I will work on it; if I don't need to work on it, it ends up in a stack behind me because I'm super busy. I'm not big into filing, which can really create a big clutter problem. And being super busy means that I have a bunch of stacks in front of me, beside me and behind me. I'm surrounded!

Okay, for one week, the 2nd week of 2012, I successfully decluttered and removed almost all of the stacks in my office. Yay! That was liberating.



During week 9, I had the random urge to declutter again, but this time it was my closet. More about that later because that was influenced by the focus area of that week in subtle and interesting way...

Now that it's back to the beginning of the 13 focus areas this week, I'm actually craving next week's focus of Declutter to cycle around again. I keep looking around at the various rooms in my house and fantasizing about what I'd like to get rid of – not that I will actually get rid of it all, which is why it's a fantasy, but I'm absolutely going to clear out some stuff next week!

T-ool: What is a tool I/we can use to maintain this focus area?

Very simple. I added a 30 minute appointment on my calendar everyday during which time I either filed paper or shredded paper. Since it was only 30 minutes, and it was only for one week, I had no challenge adhering to it at all.

[Choosing Healing And Peace Of Mind](#)

Published by [aloeb](#) on April 9, 2012 - <http://beradiantsquared.com/choosing-healing-and-peace-of-mind/>

In addition to affecting my productivity, my personal 13×4 system is also helping me with physical healing and peace of mind. Last time in [Second Week Of The 13×4 Is Causing Random Urges and Fantasies...](#) I told you about the four domains of my 13×4 Wheel™ and how the first domain I picked from was Body/Physical. The next focus area I chose was from that domain, too. Though a case could be made for putting this one in the Mind domain, I have a specific reason for positioning it where it is, as you'll soon see.

Components Are Interconnected

Of course, all the components of the 13×4 are intricately tied together. I know that my domains of Mind, Body, Spirit and Community are interconnected. And my 13 focus areas have all been cross-pollinating in undeniable ways. For me, during week three's focus, the mind and body connection was undeniable...

Focus Area #3

F-ocus: *Everything's Perfect*

A-ttitude: What is my approach to this focus area – what do I/we want it to be?

This is a healing message that I chose so I could train my mind to focus on the outcome I desire rather than on the alternative that I do not want.

S-tory: What is a story that illustrates the power of having this focus in my life?

Last year I was diagnosed with a minor condition that has the long-term potential to result in a major surgery. I intend to avoid surgery if at all possible.

And even if surgery becomes the best healing outcome at some point, I choose to trust that it is all perfect.

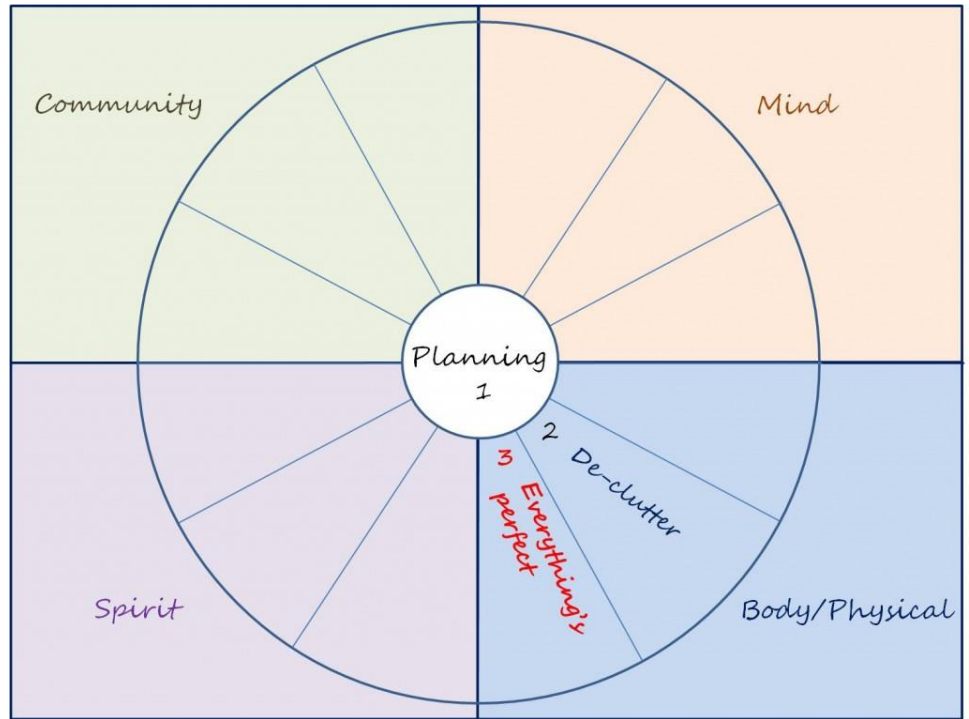
This focus area helps me to remember that the health state of my body is perfect as it is in the present moment. Tomorrow hasn't yet happened, and, therefore, to dwell on what might happen is to get wrapped up in illusion (and worry). The only reality is now. I am in the now because I can't physically be anywhere else... and in the now everything is perfect as it is.

During this third focus week, I found myself drawn to Wallace D. Wattles and re-read his expositions on two related topics:

1. "being perfect in each stage yet incomplete" from [The Science of Being Great](#)
2. "holding thoughts of perfect health" from [The Science of Being Well](#)

Worrying about "what if" while I wait for months in between check-ups with my doctor does me no good. Stress only increased damage to my body and interferes with my healing. At the very minimum, I have found that reflecting on "everything's perfect" has brought me more peace of mind. It definitely reduced the damaging effects of stress on my body during that week, and overall I feel much better ever since incorporating this concept into my outlook.

T-tool: What is a tool I/we can use to maintain this focus area?



One of my favorite aspects of the 13×4 is its simplicity. All I did was place two statements as though they were appointments on the calendar. So, twice per day during week three, I would receive the following alerts:

- *At 9:00am, “Hey there! Everything’s Perfect!”*
- *At 5:00pm, “Remember – everything is perfect”*

Each time these alerts popped up, the message was effortlessly reinforced in my mind.

[My Boomerang Got Bigger](#)

Published by [aloeb](#) on April 16, 2012 - <http://beradiantsquared.com/my-boomerang-got-bigger/>

If you’ve been following this article series, you know that I’ve been relating the personal revelations coming from my 13×4 experience. I started during the first week of January 2012, and it’s been an *amazing* year so far.

In my last installment, [Choosing Healing And Peace Of Mind](#), I told you about how all the components of the 13×4 are intricately tied together – that they cross-pollinate each other in unexpected ways. I also discussed my third focus area *Everything’s Perfect*, which has to do specifically with healing my body since I want to avoid surgery.

The Attitude

In my next focus area, I found that I didn’t fully realize the deeper implications of why it’s so powerful until I started really noticing. In the FAST™ Method, which helps you to adhere to the goals you set up in your 13×4 System, the “A” is where you explain what this focus area means to you. You explore what your attitudinal relationship is to it and why you are choosing it.

Knowing your attitude to the focus area is critical for choosing what is best aligned with you. Rather than merely choosing something that looks and sounds good because you saw it on someone else’s 13×4 Wheel™ or were told that you should focus on it, you are called to really think about your reason for choosing it. In ascribing a meaning to it that is personal to you, you own it more fully. You set yourself up for greater success in attaining what you desire.

When I chose my next focus area, I thought it was important to me because it feels good to do it. That is still the case, but now it means more...

Focus Area #4

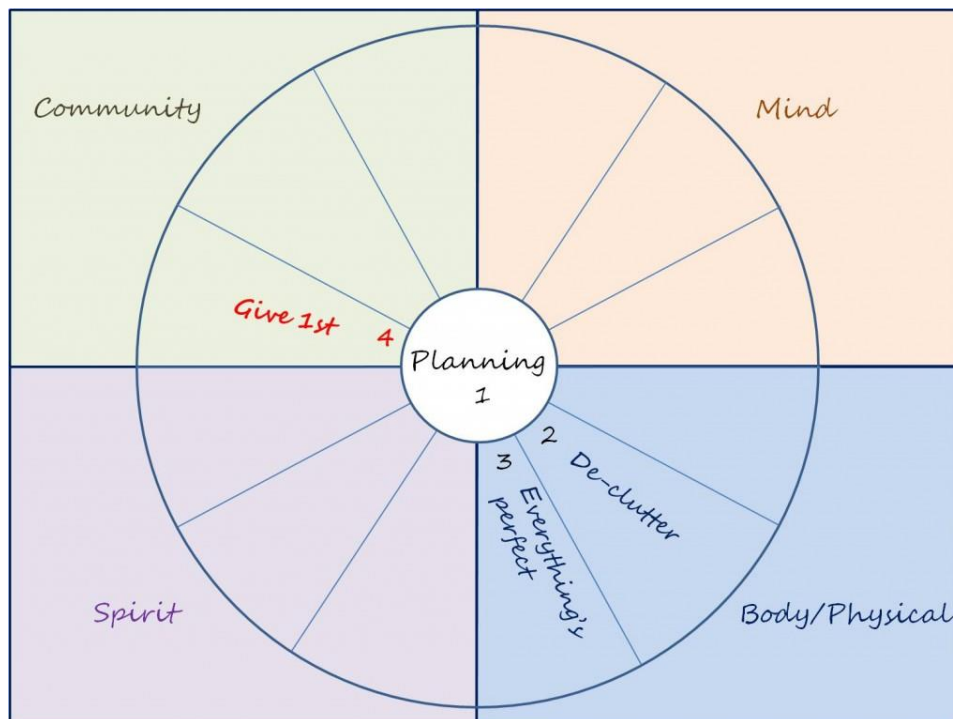
F-ocus: *Give First*

A-ttitude: What is my approach to this focus area – what do I/we want it to be?

For me, I have noticed that Give First is attraction energy. At first, it was about giving because it feels good to give. However, my attitude about giving first has shifted somewhat. It still makes me feel good, of course, but now I realize that what I give out comes back to me tenfold (and more). I give in ways that affect others positively. As that energy moves around, it picks up or attracts abundance. It enlarges and then returns to me like a boomerang. When I Give First, I get back more than I originally gave.

S-tory: What is a story that illustrates the power of having this focus in my life?

I have always incorporated the practice of Giving First (without specific expectations of reward) into my life because it makes me feel good to give and to be of value and service to others. What I have always thought that I get back from doing this is a sense of purpose and good feeling. This



particular week was mostly about increasing my awareness of Giving First, and then later I realized there was more going on besides mere good feelings. There were many giving moments that later increased in the inflow back to me, but here are a few examples:

I met with several new “networking friends” over coffee... One was an aspiring author who later wrote to me that she was inspired by our meeting to move forward with her dreams. Another told me he was at a crossroads about his next career steps. He later emailed me to say that he was pursuing the bigger vision of these two possible scenarios and that there was some definite movement forward on that road. These two people gave back by reinforcing my chosen work as someone who helps others realize their dreams.

I treated a friend to lunch for her birthday. During our conversation, she gave me some new knowledge about an area that I’d been curious about for years. This new knowledge gave me extra

insight into a personal experience I'd had in December. I received way more than I gave... and this was just supposed to be a "fun lunch with a friend"!

I created goodwill in the human resources community by giving away job search advice during a presentation, and the word was spread about my consulting business. I gave a colleague a jumpstart in her career by hosting a program for her – she has since sent much encouragement to me in support of my own programs and has said many nice things about me to others.

During this week I noticed that each boomerang I sent out got bigger. And I didn't know what it would look like until it came back and how well it would serve me until I received it. THAT was fun!

T-ool: What is a tool I/we can use to maintain this focus area?

Each day at noon, a question would pop up on my calendar asking me: "What are you giving first today?" And then I noticed...

[Good Friends, Good Times and Better Balance](#)

Published by [aloeb](#) on April 23, 2012 - <http://beradiantsquared.com/good-friends-good-times-and-better-balance/>

During the previous week's focus of *Give First*, which I described in [My Boomerang Got Bigger](#), I had unknowingly set up a great dynamic for the 5th week's focus area. And the funny thing about it was that I hadn't realized how the two focus areas would overlap so incredibly or how the timing would be so beautiful...

Casting the Wheel

After you choose your domains and your focus areas, the next step is what I call "casting the wheel." Simply put, this is when you decide the order of your focus areas week by week. Tom likes to assign numbers to his, starting with the center focus as week one, and then he picks one from each domain in a rotating fashion until he's ordered all 13. For my first 13×4 cycle, I chose mine by intuition, picking whatever I felt drawn to... and if you've been following this article series, you've probably noticed the pattern that developed.

I started with the center focus. Then I picked two from one domain, then jumping to another domain – in no particular order – I picked two from there, two from the third and then two from the last. Then I popped around and picked up the remaining focus areas, one from each domain. Not only was it fun to do it this way, it turned out to be really eerie and cool how everything worked together. As I

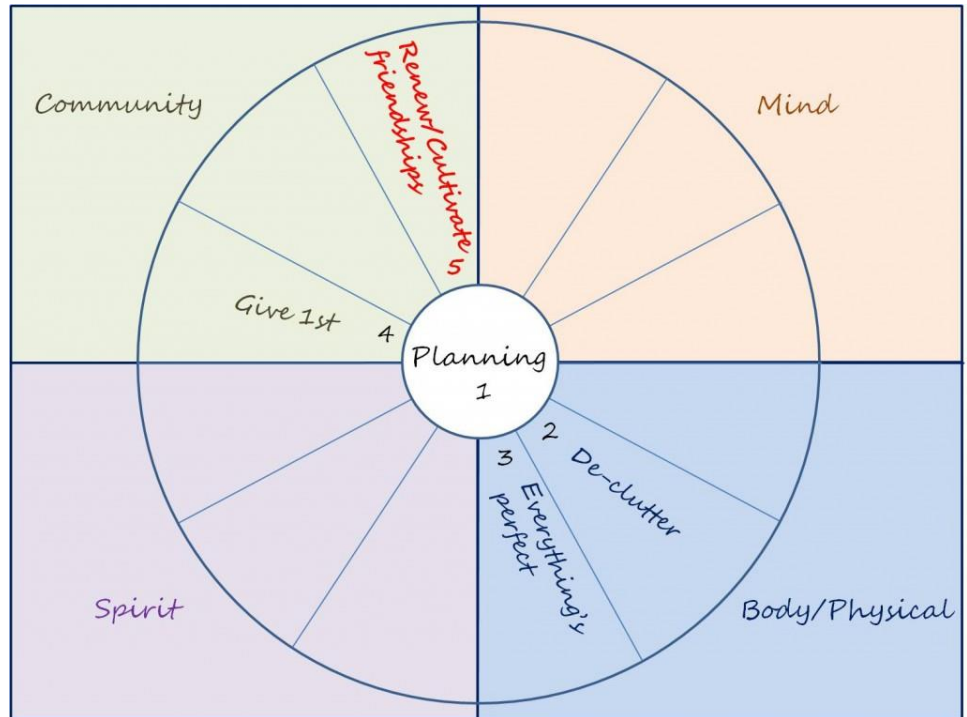
look back on how I cast the wheel in January, I had no idea that the timing would work so synchronistically with the events that later occurred in my schedule, as well as how the focus areas would complement each other according to the order they were cast. Talk about planning without planning... or, rather, planning with faith!

Focus Area #5

F-ocus: *Renew/Cultivate Friendships*

A-ttitude: What is my approach to this focus area – what do I/we want it to be?

I work... A LOT. Six days a week, my average schedule is about 7am until about 7pm. In fact, it's 6:23pm right now as I write this. That's because I love my work so much. When the lines between work and play are blurred, you really have to



force yourself to remember to nurture your social and personal relationships. My friends and family give me love, emotional support and intellectual stimulation. Without that, my life lacks balance because the work I'm doing in the world doesn't provide me all that I need. Let's face it, if we knew that a giant asteroid was going to hit the planet 6 months from now and wipe out the human race, my work wouldn't matter anymore would it? Instead of working over the next 6 months, I'd be seeking the companionship of friends and family during our remaining time together. (Though I think I'd still write... 'cause I can't not write!)

S-tory: What is a story that illustrates the power of having this focus in my life?

Planning was definitely underpinning the focus area for this week. I planned and enjoyed two lunch dates with dear friends, one on Monday and one on Wednesday. Ironically, these two particular friends actually started out as workmates more than ten years ago.

A friend, who also used to be a colleague, decided to get the old work team back together and I responded to her reunion dinner invitation that week. How interesting that it happened during this particular week...

Still in the spirit of the previous week of Give First...

- *A long-time friend reached out with a question via email, and I gave her some advice that she seemed pleased to have.*
- *I set up a coffee date with a new friend I'd met in December and then introduced him to someone who I knew wanted to hire a contract trainer (and he got the gig!).*

And I celebrated a very important relationship in my life – it was my husband's birthday during this particular week. Yes, casting the wheel by intuition was a great deal of fun, and here's another synchronistic surprise in the way the timing worked!

T-ool: What is a tool I/we can use to maintain this focus area?

I set a daily recurring appointment on my calendar to “Send a note to an old friend” – and so I did. It also raised my awareness of gratitude for all my loved ones.

[Sometimes Two Heads Are Better Than One](#)

Published by [aloeb](#) on May 2, 2012 - <http://beradiantsquared.com/sometimes-two-heads-are-better-than-one/>

I'm still amazed by how using my intuition to cast my wheel like I explained in [Good Friends, Good Times and Better Balance](#) has led to so many cool synchronicities. Including the sequence of these last two focus areas and then the one I'm about to describe. They ended up being related to one another!

One of the most appealing features of the 13×4 model, besides the crossover synchronicities and influences, is its flexibility. It can be used as a personal effectiveness program like I'm discussing in this article series. It can be used to put together a leadership effectiveness plan, a career transition plan, a program to increase sales, a plan to improve relationships, a better approach to parenting, etc. And recently, I met a 12-year old young man who is even using it to set sports goals, as well as goals for improving his grades and for listening to his teachers and parents.

Team Goals

The 13×4 can also be used to set team goals. In fact, the sixth focus area of my 13×4 Wheel™ reminds me of this aspect.

Earlier this year, Tom and I conducted an interactive program with a group of architects. Together, they created and cast their team 13×4 Wheel™. They wanted to blend the overarching goals of the company – the corporate office is located in another city – into their own team's local goals.

I'm told that they are seeing some positive effects already after 4 months. The 13x4 gives them a chance to remember the bigger picture during the intensity of performing the tasks and deadlines that are right in front of them. The focus areas they chose as a team reminds them why they're working so hard, and it gives them a common purpose. Gradual, positive changes in their team culture are occurring as each week's focus area seeps through their busy work schedules and into their awareness on an ongoing basis.

Focus Area #6

F-ocus: Collaborate

A-ttitude: What is my approach to this focus area – what do I/we want it to be?

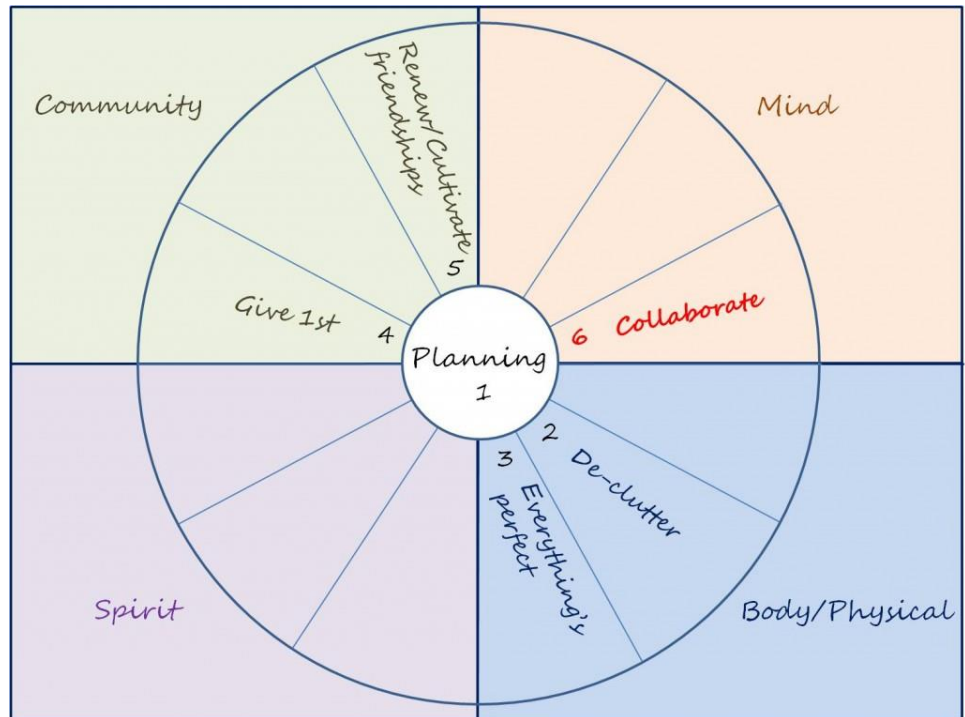
This is under the Mind domain because... “Sometimes, two heads are better than one.” While, of course, this can be true in all aspects of life, my intention for choosing this focus area is career related.

I've always enjoyed working collaboratively with others in my field, and I want to continue exploring that in my career.

S-tory: What is a story that illustrates the power of having this focus in my life?

When I was a recruiter, I partnered with other recruiters on candidate searches. As a career consultant, I've had great fun developing and delivering programs, including the online radio show I co-hosted between 2009 and 2011 with other experts. Producing that radio show was a multi-layered collaborative effort because it wasn't just the co-hosting. It was also the interactions I had with our guests before during and after each show. Each time it was a coming together of multiple minds.

Choosing to focus on Collaborate and underpinning it with my gateway focus of Planning has helped me to envision additional collaborative projects I could do this year. For example, I branched out and did a teleseminar with [DeAnne Pearson](#). During this focus week, we did the post event wrap up activities and discussed how fun and helpful it had been to both of us. That week I talked with two people about the possibility of hosting future teleseminars for later this year. And I actually put one on the calendar with Tom Cassidy (that we did later on March 27).



By the end of the week, I'd confirmed the venue for the April 21 workshop that Tom and I had been planning to co-facilitate for a year. This was also the week that I put out the call for a freelancer to collaborate with in promoting the April 21 workshop.

Of course, the whole 13×4 concept is a collaborative effort between Tom and me... and as I've lately been reading Ben Franklin's autobiography, I feel like Franklin has with us in spirit as we co-teach!

T-tool: What is a tool I/we can use to maintain this focus area?

I set a daily recurring appointment on my calendar that simply said, "13×4: Mind – Collaborate." Each day I was reminded to reach out to those I was drawn to collaborate with or had collaborated with in the past while also inviting the possibilities for new colleagues and partnerships in the future.

[Turning On The Current Of Currency](#)

Published by [aloeb](#) on May 11, 2012 - <http://beradiantsquared.com/turning-on-the-current-of-currency/>

Time to move along to one of the most amazing focus area weeks of all. Yes, it was cool what happened when I focused on *Collaborate* during the previous week (more in [Sometimes Two Heads Are Better Than One](#)) and on the focus areas of all the previous weeks, too. But I'm very excited about what this next focus area has done for me in light of my lifelong mental perceptions.

And it's not just the focus area alone that has shifted me. It's as though my whole wheel is a secret sauce for my success. The ingredients all work together in unpredictable but deliciously magical ways. Every time I write one of these articles, I seem to peel back another layer of insight. While I'm in the focus week, certain effects on my life are obvious, and then when I reflect more specifically on each area after the fact, I'm amazed at how much more comes to light.

Center Focus Is the Superforce

This next focus area came up in the 1st cycle of my 13×4 Wheel™ during mid February. When I look at what has happened due to this focus, I realize the importance of the center focus of *Planning*. In fact, *Planning* has been a powerful foundation for all of the focus areas. While they have all been cross-pollinating each other at some point or another along the way, my center focus has been the superforce that provides the most momentum for all of them at all times.

Undoubtedly, the *Planning* center focus has been in my subconscious, as well as my conscious mind. I know this because a long time ago I realized something about myself. When I am stressed, my tendency is to go into action mode rather than planning mode. There have been many examples of this in my life, and this trait was even identified in a personality assessment I took back in the late 1990s. The actions that I'm prone to take will usually center around what I know has worked for me before. That is not a bad thing at all, but when I want to go into action, it's usually a good idea to take a deep breath and do a little planning first.

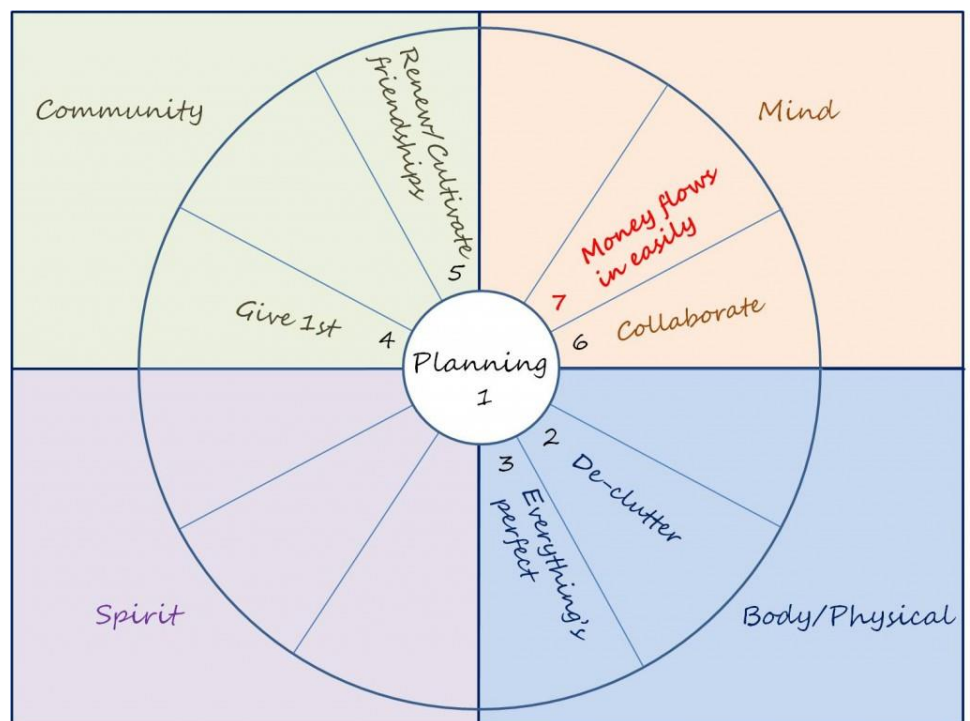
I didn't realize just how helpful it would be to make *Planning* the superforce behind my focus areas this year. And, as you are about to see, it has it paid off... literally!

Focus Area #7

F-ocus: *Money Flows In Easily*

A-ttitude: What is my approach to this focus area – what do I/we want it to be?

Money is energy just like everything else. And I am using the phrase "flows in" for this focus area because I see that money is like electricity. It's a play on words too. Currency and current. Money currency flows in and electric current flows in. Though the energy of electricity is usually invisible, I know it exists, and I know I have the means to allow it to flow in. I don't exactly know how electricity works, but I know that if I turn on the switch, it powers the light bulb in the ceiling above my head. I don't know exactly how money works. I'm not an economist or a banker, but I know I have the means to allow it to flow in. I think in a certain way, and it powers my needs and desires. I choose for it to be that easy, and, therefore, it flows in easily.



S-tory: What is a story that illustrates the power of having this focus in my life?

Let me explain how making this focus area front and center for only one week brought me my best single month in business ever... And during these first few months of 2012, my earnings have already exceeded ¾ of what I made all of last year. This unexpected result came in spite of a decreasing source of money that could have messed with my mind (and my money flow) if I'd let myself worry about it.

Last fall I was awarded an excellent project that could potentially last up to a year (and which I knew would not). It brought in a nice monthly sum, so money was flowing in easily late last year. However the nature of the project was such that the more successful I was in my deliverables each month, the less each subsequent month would bring in earnings. It was the classic “work yourself out a job” situation. In February, at 4 months into the project, I was doing very well in my deliverable side, which meant that soon there would be dwindling amounts each month to come.

The timing of having this focus area come up each day for that particular week was very important. To be reminded that money is energy that flows in easily really helped. After all, the project and the money from it had come to me easily in the first place. I paused to do some number calculations and planned some useful actions. Money that was dwindling from one project could easily be replaced or even expanded from other sources. And, indeed, it has. March 2012 was my best month ever financially. Even though the project was diminishing, my inflow of money actually increased.

T-ool: What is a tool I/we can use to maintain this focus area?

I added two daily recurring appointment on my calendar – one at 9:00am and one at 5:00pm. Basically, these messages to my mind were twice-daily affirmations. The first said “Hey there! Remember – money flows in easily.” The second said “\$ flows in easily (hurray!)” So, the first was a reminder at the beginning of the day so that my mind would be on alert. The second sent the message to my mind, pointing out that that money had flowed in that day and will continue to flow in (it's phrased in the present tense rather than past tense). The second affirmation included a celebration component, which makes this focus much more fun.

[Touched By An Angel](#)

Published by [aloeb](#) on May 16, 2012 - <http://beradiantsquared.com/touched-by-an-angel/>

Let me tell you... it's been a blast writing this article series. In case you haven't been following along, what I'm doing is relating the stories and mind-opening discoveries I've had since starting my 13x4 System in January. It's been an amazing year so far!

In my last installment, [Turning On The Current Of Currency](#), I told you the story of how focusing on *Money Flows In Easily* led to my making three quarters of last year's income in less than 4 months. It was a result that came even though one of my money sources was *decreasing*.

The Power of Story

We all know that telling stories is one of the best ways to teach and entertain. Past masters of philosophy and spiritual teachings often taught through the method of storytelling. Many still do today. And, of course, stories are also highly entertaining. This explains the incredible success throughout history of plays and books... and, later, of movies and television. Anthropologists tell us that even before humans invented writing and in cultural situations when people weren't or aren't literate, oral storytelling was and is the norm.

Telling stories is also a great way to understand ourselves better. In the FAST acronym, you'll notice that the "S" stands for Story. It's important that you tell a story which illustrates the power of having this focus in your life when preparing your custom 13x4 Wheel™. Why? Because when you tell the story of the focus area, it stands out better in your mind about WHY you're focusing on it. Also, if you can prove to yourself that you've had success in this area before, you will begin with a positive mental state. You will be more assured that it can be done.

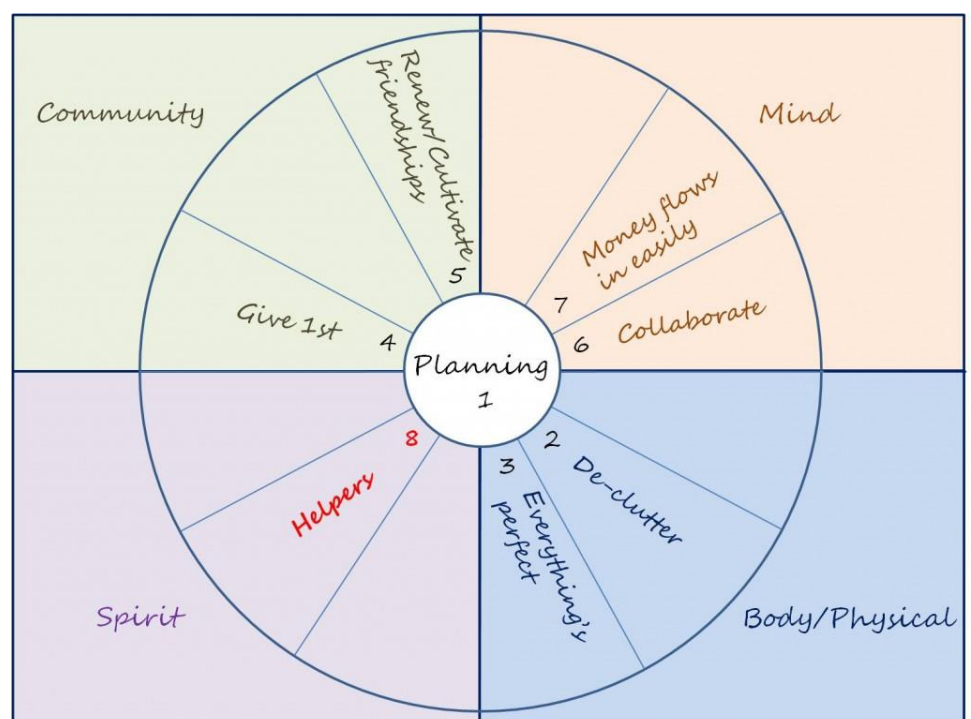
The story of my eighth focus area is very personal, and I almost hesitated to tell it for that reason. Yet I know it's one that millions of people share, and they feel as I do. I know because I've seen many examples and portrayals of this common story throughout history. And I have friends and family who have also been touched by an angel... or two... or more...

Focus Area #8

F-ocus: *Helpers*

A-ttitude: What is my approach to this focus area – what do I/we want it to be?

About 10 years ago, I adopted St. Benedict's personal motto, "Open the ear of my heart." I wanted to open and hear guidance from my higher self so I could heal, understand



what my mission is in the world and direct the course of my life more efficiently in that direction. In addition to tapping into that higher-self knowing, I also wanted a clearer channel of communication between the unseen help that I sense is always with us and myself. I've heard and read many stories about people receiving supernatural visitations by angels, saints and enlightened masters. While I've never really sought visitations, I've always tried to be open to help from such entities. This focus also reminds me that there is more beyond this life in a body.

S-tory: What is a story that illustrates the power of having this focus in my life?

When I was a child I was taught that we have unseen helpers called guardian angels. And since I was raised in a Christian household, we also learned about the angels referenced throughout the Bible, the most famous ones being Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. As I grew older I observed that many cultures around the world also believe in the existence of unseen assistants and messengers. The Native Americans call them The Bird People, Hindus have apsaras and devas, Buddhists have dharmapalas, in Judaism they're called malachim and Muslims believe that everyone has four angels called malaikah (messengers). Whatever they're called, they are found in the retelling of human history all through the ages.

The popularity of television programs featuring angels (both dramas and documentaries) has further proven to me how much we appreciate having or want to have such help in our lives. Many helpers come not just in the form of angels but also that of saints and masters who once lived human lives, such as Mary, Jesus' mother, and, of course Jesus himself.

I have always felt as though I have been protected so that I could carry out my purpose in life. When I was a child, I climbed dozens of tall trees and never once fell. I went from being a city kid to a country kid between ages 8 and 11 years old and explored the forest almost every day during that period of time. I saw poisonous snakes but was never touched or threatened by them or any other animals or insects (except harmless ants and mosquitoes!). Once I asked my mother – when I was a mother myself – how she could bear to let me go off alone like that, and she, of course, said that she had faith I was being protected.

I also recall several specific instances of spins and accidents, especially during dangerous road conditions, in which it seemed highly unlikely that none of us in the car got hurt or even endured a scratch. Clearly, I was being protected.

Then, in 2008, I had a series of encounters with several angels and Mother Mary that shifted my life's course dramatically. And even though I was a believer, I realized then that I still had some residual skepticism about the existence of unseen helpers. However, now I'm no longer a believer,

but, rather, I'm a knower – and knowers, like me, will understand the power of having this focus in everyday life.

T-tool: What is a tool I/we can use to maintain this focus area?

During that focus week of Helpers, I blocked time on my calendar at the end of every day to relax and consciously subdue my “[monkey mind](#).” Even if it was for a few minutes, I gave my attention to opening the ear of my heart. And I asked for help to unhook from whatever negative energies might be weighing me down.

[What Goes Around Comes Around](#)

Published by [aloeb](#) on June 9, 2012 - <http://beradiantsquared.com/what-goes-around-comes-around/>

I've been very busy... a side effect of having the center focus of my wheel as *Planning*. I've planned so much and am, therefore, executing on many interesting projects. It's a good thing to be so productive. While I am definitely grateful for the abundance of activity, I'm also grateful that I had the foresight to add focus areas like *Breathe* to my 13×4 Wheel™! (I'll be talking about that in an upcoming article, so stay tuned.) And it certainly helps when I get some support like I mentioned in my last article, [Touched By An Angel](#).

Being so busy, I've had to rely heavily on the tools that I pre-programmed at the beginning of the year for my personal 13×4. So glad to have them!

And these are the two points I want to make today – first, about those tools and, secondly, about my 9th week focus area...

Thought Algorithms

My colleague, Tom Cassidy, says that he loves to work with and teach what he calls “Thought Algorithms.” What are thought algorithms? Well, I see them as akin to what is known as problem-solving algorithms. That is, applied to the mind rather than outside problems. [According to Encyclopedia Britannica](#), “A problem-solving algorithm is a procedure that is guaranteed to produce a solution if it is followed strictly.”

So, it's a science thing. Which means that when it is repeated over and over again, it yields the same results for everybody who does it. Otherwise it's just a theory or an idea. It's only a science if it works consistently over time.

There are tools that we use to stay focused during each week of the 13×4 cycle. This is the “T” part of the FAST Method™. Many of these tools are thought algorithms. You ask yourself a question to raise your awareness. Or you use a statement that makes you think in a different way.

Clearly, this part of the FAST Method™ is especially critical in helping you to stay focused on achieving what you desire. Choose and use your tools with utmost care... and thought!

Focus Area #9

F-ocus: *Gratitude*

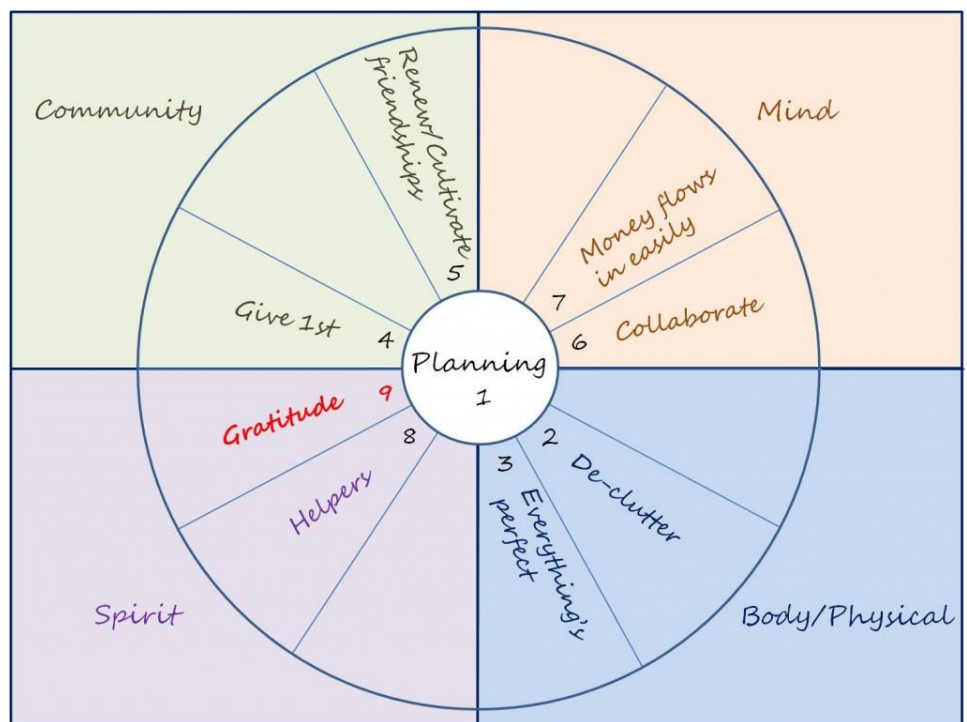
A-ttitude: What is my approach to this focus area – what do I/we want it to be?

Wallace D. Wattles puts it well in his book, [“The Science of Getting Rich”](#)... that gratitude “brings your whole mind into closer harmony with the creative energies of the universe.” He adds that reaching your mind out to the creative substance of the Universe with gratitude causes a reaction of instantaneous movement back towards you. He uses a biblical reference to confirm his point, saying that it is a psychological truth as well:

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” (James 4:8) After that, he goes on to make a very obvious point, which is apropos whether you dig the bible or not: “To permit your mind to dwell upon the inferior is to become inferior and to surround yourself with inferior things. On the other hand, to fix your attention on the best is to surround yourself with the best, and to become the best.” So, what goes around comes around.

Ultimately, the way I see it is this... thoughts of gratitude vibrate at a higher level and so having such thoughts will help you to attract higher vibrational responses from others (and the Universe). And that’s what I want.

S-tory: What is a story that illustrates the power of having this focus in my life?



S-tory: What is a story that illustrates the power of having this focus in my life?

One morning, during this week of focusing on Gratitude, I found myself standing in my closet, thinking, “I sure have a lot of clothes, and I’m grateful for that. But, if I’m honest with myself, more than half of these things are ‘not me’ anymore.” I realized that many of my clothes, though in nice condition, no longer fit the image I wanted to project of myself. While I felt grateful for the abundance of nice clothes I owned, I realized that someone else would be grateful to have them since I wasn’t using them. So, I pulled out whatever I hadn’t worn in the last year and gave them away.

Another blessing I counted, among many, that week was my financial abundance. I was able to use some of the money that was flowing in to buy 5 items of clothing that did fit in with my wardrobe. And, I sure had a lot more space in my closet to put them!

One more observation I’d like to share that has made me see the brilliance of focusing on something fully for one week and then switching to something else the next week... Even though it was during week 9’s focus on Gratitude that I had the urge to clear out my closet, clearly week 2’s focus of De-clutter had a subliminal role in my mind’s decision to do it.

T-tool: What is a tool I/we can use to maintain this focus area?

On Sunday through Saturday of that week, two recurring appointments would pop up on the calendar on my computer and on my phone.

At 9:00am, it would say: Gratitude: What am I putting in? (This is based on the concept of “you reap what you sow” and echoes the wisdom Wattles wrote about.)

At 5:00pm, it would say: Count the blessings!

[A Minute Of Breathing A Day Keeps The Doctor Away](#)

Published by [aloeb](#) on June 11, 2012 - <http://beradiantsquared.com/a-minute-of-breathing-a-day-keeps-the-doctor-away/>

Last time, in [What Goes Around Comes Around](#), I talked about thought algorithms. They are tools that help you stay focused during each week of the 13×4 cycle (and are the “T” part of the FAST Method™). Other tools you can use are “Action Algorithms.” These are similar in that they help you stay focused, but the distinct difference is that you don’t just focus on your thinking, you do something a bit more active.

Action Algorithms

Whereas thought algorithms are reminders to notice your thinking, action algorithms call on you to

act in a certain way. For example, “The Sausage Machine” is a tool that my colleague, Tom Cassidy, often suggests people use. He calls it the “Master Action Algorithm,” and using it moves you from thinking that everything is happening to you to realizing you are the architect of your life. It encourages you to shift into action so that you change your reality yourself. For more on this excellent action algorithm, check out a video about it at: <https://youtu.be/A8OnHeqFOjw>

I often use action algorithms in my 13x4 program. It’s because the underlying focus of the whole program for me this year is *Planning* – and that is leading to the necessity to take a lot of action in my life. It’s also because I’ve been driven to produce results. A point of view expressed so succinctly by Mohandas Gandhi when he said, “You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result.”

My number 10 focus area is in itself an action algorithm. I use it to solve certain “problems” like algorithms are meant to do...

Focus Area #10

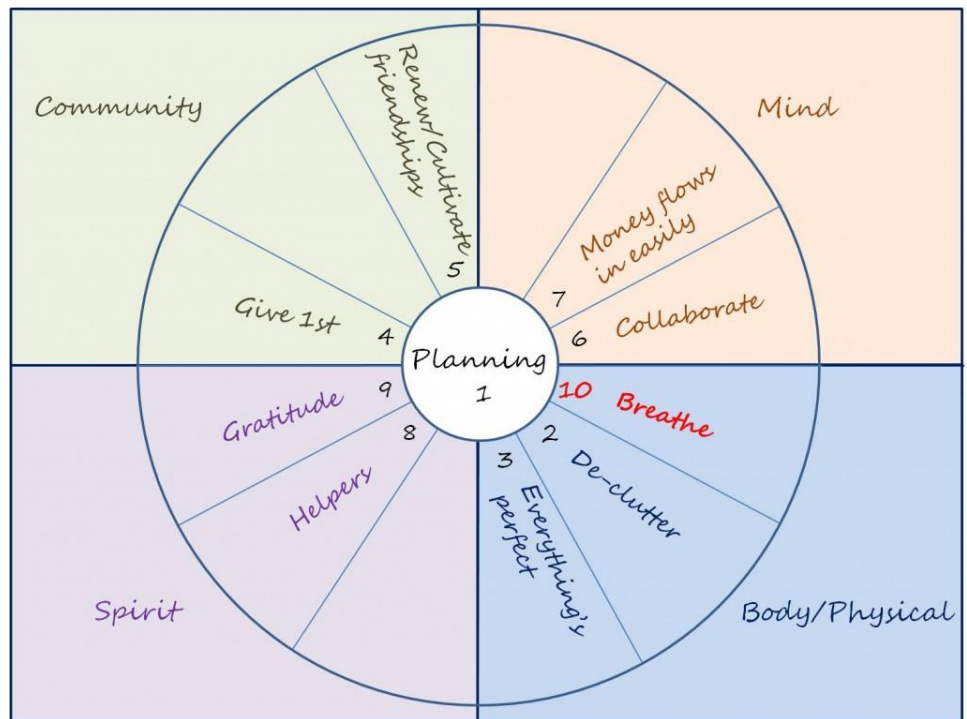
F-ocus: *Breathe*

A-ttitude: What is my approach to this focus area – what do I/we want it to be?

It might seem silly to have to remind myself to Breathe. Of course, I’m not trying to remind myself to do the involuntary breathing that my body does automatically without my thinking about it. I’m trying to remind myself to

pause in the midst of my busy days and do some deeper, conscious breathing. The kind of breathing in which you imagine the stress leaving your body with each exhale and you imagine light and energy entering your body with each inhale.

Breathe is one of the main ways that I use to immediately release stress and put in more energy and vibrancy into my body. It’s a mind function as well as a body function, but, for me, there are more reasons for bodily health as I explain below. I know it works for me [based on an experiment that I did with meditation last summer.](#)



S-tory: What is a story that illustrates the power of having this focus in my life?

In doing this 13×4 program, I've enjoyed learning new things by focusing on what I hadn't focused on before. And I've also noticed that I've been able to get more done with less time, which is, in part, due to the week when I stopped for a moment two times each day to Breathe. Coming out of work mode, closing my eyes and simply breathing was like a computer system reboot. It got me to review my time priorities, reduce my stress and recharge so that I could get more accomplished.

It's also allowed me to maintain my health and well-being. I don't take medicine to control my blood pressure, but doctors have told me that if I don't control it on my own, then they will prescribe drugs. That's how close I am to the borderline of what they consider healthy versus unhealthy numbers. I don't want to deal with the hassle of having to take drugs, especially having to deal with the possible side effects. Breathe is in the Body/Physical domain for this reason. And, thanks to this focus area – which, by the way, feels so good to practice that I make time more often than not to breathe and recharge – my blood pressure is still in the healthy range.

T-ool: What is a tool I/we can use to maintain this focus area?

At midday every day, I noticed my stress level and paused to breathe. It was simple to remember to do this. I set my calendar with a daily appointment notated with the word "Breathe."

[The Universe Played Along And Taught Me A Valuable Lesson](#)

Published by [aloeb](#) on July 6, 2012 - <http://beradiantsquared.com/the-universe-played-along-and-taught-me-a-valuable-lesson/>

We're in the home stretch with this series. Just a couple more focus areas to go!

Last time I talked about the power of taking a breathing break in [A Minute Of Breathing A Day Keeps The Doctor Away](#). This time, I want to tell you about how the Universe played along with my 13×4 during the 11th week and taught me a valuable lesson.

The RAS

If you haven't noticed already, telling my mind something specific every day... one thing at a time, one week at a time... has engaged my subconscious mind in ways that hard to ignore. It's the RAS that is often involved here. The RAS is something that [I've written about before](#). It's the Reticular Activating System. It's something that Tom & I often talk about and discussed in one of our videos (<https://youtu.be/nVpxP6IYmj4>).

I've found my RAS to be extremely helpful in staying focused. I've realized that I'm telling my RAS every week what I want it to notice, so I need to be careful. If I'm emotionally charged about something I don't want or am worried about, it will show me that too. I think that's why this next focus area has presented such a challenge for me this year. I must be clear when thinking about what it means to me.

Focus Area #11

F-ocus: Release Judgements

A-ttitude: What is my approach to this focus area – what do I/we want it to be?

My accountability partner and I have been supporting each as we move through the cycles of our 13x4 systems this year. We customized our own wheels, and when she saw that I had chosen this focus area she was surprised. She said, "You are one of the least judgemental people I know. Why are you choosing this?"

I assured her that I still had a long way to go on trying not to judge people. I think of the

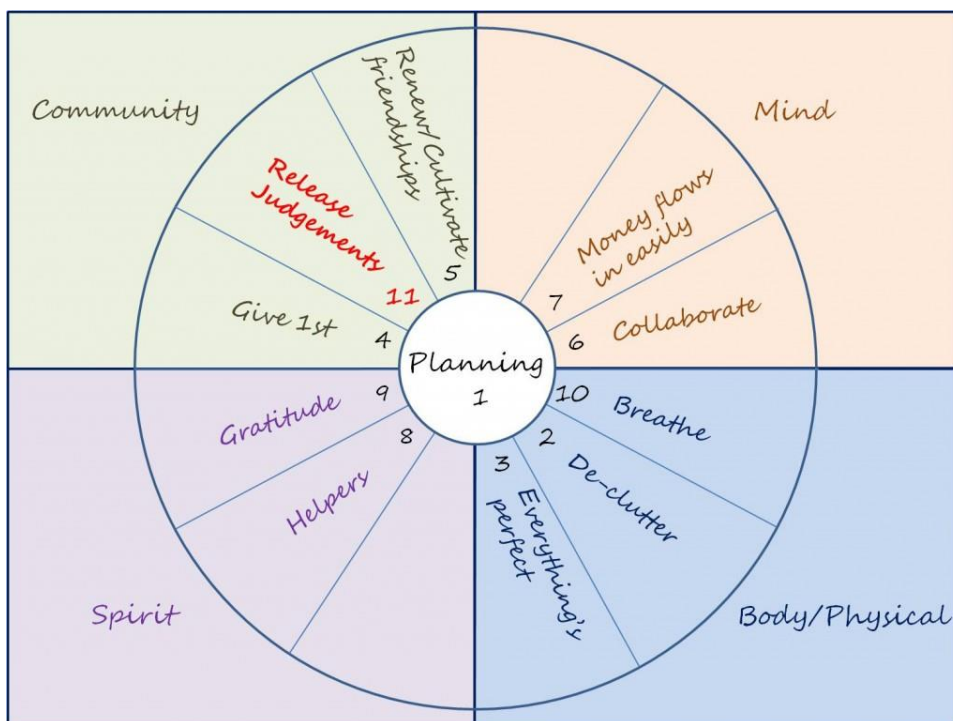
many times when I get annoyed while driving. One of my pet peeves is other drivers not indicating with the proper signals that they intend to make lane changes. When it happens, I tend to think of and/or utter expletives and sometimes even curse them.

So I told her that I have not yet mastered what I am striving to master.

S-tory: What is a story that illustrates the power of having this focus in my life?

When I was a child, I was taught: "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgement." (John 7:24). It kind of confused me at first. So, do we judge or not? And how do we know what is "right judgement"?

I have come to realize with time and wisdom that there is there is a time to judge, such as when it will serve in protecting yourself or others, and there is a time not to judge. There's a light side and a



dark side to this whole judgement thing. And it really clicked for me when I read what Miguel Ruiz teaches in his book, [The Four Agreements](#), which is “Don’t make assumptions.” It made sense because when I would make assumptions, 9 times out of 10, I would make mistakes.

When I focused on releasing judgements about others during that week, my RAS kept noticing all sorts of things dealing with making judgements. For example, one of the newsletters I subscribe to featured an article about this very topic during that week. That was weird in a cool way.

It was also pretty weird how during this particular week, a brand new client during our first session came right out and asked me to make a judgement about him. He wanted to know what I thought about him when I first saw him... what was my first impression of him as he walked through the door? Specifically, did he look too old and should he use hair color to look younger? He insisted that my answer – and how honest I was – would give him a sense of whether I would be the right consultant for him. Talk about being put on the spot. And that it was during the week of “Release Judgements” was not lost on me in that moment either.

Before I answered him, I smiled and told him that I found his question highly ironic because of my particular personal improvement focus area that week. Of course, I proceeded to give him my answer (which was not about his hair color but about his energy, which came across as frustrated and tired – a far more important indicator of how young he appeared than how much gray hair he had).

Clearly the Universe was challenging me, “So, you want to learn about making and releasing judgements, huh? Well, here’s the thing, girly girl, you will always make judgements about people because it’s part of being human. Here’s a chance, though, to judge someone with compassion. Here’s an opportunity to notice your judgements and say them to this person in such a way as to help him.”

Yes, I know... watch what you ask for!

So, I get it. It’s not that I’m going to release judgements totally when I master this focus area. It’s that I’m going to acknowledge that I have a tendency to make assumptions and then strive to question my own assumptions. It’s also about embracing a more compassionate point of view of what I have been tempted to “judge” whether I’m sharing it aloud or not.

T-tool: What is a tool I/we can use to maintain this focus area?

At 9am every day, a message popped on my calendar that said, "Release judgements." Nothing fancy, just a reminder to my conscious and subconscious mind – and, apparently a message to my RAS!

[The Oak Is No Longer Sleeping In The Acorn... It Is Sprouting Big Time](#)

Published by [aloeb](#) on July 30, 2012 - <http://beradiantsquared.com/the-oak-is-no-longer-sleeping-in-the-acorn/>

When you decide to learn about releasing your judgements of others, the funny thing is that you can't help but learn about releasing your judgements of yourself as well. And that's why the last focus week (more in [The Universe Played Along And Taught Me A Valuable Lesson](#)) segued nicely into this next focus week.

This next week required that I start with releasing a pretty strong self-judgement in my "Script." But first, let's have a little context about why I want to choose something different in the first place...

Begin With The End In Mind

I love this quote by Jim Rohn: *"If you don't design your own life plan, chances are you'll fall into someone else's plan. And guess what they have planned for you? Not much."*

Anyone who knows me, has read my writings or has heard me speak, knows that I'm big into life and career planning. After all, "Planning" is the center focus of this 13x4 Wheel™ that I've been using for my own personal effectiveness.

It's not that I'm uber organized (I'm not) or that I have to know and control every little thing (actually, I used to try that until I learned better!). It's more about co-creating the future. It's about pushing my potential to where I can go and what I can do. To me, life planning is about developing a vision for yourself and your direction. And, to me, that's fun, that's adventure.

According to the dictionary, vision is "the ability to think about the future with imagination or wisdom." See? You use your imagination and wisdom to figure out what you want in your future. If you don't imagine it, someone else will. Or maybe they won't, and you'll kind of drift along. Drifting is fine if that's your plan... but, if the thought of drifting makes you antsy because you're more of an action person like I am, then get busy developing a vision. Go for it! Get off the driftwood and climb into a boat with a rudder and sail.

So my reason for choosing this next focus brings to mind what the philosopher, [James Allen](#), once said: *“The greatest achievement was at first and for a time a dream. The oak sleeps in the acorn, the bird waits in the egg, and in the highest vision of the soul a waking angel stirs. Dreams are the seedlings of realities.”*

Focus Area #12

F-ocus: *Confidence in the bigness of my vision*

A-ttitude: What is my approach to this focus area – what do I/we want it to be?

My vision is that there will be a time when I am writing bestselling self-development books and speaking internationally.

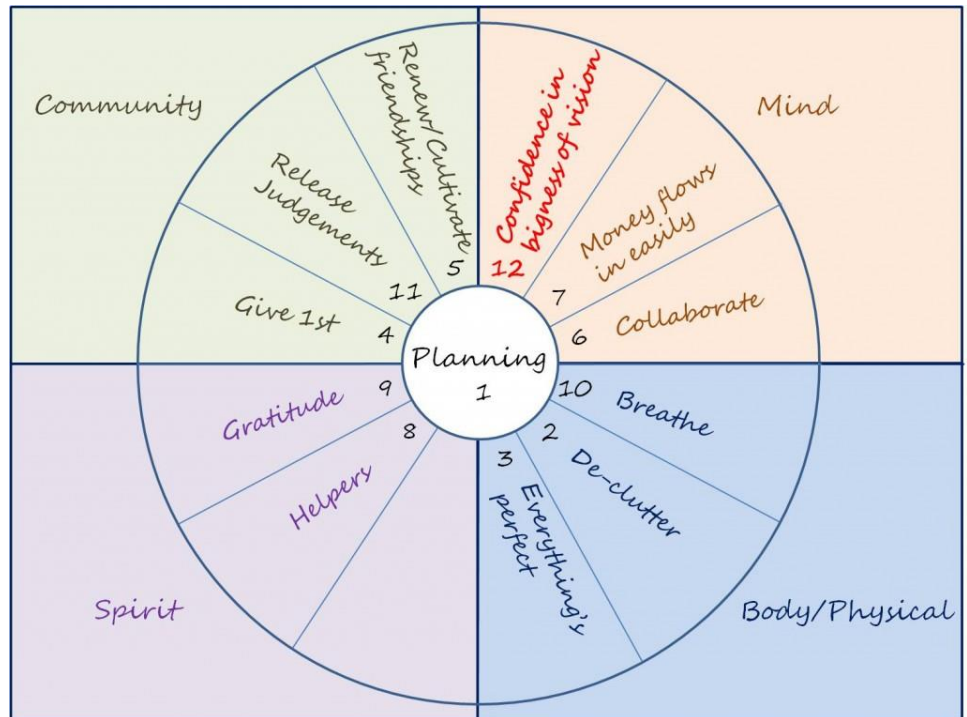
More specifically, I see that, as a result of writing, I’m being invited to speak. The content is of a spiritual nature sometimes; it is also of a very

practical nature. In other words it includes nuts and bolts stuff that you can use in everyday life to raise your awareness and effectiveness on the human journey, as well as philosophical and inspirational stuff that raises your vibration in general.

Since I’m naturally an introvert who comes from a humble background, I’m prone to heeding the “Script” that says “You’re a nobody, so how dare you? Really, you are only capable of thinking and being small.” History is filled with examples of others who have come from a nobody place to make a great difference in the world. They chose to have big visions, and so can I. So, to counter fear and doubt, I am choosing to put “Confidence in the bigness of my vision” into my sausage machine.

S-tory: What is a story that illustrates the power of having this focus in my life?

When I decided to ramp up my writing output in 2006 by launching the Attitude and Longitude blog, it was all a big experiment... at least it was in my mind at that time. I just wanted to see how it felt to put my writing out there. And, really, all I was “seeking” in the beginning was more creative expression since I’d stifled mine for far too long. A few years earlier, I had read and done the



exercises in Julia Cameron's [The Artist's Way](#) and had recovered a creative side of me that had been stuffed away for more than 15 years. Stifling it had even created dis-ease in my body. I knew I needed to heal emotionally and physically, and so, at that time, it was also about seeking healing. So, in addition to writing for myself, I started writing for public consumption.

After that I took bigger and bigger steps, and this writing "thing" has developed into larger possibilities. In fact, the vision of what I am doing with this ability is turning out to be much bigger than I'd first thought it was. Speaking to audiences and facilitating workshops has come into the picture too. Something my inner shy person finds amazing upon reflection.

In 2008, I dared to publish a book about job search and then another one. It was a safe step and very useful. The information I offered helped hundreds of people during the recession, and writing these books, along with giving so many public presentations about the information, has helped me build confidence in where my writing... and speaking/teaching... might go.

It's not because I have an ego about seeing my writing out there in people's hands – though that is a very cool idea – it's because I have begun to realize that it's part of my mission. I wasn't given this deep desire – scratch that... this deep need – to write so I could keep a journal for myself. My deal with the Universe is that I use this gift for something bigger than merely satisfying myself. I often marvel at the fact that my name even means "messenger." I have a message, and it must be written and spoken.

Now I'm writing my third book, and it's not about job search. This one is meant for a more mainstream audience and is far more personal in nature than simply giving nuts and bolts advice to job seekers. It has the potential to reach more people, and so I must keep telling my inner shy person to have confidence in the bigness of the vision.

T-ool: What is a tool I/we can use to maintain this focus area?

As I stated above, this week was basically about "What are you putting into your sausage machine?" So I chose to put in affirming statements so my mind would remember to be confident instead of fearful.

Every day during the first week of my 13×4 cycle a message would pop up on my calendar at 9am: "Confidence in bigness of vision" and one at 5pm: "Success is assured!" During the second cycle, I added the phrase at midday, "Think big!"

It Started With A Centenarian's Point Of View

Published by [aloeb](http://beradiantsquared.com/it-started-with-a-centenarians-point-of-view/) on August 9, 2012 - <http://beradiantsquared.com/it-started-with-a-centenarians-point-of-view/>

My 12th focus area was about thinking big, and mostly regarding my career goals. (Read more in [The Oak Is No Longer Sleeping In The Acorn... It Is Sprouting Big Time.](#)) This next (and last) focus area, the 13th, is about thinking big in a different way. It encompasses leisure time, counts up lifetime achievements and started with a centenarian's point of view...

Focus Area #13

F-ocus: *Bucket List*

A-ttitude: What is my approach to this focus area – what do I/we want it to be?

“John Goddard is most known for his amazing ‘Life List’ of accomplishments. At the age of fifteen John Goddard listed 127 goals he wished to experience or achieve in his lifetime. The list is impressive and audacious, but the results have been truly incredible.”

http://www.johngoddard.info/life_list.htm

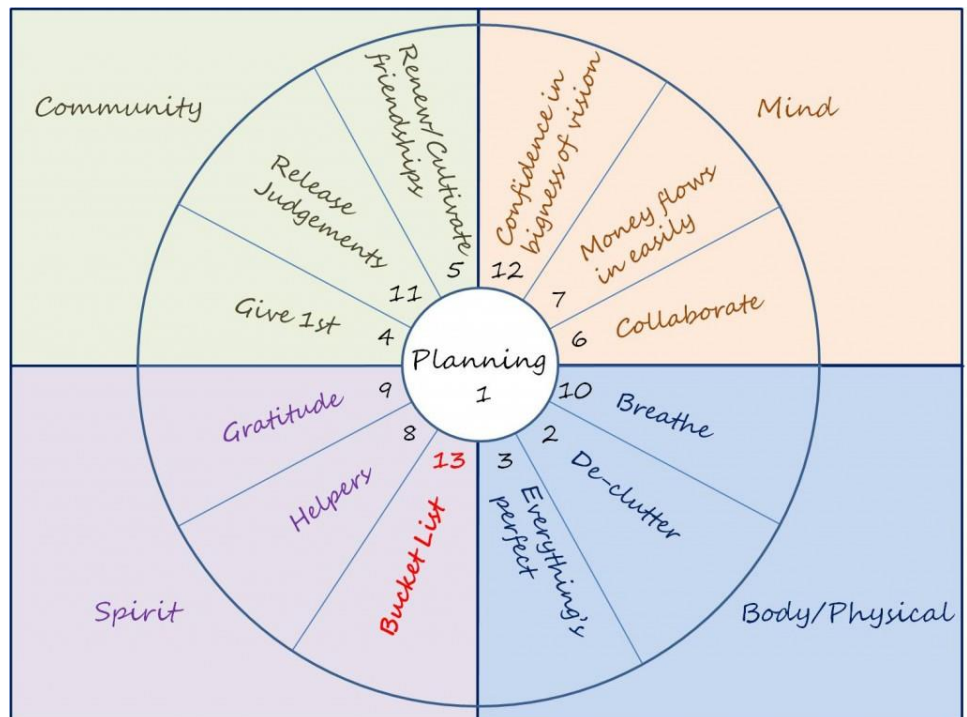
Goddard's list includes things like climbing the world's major mountains, exploring the longest rivers, visiting every country in the world and read the entire Encyclopedia Britannica.

Talk about trying to reach one's potential!

My life list... or as I like to call it, my “Bucket List” (after the [famous movie by the same name starring Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman](#))... is not as ambitious. Still, for me, it's pretty big. I started it in 2010, and my reason for making it a focus area is so that I don't forget the items I've been adding to it.

S-tory: What is a story that illustrates the power of having this focus in my life?

The act of making & checking off lists is very empowering. It gives you a sense of accomplishment and helps keep your momentum strong. Making lists is the main technique many of us use to get



things done on a day-to-day basis. But, making a bucket list really stretches your imagination. It gives you an even larger sense of accomplishment and confidence when you check off those items.

When I started my list, I didn't think of it as a bucket list. Instead it was something that a colleague challenged me to consider – my answer to the question, "On your 100th birthday, what things will you want to be celebrating having accomplished?" I started writing down where in the world I'd like to have traveled, how many books and articles I will have published, what kind of projects I'd like to have collaborated on, etc.

Life is busy. Every day is filled with the business of living and of making a living. It's easy to forget big picture dreams. This is why making "Planning" the center focus of my 13x4 System has been so important for me this year. If I don't plan for the little AND for the big things, I spin my wheels far too much. I never get down the road.

What I've realized is that I'm an expert at planning for the little things – the small projects. And focusing on Bucket List planning is helping me to understand how the little things are tied to the big things.

Here's what I mean. I have a lot of trips to faraway places on my bucket list. To afford the money and time off it will take to make such excursions, I need to look at what I have in front of me to do right now that will help me afford to do those things later. So bucket list planning helps me to work smarter. It helps me to think about my time and money in new ways.



Some of my bucket list items are smaller than others. I decided that to have some fun with this focus area this year, I would do at least one thing from my list this summer. Last week I went to NASA and saw the historic mission control room where they directed the early space missions and landed men on the moon. Check! Now I'm wondering what else I can do this year from my list...

T-tool: What is a tool I/we can use to maintain this focus area?

This focus area, "Bucket List," required that I actually block time on my calendar. So each day I spent a few minutes looking at my bucket list. During this week, whenever I had extra spare time I looked into what it would take to go certain places, do certain things. I put aside some money from

my budget and blocked out vacation time for early August so that I could fulfill something on my list.

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