

BREAKTHROUGH STRATEGY #2

Manage or Remove a Hook By Using the Principles of *Stage Climbing*

Your hooks are your thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors that are characteristic of stages other than your default stage in a given life area.

For you to be fully in charge of your life, you need to manage them, so they do not lead to or become stifling hang-ups. This means to identify, understand and bring your hooks firmly under your control. **In order for you to function *optimally*, the goal is to neutralize the ones that in any way make your life problematic by causing negative emotions or *bringing you down to a lower stage than would be optimal at any given time.*** *Once you are able to manage your hooks, they simply represent more choices for you.* In other words, they go away when you don't want them and are available for when you do. Each time you do this with a hook, you have taken another major step toward being fully and consciously in control of your life.

To manage or remove a hook:

- 1) Identify the hook** (or the issue related to one) **that you would like to work on.** However, please remember the one most important thing—***Stage Climbing can only help you to make changes within yourself.*** This means changing an attitude, belief, or behavior that is driving a self-defeating pattern or negative emotion. ***Changing another person or some set of circumstances outside of yourself is not an option or within the realm of possibilities available to you with this exercise.***

Please choose only one hook to work on at a time:

290 STAGE CLIMBING: THE SHORTEST PATH TO YOUR HIGHEST POTENTIAL

Note: Please do this exercise separately for each hook that you want to address. You can download and reproduce this worksheet at StageClimbing.com/worksheets (Password: MyStageClimb).

2) Identify the Stage(s) that typifies the hook you are working on.

What follows are the seven stages along with a sampling of the **most common** or universal attitudes and beliefs that would underlie a **problematic hook at each stage**. Underline or highlight those that apply to your hook. In the space provided, using additional paper if necessary, fill in your customized version of the belief(s) or attitude(s) that you recognize at each stage as driving/powering your own unique hook:

STAGE ONE HOOKS—e.g., “I can’t do it” ... “It’s too hard” ... “I am Inadequate”... “I must be taken care of”... “I am incapable of change or taking the initiative to better my life”... “I must be certain that some (or any) decision I make be the right one or I will not be able to decide (and/or handle the consequences)”... “What’s happened to me in the past (e.g., my childhood, etc.) makes it impossible for me now to live a happy and fulfilling life that I can take charge of.”

My version: _____

STAGE TWO HOOKS—e.g., “I must have and do whatever I want, regardless of the effect I (or my actions) have on anyone else (or even regardless of the *long-term* consequences I cause to myself); “I don’t want to change”; “I will be/ do / say whatever I have to in order to get what I want at any given moment”; “Life, and especially any aspect of it that I am concerned with should/must be easy”; “I must always be treated well; and anyone who doesn’t is just asking for revenge.”

My version: _____

STAGE THREE HOOKS—e.g., “I should/must or should not/must not (insert a rule or dictum that doesn’t serve you, but you feel com-

pelled to obey, though you are not required to by any authority outside of yourself) _____”; “I must fit in by doing only what I should do and by being what I should be—that which is expected of me—or some dire consequence will result”; “Others should/must do (and even believe) things my way”; “I can’t stand it when things don’t go my way.”

My version: _____

STAGE FOUR HOOKS---e.g., “What (some other person or people that in the grand scheme of things don’t really matter) thinks of me is crucially important”; “Rejection by someone else is unbearable and even a reason to reject myself”; “I must be loved or approved of by others (specific person or people in general) and meet their expectations”; “I can only accept myself to the degree that I am accepted by others”; “I must do well at everything I do. Anything less than perfect is totally unacceptable”; “Failing at something (e.g., a relationship, a job, an exam, a sexual performance, or to meet a goal) makes me a total failure (to myself, in the eyes of others, or both)”; “_____, (fill in the name of someone specific) must love me in the exact way that I require or our relationship is unfulfilling and perhaps even untenable.”

My version: _____

STAGE FIVE HOOKS—e.g., “I can’t (or I don’t want to) handle (fill in the blank_____) in my life right now—I am overwhelmed”; “I feel trapped with no way out”; “I must keep it all together and step up to the plate with respect to all of my roles and obligations (e.g., spouse, parent, breadwinner, manager, etc.), regardless of whether or not those roles are working or provide me feelings of satisfaction or gratification ”; “I ‘have it all’, but still feel unfulfilled.”

My version: _____

292 STAGE CLIMBING: THE SHORTEST PATH TO YOUR HIGHEST POTENTIAL

STAGE SIX HOOKS—e.g., “Not only should I have passion for, but I should also feel personally gratified by everything I do”; “Changing the world that is larger than me or making the time to help someone else is not my mission, problem or concern right now.”

My version: _____

STAGE SEVEN HOOKS—e.g., “I must save the world, some person, or a subset of the world.” It should be noted that even though they might sometimes present a minor conflict, genuine hooks in Stage Seven will rarely be problematic to you, once you identify them (or they are probably lower stage hooks in disguise).

My version: _____

Now ask yourself some questions:

Are any of the beliefs I have identified above and written down completely true?

Yes _____ No _____

Does the attitude or belief behind this problematic hook serve any purpose that would make me want to keep that attitude or belief?

Yes _____ No _____

Am I open to adopting a new attitude(s) or belief(s) regarding this hook?

Yes _____ No _____

Assuming you answered “No” to the first two questions and “Yes” to the third, **take a minute to write down how this hook and the attitudes and beliefs that underlie it might be affecting you. Note how things in your life would be different without the attitudes and beliefs you noted above and if this hook were no longer problematic for you** (use additional paper, if necessary):

Hold on to what you've just written concerning the effect of this hook now and how your life **could be** once the hook is benign and no longer has any power over you. **Refer to it whenever you need a little motivation in removing this or any other problematic hook.**

Next, use this list below as a selection or sampling, by the stages, of some new attitudes and beliefs that you can choose as *healthy alternatives or affirmations* to the problematic ones you have just identified. Underline or highlight those that apply to your hook.

Important: *To the extent that you choose to live by these attitudes and beliefs, your hook is no longer problematic:*

Stage One—“I can do it/handle it and *I will*”; “I am tired of being dependent and relying on others. I now want to and will begin taking charge of my own life”; “Certainty does *not* exist, therefore I *choose* to become comfortable with uncertainty”; “‘Too hard’ implies impossible, which it isn’t. ‘Difficult’ is merely a challenge I can handle”; “I choose to be free of my past, wherever it limits me.”

Stage Two—“Being excessively self-absorbed has thus far not gotten me what I thought/hoped it would, what I truly wanted or satisfaction around what I have gotten”, “Nobody has *everything* they want”; “I can’t always control how people treat me, only my reaction to them”; “Life is not always easy and I choose to accept that”; “There are long-term benefits *to me* in treating others as I would like to be treated.”

294 STAGE CLIMBING: THE SHORTEST PATH TO YOUR HIGHEST POTENTIAL

Stage Three—“I am ready to start examining the unquestioned rules I have lived by (and/or that I have demanded others live by), and to consider being more flexible and open to new ideas that are now a better fit for me and my life”; “Fitting in is only one of many choices that are available to me”; “Other people have the same wide array of choices regarding how to live their lives as I do.”

Stage Four—“People who won’t accept me for who I am are no longer worth my time and attention”; “There is much more to life than putting boundless energy into fitting in and/or the hope of getting others to admire and/or envy, love and/or approve of me”; “Love and approval from certain people may be nice, but not as essential as I have told myself it is”; “I give *myself* unconditional acceptance regardless of who else does”; “I can only do my best, and I hereby let go of all versions of that impossible standard called perfection”; “Failing at something does not make me a failure”; “I can handle things even when I don’t like them”; “How anyone else feels about me is out of my control.”

Stage Five—“I want to be doing what I love and to feel rewarded internally (as well as externally)”; “I can handle being overwhelmed, and resolve to use those times when I *feel* overwhelmed as learning experiences that can act as insight to draw upon when deciding whether to take things on”; “Satisfaction and gratification are nice to have, but I realize and accept that there are many things I choose to have in my life that don’t provide them to the extent I wish they would”; “I now take responsibility for putting into my life that which will fulfill me.”

Stage Six—“Life is good; but there is something more to life than my own gratification. It’s time to focus on the world that’s larger than me.”

Stage Seven—“On to the next (perhaps even a bigger or more challenging) mission!”

Using the above list (especially those you have underlined) **as a frame of reference, write out new affirmations** (attitudes and beliefs) **that represent how you choose to think and feel about this problematic hook** (use additional paper, if necessary and make your list of new affirmations as comprehensive as possible):

Now ask yourself these questions:

Are my new affirmations regarding this hook *completely* true for me?

Yes _____ No _____

Do my new affirmation(s) above remove or neutralize this problematic hook?

Yes _____ No _____

(If you answered yes to both questions, go on to (3). **Most importantly, commit yourself to living by your new affirmations; and refer to them as often as necessary until they become a hardwired part of you!**

However, if either question got a “no” answer, keep tweaking your affirmation(s) until you can answer “yes” to both questions. If you are stuck, it will also be helpful for you to revisit the chapter on the relevant stage in Part I, especially the “Making the Climb” section, strategies and action steps as well as Part II for calibrations related to this hook.

- 3) **Choose your target stage** (consider this your goal) **from which you would prefer or choose to be operating, whenever you are up against this hook.**

Stage 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6 _____ 7 _____

- 4) **When you now look at this hook through the lens of your chosen target stage, how do you see it?** How is your attitude or perhaps even your life different? Is there anything else do you need to do, to believe or to tell yourself when necessary, so that you are never undermined or held back by this hook again? **What other action steps are you now willing to take to move beyond this problematic hook?** Make note of your answers to these important questions here (use additional paper, if necessary) and refer to your affirmations and action steps whenever any version of this hook challenges you again.

In most situations, what you have done with this exercise is all you need to do, along with religiously remembering to live by, behave according to, **refer to and defer to your newly chosen beliefs and attitudes regarding this hook.** With your strong persistence, **they will soon become second nature— a hardwired part of you.**