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TIM SANDERS, *NYT* bestselling author of *Today We Are Rich*

LIVING THE



4

4:8 PRINCIPLE

DAYS

to a Joy-Filled Life

TOMMY
NEWBERRY

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

LIVING THE



4.8 PRINCIPLE

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40 Days to a Joy-Filled Life: Living the 4:8 Principle

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*This book is dedicated with gratitude to all
those who bring joy to the world.*

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DAY 1

THINK THIS, NOT THAT

The Joy of Free Will

A HEALTHY BODY produces energy. Likewise, a healthy mind produces joy. This is not an accident. If you want to experience vibrant health and abundant energy, it is essential that you consume certain foods and drinks and refrain from consuming others. The same is true if you want to lose weight or put more muscle on your frame. You have to say yes to the foods that lead you toward your goal and no to those that lead you away. Very simply, you need to eat this, not that. And while, for the most part, this is now considered common sense, it is not always common practice for those desiring to reshape their physical bodies or increase their energy levels.

Progress toward joy begins the same way, with a firm decision to cut back on *joy-reducing* thoughts and increase *joy-producing* thoughts. In short, you have to change your mental diet. You have to *think this, not that*. After all, joy is the sum and substance of emotional health.

Many well-meaning individuals desire to be leaner or more energetic but then continue to indulge in a diet and lifestyle

that takes them in the opposite direction. Consequently, they do not reach their goal. Many with the goal of increased joy run into the same predicament: they keep consuming a mental diet mismatched with their goal. In both instances, there is a major disconnect between desired objectives and daily behavior.

Joy is a state of mind that must be purposely cultivated if you are to live and love and influence others as God intended. Fortunately, joy does not depend on the outer conditions of your material life, but rather on the inner condition of your mental life. Joy is the result of something strikingly simple, though not necessarily easy: *consistently thinking joy-producing thoughts*.

Is this within your grasp? Is it even possible for anyone to accomplish? Before you answer, let me remind you that few endeavors worth pursuing come easily to anyone, and the attainment of a joy-filled spirit is no exception. There are risks in shooting for this gold standard of faith in action. There is a high price to be paid, and it must be paid in advance. Certain comfort thoughts will need to be relinquished. Counterproductive habits will need to be abandoned. Tenured excuses must be surrendered.

Since you are free to choose what you think about, and you have billions of options, what specific thoughts should you increase to become joy filled? What specific thoughts should you decrease? What kinds of thoughts will distress your soul? What types of thoughts will nourish and hydrate your soul?

At any given moment we can consciously choose to

- think excellent thoughts, not mediocre thoughts;
- think focused thoughts, not scattered thoughts;
- think fresh, exciting thoughts, not stale, boring thoughts;

- think compassionate thoughts, not harsh thoughts;
- think innovative thoughts, not common thoughts;
- think loving thoughts, not indifferent thoughts;
- think energetic thoughts, not exhausted thoughts;
- think constructive thoughts, not destructive thoughts;
- think helpful thoughts, not hurtful thoughts;
- think successful thoughts, not failure thoughts;
- think faith thoughts, not fear thoughts;
- think fit thoughts, not fat thoughts;
- think bold thoughts, not comfort thoughts;
- think opportunity thoughts, not security thoughts;
- think giving thoughts, not getting thoughts;
- think serving thoughts, not self-centered thoughts;
- think grateful thoughts, not entitled thoughts;
- think abundant thoughts, not lacking thoughts;
- think responsible thoughts, not irresponsible thoughts;
- think reconciliation thoughts, not retaliation thoughts;
- think principled thoughts, not popular thoughts;
- think positive thoughts, not negative thoughts;
- think thoughts of victory, not thoughts of defeat; or
- think about the promises of God, not the problems of this world.

Think about what you want, not what you don't want. Why is this required for joy-filled living? Very simply stated, we tend to bring about what we think about. As King Solomon counseled, "As [a person] thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7, NKJV).

Building on Solomon's wisdom, James Allen wrote that "the outer world of circumstance shapes itself to the inner world of thought, and both pleasant and unpleasant external conditions

are factors which make for the ultimate good of the individual. As the reaper of his own harvest, man learns both by suffering and bliss.”¹

It is my intention that during this forty-day regimen, you will start experiencing more of the bliss that is called joy-filled living. Starting today, release the need to hang on to thoughts that haven’t worked well for you.

It is true that we can think this, not that!

ACTIVATE 4:8



Drill #1

Think about the person you intend to become. Then on the following page, identify a few specific thoughts that are incompatible (Not That column) with that vision. In the left-hand column, identify a handful of thoughts that are compatible (Think This column) and helpful. At the bottom, write a short sentence indicating your commitment to improve your thinking.



The Extra Mile

Invite a trusted friend to participate with you over the next forty days. Send a brief e-mail to each other before midnight every day sharing what you deem the most valuable concept or “aha moment” from that day’s lesson. If possible, talk about the experience once per week by phone or over a cup of coffee.

THINK THIS

NOT THAT

A large, empty rectangular box with a white background, intended for writing thoughts or observations under the 'THINK THIS' header.

A large, empty rectangular box with a white background, intended for writing thoughts or observations under the 'NOT THAT' header.

A wide, empty rectangular box with a white background, spanning the width of both columns above, intended for a summary or final thoughts.



Make It Stick: Thought of the Day

I am free
to choose my
thoughts.



Prayer

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the freedom to select my thoughts.
Today, nudge me to think the right thoughts all day long. Amen.*

THE FIFTEEN-MINUTE MIRACLE

The Joy of Daily Solitude

A JOY-FILLED LIFE is the result of joyous decades, joyous years, joyous months, joyous weeks, and joyous days. But you can live a joy-filled life only one day at a time. Therefore, to boost your potential for joy, start with the essential daily foundation. After all, if you take care of the days, the decades will take care of themselves.

If you're going to "seek first the kingdom of God," as we're taught in Matthew 6:33 (NKJV), then doesn't it make good sense to schedule an appointment with your Creator first thing in the morning? When your first meeting of the day is with your heavenly Father, your day is established upon the rock of his truth. Could there be a more important appointment all day long?

Visit with your heavenly Father before you visit with anyone else—and before you have turned your attention to the demands of the day. The early morning hours are ideally suited for prayer,

meditation, and Bible study, as well as personal reflection and course correction. It is upon awakening in the morning that your mind is most peaceful and receptive to insight and inspiration. Quality thinking is far less likely in the agitated or cluttered mental state that often follows a hectic day of work.

Be still, and remind yourself that God is in control. Take time every single day to resurrender every corner of your life to him. Contemplate the size and scope of God. Remind yourself that any problem is small when compared to your heavenly Father. Experience the cleansing, renewing, and invigorating power that is always available to you.

Program your mind to produce a joy-filled day by saturating your mind with Scripture, following your prayer routine, and then reviewing your personal mission statement, goals, and daily priorities. Whatever you do, pour God into your morning before you expose yourself to the headlines and heartaches of the day.

There is no better example of living on purpose and putting first things first than making this morning meeting with God a nonnegotiable daily priority. If you're seeking joy, it's okay to skip a meal or even skip a workout, but never cheat yourself of the calm, quiet confidence that comes from this rock-solid start to your day. I have found that when I feel like I can least afford to invest this time, that is precisely when I need it the most.

Since God created you and the universe, why not let him help you create your day? Think about it. If you had access to the smartest person in your field and she offered to mentor you every morning, would you accept that invitation? If you had an entrée to the wisest human being alive today and he offered to coach you each day, would you accept that offer? Of course you would!

With God, though, you have far more than you can even humanly imagine. Because he is all-powerful, he can help you with anything. And because he knows everything, you can go to him with all your questions and concerns. Since he has infinite wisdom about your business ventures and family dynamics, this opportunity is simply too good to pass up.

Investing this time first thing in the morning is a single discipline, but it carries with it multiple spiritual rewards, including joy, insight, renewal, and peace of mind. Additionally, you'll move on with the rest of your day with the confident assurance that you have, for today, sought first the Kingdom of God.

It's time for a quick checkup!

How do *you* currently start the day? Do the first fifteen minutes of your morning glorify God and set the foundation for a joy-filled day? What do you feed yourself mentally and spiritually after awaking? I have witnessed more positive progress from helping my clients fine-tune their early morning routines than from any other single lifestyle adjustment. What you do first thing in the morning sets the emotional tone for the entire rest of the day. If your morning doesn't start with joy, you will find it difficult to catch up later.

First thing in the morning, before your mind gets entangled with the busyness and obligations of the day, is the perfect time to work on your "Joy Software." Upload your gratitude and then download God's grace. Invite God to reveal what he wants to see happen in your life today. Ask him about that next most important step he wants you to take. If necessary, wake up fifteen minutes early to seize this opportunity. Before long, you will find yourself positively addicted to this Early Morning Joy Ritual (EMJR), and you will never want to start your day any other way.

Fifteen minutes has proven to be long enough to make a palpable difference and still short enough to inspire busy folks to give it a try. If you're ever tempted to say that you don't have time for this solitude with God, ask yourself bluntly, "What could I possibly do with that time that would bring me any greater benefit?" Minutes invested in praying for wisdom will save days spent in overcoming mistakes.

If you invest just fifteen minutes each morning in preparation for joy, it will add up to seven-and-a-half hours in the first thirty days alone and approximately ninety hours in a year. This is the Fifteen-Minute Miracle.

ACTIVATE 4:8 ::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::



Drill #4

Create your Fifteen-Minute Miracle. Reference the following questions for ideas. Then, on page 24, identify the four key elements in your Early Morning Joy Ritual (EMJR).

1. What could I read, watch, or listen to during the first fifteen minutes I'm awake?
2. What should I avoid reading, watching, or listening to?
3. How could I prepare myself for this EMJR the night before?
4. What could I tell myself the instant I wake up every morning?
5. What should I avoid telling myself the instant I wake up?
6. How could I intensify my gratitude in the First Fifteen?

7. How could I use prayer and Scripture?
8. How could I use the 4:8 Questions?
(See Day 23 for more detail.)



The Extra Mile

To decrease the chances that your EMJR will be put off, get organized the night before. Decide on a distraction-proof location. Itemize your agenda. Prepare the coffee. Gather together your Bible, devotional, 4:8 Questions, books, music, journal, and anything else you may need to connect with God, and kick the day off to a joyful start.



Make It Stick: Thought of the Day

I joyfully launch
each day with God!



Prayer

Lord, I am grateful for the serenity found most abundantly in the early morning. Help me every day to meet first with you before I face the rest of the world. Amen.

1	
2	
3	
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YOU ARE GOOD AT CERTAIN STUFF FOR A REASON

The Joy of Using Your Strengths

YOU ARE GOOD at certain stuff for a reason. God made you that way intentionally so you can joyfully accomplish his purpose during your lifetime.

You are also lousy at a bunch of things as well. The lousy list will always be longer than the good list because there are lots of other people in this world who are really good at the things that you are not. If you spend a lot of time on the lousy stuff, you will sacrifice a bunch of joy.

This is a strange way to encourage you, isn't it? Stick with me, though. It is all part of God's plan. Think about it: if you were good at everything, there would be lots of unnecessary people just hanging out, doing nothing, occupying who knows what. Some people pretend to be good at everything, but don't be fooled. They are not. They are, however, very good at pretending, and we should at least give them credit for that. Unknowingly, though, these pretenders water down their own

potential doing too many things that God created other people to do.

And since God made us on purpose as relational beings, he wants us to collaborate with each other to accomplish his work. In fact, he's created billions of people to get his job done. I don't know exactly how this works, of course, but I imagine that among the billions, there would have to be a few alternates in case some fail to execute his plan and instead choose to exercise their own plans. My point is that we all have roles to fill and missions to accomplish on the very tight deadlines that are our lifetimes.

If you are still alive, God has plans for you, and his plans blow your plans away. This is not a guess but a fact. If you don't believe me, ask God to give you a glimpse of his plan and then compare it to your plan. See which one you prefer.

I believe God has a particular objective for your life. Do you? This objective, or purpose for your life, coincides with your gifts, talents, passions, and a host of other heavenly factors. Your areas of interest—the activities and pursuits that you find most enjoyable, energizing, and attractive—are the best indicators of strong talent and giftedness.

In school, for example, some people are naturally good at math, while others are naturally good at science or English. Of course, educators want us to be good at everything. Many parents do as well. So if we are really good in English but not so good in math, we are invited to stay after school and work on . . . you guessed it, math. Over time, we get the message that the key to a wonderful life is to fix our weaknesses. As kids, we follow the advice and strive to become less weak at our weaknesses while we simultaneously become weaker at our strengths. Could something possibly be wrong with this picture?

Some people are really good at sports and others at singing or painting. Some people are neat and organized and always color inside the lines. Others have a harder time accepting these boundaries. As adults, some have analytical strengths, while others build great relationships, design amazing marketing campaigns, or deliver moving and memorable sermons.

When you engage in activities that demand your special talent, your brain releases chemicals that trigger within you a sense of satisfaction and significance as an incentive for you to continue in this area. I never experienced this chemical reaction in math. But I did experience this joy with baseball, later with coaching, and subsequently even more so with writing and speaking. This strong and encouraging sense of satisfaction is a positive reinforcement mechanism that is all part of God's perfect design.

Our talents eventually get converted into strengths if we fully engage them and sustain the course long enough. We tend to gain great joy from operating in our area of strength. Consequently, we practice and participate over and over again because it makes us feel so good. With roughly half of our waking hours devoted to our work life, it better bring us great joy! If our work is both our mission and our ministry, it no doubt will.

Our unique conglomeration of character, talents, life experiences, personality, and even struggles merge together and spark a vision within each of us. The more often we engage in our strengths, the more crystallized our ultimate vision becomes and the greater things God can do through us. With our God-given talents transformed into strengths, we become intrinsically motivated, needing less and less prodding from the outside. And this repetitive practice produces champions capable of making giant contributions in the world.

Will you be one of them?

ACTIVATE 4:8 ::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::::**Drill #32**

In today's drill, I'll force you to give mental airtime to your top strengths. On the following page, indicate three areas where you shine. Next to each, identify what you could do in the next month to better deploy your strengths in the world. Then, at the bottom, record the first steps you will take to become more conscious of your strengths every day.

**The Extra Mile**

For two consecutive weeks, track how many of your waking hours you spend doing things that you consider to be personal strengths. Consider this number your starting point. Going forward, make it a priority to increase your "strength time," even if just a little, every single week. Keep a record of recurring distractions and obligations that inhibit your expression of strength so that you can develop a plan to minimize these barriers.

**Make It Stick: Thought of the Day**

I focus on my strengths!

	→	
	→	
	→	



Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for matching my special talents with your particular purpose for me. Help me today to elevate my strengths, accept my weaknesses, and collaborate with others to bring glory to you. Amen.