



*Start Where*

*You Are:*

*It's Not Rocket Science -*

*It's Honesty*

*A workbook by  
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*In order to change the direction of your life, it is important to know where you are starting from. People make changes for one of two reasons. Either they perceive that the change will make their lives better in some way or the place that they are standing becomes intolerably painful. Either way, they find themselves at a decision point, a fork in the road if you will, and sometimes it's a point of many choices. The more choices the more overwhelming it can become. Even is it's only one or two choices, our distress can increase if we are resistant or fearful of the choice we know we eventually have to make.*

*Probably the most difficult thing about making change is getting honest about where we are and why we stay. Yes, why we stay. At any moment it is possible to choose something different. Often times our current situation serves us in some way or did at some point. It's called secondary gain and it can be very subtle. Maybe we have an attachment to being the principle player in our own drama. Maybe when the drama settles, we are left with a quiet space that scares the hell out of us. Maybe we think we are doing what someone else wants us to do and therefore expect something in return. Maybe we used to get something important by our present behavior. Often what appears to be bad behavior is an old coping skill that is no longer working or needed.*

*Often we have developed a fear of change for one reason or another. One thing to keep in mind is that things are always changing. Nothing stays the same. So our idea that we won't or don't have to change is an illusion. Where we are now will eventually change. We can either be part of the decision and planning or let things happen around us. And just as this moment will eventually change, whatever it changes into will eventually change. Any decision you make today is not cast in stone. If it turns out that something decision isn't working for you, you can change that too. You can keep making changes until you have something that works for you.*

*People have lots of ideas and attitudes about change that gets in the way. Sometime we think change means failure; either failure in the present or possible failure in the future. Sometimes we are fearful of making the wrong decision. Sometimes we are more fearful of the unexpected or unknown than we are pained by the present. Part of this process of change is understanding what our attitudes or beliefs are about it and how these attitudes or beliefs are part of the problem.*

*The last thing about making changes is that you must have a vision. There is a Native American saying that the first step to making change is to have a vision. I call*

*it imagining the future. You must be able to imagine the kind of life you want. If you want a happy marriage, you must be able to imagine it. If you want a promotion, you must be able to imagine it. If you want simply to be happy, you must be able to imagine it. Sometimes this process is more difficult than it seems on the surface. If you can't imagine the change you want, it is not because your brain is not capable of imagining it. It is because you are resistant in some way to the change you think you want. Our brain can imagine something as small as an atom and as huge as the universe. It certainly can imagine your new job.*

*The first step is to start at the beginning. Getting honest about where we find ourselves is critical. Explore your current situation with honesty and acceptance. This workbook will help you accept where you are now, identify where you want to be and create the steps to get there. In all the work you do, have compassion for yourself and others. It's not rocket science, it's honesty.*

### ***A little about the workbooks.***

*These workbooks are intended to help you better understand your current situation. They provide a little information and a few questions to get you started on any particular topic. They are informational as well as a workbook for notes or journaling.*

*Contemplation and journaling are important steps to understanding your situation. Through journaling or contemplation, you can gain a broader understanding of the issues and then begin to develop a game plan for implementing change.*

*For those of you who are not journalers, you can simply contemplate each question while out for a walk or quietly with your morning coffee. There is something important about writing things down so even if you don't want to journal in the traditional way, write down bullet points if you like or use art to represent issues or feelings. Writing poetry or stories is also great. The idea is to get it out of your body and onto paper.*



## *Start Where You Are: The Workbook*



### *Where am I?*

*Start by taking an honest look at where you are today. Look at every aspect of your life currently and start listing facts about your current issue. Explore with some detail every aspect of your life even if it's not part of our current problem. Strengths and stability are just as important difficulties.*

*Am I overwhelmed? Overloaded with tasks or responsibilities? Overworked?*

*Am I stuck in one particular area of my life?*

*What is my emotional state? Am I depressed (read *Depression: It's Not Rocket Science – It's Molecular Biology* for details about how to know if you are depressed)? Anxious? Worrying excessively?*

*Do I like my job?*

*Do I like my spouse or relationship partner?*

*Do I like my children?*

*How about my family of origin?*

*Who is my support system? (These are people whom you trust to give you good advice and who will support you no matter what decision you make.)*



### *How did I get here?*

*The importance of this question is not to assign blame but to gain a picture of how you got where you are. This is probably the greatest challenge to honesty because in any situation we all can take some responsibility. It is never entirely someone else's fault. We often think that things happen suddenly and sometimes out of the blue. Your spouse might want a divorce and you are completely surprised! Maybe you suddenly got fired from your job? Maybe you became depressed after some particular event causing subsequent problems. Take what responsibility is yours and let go of whether others take their share. You can't change what others do and you can't make them see their part in your current situation. You can only focus on yourself.*

*Looking back, how did I get here?*

*What behaviors am I currently doing that keep me stuck?*

*What red flags did I miss?*

*What decisions did I make that contributed to the current problem?*

*What help did I need that I didn't ask for or receive?*

*Where do I wish I had made different decisions?*

*Where should I have trusted my intuition but overrode it for some reason?*

*What was I afraid of?*



*What is a keeper and has to go?*

*Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater as the old saying goes. There is always something worth keeping and there are positive aspects to almost any situation. These positives are your strengths and support. Let's keep them.*

*What about my current situation do I like or want to keep?*

*What needs a little attention or cleaning up?*

*What has become absolutely intolerable or non-negotiable and must change or go away entirely?*



*How do I feel about change?*

*Take a moment to identify your feeling and fears about change. These attitudes will be a critical piece in creating and implementing a change plan.*

*What are my fears about change?*

*Are these fears related to the present or left overs from the past?*

*Do I want to make changes badly enough to overcome my fears or attitudes?*



### *How do I get out of here?*

*There might be many facets to this question. The first step is called stabilization. Sometimes it's called damage control or debris removal. It is important to think outside the box on this one. If what you are doing isn't working, doing more of it probably won't work either. Sometimes we need to break this down into very small steps or substeps. For instance "I need to stop arguing with my wife". Maybe you need to defer a conversation till emotions have calmed down or simply practice silence. If finances are part of your difficulty, identify needs vs. wants. It doesn't matter if it's a real bargain, if you don't need it don't buy it. Break things down to their most basic components even if it seems ridiculous. Keep it simple and immediate. Don't overly focus on what needs to happen in the future or what other people need to do. Stay in the first-person present.*

*What are the overall issues?*

*What needs to be done immediately?*

*What's the easiest to clean up?*

*What can I do today to begin to resolve this?*



*When I get out of here, where am I going?*

*This is your vision quest or your imagined future. When you look into the future around this issue, imagine a successful and detailed resolution. Be very clear about what you want your life to be like and when you would like it. You must have a clear destination in order to get where you want to be. I generally suggest people look 6 months into the future but you can pick your own timeline that is relative to your own issues. Consider the same areas of life as we started with; job, relationships, family, living environment, career changes, etc.*

*What changes will I implement this week?*

*In 3 months, what changes will I have made?*

*In 6 months, what changes will I have made?*

*What will my life look like 1 year from now?*