

*Reminders for life's choices*

# note to self

**By Gena McLean**

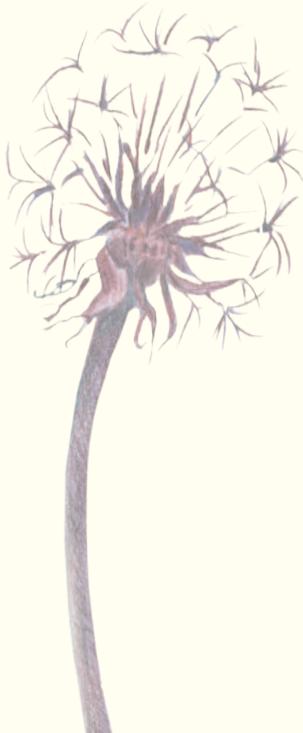
Illustration and Design by Robyn Spicer

**Innovative**  
Resources



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Illustration and Design by Robyn Spicer

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## **Innovative** Resources

62 Collins Street Kangaroo Flat

Victoria 3555 Australia

p: + 61 3 5446 0500 f: + 61 3 5447 2099

e: [info@innovativeresources.org](mailto:info@innovativeresources.org)

w: [innovativeresources.org](http://innovativeresources.org)

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## Foreword

I am someone who is always writing notes to myself. They remind, enlighten, encourage, affirm and strengthen. A shopping list may be the simplest form of a note to self. If such lists and reminders are important at a day-to-day survival level, how much more important must they be in relation to our emotional wellbeing and happiness?

Over millennia, a recurring theme in the wisdom literature is that only the examined life is worth living. If we ignore this need for self-assessment and reflection, we are no more than robots, controlled by powerful external forces. We don't even know we are being controlled and manipulated by clever advertising, fear and conditioned thinking.

*Note to Self* encourages us to explore the questions:

- What is the best life for me?
- From the endless options before me, which do I choose?
- What is happiness?
- How do I intentionally maximise my physical and emotional wellbeing?
- How do I create an integrated life?

*Note to Self* provides simple but profound affirmations, and importantly, asks us to identify how we will action these affirmations in our daily lives. Gena McLean brings her depth of experience and learning to this powerful set of cards. They are also based on the positive psychology of Choice Theory and the practice of Reality Therapy, as developed by Dr William Glasser.

Use these cards with yourself, your clients, and in groups, and watch the transformation take place.

*Ivan Honey, psychologist and author,  
Senior Faculty, William Glasser Institute*

## Contents

Foreword by Ivan Honey	iii
Author's preface: <i>Rewriting the script one note to self at a time</i>	v
Introduction: <i>The power of one</i>	1
The complete set of cards	5
The six suits:	
• Power	7
• Perspective	9
• Potential	11
• Purpose	13
• Preservation	15
• Practice	17
Using the cards	19
About the author	24
About the publisher	25
About the William Glasser Institute	26
Brief definitions: Choice Theory and Reality Therapy	27
Acknowledgements	28



## Author's preface

### *Rewriting the script one note to self at a time*

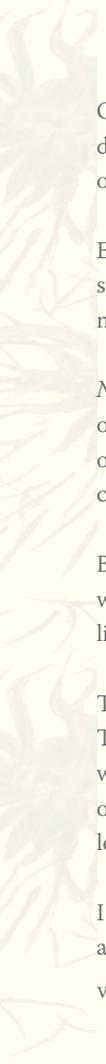
For a long time I have believed deep down, that we are each accountable and responsible for ourselves. This belief became a part of my daily reality when I read these profound, yet down-to earth words:

'It only takes one person to change your life...YOU.'

I distinctly remember the moment this quote changed my life. I'd seen it day after day on my office wall until one morning I read it and felt the truth it was speaking finally sink in. A sense of relief and goose bumps came over me. I felt liberated...strangely free. These ten simple words meant that I no longer had to wait for someone else to fix my problems; I could rescue myself. I realised I was only ever stuck if I handed my control to others or had thoughts of stuckness.

Since that magic moment this quote has been my core Note to Gena and in a roundabout way, has led to the creation of *Note to Self*.

We all talk to ourselves about the stuff that's going on in our lives; we have opinions about what we are experiencing—sometimes we voice them, other times we churn them over and over in our mind in silent agony.



Often we call ourselves names; we punish and blame ourselves for something we did or didn't do. What we say about ourselves to ourselves really matters. It affects our self-esteem, our choices, our experiences, and ultimately our ability to be happy.

Every day we make mental notes about ordinary things; reminders like 'wash whites separately'. It was this realisation that led me to ponder: imagine if we made daily mental notes about stuff that really matters!

*Note to Self* is about using encouraging and supportive self-talk. It provides the opportunity for us to be kind, compassionate and forgiving toward ourselves and others. It promotes responsibility through acceptance and respect. It helps us resume control when we feel like we have none. And it offers hope.

By shining a light on our thoughts we can begin to see with awareness and clarity just what we've been choosing. We then have the chance to rewrite the script we've been living, one note to self at a time.

The quote I read on my office wall also sits perfectly with Dr William Glasser's Choice Theory which states that the only behaviour we can control is our own. My journey with Choice Theory began in 2005. I enrolled in a basic four-day Intensive with the aim of using Choice Theory in my work with clients. It was indeed an intense time of great learning, but mostly about me! No wonder Choice Theory is known as a self theory.

I did begin to use Choice Theory with my clients as planned, but I also started applying it in my everyday life. I was hooked on a very personal level having finally

# note to self

found a framework into which I could fit years of self-directed reading and research. I continued with the Choice Theory training, proudly reaching certification in 2008. Since then I have been riding quite the rollercoaster. At times, I almost feel cursed by my knowledge of Choice Theory because I cannot escape myself! Most of the time though, I feel an incredible enthusiasm and a deep appreciation for Glasser's message of internal control. I found that I needed to use daily reminders to help me create the transformation to internal control and make more effective choices. Enter *Note to Self*.

These cards are steeped in the principles of Choice Theory, interwoven with components of Reality Therapy and Lead Management, the core of which is to evaluate one's own behaviour and choices. Like me, thousands of people around the world know that this process ignites positive change.

My wish is that these *Notes* become the mantras you use to improve the quality of your life and that from this day forward you begin to live a life that is more meaningful, peaceful and happy.

Note to self: it only takes one person to change my life...ME!

*Gena McLean*

## Introduction

### *The power of one*

We can all do with mental reminders. All of us, at some stage, have fallen into the trap of playing the victim and relinquishing control of our choices, ourselves and our lives.

*Note to Self* is a set of reminders that promote self-responsibility. They can help us gain effective control over ourselves and our lives by focusing on that which we have direct control over: our thoughts and actions.

William Glasser's Choice Theory claims that all we ever do is behave; that all behaviour is chosen and that all behaviour consists of four components: feelings, physiology, thoughts and actions. This combination of four components is known as 'Total Behaviour'.

As is demonstrated by another set of cards published in 2006 by St Luke's Innovative Resources called *Cars 'R' Us*, Total Behaviour can be likened to a car with each of the four wheels representing each of the four components; the feelings and physiology (physical sensations) are the rear wheels and the thoughts and actions are the front wheels. As each wheel turns, it affects the others; all the wheels turn at the same time. It is whether or not you choose to drive your car as a rear-wheel drive or a front-wheel drive that influences your behaviour on a daily basis, and consequently your wellbeing. Choosing to be a rear-wheel drive car means acting at a gut level, with your feelings as your point of reference. People who do this say things like, 'I feel like I am out of control.'

# note to Self

*Note to Self* works by focusing on our front wheels—our thoughts and actions—the two components that we have direct control over. Working with our thoughts and actions is empowering because it can allow us to regain effective control over ourselves. As Glasser states, we cannot control others; the only person we can really control is ourselves. Change is always possible because we can choose new thoughts and different actions. When we do this, our feelings and physiology will follow.

Each *Note to Self* card is a thought—a positive, self-affirming thought—that supports accountability and personal power. The cards provide questions that can be applied to any of life's situations, challenges and tipping points. Whether it be a major stumbling block or life decision, a relationship difficulty or a workplace dilemma, *Note to Self* can help us get in touch with our values and beliefs, and work towards solutions and lasting change.

The statements and questions on the cards are reflective by nature and can help us evaluate our current behaviour. The result is positive self-talk which is then supported by actions, bringing about the change we want and need.

*Note to Self* is about mobilising our strengths and embracing serious optimism. It is also a tool for promoting self-esteem—an essential quality for each of us to

function effectively. Throughout the process of using *Note to Self* we are reminded of our strengths and the power we each have to be the driver of our own car. We can gain a new sense of freedom when we realise that we are each in charge of our own life. The future looks promising and positive. Opportunities and new possibilities emerge.

At the heart of all the cards is the key note to self: it only takes one person to change my life...me. We are each the solution to our own problems.



note to self



**The Complete Set of Cards**

*Statements & Questions*

## Power

### I have choices

- 1 What's within my control?
- 2 What are my choices?
- 3 How do my choices affect my reality?

### I accept what is

- 1 What's really happening?
- 2 What's working and what's not?
- 3 What's next?

### I am true to myself

- 1 What does it mean to be authentic?
- 2 Who is the person I really want to be?
- 3 What happens when my values and actions line up?

### Change is an opportunity

- 1 How comfortable am I with change?
- 2 Why is change sometimes scary?
- 3 If I embrace change now, what might be different?

## Perspective

### Today is a new day

- 1 What do I see from where I sit?
- 2 What could I do differently today?
- 3 Where will I start?

### 'Failure' is a perception

- 1 What have I labelled a 'failure'?
- 2 How might I see it differently?
- 3 What can come from failure?

### Stuff happens

- 1 What other ways can I look at things?
- 2 When I look at things differently, what changes?
- 3 Which perspective will I choose?

### I appreciate what I have

- 1 What can I be thankful for now?
- 2 How can negatives be experienced as positives?
- 3 What can I learn from difficulty?

## Potential

### I define my own success

- 1 What is my picture of success?
- 2 When have I felt successful?
- 3 In what ways have I succeeded today?

### I strive for what I want

- 1 What do I really want?
- 2 Is what I'm doing getting me to where I want to be?
- 3 What's one step I will take today?

### Fear is natural

- 1 What am I afraid of?
- 2 Do I let my fears get in the way?
- 3 When have I shown courage and moved through fear?

### I follow my enthusiasm

- 1 What am I passionate about?
- 2 How might I act on it?
- 3 How will I keep my momentum?

## The Complete Set of Cards-Statements & Questions

## Purpose

### My life has meaning

- 1 What gives my life purpose?
- 2 What's important to me?
- 3 When do I feel most connected and fulfilled?

### My happiness is up to me

- 1 For me, happiness is...
- 2 What is already bringing me happiness?
- 3 Can I choose to be happy?

### Opportunities surround me

- 1 What opportunities exist right now?
- 2 How will I choose?
- 3 How will this choice add quality to my life?

### I have strengths

- 1 My strengths are...
- 2 What new strengths could be useful?
- 3 How can I use my strengths to create change?

## Preservation

### Feelings are feedback

1. Do I listen to my feelings?
2. What are they telling me?
3. How might I choose to respond?

### I am a work in progress

- 1 What does it mean to be a 'work in progress'?
- 2 In what ways am I learning and growing?
- 3 What parts of me do I want to preserve?

### My expectations are realistic

- 1 Do I expect perfection?
- 2 Are there times when I expect too much of myself and others?
- 3 How can I maintain balance?

### I'm in control of my wellbeing

- 1 For me, wellbeing is...
- 2 What are the signs that I am travelling well?
- 3 How else could I support my wellbeing?

## Practice

### I give myself time to reflect

- 1 What can I gain from reflection?
- 2 I like to reflect on...
- 3 How can I build reflective moments into my day?

### I learn from my experiences

- 1 Who or what have been my greatest teachers?
- 2 How can I keep that learning alive?
- 3 What am I learning now?

### I step out of my comfort zone

- 1 If I was to 'step out', what might be different?
- 2 How might I benefit from taking a risk?
- 3 What's stopping me?

### I embrace life

- 1 What does it mean to live in the present?
- 2 How might I embrace life when things seem bad?
- 3 What can I celebrate today?

## Power

There are many uses for the word 'power'. People often think of power in terms of domination, superiority and force. We've all heard of power-struggles and many of us have felt powerless when others have used their 'power-over' in an attempt to control us. This power is damaging and disconnecting, and not what *Note to Self* is about.

The power these cards are referring to is self-control—internal rather than external control. Power can also be regarded as the ability we each have to create what we desire for ourselves and our lives. It's about being responsible for ourselves and the choices we make, using our power positively, constructively, respectfully and appropriately.

At times, we've all fallen into the trap of 'why me?', relinquishing responsibility for our choices, ourselves and our lives. When we do this we render ourselves powerless and act as though we have no control. We claim that it's everyone else's fault while we wait for someone to rescue us and make everything ok.

The thing is that each of us has the power to choose. Freedom and hope emerge when we start accepting what is and identifying what's working and what's not. By focussing on what we can change rather than on what we can't, we place ourselves in a much better position for reinstating internal control. We regain a sense of power when we realise that we do have choices. Then we can stop looking for others to rescue us or fix our problems.

We each have the capacity and potential to create the experiences, relationships and life that we want. We may not always get what we want, but we can always strive to be the person we really want to be. We are empowered when we recognise that we create our reality with every choice we make. And we can then control the only thing we truly have control over: ourselves.

## Power statements

I have choices

I accept what is

I am true to myself

Change is an opportunity

## Power questions

- 1 What's within my control?
- 2 What are my choices?
- 3 How do my choices affect my reality?

- 1 What's really happening?
- 2 What's working and what's not?
- 3 What's next?

- 1 What does it mean to be authentic?
- 2 Who is the person I really want to be?
- 3 What happens when my values and actions line up?

- 1 How comfortable am I with change?
- 2 Why is change sometimes scary?
- 3 If I embrace change now, what might be different?

## Perspective

*How do I see the world? What meaning do I give to what I see?*

How we answer these questions can have a profound effect on our relationships, our ability to satisfy our needs, and the reality we experience.

The way we approach each day will influence our perception of what we encounter. What we choose to see can affect our experiences. If we see life as a struggle—something to endure—then it's likely our days will reflect this. However, if we see life as a series of experiences, rich with meaning and potential, then we invite possibility. Our glass can be half-full or half-empty; we can choose pessimism or serious optimism. Our perspective is ours alone to choose.

Admittedly this is not easy. For many of us it requires a big shift in thinking. We can all get stuck in negativity at times, but even the most awful experiences and events contain the seeds of learning and hope. It may seem well hidden at first, but with a willingness to see situations differently—to use the power of our perspective—we can find the jewels among the rubble.

Stuff does happen; people do produce undesired outcomes and results, but it's how we choose to perceive them that determines whether they are labelled a 'failure' or not. Picking ourselves up, wiping off the dust, being thankful for what we do have and do know puts us in a better position for starting again with our sense of self intact.

The waves will come, our days will be filled with challenges but consider the possibility that what you perceive might be what you get. Will you choose struggle, hopelessness and adversity ... or opportunity, possibility and new beginnings?

### **Perspective statements**

Today is a new day

'Failure' is a perception

Stuff happens

I appreciate what I have

### **Perspective questions**

- 1 What do I see from where I sit?
- 2 What could I do differently today?
- 3 Where will I start?

- 1 What have I labelled a 'failure'?
- 2 How might I see it differently?
- 3 What can come from failure?

- 1 What other ways can I look at things?
- 2 When I look at things differently, what changes?
- 3 Which perspective will I choose?

- 1 What can I be thankful for now?
- 2 How can negatives be experienced as positives?
- 3 What can I learn from difficulty?

## Potential

Potential is commonly thought of as one's capacity for achievement. We've all heard talk of rising stars in the sporting arena—their limitless talent and 'huge potential' paving the way to unprecedented success.

*Note to Self* invites us to think of potential more broadly than this. It reminds us that potential is something we are all capable of reaching for in any area of our life. It's not only about what we want to achieve in the world, it's also about who we want to be.

It's easy for us to get attached to outcomes but the one thing we can count on is that life is full of potholes. We may feel like we've failed when we don't reach our self-imposed goals, yet the possibility for us to be the person we want to be exists regardless of our destination. The goal is never as important as the person we become along the way and every day we each have the chance and the choice to be the person we really want to be.

At times we've all felt that we were living on auto-pilot; days rolling into weeks, and months passing us by in a blur—our potential seemingly lost in the busy-ness of daily life. The reality is that opportunities exist daily for us to move closer to fulfilling our potential; we just need to be open and aware. If we get in touch with what excites us, we can use this energy to help create what we want.

Success is personal; we each have our own picture of success, and our own means and methods for measuring success. Getting in touch with what we want to achieve and who we want to be is essential if we are to begin to reach our true potential.

And remember, achievement and accomplishment aren't exclusive to large scale projects and long term goals; mending a relationship, keeping our cool in a difficult situation, taking that first step toward something new, can all be counted as successes.

## Potential statements

I define my own success

I strive for what I want

Fear is natural

I follow my enthusiasm

## Potential questions

- 1 What is my picture of success?
- 2 When have I felt successful?
- 3 In what ways have I succeeded today?

- 1 What do I really want?
- 2 Is what I'm doing getting me to where I want to be?
- 3 What's one step I will take today?

- 1 What am I afraid of?
- 2 Do I let my fears get in the way?
- 3 When have I shown courage and moved through fear?

- 1 What am I passionate about?
- 2 How might I act on it?
- 3 How will I keep my momentum?

## Purpose

When we think of purpose we often think of the ‘big picture’ and of that million dollar question: What is the purpose of my life? While it’s important to ponder big questions, we can easily become bogged down in the ‘what’ and ‘why’ and lose our focus on the present.

Rather than getting hooked on solving life’s mysteries *Note to Self* encourages us to explore the role purpose and meaning play in our life on a daily basis. Each new day presents opportunities for us to get closer to living with purpose. The challenge is to recognise those occasions that have the potential to bring meaning to our life.

Lately there has been a focus on happiness; where we can get it, how we can find it, and once we’ve got it, how we can keep it. A link has been made between happiness and meaning, but are we really looking in the right places? Since when is it up to others to make us happy? If we are each creating our reality, then maybe it’s time we stopped leaving happiness to others to fulfil. Our happiness is too important to be left to chance.

We are each endowed with strengths and talents. Identifying and using them with intention can help us as we journey through life looking for meaning and purpose. We face countless opportunities throughout our lives that may or may not lead us to greater meaning. Tuning into our values—to what we hold near and dear—can help us navigate our way to purpose.

A meaningful life is created choice-by-choice, day-by-day. Becoming conscious of this can help us see that our reality, and consequently our relationships, arise out of the choices we make. Our choices have the power to create meaning and enhance our sense of purpose.

## **Purpose statements**

## **Purpose questions**

My life has meaning

- 1 What gives my life purpose?
- 2 What's important to me?
- 3 When do I feel most connected and fulfilled?

My happiness is up to me

- 1 For me, happiness is ...
- 2 What is already bringing me happiness?
- 3 Can I choose to be happy?

Opportunities surround me

- 1 What opportunities exist right now?
- 2 How will I choose?
- 3 How will this choice add quality to my life?

I have strengths

- 1 My strengths are ...
- 2 What new strengths could be useful?
- 3 How can I use my strengths to create change?

## Preservation

The word 'preservation' often brings to mind old-growth forests and endangered species. But do we ever stop to think about the preservation of our own sense of self?

The busy-ness of life can take its toll. We are all juggling responsibilities, commitments and relationships, and often the last on our list of priorities is ourselves.

We may find it easy to help a friend in need, yet we often give ourselves the cold shoulder when we need nurturing the most. We may get caught up in self-defeating behaviour; criticising, blaming and resorting to harmful habits. This eventually leads to a damaged sense of self and we end up surviving rather than thriving.

Preservation is about reminding ourselves that we matter. It's about choosing to keep our own self safe and intact. Whatever we are going through, whether it is invited or unwanted, it is vital that we look after ourselves. Whatever our starting point and even while we are in the midst of challenging transformation, we still have strengths and virtues that need to be protected and preserved.

Attending to our own needs is not a selfish act. Knowing what our needs are and meeting them daily is how we can preserve our sense of self. Honouring ourselves doesn't mean that we matter more than others; but it does recognise that we can care for others far more effectively when we make it a priority to care for ourselves.

The expectations we place on ourselves and others can have a major impact on our quality of life, our wellbeing and our relationships. Being honest with ourselves about what we expect is essential if we are to preserve our sense of self.

## **Preservation statements**

## **Preservation questions**

Feelings are feedback

- 1 Do I listen to my feelings?
- 2 What are they telling me?
- 3 How might I choose to respond?

I am a work in progress

- 1 What does it mean to be a 'work in progress'?
- 2 In what ways am I learning and growing?
- 3 What parts of me do I want to preserve?

My expectations are realistic

- 1 Do I expect perfection?
- 2 Are there times when I expect too much of myself or others?
- 3 How can I maintain balance?

I'm in control of my wellbeing

- 1 For me, wellbeing is...
- 2 What are the signs that I am travelling well?
- 3 How else could I support my wellbeing?

## Practice

Sometimes we do something once and wonder why it feels like it isn't working. A change may occur suddenly, but it usually requires more than a single isolated response to manage it effectively. Even when we instigate change we have a better chance of maintaining and sustaining it when we see it as a process that requires regular action.

Practice is about choosing and cultivating habits that support us as we change, develop and grow. Cultivation implies the encouragement of growth; so whether we are cultivating a crop or a new way of being, patience and perseverance are essential. And practising a little self-care never goes astray.

It's also about looking at what we have learnt along the way and applying this newfound wisdom to our current situation. We don't need to be old to be wise—just aware. Our most important learnings may be disguised as problems. *Note to Self* suggests that our approach to our problems can be the catalyst for positive change.

Sometimes adapting to change successfully requires that we step out of our comfort zone and go out on a limb. Initial feelings of insecurity and uncertainty may appear, but by taking regular supportive action and using positive self-talk we might even enjoy the fruit on the outer branches.

We are all developing and growing. Reflecting on our choices, our values, our vision and our actions can help us set up more encouraging, useful habits, enabling each of us to be

the person we really want to be. Practice doesn't need to make perfect; it just needs to sustain the change.

### **Practice statements**

I give myself time to reflect

I learn from my experiences

I step out of my comfort zone

I embrace life

### **Practice questions**

- 1 What can I gain from reflection?
  - 2 I like to reflect on...
  - 3 How can I build reflective moments into my day?
- 
- 1 Who or what have been my greatest teachers?
  - 2 How can I keep that learning alive?
  - 3 What am I learning now?
- 
- 1 If I was to 'step out', what might be different?
  - 2 How might I benefit from taking a risk?
  - 3 What's stopping me?
- 
- 1 What does it mean to live in the present?
  - 2 How might I embrace life when things seem bad?
  - 3 What can I celebrate today?

## Using the cards

Who will use *Note to Self*? Anyone who wants to make a positive difference in their life and gain effective control over their thoughts and actions including:

- counsellors and therapists
- life coaches
- psychologists
- social workers
- managers and supervisors
- teachers and trainers
- facilitators and team leaders
- practitioners of choice theory, cognitive behavioural therapy, positive psychology and mindfulness techniques

*Note to Self* can provide a valuable tool for conversations that aim to:

- clarify needs and wants
- identify strengths and exceptions
- awaken hope
- acknowledge thoughts and feelings
- identify patterns and themes in our lives
- explore beliefs and values
- find ways forward.

# note to Self

Whoever we may be, and whatever we may be seeking, many of us surround ourselves with sticky notes, scraps of paper, or lists of things we want to remind ourselves to do on a daily basis. As the title suggest, *Note to Self* is just that; a set of important reminders for ourselves—reminders that we have control over our thoughts and actions, that we have choices, that our lives can be rich with meaning when we feel connected and fulfilled.

There are no rules or prescriptions for using *Note to Self*. We know from past experience that the way the cards are used will depend greatly on the preferences and creativity of the user. Of course, issues of respect, permission, cultural sensitivity, energy levels, literacy, timing and confidentiality all apply to *Note to Self*, just as they do when introducing any hands-on tool.

*Note to Self* is about the choices we make in life, and those choices include how you might use the cards. For some, scanning the *Note to Self* cards in search of the right statement or question to address a particular issue or situation will be the way to go. For others, the serendipitous nature of random choice might provide an unexpected shift in perspective or a moment of profound change. Whatever your method of using the cards, the ideas on the following pages may spark your own creative thoughts.

## *For reflection*

Each of the following suggestions can be adapted for both personal and professional use.

- Self-affirming thoughts can bring about positive action, and just maybe it can begin with a simple piece of note paper! Create your own *Note to Self* pad using a blank note pad or a pad of sticky notes. Write one or two (or more) notes to self and put them in prominent places: on the fridge, the dashboard of your car, the bedside table. Slip a note to self inside your diary or the book you're reading, pin one on a noticeboard or on the back of the toilet door, or stick one on the mirror.
- Spread the *Note to Self* cards out. Select one card you would like to think about for a day or for a week. Why have you chosen this card? Take some time to reflect on the statements and questions, and see if you can apply them to your daily situations and interactions.
- Select a card that represents an aspect of your life. Why is the statement important to you? As an example, imagine you chose the *'Failure' is a perception* card. Apply the questions to something you've perceived as a failure in your life. What further questions arise? How might you see things differently?
- Pick a key word from within the statements or questions that you'd like to explore further. For instance, you might choose a word like 'momentum' or 'authentic'. Make it a theme for your thinking or journaling. Create your own *Note to Self* based on that word. Perhaps evaluating how such words relate to our lives can take us closer to choosing the person we most want to be?
- Is there a *Note to Self* statement that strikes you as a slogan you'd like to make your own? Put the card in a prominent place as a reminder, carry it with you in your pocket

or diary or in your car—anywhere you'll bump into it often.

- Would you like to choose a new statement each week or month?

## *For supervision, groups and team-building*

*Note to Self* can be used in team meetings or for one-to-one supervision. It aims to foster continual improvement, promote responsibility, and prompt conversations about what makes a quality workplace, organisation or team. Once again, keep in mind that all of the following ideas for implementing *Note to Self* assume a trusting and respectful relationship between participants. Once the group has agreed on how it will conduct itself respectfully, the following ideas might be useful:

- Invite each member of the team to select a card to reflect on over the ensuing week and discuss at the next meeting. How does the card relate to their role in the team? How might it change their work or their relationships with others?
- Can team members identify a card that might encourage more fun, learning or opportunities for change within the team?
- Try a 15-minute discussion circle at a team or staff meeting. Spread the cards inside the circle. Is there a statement that is topical or relevant for the team at this particular time? A card can be chosen by the team as a whole, by a single group member or by the facilitator. Or a card can be chosen at random.
- The statement and each of the three questions on the card will help unfold the conversation. The group can continue to respond to each question until everyone has had a chance to contribute. Encourage group members to record their key learnings

or notes to self as the discussion unfolds, or build in a silent period at the end of the discussion for recording their notes.

- To wind up, invite each participant to share one of their notes to self.

### *For counselling and coaching*

- Use *Note to Self* as a simple session starter. Invite the client to pick a single card, and take the three questions on the card to prompt the discussion. Of course there is plenty of scope to change the order of questions, or for the group to create their own. But what *Note to Self* does provide is 24 topics guaranteed to go right to the heart of what it means to be human.
- If a conversation leads itself naturally to the theme of a *Note to Self* card, use the the questions on the card as a way forward. Or even a whole suit (such as Power or Preservation) may be of particular interest to them.
- Invite the client to make their own notes to self during the session. This may be both empowering for the client and provide something to take away at the end of the session. They might record new thoughts, meaningful snippets of conversation, or notes to reflect on until the next session. Counsellor and client might both make notes to self during a session and use their notes to confer at the end.
- Use the cards to identify one thing that the client might do differently right now. Scan the cards in response to the question: What will I do first?
- Use the cards to wrap-up or summarise what's been talked about during the session. Offer the client a question or statement to reflect on before the next session to create a sense of continuity.

## About Gena McLean

My vision is to live an inspired life; a life that is rich with meaning and purpose; a life where I am aware, open to possibilities and authentic; a life where I am the best me I can be. In an attempt to turn this vision into reality I followed my enthusiasm and began devouring hundreds of self-help, wisdom-based, you-can-do-it style books. In 2005 I began facilitating and coaching adults to be their personal best whilst embarking on the Choice Theory journey, reaching certification in 2008. I am now enjoying Practicum Supervisor Training, which is deepening my understanding and affirming the knowledge and wisdom I have been gathering for nearly 20 years.

In my quest to unleash my best self I have discovered that I am actually a ‘work in progress’—and always will be. I’ve come to realise that life is an education; our experiences and relationships serve as our teachers, providing opportunities for us to learn, love and grow. My burning desire to write and be a catalyst for change has led me to create my very own wisdom literature, *Note to Self*, which is as much for me as it is for you.

**[www.genamclean.com](http://www.genamclean.com)**

## About the publisher

Innovative Resources is part of Anglicare Victoria, one of Australia's leading community service organisations providing child, youth, family and community services throughout Victoria and New South Wales.

Innovative Resources publishes card sets, stickers, books, picture books, digital and tactile materials to enrich conversations about feelings, strengths, relationships, stories and goals. Our resources are for all ages and bring colour and creativity to therapeutic and educational settings all over the world. They are used by counsellors, psychologists, teachers, trainers, social workers, managers, mentors, parents, teams, supervisors ... and anyone who works with people to create positive change.

Innovative Resources also offers highly-engaging training in 'strengths-based' approaches to working with people where change arises out of a focus on strengths and 'power-with'. We also offer 'tools' workshops on ways of using resources to invigorate human service work. Our workshops respect different learning styles and the power of visual images and storytelling to truly connect with children and adults alike.

**[www.innovativeresources.org](http://www.innovativeresources.org)**

## About the William Glasser Institute

In 1967, psychiatrist, author and lecturer, Dr William Glasser, founded the William Glasser Institute with the mission of teaching the world Choice Theory. Since then more than 75,000 people have completed the Basic Intensive Week—the introductory course in Reality Therapy and Choice Theory. Choice Theory is used as the basis for training in Reality Therapy, Lead Management and Quality Schools and is taught in over 26 countries. The William Glasser Institute-Australia is a non profit organisation whose purpose is to assist in Glasser's mission.

For further Information go to: **[www.wglasser.com](http://www.wglasser.com)** or **[www.wgia.org.au](http://www.wgia.org.au)**

Illustration and Graphic Design by Robyn Spicer  
**[www.magicmousegraphics.com](http://www.magicmousegraphics.com)**  
Email: **[magicmousegraphics@iprimus.com.au](mailto:magicmousegraphics@iprimus.com.au)**

## **Brief definitions**

William Glasser defines Choice Theory as a responsible internal control psychology, stating that we choose everything we do in an attempt to satisfy our five genetic needs (Survival, Love and Belonging, Power, Freedom, Fun) and that the only person whose behaviour we can control is our own. Glasser believes that we need to be close to other people if we want to be happy, and that by cultivating internal control using Choice Theory we can learn to get along better with others and improve the quality of our lives through the choices we make.

Reality Therapy is a counselling method based on Choice Theory which is used to help clients make more effective choices. Since disconnectedness is seen as the source of most unhappiness, the counsellor creates and builds a relationship with the client. During this process and through the teaching of Choice Theory, clients are encouraged to evaluate their choices and then choose behaviours leading to greater need satisfaction and improved connections with others.

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What do I really want?  
What can I learn from difficulty?  
What are my choices?  
What's one step I will take today?

Right questions at the right time are powerful catalysts for change — and we all need these reminders to be the best we can be.

Drawing on the wisdom of choice theory, cognitive behavioural therapy, positive psychology and mindfulness techniques, *Note to Self* is ideal ...

*For anyone who wants to take effective control of their life,  
make conscious choices and clarify goals.*