

Tools for Reinvention

These “shrinks to the stars” can help reshape your problem-solving strategies. By *Deidre Donnelly*

BETWEEN THEM, therapists Phil Stutz and Barry Michels list more than a dozen Academy Award-winners among their clients. They come to the pair for help with challenges ranging from overcoming writer’s block to dealing with stage fright. Unlike the traditional “talking cure,” Stutz and Michels’ no-nonsense approach to psychotherapy is results-driven and empowering. They believe that we all possess “untapped forces” we can use to solve our own challenges. To help people apply these forces, Stutz developed The Tools – practical exercises that combine the work of Jung, Freud, cognitive behaviour therapy and spirituality. Their book *The Tools: Five Life-Changing Techniques to Unlock Your Potential*, proposes that the five devices you need to flourish are: The Reversal of Desire, Active Love, Inner Authority, The Grateful Flow and Jeopardy. If you’ve got a problem that needs conquering, see how these examples could be resolved.



Therapists to the stars, Phil Stutz (left) and Barry Michels.

IF YOU’RE ... complacent.

THE OLD SOLUTION: Avoid the worry of change with escapist actions.

TRY: **The Reversal of Desire**

It may seem sensible to stay away from a person or situation that causes unease. But not only does this shrink your collection of experiences and human network, it defers – rather than resolves – the problem. And if you want to overcome it, a wiser approach may be to stop running. One of Michels’ clients, Vinny, a struggling stand-up comedian, sabotaged himself by not showing up at gigs or being obnoxious to agents. By avoiding the feeling of being dependant on others, he was ruining his prospects.

His routine of smoking marijuana and playing video games with friends enabled him to avoid this reality. Michels helped him get out of his rut by letting him face what he was avoiding, so he would no longer fear it. Relooking his attitude helped Vinny to start living his dream. As Stutz and Michels explain: “If you can’t tolerate pain, you can’t be alive.” Here’s how to strengthen your resilience:

- ❶ Imagine the pain you’re avoiding. Picture it before you as a big cloud. Silently scream, “Bring it on!” and feel this urge pull you directly into the pain-cloud.
- ❷ As you move through the cloud, silently repeat, “I love pain!”
- ❸ When the cloud releases you on the other side, say to yourself: “Pain sets me free.” Now, move forward into the sunny skies of possibility.

Through repeating this method, Vinny built up the courage to apologise to the last agent he was rude to, and got himself a booking. You can use it, too, to brave taking the first step out of any comfort zone of your own making.

IF YOU’RE ... so angry with someone, you can’t think straight.

THE OLD SOLUTION: Shut them out of your heart, refusing forgiveness.

TRY: **Active Love**

Still vexed at the ex who ended it years ago? Do you give in to vengeful thoughts when someone offends you? If you can’t get past the hurt or anger, you become stuck in a “mental maze.” Amanda, a fashion student in her twenties, was furious after her boyfriend flirted with another girl. Though he was in many ways perfect for her, once he’d “humiliated” her, she could only see his faults.

This kind of rage comes from a childlike refusal to accept that life isn’t always fair and reasonable. And even if you are the victim in a situation, letting someone dominate your thoughts only distorts your world-view as life passes you by. Amanda, for instance, ditched every other suitor once her boyfriend had irked her (usually after only a few months) and withdrew from people into an unforgiving state.

But she had to learn that, as unlikely as it sounds, the only way to cure hate is with love. “Unlike water, if your glass is half-filled with love and you give it to your enemy to drink, the glass will return to you full.” So when someone infuriates you, invoke love – with these steps:

- ❶ Feel your heart expand and reach out to all the infinite love out there. As your heart slowly contracts back into your chest, feel it concentrate that love into you.
- ❷ Visualise the offender in front of you and transmit that love towards them, holding nothing back.
- ❸ Feel your love reach and enter the other person, and relax into a sense of loving connection.

Stutz and Michels admit that this exercise is hard, but the more you practise tapping into love, the sooner you’ll claim your power back. It’s not about wishing the other person will magically change their ways, but about finding calm and confidence. Use this tool the minute you feel provoked; to get over past sleights; or before dealing with your nemesis.



IF YOU ... feel you’re “not quite good enough.”

THE OLD SOLUTION: Limit self-expression to avoid judgment.

TRY: **Inner Authority**

Jennifer, a former model and single mom from a rural town, used to freeze every time she dealt with the well-to-do parents at her child’s exclusive school. Assuming that they thought she was “trash,” she froze, becoming stand-offish and making herself the very outsider she imagined they thought her to be. Instead of encouraging her to stay away from people who felt superior, Michels taught her a whole new approach.

“Freezing is caused by an inner insecurity you may not even be aware of, until you suddenly lose your ability to express yourself,” he explains. Insecurities are part of your Shadow, that inner “second self” that follows you around, though you try to hide it. “Our Shadow is everything we don’t want to be but fear we are.”

For Jennifer, it was her teenage self – a gawky social outcast. Because we find our Shadow repulsive, we look away from it and seek outside validation for self-worth. But when our sense of authority is dependant on those around us, we lose our ability to express who we really are. Since your Shadow is actually your source of creativity, make friends with it. Then, as a team with nothing to hide, you can speak (or write) with the self-assuredness of authority. “The ‘best you’ is only present when you’re in this ongoing partnership with your Shadow.” Here’s how:

- ❶ Imagine you’re standing in front of an audience. See your Shadow off to one side. Feel yourself as a team with an unbreakable bond.
- ❷ Together, imagine you both turn to the audience and say, “Listen!”

❸ Feel the power generated from your combined voice.

As Jennifer practised this, she made friends more easily and found the confidence to go back to acting. In time, with your Shadow on your side, you’ll shamelessly show yourself to the world, making connections with others far easier. **Q**



O is giving three readers the chance to each win a copy of *The Tools*. For details, see *Shop Guide* on page xxx.

Words of Wonder

“Every single thing I’ve written of any power or merit came through using the tools” –*Stephen Gaghan, Academy Award-winning screenwriter of Traffic*

“As simple and practical as they are, [the tools] do nothing less than deliver you to your best and most powerful self.” –*Kathy Freston, author of Quantum Wellness*

“Barry Michels and Phil Stutz are profoundly talented guides to the inner workings of the psyche.” –*Marianne Williamson, author of A Course in Miracles*