

Review Extract

Not for Sale

CHANGE YOUR WORLD ONE WORD AT A TIME

How the way you speak creates your life

David Firth

Firth has split the atom with this small and explosive book about words and their huge creative leverage... read this, and all your communication will increase in power.

Steve Chandler
Author of *Time Warrior*

Watch 'reality' change!

One day, I saw Werner Erhard on YouTube speaking to an audience at Harvard's Kennedy School of Business. He gives an hour-plus talk answering the question 'What is the source of action?' Being a typically Erhard lecture, you really have to sit with it, because this is as far from 'The Secret Simple Seven Steps to Success!' as you can imagine.

And then towards the end, having developed pretty much a single idea for 50 minutes plus, it's as if Werner suddenly decides to throw in a few quick other ideas before his close. It's a funny change of gear and not what I was expecting, and maybe it was that change of gear throwing me off guard, as it were, that allowed me to hear a sentence that has wrapped itself around the 'fleshy contours of my heart' (as my coach's coach says). Which means that it has changed my life.

A concept that I thought I got before I now realize I have really got. As in Got Got. Got not like "Oh yes, I understand what you are saying, how fascinating!" but got as in 'Got it like a joke'. Meaning straight inside, no filters, everything shifted.

The sentence is:

WHALES DO NOT HAVE TOO MUCH TO DO

Because they don't. And this is not because they are whales and we are human beings and all whales have to do is be a whale and/or swim and/or eat whilst we as humans have considerably more to do on any given day, just take a look at my In Box. No. It's nothing to do with that difference at all.

We are talking about language here – pretty much the only thing we have (try taking any action without it being formulated and then captured in language).

And right now I'm going to use another form of language – written English – to point to where I'm going with this. So I'm going to write the sentence again with some punctuation:

WHALES DO NOT HAVE 'TOO MUCH TO DO'

That is the key phrase - 'too much to do' - as in:

'How are you doing?'

'Oh, OK thanks, but I've got too much to do'

Or its sister phrases, such as:

'I'm really busy'

or

'Actually, I'm a bit overwhelmed!'

Bentley and Chumley do not have too much to do!

My two St Bernard dogs are like whales. And the reason that

BENTLEY AND CHUMLEY DO NOT HAVE TOO MUCH TO DO

is once again NOT because they are dogs and we are human beings and all dogs have to do is be a dog and/or bark and/or eat whilst we as humans have considerably more to do on any given day, just take a look at my In Box. No.

No.

It's because Bentley and Chumley do not have language.

They are sitting right behind me as I write this and I have asked them. They don't.

My dogs can't think 'I have too much to do' and they can't say 'I have too much to do', so 'too much to do' doesn't show up in their life. Bentley and Chumley NEVER have 'too much to do' showing up in their lives.

And the reason you have 'too much to do' is because you do think and say it. And so it does show up for you. Consistently. Every day.

Just like everything else in your life. Everything shows up in your life as a function of how you language it.

'Too much to do' doesn't exist out there. It ONLY exists in here (David points to his head). And in our speaking.

And the first, critical step in addressing your sense of overwhelm is to simply delete language like that in your life. Cut it out. Stop it.

Stop it. Tell the truth instead

I've given up on the word 'busy' – try me, it doesn't pass my lips any more.

Why have I done that?

One of the reasons is because I realized that most of the time when I was saying the word, it was a lie. Not a lie because I had nothing to do. Not at all. Just like you, in my life there's always 'a list of things to do and be done and some come unexpectedly and all have varying degrees of urgency and importance accompanying them'.

So I have lots to do and so do you. Let's not get into a contest here about whose list of things to do is the longest. That's really not the point.

The reason it was a lie was because most of the time I didn't mean 'I'm busy' but (especially to my clients):

'I'm feeling really needy right now so I need you to know that just because I don't work in a Big Organization I don't sit around twiddling my thumbs all day'

or (especially to other consultants):

'I see you as a competitor in a Universe of scarce clients and so I need you to know that my business is successful'

or, unfortunately, often I really meant (to lots of people):

'I may indeed have just said Yes to your request but I'll probably let you down and not deliver on time and in full and I hope the code word 'busy' we've just used will encourage you to be complicit with me in forgiving me for letting you down...'

Or more positively, sometimes when I said 'I'm busy' I actually meant:

'I'm not at all 'busy'. My life is full of amazing things I get to do, things that are in my circle of influence because of the sort of work I do and how I've

chosen to lead my life. I'm not 'busy'. I'm abundant in things to do! I love that these are mine to do!! How lucky am I?!

But I used to chicken out and say 'I'm busy' instead. Everyone else was saying it, and I wanted to be cool like them, and fit in.

But not any more.

Complete your own personal translations of the word 'busy'. Be curious about what's going on for you when you want to say 'I'm busy'. And experiment with telling the truth instead.

You never have too many emails

You can give me – as in you can 'put into my hands' - a laptop or you can give me a phone or you can even give me a kiss. All these things have dimension, mass, texture, they take up physical space – but you can't give me 'too much to do'.

'Too much to do' only exists as a chunk of language, a thought form manifested in words.

'Ah' you say, 'But here's my inbox in that very same laptop I've given you and you can see it has 100 unread emails in it and I know that at least 60 of those have to be responded to by 8pm and there's only one hour to go to that deadline – THAT's too much to do!!'

The only reason this list of things means 'you have too much to do' is because you and I agree that this is what it is going to mean.

And given that I can see the emotional reaction your 'busy' meaning generates in you (I notice it rarely makes you happy to say 'I'm busy')

- and also because some of that anxiety is beginning to transfer to me (because we are all, after all, energetic beings) causing me to be stressed too -

I have decided to stop sharing that meaning with you. If you want to be 'busy' that's your thing not mine.

We have a choice.

Let's slow down and look at this.

You have 650 unread emails with a deadline coming soon.

You can indeed label that reality with the words 'busy' or 'too much to do'. After all it seems inevitable to do that. Everyone is using those terms.

But let's be clear that the words have an impact, on you and others. It's the label that produces anxiety. It's NOT the 650 emails, but the label we use. And then the feeling infects the thinking, so we get into victim mode with thoughts like

There shouldn't be 650 emails

I'm drowning here

If I were in charge of this place there would be a better process but I am not

There must be something wrong with me to get so far behind

and all those thoughts stimulate the anxiety and so on. It's a system. A closed loop.

So when you say you have 'too much to do' you think you are merely describing reality, and you think that you are reporting the reality that is causing your stress.

And I say that in fact it is exactly the opposite. Your instinct - personally and socially conditioned - to use that language is the cause of your stress.

Do this. That's all

Here's an alternative view.

We can all of us look back at our lives and see that the only thing we have ever done is what we did.

Slow down. Breathe that in!

There are never in fact '650 emails to be doing' (unless of course you really want that language and its consequent emotional drama in your life: hey, no one is forcing you to be free here).

No. There's only ever the one email to be doing. This one. I am doing this email. Now it is done. Here is the next email. Here I am doing it. Fully present to this email. Giving the task, the relationship, the words I type, my full attention.

I'm not distracted by the thought-form 'still 648 more to go though!' (that's never in fact as useful to me as it claims to be in my mind - what are we trying to do, motivate ourselves!?)

Here I am just doing the only thing I can do which is the thing I am doing right now. Nothing hanging over my head. Not dragging the weight of undone things around with me. Nothing heavy here.

Stress not 'managed': just never created.

I don't want to be left managing my stress. I want to get in at the start, and stop stress being made. And that starts with my words.

One email.

Words and the world, which came first?

So there's a distinction here.

First is the distinction of the 'Word to World Fit'. This is the distinction the majority of us are conditioned into.

It says this. There is a world out there, and we have learned certain labels to describe that world. This is a thing and I call it a tree. This is a thing and I call it a car. This is a list of emails to respond to and that means 'I'm busy'.

There is both personal and – probably even stronger – social pressure to ensure we continue to fit the right word to the right 'thing'. So we obediently say tree, car and busy.

Plus there's the payoff we get when it comes to the word 'busy' in particular as used in today's environment. The sympathy. The admiration. The complicity.

But I want to live a life more deliberate, more intentional than that.

I have something to say about how this thing called 'my experience' shows up for me. I don't want The sympathy. The admiration. The complicity. If I ever do, you'll hear me ask for them.

And I certainly don't want the stress. So I hope you'll never hear me ask for that, unless I am at my neediest.

And because I have decided that I have something to say about how my life shows up for me, I have decided to start with my language. I have decided to care A LOT about what comes out of my mouth.

Which is why I don't use the word 'busy' any more.

The second distinction is called 'World to Word Fit'

In other words, I cause to have the world

- this thing I call 'my experience' -

match my word, as much as I possibly can.

This is the realm of integrity.

For example, I say I will be on a call with you at 4pm on Tuesday and I am there. In other words, the world shows up as I said it would.

You ask me to complete the report by Friday at Noon, and I say Yes, and then I deliver it, on time and in full. Again, the world shows up as I said it would.

I have chosen peace. Not 'too much to do' Just the 'things I am choosing to do in the way I choose to be whilst doing them'

I have something to say about how the world occurs for me. And I have something to say about how I show up, as one of the things showing up in the world.

And so do you.

Bentley and Chumley do not have too much to do. And neither do you.