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FACING — THINGS — THAT HAUNT YOU!

By Charles E. Winburn, M.Ed.



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HEALING & RECOVERY FROM DARK SECRETS!

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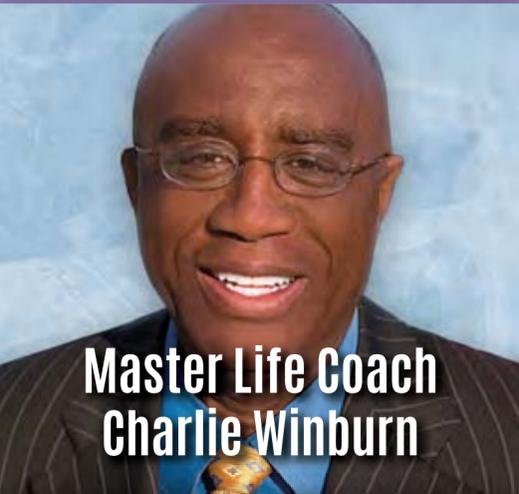
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TURNING YOUR DARK SECRETS INTO SELF-COMPASSION!

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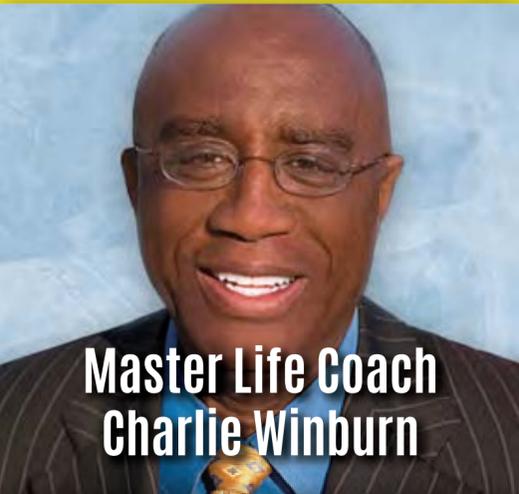
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CONFRONTING YOUR DARK SECRETS!

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HEAL FROM THE TRAUMA OF YOUR DARK SECRET!

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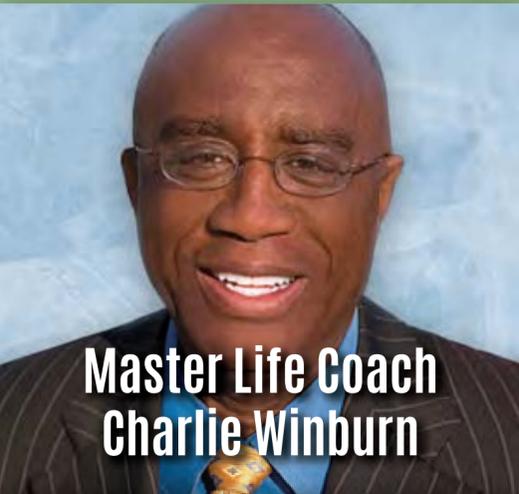
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ARE YOUR DARK SECRETS HOLDING YOU HOSTAGE? GET SET FREE THIS SUNDAY!

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ARE YOU HEALED FROM YOUR DARK SECRETS?

**LEARN HOW TO GET HEALED FROM YOUR
DARK SECRETS WITHOUT TELLING OTHERS!**

By Charles E. Winburn, M.Ed.

Disclaimer: This teaching is for religious and educational purposes only and is not designed to diagnose or give medical or psychological advice whatsoever. Please seek the advice of your medical doctor, psychologist, or counselor.

Resources

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**Ohio Domestic Violence Network
(ODVN) Helpline**

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www.odvn.org

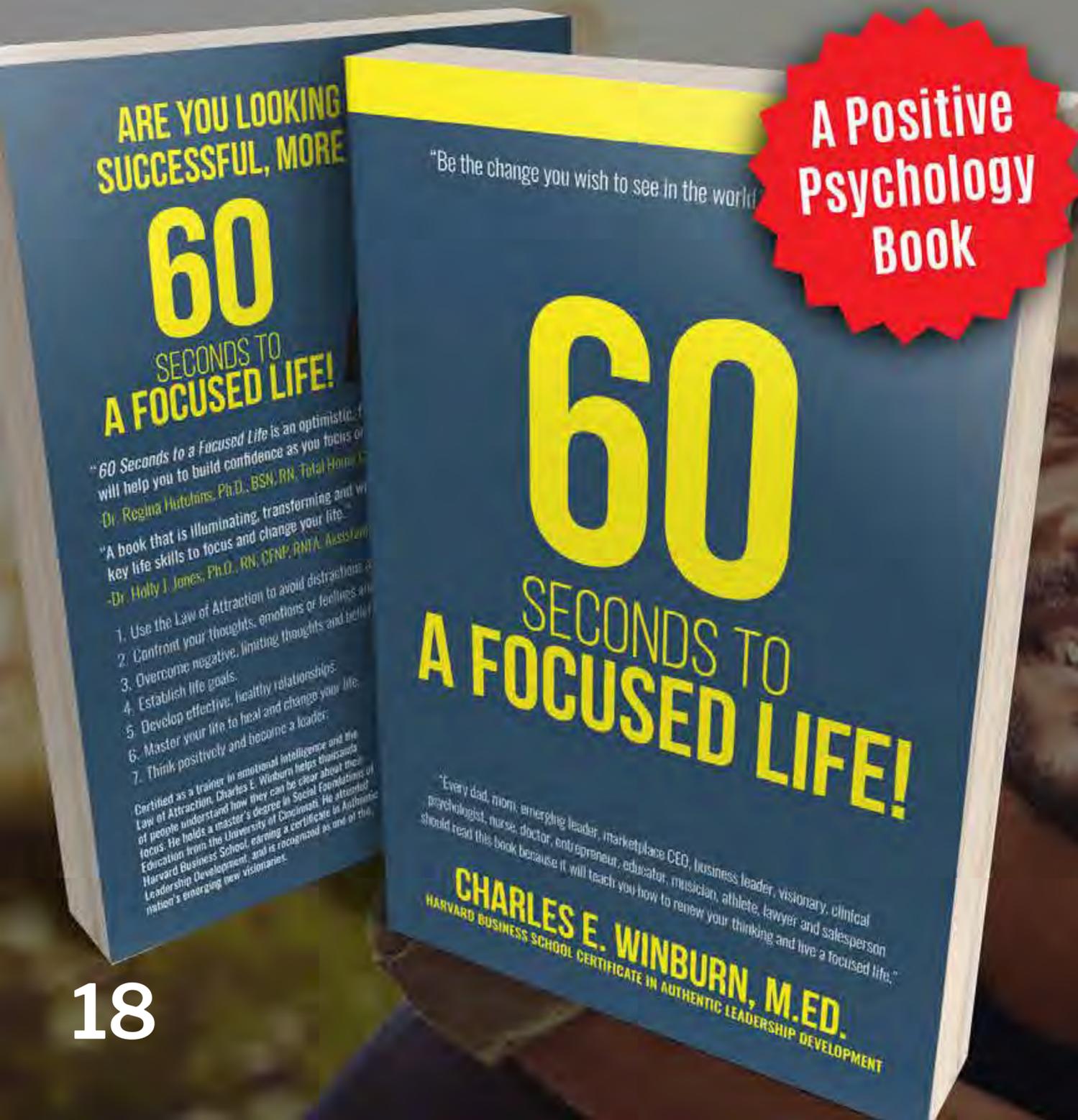
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Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13-14

Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

Isaiah 43:18-19

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

Isaiah 46:9-10

**Therefore if any man be in Christ,
he is a new creature: old things are
passed away; behold, all things are
become new.**

2 Corinthians 5:17

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:1-2

**But grow in grace, and in the
knowledge of our Lord and Saviour
Jesus Christ. To him be glory both
now and for ever. Amen.**

2 Peter 3:18

**If ye then be risen with Christ,
seek those things which are above,
where Christ sitteth on the right
hand of God. Set your affection on
things above, not on things on the
earth.**

Colossians 3:1-2

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before

**him endured the cross, despising
the shame, and is set down at the
right hand of the throne of God.**

Hebrews 12:1-2

**Let thine eyes look right on, and let
thine eyelids look straight before
thee. Ponder the path of thy feet,
and let all thy ways be established.**

Proverbs 4:25-27

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him.

Psalm 37:23-24

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain And every man that strive for mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as

**one that beateth the air: But I keep
under my body, and bring it into
subjection: lest that by any means,
when I have preached to others, I
myself should be a castaway.**

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Colossians 1:28-29

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Hebrews 11:6

**Ye did run well; who did hinder you
that ye should not obey the truth?
This persuasion cometh not of him
that calleth you.**

Galatians 5:7-8

How do people hide their dark secrets?

AI Research

1. Concealing the truth from others: Deliberately not sharing significant, upsetting, or illegal aspects of one's life with friends, family, or colleagues to maintain a chosen image or avoid judgment.

Explanation: The person manages a public narrative that excludes troubling details.

- 2. Presenting a curated self:**
Crafting an appearance of normalcy or virtue while privately harboring actions or desires that contradict that image.
Explanation: A split between outer persona and inner reality.

3. Maintaining a guarded inner life: Keeping certain memories or urges inaccessible to others, even close confidants, to prevent vulnerability or exposure.

Explanation: Walls are built around sensitive experiences.

- 4. Engaging in self-regulation through secrecy: Regulating behavior to avoid triggering disclosure, often through meticulous routines, lies of omission, or selective honesty. Explanation: Secrecy functions as a control mechanism.**

- 5. Carrying moral dissonance privately:** Living with a conflict between one's values and actions that are hidden from the moral scrutiny of others.
Explanation: Internal tension remains unaddressed publicly.

6. Compartmentalizing life into sectors: Dividing life into discrete parts (e.g., work, family, online) to keep dark secrets isolated from other areas.

Explanation: The person avoids cross-contamination of secret with other roles.

7. Engaging in performative normalcy: Faking everyday competence or happiness to mask concealed turmoil or wrongdoing.

Explanation: The outward show hides the underlying issue.

8. Delaying accountability:
Prolonging confession or restitution in the hope that secrets won't come to light or that time will change circumstances.

Explanation: Avoidance of immediate consequences.

- 9. Rationalizing concealment:**
Creating justifications for not disclosing, such as “they don’t need to know” or “it’s better left unsaid.”
Explanation: Cognitive reframing supports the secrecy.

10. Protecting a fragile self-image:

Hiding secrets to prevent damage to self-esteem or to avoid crushing a constructed identity.

Explanation: Secrecy serves as a shield against self-doubt.

**What does it mean for a
person's dark secrets to
haunt them in their lives?**

AI Research

1. Conscience as constant drumbeat: A persistent inner nagging that reminds the person of what they hid or did wrong, shaping mood and decisions.

Explanation: The secret becomes a moral undertow.

2. Night-time guilt loop: Recurring intrusive thoughts or dreams about the secret during sleep, leading to restless nights.

Explanation: Sleep becomes a battleground for remorse.

- 3. Hypervigilance and paranoia:**
Heightened alertness to cues of discovery, causing suspiciousness or overprotection of information.
Explanation: The past exerts a chronic state of alert.

4. Self-estrangement: Feeling alienated from one's own values or identity due to living in conflict with the secret.

Explanation: A fracture between who they are and who they pretend to be.

5. Relational anxiety: Fear of harming relationships or being exposed, leading to withdrawal or overcompensation in interactions.

Explanation: Secrets corrode trust and connection.

- 6. Compulsive secrecy rituals:**
Repetitive checking, censoring, or rehearsing conversations to prevent accidental disclosure.
Explanation: Secrecy becomes ritualized, consuming mental energy.

7. Shame echo: Internalized shame that surfaces in moments of vulnerability, making the person overcritical of themselves.

Explanation: Shame amplifies the secret's weight.

8. Rumination and mental replay:
Repeatedly revisiting the event or truth in one's mind, often with "what if" scenarios.

Explanation: Mental looping hinders closure.

- 9. Avoidance of accountability:**
Deliberate or unconscious avoidance of situations that might force disclosure or consequence.
Explanation: The secret keeps them dodging responsibility.

- 10. Impact on decision-making:**
The secret subtly guides choices, leading to risk-averse or overly cautious behavior to prevent exposure.

Explanation: The hidden truth shapes life trajectories.

25 practical ways to heal and recover from hiding dark secrets

AI Research

1. Acknowledge the truth

What it means: Recognize that the secret exists and affects you, even if you haven't admitted it publicly.

Practical steps: Write a private confession or journal entry; name the secret without judgment; identify the emotions it triggers (guilt, shame, fear).

2. Seek professional support

What it means: A trained therapist or counselor can guide you through the processing.

Practical steps: Find a licensed therapist (consider specialists in trauma, guilt, or shame); schedule an initial session; commit to a regular cadence (weekly or biweekly).

3. Practice self-compassion

What it means: Treat yourself with kindness rather than self-criticism.

Practical steps: Create a daily self-compassion practice (affirmations, self-kindness notes); catch and reframe critical thoughts; extend the same grace you'd offer a friend.

4. Understand the impact of secrecy

What it means: Secrecy maintains power over you; awareness reduces its grip.

Practical steps: List ways the secret affects behavior (avoidance, overeating, perfectionism); reflect on how visibility might change outcomes.

5. Decide on disclosure boundaries

What it means: Disclosure is not all-or-nothing; you can choose what, when, and to whom.

Practical steps: Make a plan with tiers (private journal, trusted person, therapist, public). Set a timeline and safety nets.

6. Build a trusted support network

What it means: Safe relationships reduce isolation and shame.

Practical steps: Reach out to one or two trusted friends or family members; share small truths first; consider joining a support group.

7. Practice grounding techniques

What it means: Grounding helps in moments of distress when thoughts about the secret surge.

Practical steps: Learn 4-7-8 breathing, 5-4-3-2-1 sensory grounding, or simple body scans; use them during flashbacks or rumination.

8. Create a written map of the secret

What it means: Externalizing the secret helps you see it clearly.

Practical steps: Write a detailed but concise description of the secret, its origins, who is affected, and its current consequences; review and revise over time.

9. Separate facts from interpretations

What it means: Distorted thinking often amplifies burden.

Practical steps: List objective facts, then note common interpretations; challenge unhelpful beliefs with evidence.

10. Address underlying guilt and shame

What it means: Guilt focuses on actions; shame targets your identity. Both can be amplified by secrecy.

Practical steps: Write statements reframing actions as understandable choices; practice self-forgiveness exercises; explore how your values align with your past and present.

11. Normalize mistakes as human

What it means: Everyone has flaws and makes errors.

Practical steps: List past mistakes and the lessons learned; identify ways you've grown since; remind yourself lineage of growth rather than stigma.

12. Repair torn relationships when safe

What it means: Some disclosures can heal relationships; others may cause harm if unsafe.

Practical steps: Assess risk with a trusted advisor or therapist; if safe, plan a careful, compassionate disclosure with boundaries; be prepared for varied responses.

13. Develop a values-based life framework

What it means: Aligning actions with core values recaptures a sense of integrity.

Practical steps: Define 5 core values; audit daily actions for alignment; adjust routines that undermine your values.

14. Establish daily rituals for growth

What it means: Consistency builds resilience against old patterns.

Practical steps: Morning intention setting, journaling, 10 minutes of reflection at night; weekly review of progress and setbacks.

15. Practice release through expressive arts

What it means: Creative outlets can process heavy emotions safely.

Practical steps: Try journaling, painting, music, or dance to express the secret's emotions; avoid censoring the artwork—let it flow.

16. Learn and apply mindfulness meditation

What it means: Mindfulness reduces rumination and helps observe thoughts without being carried away by them.

Practical steps: Start with 5–10 minutes daily; use guided apps or videos; notice thoughts about the secret without judgment, then return to breath.

17. Build healthy coping strategies

What it means: Replace maladaptive habits with constructive ones.

Practical steps: Identify triggers; replace with exercise, reach-out calls, or a hobby when triggered; track coping effectiveness.

18. Practice moral and ethical repair

What it means: If your secret harmed others, consider restorative steps within safe, legal bounds.

Practical steps: Consult with a professional about restitution options; prepare a plan that respects others' autonomy and safety; document steps taken.

19. Establish accountability partners

What it means: Partners help you stay honest and consistent.

Practical steps: Choose 1–2 nonjudgmental people; set regular check-ins; share goals and progress; agree on consequences for slipping back into avoidance.

20. Reduce triggers and avoid safety-compromising environments

What it means: Some environments intensify distress or temptations to self-protect via secrecy.

Practical steps: Identify high-risk contexts; create boundaries or remove yourself when needed; arrange alternatives for supportive spaces.

21. Learn about trauma-informed care

What it means: Secrets often tie to trauma; understanding trauma helps with healing.

Practical steps: Read accessible resources on trauma (e.g., basic guides); ask your therapist to explain how trauma responses show up in secrecy; implement trauma-informed practices in daily life.

22. Practice forgiveness rituals

What it means: Forgiveness can free you from the burden of carrying the secret.

Practical steps: Write a forgiveness letter to yourself or to others involved (not necessarily sending it); perform a symbolic ritual like lighting a candle, releasing a stone, or a letter-burning exercise in a safe, private setting.

23. Monitor progress with measurable milestones

What it means: Clear milestones create motivation and clarity.

Practical steps: Set SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) such as “disclose to one trusted person by month X if safe,” or “journal three times weekly about triggers and progress.”

24. Cultivate humility and curiosity

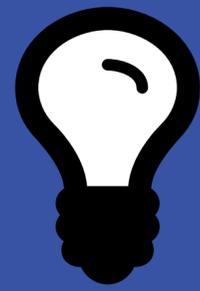
What it means: Accepting imperfection reduces shame and opens the door to learning.

Practical steps: When self-criticism arises, pause and ask: “What can I learn from this?”; write a brief curiosity note about how this secret has shaped you and what you want to change.

25. Consider spiritual or philosophical alignment

What it means: For some, beliefs provide meaning, comfort, and resilience.

Practical steps: Engage with a trusted spiritual or philosophical practice that resonates (prayer, meditation, service, rituals); seek guidance from a trusted leader or community if helpful.



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