

# Soul Proprietorship



**8 Critical Steps  
to Overcoming  
Problems  
in Business  
and Life**

**Al Killeen**

*“Delivers a very important tool kit for the development of authentic relationships based on your core values.”*

– Gay Hendricks, Ph.D., Author of *The Big Leap*, co-author  
(with Kathlyn Hendricks) of *Conscious Loving*

## More Praise for *Soul Proprietorship*

“Al Killeen’s book, *Soul Proprietorship*, delivers a very important tool kit for the development of authentic relationships based on your core values. As a relationship expert, I suggest you use this work to uncover your core values and incorporate them into all aspects of your work and life.”

– **Gay Hendricks, Ph.D.**, Author of *The Big Leap*, co-author  
(with Kathlyn Hendricks) of *Conscious Loving*, [www.hendricks.com](http://www.hendricks.com)

“Filled with wisdom, clarity and integrity, Al Killeen’s book *Soul Proprietorship* is a blueprint for those who strive to live an extraordinary life.”

– **Andrea Joy Cohen, MD**, Author; *A Blessing in Disguise—39 Life Lessons from Today’s Greatest Teachers*, Penguin

“*Soul Proprietorship* offers a pragmatic yet inspired approach to improving one’s life—ranging from business interests to interpersonal development. The tools provided are easily worked with and more valuably, presented in such an encouraging way that you want to put them to immediate use. Personally, the strength and confidence that I have gained through Killeen’s ‘core value’ approach has made a meaningful difference in how I live my life.”

– **Bob Webster**, President; Webster Investment Advisors; Director,  
Western Golf Association and Colorado Golf Association

“Al Killeen’s book is the key to personal and professional effectiveness. It is a guide for practicing integrity and truth in daily life.”

– **Greg Osborne**, Senior Executive, Fortune Top 50 Company  
(client since August 2000)

“You may think you’ve heard it all, but I guarantee not in the way Al Killeen has put it all together in one place. This is a book about much more than change, it’s about transformation.”

– **Jordan Paul, PhD**, Author; *Do I Have to Give Up Me to Be Loved By You?* and *Becoming Your Own Hero*

“This book is a template for sustainable, heartfelt accomplishment, which is the foundation of authentic self-esteem. This is a gift to anyone caring and daring enough to implement the blueprint provided by Mr. Killeen.”

– **Tom Boyer**, Senior Consultant, IMPAQ Corporation

“The Expectations on Leadership continue to evolve. We are under pressure to perform in a rapidly changing, stressful environment, with limited information and limited resources. Having the right tools and processes to overcome these challenges are critical to not only survive but to thrive. Al’s got the ‘secret sauce’ skillfully detailed in his new book *Soul Proprietorship*.”

– **Daniel R. Meyer**, Founder, Global Wealth Strategy Partners, LLC;  
Registered AXA Advisors

“The message of this book is so encouraging because it reflects the life work, heart, and personality of one of the most encouraging individuals that I have ever met. Since my introduction to Al Killeen, my life has been characterized by a relentless pursuit of opportunity. Al called me to a bigger game in every aspect of my life, and then gave me the faith in myself to play that game. The contents of this book can encourage you and give you the faith in yourself that you need to play that bigger game, and the richness of life that flows from it.”

– **Michael Watkins MBA/JD**, President, Guild Associates, LLC  
(client since 2002)

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in Business and Life**

**Al Killeen**

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Boulder, Colorado

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# INTRODUCTION

*You are what your deep driving desire is;  
As your deep driving desire is, so is your will;  
As your will, is so is your deed;  
As your deed, is so is your destiny.*  
—The Upanishads

Everyone faces problems in every domain of his life at some time. Many people have an intimate relationship with adversity, which seems curious because we are basically creatures of comfort. We design our lives to maximize our comfort and minimize our discomfort.

When problems do arise, however, it is great to have a way to work through them—a proven, time-tested method. That’s what this book gives you: eight critical steps that a person, organization, or team can employ to overcome problems in business, relationships, and life as a whole.

The eight steps are presented here in a linear fashion and should be read in the order presented. However, in using the steps to solve problems, you may find that you need to jump from one to another to be effective.

In a team or organization, dialogue and communication must take place and all eight steps should be discussed before beginning a project. It may take time to go through the steps, but doing so will create a collective sensibility among the people involved and you will craft a beautiful solution that will be easily executed. In thousands of hours of coaching executives, I have seen these eight steps guarantee movement toward positive resolution.

For an example of how these steps ensure victory, consider Ernest Shackleton<sup>1</sup> and his Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1914-1917. They never made it to the South Pole but, over many months, their ship was frozen in the ice and crushed, they were stuck on the ice, they survived an open water voyage, yet Shackleton brought all his men home alive. How?

- He had to have the right mind-set (Step 1).
- He had to be objective about where he was starting from and the reality of his situation (Step 2).
- He had to remember the goal of survival and have faith that they could survive (Step 3).
- He had to have a plan to keep people occupied and productive (Step 4).
- He needed to notice where barriers arose and what breakthroughs were possible regarding his people's thoughts and emotions (Steps 5 and 6).
- He made sure that he and everybody on the team was committed (Step 7).
- He monitored people constantly to make sure everyone executed commitments (Step 8).

Welcome to the exploration of these eight critical steps. I am excited for you. This template will grow your life, help you manage and overcome problems, and amaze you when you see what you can achieve with the right mind-set and tools.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Shackleton's Way: Leadership Lessons from the Great Antarctic Expedition*, by Margaret Morrell and Stephanie Capparell.

## An Overview of the 8 Critical Steps

Here is a summary of the eight steps you can use to solve any problem in business, relationships, or life as an individual or a team.

### **Step 1: Mind-Set**

Establish a mind-set based on your core values, not on the comfort of your past scripts or personality preferences. This empowers you to make more objective and effective decisions that will more naturally appeal to other people involved in the situation or problem.

### **Step 2: Current Reality Analysis**

Analyze the problem from an objective perspective, in terms of “effectiveness” rather than “right or wrong.” Look at what is working and what is not working right now. Depersonalize and review it completely.

### **Step 3: Inspired and Desired Future Outcome**

What is the best possible outcome to solve this issue? Don’t think about how to get to the solution. Simply allow yourself to envision the optimal outcome from a broad perspective.

### **Step 4: Process for Moving from Current Reality to Desired Future Outcome**

Create the road map to resolution and the milestones of progress toward realizing your inspired vision. Identify the action steps you will take to reach the milestones. Identify who will execute the action steps.

### **Step 5: Barriers to Executing the Process**

Identify what barriers could obstruct your progress. Do you have personality traits that could stand in the way? What external factors might inhibit the process?

**Step 6: Breakthroughs to Barriers**

Identify how you will break through the barriers.

**Step 7: Commitment to Executing the Process**

Are you and the others involved truly committed to executing the process? Are you willing to experience the potential discomfort of operating effectively to resolve the problem as an expression of your core values? If so, proceed. If not, what must you do to gain commitment?

**Step 8: Follow-Up Monitoring System**

Identify how you will measure progress and ensure effective execution of your road map.

These steps are interdependent. All must be included if you hope to realize your desired future outcome.



## How This Book Came To Be

I have taken nine years to write this book. It has emerged from a yearning for connection. In those nine years, I created a new business and captured an eruption of thoughts that have been percolating within me for nearly forty years.

We wander in and out of careers, relationships, and communities with the hearts of minstrels, the minds of students, and the hopes of young lovers on a quest to make sense of it all. Yet, the answers somehow elude most of us.

This book is my humble attempt to dislodge the answers from their rocky and remote domains, and I hope you find the approach refreshing. It comes with an outrageous premise: If your life is more extraordinary and fulfilling after following this guide, I will know this book is successful. That is why I wrote it.

This book is meant to be unlike anything you have ever read. It is an authentic offering of the best of my heart and mind and is intended to provoke the best of your heart and mind to awaken your great gift.

Your gift is the unique place within you that wasn't here before you and won't be here when you are gone. Your gift is something important for you to understand because that understanding will unleash your mastery and begin to awaken power in other people's lives. The reason we are here is to find the code that unlocks our personal mastery and the path for accessing it.

### How To Use This Book

Your best approach to this material is this: Make your own rules. Take one or more of the following approaches:

- Read it from start to finish like other books.
- Review the Contents and read any title that intrigues you.

- Let the book fall open in your hands, find the nearest chapter heading, and begin reading.

I recommend that you read no more than one chapter at a time. Give yourself time to think deeply about the message of that chapter and your answers to any questions asked. Use the concepts in each chapter to guide you to a new perspective. You will find greater impact and enjoyment if you are patient and let each chapter provoke you to deeper answers within yourself. I suggest you start a journal to record your journey and answer the questions we pose.

Finally, consider that this book may lead you to answers that provoke solutions for all domains of your life. These domains include:

- Career and Business
- Relationships
- Family
- Health
- Intellectual
- Creative
- Spiritual
- Others you define

The tools of personal mastery are universal in their application and valuable to all domains. Whether you are a business owner or manager who wants to improve performance, or a parent who wants to help your daughter find her way, you will find the answers in these pages.

## **Direct vs. Indirect Living**

This book is designed to help awaken you to thoughts and ideas that will change your life. One place to begin is to notice how others are living and one measure is “direct” vs. “indirect.”

As you start watching people, you will notice that 98 percent of the people around you are living life indirectly and only 2 percent are living directly.

*When you live indirectly you:*

- work forty to sixty hours per week at a job that doesn't fulfill you or match your core values and you don't leave because you need the money to "survive"
- wait for weekends, evenings, or retirement to live how you really want to—anything else would be "irresponsible"
- would like to trust your talents, passions, or core values to guide your life, but your résumé, history, and experiences seem "safer"
- live fearing what might happen instead of committing to what might happen

*When you live directly you:*

- identify your core values, passions, and gifts and use them to design your life
- identify your priorities and spend as much time as possible manifesting them
- align your core values, passions, personal talents, and envisioned future with a pathway to fulfillment—and live a fulfilling life

Are you living life indirectly or directly? How? Why? What will you do differently from this point forward?



## Comfort vs. Commitment

I hope you become uncomfortable while reading this book and doing the exercises. Why? Because most of us cruise through life with the goal to stay warm, safe, and dry. The worry alarms are off. You have enough money for now, enough love to avoid facing yourself, and enough acceptance to avoid looking in a clear, dust free mirror. You are pretty comfortable.

Then, suddenly, you sense the presence of your brilliant possibility, a nagging voice of what your life could be. It begs for your attention and asks you to consider another future. It asks that you not settle for warm, safe, and dry. It asks you to remember what it felt like to be whole and how it might feel to be fully alive, more than “not dead.”

You constantly face competing commitments, largely unconscious, largely unrecognized. You hide them from others, like something you cannot discuss or share without exposing your humanness.

Not knowing what others would think, you defer to the path of least resistance, your past scripts, your comfort zone. You choose the mediocrity of your past over the siren call of your potential. You settle.

Instead, you could choose to courageously act toward what you want. You could choose self-faith and resolve over self-doubt, timidity, and fear.

This book will help you make the choice to commit to what you could be.

## Sources of Personal Power

Personal power is an ongoing and repeated premise of this book. It is based in your identity and begins with the thought that you can choose your identity. That choice is between your ego and your values.

Most people think that they are their ego, their physical entity that grows, lives, and dies with their body. But what do people talk about at funerals? Values—the personal principles the life represented.

The impact people have is how they express their values and principles through their life decisions and actions.

## **Two Sources of Personal Power**

The first source of personal power comes from shifting your identity to your values by asking questions like, “What would my value of integrity or honesty do right now?” instead of, “What is comfortable for me?” or, “What would my ego do?” When you do that, you actually gain strength and support from the Universe to operate courageously and effectively.

The second source is to work with time in your perspective. You can be in the moment (values or power), or you can project fear forward or regret backwards (ego or disempowerment). Disempowerment creates paralysis and self-protection. Instead, when you operate from your values, you operate more courageously.

When you operate as an expression of your values, you access the power of the Universe.

## **Now Is Your Time**

I watch two types of animals near my office building: rabbits and foxes. The rabbits spend their days paralyzed by fear. They huddle, frozen, and await the hungry fox who hunts them. The fox hunts with purpose and diligence. He knows that if he does not catch a rabbit, he and his kits will go hungry.

Today’s world news invites you to be a rabbit, but you have the power to be a fox. If you resolve to be a fox, you will grow fat and happy and take care of your children—and maybe even teach the rabbits how to become foxes.

Here is how you might do that:

- You get what you focus on in life. If you focus on fearful outcomes, you will create them. If you focus on positive outcomes, you grow and flourish, even in times of adversity.
- Be persistent. My father-in-law started and failed at twenty-five businesses over twenty-five years. The twenty-sixth business made him wealthy. He learned not to take setbacks personally. Instead, he learned from them and kept trying until his consistent and bold commitment finally gave him freedom, options, and economic independence. Be resolved to do the same.
- You trade your “value proposition” for compensation. It consists of price, actual value, and perceived value. If you focus on price, you may lose out to larger and cheaper offerings. If you offer actual value without concern for price or perceived value, you may end up bitter and alone with the sense that the world didn’t recognize your value. If you offer only perceived value, your customers abandon you when it does not match actual value. Therefore, the secret to success is to first pay attention to perceived value, then authenticate it with actual value. This is also known as “under-promise and over-deliver.” You create a highly valued offer that grows more as time goes by.<sup>2</sup>
- If you watch the nightly news or read the daily newspaper you may feel great fear and despondency. Or turn off the news and stop programming yourself into a mind-set of fear. Take control of the one thing you actually can control: your frame of mind.

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<sup>2</sup> Example: You may perceive a Lexus automobile as valuable. That perception is backed up by its actual value. If you buy one, you own it for a long time because of its quality. Therefore, it becomes a better value over time and costs you less than a cheaper car that is not built as well.

- You may have lost a substantial amount of your net worth during downward trends in the stock market and housing market. Get over it. Create it again—bigger and better—with the wonderful gift of wisdom gained from your experience. Life involves risk, and your “net worth” is not what you have in the bank anyway. Your true material wealth is in what you can and will produce in the future. As Warren Buffet says, “Be fearful when others are greedy, and be greedy when others are fearful.”
- Don’t focus on the current reality of problems as much as the future vision of what you want. If you focus on what is not working today, you will be stopped or paralyzed. If you focus on where you are inspired to go, you invite the Universe to open doors for you in remarkable ways. You get what you focus on, good or bad, so be a jealous guardian of your focus.
- Help others. There is no greater way to take control of your own life than by supporting and contributing to others. This may seem like so much sugar water of motivational moralizing, but it is an actual path to power. When you focus on benefiting others, you not only create good “karma” and outcomes, but you forget to diminish yourself with self-defeating thoughts or activities that keep you from productive action.
- What you believe about yourself, the world believes about you. You will truly believe great things about yourself when you get crystal clear on your core values (see page 28) and personify them. Then, notice how others begin to believe in you in a dramatically greater way. They will respond by awakening their own values as you invite them into a far more loving and empowered relationship.

- The Chinese character for wealth is composed of two symbols, “trade” and “brilliance” (in the sense of your unique brilliance in life). When you create a value proposition that trades in your unique brilliance or gift in life, you become irresistible to others and eventually create great success.
- Concept + Experience = Ownership of Truth. These truisms won’t do anything if you don’t immediately try them out in your life and work today. Otherwise, they will fade into memory and you will be drawn back into the fear of the rabbit. If you experience them, you will see their truth and find the world far brighter, because you are.

Go out as a “Warrior of Light” who shines that perspective into the world. It will help eliminate your fear and create purposeful and effective action in your life and others. The rest of this book will help you do this effectively.

## The Empty Cup

A reporter from New York City goes to Japan to interview an old Zen monk who has been in the monastery for forty years. The reporter thinks the monk has wasted his life meditating and raking rocks—whatever he does in the monastery without women, wine, or song.

He asks question after question, barely letting the old man talk. The monk eventually calls for tea. When the tea comes, he pours himself a cup and then pours a cup for the reporter, who continues to yammer on with his incessant questions.

The old man starts to fill the reporter’s cup. When the tea reaches the top of the cup, he keeps pouring. It pours over the edge, onto the table, and eventually off the table and onto the reporter’s lap, which causes the reporter to jump up and say, “You crazy old man, what are you doing? Why did you do that?”

The old man says, “Your mind is like that cup. If it is full, I cannot put anything in it, just as I cannot put any tea in the cup when there is tea already in it. Empty your cup and then I can put something in it.”

Shunryu Suzuki, who introduced Zen to America, said “In the beginner’s mind possibilities are many, but in the expert’s mind possibilities are few.” We have to be able to empty our minds and become learners, rather than knowers, to expand ourselves and grow. Otherwise, we spend a lot of time simply validating what we already know.

When I feel my mind is overly busy, I go to bed at night and turn a cup upside down on my bedside table. When I wake up in the morning, I notice the cup and turn it over as a reminder to have an empty cup as I go through the coming day.

As you read this book, have an empty cup. When you are done, see if there has been some shift in you. Don’t lock it out by trying to defend that which you already know.

## **Beyond Warm, Safe, and Dry**

Earlier, we talked about comfort vs. commitment and being warm, safe, and dry. As you grow, your needs begin to shift. Eventually, at age thirty or forty or fifty, you decide to grow up.

Many of my friends and clients are getting in touch with those shifting needs. Rather than maintaining the status quo (that warm, safe, and dry feeling), they want more from life. The drive for true meaning in their lives becomes paramount, and the courage to find it begins to supersede the relative boredom or stress of mere survival.

Sometimes this search is catalyzed by a life event that causes upheaval. You lose a parent or a job, your spouse decides to leave, the kids move out. Whatever the cause, more and more people are less willing to settle for mere maintenance. They are demanding lives that matter.

My wife has a piece of stained glass that hangs in our laundry room. It says, “Your life is a gift from God; what you do with it is your gift back to God.”

People want to use their personal life gifts in significant ways so they can feel they are spending their lives appropriately and not wasting them. Do you ever think about moving beyond safety and security and getting to real fulfillment in your life? Is your current career worthy of you? Is your family life as fulfilling and creative as it could be? Do you work on your life from an empowered and inspired place, or do you use fear as your motivator to stay warm, safe, and dry?

These are some of the issues you can use this book to sort out. Although they may seem like philosophic journeys to get to “when I have time,” isn’t now a great time to start looking at these deeper issues?

## **Your Life as a Gift**

My father lived to age ninety-five. He was a wonderful human being, healthy right up to the end. And he felt he had wasted his life because he had spent it as a child of the Depression, trying to play it safe, carefully avoiding the discomfort, fear, and survival challenges he’d had when he was young.

As a result, in his eighties and nineties, he expressed regret over how he had spent his life. He had worked in government for forty years and had been married for fifty years, much of the time spent unhappily in both relationships. He had played it safe, not wanting to lose what he had, whether or not he was happy with it.

Your life is a gift. What you do with it is your choice. Why not be bold? Don’t waste a single precious minute. Use this book to help you begin to make new choices and bold moves.

