

Intentional Pro-Truth Activism Handbook

By Dr. Gleb Tsipursky

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.” These wise words by the twentieth century American cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead point to the genesis of many social movements, such as the fight against slavery, the struggles for the rights of women, African-Americans, and LGBTQ individuals, and the environmental movement. The Pro-Truth movement may join the ranks of these movements, if it can find sufficient thoughtful and committed citizens willing to push back against the post-truth sickness that has infected our political life, and make truth matter.

Truth is not just one cause among many; truth is the foundation of a shared understanding of reality without which Democracy can't function. Democracy depends on people of different views coming together to discuss, debate and decide on a course of action. If you take away truth, then all you have is a raw struggle for power. The best liar wins, and the nation slides inevitably towards authoritarianism.

Some readers of this book may already be inspired to take up the pro-truth cause; it's my hope that every reader feels impelled to do something to promote truthfulness. Every one of you has the power to take simple but significant steps in your daily life to fight lies and promote truth in politics. As political philosopher John Stuart Mill has said: “bad men need nothing more to [achieve] their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing.” I hope you will avoid this mistake, and that through your efforts, together, we won't let the liars win.

To help you become as effective and powerful as possible in the cause of truth, this chapter provides you with a set of strategies for intentional activism, based on a research and real-world experience. An intentional activist is someone who approaches activism with a clear grasp of his or her motivations and goals, an awareness of the various methods of activism, and a specific yet flexible plan for carrying out

his or her own activism.

Your Motivation

Start by figuring out your internal sense of motivation for pursuing your activism. Outlining your aspirations for this area of your life. Why are you doing what you are doing, and what do you hope to accomplish? I have seen many people become accidental activists by diving into activism unconsciously: while some have done well, many get frustrated and disenchanted and burn out quickly. Usually, such sad outcomes result from people failing to understand what emotions and beliefs drove them to become activists in the first place, as well as failing to set goals for what they wanted to see happen as a result of their activism. A more intentional approach to activism is much more likely to help you have a fulfilling, meaningful, effective, impactful, and lasting experience with activism. (See the research I have summarized in my 2015 *Find Your Purpose Using Science*, and Heidi Halvorson's 2010 *Succeed: How We Can Reach Our Goals*).

Start by figuring out your emotional drivers. Why do you personally care about fighting political deception and promoting truth? Do you have a visceral reaction of disgust to a politician manipulating you for their own purposes through lying, as I do? Perhaps you were a "Leave" voter in Brexit who saw the lies crumble immediately after the campaign, and have come to realize the dangers of deception on an intuitive level? Are you one of the many Republicans who voted for Trump while holding your nose, supporting much of what he promised but opposing his methods? Maybe you are a liberal who has seen their political candidate lose due in large part to a tide of lies, and want to do something about it? Could you be a science enthusiast who sees the promise of applying the principles of the scientific method to improving our political system? Or perhaps you recognize the huge dangers of post-truth politics to democracy, and the high risk for democratic systems to collapse into corruption and authoritarianism as a result?

Whatever your motivations are, now is the time to figure them out. One of the best ways to do this is

through writing, an approach informed by research such as in Karen Baikie and Kay Wilhelm's 2005 article in *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* and in a 2001 piece by Roger Hiemstra in *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*. Take 30 or so minutes to write out by hand your answers to four questions:

- 1) What first caused you to see political deception as a problem?
- 2) What led you to try to address this threat to your political system?
- 3) How has what you've read so far in this book changed your perspective on why political deception is a problem and why you should work on solving it?
- 4) What do you feel about political deception (anger, frustration, sadness, anxiety, outrage, and others)?
- 5) What do you feel about the possibility that you can actually do something about this huge danger that makes a difference (hope, joy, determination, appreciation/gratitude, and so on)?

After you finish writing these out, type them into a digital format, and edit for grammar/spelling. You will likely find that fresh realizations appear and you gain a better understanding of your motivations, emotions, and beliefs as you engage in this process of transferring your handwritten notes to a digital version; moreover, the edited version will be very helpful for you to revisit later and potentially share with others, as I will describe below. Don't feel the need to get it perfect as this will be a living document that you will revisit frequently.

As an example, here is my version, updated to reflect my current understanding of myself at the time I am writing these words on July 31, 2017:

- 1) What initially caused you to see political deception as a problem?

Since I started actively following politics in my mid-teens, deceptions by politicians have always inspired an intuitive negative reaction for me. Naturally, lies by those on the other side of the political spectrum have caused me to feel more outrage; however, even deceptions by those on my side made me feel dirty inside, ashamed that I support a party whose leaders would engage in such practices. As I learned more

about the country from which my parents came - when I was ten, my parents immigrated from the Republic of Moldova, at that time part of the Soviet Union - I grew even more worried by the misleading statements uttered by American politicians across the aisle. After all, the Soviet Union's authoritarian and thoroughly corrupt political system rested, to a large extent, on convincing its citizens to believe in lies, giving me a visceral understanding of the danger of lies in politics.

2) What led you to try to address this existential risk to your political system?

My moral code combines humanism, meaning love of humanity, with utilitarianism, the desire to do the most good for the most number. Within that framework, I guide my activism by evaluating how important, neglected, and solvable each social problem is (an approach guided by Effective Altruism), and investing my efforts accordingly. I have long known that political deception breeds bad decision-making, corruption, and authoritarianism. However, I had not perceived post-truth politics as particularly important, though certainly neglected, prior to the 2016 US presidential race and Brexit, focusing my energy on other areas of activism related to rational thinking and wise decision-making. With the start of the US election campaign in early 2015, I observed an enormous escalation in political deception and mounting evidence of the huge vulnerability of the US political system to such deception as the candidate relying most on post-truth tactics continued to gain power. Very quickly, I realized that the evidence of Trump's success would cause other political candidates to adopt his tactics, regardless of whether he won the general election. Given my area of expertise in rational thinking and decision-making, I saw myself as well-placed to help solve this problem, and pivoted much of my attention to it, due to the dangers of corruption and authoritarianism resulting from post-truth tactics. The deceptive tactics used by the "Leave" side in Brexit, the outcome of the 2016 US presidential election and Russia's role in it, and the growing authoritarianism in Turkey accompanied by the post-truth tactics of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan cemented my commitment. Unfortunately, few others followed my path, preferring to stick to their previous areas of activism. Given that political deception has the potential to destroy progress on any other issue - environment, health care, taxes, welfare, policing, immigration, and so forth - I found myself somewhat surprised that more people did not decide to shift their efforts to this critical problem, even after Brexit and the presidential election, when the dangers became so obvious and undeniable. Knowing that this problem is highly

neglected and has grown very important, and that my expertise suggests it is definitively solvable and that I can play a role in solving it led me to commit myself to fighting political deception.

3) How has what you've read so far in the book changed your perspective on why political deception is a problem and why should you work on solving it?

(Not relevant for me).

4) What do you feel about political deception?

I feel outraged and angered by political deception coming from politicians and other public figures, and resentful, anxious, and despondent when I see them achieve their goals using post-truth methods; when these are figures who use these tactics to achieve goals I support, I feel guilty, shameful, and dirty. I feel annoyed and sad when I see private citizens sharing viral deception, and frustrated when they share pieces supporting my perspective, since it casts a bad light on issues I care about.

5) What do you feel about the possibility that you can actually do something about this huge danger?

Seeing the evidence of the early successes of the Pro-Truth movement, I feel hopeful and optimistic. Moreover, I feel a deep sense of contentment, fulfillment, and meaningfulness, since the available evidence suggests that I am doing something important and impactful. Given the enormous problem posed by post-truth politics, the miniscule efforts dedicated to addressing this problem, and the scientific backing for the strategies I am following, I feel a sense of confidence that I make a much higher impact with every hour and every dollar I spend on the Pro-Truth movement than on other areas of activism. That recognition feeds my utilitarianism and humanism, and helps me feel a strong sense of meaning and purpose in my activism.

Your Goals

Next, figure out the broad goals for your activism. What is your vision for what you personally want to accomplish? Use "I" language to make it centered around yourself, and be realistically optimistic, aiming just a bit above what you think would be reasonable, as opposed to naively optimistic. An example of the

latter might be “I want to be the person who convinces Trump and Clinton to take and stick to the pledge.” Instead, something challenging but doable would be “I want to organize a group of pro-truth activists in my locale that would get most candidates in our local elections to take the pledge, evaluate their commitments, and address any violations.”

Make your goals congruent with your strengths and skills, or at least within the range of skills you can commit to developing over time, as research suggest playing to your strengths decreases stress, contributes to self-esteem, positive emotions, and overall well-being (as reported in a 2011 article by Alex Wood et al. in *Personality and Individual Differences*). For instance, if you struggle at writing, don't set a goal of writing weekly letters-to-the-editor about the Pro-Truth Pledge. Use your strengths rather than your weaknesses: while you might be a terrible writer, you might be extroverted, and thus easily capable of going to political and community events to get attendees to sign up for the pledge. Consider how you can deploy your resources of time, money, social capital, and institutional role to advance the pro-truth movement: if you work a 60-hour a week job as a middle manager in a software firm and have no time to spare, perhaps you can dedicate five percent of your income to the pro-truth movement and also advocate for your company to commit to the Pro-Truth Pledge. Also, consider what kind of experience you want to have as you figure out your goals. Do you struggle to fit into an in-person group setting, and prefer to spend your time engaging in social media and online discussion forums? Then set a goal of engaging strategically in promoting the pledge via social media and in online forums, as well as joining and engaging in online communities for the pro-truth movement.

Spend about 15-20 minutes writing this out by hand and typing it up.

Here's my example:

“While my expertise helped me recognize that political deception is solvable, other people I spoke with did not understand that and thus failed to turn their energy and attention to this issue. As a result, I have decided to focus my activism on *helping people concerned about political deception learn how to address this issue effectively, and provide them with a community of like-minded people who wanted the same: the Pro-Truth movement.* This focus aligns well with my skill set: comfort with scholarship on rational

thinking and decision-making; extensive background in research, analysis, writing, speaking, and media engagement; experience with leadership in the nonprofit sector and networking. Although I am introverted, I can expend some social energy for necessary social engagement. Finally, I decided to dedicate a significant portion of my income, ten percent, to supporting pro-truth movement activities, knowing that every dollar spent in the early stage of getting this movement off the ground will be highly impactful.”

Once you finish writing out and then typing out your broad goals, combine the typed version with the previous document on your motivations. Save the document in an easily-accessible place on your computer where you save other documents related to activism. For instance, something you might do is create a folder on your computer called “Activism,” and within that a subfolder called “Personal,” and save this document with the title “Motivation and Goals for Activism”; choose an organizing system that works for you if you prefer a different way of structuring your activism organization. Choose a day once every month - say on the first of every month - to revisit that document and see if your activism over the past month matched your goals and spoke to your motivation, made you feel fulfilled and content, and contributed to your sense of meaning and purpose. If not, adjust your activism. Also see if the document remains aligned with your actual motivation and goals.

As you engage in activism, you will learn more about yourself and your motivations and goals, and might need to update the document. Likewise, life circumstances might change for you, shifting your activism: for instance, if you are a student or teacher, the summer might bring you more time to engage in activism, or a job loss might impair your capacity to donate. As an aside, this is why I prefer to frame my donations in terms of percentage of income, which allows me to shift my donations as my income fluctuates; it also helps me feel good about what I earn, since I know that a percentage of every dollar goes to addressing a very dangerous problem for our society. Overall, this process of reassessment once a month will help you integrate your activism into your personal identity and narrative, as suggested by Arnaud D’Argembeau et al.’s 2013 piece in *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*.

Personal Organization and Task Management

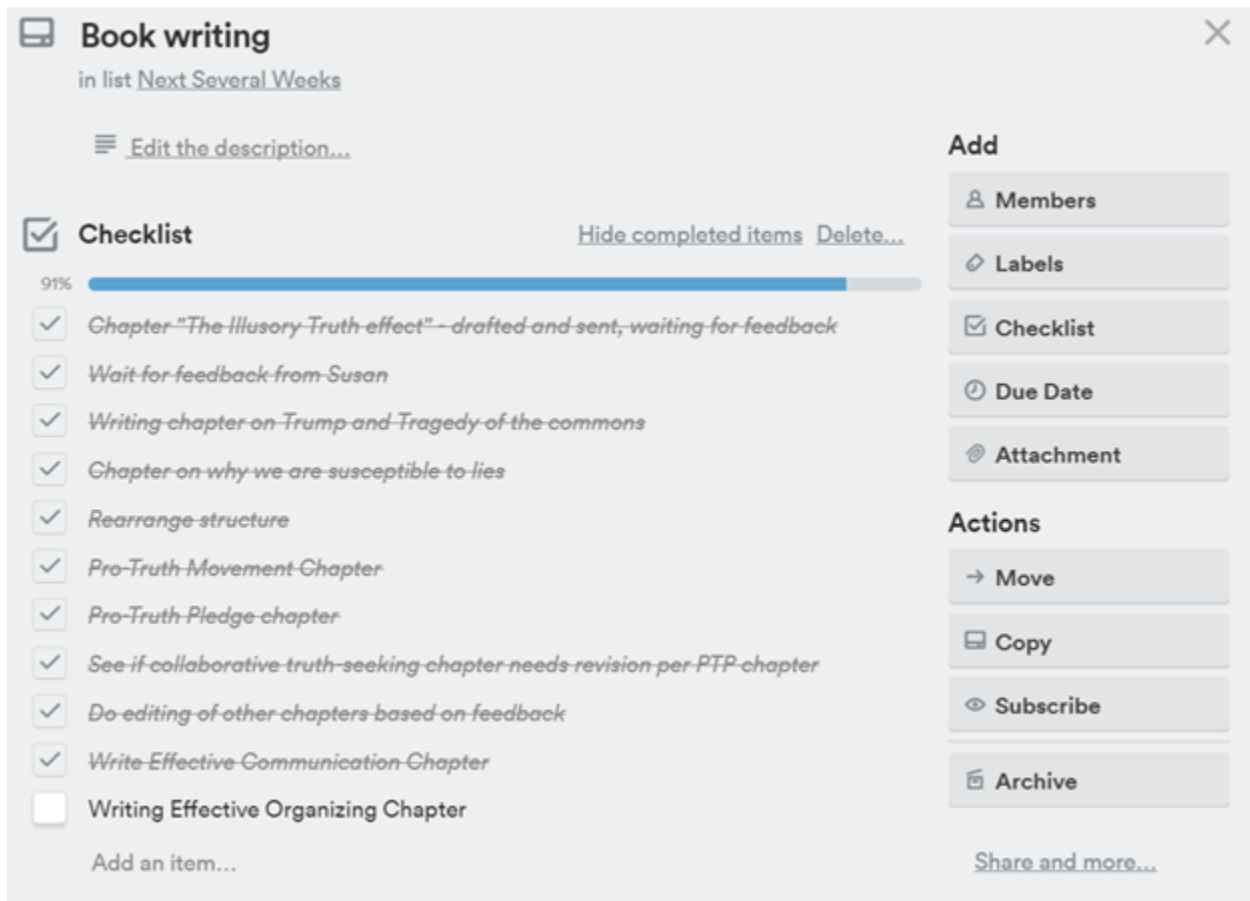
You can maximize the impact of your activism through being well-organized and disciplined in your civic engagement, as well as in other life areas, so that you free up more resources for addressing the huge problem of political deception. To do so requires choosing among the many available task management systems, figuring out one that works well for you, and sticking to it. What you choose will depend on your personality, preferences, and working style. Those who do well with a maximum amount of structure should consider David Allen's approach, described in *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*. For those desiring less structure, Stephen Covey's 1989 *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* may be helpful. A good balance, and one I recommend as a default, is Julia Morgenstern's 2004 *Organizing From the Inside Out: The Foolproof System For Organizing Your Home, Your Office and Your Life*. You might prefer a grab-bag approach of drawing your favorite strategies from a range of organizational methods, or choose one author's approach and stick to it. My recommendation is to use electronic task management and organizing tools as the default option; digitize as much as possible, for example by taking photographs and scans of relevant papers. Doing so helps you not only preserve the environment but also minimizes the possibility of losing any piece of paper, makes it very easy for you to share documents with others, enables you to easily reorganize your system as your needs change, ensures that you can easily search through your files, and avoid the risk of a flood, fire, or other catastrophe destroying your files; make sure to use secure backup systems to store your digital documents in the cloud to address the possibility of malware corrupting documents on your local computer.

The most important things for any task management system you choose is to ensure that it fits within and fulfills your overarching goals and motivations; minimizes the likelihood of any salient information or tasks getting lost; supports your ability to know what you need to do at any given time; helps you track the progress on your larger projects and break them up into subprojects to do in small time increments, of say between 15 minutes and an hour; provides flexibility for and a process of adding new projects and tasks, deleting those no longer relevant, delegating those best done by others, delaying those that can afford to be delayed for the sake of more priority projects, and diminishing those that may not need the kind of

resources that you originally intended to invest; managing effectively your commitments to yourself and others, whether by carrying out your original commitment or renegotiating the commitment as soon as you see a need to do so; most importantly, helping you and those around you avoid negative feelings through facilitating healthy habits, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors around your organization and productivity. Emotions of shame and guilt over tasks undone and commitments unmet, as well as resentment and frustration over their fellow activists who they relied on failing to do their fair share, frequently undermines people's capacity to engage in activism; much better to underpromise and overdeliver, to yourself and to others, rather than vice versa.

Let me share my own approach to organizing and task management as an example. I draw on a variety of research-based approaches to organization and task management, as opposed to adopting one single method, and try to digitize as much as possible. For organizing my documents, related to activism and other life areas, I set up a series of folders on my computer, with sub-folders devoted to specific projects or topics within that folder, and sub-subfolders in each as needed. The example I gave above of an "Activism" folder and a "Personal" subfolder with relevant documents illustrates what I mean. I store all of these folders on my local computer within a larger folder called "Dropbox," which refers to an electronic backup system by the same name (Dropbox.com). All the files stored there, including any changes I make to any file, are automatically uploaded to the Dropbox website, which protects the files from being corrupted by malware or from any physical damage to my computer. I can access them at any time from a different computer if I am traveling; Dropbox is highly secure if you turn on the two-step verification, which I did, and was thankful for after people opposed to my activism began to try to hack my online accounts.

For my task management, I use Trello, a very flexible system that allows you both to collaborate with others and also manage your own personal tasks by setting up group or individual boards. A board consists of columns of digital index cards, with 6 columns visible and 6 cards within each without scrolling to the side or down, for a total of 36 activities: more than enough for most people. Each card can contain checklists, due dates, labels and color codes, and for collaboration, multiple members. As an example, here is the card I used to help organize the writing of this book:



Screenshot of Gleb Tspursky's Trello (Retrieved from <http://imgur.com/a/ZDIlj>)

Each card can also have attachments, whether uploaded from your computer, or linked from popular cloud file storage systems such as Dropbox or Google Docs, which is fortunate since I use the latter extensively for online collaboration on writing projects with others. Another nice benefit of Trello is that you can put a link to your emails or digital calendar into a card, thus preventing yourself from the unhelpful practice of using your email inbox or calendar as a task management system (disclaimer: neither Trello, Dropbox, nor Google paid me to endorse their products, nor did any other service or product I mention here). I use Trello to organize all my tasks - activism, work, house chores, health management, and so on - avoiding the typical problem of having separate life areas in different task management systems, and enabling me to see all the projects I am working on at the same time. While this is the system I use, and it works for me, I recommend you figure out a system that works best for you,

using the guidelines and examples I provided above.

Your Time/Energy Management

To ensure that you can do the tasks you set out to do effectively, time and energy management skills are vital. Most people tend to fall for the *planning fallacy*, a cognitive bias of underestimating the time and other resources necessary to complete tasks, which impairs activism along with other life activities. Fortunately, research by Roger Buehler et al in a 1994 piece in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* and Peter Gollwitzer and Veronika Brandstätter in a 1997 article in the same journal suggests that comparing task completion times to similar tasks they did before and also creating specific plans for implementing the tasks help address the planning fallacy. For systematic approaches to time management, I suggest Julia Morgenstern's 2004 *Time Management from the Inside Out: The Foolproof System for Taking Control of Your Schedule--and Your Life*, especially for those who found her book on organizing beneficial.

We all have different energy levels, and our energy varies throughout the day: to help you make the most impactful use of your energy, I recommend checking out the 2005 book by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz, *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal*. For a more academic approach to energy use, read Roy Baumeister and John Tierney's 2011 *Willpower: Rediscovering The Greatest Human Strength*, while keeping in mind that the tie made by Baumeister between sugar and willpower has been questioned by scholars such as Veronika Job et al. in a 2010 *Psychological Science* article. My personal system of time management relies heavily on Google Calendar, which I use to keep track of my activities; Calendly.com, a scheduling service that integrates well with Google Calendar to enable others to schedule meetings with me; and addressing planning fallacy by building in much more resources of time, money, and other relevant resources than I anticipate I might need.

Your Professional Development

To improve your organization, task management, time and energy management, and other relevant

personal aptitudes and skills, I strongly recommend investing effort into professional development. That may involve reading the kind of books listed above on specific areas of personal improvement, or more general works, such as this 2001 one on habits by James Clear and Jerry Seinfeld, *The Habit Change Workbook: How to Break Bad Habits and Form Good Ones*. Specifically for developing general activism skills, you can't go wrong with the classic 1971 *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* by Saul Alinsky, and the more recent *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*, a 2004 book by David Bornstein.

Persuasion and promotion skills are particularly important for activists, and among a number of outstanding works, I would recommend first another classic, Robert Cialdini's 1984 *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, which has stood the test of time; you can find newer research and best practices on this topic in Jonah Berger's 2013 *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*, Guy Winch's 2011, *The Squeaky Wheel: Complaining the Right Way to Get Results, Improve Your Relationships, and Enhance Self-Esteem*, Roger Fisher et al.'s 2011 *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, and Chip and Dan Heath's 2007 *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*. I also recommend Tim, my co-author's book, *The Master Communicator's Handbook*.

Furthermore, using digital media for communicating your ideas is crucially important, and the following books provide good resources: David Scott's *The New Rules of Marketing and PR: How to Use News Releases, Blogs, Podcasting, Viral Marketing and Online Media to Reach Buyers Directly* (2013), Kivi Miller's *Content Marketing for Nonprofits: A Communications Map for Engaging Your Community, Becoming a Favorite Cause, and Raising More Money*, (2013), and Heather Mansfield's *Social Media for Social Good: A How-To Guide for Nonprofits* (2012). Gerrard Braud provides useful guidelines for media engagement in his 2010 *Don't Talk to the Media Until... 29 Secrets You Need to Know Before You Open Your Mouth to a Reporter*.

For any substantial activism, you will likely need to engage in fundraising. Start with the down-to-earth *Ask Without Fear! A Simple Guide to Connecting Donors with What Matters to Them Most*, a 2008 book

by Mark Pitman, and for more complex activities check out Ken Burnett's 2002 *Relationship Fundraising: A Donor-Based Approach to the Business of Raising Money*, and Jeff Brooks's 2014 *The Fundraiser's Guide to Irresistible Communications: Real-World Field-Tested Strategies for Raising More Money*.

To work well with other activists and take a leadership role, it helps to read books on successful volunteering and volunteer management, such as the 2011 *The Volunteer Management Handbook: Leadership Strategies for Success* by Tracy Connors and the 2012 *The New Breed: Understanding and Equipping the 21st Century Volunteer* by Jonathan and Thomas McKee. You can also consider taking free online courses at websites such as Udacity.com and Coursera.org, and reading quality blogs and videos on these topics.

Intentional Insights, the nonprofit organization running the Pro-Truth Pledge project where I serve as the volunteer President, offers a wide variety of professional development content on its website, intentionalinsights.org, in the form of blogs, videos, podcasts, apps, and other formats.

Your Physical Self-Care

Sustainable activism rests on a solid foundation of self-care. I learned that well in 2014, when I developed a mental illness - anxiety adjustment disorder - from a combination of starting up Intentional Insights and thus greatly ramping up my activism, along with continuing my day job as a professor. My anxiety jumped through the roof, which for me manifested primarily as psychosomatic (mentally-induced) physical fatigue, at times bad enough that I couldn't lift my cup to take a drink. Not fun. Fortunately, I was privileged to have good health insurance, and could afford to visit a therapist, and eventually after some more turmoil in my life, starting up psychiatric medications as well.

I strongly recommend anyone whose health insurance offers that option to schedule a mental health check-up, especially as you begin to engage in activism, since it will likely prove more straining than you will imagine - remember planning fallacy. Be prepared to deal with feelings of anger, outrage, anxiety, and sadness over what you learn and experience in your activism. The silver lining of my own unfortunate

experience is that it led me to do quite a bit of research on the science of self-care. It turns out that the fundamental basis of self-care stems from healthy daily routines.

Studies show that getting a good night's rest of 7-8 hours is important for mental functioning and physical health, described in a 2002 piece by Sara Mednick et al. in *Nature Neuroscience* and a 2011 one by Aric Prather in the *Journal of Aging Research*. For those who feel they do fine on four hours of sleep a night and get more stuff done: you are likely making worse decisions, your work is lower quality, and thus overall you are having lower productivity, and are also putting yourself in danger of mental and physical breakdown. Good news for those who can manage to go to sleep in the afternoon (a talent I unfortunately lack): naps lasting between ten and thirty minutes makes people more productive, alert, and ready to learn, but don't nap longer than thirty minutes, as these longer naps inhibit productivity, according to a meta-review by Rajiv Dhand and Harjot Sohal in a 2006 piece in *Current Opinion in Pulmonary Medicine*.

As someone who suffers from insomnia, upon learning about the benefits of a healthy night of sleep, I delved into sleep aids. Melatonin has been shown to improve sleep onset, quality, and quantity as reported in a meta-analysis by Amnon Brzezinski et al. in a 2005 article in *Sleep Medicine Reviews*, while L-theanine promotes calmness and relaxation according to Kenta Kimura et al.'s 2007 article in *Biological Psychology*: I take a combination of both every night to ensure good sleep quality. Also, I use f.lux, a program that changes the blue light on a computer screen into a more reddish tint closer to bedtime, as blue light has been shown to promote alertness and impair sleep quality, for instance in a 2009 article in *Chronobiology International* by Burkhardt Kimberly and Phelps James. Find a healthy sleep regimen that works for you, and stick to it, despite any desire to sleep less and spend more time on activism, a desire that plagues so many people dedicated to saving the world and causes them to crash and burn, or at the very least drastically underperform.

Healthy eating routines represents another fundamentally important aspect of self-care and sustainable activism. I have observed so many activists take pride in subsisting on a diet of pizza, donuts, and fast

food because they do not want to take the time to eat in a healthy manner. Well, they're doing it wrong, at least if they want to sustain their activism in the long term. Plenty of research suggests clear guidelines on how we should eat, as described in Gregory Privitera's 2008 *The Psychological Dieter: It's Not All About the Calories* and Michael Roizen and Mehmet Oz's 2008 *YOU: Being Beautiful: The Owner's Manual to Inner and Outer Beauty*. You won't be surprised to learn that a healthy diet consists of a large amount of green veggies, healthy proteins such as beans or fish, and minimal carbohydrates and fats, which you can get from unprocessed whole grains and fruit for dessert.

As someone who engages in comfort eating of sugary foods to manage my anxiety, and also does not like to cook, I have struggled to establish a healthy eating regimen. For sugary foods, I find that sugarless jello and jams, along with sweet dried fruits such as raisins and prepared desserts such as sugarless applesauce, to which I can add plant-based sweeteners such as Stevia, help satisfy my cravings; for convenient foods that require little or no preparation, I have benefitted from having easy-to-make protein shakes and protein-rich snacks such as roasted edamame, peanuts, and soybeans. All of these represent convenient foods that I take along when I go to rallies to give speeches or meetings with fellow activists, and all are relatively inexpensive, much cheaper than easy-to-access junk food; however, they all take some advance planning, which I strongly encourage you do to preserve your health for the long term.

A third area of healthy routines involves physical exercise. Plenty of research demonstrates the benefits of exercise for addressing stress and improving energy, related in Roizen and Oz's *YOU: Being Beautiful*. N. I. Siddiqui et al. in a 2010 piece in *Mymensingh Medical Journal* describe how exercise decreases the risk of various physical diseases such as cardiac disease and high blood pressure, and mental illness, such as anxiety. Exercise improves learning and memory, as reported in Nicole Berchtold et al.'s 2010 *Neuroscience* article, and even contributes to healthy sleep, a finding of Mei-Feng Tang et al. in a 2010 piece in *Supportive Care in Cancer*.

A light but sufficient exercise regimen involves taking walks of at least 30 minutes most days a week, or doing another exercise that gets you up and moving for 30 minutes a day if walking is not feasible for you. If you want to save time, you can consider more intense but shorter-duration exercises such as high-

intensity interval training (HIIT), which involves a series of repeating short bursts of intense exercise: an intense HIIT exercise of 10 minutes a day most days will suffice. Another way to save time involves combining chores you would do anyway with workouts: for example, I do most of my workouts in the warmer months of the year through doing various intense gardening activities, bike to meetings when possible, and take the stairs as opposed to elevators or escalators. Consider how you can integrate a healthy exercise regimen into your life and activism. Social support is an important aspect of maintaining a regular exercise routine, so joining an exercise group can help keep you on track.

Your Mental Self-care

Mental exercise through mindfulness and meditation is a fourth area of healthy habits. Many people still too frequently dismiss these as spiritual nonsense, but plenty of research demonstrates the benefits of mental exercises. A comprehensive review of the research can be found in Jon Kabat-Zinn's 1990 classic, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*, which describes studies on the benefits of mindfulness and meditation for addressing stress, pain, and other forms of physical discomfort. Meditation helps improve focus and thinking processes, as reported in Fadel Zeidan et al.'s 2010 *Consciousness and Cognition* article. A 2010 article by José Leite et al. in *Perceptual and Motor Skills* demonstrated that meditation helps address mental illness symptoms such as anxiety and depression, although for more serious cases, meditation should be combined with traditional therapy as shown in Sy Saeed et al.'s 2010 *American Family Physician* piece.

Mindfulness refers to a set of skills related to one's capacity to observe and describe one's internal and external environment in the present moment, acting with this awareness, while expressing an attitude of nonjudgment and non-reactiveness to the observed and described stimuli; the nonjudgment area in particular correlates with lowered symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression, according to Morgan Cash and Koa Whittingham's 2010 piece in *Mindfulness*. Meditation refers to a specific practice where you induce a mental state of focusing on a specific object, idea, or experience to the exclusion of all distractions.

A simple meditation practice, which I invite all readers to try right now, is to focus on your breath. Start by - after you read the rest of these instructions - putting away the book and sitting in a calm and relaxed position. Then close your eyes, and take a deep breath, counting to five internally as you breath in, so that the inhalation takes about five seconds. Notice - here's the awareness - how the air feels as it rushes past your nostrils. Feel yourself expand as you take in that deep breath. Hold your breath to a count of three. Pay attention to how your expanded chest feels as you hold that breath. Now exhale, again to a count of five. Sense the air flowing out of your nostrils, and the decrease in your chest as you do so. Do not breath in immediately, hold your breath for another count of three, noticing the feelings in your chest as you do so. Now again breathe in, following the cycle described above. Do so for ten breaths, focusing solely on this process, to the exclusion of all other thoughts, feelings, and sensations. If these intrude, simply note the intrusion, and let it go, without judging or reacting to it; turn your focus back to paying attention to your breathing, and the bodily sensations accompanying the breathing. Start your day with that breath meditation, which should take about five minutes altogether, and do it again every three hours, for a total of four sets of this mental exercise per day. It offers an excellent introduction to meditation and mindfulness practice, and should be sufficient if you choose to do nothing else, but if you want more diversity or to develop your mental exercises further, Kabat-Zinn's book offers much more thorough guidelines. Finally, a good way to combine mental and physical exercise is practicing yoga.

Last, but far from least, healthy habits involve systematic restful, restorative activities. Extensive research on this topic is offered in two books by Herbert Benson and William Proctor, the 2003 *The Breakout Principle: How to Activate the Natural Trigger That Maximizes Creativity, Athletic Performance, Productivity and Personal Well-Being* and the 2010 *Relaxation Revolution: The Science and Genetics of Mind Body Healing*. Rest helps address stress, prevents and alleviates anxiety and depression, and a whole host of physical symptoms. Arielle Tambini et al.'s 2010 article in *Neuron* shows the importance of rest for memory formation.

Now, I personally am a workaholic, and that has contributed to my burnout and development of mental illness described earlier. Given my background, and the research on rest, I have deliberately integrated

systematic restorative activities into my life. My habit involves time-blocking at least one day a week to avoid work beyond a minimal check of virtual communication, and I would recommend that you avoid that checking if you are not in a leadership or media communication role; I used to spend a whole day off-line, but learned from experience that doing so results in missing a number of last-minute interview opportunities and also organizing/leadership-related matters that couldn't wait for a day, such as public relations problems. Also, I aim to spend the hour before I go to sleep relaxing on the couch with my wife, and the last half-hour before sleep without the internet. Likewise, I practice a Pomodoro-informed style of work, a half-hour of work followed by a break of 5-10 minutes when I do meditation or exercises; after a couple of hours of work, I take a longer break to do gardening. I also regularly schedule at least an hour a day to connect with my wife, and social activities with her and with other friends three or so times a week. These activities help me avoid burnout, and I strongly urge you to find a routine that you find relaxing and restorative for yourself to ensure sustainable activism that will last you through many years: the fight against lies in politics is a marathon, not a sprint.

Your Sense of Empowerment

Besides these healthy habits, long-term activism success requires a specific mindset associated with a sense of personal agency and an internal locus of control. Personal agency in psychology refers to a sense of personal awareness and empowerment in affecting one's internal and external environment, as described in a 2010 edited volume by Michela Balconi, *Neuropsychology of the Sense of Agency: From Consciousness to Action*; an internal locus of self-control is a related concept, describing one's perceptions that one's own actions determine one's outcomes, rather than an external locus of control, which attributes responsibility for one's fate to forces outside of oneself.

Research suggests that a perception of oneself as efficacious in determining one's own situation translates to a range of positive health benefits, since this mindset results in more effective coping strategies, described in Andrew Francis' 2010 article in the *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*. As an example, college students who had a stronger sense of an internal locus of control and self-efficacy tended to have lower levels of stress and illness, according to Angela Roddenberry and Kimberly Renk's

2010 piece in *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*, and also engage in healthier behavior habits such as in maintaining diet change, reported by Ulrike Sonntag et al. in a 2010 *Medical Science Monitor* piece. For a sense of resilience and personal power, I can also recommend Tim my co-author's book, *Indestructible You: Building a Self that Can't be Broken*, written together with Shai Tubali.

So how does all this translate to activism and self-care? Let me be clear: taking responsibility for your own fate does not mean beating yourself up when you failed at something you set out to do, or when someone says or does something that goes against your values and goals. Instead, locus of control means meeting such situations head on in an intentional and healthy manner. First, work to manage your own emotions: use that internal locus of control to calm your feelings so that you do not make bad decisions. When it's about your own lack of success at achieving something - say you ran out of time to write an article you wanted to finish by a deadline - how would feeling guilty help you? Use mindfulness to notice that guilt, observe it nonjudgmentally and non-reactively, and let it go. You'll have plenty of opportunities to perform future activism tasks, and feeling guilty about past failures will just hinder your future success. Just hop on back on the productivity train, and go forward. In cases where your actions let others down, apologize to anyone whose activities you might have hindered or whose expectations you might have broken, and discuss how to decrease the likelihood of future problems.

Turning to undesirable actions of others, you will run into plenty of cases when fellow activists will let you down. I remember when I was just getting into activism feeling high anxiety over activists failing to return my emails and phone calls, which contributed to my eventual mental illness. Perhaps you had someone who agreed to a collaboration and then backed out, something that happened to me more times than I can count. Avoid burnout by noticing emotions of disappointment and resentment, and letting those go. Update your beliefs about that person, and depending on the nature of interactions, discuss how to improve your collaborations. Another type of undesirable action might come from attacks by critics. Again, start always by addressing emotions of defensiveness and aggressiveness, whatever comes up for you, in a nonjudgmental and nonreactive manner. Take time to cool off as needed; take some deep breaths, do a meditation session, do exercises to work out some stress. Once you are refreshed, evaluate whether

the critics have something valuable to say, taking an approach of taking any useful lessons even from the most unfair and unjust criticism, so that you can update your beliefs and adjust your actions accordingly.

Then take an intentional approach to addressing the criticism. Often, after you adjust your actions and words, the best approach is to do nothing at all, so as to avoid drawing attention to it and wasting your time and energy in an unhelpful back-and-forth. Every case will be different, and the marketing and communications books cited above should prove helpful here. In all cases, remember that you are the one responsible for your own emotional responses, not other people; manage your emotions well to achieve your activism goals.

Pro-Truth Personal Activism

Depending on your preferences, capacity, background, and social context, you can engage in personal pro-truth activism, remaining independent of the broader movement; join the pro-truth movement as a grassroots activist online or in-person; or take a leadership role.

Personal activism starts in your personal network, with the people you can most strongly influence. For instance, research by Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler, published in 2008 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, showed that if you quit smoking, there's an average of a sixty-seven percent chance that your spouse will quit smoking, and a thirty-six percent chance that each of your friends will quit smoking. Now imagine what will happen if you start actively educating those close to you - at home, at work, in your church or secular group, in your friendship circle - when they share false news stories or use a news source known as unreliable, in a compassionate and gentle manner. Avoid being aggressive and saying they are sharing viral deception: instead, use curiosity to ask something like "Can you help me understand where you got that information?" if a friend tells you something you suspect may be inaccurate, or, if they tell you they got the information from a source you think might be biased, state "I see you're sharing an article from *OccupyDemocrats.com*. Can you let me know how trustworthy that source is in the evaluation of mainstream fact-checkers?" An on-line search might lead your friend to a PolitiFact scorecard for *OccupyDemocrats.com* that showed the site rarely made claims that were wholly

true, and made claims that were completely false more than 60% of the time.

We often don't want to confront people with information they would feel bad about because we are afraid we would be blamed for it, what scholars have termed the *mum effect*, described in Jayson Dibble and Timothy Levine's 2010 piece in *Communication Research*. Gentle questioning helps ameliorate the mum effect through letting the person figure out the bad news themselves, without you bringing it to them directly. The same approach applies to social media and online forum communication; although you are less likely to get traction than with people close to you and/or face-to-face conversations, the outcomes are much more likely to be effective and avoid triggering the *backfire effect*, the surprising cognitive bias where people who are provided with clear factual evidence that contradicts their beliefs actually double down and hold onto their beliefs more strongly. Even if the person you are engaging with does not change their mind, you come out looking much better to all the other people observing the interactions on social media or online forums, as someone curious and willing to learn, rather than arrogant and strident. Aim to slip the Pro-Truth Pledge website into your commentary, saying something like "I am genuinely interested in learning your perspective, and per the Pro-Truth Pledge I have taken at ProTruthPledge.org, I would be happy to update my beliefs if shown I am mistaken." This is both an accurate reflection of reality, and helps spread word about the pledge and the truth-oriented behavior it inspires.

As people close around you grow more truth-oriented through your persistent, kind, and gentle influence, inform them about the strategies described in this book for healthy communication. Practice collaborative truth-seeking as they grow ready for it, and show them the benefits of this approach. Help them engage in rational communication strategies. Get them to recognize how much better off they and everyone else will be in a pro-truth, instead of post-truth, society. Your personal activism should also involve teaching your children or younger siblings, if you have any, about the strategies described in this book for truth-oriented behavior and getting them to internalize and practice the behaviors of the pledge. Fortunately, younger minds have less to unlearn, and are more likely to be flexible, thus readier for these unintuitive behaviors that are unfortunately not part of our social norm or education system as of yet.

Pro-Truth Virtual Activism

A host of activities exist for those who want to engage in pro-truth online/virtual activism, for instance boosting awareness among your social media followers and social network. You can follow and retweet relevant posts from the Pro-Truth Pledge Twitter account, and do the same for the PTP Facebook page. Read and share blogs from the PTP website and politics-themed blogs from Intentional Insights on social media and via email with your contacts. Use the template emails available on ProTruthPledge.org to invite friends, family, coworkers, and members of your community to take the PTP, and use the other templates on that same website to send emails to public figures that did not yet take the pledge. Also send hashtag-rich tweets to public figures to invite them to take the pledge, for instance “@[twitter handle] I hope you will take #ProTruthPledge at ProTruthPledge.org to fight #fakenews @ProTruthPledge.” You can also call public figures to encourage them to take the pledge: if you reach them, or most likely their staff, please be polite and gracious, and stress the benefits to them of being a signee. Check the list of public figures who did take the pledge on the website, and send them messages of gratitude, by Twitter, Facebook, email, mail, or phone call. Be creative in using your own social context and capacities to engage in online signal-boosting.

Upon taking the pledge, you also gain an opportunity to join online communities devoted to it, such as a number of relevant Facebook groups. The “Intentional Insights Insiders” group - the main Facebook group for the nonprofit that runs the PTP - offers a forum for any discussions related to rational thinking and wise decision-making, including in politics. For matters specifically related to the pledge, the “Global Pro-Truth Pledge Advocates” group unites Facebook users who signed the pledge and want to help. Additionally, Facebook hosts many area groups devoted to PTP activism in that area. In those groups, you can connect with fellow pro-truth movement members who are committed to truth-oriented behaviors, making whatever they share much more credible.

Moreover, you can have discussions about various resources to improve your ability to seek the truth and fight lies: I recently learned about a browser extension called “B.S. Detector” that provides visual warnings for sites that may contain viral deception. You can discuss problems you may be having with

engaging in truth-oriented behaviors, such as a recent discussion on how best to retract posts that you discovered are no longer true, or pro-truth activism activities, for instance how to deal with recalcitrant relatives who insist on sharing falsehoods. You can discuss mutual online collaboration, as for instance a recent discussion where a political candidate who took the PTP got a volunteer to help him with Twitter. A number of email lists devoted to the pledge also exist, where you can get and share relevant information for pro-truth activism. Other online community venues provide similar benefits. Moreover, all these venues offer a sense of community belonging and support for each other both to model truth-oriented behaviors and engage in truth-oriented activism, as well as meet like-minded people from all across the political spectrum mutually dedicated to promoting truth in politics and other areas of public discourse. Members often report that this community belonging and support offers them the highest degree of benefit in promoting truth and fighting lies.

Much of the volunteering needs of the central Pro-Truth Pledge project can be accomplished online, and you can learn about these opportunities on the website and PTP online communities. One big area of volunteering involves supporting other members of the community in orienting toward greater accuracy. For instance, we sometimes have new members of the pro-truth movement posting articles from sources that are unreliable, both on their own walls and in PTP Facebook groups. More experienced members work to educate them gently to avoid such sources, regardless of whether the article itself has merit. Another area involves keeping track of public figures who took the pledge, and making sure they abide by it. Volunteers in this area read through their social media feeds, speeches, press releases, and other public statements; if they find something that smells fishy, they follow the process for addressing misinformation described on the website. The central PTP organization is maintained by volunteers who do programming, editing and writing, social media management, video and audio editing, administrative tasks such as inputting people who signed the pledge in person into the website, managing the newsletter, and a variety of research related to the pledge, such as identifying public figures who might be good prospects to approach about the PTP. So are local PTP organizations, with volunteers engaging in activities such as managing local area Facebook groups and social media accounts, writing op-eds and letters-to-the-editor of local newspapers, getting on local radio stations to discuss the pledge, and so on.

Pro-Truth In-Person Activism

In-person activism centers around spreading the message of the pledge, by yourself or in collaboration with others. Starting with things you can do by yourself, it's very easy to wear Pro-Truth Pledge merchandise and convey your commitment in a subtle manner. A number of people who see you wear the shirt will be interested enough to look up what the PTP is about. Some people who wear the shirt even report that people strike up conversations with them, wanting to know more about the pledge and its goals; that is a perfect opportunity for you to share about it.



Pro-Truth Pledge shirt (Retrieved from <https://www.protruthpledge.org/merchandise/>)

Another way to spread the message is to put on the back of your business card a statement that you took the PTP, together with the website. That offers an opportunity for a conversation about the pledge with a new business contact, and puts you in a positive light: who wouldn't want to be known by their potential business contact as someone demonstrating sufficient integrity that they put it on the back of their card? The design below offers plenty of space for your new business contact to write notes about you, while

also keeping your commitment to the PTP as part of your connection with that person.

A more proactive form of volunteering involves gathering signatures. You can do so by attending appropriate events, such as political rallies, meetings of service clubs and political clubs, churches and secular groups, events at schools, universities, and libraries. For spontaneous signature-gathering, libraries and universities are a good bet. The PTP website has directions on putting together a handy binder you can use to gather signatures, with flyers and sign-up sheets, along with written directions and training videos on how to gather signatures effectively. You can then email scans or photos of signatures to the central PTP organizing team, who will find someone to input them into the website. You can also give speeches at various events, such as clubs and political events, themed around the pledge: the PTP website has suggested talking points and speech guidelines. During or after the speech, you can pass out your binder and encourage people to sign up. If any of them are public figures - this will be especially likely if you are at a political rally with candidates for office - get their business cards to contact them later, so that they can more fully fill out the public figure portion of the website.

To get a public figure to sign up you'll likely have to engage in individual lobbying, which forms a distinct area of in-person activism. This may involve approaching the minister of your church or secular group leader, or local journalists and academics, or your boss in the company where you work, and of course politicians, and convincing them to sign the pledge. In most cases, unless you know the individual personally, you'll first want to engage in virtual activism, through emailing, tweeting, Facebook messaging, and calling the person. Try to secure a meeting with them, or their staff if the person is not available. For politicians in particular - since the pledge involves a statement from signees asking their elected representatives to take the pledge - you will want to show them how many of their constituents took the pledge and want them to do so, information that you can get from the PTP central organizers. After you go to meet with a politician several times and the politician still refuses to sign the pledge, you can go to friendly media contacts - ideally ones you got to sign the pledge earlier - and tell the contact about the situation, as well as show them the signatures of ordinary citizens asking the politician to sign the pledge. This may result in a news story that would both spread word about the pledge and put some

pressure on the politician to sign it, or be perceived as having something to hide.

While such activities can be done alone, you will get more impact if you collaborate with a group of like-minded people in your locale devoted to fighting lies and promoting truth. A number of areas already have existing in-person groups that you can join. These groups form natural venues for collaborating around pro-truth movement activities with people from across the political spectrum and a variety of diverse skill sets. A group can divide among its participants the basic activities necessary to get local PTP activities moving forward. These include researching venues and events at which you can gather signatures and give speeches, perfect for those who are more introverted and like to spend their time in front of computers. They can also engage in activities such as managing the area PTP Facebook page and Twitter account, the area Facebook group, the listserv for PTP advocates in the area, virtual lobbying of public figures to take the pledge, monitoring of these public figures, and various other administrative behind-the-scenes activities.

Those who identify as more extroverted can sign signatures at these events and venues, which might include contacting organizers in advance depending on the nature of the event, and sometimes may involve securing a table; they can also lobby public figures and organizations to take the pledge in-person, after some initial work of virtual lobbying. Those with public speaking skills may arrange with organizers at various events and venues to give speeches, and others can come along to help them gather signatures after such speeches. Existing area PTP groups can also choose to collaborate in an official capacity with other organizations or groups in your locale that have overlapping missions to promote the PTP. Over time, you can encourage that organization or group to commit to abide by the PTP. An important in-person activity involves doing fundraising to support the activities of the local and central PTP organization. Perhaps the most important area of activity is organizing, meaning coordinating other people in doing PTP-related activities. You can get training and guidance on all of these activities from the PTP website and the central PTP organizers.

Financial Support for Your Activism

Many people are excited about such in-person activities, but have difficulties with the money needed for them: one of the ways that the PTP helps advance truth and fight lies is by distributing money from those who have it and lack time to do organizing to those who have the time but lack the money through the nonprofit organization running the PTP, and Intentional Insights. If you or any other PTP advocates you know have financial difficulties printing out the materials, purchasing a binder, travelling to an event, paying for parking, you can get up to twenty dollars per month reimbursed for printing materials and purchasing a binder; separately, you can get up to twenty dollars reimbursed for travelling to an event, such as for gas, paying for parking, price of entry, and also up to twenty dollars for direct event-themed costs, such as making a PTP sign for visibility at an event such as a march or political rally. If you can get a table at a promising community or political event, you can be reimbursed up to one hundred dollars for the table if you can commit to arranging for yourself or someone else to be present for at least three-fourths of the event. You can also get reimbursements of up to fifteen dollars off the costs of PTP-themed merchandise, to ensure your visibility at events.

To get reimbursements, first email finance@intentionalinsights.org and describe your financial need: no need to provide documentation, just describe your situation in a paragraph, and get confirmation of approval. After that, just email the receipt for the purchase of the materials/binder, parking or travel by Lyft/Uber/Taxi/public transport or approximate gas money, or the approximate cost of paper and ink if you are printing at home, and any other similar expenses. Also explain what you used this money to pay for, so we can keep a clear track of reasons for expenditures, and a scan or clear photographs of all the signatures you gathered. Finally, please provide a PayPal account to which we can transfer the money. We trust all PTP Advocates to avoid abusing this system (after all, you signed the Pro-Truth Pledge), and only use this as needed per your financial difficulties. Area groups can provide additional monetary support above and beyond this from the central organization. You can work within your local area group to maintain a central fund for various expenses, such as marketing costs, or simply have one area member pay for the needs of others. For example, some area members order extra merchandise and donate it to others who can't afford it; other local participants pay for the travel of some individuals across a state or the country to attend major events, for example marches in DC, which offer excellent

opportunities for signature-gathering and speaking.

Making Donations

The central PTP organization helps sponsor these costs through small donations from pro-truth movement supporters across the world. Such donations represent another area of activity. Many people work long hours and have minimal opportunity to promote the PTP beyond putting it on their business cards, and talking to friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers; they have more financial capacity, and become checkbook activists, sponsoring the organization financially. Others who volunteer significant amounts of time also make financial donations, as do I, since I serve as the volunteer President of Intentional Insights and donate ten percent of my income to the organization. Part of this money goes to sponsor other PTP advocates who need the money to engage in various PTP-related activities, and part goes to the central fund, to sponsor marketing costs, website and social media management, high-quality video and audio editing, and many other costs; the eventual goal is to hire staff to professionalize the pro-truth movement.

You can donate online through the link on the ProTruthPledge.org website: for the monthly donation option – which is especially helpful, as it enables longer-term financial planning – click the checkbox “monthly recurring donation.” If you want to write a check, you can make it out to Intentional Insights, and mail it to 450 Wetmore road, Columbus, OH, 43214. Emailing info@intentionalinsights.org if you would like to make an ACH transfer or any other more complex form of financial gift, such as stocks or putting Intentional Insights into your will. These donations are tax-deductible against any income that you earn in the US, whether you are a US citizen or not, since Intentional Insights is a 501(c)3 nonpartisan educational nonprofit based in the US. Please choose an amount that would make you happy and proud to support the fight against lies and the promotion of truth.

Pro-Truth Activism Leadership

The most valuable area of activity is becoming a leader in the pro-truth movement through helping organize and coordinate local PTP area activities. While some area groups exist, you might well be in an

area where a group does not yet exist. In such situations, I welcome you to become the wellspring of the pro-truth movement in your area by taking the initiative in starting one as a PTP area organizer; the guidelines for doing so are on the PTP website. Doing so necessitates at least some skills at social interaction and organization, which you can develop based on the books listed above; as an introvert myself who was a marginalized social outcast at school, and someone who suffers from social anxiety, I can attest that, given a desire strong enough - such as effectively fighting lies and promoting truth - these are abilities one can choose to cultivate intentionally if you choose to do so.

The area-organizing-volunteer role involves recruiting and coordinating others to ensure the outcomes of the PTP project are met, namely: 1) effective promotion of PTP to the public, getting more and more people to sign on; 2) effective lobbying of public figures, especially politicians, in your local area, with increasing numbers taking the pledge; 3) effective evaluation of local-level public figures who signed the pledge; 4) effective behind-the-scenes activities needed to support activities on the local level, such as management of communication processes and collaboration venues, and community support for PTP activities; 5) effective fundraising to support the needs of the local group for things like printing, travel, tabling, and marketing, and also additional donations to the global pro-truth movement; and 6) effective coordination of all the areas of PTP activity listed above. To help ensure positive outcomes for all six areas, it's important for you as an area organizer to perceive yourself as a role model and leader enacting the following behaviors:

Nine behaviors for PTP leaders:

1. Inspiring people to volunteer and donate by communicating first about the problems that the PTP is solving, sharing successes, and then letting them know about the needs of the area group.
2. Finding a good fit for the ones who start to get involved in the various activities available.
3. Helping those who get involved work together well by setting up clear communication processes and collaborative venues.
4. Encouraging shared expectations and sticking to commitments, and renegotiation of commitments and expectations when life stuff comes up.

5. Modeling direct and transparent communication, erring on the side of an overabundance of communication rather than insufficient communication.
6. Exhibiting emotional and social intelligence to read people and channel their enthusiasm and other emotions toward healthy directions.
7. Addressing the conflicts that will arise in an effective and healthy manner.
8. Providing an engaging community setting, such as doing fun things together, in-person and online, getting to know each other socially, and overall building a truth-oriented community where people can find a home.
9. Being a cheerleader for accomplishments, and giving due praise.

Remember that you will be organizing people who have very different values than you do. Whether you are religious or secular, left-leaning or right-leaning, or any other ideological perspective, you will be bringing together people to work on a shared project of advocating for truth-oriented behaviors in addressing value differences. That means that you yourself need to model an inclusive and welcoming attitude for people with different values, and be especially welcoming and inclusive toward people with values different from your own and also those whose values are in the minority in your group. Doing so will be key to helping these people both be engaged in the pro-truth movement and as a result reach out to their social networks and communicate the pro-truth message to people who hold similar values and change the culture in our society.

Here's the plan of action for starting up your area group:

As an area organizer, you'd want to do activities that are most impactful, which means moving as quickly as possible in coordinating other people and doing strategic planning, rather than doing ground-level activities (however much fun those might be for you). You'll start off by first getting signatures: in our experience, at least 20 percent of the people who sign up indicate they want to help, and about 20 percent of those (that is 4% of the total) turn out to be reliable and consistent volunteers. We strongly recommend that you offer to meet with people individually to help get them oriented, either in-person or

online, and once you have more than a couple of people actively involved, set up a regular meeting once a month dedicated to advancing the PTP in your locale. While not all will become actively involved in meetings and signature-gathering, those who do will spread the PTP through their social networks, do research, lobby politicians, donate, and so on, and it's really important to try to do at least one face-to-face meeting – virtual or videoconference – to get them involved with this project.

Once you gather enough signatures, you would want to focus on coordinating people in their volunteer activities, decreasing your own time doing ground-level activities. We suggest you focus these volunteers first on gathering more signatures, enough to form a solid core team in your area of about ten consistent volunteers. At the same time, you'll want to form a coordinating committee of area organizers, of about three to six people, who can each take charge of different areas of PTP activities and work together to coordinate other volunteers. Once you gather at least 250 signatures, and get a person who is able to take charge of lobbying, you will be ready to start lobbying local-level elected or appointed officials and other public figures in your locale to take the pledge in person. Of course, you can do virtual lobbying earlier, but do not take the time to meet them until you have gathered 250 signatures as they will be unlikely to listen to you. In lobbying public officials, we advise you to start with candidates for office rather than office-holders, as the candidates will be more likely to take the pledge, since they have less to lose by doing so in constricting their behaviors. Once a candidate for office takes the pledge, you can then go to incumbents and tell them that the candidate for office took it, and you also have a lot of signatures from their constituents asking them to take it. As you get public figures signed up, you will want to establish an evaluation system.

Try to set up collaborations with local groups interested in the PTP, which would usually be various kinds of grassroots political or civic education or science-themed activism groups. Ask leaders in those groups to take the PTP, and get the whole group committed to the PTP, and they will then help you advance the PTP message. Also coordinate with local branches of national organizations that have shared values. Please make sure that, within any ordinary situation, you respond to emails or Facebook messages within 48 hours, and to texts or voicemails within 24 hours. It's fine to respond saying "I got your message and

will respond by _____," so that the other person knows that you are accountable to get back to them in that time. As we are trying to promote truth and accountability, it is really important to be accountable as area organizers. Of course, emergencies come up, and that's totally understandable. Still, if it is not an emergency and you are traveling or on vacation, please indicate that through email vacation auto-responders or something of that style. Be as professional and accountable in your activism as you can be, both to internal stakeholders such as members of the pro-truth movement, and external stakeholders who want to learn more about the movement. Much more thorough directions are available on the PTP website for how to perform each of these steps, along with training and guidance from the central PTP organizing team. As you advance further in your leadership, you can grow from local to regional area organizer, or also consider joining the PTP Central Coordination Committee.

The PACER Model for Leaders

Lead your group by helping everyone to stay focused on the goals they all share and work together in an effective manner by adopting the PACER model developed by Amanda Metskas, the former Executive Director of a national volunteer-based organization, who also borrowed ideas from the work of Amy Sutherland in her 2008 *What Shamu Taught Me About Life, Love, and Marriage: Lessons for People from Animals and Their Trainers*. The PACER model involves first working on developing a clear vision and shared goals, and then setting incentives in an explicit manner to ensure that you and all other group members benefit from achieving these goals, and having positive emotions around doing so: a very intentional approach to team engagement.

PACER is an acronym referring to the five goals you should aim to encourage in your group: process, affirm, check-in, expectations, and reward. Process refers to shaping the process of decision-making in such a way that team members feel ownership of the decision and have buy-in. Avoid trying to get your way and dominating the process of decision-making, and be flexible based on the desires of the majority of participants, unless the issue is of existential importance to pro-truth activism in your locale, which is going to be exceedingly rare. Remember, other people are involved only because they are enthusiastic about the project, and the more buy-in and ownership they feel, the more enthusiastic they will be, and

the more resources of time, attention, money, and others they will devote to pro-truth activism.

The second point of PACER involves affirming shared goals, stating and restating them. Remind people at the beginning and end of meetings about your shared goals, which are going to be so much more important than the specific issue of the meeting itself. Presume that other people in the room have good intentions if they seem to be opposed to your perspective; try to understand why they feel and think the way they do, and update your beliefs.

The third part of PACER involves checking in, with yourself and others. Checking in with yourself involves the emotional intelligence skill of self-awareness and self-management: how are you feeling, thinking, and behaving, and can you improve your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors in order to help address the goals of the PTP? Check in with others as well, about their feelings and thoughts, as well as their tasks and responsibilities. Encourage a culture of open and honest, while also gentle and socially intelligent, communication about tasks and goals; invite people to say “no” rather than say “yes” and not do something, and to renegotiate commitments to you and to the group rather than leave you hanging and fail to communicate because they don’t want to cause bad feelings and disappoint you. Beware of encouraging the mum effect by responding negatively to bad news about someone not being able to fulfill a responsibility they took on; express gratitude for that person letting you know, and encourage the person to take on more responsibilities in the future instead, or provide other resources to address the situation.

The fourth part of PACER involves expectations. Set clear and shared expectations around responsibilities and timelines, as well as the process of communication and collaboration. Remember that other people may not know nearly as much as you do about effective activism, so communicate the strategies outlined here to them as part of your engagement with them.

Finally, the fifth and last part of PACER is reward. Strive to figure out what kind of reward people prefer: private praise, public recognition, a higher level of responsibility. Then, apply appropriate rewards for

behavior that you want to see while minimizing punishment except when someone violates group norms: generally, research suggests that rewards work much better than punishments in producing desired behavior in the long term, for instance as found in the 1982 article by Philip Podsakoff et al. in *Academy of Management Journal*.

Challenges for Leaders

You will need to be particularly vigilant about dealing with negative things said about the pro-truth movement and its participants, as the success of the movement depends on its reputation and the reputation of its participants for demonstrating integrity, nonpartisanship, and updating of beliefs. Investigate any external or internal claims criticizing the reputation and work of PTP advocates, with the similar “innocent until proven guilty” approach you would take to investigating public figures accused of violating the pledge. Be transparent about the investigation and its outcomes, internally and externally. The pro-truth movement makes it easy for anyone to join: take the pledge, offer to volunteer, and you’re in. While most will be a good fit as long as they follow the tenets of the pledge, some may not follow its tenets well, or behave problematically in other ways. Moreover, by its very nature, any social movement will inevitably be plagued by certain people trying to troll it; we should judge the movement as a whole by the processes and systems it sets up to deal with problematic behavior, and the kind of culture its leaders establish internally so as to exclude such bad apples.

Of course, it’s very hard to differentiate between people trying to deliberately undermine the movement, and people who join the movement out of a genuine desire to advance the truth, but without sufficient knowledge of how to do so well. This is why if an investigation does demonstrate minor problematic behavior - such as implicit prejudice or strong partisanship - gentle education and correction, encouraging people to abide by the pledge and helping other people feel safe, needs to be the first course of action. If a pattern of minor problematic behavior is established, then escalate warnings and corrective measures. If there is no noticeable or sufficient behavioral improvement, you will need to exclude the person from participation after several warnings; notify the PTP central organizers if you do so, in order to disseminate that information to other local-level leaders in case the person moves elsewhere or tries to participate

online. For any major disruptive behavior, such as engaging in behavior that would make other people feel unsafe in a substantial way such as explicit discriminatory behavior or threats of violence, or explicit efforts to manipulate the PTP evaluation process, exclude the person immediately from local-level participation, to ensure other participants feel safe and protect the reputation of the PTP. On your own recognizance, after some time passes if that person appears to have changed their behavior, explicitly apologized for mistakes, and committed to avoiding them in the future, you may choose to allow a limited form of re-engagement for that individual.

If the investigation uncovers no problematic behavior, and the accusations continue, you are then dealing with someone deliberately trying to undermine the credibility of the PTP. Likewise, you can sometimes explicitly see that someone is simply engaging in defamation. Instances might be a local politician or political advocate who tries to undermine its credibility by criticizing the nature of the pledge. Other examples might be online trolls who engage in tactics such as:

Sealioning, meaning asking questions aggressively in bad faith and pretending cluelessness

Gish galloping: the tactic of making a large variety of arguments in order to beat down your opponents by having to answer each one if you play into that game.

Concern trolling: when trolls pretend to be supportive and express their hostility through the perspective of pseudo-constructive criticism, often with making accusations of hypocrisy; and plenty of other tactics.

Your best strategy for dealing with trolls and defamatory statements from politicians and partisan advocates involves making a short, clear, concise statement in response in a public forum, such as Twitter or Facebook, and then linking that post in response; minimize engaging in discussions on other forums, direct discussions to your own venue instead. Note that the more success you have, the more attacks you will face, and the more sustained the attacks will be; you need to be prepared for such attacks personally as a leader. In some cases, if you face a sustained series of attacks, you will need to consider writing up a longer and more thorough rebuttal; I have myself had to write out a blog post of over 7,000 words to address a somewhat prominent blogger who engaged in libel, cyber-stalking, cyber-

bullying, trolling, and various other attacks against me, and got his followers to help out. The more prominent a leader you are, the thicker skin you need to grow. The books on PR and marketing cited above should provide good guidance.

Activism Tips

Pro-truth activism can be a challenging endeavor: you will be facing an uphill battle, especially in the early stages of the movement, against an onslaught of political deception. It really helps to have community support, online or in-person, to engage in such activism in a sustained manner.

Such community support may come from friends and family who endorse your efforts, and contribute their own resources to enabling you to engage in such activism. This may mean financial resources, such as a spouse working to support their spouse doing activism, or a child supporting a retired parent; it may also mean emotional support encouraging and praising one's perseverance in the face of the tide of lies.

However, such support comes most effectively from a community of fellow activists who engage in pro-truth activities. They know viscerally, on a personal experiential level, the kind of efforts you are putting into these activities. They can provide financial support and emotional support, as can friends and family, but fellow activists can also help with advice and guidance on what worked for them and what did not; they can also collaborate on pro-truth activities. Moreover, pro-truth communities are excellent for professional interactions: finding a plumber, lawyer, babysitter, and so on. You know the people there are committed to integrity, and I am certainly happy to give my business to people who I can trust to follow the pledge.

In building a community of fellow activists, it's important not only to engage in pro-truth activities, but also have fun together, as a means of building trust and social connections. Have intellectual discussions about various topics related to truth and lies, in politics and elsewhere, without focusing on PTP activism; enjoy picnics, potlucks, board game nights, and other social activities; have fun at outings to movies, museums, concerts, and other cultural and entertaining activities. Such trust really helps in the inevitable disagreements with fellow activists who share your goals of pro-truth activism, but have different ideas

about the best methods to accomplish these goals. In seeking to resolve such conflicts, follow the strategies of collaborative truth-seeking outlined earlier in this book, which includes building up trust as a vital component for effective truth-seeking conversations. Step outside of the context of the conflict, whatever it may be, and remind yourselves of the shared goals you hold. Reinforce your mutual commitment to fighting lies and promoting the truth in a nonpartisan manner. Discuss things openly, in an emotionally and socially intelligent manner. If you are unable to resolve the matter, seek an external mediator, and/or advice from other parties, whether from your local area group or the central PTP organizers.

When you are working with fellow activists, whether you are in a formal leadership role or not, assume responsibility for everything going well, and take initiative to make sure it does so. If you see someone in the leadership role needing help or guidance, provide that help and guidance. If you observe people feeling left out or alienated, try to help them get more involved. If you see a task falling through the cracks, bring it to the attention of the group. Don't be afraid to play the devil's advocate of pointing out potential problems in a soft and gentle manner to the rest of the group: research described by James Surowiecki in the 2004 *The Wisdom of Crowds* highlights the vital role of such dissenting voices in making good decisions. Focus on improving the group's process of coordination and task management over getting any specific task done, as this improvement will pay off in much greater dividends down the line. If you see the group getting bogged down in unnecessary detail or conflicts, help uplift everyone by reminding them of shared goals. Note any personal tensions between group members - which are especially likely as the PTP brings together people of such different ideological beliefs and value sets - and work behind-the-scenes to address such problems. Remember that the credibility of the PTP in your locale rides on your shoulders as the representatives of the PTP in the area, so be a role model for how you would want everyone else to behave. Make sure to praise fellow group members and celebrate mutual accomplishments in the long but vital struggle for truth and against lies in your area.

Planning your next steps

With this set of strategies for being a Pro-Truth movement activist, it's time to return to your "Motivation

and Goals for Activism” document and make a plan for your activism, with specific next steps. Now, doing so might sound like an unnecessary task – why not jump into pro-truth activities? Well, here’s why – to maximize the chance for your success. Working on pro-truth activism is a long-term project.

A great deal of research shows that making a specific plan for any such activity makes it much more likely for people to succeed, since connecting long-term goals to short-term tasks is powerfully motivating, and also helps you focus on your activities, for instance as related in E. J. Masicampo and Roy Baumeister’s 2011 article in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Studies suggest that planning your implementation steps thoroughly, asking yourself when and where you will do a particular task, what will remind you, and what positive reinforcement you will give yourself for accomplishing your goal raises the average chance of completion from 35% to 80%, as reported in Ian Ayres’s 2010 *Carrots and Sticks: Unlock the Power of Incentives to Get Things Done*.

So take the time now to write down a specific plan in order to connect clearly your long-term desired goals for your activism with the specific activities you plan to engage in over the next few months; write down how, when, and where you will do them, what will serve as a reminder for you, and what positive reinforcements you will give yourself for accomplishing your goals, as a way of actually getting to what you want, as described by Henriette Anne Klauser in her 2001 *Write it Down, Make it Happen: Knowing What you Want – and Getting It!* The plan should be flexible and experimental, revised according to your needs as you discover more about yourself and what kind of activities are best suited to help you feel fulfilled and impactful in your activism. Just because the world needs a lot of work to fight lies and protect the truth does not mean you are the one who needs to do all that work. Integrate pro-truth activism into your life for a long-term, sustained engagement, one that can become a habitual activity that you engage in proudly and happily, while balancing it with the rest of your life.

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