



Articles by Kathie Hightower & Holly Scherer

## Changing Patterns

by Kathie Hightower and Holly Scherer

I love the “fresh start” feel of the New Year. I have a new calendar and even treated myself to a brand new holder, this one a sporty bright red, a symbol of action for me.

I’ve been in a bit of a slump lately, a combination of many factors, from September 11 to disappearing contracts due to big budget cuts my clients face to a major computer challenge just as my website goes up to this annual down feeling as the grey skies period hits the northwest. Okay, so being a bit down is a natural reaction, but it’s not a good thing for someone who teaches people how to increase their energy, creativity and joy!

I’ve been here many times before. That’s one of the reasons I teach what I do. I don’t come to this topic area from my own natural high energy, optimism and action-taking habits. I know that many of my fellow seminar leaders do — they were born that way, full of energy, enthusiasm and optimism. I come to it from the opposite life.

I am a recovering pessimist, procrastinator and way-too-serious professional. I had to learn these life lessons myself first, the long hard way of research and testing, and I have to relearn the lessons regularly. I think this is a little like being a recovering alcoholic. The negative tendencies remain a part of your inner makeup forever; you just learn how to keep them at bay. And how to pull yourself back up when you fall off the wagon. It’s great to have the awareness and the tools.

This year I finally decided it’s time to change a pattern I’ve been contemplating changing for years. I intend to turn myself into a morning person.

Mind you, my hereditary makeup is that of a night person. My 81-year-old mother still stays up until midnite or later every night, reading and/or watching TV, and then sleeps in til 830 or 9. My sister made a career change from the 9-5 (well, more like 7 – 5) federal government world to do what she loves and to work on her body schedule. She is an emergency medicine veterinarian, working at night and sleeping during the day.

Oh, sure, I’ve been forced to do the morning thing in the past. In the Army I had to be up early, often as early as 0430 for weeks or months on end. In my fanatic running days, I got myself out of bed at 430 am to run (in the snow and ice, no less) in Chicago before I left for my job at 630, knowing that when I got home at 7 or 8 or later running would be out of the question.

But now that I have my own business, working out of my home, I have more flexibility. I work best during the afternoon, early evening and even late evening. And then I sleep in and start my day slowly. But I realize I’ve been sliding into fewer and fewer actual work hours, not getting things done as I need to.

And I keep getting “signs” that I should change this pattern. Of course, I’m a bit slow to act on them.

The first sign for me was when Henriette Klausner, author of *Writing On Both Sides of the Brain* and many other books, shared the fact that she was able to write her first book only by getting up and onto the computer (before a cup of coffee even) at 530 am before her kids got up. She mentioned that in 1988 at a speaker’s workshop held at her home in the Seattle area. See...I really am a bit of a procrastinator.

Then I met Ruth Kuehler this past year. This lively, active 86-year-old shared that she started rising at 4 am when her kids were little just to have one to two hours a day for herself. She continues to do that to this day!

And the straw that broke my inertia? My artist friend, Carrie Marie, just couldn’t seem to find time for her art, the lower-paying (for now) part of her creative work. We tried all kinds of tricks, all of which would work for a short while.

Visiting her recently, I was astounded by the seemingly sudden volume and quality of her art. Her new secret? “I get up, get a cup of coffee, and get into my studio at 530 at least three times a week. I usually don’t want to be there or know what I’m going to do, but as soon as I put my brush to paper I enter the flow. My coffee gets cold before I stop in time to switch over to the money-making graphic design work.”

Then I read a book on creativity as the author describes what it meant to him to force himself to become a morning person. The benefits and the increased volume of published writing.

All right, all right, already. I get it.

So...since I teach goal-achieving workshops among others, I know the tools. One of them is to announce your goal to the world — well, specifically to supportive people, not the naysayers of your life.

So, besides telling all my family and friends and my support group, I’m announcing it to you.

It’s like the couple who managed to succeed with the very challenging Body for Life program, as their progress was reported in *Modern Maturity* magazine. The success rate for people who take on that program is apparently very low, in the single digit percentages. I told my husband, “Well, that’s the way to do it — know you have to share your success — or failure — in a magazine read by thousands.” *Modern Maturity* has one of the highest subscription bases in the publishing industry.

