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Consider a Summer Makeover!

From all outward appearances, Michael Gates Gill had it made: a big house in the suburbs, a loving family, a great job and six-figure salary. A Yale University graduate, Michael rose through the ranks at the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency to become executive vice president on a host of major accounts including Ford, Burger King, Christian Dior and IBM.

But then the bottom fell out of his life. At age 60, he was downsized from his job, became estranged from his family and was diagnosed with a brain tumor. In desperation, he conducted his job search from a local Starbucks (free Internet) but with no luck. One fateful day, the Starbucks manager was conducting open interviews for starting positions and asked Michael if he was looking for a job. Somewhat bemusedly, the former high-flying executive who once hung out with Frank Sinatra, agreed to be interviewed. The next day he was hired and his on-the-job training began – including the proper method of cleaning restrooms. In one day, he had gone from drinking coffee in a Brooks Brothers suit to serving it in a green apron. But strangely, his life began to improve.

For the first time in his life, Michael was a minority: the only older white guy working with a team of young African Americans who were running circles around him. But his co-workers treated him with respect and kindness and Michael began to discover a new emotion – gratitude. His daily responsibilities, ranging from opening up early in the morning, to greeting customers, to mopping the floors late at night, provided him with a sense of accomplishment that eclipsed his prior work experiences in corporate America. In fact, his “fall from grace” was exactly the opposite. The transformation cracked his world wide open and once the armor of his entitlement mentality had been stripped away, a humbler, happier and gentler man emerged. One that everyone, especially Michael’s children, liked a lot better.

How Starbucks Saved My Life: A Son of Privilege Learns to Live Like Everyone Else (Michael Gates Gill, Gotham Books, 265 pps), provides not only a great summer read but also a blueprint for examining our own lives, beliefs, prejudices and pain.

But as an EAP member, you do not have to experience Michael’s personal upheaval to redirect your life in a positive direction. You have 24-hour access to professional counselors who can help you initiate a personal makeover – not the mere cosmetic kind, but rather the more important kind that can lead to a happier life. Before you call, spend some time examining those parts of your worldview that may be sabotaging your happiness and fulfillment. These can include:

- **Emotional clutter:** Are you still reacting to real or perceived events that occurred in the past such as rejection by peers or abandonment by a parent, friend or significant other?
- **Non-productive grudges:** Do you still persist in nurturing anger against those who hurt you months or years ago?
- **Low self-confidence:** Does your lack of belief in yourself keep you from attaining higher skills which could make you a more productive employee?
- **False beliefs:** Are you overly concerned with the trappings of status as the ultimate measure of your worth? Or convinced that a fancier car or address will make you more “worthy”?

Your EAP is standing by to help you commence your journey to (as Michael Gates Gill calls it) a “surprising new life.” *Dial us up at 888-EAP-1060.*

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