Favorite quote Page 65
“Life may be one damn thing after another, but it does not have to be the same damn thing over
and over again.” I use as part of my sig file and usually have one quote per handout when I
give presentations. I collect quotes for clients and have them organized by health, goals,
change etc.

Great coaching tool to use with clients on page 99 and 100
What you think of you
I am incredibly ____________.
I am a lousy ____________.
I am __________ intelligent.
I have a knack for __________.
I am extremely good at __________.
I am a (n) __________ athlete.
Most folks who know me think that I am __________.
I will never learn to __________.
I am a run of the mill __________.

My life is __________.
My future is going to be __________.
I would rather be __________.
I am far too __________.

I think this is a great tool to examine your beliefs. Carson states that if these thoughts are left in
your unconscious they will permeate you and dictate your future. You could use this tool at the
beginning of the coaching and then at the end of the coaching.

I use the “success formula” event > belief> emotion> behavior often with clients.
This book categorizes emotions into 5 basic categories – anger, joy, sadness, sexual feeling
and fear. Carson talks about the importance to notice your emotions and the “old tapes” that run
these emotions. Chapter 4 succinctly explains each of these emotions in depth.

Self Concept page 71
“True satisfaction and contentment have more to do with actualizing yourself than with actualizing your concept of who you imagine you are supposed to be.”

I have found that when clients accept who they are instead of trying to be someone they think they should be the magic starts to happen ~ beliefs change and then healthy changes in behavior result.

I coach around the client’s happiness and use this: Happiness is liking WHO you are, WHAT you do and HOW you do it. This chapter on Self Concept would be a grand tool to expand on this happiness formula!

Great short book with many wonderful tools and grand food for thought!

Taming Your Gremlin - Learning Notes
Cynthia Rose

Personal Lessons
This book provides a structure for self discovery and creating happiness that can be applied to our own lives and also adapted for working with coaching clients. I was already familiar with most of the behavior modification concepts in the book, although the idea of naming one’s inner voice was new. Carson has organized his behavior modification suggestions in an order that moves the reader along a path to self-awareness that is both logical and minimally threatening. Below I have adapted his basic ideas into a four-step model for working with coaching clients. This model assumes that the client will not read “Taming Your Gremlin.” While I think that many coaching clients could benefit from the book, most are too time-crunched to want a book assignment from their coach.

As a coach, I appreciate Carson’s book for the framework it defines and the simplicity of his ideas. Three ideas that were especially helpful to me personally in my efforts to change my behaviors and become a better coach were:

1. “I free myself not by trying to be free, but by simply noticing how I am imprisoning myself in the very moment I am imprisoning myself.”
2. “Simply notice the natural order of things. Work with it rather than against it. For to try to change what is only sets up resistance.”
3. “Feeling good and being happy is primarily an inside job.”

These ideas are particularly important to me because I have a tendency to want to control things and situations, rather than just accepting them and changing myself in positive ways. I’ve actually posted these quotes in my office, car, and bathroom!

Coaching Lessons from “Taming Your Gremlin”
Here are Richard Carson’s steps to change simplified for working with coaching clients.

1. The first step to change is teaching clients to observe themselves. Coaches must help clients recognize what they do and when they do it, how they react to people and situations, how they feel throughout their days, and what thoughts accompany their actions. The book defines this step as “Simply Noticing.” This means learning how to observe one’s behaviors and internal dialogue without judgment, and then assessing how these behaviors and dialogues help or hinder (more often) success in life.
2. The second step involves objectifying one’s inner voice to separate one’s true needs and desires, from their old unconscious tapes and habits. If a client does not read Carson’s book, the idea of a “personal gremlin” will probably seem far fetched. I would not use the term “gremlin,” but would encourage clients to give a name of their choice to the inner voice that justifies negative choices and keeps them from making their health and happiness a priority. Doing this will help them achieve a more objective position from which to view their behavior patterns and inner dialogues. From this objective distance they can begin to see that “in every moment you are a devotee. In every moment you devote your life to something. You do so via your awareness.” When they see that where they put their awareness is a choice, they will realize that all their behaviors and thoughts are the result of their choices. This opens the door to making new, more satisfying and healthful choices.

3. In step three, the coach leads clients to look at options for change, which can raise many fears, both conscious and unconscious. Old behaviors and habits are familiar and comfortable, change creates an unknown outcome. Carson’s “playing with options” concept requires that clients first ask themselves what it is that they really want (not what their friends and families want of or for them), and decide what steps they need to take to achieve them. Coaches must help clients explore the possible outcomes of change, both real and imagined, so they can overcome the fears that change brings, and live more harmoniously with their deep desires. They need to write down all the “what ifs,” both positive and negative, and weigh those against the option of doing nothing.

4. The final step is teaching clients that change is a process. Healthy people continuously look at their life choices, assess how they help or hinder them, consider their options, obstacles and support systems, and move forward. When clients realize that changing themselves is a life-long process rather that a finite exercise, they are less likely to get discouraged along the way.

In order to successfully implement this model with clients, coaches should read the book themselves. They will glean something of value for their personal behavior changes, and they will more fully understand the ideas summarized above.

If I had to pick the single most important learning from the book it would be the concept of simply observing with a non-judgmental attitude. Most people have had repeated failures at changing the behaviors that brought them to coaching, and they feel frustrated, disappointed, and angry with themselves. Helping them release this attitude of judgment will be a key in their success.

Taming Your Gremlin or A Guide to Enjoying Yourself
Phyllis Havens, MS, RD, LCSW
Licensed Corporate Wellcoach

The Top Five Lessons of Gremlin-Taming:

I must say first that I read Richard Carson’s self-help book upon the recommendation of a life coach I was working with in 2002, and used my copy of this book for this review; it was only in
the past week (July 10, 2005) that I learned that Carson wrote an updated and revised “20th anniversary” second edition in 2003, a copy of which I now have but have not yet read in full. What I’d like to note about Taming Your Gremlin, then, will be based on the message and text from the original book.

Lesson #One: There is deep within each one of us a shadow self that has often been referred to as our “negative self-talk” or our “negative thinking”, but which can also be imagined as a Gremlin whose mission it is to be our own individual judge, jury, and self-saboteur. Fear is this Gremlin’s number one tool and creating unhappiness and personal misery is this entity’s mission. This Gremlin, as Richard Carson calls “him”, relies on the perpetuation of the many myths we story about ourselves, our lives, our reality, and our relationships and is a powerful force that shapes our lives should we so let said Gremlin do so. The image of this Gremlin is unique to each one of us and when we take the time to imagine our own Gremlin, we usually can define and describe him with quite the color and character and personality of all that makes our lives the most difficult and the most vulnerable to problems and challenges.

Lesson #Two: Noticing and naming this Gremlin presence is the only way to Tame it and create an alternative reality for ourselves. In truth, noticing and having an awareness of the presence and voice of our Gremlin is an essential experience of the practice of Mindfulness; in Mindfulness, it is a key concept to Stop, Breathe, Do a Body Scan, and Choose to respond differently (“Taking a second look at our first reaction”). So it is also in noticing and becoming aware of our Gremlin’s presence and “voice” in any given moment or life situation that we have the very strategy to outsmart and “tame” our gremlins.

Lesson #Three: Developing Awareness is a skill and a strategy that directs us to take a real good look at our habits as we experience ourselves up close. By becoming more aware of our habitual responses to feelings and to people, we have the unique and critical opportunity to intentionally think, feel, and do something different, and thus, in doing something different, create a new reality for ourselves and, in the process, outsmart and “tame” our gremlins. When we’re intentionally focusing on our awareness of self and our concept of ourself, we open the opportunity to do a “reality check” and question the myriad of agreements and assumptions we have about ourselves that, indeed, can be changed.

Lesson #Four: After Simply Noticing and turning our Awareness, we can Choose!!! Paying attention to when and how our Gremlin shows up and what our habitual responses have been and are opens us up to the possibility of Choosing to think, feel, and act differently to truly create an alternative reality for ourselves. Choosing as an intentional act opens up options for expression and action that are then grounded in the reality of the now (“being present in the moment”), not based on the past or projected into the future of our lived experience. Carson reminds us that our gremlin can be truly disempowered when we acknowledge that things have been a
habitual, predictable way with us “Until Now…….”. And the whole experience of opening up to options and the concept of free will and choice can indeed be a PLAYFUL one!!! We have only the limits of our imaginations to shape what choosing differently will create.

**Lesson #Five:** The final core process of “taming” this gremlin of ours is just Being In Process. It’s about keeping an Open Attitude and maintaining the “Radical Acceptance” that this taming business is an ongoing process where the experience is in the practice of being, doing, and choosing. Like Mindfulness, Taming Your Gremlin is a verb, it’s an action that is a practice and ongoing. Indeed, because of this fact, it’s a skill and a strategy that in the doing creates a life richer in happiness, peace, contentment, acceptance, love, and enjoyment.

What I most love about this book and Carson’s message and story is the potential and possibility it offers to teach a skill and a collection of strategies to anyone who is really struggling to make change in their lives but is caught in the web of self-doubt, self-criticism and negative judgments. As a coach, my ear is keen to conversations where I hear my client using self-reproach and many “shoulds” and “can’ts” and, thus, being their own worst enemy. When a client can identify fear or self-doubt as a significant obstacle to change and a barrier to achieving her goals, Taming Your Gremlin is a great tool for introducing an alternative perspective in a clever and humorous way. I’ve recommended this book to at least a dozen friends, clients, and colleagues, and, to a one, they’ve thanked me for it!!!

In my own personal life, there have been several situations at work in my office with co-workers and my clinical supervisor in which being able to notice my gremlin speaking and to choose to respond differently than my habit AND not “beat myself up” or react with fearfulness, has made a huge impact on my sense of competence. Taming Your Gremlin has allowed me to better deconstruct my set of beliefs and habits and to reframe situations, people, and my reactions to them in a way that, at times, truly amazed and delighted me.

**TAMING YOUR GREMLIN:**
Five Key Lessons
Rebecca Johnson

**LESSON 1:** Playfulness, a sense of humor and an informal style make difficult concepts in easier to think about and incorporate into our lives. This book is chock full of “big”, important ideas about how to change our lives, such as: mindfulness, breaking habitual responses and behaviors, living to our full potential and more. But one of the neatest things about this book is the way in which Rick Carson presents and teaches his lessons about these concepts without using “loaded” words or terminology that might otherwise be too much to handle or feel too difficult to work into our own or our clients’ lives.

- **How I Will Use This:** Taming Your Gremlin has reminded me that playfulness and a sense of humor can be helpful and freeing in coaching work with clients. I have begun to...
think about different ways I can help my clients break down the “big” concepts into more manageable things they can do to help the change process. I feel I have a few new tools for presenting and discussing issues such as mindfulness, negative self-talk and self-actualization with my clients, without sounding “expert” or “new age”.

LESSON 2: Repetition of Themes! How many times does the author repeat his core ideas? Many! We hear “simply notice, play with options and be in process” more times than we can count … and that’s what makes it stick! I like the way he throws in word puzzles and bold letter paragraphs that make the reader repeatedly think about the major lessons of the book.

How I Will Use This: In past coaching sessions, I have often hesitated to discuss an issue or a theme too frequently with a client, for fear of being annoying or repetitive. But, in reality, when we are making difficult changes – whether it be in our own lives or with our clients - this is exactly what is necessary. This book has been a reminder for me that we certainly do not learn to think and act in different ways with only a few thoughts or discussions of where we are going and how we can get there. We need constant reminders of the fundamental ideas and plans that will get us where we want to go. [For example, many of our clients may continue to feel poorly about their inability to make their desired changes quickly, simply because they have not accepted that change is a process and that it takes time and commitment, and does not happen overnight. In this area, I have made it a goal for my own coaching to offer clients more frequent discussions and reminders regarding the fundamental ideas about lasting change when necessary (i.e. these have been lifelong habits, so it will take some time and commitment to change them … do not rely on willpower alone – focus on the plan … etc.).] I hope to feel more confident coming back to the fundamentals as frequently as necessary with each client.

LESSON 3: Many of the limiting or negative behaviors we seek to change are based on habitual response to emotions or situations. So, in order to relieve ourselves of these limiting behaviors, we must first become aware of our habitual reactions, and then – only if we want! – decide to “play with options” in order to change them. There were several exercises in this book that I found particularly helpful in highlighting my own personal habitual responses to emotions and situations. Specifically, the section of open-ended questions about my concepts of and reactions to anger was quite enlightening.

How I Will Use This: Almost all of my clients, in one way or another, have goals to make changes in ways that will require them to respond differently to emotions or situations. In particular, I have a client who is a life-long emotional eater; when she feels stressed or anxious, she turns to food. She has been doing this for her entire life. Part of our work together is to get her to respond differently to the stress she encounters so that she does not turn to food for comfort. We have been making some solid progress in this area, but I felt a renewed sense of excitement in this work after reading this book. I was reminded again of the absolute need for this to happen in her life, and I feel a bit more capable of helping her learn to become aware of her tendency to do this and to help her change the process.
LESSON 4: Tame your gremlin by anchoring yourself in reality – notice your body, the world around you and the world of mind. I loved this! What an interesting way to describe the process of “centering” yourself and slowing the internal mental chatter that often fills our lives …

- **How I Will Use This:** In my own personal life, my most immediate and important goal is to increase my feelings of mindfulness and decrease the internal chaos that creates anxiety for me. I often find it helpful to focus on my breath, but when I played with noticing my body, the world around me and then the world of mind, I had a very good experience. I was able to immediately recognize that my “gremlin” was using fear or rehashing past experiences to create trouble for me! Further, I felt a sense that I was in control of how I would think and respond to this chatter … This was a helpful addition to my mindfulness toolbox, and I think it might work well with certain clients, too.

LESSON 5: Creating new “shoulds” to replace the old “shoulds” only leads to a new gremlin and does not enable us to live authentically. Often times we think or are taught that we must replace old thoughts or behaviors with something new, something better. But, Rick Carson suggests that to do so is simply creating a new form of gremlin that still does not allow us to live authentically. (Again, the example of anger is used. We may try to replace our habit of suppressing anger with a new habit of expressing it all the time, when that may not be what feels right or is appropriate for the situation.) I really like this idea. Instead, simply noticing what is going on inside our mind and then choosing how to react or respond allows us to fully experience our emotions but be in control of what we will do in response to them.

- **How I Will Use This:** In my personal life again … I am prone to fall into “shoulds” and “oughts” quite a bit, especially when it comes to my personal growth, even though I strive to live authentically and mindfully. The two are not really compatible. It is a challenge to address our own thoughts and emotions mindfully rather than reacting in a certain, predictable way … Thinking about this has given me another reminder of where I want to go and how I need to get there.

- **With Clients:** I would love to be able to incorporate a bit more of this concept in my coaching sessions. But, I do think clients have to be in a certain “place” in their own self-growth before they would be interested or able to work on this. I hope NOT to come across as condescending about this, but I do feel some clients may actually respond better to have predictable patterns of response to rely on. More on this in our teleclass discussion …
Taming Your Gremlins
Beth Tansey-Peller

Overall, my takeaway is that the importance of taming our gremlins is to enable ourselves to live our optimal lives without encumbrances that come from within.

Other lessons learned:

That it's important to be in touch with who I am and really want to be--the "natural self" I have always had inside me, and for my clients, it's important to help them to understand that simply noticing can help them to realize their natural selves.

Corollary to this is the reminder (on page 29) that "Taking charge of your spotlight of awareness is about...having the courage to recognize that life is a time-limited gift... " We don't have time to waste on letting our gremlins get the better of us.

That we are physical and emotional beings: by just learning how to be with our breath, we can alter the course of stress in our lives. This is such an ancient understanding that many of us have lost along the way.

That by observing our gremlins (our obstacles, our negative self-talk, etc) we can recognize that we don't have to let them stand in our way. By helping our clients understand the impact of "shoulds, oughts, and musts" we can help them create better internal guidance for themselves, to more fully become their natural selves.

That being in process is a way to move toward "true love", the essence of who we really are, the inner compass that is more powerful than any gremlin.