



MASTER YOUR MOTIVATION

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO UNSTICK YOURSELF, BUILD
MOMENTUM AND **SUSTAIN LONG-TERM**
MOTIVATION

THIBAUT MEURISSE

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INTRODUCTION

Newton's First Law of Motion states that an object in motion stays in motion. This law also applies to human beings—at least in terms of goal setting. In other words, when we are in motion and *actively* moving toward our goals, we can sometimes feel unstoppable. We can experience a state of flow and achieve a lot more than we otherwise would do.

However, what happens when we stop? We might find it hard to start the ball rolling again. As a result, we may end up procrastinating, become depressed or feel frustrated by our lack of action.

Perhaps, this is how you feel now. You may be in one or several of the following situations:

- You feel stuck and lack motivation, unable to make progress on your most important goals.
- You beat yourself up for not getting things done.
- You feel overwhelmed, not knowing what to do next.
- You doubt yourself and worry more than you need to.
- You keep jumping from one task or goal to another, without achieving anything substantial.

If you recognize yourself in any of the above situations, don't worry. This book will help drive you out of your slump and rebuild your motivation.

Fortunately, lacking momentum or feeling stuck is never permanent. You can make it a temporary condition. There are many things you can do to generate motivation and become excited to progress toward your goals and dreams once again.

From time to time, we all feel stuck.

I have moments in my own life when I struggle to complete even the easiest task. In these moments, simply answering one email can become a real challenge. While writing this book, I experienced my fair share of mental blocks, and I had days when I couldn't complete much work. It would be dishonest if I didn't share this truth with you. However, from personal experience, I also know that motivation fluctuates, and that it can return as quickly as it disappeared.

As you apply what you learn in this book, you'll be able to build momentum and generate more consistency in your life. Your motivation will increase and, as a result, you will be able to achieve many more of your goals than you thought possible.

In **Part I** of this book, we'll take a step back and assess your situation from an objective point of view, so you can let go of some of your negative emotions and release the pressure you're piling onto your shoulders.

In **Part II**, we'll see how you can build momentum to help you feel more motivated in your daily life.

In **Part III**, we'll discuss what you can do to sustain that momentum in the long term, to help you maintain a high

level of motivation and achieve even more of your goals.

Finally, in **Part IV**, we'll look at the 25 Strategies you can use to rebuild and maintain your motivation.

So, are you ready to boost your motivation and march toward your goals with total confidence?

Excellent. Let's get started.

Your Free Step-By-Step Action Guide

To help you act and build motivation, I've created a free action guide. Make sure you download it here.

You can download it at the URL below:

<http://whatispersonaldevelopment.org/master-your-motivation>

If you have any difficulty downloading the action guide, contact me at:

thibaut.meurisse@gmail.com and I will send you a copy as soon as possible.

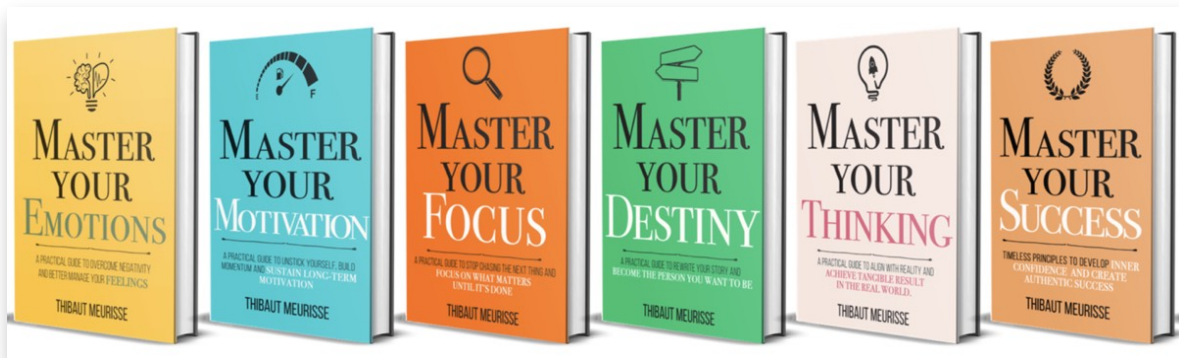
**You can get the physical version of the workbook at the URL below:*

http://mybook.to/MYM_workbook

Master Your Life With The Mastery Series

This book is the second book in the “**Mastery Series**”. You can check out the first book, “Master Your Emotions” below:

[Click here to learn how to master your emotions](#)



What readers say about Master Your Emotions:

“Changed my life”

"One of the best self help books I have ever read!"

“One Word: PHENOMENAL!”

[Click here to learn how to master your emotions](#)

Stop — Do that one thing now

Do you lack motivation? Are you feeling stuck right now?

When feeling stuck, you can often lose sight of the big picture and end up worrying far more than you probably need to. Therefore, I thought I would start by inviting you to take a step back, climb out of your head and examine your current situation from an objective point of view.

I also thought I'd start by inspiring you, to help you feel better about yourself.

However, I'm not going to do either of these things right now. I'm not even going to ask you to read this book all the way through to the end.

Instead, I'm going to tell you the truth: how to unstick yourself right now by doing just one simple thing. Completing this one task alone will change your emotional state very quickly and put you back on track. I don't want you to *think*. If you feel stuck right now, it's probably because you are overthinking. No, what I want you to do is *act*!

How?

Simply by doing the following:

Complete one task you've been putting off for ages. And complete it now!

Right now, close this book and go complete the task. Then, see what happens next.

Unsure what task you should tackle? Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the one task I *should* complete but don't want to?
- If I were to complete one task right now, which one would free my mind the most? (This is probably a task you can't stop thinking or worrying about.)

Remember, in most situations, action is the thing that gets you unstuck. A short while ago, one of my friends posted the following message on Facebook, which is an extract from a book by the author, Dan Millman:

"To change the course of your life, choose one of two basic methods. You can either:

1) Direct your energy and attention trying to fix your mind, find your focus, affirm your power, free your emotions and visualize positive outcomes so that you can finally develop the confidence to display the courage to discover the determination to make the commitment to feel sufficiently motivated to do what it is you need to do, or

2) Just do it."

I invite you to "just do it."

Now, put this book down and complete that task you've been putting off for way too long. Perhaps you need to fill in your tax return. Perhaps you should complete that project you abandoned halfway through. Perhaps you ought to clean your house.

A short while ago, I had an accountability partner who had been wanting to finish laying the floor of his hallway for months. Although it would only have taken him a day or two, he couldn't force himself to do it. I encouraged him to focus on completing this one specific task and forget about everything else. Guess what? He finished the floor and

generated a surge of motivation that led him to tackle many other household tasks.

This is the magic of momentum. I'm absolutely convinced you will experience the same thing when you tackle and complete a task or chore you've been putting off for ages.

Remember, you build momentum through action, seldom through thinking. Therefore, it's time for you to act and start building that momentum.

I invite you to return to this book once you've completed your task, and we'll then keep building momentum together.

Time to get your body moving.

As the famous life coach Tony Robbins would say, "Emotion is energy in motion".

Stand up and start moving your body. Do some push-ups, shadow boxing or jumping jacks. Just get your body moving. If you can, talk to yourself out loud—and use a loud voice.

Now, go do that task. I'll be waiting.

PART I

ASSESS YOUR SITUATION

You're back? Great. I hope you've started building some momentum and feel more motivated now.

Do you still feel stuck? Perhaps you've been procrastinating for days, unable to work on an important project. Perhaps you haven't found the motivation to work on your side business. Or perhaps you're just stuck in life, not knowing which direction to take.

This is perfectly fine. We're human and we can't expect to be fully motivated all the time. So, if you still lack motivation, don't worry. We're just getting started.

When we feel stuck, we often overdramatize things. We sometimes lose sight of the big picture, and it may feel as though we're never going to drag ourselves out of the slump. But this is never the case. Motivation can disappear quickly, but it can also return just as rapidly. This is normal, so give yourself some slack and acknowledge that how you feel now is okay. Feeling unmotivated or depressed doesn't make you less of a person than you were a few days or weeks ago when

you were happy and enthusiastic. Give yourself a break. Take it easy. Release the pressure and allow yourself to relax for a while.

See this book as a wonderful opportunity to make a new start. Allow yourself to begin afresh right now. You may have lost momentum but we're going to rebuild it.

In the next section, we'll see how you can start eliminating stress and worry but, for now, let's take a step back and look at the bigger picture.

1. ACCEPT YOUR SITUATION

Do you regularly beat yourself up because you procrastinate? Do you feel guilty for not being able to complete the tasks you should be doing?

If so, I encourage you to accept your current situation as it is. Accept where you are right now. Completely. Don't dwell on the past, wishing you had done things differently way back when. This will only keep you stuck in your rut. Instead, show yourself compassion. The simple fact you beat yourself up over past mistakes is a genuine sign you want to move forward in your life.

You want to accomplish your goals and feel better about yourself, don't you? This means, deep down, you really care about yourself and want the best for yourself. Behind the harsh way you may treat yourself now, there is a deep love for yourself. So, take the time to acknowledge this fact.

Let this sink in for a moment.

We tend to believe that criticizing ourselves is the best way to motivate ourselves but, in truth, it is totally ineffective, not to mention upsetting and painful. Self-compassion has been shown to be a more effective motivator.

Why not learn to be kind to yourself?

Why not accept the fact you cannot feel great all the time? Remember, the times when you feel negative or down are temporary. Sooner or later the clouds will dissipate, and you will feel better about yourself.

You will find that the more self-compassionate you become, the faster you will retrieve your motivation, and the less suffering you will impose on yourself.

Being kind to myself has helped me tremendously. For instance, I've been struggling with writing this book—and others—but I understand this is a normal part of the process. It's part of being human. Nobody is perfect. Imagine how dull your life would be if you never had to overcome any challenges. How could you ever feel proud of yourself for your accomplishments if they were easy to achieve?

As I wrote in *Master Your Emotions*, your feelings are there to tell you something. In fact, feeling stuck or unmotivated is not a bad thing. Emotions are the way for your body and your mind to give you feedback. They are a sign that you need to change something about your situation. For instance, a lack of motivation may tell you that you need to:

- Clarify what you really want in life,
- Complete unfinished business,
- Declutter your physical environment,
- Focus more on what you love doing,
- Remove draining activities,
- Let go of some toxic people in your life,
- Take better care of yourself,
- Rest, and so on.

There are plenty of reasons for you to lack motivation, and we'll discuss many of them in this book. The bottom line is: where you are now is exactly where you're supposed to be right now. So, stop trying to be somewhere else. Instead, accept your situation and take a fresh start from where you are *right now*. More importantly, take it easy! Give yourself permission to let go of your worries for a while. There's absolutely no need to carry the weight of the world on your shoulders. This doesn't help you or anyone else.

Just relax.

2. STATE THE FACTS

Are you beating yourself up, judging yourself or overdramatizing things?

If so, it is likely that, instead of looking at the facts objectively, you are paying too much attention to your negative thoughts. When you're in a negative state, this becomes normal. In other words, negative thoughts that once passed by unnoticed have become your center of attention. And, as you identify with these negative thoughts, you create even more negative emotions.

Experiencing negative emotions is inevitable at times, but please remember, most mental suffering is optional. This kind of mental suffering only happens when you over-identify with those negative emotions and give them more power than they really have. Now, take a step back and look at the situation you are in right now. Ask yourself:

- Twenty years from now, will this even matter?
- Is this the first time I've felt this way?
- Is this really that big a deal?
- Is the event relevant on a world scale?
- What can I do about it right now?

For instance, I was unable to work on this book for several days and suffered from a lack of motivation. Now, let's state the facts and separate them from the fiction—the story that was going on in my mind.

Facts:

- I didn't work on my book for a few days.

Interpretations:

- I lack discipline.
- I'm lazy.
- I'm not good enough.

The mental suffering I experienced included:

- Shame,
- Guilt,
- Anger, and
- Frustration.

When we separate the facts from my interpretations of them, the only thing we can say is that I didn't write for a few days. That's it. Nothing more to say about it.

Now, is this such a big deal? If I took the time to look at the big picture, was it something that deserved the time I spent worrying about it? Probably not.

Will it matter twenty years from now? Definitely not.

Was it the first time I'd felt the same way? No. I have felt the same way before and managed to overcome it.

Is the event relevant on the world scale? Hell no!

What can I do about it now? Among other things, I can show myself compassion, or I can talk to a friend to receive an external perspective.

Learning to separate pure facts from your interpretation of them will allow you to take a step back and observe your situation from a broader and more objective point of view. Remember, facts don't create mental suffering—your interpretation of them does.

* * *

Exercise: state the facts

Using your action guide, write down the raw facts regarding your current situation. Make sure to detach yourself and look at it objectively. Then, write down your interpretation and how you feel. Finally, write down what you can do to improve the situation.

3. FIND AN EXTERNAL PERSPECTIVE

When left alone, we can easily lose sight of the bigger picture and can concentrate on things that aren't important. Talking to someone can help you see things from a different angle and pull you out of your slump. As you do so, you may realize that you've been overdramatizing things. Therefore, whenever you catch yourself repeatedly worrying about the same thing, consider discussing the matter with a friend. Please make sure your friend is a positive person who will uplift you.

You want him or her to be able to encourage you and to listen to you carefully without being too judgmental.

Put yourself in someone else's shoes

Alternatively, you can imagine yourself being in someone else's position. Imagine this person looking at your life objectively. How would he or she perceive your worries in the grand scheme of things? For instance, what would your parents say? What about your partner? Your friends? Your colleagues?

You might also want to consider what you would say to your best friend if he or she was in the same situation. How would you encourage them? What exact words would you say to them? Now, act the same way toward yourself. How does this make you feel?

* * *

Exercise: step outside yourself

Referring to your action guide, do one, two, or all of the exercises below:

- Talk to a friend.
- See your situation through someone else's eyes.
- Imagine your best friend being in a similar situation.

In the next section, we'll discuss what you can do specifically to build momentum to reclaim your motivation.

PART II

BUILD MOMENTUM

Do you want to build momentum and achieve your most exciting goals? If so, read on.

People struggle to build momentum for different reasons. In this section, we'll focus on the four steps you can take to strengthen your momentum and ensure you are being productive and focused, rather than stuck in a rut and wasting your time.

First, we are going to focus on decluttering your mind and your environment, so you can reduce your worries.

Second, we will work on gaining extra clarity regarding what you are trying to accomplish, so you can feel totally aligned with it. To do this, we'll discuss your core values, your personality and your vision.

Third, I will invite you to embrace the new and move beyond your comfort zone. This will give you a surge of motivation and will help you build even more momentum.

Finally, we will cover the importance of completion. You are about to discover why it is so important for you to generate the habit of finishing what you start. We will also discuss how you can do so.

Right, let's get started.

1. DECLUTTER

Do you often feel stuck or overwhelmed? Do you wish you could experience more peace of mind in your everyday life?

This is because your mind is cluttered. It is likely filled with:

- Unfinished business,
- Unnecessary worries,
- Unproductive tasks,
- Needless distractions, and/or
- Ill-defined goals.

In short, instead of being focused, your mind is scattered. And the constant friction you experience every day leaves you feeling unfocused, stressed and exhausted.

In this section, you'll learn how to declutter your mind and your environment so that you can move toward your goals freely and effortlessly.

A. Reconnect with the present

Do you worry too much? Do you have significant problems you can't stop focusing on?

If so, these problems are likely to destroy your peace of mind and make your life harder than it needs to be. The reason you worry too much is that you spend too much time focusing on things you cannot change. You dwell on your past without being able to do anything about it, or you worry about your future, wondering if everything is going to be okay.

To reduce your worries, you must learn to live in the present. You can only live one day, one hour, one minute, one second at a time. Yesterday is gone. You did what you could, so let go of the past and move forward. Tomorrow hasn't yet come. You'll deal with whatever happens when it arrives. But for now, the only thing you have to focus on is this moment, right now.

Before we continue, let's complete a simple exercise. Spend a couple of minutes reflecting on the fact that this moment is the only thing that is and ever will be real. Don't think. *Feel* the present moment. Become aware of all your senses. Notice how your body feels. Hear all the sounds. Observe the room you're in and look for things you've never noticed before.

Now, realize that your past is no more. It exists only as a memory you recall in the present moment. Meditate on that for a while.

Your past is gone. Forever.

Also, notice that whatever you refer to as "your past" is largely the result of your selected focus and personal interpretation of past events. Every day, you recreate your

past by recalling memories and interpreting them in a particular way.

Similarly, realize that the future is a construction of the mind. Tomorrow is a concept, not a reality. You can only experience the present moment. Therefore, the only way you can ever change your future is through the actions you take *in the present moment*. No matter how much you worry about tomorrow, worry of itself won't change anything. It will only disturb your peace of mind and hamper your ability to act in the best way possible.

That's the end of the meditation.

How do you feel now? Do you feel lighter and more grounded?

Here's the bottom line.

You don't need to carry the weight of your past or the responsibility of your future all the time. You can let go and realize that all you have to do is complete one task at a time. Doing your best *in the present moment* is enough. In fact, it's the *only* thing you can ever do.

The present moment offers an infinity of possibilities

The present moment opens the door to boundless opportunities for change. Have you ever noticed how many actions are available to you at any given time? Each passing second offers us the chance to make a different decision, which could alter the course of our entire lives. For instance, on average, we make 35,000 decisions each day. Now ask yourself, how many new decisions do you really need to make to improve your life?

Not that many.

In fact, a few daily habits that you stick to over the long term have the power to transform your life over the coming months and years. If you don't believe me, I challenge you to implement a few daily habits and see what happens. In my book *Habits That Stick*, I offer a list of seven powerful daily habits. They are:

#1 Setting daily goals.

In my experience, daily goal-setting will increase your productivity dramatically. To set your goals, simply take a pen and a sheet of paper and make a list of three to five tasks you want to accomplish during the upcoming day. Then, prioritize your tasks by numbering them in order of importance. Start working on your most important task until you complete it, then, and only then, move to the next one. Repeat the process to the end of the list. Do the same thing every day.

#2 Reading your goals every day.

This is a powerful way to ensure that you stay on track with all your goals. When things get busy, it's easy to forget about your goals but reading them aloud on a daily basis can prevent this from happening.

#3 Meditating.

Meditation provides a huge number of benefits. You can begin by spending just a few minutes each day. There are many ways to meditate, but it can be as simple as closing your eyes and focusing on your breathing pattern.

#4 Practicing gratitude.

Forgetting to express gratitude is a major cause of unhappiness. People tend to take everything for granted and fail to appreciate fully the little things in life (or even the big ones). Practicing daily gratitude will enhance your mood and boost your motivation. For more details, refer to the upcoming section, *Practice daily gratitude*.

#5 Consuming motivational content.

Feeding your mind with inspirational material on a daily basis will help you stay motivated for the long haul. If you can't find the time to read, you can try listening to uplifting audiobooks.

#6 Self-reflection.

Taking a few minutes to reflect upon your day is a very effective way to improve yourself. When you analyze the events of your day, consider asking yourself the following questions:

- What did I do well today?
- What could I have done better?
- What can I learn from today?
- What will I do differently in the future?

#7 Exercising daily.

These days, many people spend too much time sitting and looking at their televisions or computers. Daily exercise will not only improve your physical health but also enhance your mood. Remember, exercise is a powerful anti-depressant.

Each of these seven daily habits helps create momentum and can dramatically increase your well-being, confidence and productivity. It is not far-fetched to say that a few decisions you choose to make every day are enough to turn your life around.

What single beneficial daily habit could you implement in your life starting today?

Trusting your future “you”

Like most people, you probably worry about the future and are desperately trying to place yourself there in your mind. I suggest this is nothing but total insanity. You can never be somewhere else other “in the now.” Sure, you can *visualize* your future to help you take better action in the present, but this is not what I’m talking about. Here, I’m talking about your attempt to change your future by worrying about it. This comes from the false belief that, by doing so, you can alter your future. Unfortunately, this is not how things work. Merely worrying about tomorrow’s presentation isn’t going to be of much help unless you actually do something in the present to ease your concerns.

Instead, I invite you to trust your future self. Your past self was able to overcome many challenges. So why worry about future problems now? Why not leave the responsibility of the future to your future self and trust that he or she will deal with those challenges effectively?

Imagine how would feel if you could trust your future self entirely and allow him or her to lift the heavy burden from your shoulders. How great would that be?

* * *

Exercise: transfer responsibilities to your future self

As we have discovered, your present self can only deal with the present. The only person that can deal with your future is your future self. It is his or her responsibility to do this, not yours. Using your action guide, work through the four-step process below:

1. Take a few deep breaths and relax.
2. Remember the accomplishments and challenges you've overcome in the past. You've been able to survive up until now and your future self will do just fine.
3. Imagine yourself transferring all your worries about your future to your future self. Feel yourself become lighter and more "present."
4. Refocus on what you can do today and *only on that*.

B. Sort out your worries

“Let me show you how much time we waste in worrying about the wrong problems. Here is a reliable estimate of things people worry about: Things that never happen, 40%; things that are over and past and that can never be changed by all the worry in the world, 30%; needless worries about our health, 12%; petty miscellaneous worries, 10%; real, legitimate worries, 8%. In short, 92% of the average person’s worries take up valuable time, cause painful stress even mental anguish, and are absolutely unnecessary,” – Earl Nightingale, motivational speaker.

We all worry too much. If you take a close look at what you worry about, you’ll notice that you tend to worry about the same things over and over. It could be your financial situation, your relationships or your career.

In most cases, however, worrying is a complete waste of time. It kills your peace of mind and creates unnecessary suffering in your life. When you allow too many worries to inhabit your mind you can easily feel overwhelmed.

It is possible to sort worries into the following three major categories:

- a) Worries about things over which you *have* control,
- b) Worries about things over which you have *some kind of* control, and
- c) Worries about things over which you have *no* control.

When you learn to deal with your worries based on these three categories, you will start seeing things clearly, and you will be able to eliminate or lessen many of your concerns.

Now, let's review each of the categories in turn.

a) Things over which you have control

In this world, there are things you have direct control over. These are the things you can take action on. For instance, you can choose to:

- Watch TV or work on your side business,
- Confront someone or say nothing,
- Face your fears or run away,
- Prepare in advance or cram for an exam, or
- Blame other people or take responsibility.

You have the power to determine the way you react to any event that happens to you. Thus, for each aspect of your life you *do* have control over, it is important for you to take the appropriate action, instead of merely reacting to your environment. You often have far more power to change your situation than you believe.

To reduce your worries about things within your control:

1. Recognize you do have control over them,
2. Identify what you can do, and
3. Take action.

What worries could you reduce if you were to take responsibility for them?

b) Things you have some kind of control over

There are also some things you have only partial control over. For instance, you can't be sure that you'll win your tennis match, but you do have some control over the outcome. By practicing beforehand or working with a coach, you can improve your performance and increase your chance of winning.

Similarly, you can't know for sure whether your date will like you. However, by working on yourself, reading relationship books or hiring a dating coach, you'll become more confident and will increase the chances that your prospective partner will like you.

The point is: you can influence the outcome of many situations by taking appropriate actions, such as preparing beforehand or adopting a more positive attitude in the face of adversity. Consequently, rather than worrying about the outcome of a future event, focus on what you can do *right now* to increase the chances of things turning out well.

In short, identify what you have control over and do the best you can. Then, let go of your need to control anything else. For more details, refer to the upcoming section, *Right action vs. right result*.

c) Things over which you have no control

There are also many things you have no control over. Yet, chances are, you keep worrying about these things anyway. For instance, you can't control the weather, but you will likely get upset if it rains on the day you plan to have a picnic. You can't control your past, but you may spend a lot of time dwelling on it. You can't control your future, but you may waste a lot of time and energy worrying about it.

Here are some examples of things you have no control over:

- Your past,
- Your future,
- Natural disasters, wars and other world events,
- The weather, and
- Most of the things happening around you (e.g., traffic jams, people who don't arrive at a meeting on time, et cetera).

In fact, if you examine all the things you worry about, you'll realize that, in most cases, there is absolutely nothing you can do about them. Now, let's do a simple exercise to help you reduce many of your worries.

Exercise: sorting out your worries

Take a piece of paper or refer to the corresponding section of your action guide. Create four columns and add the following titles:

- Things I worry about,
- C/SC/NC (control/some control/no control),
- How it benefits me, and

- What I can do about it?

In the first column, write all the things you worry about, whether they are small or large. For instance, you could be worrying about your job, your financial situation or the fact you have yet to meet the right partner. Or you could be dwelling on certain events that happened in the past.

In the second column, write whether you have total control (C), some control (SC), or no control (NC), over the situation.

In the third column, write down how worrying benefits you. Does it help you in any way, or is it just pointless?

Finally, in the last column, write down what remedial action you could take to ease the situation. Could you decide to stop focusing on it and let go? Could you take action to lessen the worry? Could you ask someone for advice?

As you work through this exercise, you will realize that most of the things you worry about are things you have little or no control over. This is the error most people make. They dwell on a past they can't change, worry about a future that doesn't exist (yet), or keep complaining about things they have no power to affect.

Now, how much of your worries actually make sense, and how are you going to make them disappear? I would argue that in most situations, you only ever have three choices:

1. Do something about it,
2. Accept it, or
3. Worry/complain about it.

Most people exert a great deal of energy complaining about what is happening to them. However, no matter how

tempting it may be, complaining does not help. Instead, it robs you of your power to take action. Notice that the more you complain about something, the less action you tend to take. Whenever something is worrying you, ask yourself what you're going to do about it. Will you do something about it, accept it or complain about it?

The choice is yours.

* * *

Bonus exercise

To go further, I encourage you to undertake a **7-Day Zero Complaint Challenge**.

For the next seven days, avoid complaining out loud or in your head as much as possible. As you do so, you'll realize that complaining is often your way to avoid taking constructive action. Complaining is the easy way out, which is why most people indulge in it. To help you with this challenge, put a rubber band around your wrist and snap it each time you catch yourself complaining.

C. Close open loops

Do you suffer from chronic distraction? Do you feel overwhelmed? Are you stuck and unable to move forward?

At the beginning of this book, I've invited you to complete one task you had been putting off. Let's talk about this in more depth.

At any point in time, you have a list of things you want to do in your mind. Let's call it your mind's to-do list. You might not be aware of the number of tasks that have been accumulating, but these tasks tend to do nothing but weigh you down. When you accumulate too many unfinished tasks, you may feel stuck and unable to make progress the way you would like to. Often, you may not even know *why* you feel stuck.

Whenever you experience difficulty in completing your tasks, it is usually a sign that you need to declutter your mind. While your mind is amazing at processing information, keeping everything in your head is not the best way to deal with your worries or problems. The simple act of writing things down will help you think things through and force you to clarify your thinking. Instead of having an abstract problem in your mind, by writing it down, you will have something tangible to work on. Thus, pen and paper are fantastic tools that will help to organize your thoughts and work your problems through.

* * *

Exercise: close open loops

Create a list of all the tasks present in the back of your mind, whether they be significant or otherwise. You might want to go one step further and organize your list into categories. For instance, you could divide your list using categories such as, administrative tasks, daily chores, work-related duties, and so on. Then, schedule time to complete these tasks. You can set an entire day to get rid of all the tasks you've been putting off. Or perhaps, you can set an entire week to complete a project. Do whatever works best for you. Remember, anything you haven't scheduled or completed will take up some of your mental resources and, allowing too many incomplete tasks to accumulate can leave you overwhelmed and stressed. Clear your mind and you will increase your capacity to feel more motivated.

D. Free up your schedule

Are you spending too much time on unimportant things? If so, you might need to free up your schedule.

Having too many tasks to complete every day may overwhelm you and can leave you tired and unmotivated. Imagine you had to eliminate eighty percent of your daily activities. Which tasks would you choose to remove? Which tasks would you delegate? Who would you say no to?

To take control of your day, it is essential you become ruthless with the way you utilize your time. If billionaires, like Bill Gates, schedule their appointments in five-minute increments, they have a good reason for doing so. As a rule of thumb, the more you respect your time, the more productive you will become. Conversely, the more you give your time freely to whoever asks for it, the more overwhelmed you will feel and the less you are likely to accomplish.

Let's see how you can declutter your schedule by learning to say no and by removing unnecessary tasks from your schedule.

Why you struggle to say no

Saying no to other people's requests is not easy. In fact, there are quite a few reasons why you may have difficulty doing this. Let's review some of them.

a) Lack of clarity

One reason you may have a hard time saying no is because you lack a clear vision. You don't know what you want or where you are heading and, as a result, it is easy to become distracted. Of course, you're not always in a position to say no at work or in your personal life. However, remember this: as a rule of thumb, the clearer you are regarding what matters to you—such as your goals and values—the easier it will be for you to make the correct decisions and say no when necessary.

Successful people have to decline requests most of the time. And this is one of the reasons they are so successful: they have clear priorities, well-defined values, and a specific vision.

The following story of Richard Branson, the billionaire founder of Virgin, illustrates this situation very well. A company that wanted to hire Richard Branson as a keynote speaker offered to pay \$100,000 for an hour-long speech, but he declined. They raised their offer to \$250,000, but again he declined. Then \$500,000, but still no. Finally, they offered to pay whatever price he named. Despite this lucrative offer, they received the following message from his office:

“No amount of money would matter. Right now, Richard has three strategic priorities he is focused on, and he will only allow us to allocate his calendar to something that significantly contributes to the accomplishment of one of those three priorities and speaking for a fee is not one of them.”

As you can see, Richard Branson knows exactly what he's doing and where he's going, and he will let nothing prevent him from concentrating on his top priorities. Now, unlike Richard Branson, you're probably not receiving hundreds of requests every day, but how are you going to design the life you want and achieve the success you desire if you're unable to say no? And what will happen as you become more and more successful in the future? If you can't say no now, how will you say no in the future?

b) Lack of assertiveness

Another reason you may have a hard time declining requests is because you're afraid of hurting other people's feelings. Like most people, you probably want everybody to like you. While understandable, this type of behavior will rarely allow you to perform at your best or design the life you want. You may lie to yourself, pretending you're acting selflessly, but it's often not the case.

In fact, if anything, being a people pleaser is a selfish action, not a selfless one. When you seek to please people, you act out of fear of not being loved. Consequently, the focus is on yourself and what people may think of you, not on the other person. This is why "Mr. Nice Guy" often finishes last. Instead of being himself, he wears a mask, hoping to make a good impression. He hides his true personality for fear of being rejected. In the end, he often is rejected; ironically, not for who he really is, but for who he pretends to be.

Even worse, in the long term, this type of behavior tends to create resentment toward people who abuse your kindness. Under this condition, instead of having real relationships with people, you will develop fake relationships based on resentment and fear of showing your true self. This lack of assertiveness and the tendency to please other people often result from insufficient self-worth. For instance, a lack of self-worth can prevent you:

- Standing for your values and what you believe in,
- Accepting that some people will not like you,
- Valuing your time (and yourself),
- Setting expectations and clear boundaries, and
- Deciding on a clear direction you want to follow.

c) Lack of understanding of what saying yes means

Whenever you say yes to something, you will probably have to say no to something else. For instance, when you help someone do something of little importance, you lose the opportunity to work on something of greater import, something that may have a bigger impact on the world. In short, saying yes too often can rob you of the opportunity to do something more meaningful and impactful with your time. In this regard, it is easy to see why saying yes is selfish.

Contrary to what people think, saying yes is not the default answer, saying no is. Remember this: nobody is entitled to your time. When someone asks you to give them some of your time, they assume they know what's best for you and how you should use your time. Or worse, they simply don't care about your time, and they are only considering their own interests. Isn't that selfish?

The point is, whenever you offer your time, you give away a chunk of your life, and time is a hugely valuable commodity. Is it worth your time? Shouldn't you spend your time doing something you judge more important?

Don't get me wrong, though. I'm not saying you should be a jerk and never help other people. The truth is, we usually love helping others. The helper feels good about sharing his or her knowledge, while the person asking for help is happy to find some. I'm merely encouraging you to become more selective in the way you use your time. Help people whenever you can, but don't feel obligated to do so every time.

* * *

Exercise: identify why you're not saying no

Complete the corresponding table in your action guide:

- In the first column, write down all the things you've been saying yes to in the past thirty days. Don't worry if you can't remember every instance.
- In the second column, write down "Y" if you wanted to say yes, and "N" if you wanted to say no.
- In the third column, for each request you wanted to decline, write down why you felt you couldn't say no. This will give you a better idea of the things you need to work on.

Now, let's have a look at some of the things you can do to assert yourself and say no more often.

How to say no

Many people struggle to assert themselves or ask for what they want. As a result, instead of being proactive and going after their dreams, these people tend to react to what life throws at them. If this sounds like you, it's now time to assert yourself and go after what *you* want.

a) Start small

If you struggle to say no, I encourage you to start small. Start by saying no to small requests with minor consequences. Perhaps you can say no to attending a party you've been invited to. Perhaps you can say no to someone who asks you for a small favor. At first, it might feel uncomfortable but it's a good sign you're making progress. People are not going to die because you say no to them.

b) Stop over-justifying yourself

Do you try to justify yourself whenever you choose to say no to a request? I see people doing this all the time. Here is the thing: you don't need to justify yourself. Remember what we discussed previously; when people ask you something, your default answer should be no. Therefore, you don't need to come up with false excuses nobody would ever buy into. Instead, try telling the truth:

- I'm sorry, but parties are not my thing, so I'm going to skip it this time.
- I'm sorry, but right now I'm entirely focused on a very important project.
- I'm sorry, but I made a promise to my kids, and I won't disappoint them.

You don't need to over-apologize either. Time is one of your most precious assets, so why squander it? Why not value your time more and say no to requests that aren't the best use of your time? At first, it might feel uncomfortable to say no without offering lame excuses, but I encourage you to try it out. If you find it difficult to assert yourself, this exercise will help you immensely.

c) Practice saying no

If you struggle to say no, an effective way to work on your assertiveness is to use role play. Role-playing has been shown to be effective in many different fields, especially sales. Anything you practice saying by yourself—or better, with someone else—becomes easier to say in real life.

To practice, envision a specific situation when you want to say no. Perhaps it is when one of your colleagues ask you for a favor. Or perhaps it is when a friend wants you to attend a party. Now, imagine what you would say in this specific situation. See yourself actually saying it. Practice saying it out loud. The simple fact of having rehearsed your answer in your mind will help you when the situation arises in reality.

d) Practice offering alternatives

Rather than saying no, you can also offer alternatives when necessary. I find this method effective when I don't want to say no, can't say no or simply want to modify the request so it works better for me.

For instance, let's say someone asks you to attend a party and you don't want to go. You could say something like, "I don't feel like going tonight, but we can have lunch together tomorrow, if you're free." Of course, that's providing you actually *do* want to meet that person. This alternative may come handy especially if you're an introvert.

Removing tasks you do reluctantly

To declutter your schedule and reduce stress, it is also essential for you to remove tasks you do reluctantly during the day. These are often the tasks that generate the most stress. If they are part of your job, you might not be able to remove all of them, but you can probably eliminate at least a few. As you do so, you'll make your day easier and will have more time and energy to dedicate to things that truly matter to you.

* * *

Exercises: eliminate unpleasant tasks

Create the following table in your action guide:

- In the first column write down all the unpleasant tasks you have to perform on a regular basis. Revisit your day mentally. It will help you make sure you don't forget anything. If it helps, ask yourself, "If I were to eliminate some tasks, which ones would increase my peace of mind and boost my mood most dramatically?"
- In the second column write down what you could do about it. For instance, you might be able to delegate the task in some way, spend less time doing it or eliminate it altogether. You could choose to give it an empowering meaning. Perhaps you can see this as a way to strengthen your self-discipline.

E. Declutter your desk

A messy desk can often be the result of a cluttered mind. One thing you can do when you feel stuck or tend to procrastinate is to start cleaning your work environment. This is what I like to do, and it usually works for me.

When you start working, remove anything you don't need from your desk. Eliminate anything that could distract you. Turn off the notifications on your phone, remove any file you don't need right now, and only keep what you actually need. For me, in most cases, it would mean having only my computer on my desk and nothing else.

Also, note that getting into the habit of cleaning your desk before you start work is a great way to prime your mind and let it know, "Now, it's time for action."

* * *

Exercise: declutter your desk

Remove anything unnecessary on your desk such as files you don't need right now, your smartphone, et cetera.

F. Declutter your physical environment

A cluttered environment can be the result of a cluttered mind. Clutter is not just about having a messy room, it's about having too many unnecessary things that neither serve you nor bring you joy. These things clutter your mind and impact you in subtle ways. They can become distractions that prevent you from thinking straight and facing your own problems.

In her book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, Marie Kondo explains how her clients often dramatically change their life after decluttering their house.

Here are two of her student reviews:

After your course, I quit my job and launched my own business, doing something I had dreamed of doing ever since I was a child.

Your course taught me to see what I really need and what I don't. So, I got a divorce. Now I feel much happier.

Here's the bottom line: there is a connection between physical clutter and mental confusion. Physical clutter might be a way for you to hide your feelings and avoid facing certain things in your life. As you get rid of what you don't need, you can often gain clarity regarding what you really *do* want and need. The opposite can also be true: mental clutter might actually *produce* physical clutter.

Decluttering your environment means getting rid of *everything* you don't need, keeping only the things that bring you joy. This requires you to remove unnecessary things from your life, not just by putting them in a drawer or in a storage facility. This act of decluttering is a one-time deed—

a commitment to removing everything that isn't serving you in your life.

In a nutshell, here's how to declutter your environment.

Sort out your possessions by categories

Marie Kondo recommends you sort out your possession in the following order:

- Clothes,
- Books,
- Papers,
- Miscellany, and
- Items with sentimental value.

Gather all the items in each category

Start with your clothes. Gather all of them on the floor of one of your rooms. Then hold each item in your hand and ask yourself whether you really want to keep them. Imagine you see this item in a store today, would you buy it again?

Books

Hold them in your hand one by one and see how each one makes you feel. Would you love seeing the book you hold in your hand on your bookshelves every day? If not, you might want to get rid of it. If you have unread books, you probably want to sell or donate them unless you're excited at the prospect of reading them. But remember, if you really wanted to read them you would already have done so, yes? Also, you can always buy a new copy later if you feel the urge to read it.

Papers

The rule of thumb is to discard everything. After all, papers will seldom, if ever, bring you joy, right?

Marie Kondo recommends you only keep papers that fall into one of the following three categories:

- Papers currently in use,
- Papers needed for a limited period of time, and
- Papers that must be retained indefinitely.

Note that this category doesn't include papers with sentimental value, such as letters.

Miscellaneous items

This category includes anything else in your house except items with sentimental value. This could include CDs, electrical equipment, accessories, et cetera. Divide the items in this category into main sub-categories that make sense to you. Then, take each item in your hand and decide whether you want to throw it away or keep it. Again, make sure you get rid of anything that doesn't actively bring you joy.

Items with sentimental value

Throwing away items with sentimental value might be challenging, but it is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on your past and let it go, so that you can open yourself up to new opportunities. As Marie Kondo beautifully puts it, *“It is not our memories but the person we have become because of those past experiences that we should treasure.”*

So, don't be afraid to let go of any item that keeps you stuck in the past. Many of these objects have already played their role. Unless you absolutely need them to move forward, let go of them.

Throw away or donate items you don't need anymore

Put every item that you don't want to keep in bags and throw them away. You can also sell them or donate them. If you have difficulty discarding certain items, especially those with sentimental value, ask yourself, "Am I having trouble getting rid of this because of an attachment to the past or because of a fear of the future?" Removing the things you no longer need, may require you to let go of items from the past so you can enjoy the present and focus on building the future you desire. And, while you may be afraid of eliminating too many things from your house, it will rarely feel that way.

Ask yourself these questions:

- "Will I ever use this book to learn Spanish?"
- "Will I listen to these old CDs again?"
- "Will I use that guitar?"

Each time you look at an object and decide to keep it or throw it away, you are forced to think about what really matters to you. By choosing what you want to own, you choose how you want to live your life, the values you want to live by and the items you really cherish.

In short, decluttering your house allows you to remove all the things that have weighed you down for too many years. And, as you remove the clutter from your life, you can gain clarity regarding what you want to do. You can also become more "present" and feel more motivated to move toward your goals.

As the saying goes, “what you own ends up owning you.” If this is true, which items do you want to be owned by? The items you love and the ones that reflect your interests, values and personality, or the boring items you no longer have any use for?

Additional tip: to help you decide whether you should keep something or throw it away, ask yourself why you have that particular item in the first place. When did you buy it and what purpose has it played so far in your life? Now, reassess its purpose. If it has already served its purpose, it might be time to remove it from your life.

To learn in more detail how to tidy your environment, I encourage you to refer to *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*.

* * *

Exercise: declutter your physical environment

Complete the exercises in the corresponding section of your action guide.

G. Revise your forecast

Are you overwhelmed and feeling as though you aren't doing enough?

Have you ever considered that you may simply be miscalculating the amount of time you need to complete your tasks? In general, humans do a terrible job at forecasting. We overestimate what we can accomplish in a year and largely underestimate what we can accomplish in a decade. When we set goals, we tend to have unrealistic expectations, failing to consider worst-case scenarios and unexpected events. While being optimistic is important, when it comes to planning, a healthy dose of realism is often necessary.

A rule of thumb I like to use is simply to double the time I think I will need to complete a task. As a result, it rarely takes more time than I expect to complete a task, which makes me feel more productive and in greater control of my day. Consequently, if you tend to feel overwhelmed or never have enough time to finish your work, I encourage you to double the time you give yourself to finish your tasks. Try this method and see what happens during the day and how you feel at the end of it. What you may realize is that inaccurate forecasting can create unnecessary stress and impact negatively on your self-esteem. You'll probably discover that merely by giving yourself more time, you'll accomplish the same amount of work—if not more—and will feel much better about yourself.

H. Take enough breaks

Are you working non-stop from morning to night without taking enough breaks? After all, you need to hustle right?

While you may believe that every minute counts and that the fewer breaks you take, the more productive you will be, studies actually show this is not the case. In fact, high-achievers take regular breaks as part of their strategy to perform at the highest level. Brendon Burchard, the best-selling author of *High-Performance Habits*, takes breaks very seriously and recommends his clients to take a break from work every 45-60 minutes.

“If your butt lands in a chair, then set a 50-minute timer on your phone or computer. At fifty minutes, no matter what you’re working on, stand up, move, breathe, set an intention, and then return to work.”

What about you? How often should you take breaks? Below are the techniques considered to be the most effective:

Every 75-90 minutes:

Robert Pozen, author of *Extreme Productivity: Boost Your Results, Reduce Your Hours*, encourages people to take a break every 75- 90 minutes. This is because it is difficult to remain focused for more than 90 minutes at a time.

Every 52 minutes:

The startup, Draugiem Group, ran an experiment and found that the most productive people took frequent breaks working 52 minutes and taking 17-minute breaks. While they may seem like long breaks, in reality, if you can remain focused for fifty-two minutes, you will be more effective at work, and your breaks will be well-deserved.

Every 25 minutes:

This is called the Pomodoro technique. The idea is to work 25 minutes and take 5-minute breaks every half hour.

Now, which method should you use? This depends. The only way to know which one works best for you is to try them out. I encourage you to test each method for a week and see which one works best for you. Note that it may also depend on the tasks you perform. For instance, for a task that requires a great deal of creativity, perhaps working in blocks of 75- 90 minutes might work best as it gives you more time to enter the “flow.” Alternatively, for tasks that require less or minimal concentration, working in blocks of 25 minutes might be more effective.

2. FOCUS

Do you feel like a hamster in a wheel, continuously running but never reaching your destination and feeling like you're not in control of your day?

In the previous section, you learned how to declutter your mind and your environment to help you feel more at peace and less overwhelmed. In this section, you'll discover how to sharpen your focus to help boost your productivity.

Let's get started.

A. Assess your productivity

Are you productive or are you merely busy?

If you feel overwhelmed, the reason may be that you spend too much time on unproductive tasks. You may stuff your mind with unnecessary tasks or become distracted too easily. This lack of focus or clarity often leads to confusion and indecision.

Creating a time log

To help you understand how you use your time, I encourage you to create a time log and record everything you do during a typical week at work and outside of work. This might sound tedious, but I promise, it will be well worth your time and effort.

To create a time log, write down everything you do during an entire week, from the time you get up to the time you go to bed. Each time you transition from one activity to another, write it down. Make sure you write down how much time you spend on each activity. Also, include your bathroom breaks and the time you spend checking your non-work emails or your Facebook newsfeed. Just by doing this, you'll become far more aware of all the ways you're distracting yourself. In fact, you'll realize how little you spend doing actual productive work. For instance, you may notice that you're checking your private emails or your personal phone far too often.

At the end of your week, review all the activities you engaged in. Focus only on the tasks you consider as productive and count how many hours you spent working on them. Make sure you only count productive activities that move the needle forward. For instance, this may include working on an important project or preparing a presentation that could allow you to land a big contract. The questions below will help you see what you could have done differently:

- **If I didn't complete a particular task this week, what would have happened?** If the answer is nothing, it is very possible you could have been focusing on more important tasks.

- **What important tasks could have I worked on but didn't? Why?** These questions will help you uncover the tasks you may be procrastinating over. There may be several reasons you procrastinate, but often it has to do with fear. The fear of not doing a good enough job, perhaps. Another reason might be a lack of clarity regarding what needs to be done. If so, what could you do to gain more transparency? Maybe you could talk to your boss and ask for clarification. Or maybe you can ask a colleague who is more knowledgeable than you on the topic. Yet another reason might be a lack of motivation. Perhaps you're not particularly excited about the task. Perhaps, something else is holding you back and you're not sure what. If so, what can you do about it?
- **What could I have done to make me more productive?** Try to unearth a few things that would have significantly increased your productivity. For instance, it could be to work on your most important task first thing in the morning or check your email only a couple of times a day.

* * *

Exercise: create your time log

Use the time log sheet in your action guide and record everything you do during a week. If you wish, involve a friend and stay accountable to each other.

B. Leverage the 80/20 Principle

The last thing you want is to be busy simply for the sake of it. Most people spend far too much time working on unimportant things and, while some people pride themselves on how busy they are, being too occupied shouldn't be worn as a badge of honor. It is a state of mind that results from a lack of prioritization. If anything, being too busy results from laziness in your thinking.

Being able to focus on what matters will make it far less likely for you to feel overwhelmed. It will ensure you work on the right thing and maintain a high level of motivation.

Applying the 80/20 Principle

According to the 80/20 Principle, twenty percent of the things you do bring you eighty percent of your results.

This rule applies in countless situations. For instance, it is also true that twenty percent of a company's customers will usually generate eighty percent of their profits, and twenty percent of the world's wealthiest people own around eighty percent of the world's wealth.

This is a fascinating principle. Once you apply it consistently, it can dramatically improve your life.

80/20 your life

What twenty percent of your tasks produce eighty percent of your results? Which few things can you focus on to bring you better results with less time and effort?

To give you some examples, for me, it is writing more books, advertising via Amazon Marketing Services and growing my email list. In fact, there was a time when I tried to do a lot of different things. I would run Facebook Live events, create YouTube videos, and post on Facebook and other social media sites every day. While nothing is wrong with any of these activities, it didn't work for me. Therefore, I stopped doing them, which freed a load of time and allowed me to focus on writing books.

So, what does a productive task look like?

A productive task is one that brings you the results you want as fast as possible. It produces something tangible that moves you toward your goal—whatever your goal might be. Good examples are:

- Developing clients.
- Creating new products or services.
- Marketing activities and increasing sales.
- Any optimizations that make your business more effective and profitable; streamlining, automation, creating checklists, et cetera.
- Strategic learning with specific implementation in the near future.

Note that productive tasks can often be challenging or scary. This is the reason most people procrastinate and spend most

of their day working on tasks that don't make a big difference to their business. It's also the reason people constantly look for the perfect productivity system. However, this is often nothing but a distraction.

If you can identify the few tasks with the highest positive impact and work on them every day before working on anything else, you'll become far more productive than most people. This is what you need to prioritize before you implement any other productivity system.

Focusing on what you enjoy

When you select the key tasks to focus on, you must also take into account your level of interest in these activities. Ideally, you want to identify effective tasks that you're good at and enjoy doing. This will enable you to sustain your motivation in the long term. For more on that, refer to the upcoming sections, *Do more of what you love*, and *Set exciting goals*.

So, what is your top twenty percent? What "Top 20%" brings the majority of your results?

Note that you can use these rules in every area of your life, not just for your work. Below are some questions you can ask yourself:

Social life

- Who are the Top 20% of people who bring me the most joy, and how can I spend more time with them?
- What are the Top 20% social activities I enjoy the most, and how can I spend more time engaging in them?

Finance

What Top 20% financial activities should I focus on to improve my finances the most?

Health

What Top 20% daily habits should I focus on to improve my health the most?

Well-being

What Top 20% pursuits should I focus on to improve my mood the most?

* * *

Exercise: 80/20 your life

80/20 your life using the corresponding section in your action guide.

C. Destroy distraction

Knowing why you distract yourself

We constantly try to avoid pain or discomfort while seeking pleasure. Whenever we perceive a task as difficult, boring or scary, we search for ways to distract ourselves with an enjoyable activity so we will be rewarded with a quick shot of dopamine—the brain's neurotransmitter responsible for delivering pleasure.

Interestingly, concentrating on what seems like the most fun activity rarely brings us the sense of fulfillment we're seeking. If anything, it makes us feel miserable and unfulfilled in the longer term. Also, when we keep postponing the tasks we should be working on, we often end up feeling bad about ourselves, which adversely affects our self-esteem.

The point is, whether you distract yourself by going for a walk, drinking water every twenty minutes or checking your emails, the need to do so usually comes from your brain's attempt to avoid fear, discomfort, boredom or a lack of clarity. To reduce distractions, you must look at the root cause behind them. I believe the main reasons for distractions are:

- a) The fear of not doing a good enough job,
- b) A lack of clarity regarding what you need to do or how to do it,
- c) A lack of interest, and

d) A lack of energy.

a) Fear of not doing a good enough job

You may struggle with a certain task or project and wonder whether you'll be able to complete it properly. The resistance you experience in this case, makes it easy to procrastinate. As a result, you may find yourself checking your Facebook newsfeed or watching "amusing" videos of cats on YouTube. If this is the case, start noticing it and, better still, start improving the situation.

To give you a personal example, I often experience resistance when I write. In the beginning, I am pumped up and ready to write a book that could help many people. But as soon as I start writing, doubts start creeping in, and I begin to procrastinate. In this specific example, I need to keep pushing through, while reminding myself that, for the first draft, I merely need to put words on paper. From experience, I know I will be able to revise and improve each subsequent draft until I'm happy with the result. Then I send the manuscript to the most vindictive editor on the planet (or so he says).

What about you? What are you procrastinating on out of fear, and what can you do about it?

b) Lack of clarity regarding what you need to do or how to do it

Do you know what you have to do and how you are going to achieve it? When you are unsure of what you need to do, it is easy to become distracted. Asking yourself the following questions will help you clarify your actions:

- What exactly do I need to do here?
- What am I trying to accomplish?
- Exactly what does the end result look like?

Gain clarity regarding what you need to do, and you'll be less likely to procrastinate.

c) Lack of interest

Do you find the task boring? Sometimes, the task may make sense from a rational point of view but may not seem quite right to you. For instance, a particular project may bring you a lot of money or a new strategy could allow your company to grow significantly, yet you don't feel motivated to proceed with it. This is usually because there is a misalignment somewhere. Perhaps the task contradicts your values and what you believe in. Perhaps it requires you to spend a lot of time on tasks you dread or are poor at. Perhaps it moves you away from your vision. Whatever the reason may be, it will lead you to procrastinate—and you may not even know why.

Consequently, whenever possible, make sure you align your goals with your vision, strengths and values. For more on this refer to the next section, *Reignite*.

d) Lack of energy

Sometimes, you simply need to recharge your batteries. For instance, if you schedule a demanding task late in the afternoon, you may lack the energy to complete it correctly or efficiently. Personally, if I don't write first thing in the morning when I still have the required energy, I probably won't do much writing during the day. Similarly, other activities such as shooting videos or sending emails—especially sales emails—demand a great deal of energy from me. If I don't tackle these things in the morning or early afternoon, I will likely put them off or do a bad job on them, which is equally inefficient.

Thus, it is massively important for you to focus on your most critical tasks when you have the most energy. If you experience a chronic lack of energy, you might want to check whether you eat well, sleep well and exercise regularly. I encourage you to focus on getting these three things right before doing anything else. For most people, there is ample room for improvement in the general areas of fatigue, nutrition and health.

When you focus on interesting tasks, work through your fears, and learn exactly what you have to do to maintain a high level of energy, you will feel far more motivated. As a result, you will be far less likely to become distracted. Thus, if you lack motivation right now, assess how you fare in each of the following areas:

- Fear of not doing a good enough job,
- Lack of clarity,
- Lack of interest, and
- Lack of energy.

* * *

Exercise: destroy distraction

Answer the following question using your action guide:

What one thing can I do right now to boost my motivation?

If you feel any resistance, try to identify the root of that resistance.

D. Optimize your environment

Sometimes, the best way to push through a barrier is to change your environment. This may mean removing some people from your life, joining a new community or meeting a new person who motivates you to change.

As independent as you think you may be, you are largely the product of your environment. Your actions, at least to a certain degree, are based on the expectations of the people around you. You may have chosen a particular career because your parents strongly recommended you do so. You may smoke or drink more than you should because of your closest friends or your environment. Or you may be holding certain religious or political beliefs because most of the people in your community do so.

In short, you exist as part of an interconnected eco-system that is continuously evolving. You influence your friends, colleagues, and acquaintances and they influence you. When you live in an environment that is misaligned with your beliefs, core values or purpose, you may find it impossible to take the actions you need to create the life you want. As a result, you may feel stuck and unable to express yourself. You may pretend to be someone you are not, doing things you don't want to do. You might continue working at a job you don't like, attend parties you don't enjoy or associate with people you would rather avoid.

I invite you to have a close and honest look at your environment. Are you surrounded by people who inspire you to be your best? Do you have anyone to encourage you when things become difficult? Or are you surrounded by people who discourage you and tell you your goals are unrealistic?

Your environment is more powerful than your willpower

While you may have heard you need to develop willpower, the truth is, your environment impacts your life to a far greater extent than your willpower ever can. To change your life and your actions, willpower alone is often not enough. You must also change your environment. For instance, in the past few days, I've been struggling with writing my latest book and was falling behind on my schedule. To overcome this situation, I disconnected the Wi-Fi on my computer. I made it so that I need to go to another room, look under my internet box and enter a lengthy password. This might sound silly, but it worked. Rather than trusting my willpower, I altered my environment to work with me instead of working against me.

Any time you add friction, you make a certain adverse behavior less likely to occur. Another example would be to remove all the junk food from your house. The simple fact that you have to go out to buy more junk food will add friction and make it more difficult, and therefore, less likely you'll eat unhealthy food.

In short, you should aim to:

- Make undesired behaviors more difficult to indulge in by *adding* friction, and
- Make desired behaviors easier to indulge in by *removing* friction.

What about you? What small changes could you make in your environment to remove friction and encourage the desired behaviors?

Now, let's delve deeper and identify the different factors your environment consists of.

a) Physical objects

Your physical environment either facilitates the behaviors you seek to adopt or makes them unnecessarily complicated. For instance, removing junk food from your house will facilitate the behavior “eating healthy food.” In my case, disconnecting my computer from the internet facilitates the behavior “working on my book,” while making the undesired behavior “wasting time surfing the internet,” less likely.

The point is: when you remove unnecessary temptations and create incentives to adopt desired behaviors, you start decluttering your mind from compulsive thoughts and their associated unproductive behaviors.

What about you? How can you make undesired behaviors as challenging as possible to engage in while making desired behaviors as frictionless as possible? Remember, simply adding some extra friction can work wonders. Sure, it might be a little challenging at first, but you will get used to it, I promise. Go on, give it a try.

b) People

Jim Rohn, the business philosopher, said that you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with. It is certainly true that the people you associate with have a tremendous impact on your life. When placed in the wrong environment, people who are easily influenced can end up in a very bad position in life.

What about you? Are you surrounded by positive, happy and successful people? Are the people around you helping you become the person you need to be to achieve your dreams or are they holding you back?

People you spend time with influence:

- **Your habits/behaviors:** How early you wake up in the morning, the kind of food you eat and whether you exercise.
- **Your beliefs:** What you think is and isn't possible in terms of your career, relationship, finances and dreams.

Remember, the people you associate with influence your life to a far greater extent than you may imagine. Therefore, it is your responsibility to surround yourself with positive, supporting people. Note that the less clear your core values and vision are, the more easily you'll tend to be influenced by your environment and your friends and associates.

c) Direct environment

Your direct environment is the place you spend the most time, i.e., your house and your workplace or school.

Is your current work environment inspirational? Does it bring out the best in you? What about your house? Does it provide you with the inspiration and motivation you need to pursue your goals and dreams or does it suck up your energy? What could you do to improve your direct environment?

Remember, your environment either supports your goals or drives you away from them.

* * *

Exercise: optimize your environment

Complete the exercise in the corresponding section of your action guide to start optimizing your environment.

d) Digital environment

How about your digital environment? Is your desktop organized in a way that maximizes your productivity? What about your email box and your social media accounts? Are they working for or against you?

Nowadays, many of us spend hours in front of our computers. And as we do so, we can be exposed to thousands of ads and countless articles and videos. Social media can give us the illusion that everybody else lives the perfect life, while ads can make us feel as though we're lacking something. However, that is not generally the case.

Let's see how you can go on a digital detox.

Going on a digital detox

Although they can make us more productive, new technologies often have the opposite effect. We can waste hours scrolling through the newsfeed of our favorite social media app, checking our emails compulsively or reading the news many times a day.

By learning to make more effective use of new technologies you can dramatically increase your productivity. Thus, I encourage you to reduce the time you spend on the internet and on your smartphone. Be selective about the time you spend because, as we've already discussed, time is perhaps your most precious asset.

There are two different ways to initiate a digital detox. You can either go on a full detox for a predetermined period (e.g., 24 hours or 48 hours), or you can choose to reduce your daily digital exposure for an extended period. In fact, I recommend you do both.

Full detox

The best time to do a full digital detox might be during the weekend when you have no obligation to use your phone, internet or any other digital device for work.

- Make sure you have everything you need. Print maps if you need to go somewhere, answer urgent emails beforehand, and let people know you won't be available.
- Schedule beforehand how you will spend your time. 24 or 48 hours without digital devices can seem like ages in today's world. Therefore, make sure you plan some exciting activities to plug this void. It could be hiking, reading or cooking, for instance.

Partial detox

A partial detox is a great way to reduce your use of social media, phone, TV or any other digital activities. To carry out a partial detox, set specific rules regarding your use of digital devices. For instance, you might decide you will only check your email once or twice a day at a specific time (e.g., at noon and 4 pm). Or you might decide that you will check Facebook only twice a day for fifteen minutes each occasion. Also, to avoid wasting time, make your intent clear. For example, when you go on Facebook you could decide only to:

- Check if you have any messages and reply if necessary,
- Send a message to someone you need help from, and
- Schedule Facebook posts for your business page.

The simple fact of knowing exactly what you need to do and visualizing it beforehand will help you avoid distraction. I can't tell you how many times I've logged in to Facebook to do one simple thing, only to end up spending half an hour mindlessly checking my newsfeed. This goes for social media as well as anything else. The more deliberate you are in each of your actions, the better results you will obtain.

* * *

Exercise: complete a digital detox

Do the following exercises in your action guide:

Full detox: For 24 hours, 48 hours, or more, refrain from using any digital device.

Partial detox: Create your own rules regarding your digital environment. For the next seven days, do your best to follow these rules and see how it makes you feel.

3. REIGNITE

Sometimes, you need to take a moment to reconnect with what you really love to do. We can spend a lot of time lying to ourselves and pursuing goals that aren't ours in the first place. Under these circumstances, it's not surprising that we can end up feeling stuck or unmotivated. Let's see how you can reignite the spark and boost your motivation.

A. Do more of what you love

If you want to feel more motivated and happier, do more stuff that makes you happy every day. Sounds simple? Well, in theory, it is.

However, strangely enough, you can spend a lot of time doing things that fail to make you happy. How often have you engaged in “fun activities” that actually leave you unfulfilled at the end of the day? Does watching your favorite TV shows provide you with the deep sense of fulfillment you’re searching for?

One reason you may be unfulfilled is that you’re acting as a *consumer* instead of acting as a *creator*. As a human being, you are highly creative and can derive a great deal of pleasure from creating things. For instance, you may enjoy creating art or writing or you may like building things with your hands. But when you rely on consumption instead of creation for your fulfillment, it often doesn’t work.

Now, if using your creativity is such an enjoyable thing, why do you spend so much time consuming rather than creating?

First, being a consumer is much easier than being a creator. For example, watching YouTube videos is a passive activity that requires little real effort. Second, consuming doesn’t require you to face your fears and self-doubts such as the fear of not being good enough, the fear of failure, et cetera. Third, you might feel prone to consume because it’s what most of your peers are doing. For instance, you may party every weekend because your friends do so, even though other more productive activities would make you much happier.

Another reason you may fail to do what makes you happy is social conditioning. Your parents, your teachers, your peers and society as a whole probably expect you to act in a certain way. In the past, you may have been told what type of career you're supposed to pursue, how you should spend your weekends, what type of house you should purchase or when you should marry. The truth is that only you know what you should be doing with your life. And if you're unsure, it's *your* responsibility to figure out the correct path for you. Nobody else can ever do that for you.

So, are you spending enough time pursuing activities that make *you* happy or are you neglecting them in favor of less fulfilling activities?

* * *

Exercise: if possible, give up doing what doesn't make you happy

Using your action guide, make a list of what you do every day (or refer to the list you've created for the time log exercise). Then, ask yourself, "which of these activities brings me the sense of fulfillment I'm looking for?" Be radically honest with yourself. You may realize some of the things you do are mere distractions. Identify activities that require little brain power such as playing with your phone, checking social media or watching YouTube videos. Is it possible you spend too much time on such non-productive activities?

Now, let's have a closer look at what *does* make you happy.

Identify what makes you happy

Do you really know what constitutes a good day for you? Which activities make your day a great one? Is it:

- Spending more time on a side project?
- Reading more?
- Seeing your friends more often?

I invite you to do more of what makes you happy. Even better, I encourage you to schedule a specific block of time to carry out these activities. Simply spending ten to fifteen minutes every day doing things you love can lift your spirits and increase your well-being.

* * *

Exercise: identify what you love to do

1. Using your action guide, answer the following questions:

- When was the last time you had a great day and why? What did you do? Perhaps you tried something new, worked on a passion project or met your friends.
- What are you most looking forward to doing every day?
- If you could do only one activity you love every day, which one would it be?
- What activities would allow you to feel completely fulfilled at the end of your day?
- How would you describe your ideal day to your best friend?
- Is there something you enjoyed doing in the past but don't do any longer?
- Is there something you've always wanted to try but have never mustered the courage to attempt?

2. Take a pen and a sheet of paper or use the action guide and write down at least twenty things you love doing. These can be simple things such as going for a walk or listening to music. Make sure you're being completely honest with yourself. Nobody else needs to see your list. Here is mine.

1. Reading,
2. Learning new things,
3. Studying the human mind,
4. Learning about the nature of reality,
5. Helping people succeed,
6. Helping people design their ideal life,
7. Playing sports,

8. Going for walks,
9. Dancing,
10. Talking about ways to change the world,
11. Making a difference,
12. Improving things,
13. Having deep one-on-one conversations,
14. Connecting with people at a deep level and identifying their passions,
15. Making people laugh,
16. Inspiring people,
17. Writing,
18. Learning foreign languages,
19. Living in different countries and learning their culture, language and way of thinking, and
20. Observing people and animals.

B. Identify what really motivates you

Do you struggle to motivate yourself? Sometimes, do you not only spend too much time on unfulfilling activities, but do you also pursue the wrong goals?

The truth is, we seldom lack motivation, but we often set the wrong goals, set the right goals for the wrong reasons, or we choose not to go after what we want due to fear.

To set the right goals for you it is important for you to:

- Be radically honest with yourself and assess whether your current goals are the right ones for you,
- Identify your strengths and leverage them as often as possible,
- Clarify your values and live by them, and
- Nail your vision, making sure most of your goals are aligned with it.

Let's look at each of these points one by one.

Pursuing the right goals

While you may believe you're targeting the right goals, this is not always the case. In reality, you may pursue certain goals because it's seen as the cool thing to do and you might pursue others because they will give you the external approval you seek—or so you hope. Even when you do set an appropriate goal, you may approach it the wrong way.

In short, you may be making one of the following three mistakes:

- a) Idealizing your goals,
- b) Pursuing goals to get other people's approval, and/or
- c) Working on the right goals in the wrong way.

Let's examine each of these mistakes.

a) Idealizing your goals

A common problem is “idealizing” your goals and making them more exciting than they are. To avoid this mistake, you must be willing to be brutally honest with yourself. For example, just because:

- You get excited after seeing a video of a man traveling around the world while working online, doesn't mean it is actually what you want to do,
- You see an ad telling you how to make money from home with Forex trading doesn't mean you actually want to spend your day glued to your computer trading currencies, or
- You see a man with a six pack doesn't mean you're willing to do the work to develop a six pack of your own or that a six pack is something you actually want.

My point is that, too often, you may pretend to want something you don't actually desire. You might be picturing an ideal outcome that has nothing to do with reality and project feelings of joy you won't actually experience once you achieve your goals. As you do this, you will distract yourself from what truly matters to you. This situation is more common than you might realize. In fact, I would bet that it's what you're doing right now in at least one area of your life.

Idealizing their goals is why many people spend years working on a goal only to realize it doesn't make them any happier when they finally reach it. To avoid this trap, it is important for you to enjoy the journey rather than hoping

some type of accomplishment will make you happy in the future.

Therefore, learn to be brutally honest with yourself and ask yourself whether the thing you're dreaming of is really, really, *really* what you want.

* * *

Exercise: identify what you really want

Using the action guide, write down your major goals. Then, ask yourself:

- Is this *really* my goal or is it someone else's goal?
- Is it exciting me? Do I feel drawn to it or do I have to continuously push and struggle?
- What will I gain from achieving this goal? And is it what I *really* want? Will it *really* improve my life?

b) Pursuing goals to gain other people's approval

For years, I envisioned myself traveling around the world while working on my online business. However, when I quit my job and finally had the opportunity to do so, I realize it wasn't necessarily what I wanted. Actually, it turns out, I enjoy having structure and stability in my life. Traveling all the time isn't all that appealing to me (though occasional travel is wonderful and mind-expanding).

I lied to myself because I thought it would be cool to be seen as the international traveler. I thought it would make me feel superior. I thought people would envy me and see me as successful. However, what I really wanted was the freedom to travel whenever I felt like it—without necessarily doing any actual travel. I yearned for the freedom to set my own schedule and needed to have the choice.

The bottom line is: often, we pursue “noble” goals, hoping to be loved and appreciated by others when we attain them. Wanting to be seen as cool, altruistic or “successful,” we can spend most of our life trying to achieve goals that aren't ours. No wonder we end up lacking in motivation.

What about you? Would you still pursue your current goals if the opinion of other people didn't matter at all? Or would you do something else more exciting to *you*?

The absolute key is to focus on goals that feel right to you.

Your goals don't have to be about changing the world. The most important thing is that you are radically honest with yourself and accept whatever goal appears to be pulling you. If your goal is to be a good mom, be a good mom. If your goal is to draw beautiful pictures, do so. Only *you* know what you

want. So, don't dismiss anything small or big. Simply do more of what you love and see where your journey leads you.

c) Working on the right goals in the wrong way

It is also possible that you set the right goals but work on them in the wrong way. In his book, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Dan Pink argues that three things act as effective motivators. These are:

- **Autonomy:** The urge to direct our own lives,
- **Mastery:** The desire to get better and better at something that matters, and
- **Purpose:** The yearning to do what we do in the service of something larger than ourselves.

It is interesting to note that people's main motivator(s) can be different. Some people will value *autonomy* the most while others will prefer *mastery*. Yet others will give more weight to *purpose*. If you currently lack motivation, it might be time to look at your goals and see how they align with your main motivator(s).

For instance, if you value *autonomy*, perhaps, you'll enjoy your work more if you negotiate with your boss to gain more independence and flexibility at work.

If you're more *purpose*-driven, perhaps you can spend time working on a project that makes you feel as though you are making a difference, whether it be at work or in your private life.

If you value *mastery*, perhaps you can set specific targets to reach every day so that you can measure your progress accurately over time. You could also create an internal contest with some of your colleagues or set up a challenge that motivates you.

In her book, *Not Another Motivation Book*, Joanna Jast explains how she tried to cut down on carbs and sweets but failed for years. Even though she hired a wellness coach, she struggled to improve her diet. According to her, the main reason for her failure was that she didn't approach her goal with the right motivational driver, *mastery*.

To align her goal with her main motivational driver, she started setting herself challenges revolving around the idea of resisting sweets, continuously seeking to break old records. This method worked wonders for her.

This shows that, if you repeatedly failed to achieve a specific goal in the past, consider tackling it differently by using another motivational driver. If you value autonomy the most, try to formulate your goal in terms of how much more autonomy it would give you. Or design it in a way that provides you with more autonomy as you work on it, (e.g. working from home one day a week). If you value *purpose* the most, frame your goal in a way that makes you feel as though you are contributing to something you care about and measure your progress accordingly (e.g., count how many people you help or how many thank you emails you receive). If you value *mastery* the most, consider setting challenges that motivate you and allow you to track your progress over time (e.g., set sales targets, the number of miles to run, et cetera).

Now that we've seen the main mistakes to avoid when you pursue your goals, let's identify your strengths so you can leverage them and boost your motivation.

Leveraging your strengths

At my previous job, it felt as though every day was a struggle. I didn't feel competent, neither did I enjoy what I was doing for the most part. This is because I wasn't utilizing my strengths or my talents, and I had no passion for what I was doing.

On the other hand, I really enjoy what I'm doing now. Sure, I have my fair share of self-doubts, but my days are far more enjoyable than they used to be. This is because I leverage my strengths while:

- Making the most of my (introverted) personality,
- Living by my values (freedom, autonomy, contribution, et cetera), and
- Pursuing my vision (helping people improve their lives).

I am no longer sitting at my desk, believing I should be somewhere else. Instead, I spend my time doing what I feel good at.

My point is that, if every day seems like an uphill battle, it is likely you're spending too much time doing things you're not good at and too little time using your strengths and your natural abilities. By failing to leverage your strengths, you're doing a disservice to yourself and to the people who could benefit from what you have to offer. You're also making your life harder than necessary.

* * *

Exercise: find your strengths

Use your action guide and answer the following questions:

- What are your biggest strengths?
- What do you believe only you can do? What is unique about you?
- What do you find so easy to do that you genuinely don't understand why others have difficulties doing the same thing?
- What do people compliment you on? If you don't know the answer to this one, ask your friends, family members or colleagues.

Now, let's see how you can identify your personality and design your day in a way that better aligns with it.

If you need help to find your strengths and your passion, download my free eBook, *Find What You Love: 5 Tips to Uncover Your Passion Quickly and Easily.*

Understanding your personality

Are you an extrovert or an introvert? Do you prefer to work by yourself or to be part of a team?

Your personality traits are important as they will influence how you work and determine how you spend your day in general. For instance, if you're an introvert, you might prefer to spend more time on your own rather than working as part of a team all day long. Or you may prefer a quiet environment rather than a loud one. Your communication style might be different as well.

Below are a few traits shared by a majority of introverts, who generally:

- Prefer to spend time alone to replenish themselves,
- Dislike small talk but enjoy deep conversation,
- Prefer small groups,
- Think before they speak,
- Require an invitation before they speak,
- Avoid speaking until they feel they have something important to say,
- Listen more than they talk,
- Talk a lot when the topic is something about which they are really passionate,
- Choose depth over breadth (e.g., they would rather know a few people very well than know several people casually),
- Keep their enthusiasm and excitement to themselves and share only with people they know very well,
- Prefer to know a lot about a small cluster of topics than know a little bit about a wide range of topics,

- Need alone time to think (rather than having to endure brainstorming sessions),
- Dislike interruptions,
- Are uncomfortable with conflict, and
- Need a lot of preparation before addressing an audience and have difficulty speaking for long periods of time.

For more on introversion, refer to my book: *The Thriving Introvert: Embrace the Gift of Introversion and Live the Life You Were Meant to Live.*

Now, let's have a look at a few traits shared by a majority of extroverts, who tend to:

- Talk first and refine their thinking later (talking allows them to organize their ideas),
- Love talking with people,
- Talk more than they listen,
- Like teamwork,
- Like to solve problems by discussing them,
- Feel energized when they mingle with other people,
- Enjoy being the center of attention,
- Feel isolated by too much time spent alone, and
- Enjoy talking about a variety of different topics.

As you can see, you may choose to spend your day differently based on your level of introversion or extroversion. If you're an introvert and don't have enough time for yourself during the day, you'll probably end up exhausted. If you're an extrovert and don't have enough human interaction, you may feel lonely.

What about you? Are you more of an introvert or an extrovert? Or, perhaps, you're an ambivert (i.e., somewhere

in the middle).

Now, do you prefer to be an expert, or would you rather be part of a group? This is what Nicholas Lore, author of *The Pathfinder*, called Maestro vs. Tribal. These are another two personality traits worth mentioning.

Tribal people like to work for an organization and thrive when working with others toward a common goal. Rather than focusing on mastering a specific skill, they enjoy tackling a variety of activities and don't mind moving from job to job within an organization.

On the other hand, Maestros are the specialists. They like to be experts in a specific area, and they derive a large part of their identity from what they do as opposed to the organization they belong to. Consequently, it is essential they work on something they are passionate about.

Personally, I'm an introverted Maestro. I like to work by myself or in very small groups, and I enjoy delving deeper into specific topics rather than performing a variety of tasks.

What about you? Do you see yourself as a Tribal or a Maestro? And are you able to express this aspect of your personality at work?

Additionally, you might want to check out the following personality tests: MBTI and Big Five personality tests. You'll find free versions of them online. If you want to delve deeper, you can also take paid tests.

* * *

Exercise: leverage your personality

Based on what you know about yourself and your personality, what one thing could you do to express your personality better? What impact would it have on your life?

Identifying your core values

When you live a life that is out of alignment with your core values, you may feel resistance or stress. Or you may feel as though something isn't right. On the other hand, when you're clear about your values, you can set the right priorities and move toward your goals with confidence.

What about you? What do you value the most in life?

Let's see some example of core values.

Let's say *family* is your number one priority and you're offered a promotion at work. If the new job requires you to work longer hours, you might decline the promotion. On the other hand, if you are career-oriented, you'll most likely accept the promotion.

Another value could be *freedom*. If you have a strong desire for flexibility and autonomy, you may prefer being self-employed, even if you end up working longer hours or making less money.

Yet another value could be *connection*. If so, you may be willing to sacrifice some flexibility in exchange for strong bonds with your coworkers.

As you can see, when it comes to core values, there is no right or wrong answer. The key is to identify your top values, rank them in order of importance, and design your life in a way that allows you to live by your most important values.

* * *

Exercise: align your life with your top values

Complete the table in your action guide:

- In the first column write down your top five values. Check the list [here](#) for examples of values.
- In the second column write down whether or not you are living by your values.
- In the third column write down what you could do to align your life better with your top values.

Creating your vision

Your vision gives your life meaning and determines what you should do every day. If you lack motivation, it might be a good idea to spend time thinking of where you want to be five or ten years from today. The more inspirational your vision, the more motivated you will be to take the necessary action to make it a reality.

An effective vision is created (or uncovered) based on the following things:

- **Your talents and strengths:** What you're naturally gifted at and/or enjoy doing.
- **Your values:** What's the most important to you, or what you're really about.
- **Your personality:** Whether you're an introvert or extrovert, prefer teamwork or working by yourself, et cetera.
- **Your skills:** What you've learned in the past. The skills you've developed may be stepping stones toward your ultimate vision.
- **Your passion(s):** What you are passionate about. This could be passion projects you've worked on in the past, work on now, or would like to work on in the future. This could be the subjects you want to learn more about, or it this could be anything you're naturally drawn toward.
- **Your life experiences:** Which includes challenges you overcome and past accomplishments you feel proud of, for instance.

By combining each of the elements mentioned above, you can remove a great deal of inner resistance and create a vision you are able to move toward with enthusiasm.

- When you make effective use of your talents and strengths, you stop feeling as though you're fighting an uphill battle.
- When you live by your core values, you feel grounded and honest with yourself, and you experience less guilt or shame.
- When you utilize your personality, you have more energy and feel better about yourself.
- When you analyze your skills, you generate ideas for your future career and find ways to accelerate your success.
- When you follow your passion, you feel more energetic and are more likely to persevere over the longer term.
- When you look back at your life experiences, you can identify your strengths and find meaning in the challenges you overcome. For instance, it's common for people to find their purpose in helping others overcome similar problems they had to face themselves.

What about you? Do you have a clear and compelling vision for your life?

* * *

Exercise: identify your vision

Complete the corresponding exercises in your action guide.

To learn how to find your passion and design a career you love in greater depth, you can refer to, *The Passion Manifesto: Escape the Rat Race, Uncover Your Passion, and Design a Career and Life You Love.*

C. Set exciting goals

Do you have a clear reason to wake up to every day? If not, you risk wandering through life instead of creating the life you want.

Having inspiring goals is critical to your long-term success. Sometimes, it is possible to feel stuck because you have lost track of your long-term goals, or you don't have clear goals that excite you enough. If so, you might want to:

- a) Reconnect with your original “whys”,
- b) Strengthen your “whys”, and
- c) Make new plans.

a) Reconnecting with your original “whys”

Have you lost track of why you’re doing what you’re doing? If so, perhaps you need to reconnect with your original vision.

- How did you feel when you first started your current relationship? What were your deepest aspirations?
- What was your level of excitement when you started your business or career? What were you trying to accomplish and why did it matter to you?

* * *

Exercise: reconnect with your vision

Using your action guide, take some time to reconnect with your vision. Clarify it and seek to reignite the original spark.

b) Making new plans

When you lack motivation, consider making new plans. Occasionally, I like to sit down and revise my long-term vision. I ask myself what I really want from life, and I listen to my emotions, leaning toward what excites me. This is because I understand that creating a vision that pulls me is far more powerful than relying on willpower alone.

What about you? What's pulling you? What do you want to achieve in life?

* * *

Exercise: make new plans

Let your imagination run wild and make sure you pay attention to any sign of excitement you may experience.

- Is there a goal or idea I feel particularly drawn toward?
- Is there anything that makes me feel really good?
- Is there something I feel like doing right now or can't wait to make happen in the near future?

Remember, how you feel is important. Your emotions tell you a great deal about yourself and what you value the most.

c) Strengthening your “whys”

Humans like to believe we act rationally but, in truth, we tend to select goals based on how they will make us feel in the future. How you feel about a goal is more important than how logical it seems. Thus, you must create an emotional connection with your goals and strengthen that connection as you progress toward it.

For example, eating healthy food might make perfect sense. It can allow you to live longer, have more energy and feel better about yourself. However, it doesn't mean you're going to feel motivated to eat more healthily. Unless you have a strong reason, and one you can relate to at an emotional level, you will likely struggle to improve your diet.

If you lack motivation right now, be honest with yourself. Do you have a strong emotional connection with your goals? If not, strengthen your why by reframing your goals or replacing them with more exciting ones.

Remember, your why becomes more powerful when aligned with your personality, values and vision. So, why is your goal important to you? How will it change your life once you achieve it?

Let's assume you want to create an online business. Why is this important? Is it just to make money or is there something more? If it's for the money, you'll probably give up when you fail to obtain the results you want quickly enough. However, if you have strong emotional reasons, you are more likely to persevere during the tough times.

Perhaps you'd like to create an online business because you want to:

- Be independent and have no boss to tell you what you do (autonomy),
- Be able to visit your parents more often (family),
- Spend more time with your partner and kids (family),
- Spend time doing what you love (passion),
- Take longer vacations (freedom, family, passion),
- Travel around the world (freedom), and
- Work on your own (autonomy—alignment with your introversion).

Close your eyes and imagine all the benefits of achieving your goal. How does it make you feel to spend more time with your family? What about being your own boss? Traveling around the world? Feels pretty good, doesn't it?

Now, which goal do you think will energize you the most? The original goal of making more money or the emotionally charged one? In both cases, the goal is the same, creating an online business, but the why behind it changes everything.

As you now understand, having an emotional connection to your goal is paramount. Effective goals energize you. They tap into your core values and are aligned with your strengths and passion. And the more (emotional) reasons you come up with, the more motivated you'll feel.

* * *

Exercise: strengthen your “whys”

Sit down, take a pen and a piece of paper, and answer the questions:

- What’s the most important (and exciting) goal I want to pursue right now and why?
- What are all the reasons it must happen?

Come up with at least twenty reasons for achieving this goal. If you can, try to come up with a hundred reasons.

For a step-by-step method to set and achieve exciting goals, refer to my book, *Goal Setting: The Ultimate Guide to Achieving Exciting Goals that Truly Excite You*. To find your passion and make a living from it, read my book, *The Passion Manifesto: Escape the Rat Race, Uncover Your Passion, and Design a Career and Life You Love*.

4. JUMP

A. Do the impossible

Have you ever done something you thought impossible? How did it make you feel?

Sadly, people around you often put you down. They tell you what is possible and not possible, based on the image they have of you. The problem is, you might fall into the trap of doing the same thing to yourself. Believing your past equals your future, you might fail to realize how radically different your future could be if you decided to attempt the apparently impossible.

However, in most cases, impossible is an *opinion*, not a *fact*. Regardless of what you think you're capable of doing, you can always do more. You often ignore your talents and abilities. You can do things that nobody around you believes you can do—not even yourself. Yes, it's true. You have enormous potential. But because your time is limited, you'll never be able to realize your potential to the fullest. However, what you can do is keep expanding and testing the limits of what is possible for you on this playground we call Earth.

Doing the impossible can dramatically shift your model of reality and shatter your beliefs. Being exposed to the truth of your potential opens a whole new world of possibilities. And once you've done something extraordinary one time, you can always repeat it.

If you've ever experienced doing something outside your comfort zone, you probably felt a great surge of energy and confidence as a result. The pleasure and pride you experience from challenging yourself and succeeding, is an invitation to grow and expand. You arrived on Earth to experience more of

life and discover what you're capable of, not to play it small. Consequently, as the late Wayne Dyer beautifully said, "*Don't die with the music still in you.*" In other words, don't let fear and self-doubt prevent you from giving your unique gift to the world.

What about you? What part of your reality do you want to shatter? What truth about yourself—and your potential—do you want to discover? If there was one thing you could change or create in your life, what would that be?

Do the impossible and you'll realize that the limits you've imposed on yourself are mostly artificial. Remember, if other people can do it, most likely, you can do it too.

What does doing the impossible mean?

Doing the impossible means doing anything you didn't think you could do and, by doing so, expanding your field of possibilities. The main characteristic of such a deed is that it feels uncomfortable, at least to begin with. Some examples could be:

- Approaching the man/woman of your dreams,
- Delivering a speech to a large audience,
- Doing a skydive or a bungee jump or anything else that scares you,
- Learning skills you consider impossible, or
- Cold calling people.

Of course, whether or not something is impossible is highly subjective. The key is to choose something you think you could never do and to give it a try.

Additional tips:

Below are some tips to help you move beyond your comfort zone:

- Join a group of people who do what scares you (e.g., if public speaking scares you, you could join Toastmasters, a public speaking group).
- Just do it once. If you can do something once, you can do it again and again. The important thing for now, is to do it just once.
- Have skin in the game. Use your hard-earned money to invest in a course, find an accountability partner, et cetera. The more you have invested in the game, the more you have to lose (see also the section, *Seek external accountability*).

* * *

Exercise: do the impossible

Write down everything you think you could never do. Now, select one thing on this list and commit to doing it this week or this month.

B. Meet new people

Have you ever felt as though you can't find your tribe? If so, instead of looking for the right people to connect with, why not attract them? Why not create an event they would want to join?

Often, we tend to forget how much power we have to create the reality we desire. We can allow our external environment to determine what our lives are going to be, instead of deciding what we want. We often let what happens to us dictate our lives. However, in truth, what happens to us is not that important. What matters is what we do about it. We don't have to change what's *outside*, we only have to change what's *inside*. And, as we change, everything changes for us.

You aren't a powerless creature. You can proactively create the environment you want to live in. You can create the circumstances that allow you to meet the people you want to meet and achieve the goals you want to achieve. So why not work on creating your own eco-system? Why not create your own tribe? This is more effective than simply hoping you'll meet the right people.

Fortunately, these days, it has never been easier to create your own group. For example, one of my friends created a personal development group in London, which allows him to meet cool people while pursuing his dreams—he is in the field of personal development.

A few weeks ago, I joined an English conversation Meetup. I was looking for something to do, and this was one of the only activities I could find in my city. I learned that it was a brand-new event created by a French woman who had returned to France after living in Scotland for seven years.

Like me, she couldn't find any similar activity in her area, so she created the event.

What about you? What new activities could you join or create to help you move toward your goals and dreams? Who do you want to be surrounded by, and what events could you create to attract them into your life?

Do you want to be around vegans, young entrepreneurs, avid readers, growth-oriented people? Remember, it's hard to feel motivated when you're not surrounded by people who have similar values and a similar vision to you. And I'm afraid it's your responsibility to attract these people into your life. If you haven't done this before now, it's probably for one of the following reasons:

- **Your vision is shaky:** You have no clear direction.
- **Your values are unclear:** You have no specific set of rules to live by. As a result, you follow the crowd and are easily influenced by people around you. Perhaps you allowed your parents to choose your career for you. Perhaps you're mimicking your friends' lifestyles. Ask yourself, is your current environment a reflection of who you really are? If not, determine what needs to change.
- **You haven't jumped:** You stay in your current environment because it is comfortable. It might be toxic, but it's something you're familiar with, and your brain finds comfort in familiarity. To change your life, build momentum and move toward the person you want to become, at some point, you need to jump. You need to outgrow your current situation and put yourself in a new environment in which you can grow and start expressing your true self. Ask

yourself, if you had unlimited courage and no fear,
what bold move would you make right now?

* * *

Exercise: meet the right people

Using your action guide, answer the following questions:

- What type of people do I want to meet, and what are their values, visions, character traits, et cetera?
- Where can I find them?
- What concrete actions will I do to meet like-minded people?

C. Break old patterns

The reason you may feel stuck right now is because your daily rituals are not serving you well. In fact, you're probably operating under the same old patterns time after time. And, if you keep thinking, feeling and acting the same way, you'll struggle to climb out of the rut and build momentum.

Now, your daily rituals may either be deliberate or unconscious, but you definitely have some in your life. For instance, one of your daily rituals might be to hit the snooze button. Alternatively, it might be to dwell on how bad your day is going to be as soon as you open your eyes. Or it might be to plow through Facebook on your phone, mindlessly. In any event, you are probably doing the same thing over and over again. Einstein said that, "*The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.*" Therefore, unless you change your old patterns, you'll find it difficult to motivate yourself.

* * *

Exercise: identify disempowering patterns

If you feel stuck or unmotivated right now, you must be thinking, feeling and/or acting in a different way than you did when you were motivated. Using your action guide, write down how you think, feel and act now as opposed to before.

Doing everything differently

Sometimes, you need to break your old patterns to be able to move forward with your life. What if you decided today to do the exact opposite of what you're currently doing? What if you spent your day doing things you haven't done for a while or have never done before?

For example, if you haven't ridden your bike for years, perhaps you can do just that. What about calling a friend you haven't talked to for ages? Or perhaps you could exercise or play sports you haven't played for a long time. Think of activities you enjoyed doing in the past but haven't done for a while. Engaging in these activities might help you reconnect with positive memories.

Remember, actions build momentum.

An object in motion tends to stay in motion. You are the object. As you start the ball rolling, you warm up the engine and can more easily shift your emotional state from a negative to a more positive one. You can never really be stuck. It is only your thinking that makes you feel that way. As you clear your thinking and take action, your emotional state changes and, as a result, your thoughts change as well.

Ask yourself: What would I need to do to break free from this feeling of being stuck?

* * *

Exercise: do things differently

Using your action guide, write down things you could do right now. These could be the things you haven't done for a while or new things you want to try out.

D. Perform an act of kindness

How often do you perform acts of kindness to strangers without expecting anything in return? If you're like most people, it's not that often. Yet, when you do so, you probably feel really good about yourself. And the better you feel, the more likely you are to repeat the action. Thus, focusing on helping others can be a great way to lift your emotional state and increase your motivation.

Small acts of kindness can not only make you feel good, but they can also change someone's life. Even a tiny act of kindness such as a simple smile can change someone else's life. John Wang, the founder of One Kindness—a movement that inspires people to perform acts of kindness—gave a real-life example of how a single act of kindness can change someone's life. A person intending to take his own life left a note on his desk, which said, "Today, I'm gonna go walk to the Golden Gate Bridge. If one person smiles at me along the way, I will not jump."

Sadly, nobody smiled at the man that day.

As you can see from this example, you never know how a simple act of kindness can impact upon the lives of other people.

Also, as you look for ways to help others, you will stop being overly focused on yourself and your own problems. There are millions of people in the world who could benefit from your help. And there are always people in far worse situations than yours. Alleviating other people's suffering—and your own—can bring you a deep sense of fulfillment and give added meaning to your life.

Acts of kindness include:

- Sending a thank you message,
- Helping a stranger,
- Sending resources to help someone achieve their goal,
- Smiling at someone,
- Giving a genuine compliment,
- Offering words of encouragement,
- Sending a small gift,
- Giving money to a cause you care about, and
- Teaching something for free.

So, who could you help today? Do one thing for someone and expect nothing in return and see how it makes you feel. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, *“Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”*

* * *

Exercise: perform an act of kindness

Do one act of kindness today and expect nothing in return.

5. COMPLETE

Completion builds momentum.

Why?

Because it reduces the number of open loops running through the back of your mind. Remember, an object in motion stays in motion. The way you begin the motion is by getting started but, most importantly, by *completing what you've started*. In addition to closing an open loop, completing a task will boost your self-esteem which, in turn, will give you even more motivation to keep moving forward.

In this section, you'll learn how to generate the habit of completing tasks. You'll also learn it can help enhance your self-esteem and boost your motivation, so you can keep moving toward your goals.

A. Complete tasks 100%

How often do you start a task and leave it half-finished? If you're like most people, fairly often.

Now, do you realize the signal you send to your brain by doing so? You tell it that it's okay not to finish what you start. As you do this repeatedly, you build the habit of quitting. This lack of discipline comes with a hefty price: failing to design the life you want.

Your ability to finish what you start is one of the most important factors in determining how happy and successful you will eventually become. As we've seen before, unfinished business creates unnecessary clutter that ends up destroying your focus and killing your momentum. Your thoughts will end up all over the place, you will feel overwhelmed and will be unable to progress. In addition, leaving tasks incomplete dramatically decreases your productivity, because you will need to return to the same task until it is completed.

Remember, people who maintain a high level of motivation are people who finish what they start. They complete what they begin and feel good as a result. And even though they may be working only on a few projects, in the long term they accomplish far more than most people ever do.

If you find yourself not finishing what you start, it might be time to work on solving this issue. Your future self will thank you for that. I promise!

* * *

Exercise: finish what you start

Write a list of your incomplete projects. How does the list make you feel? Now, remember a time you completed an important project. How did it make you feel? And what happened afterward? Did you feel more motivated? More confident?

B. Destroy Shiny Object Syndrome

I believe the inability to stay focused on one course of action for long enough is the prime reason most people fail to achieve their goals. How many entrepreneurs fail because they try to create several businesses at once or seek to offer too many services? How often do people keep reading book after book on a certain topic without obtaining the results they want? How many people jump from one diet to another without reaching their target weight? All these people fall for the Shiny Object Syndrome, giving up on an existing opportunity for a seemingly more exciting or promising one.

Again, this has a great deal to do with people's inability to complete what they start, which results from several factors.

In this section, we're going to work through each of these factors so you clearly understand the main reasons why you may fail to achieve the results you want in your life. Once you understand the importance of completing what you start, things can dramatically improve for you.

Now, let's look at specific reasons you may fail to stay focused on your goals.

a) Lack of understanding

A lack of awareness of how success works can lead people to feel stuck. For example, you may expect to achieve your goals quickly, but it turns out to be a longer and more tedious journey that requires more time and effort than you originally imagined. When reality doesn't meet your expectations, it is easy to give up. Fortunately, once you understand how the goal achievement process works, you can make the correct decisions and increase your odds of reaching your goals. To learn how success works in greater depth, I invite you to read my book, *Success is Inevitable*.

b) Ineffective strategy

Do you have the right strategy for success? Are you focusing on what moves the needle? No matter how productive and disciplined you may be, if you work on the wrong things, you will not achieve the results you're after. An effective way to avoid distraction is to spend enough time planning, while making sure you have the proper strategy in place. Here is a simple approach:

- Find someone who has achieved the same results you want, making sure it is someone you can relate to and trust. This person should walk the talk.
- Discover how they got there. What blueprint did they follow? What beliefs did they have? What habits did they implement? If possible, interview them and ask them what they would do if they had to start all over again. If they offer a course, buy it.
- Apply everything in the course until you get some results or follow the blueprint you've identified.
- When you fail to achieve tangible results, revisit the course one more time until you master everything in it or revise your blueprint. Resist the temptation to buy another course. Learn less stuff but delve deeper into it. This is how you will achieve great results in the long term.

c) Impatience

People want to become a millionaire in thirty days, lose fifty pounds in a week, or attract the ideal partner quickly and effortlessly. Unfortunately, this is not how life works. Every meaningful goal takes time. Therefore, if your goals require time to materialize, take this as a positive sign. Designing your dream career, becoming financially secure or returning to your ideal weight will never happen through luck. It will only happen through the implementation of a specific process over a long period of time. The investor, Warren Buffet, said, *“The stock market is a device for transferring money from the impatient to the patient.”* Patience not only applies to the stock market but to many other areas of your life. People who can think long term and remain patient will make daily decisions that increase the chances of them having a better future. As a result, they will tend to be healthier and wealthier than people who find delayed gratification impossible.

To be honest, impatience has been one of the hardest things I have had to battle with over the past few years. Like most people, I want things to happen—and to happen now. Consequently, I had to display a great deal of self-compassion when things didn't go as planned. “It's okay, you have time,” and “Be patient,” have been my favorite mantras over recent years. You, too, are likely to feel frustrated and may want to give up on your goals from time to time. But *always* remind yourself to be patient. You have time. Life is a marathon, not a sprint. So, take a step back, look at the overall picture and think in terms of years or decades, not weeks or months. If you lack patience, don't beat yourself up. We are all in the same boat. Being patient

and thinking in the longer term is a skill and one you can develop over time, by focusing on the long-term picture.

This shift from short-term thinking to long-term thinking will make a huge difference in your life. In fact, I would go as far as saying that, for the most part, your ability to think long-term will determine where you end up in ten years from today.

d) Inconsistency:

Being patient is wonderful, but if you just wait around without doing anything, nothing is going to happen. Lack of consistency is another key factor explaining why people don't reach their goals. Did you know the swimmer and Olympic gold medalist, Michael Phelps, didn't miss a single day of training from the age of twelve to eighteen? Now, that's what I call consistency!

We all know people who can't stop talking about what they're "going to do." They're going to lose all this weight, create this incredible business or make all that money—or so they say. But once the original excitement wears off, you never hear about their exciting plans again. They've already moved on to the next new thing, and they will keep moving on to different things for years, never hitting any of their targets. Why? Because it's a pattern. It has become a habit deeply ingrained in their brain.

The same goes for you. If you lack consistency in one area of your life, you probably lack consistency in other areas as well. If so, reading one more book, taking one more course or trying one more diet won't work. You must change your pattern. Consistency must become part of your identity.

e) Fear:

The reason many people fail to achieve the results they want is due to fear. Jumping from one opportunity to the other serves as an excuse to avoid the hard work. This is like people who spend hours looking for the best productivity hacks while putting off the most important tasks they should be focusing on. You may feel stuck because you're trying to move away from your fears. This is one reason you see many people who, after having read countless books, are still stuck in the exact same situation they started in.

Remember this: *action cures fear*.

While there are other techniques to overcome your fears, Nike's motto, "Just do it," might be one of the most effective ones. Although it might sound like a cliché, it really does work. What about you? Are you taking all the actions you should be taking right now?

f) Lack of commitment:

Most people pursue goals without being committed to them. They buy a book or program already “knowing” it’s not going to work for them. However, by thinking this way, they’ve already failed before even getting started. Trouble is, they might not even be aware of it.

Commitment is a powerful force. Unfortunately, few people take advantage of it. As we’ll see later, committing to something and being held accountable to it is an effective way to maintain momentum and achieve your goals. To be effective, a commitment requires that you set a specific goal that feels right to you. You also need to establish a clear deadline for its achievement. Now, before you commit to something, you must be honest with yourself and listen to your inner being. You must pay attention to any sign of resistance you may experience. Resistance is usually the result of at least one of the following three things:

- **Lack of clarity:** You’re unsure of what you’re trying to achieve or don’t know how to achieve it. Thus, you can’t commit to the actions required to achieve it.
- **Lack of passion:** Your goal doesn’t feel quite right to you. Perhaps this is because your goal is misaligned with your values or purpose. If you don’t feel drawn toward your goal, you will struggle to remain motivated in the long run.
- **Lack of belief:** Deep down, you don’t feel as though you can accomplish your set goal. If this is the case, you need to lower your target or extend your deadline. You want your level of confidence in your ability to achieve your goal to be at least a 7 out of 10.

Once you know what you want and how to achieve it, and *truly believe* you can do it, committing will come easier.

g) Information overload:

Do you suffer from information overload? In general, the more information you consume, the less action you will tend to take, and the more overwhelmed you will tend to feel. The main reason people suffer from information overload is because they lack *intentionality* behind what they do. When you consume information without having any purpose in mind, your brain tends to become confused. With no clear instruction given, how can your brain organize the information you feed it in a coherent manner? It can't—at least not effectively. Instead, it merely absorbs the information, and remains unsure what to do with it. To avoid this situation, you must create the habit of learning with a specific purpose in mind. You must practice “strategic learning.”

Remember, the quantity of research you do, the books you read or the courses you take do not determine how much you'll accomplish or how big an impact you'll have on the world. The truth is, many people have far too much knowledge but do far too little with it. Don't get me wrong, I love learning and I believe it's critical, but I also know how dangerous it can be when we use the act of gaining knowledge as an excuse to procrastinate. It's definitely better than binge-watching a TV series or playing video games but, without action, knowledge alone won't help you achieve your dreams.

You must set clear intentions when you read a book, start a course, make research online or do anything else. You must ensure that what you do moves you toward your goal and isn't procrastination in disguise. Before you look for any information, ask yourself the following questions:

- What am I trying to accomplish here?
- What's my specific intent?

For instance, if you decide to read a specific book, what is your end goal? Do you want to learn how to do something? Do you want to use the information in the book to write an article? Based on your goal, perhaps, you only need to read a few pages, or one specific chapter, as opposed to reading the whole book. Another question you can ask yourself is, "What will happen if I don't read this book, take this course, et cetera?" If your answer is nothing. You might be better off doing something else with your time.

Remember, the more deliberate you are with your action, the more productive you will be, and the less overwhelmed you will feel.

Below are a few tips to help you avoid information overload:

Schedule your learning

You can reduce the risk of becoming distracted by setting a few clear goals at the beginning of each year. To do so effectively, decide on the few skills you want to learn or improve and a few major projects you want to complete. For instance, if you have an online business, you could decide that this year you want to learn:

- How to use Facebook ads to grow your business,
- How to grow your email list, or
- How to create and sell an online course.

You could buy a specific course for each project, set a clear target and focus on completing one course before moving on to the next. Each time, you're tempted to buy another program, remind yourself to stay focused on the program you bought until you obtain the results you want.

You can apply this strategy for anything you want to accomplish, which could be losing weight, learning a technical skill or writing a book. Less is often better. Focus on a handful of skills and the projects you're interested in, create a schedule and stick to it.

Additional tips:

Here are some tips to help you maximize your learning:

- Beware of free courses. While there is a lot of content available free these days, prioritize paid courses for the skills you want to learn seriously. You'll have more skin in the game and will benefit from a clear structure you can rely on for your learning.

- Limit the courses/books you learn from. Again, be deliberate with your learning. It's better to focus on one or two courses at a time and go through them diligently than to jump from one course to the other and go nowhere.

Remove unnecessary stimuli

Have you ever abandoned a course for another one that appears more exciting or interesting? Have you ever joined webinars to be sold yet another product? Digital marketing experts estimate that most Americans are exposed to between 4,000 and 10,000 ads each day. With each new stimulus—whether display ads, recommended videos or promotional emails—the risk of becoming distracted increases. The point is that falling off track has never been easier than it is right now. Therefore, the more you can reduce your exposure to needless information, the better. Below are some of the things that can help you do this:

- **Unsubscribe from promotional emails:** Go through your emails and unsubscribe from most, if not all, promotional emails. You can always subscribe back later when you really do need the information.
- **Use software to block ads:** Use Adblock software or browsers such as Brave to avoid seeing ads when you watch videos on YouTube, for instance.
- **Install programs that block access to your favorite websites:** If you tend to waste time on the internet when you work, install programs that block sites you spend the most time on.
- **Reduce the number of times you check emails and social media platforms:** Check your social media and emails only a few times a day and with a clear purpose in mind (e.g., replying to new emails, sending a message to a friend on Facebook, et cetera).
- **Condense your exposure to external stimuli:** Create a routine that allows you to obtain your daily exposure to “unnecessary” stimuli in a single “hit.” The idea

behind this is to cluster all your distracting activities together and therefore, limit them.

- **Create an “ideas” journal:** Use a dedicated notebook to write down any ideas you may have during the day. This will prevent you from being distracted while working on a task.
- **Organize your desktop:** The files you use the most often should be the easiest to find. Therefore, organize your desktop for easy access to the project you’re currently working on. Also, reduce the number of windows open on your computer to a minimum.
- **Clean your desk:** Remove unnecessary items from your workplace. Decluttering your desk can help clear your mind and increase your focus.
- **Perform a digital detox:** From time to time, consider staying away from all technology for a day or more. This will help reduce the amount of information you’re exposed to and clear your mind.

For more tips on how to declutter your mind and increase your focus, refer to the corresponding section at the beginning of this book.

In short, to overcome distractions you need to:

- **Be aware:** Identify the areas area of your life that interfere with your goals. Understand how success works and change your mindset accordingly.
- **Implement an effective strategy:** Spend time to craft an effective plan that, when you follow it, will deliver the results you desire. Don’t reinvent the wheel. Instead, copy what people who’ve achieved your goals have done.

- **Be patient:** Life is a marathon, not a sprint. Think long term and you will achieve far more than most people ever do. The following should be your mantras: “Be patient,” and “It’s okay, you have time”.
- **Be consistent:** Stay focused on a specific course of action and follow it consistently every day until you achieve your desired results.
- **Overcome your fears:** Be honest with yourself and face your fears instead of using procrastination as a way to avoid leaving your comfort zone. Remember: action cures fear.
- **Commit:** Set a specific goal that excites you. Establish a clear deadline and resolve to achieve your goal. To help you succeed, make your goal public or find an accountability partner or coach, if needed.
- **Avoid information overload:** Have a clear intent behind what you do, create a learning schedule, and remove as many distracting external stimuli as you possibly can. The more focused you are, the less overwhelmed you will feel.

C. Honor your promises

Breaking promises is another act that goes against the principle of completion. When doing so, you open loops and fail to close them. You might think that not keeping your promises or saying yes to people out of courtesy isn't a big deal, but I think it is.

Why?

Because breaking promises means your words have little power. You say things but don't follow through. As a result, you can't trust yourself because you know you will probably renege on your promises anyway. People who can't keep promises to others, usually can't keep promises to themselves either. If you break your promises often enough it will become a habit. As a result, whatever goal you set, you probably won't take the actions required to achieve it.

Also, by failing to keep your promises, you communicate to yourself and to others that what you say doesn't matter. And, as you repeatedly fail to honor your word, you erode your self-esteem and lose self-respect. Then, you may start thinking, "What's the point of setting goals, since I will not achieve them, anyway?"

Now, let's look at the two types of promises and what you can do to keep them.

a) Keeping your promises to others

Now, let's have a look at what honoring your commitments to others means:

- **Say “yes” only when you can deliver:** How often do you say yes to people with no intention of following through? Learn to say yes less often but when you do so, make sure you keep your promises. There is no such thing as 100% consistency, but your ultimate goal should be to honor your commitments as much as humanly possible.
- **Clarify exactly what needs to be done and why:** Lack of communication can result in additional work. So, don't be afraid to ask for clarification before you commit to anything. You may realize that the task can be done in a more effective way, can be delegated or doesn't even need to be carried out in the first place. Also, remember that the more clarity you have regarding the process, the more likely you are to complete the job effectively and efficiently.
- **Do what you say:** When you say something, mean it. If you say you're going to send an email to someone on a certain day, make sure you do it. Give power to your words by acting upon them. Make it a habit and people will see you as one of the most reliable people they know. Start by keeping your small promises over and over.
- **Always be on time:** Aim for punctuality. When you are repeatedly late you communicate to the other person that your time is more important than theirs. As I keep reiterating, time is one of our most precious assets. What does it say about you when you

disrespect other people's time? Of course, there are times when punctuality is less important (e.g., picnics, parties and events when people are free to come and go as they please). Other than this, aim to be as punctual as possible.

As you learn to honor your commitments most of the time, over the long term you will stand out and rise above the crowd.

b) Keeping your promises to yourself

Do you know how many people who set New Year's Resolutions actually follow through? According to research conducted by the University of Scranton, the figure is a mere eight percent!

I aim to honor (almost) all my commitment to others, but I also take my commitment to myself—my goals—seriously. This is because I see honoring my commitment as a sign of self-respect. I understand that, in the long term, this is the difference between living the life I want and living the life other people want me to live. Of course, I'm not perfect but, wherever possible, I always, always try to keep my word.

To honor the promises you make to yourself, you need to create the habit of setting and completing simple tasks consistently and daily. Start small and remain consistent. Over time, you'll be able to achieve bigger and bigger goals and your self-confidence will grow. A side benefit of keeping your promises to yourself is that you will boost your self-esteem and feel better about yourself. Another side benefit is that people around you will see you as trustworthy, and they will be more willing to listen to you and follow in your footsteps. Who would you rather trust? Someone who walks the talk or someone who never does what he or she says?

What about you? How often do you break the promises you make to yourself and to others?

* * *

Exercise: keep your promises

Complete the exercises in the corresponding section of your action guide.

D. Procrastinate smartly

Take the path of least resistance

Mark Twain once said, *“Eat a live frog first thing in the morning and nothing worse will happen to you the rest of the day.”* The success expert, Brian Tracy, reused this idea in his popular book, *Eat That Frog*, explaining that you should be working on your most important task(s) first thing in the morning (i.e., eat your frog). As you complete these tasks, you will experience a surge of motivation and will be able to build a momentum that carries you through the rest of the day. I agree with this philosophy and recommend you apply it in your own life.

However, the truth is that sometimes, we fail to work on our most important tasks. Perhaps, this is because we’re feeling a little sad. Or perhaps we’re scared and don’t have the energy or courage to tackle the task right away. As a result, we put it off. And the more we put it off, the more difficult it becomes to return to it. If you add negative self-talk to the situation, you may end up feeling guilty, angry at yourself or even depressed.

To avoid this trap, I recommend you “procrastinate smartly.” What I mean by this is, when you’re in a negative emotional state, you should work on any task that helps you make progress, rather than trying to tackle your most daunting obstacle. The idea is to use the power of completion by finishing small tasks to help you build momentum. You want these momentum-building tasks to be:

- **Manageable:** Tasks you can complete with your current level of motivation. The less motivated you feel, the smaller and easier the tasks need to be.
- **Momentum-building:** Tasks you believe will help you enter the zone and prepare you for bigger challenges.
- **Enjoyable:** Tasks that are enjoyable in themselves or that motivate you because they move you toward an exciting vision.

The most important thing is that you *take action*. Action creates momentum and, as you start moving, it's easier to stay in motion. For instance, I could stare at my computer screen unable to write anything, or I could do something that contributes to my goal of being a successful writer. For example, I could read a book on a similar topic, edit the parts of the manuscript I've already written, et cetera. Needless to say, the latter option is more likely to help boost my motivation than the former.

Similarly, when you are struggling to work on your most important task, I encourage you to seek the path of least resistance. Personally, I always strive to move forward in some way or another. I call this process "procrastinating forward." In fact, it's better to do something that moves you toward your goals than to do nothing at all.

The point is: we all procrastinate from time to time. Some people procrastinate smartly by moving toward their goals in whatever way they can. Others seek to escape by doing unrelated activities. Yet others ruminate. Please note, the less action you take, the more stuck you'll become, and the harder it will be to climb out of the rut. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, "*If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.*"

No matter where you are in your life, you can always take tiny steps in the right direction. These tiny steps may not seem much, but the momentum you build by taking them can prove invaluable.

* * *

Exercise: procrastinate smartly

Using your action guide, write down all the small actions you could take right now. Lean toward activities you enjoy or at least, activities that move you in the right direction. Now, select one action and resolve to take it now or, if you can't do it now, do it later today, but *do it*.

E. Deep-dive

Is there a project you've been working on for a while, but have yet to complete? As we've seen before, closing open loops is important to help you build momentum. If you have a big project that you constantly think about (or even have nightmares about), it might be time to complete it. This is what I called "deep-diving."

Sometimes, focusing on something intensely until it is finished can be highly effective. It can be invigorating and can allow you to get rid of tasks you've been putting off for too long or to learn a new skill more quickly.

Personally, I like to focus on only a handful of projects and complete each one before moving on to the next. For instance, if I wanted to learn a foreign language, I would likely spend a few months studying intensively as opposed to years studying a little every day. The same goes for other skills I want to acquire.

What about you? If you were to focus on a single project for a short period of time, which one would allow you to build the greatest momentum and make you feel better about yourself? If, for the next week, you could only focus on one thing, what would it be?

When you deep-dive on a project and complete it, you remove it from your mind's "to-do list" and create space for something new. As a positive side-effect, you will increase the chances of entering a state of flow that may carry you even further.

* * *

Exercise: deep-dive

Using your action guide, identify one of the projects you've started but have yet to complete. Then, give yourself a short period of time to focus on it and drive it through to 100% completion. Go on, you can do it and feel great as a result!

PART III

SUSTAIN MOMENTUM

By now you should have a much greater understanding of what you can do to build momentum and get yourself unstuck. Hopefully, you've already taken some action, made progress and feel more motivated than when you started this book.

Once you've started the ball rolling, the next phase is to put in place the habits that will allow you to maintain the momentum over the long term. Many people can experience a state of excitement at the beginning of a new venture, but unfortunately, few can sustain it long enough to achieve the results they seek.

In this part, we're going to discuss in detail what you can do to sustain momentum over the long term.

First, you'll learn the importance of acknowledging yourself and your accomplishments on a consistent basis, to help maintain or even increase your motivation. You'll discover specific exercises you can do to boost your self-esteem. You

will also be introduced to the concept of “right action” so that you can create positive reinforcement.

Second, you’ll learn the importance of commitment and how you can use it to stay on track with your goals over the longer term. You will also see how simple daily actions repeated over a long period of time can radically change your life.

Third, and finally, you’ll discover how to use appreciation to further boost your motivation and enhance your self-esteem.

Let’s get started.

1. ACKNOWLEDGE

Do you take time to acknowledge your accomplishments every day? Do you appreciate all the things you've already accomplished in your life?

Building motivation requires you to acknowledge yourself and all the wonderful things you have done and are continuing to do. The more you perceive yourself as a success, the better you will feel, and the more likely you are to achieve even more great things, moving forward. When you feel proud about yourself, you will develop the confidence and motivation to progress. Yet, how often do people blame themselves for their shortcomings instead of focusing on their strengths and accomplishments?

The truth is, there will always be people in the world who are smarter, richer or better looking than you. There will always be people who accomplish more than you. And if you focus on what you *lack*, you will never feel as though you are *enough*. So why not focus on all the things you have going for you instead?

In the previous part, we discussed how completion builds momentum and how it can make you feel better about yourself in the short term. However, unless you take the time

to capture and acknowledge your accomplishments, they will be soon forgotten, and you will find yourself like that poor hamster in his wheel who is forever running, but never reaching the end, never feeling satisfied.

Acknowledgment is the conscious process of storing your accomplishments in your mind so you can revisit them at will. It entails pausing for a few seconds to capture mental pictures of the positive moments in your life—a similar process to what you do when you take “real” photos. When you choose to celebrate each of your accomplishments, you start building a library of great memories that serve as positive reinforcement.

Some people naturally acknowledge their accomplishments while others never take the time to do so. Fortunately, this is a skill you can learn. One of my friends is hugely gifted at expressing gratitude for all the little things in life. Whenever I talk to him, I always end up feeling much better. He never fails to make me realize all the things I’ve already accomplished in my life. After meeting him, I always feel the need to give myself much more credit.

The bottom line is: you can either choose to look at your accomplishments as no big deal, or you can see them as worth acknowledging. Neither is wrong *per se*, but one will make you feel good, while the other will make you feel like nothing you ever do is a big deal.

Okay, now let’s see what you can do to start acknowledging all the great things you’ve accomplished in your life so far.

A. Complete three tasks

Acknowledge your daily accomplishments

Are you guilty of creating a long daily to-do list you never manage to complete by the end of the day? Now, how does that make you feel? Does it help you feel good about yourself?

Too often, we have unrealistic expectations of what we can achieve and when we fail to meet them, it makes us feel as though we aren't good enough. However, in truth, feeling good about yourself has a lot more to do with the way you choose to perceive yourself than with reality. You can accomplish a great deal and still feel as though you're not making much progress. Conversely, you can complete only a few tasks and feel wonderful at the end of the day. It all depends on how you choose to view your accomplishments.

Instead of creating a long to-do list, I encourage you to choose only three things you'd like to accomplish today. Below are a few tips to help you identify these three tasks:

a) They should be *attainable*. The idea is to generate positive reinforcement by completing tasks consistently. As you accumulate small wins, you will feel more motivated and your self-esteem will grow. Therefore, you need to make sure you select three tasks you know you are able to complete today.

b) They should be *within your control*. Your tasks should be framed in such a way that you have control over them. To give you an example, my goal this year was to write eight books and to sell 10,000 books at full price. The first goal is

up to me while the second is only partially within my control. I call the first a “process goal” and the second one a “result goal.” Both types of goals are important but, in this instance, we want to focus on the process goals over which you have full control. Thus, when you write down your three daily tasks, make sure you formulate them in a way that gives you 100% control over their completion.

c) Your tasks should *be moving you forward* on at least one of your major goals. They should give you a sense of real accomplishment.

Again, I encourage you to start small. The point is not to beat yourself up because you fail to complete your three daily tasks, but to build a habit of accumulating small wins. Every day for the next two weeks, decide on three tasks you know you can achieve during your day. Then, achieve them consistently.

Celebrating your small wins

You want to build the habit of celebrating your daily wins. With three small wins every day, imagine how many wins you will have accumulated over a year. And imagine how much better you will feel about yourself. Therefore, make sure you take a moment to celebrate each time you finish one of your three daily tasks.

The celebration process can be as simple as crossing off the completed task from your list and saying yourself, “good job.” Such acknowledgment repeated over and over will serve as positive reinforcement. The idea behind this is to build the habit of acknowledging your accomplishments rather than brushing them away as no big deal.

If you want to give yourself a reward, you can do so, but make sure the reward is proportionate. No need to do anything big—unless you accomplish something really significant, of course.

Also, at the end of your day, take a moment to acknowledge yourself for having completed your three tasks. What gets rewarded gets repeated. Treat yourself, whether it is by watching an episode for your favorite TV show or by reading your favorite book.

Remember to start small. The key is to accumulate small wins to help you build momentum over time. Small victories add up and make a big difference in the long run. Use the carrot, not the stick, by encouraging yourself instead of beating yourself up. As the author and founder of Hay House Publishing, Louise Hay, put it, *“Remember, you have been criticizing yourself for years and it hasn’t worked. Try approving of yourself and see what happens.”*

* * *

Exercise: celebrate your small wins

Write down three tasks you want to complete today, finish them and celebrate your success. Repeat the process every day until it becomes a habit.

B. Be proud of yourself

How often do you take the time to pat yourself on the back and say, “I’m proud of you.”?

If you’re like most people, probably not that often. It’s a sad thing that we criticize ourselves each time we do something wrong, but seldom congratulate ourselves when we do things well. The truth is, most of the things you do during the day, you do them correctly.

People with a healthy self-esteem aren’t necessarily the ones who are successful in the eyes of society. Often, they are normal people living a normal life. What differentiates them from others are the things they focus on and the way they talk to themselves. They focus their attention on what they’re doing well and continuously encourage themselves. They understand that making mistakes is normal, and they don’t expect to get things right the first time, or all the time. They know they will improve over time. When they don’t know how to do something, they aren’t ashamed of asking for help.

On the other hand, people who feel inadequate often live in the fear of being unmasked. They focus on what they’re doing wrong and are afraid people will think they are “impostors.” As a result, they may be reluctant to ask for help, believing they should know everything. When they don’t, they assume something is wrong with them.

The truth is that most of us have many things we suck at. We may be bad at cooking, driving or making speeches. Yet, this doesn’t mean we can’t be proud of ourselves. And it certainly doesn’t mean we should avoid asking for help. It’s better to admit we don’t know how to do something than to hide our

incompetence and suffer in silence for weeks or months as a result.

To boost your self-esteem, I encourage you to ask yourself the following questions every day before going to bed:

- “What are three things I’m proud of today?” or,
- “What do I want to acknowledge myself for today?”

Now, don’t imagine your answers need to be anything big. In fact, it is better to come up with something small so long as it is specific. This will be more effective in improving your self-esteem. Some examples are:

- Waking up on time.
- Completing *insert your task here*.
- Eating a healthy breakfast.
- Exercising.
- Being kind to myself (as opposed to beating myself up).
- Reading something educational.
- Doing an act of kindness to someone, et cetera.

So, what are you proud of today? From time to time, say to yourself, “I’m proud of you.” It doesn’t cost anything, and you really do deserve it.

* * *

Exercise: be proud of yourself

Find something you're proud of and acknowledge yourself for this right now. Say to yourself, "I'm proud of you for *insert what makes you proud of yourself*."

Then, before going to bed, think of three things you're proud of having done that day.

C. Right action vs. right result

Do you often celebrate your results? Wonderful!

Now, what happens when you keep trying but never achieve the results you are after? Well, you likely feel bad about yourself.

The truth is that we cannot always achieve the results we want. Sometimes, we do everything correctly but, due to circumstances outside our control, we fail to achieve the results we were hoping for. On the other hand, sometimes we achieve good results while doing things wrong.

For instance, let's say you're in sales, and you need to cold call people. You follow the script, do everything right but are still rejected. Now, you call another prospect, keep making mistakes, but sell a contract. Time to celebrate, right? Or is it?

In fact, I believe it makes more sense to reward yourself for having done the right things in the first call than for having done everything wrong in the second call. This is because taking the correct action is critical to achieving your goals.

Now, what is a "right action"? A right action is one you have 100% control over and that, when repeated over and over, leads to the desired outcome. While you cannot be sure you'll achieve the results you're after, you can always choose your right action. And you can keep repeating that action consistently, regardless of external factors. Think of it as your most effective action.

Rewarding yourself for taking the right actions

You should reward yourself for the actions you choose to take, not for the results you obtain. The more you reward yourself for taking the most effective actions, the more motivated you will be to take the same actions in the future.

Let me give you another example related to the previous one. Imagine you're absolutely terrified of cold calling people. You can either put pressure on yourself, hoping the call will go well, or you can focus on taking the right action: picking up the phone and calling a number. Making a sale is largely irrelevant at this point because, if you can't force yourself to make the call, you can't generate sales anyway.

Now, let's say you're scared of public speaking. What would be the right action for you? Perhaps, it would be standing in front of people and saying a few words. Alternatively, it might be recording a video or hosting a Facebook Live.

Again, you want to build momentum. And taking the right action for you is all you need to do. As you repeatedly do so and congratulate yourself for it, you will feel motivated to move forward.

Remember, doing anything outside your comfort zone is a massive step forward and is often the beginning of something exciting. Never punish yourself for doing anything uncomfortable or scary—even if the result is a disaster. Whenever you challenge yourself, you're doing really well, regardless of what anybody else might say. So, encourage yourself because you truly deserve it.

Take the right actions and forget about the results for now and you'll be surprised by how much momentum you can

generate. Below are some additional examples of right actions. Note that a right action is always something you have total control over.

Dating:

Right action: talk to one person, ask for their phone number or make better eye contact.

Right result (but wrong focus): have a great conversation, get the person's phone number or try to get them to like you.

Cold call:

Right action: learn the script and practice accordingly, pick up the phone and call a number.

Right result (but wrong focus): make a sale.

Diet and exercise:

Right action: select a diet plan and stick to it, exercise regularly.

Right result (but wrong focus): lose weight.

Exercise: identify the right action

Look at the goals you want to accomplish in various areas of your life. Identify the right action(s) for each of them. What are the few most effective things you can keep doing repeatedly to help you build momentum over time and eventually achieve your goals?

2. COMMIT

A. Seek external accountability

Human beings are capable of accomplishing incredible feats but can often fail to do so unless they are in the right environment with the correct incentives. Left on their own, many become complacent or start doubting themselves.

Why do most people go to their job every day instead of sleeping in and relaxing at home? Because, if they don't, they face negative consequences, such as losing their job and not being able to feed their family. In short, having a job automatically builds strong accountability. You have to go to work because other people rely on you (or because you've signed a contract forcing you to do so).

Accountability is one of the most effective ways to stay on track with your goals—it fosters action and helps build momentum. Most of us tend to underperform when nobody expects anything from us. Without a deadline, how many writers would finish their books? How many students would finish their papers? The truth is, without external pressure, most things in this world would never be completed.

Therefore, I believe implementing an accountability system is essential for success. Such a system can be formal or informal. Some examples of accountability systems are:

- A public commitment to stop smoking,
- A hard deadline from your boss,
- An exam,
- A 30-day challenge of any kind,
- A specific goal you set together with your coach, or
- Regular meetings with an accountability partner.

Now, note that accountability systems can either be imposed on you or created by you. Personally, as someone who likes to be independent, I find it far more effective and enjoyable to create my own accountability systems.

Examples of accountability systems imposed on you include:

- The need to attend a job you hate every day or else you will be fired,
- Being told by your doctor you must stop smoking, or
- Being told by your spouse what you should and shouldn't do.

Examples of accountability systems created by you include:

- Setting your own goals and making them public,
- Deciding to chat with an accountability partner once a week,
- Undertaking a 30-day challenge you set for yourself, or
- Setting your own deadline for your projects.

If you don't set your own accountability system, people around you will set it for you. And guess what? You might not like their system. As the saying goes, if you don't set your own goals, you'll spend your life making other people's goals a reality. The bottom line is: there is no such thing as zero accountability. If you don't direct your life, someone else will, and that probably won't be in your best interest. This is why I encourage you to leverage the power of accountability to help you build momentum and move toward the life *you* desire.

How to create accountability

One thing to understand when you create accountability is that the less disciplined you are, the stronger the accountability system you need. While for some, writing down their goals might be enough, most of us need a stronger form of accountability. For instance, this could be sharing our goals with an accountability partner or making commitments with hard deadlines. Even the most disciplined people use accountability to perform at their best. Therefore, you are not exempt.

Some of the ways I created accountability this year was to:

- Send my list of goals to my subscribers,
- Decide on the number of books to write and publish, and
- Tell my editor when I will send him my books.

This has worked well for me, but I could have benefited from extra accountability by having an accountability partner, for example.

What about you? Who is counting on you? What are the consequences on other people's lives if you don't move forward? Without consequences, you will find it harder to remain motivated.

To build an accountability system that works for you, answer the following questions:

- Who is depending on you? Who will suffer the consequences if you don't do your job?

- Who are you accountable to? Who will call you out if you fail, and who can help you get back on track?
- What type of accountability system would work for you? Do you need to be gently encouraged or driven hard?
- How will you communicate your progress? By emails? Over the phone? Face-to-face? And to whom?
- What will be the consequences if you don't follow through with your commitments?

If you want to work with an accountability partner, I encourage you to use the accountability partner checklist available in your action guide.

* * *

Exercise: create accountability

Using your action guide write down one thing you can do to build accountability.

B. Create a morning ritual

What do you do first thing in the morning? Most people do nothing more than react to their day instead of taking charge of it. Not surprisingly, these individuals can end up feeling powerless and unmotivated.

While you cannot always control every event of your day, you can choose to begin your day with a few positive daily habits. And, as you do so, you'll experience a boost of motivation that will benefit you as the day unfolds. Having a specifically designed morning ritual is a great way to create more positivity in your life. In fact, my morning ritual helped me build lasting motivation. In my book, *Wake Up Call*, I present nine steps to help create a morning ritual to support you in achieving your goals. They are:

- 1. Clarifying your “why”:** Make sure you have a clear objective in mind when you create your morning ritual. You might want to experience a particular emotion or focus on a specific project you're excited about, for instance.
- 2. Getting excited about your morning ritual:** It might include drinking your favorite coffee, reading your favorite book, or spending quality time with your family.
- 3. Identifying obstacles and preparing yourself mentally:** Look for potential hurdles you may encounter as you create your morning ritual. If you ever failed to implement a morning ritual in the past, ask yourself why.
- 4. Selecting the components of your morning ritual:** For a correctly balanced morning ritual, select activities that will feed your body, mind and soul. For example, try exercise (body), meditation (mind), and journaling (soul).

5. Deciding how much time you have available: It could be as little as ten minutes or as much as an hour, but you do need to be consistent.

6. Removing roadblocks and distractions: Prepare everything you need the night before and go through your morning ritual first thing after waking to avoid procrastination and distraction.

7. Setting yourself up for success: Make sure you have enough sleep. If necessary, create an evening ritual as well. Whenever possible, go to bed at the same time every night. You can also set your intentions the night before by visualizing the tasks you want to work on the next day.

8. Committing 100%: Commit to your morning ritual. Don't be casual about it.

9. Undertaking the 30-Day Challenge: To strengthen your commitment, dedicate at least thirty days to your morning ritual.

If you want to learn more about how to create an exciting morning ritual, check out my book, *Wake Up Call: How to Take Control of Your Morning and Transform Your Life.*

* * *

Exercise: create a morning ritual

Using your action guide, create your own customized morning ritual and commit to a 30-Day Challenge (for more on this refer to the upcoming section, *Commit to 30-Day Challenges*).

C. Live with intent

Why acting with intent is so important

Most people react to life instead of taking control of their destiny. It starts in the morning when they hit the snooze button. Then, it continues throughout the day. These individuals allow other people to interrupt them because they have no specific intent. They fail to make progress on important tasks or projects because they don't set clear goals for the year, the month, the week or the day. They can't say no to other people because their own values and priorities are unclear and are not taken seriously enough. In short, they keep wandering through their day. And while they may help other people achieve their goals, they neglect their own goals and dreams. As a result, these individuals perform far below their true capabilities.

In short, these people live without *intent*.

Intent is awareness in action. It is deciding to channel the infinite possibilities life offers in the direction that excites you the most. The less intent you have, the less power you have to change your life. Conversely, the more intent you have, the more powerful you will become. Therefore, to generate motivation, you must leverage the power of intent. You must decide how you want to feel in the morning, what you want to accomplish during the day, what states you want to be in when you're with your family (joy, gratitude, playfulness, et cetera) and so on. The more specific your intent, the better your chances of success.

* * *

Exercise: set daily intents

To set intent, you must first identify the key segments of your day. Remember, whether or not you're aware of it, your day consists of many different segments. For most people, these segments include:

- Waking up,
- Leaving home to go to work,
- Arriving at work,
- Taking a lunch break,
- Going back home, and
- Going to bed.

If you're like most people, you probably go thoughtlessly from one segment to another, keeping the same mood and mindset. For instance, if you're angry or upset, you are likely to carry the same mood with you when you move from one segment to the next. Instead of doing this, I invite you to decide how you want to feel during your day. To avoid overwhelming you, for this exercise, we'll only focus on one or two segments of your day.

- First, write down the main segments of your day.
- Then, select the segment(s) in which you want to feel differently. For example, perhaps you want to feel happy and present when you go home and spend time with your family. Perhaps, you want to feel grateful when you wake up. Perhaps, you want to feel motivated when you arrive at work.
- Set a specific trigger for your intent. What is the trigger that will remind you to change your attitude? Usually, it is pretty straightforward. In the previous

examples, it will be waking up, arriving home or arriving at work. However, you can make these triggers more specific. For instance, your trigger can be parking your car in front of your house.

- Decide what you will do to change your existing emotional state. Finally, it is important for you to create a sort of ritual before you enter this specific segment of your day. Indeed, rather than moving seamlessly from one segment of your day to another, you need to create a pause. You need to create a buffer so that you have space to alter your emotional state when required. A good way to do this is to take a deep breath and relax your body. Then, you can set your intent for the next segment of your day.
- Set reminders. For example, you can have Post-it notes in your house or in your car. Or you can put a piece of paper on your desktop. Being *conscious* is not easy at first, and these reminders can help.

Examples:

Waking up: Smile first thing in the morning and get out of bed immediately.

Think of three things you are grateful for in your life

Reaching work: Listen to work-related audiobooks on your way to work.

Choose how you want to feel the moment you enter your workplace, step in the elevator, et cetera.

Eating lunch: Take a few deep breaths and set an intent for your lunch break. For instance, you could make sure you are positive and avoid complaining. Wouldn't it be wonderful to make the most of your lunch break and have a great time?

Arriving home: Immediately after parking your car, take a few deep breaths and allow yourself to let go of everything that happened during the day. Then, set the intent to be fully present and happy as you greet your family.

There is an endless list of things you could do throughout your day. In the end, it's up to you to design your day in a way that brings you the most joy and fulfillment, while reducing the amount of stress you experience.

You don't have to react mechanically during the day. At any time, you can choose to set a specific intent. Over time, this seemingly insignificant intent has the power to make a huge impact on your life.

D. Commit to 30-Day Challenges

What would make the biggest impact on your life if you started or stopped doing it every day for thirty days?

A 30-day challenge is a great way to get yourself moving. It's long enough for you to see results but short enough to be manageable. When you maintain and complete a 30-day challenge, you build momentum, enhance your self-discipline and start trusting yourself more as a result.

How to undertake a 30-Day Challenge successfully

Answer the following questions.

a) What would make the biggest impact on your life if you committed to start or stop doing it for thirty days?

To answer this question, consider the following aspects:

- **Emotions:** What do you feel like changing over the next thirty days? Is there anything you're willing to commit to change not just because it makes sense rationally, but because you're emotionally attached to doing so?
- **Momentum:** If you were to change one thing, what would generate the most momentum in your life? To put it differently, what's your bottleneck? What's holding you back the most?

b) What exactly do you commit to doing every day for the next thirty days?

Now that you know what you want to change, make it specific.

- What exactly do you want, and what do you need to do every day to complete your challenge? Make sure your challenge is specific, so that you can measure your success.
- Is it achievable? On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you that you can stick to at least the first challenge relatively easily so you're likely to succeed. The idea is to help you build momentum over time, so start small and remain consistent.

- Is it exciting? In short, what is the emotional component of your goal? Why is it important to you?

c) How will you create accountability for your challenge?

Without accountability, most people fall off track and fail to achieve the challenges or goals they committed to.

Who will hold you accountable?

To stick to your challenge until the end, you need to have someone who will hold you accountable and support you during the challenge. Who will this person be?

Consider the following points:

- Do you trust this person?
- Is this person willing to call you to account?
- Does this person understand how important the challenge is for you?

How will you communicate with this person?

Consider the following points:

- How often will you communicate your progress? Daily? Weekly?
- How will you communicate with them? By email? Over the phone? Face to face?
- Will that person support you when needed? If so, how?

d) What will happen if you fail?

Being held accountable means that there are consequences for not following through. Such consequences may be:

- Feeling bad for letting other people down,
- Being angry at yourself for not following through, or
- Having to give money to a cause you hate, et cetera.

e) How will you reward yourself?

Previously, we've seen how important it is to reward yourself on a regular basis. Don't wait until the end of the challenge to reward yourself. Make sure you acknowledge your progress every single day.

- What one thing will you do every day to acknowledge your success?
- What one thing will you do every week to celebrate?
- How will you reward yourself at the end of the thirty days?

There really is no need for any fancy rewards. Decide on small, specific rewards that you're genuinely looking forward to receiving instead.

* * *

Exercise: commit to a 30-day Challenge

Create your own 30-day challenge using your action guide.

E. Change your self-talk

Your biggest enemy is yourself. You are the one getting in your own way. You do so by self-sabotaging and by criticizing yourself more often than necessary.

The truth is, we are usually much harder on ourselves than we are on others. Imagine if you talked to your best friend the way you talk to yourself. What do you think would happen? Would your friend feel loved and respected? Would he or she enjoy hanging out with you?

Your self-talk is the way you talk to yourself in your mind. It is the voice in your head telling you how stupid you are when you make a mistake. It's the internal voice telling you you can't do something, or you will never amount to anything.

As you learn to change the way you talk to yourself and to become more self-compassionate, your life will become easier, and you will stop sabotaging everything you do.

The first step to changing your self-talk is to become aware of it. The more you notice that little voice in your head, the better you'll be able to replace negative self-talk with empowering self-talk, which will help you move toward your goals and feel better about yourself. One myth about self-criticism is that unless you're hard on yourself, you won't get anything done. This is the carrot and the stick approach. There is a problem though. It doesn't work well. Sure, it can help you to accomplish more, but it will be less efficient than being kind to yourself and offering yourself encouragement.

Think of what great coaches do. They encourage their students to believe in themselves. They don't insult their students but inspire them to be the best they can be. Sure,

they could yell instead, and this method might even work for a time. However, as a student, would you rather feel inspired, knowing that people will support you no matter what, or would you prefer to be driven by fear?

The same mechanism is at play with your self-talk. I encourage you to see yourself as your own great coach. The better coach you become, the better results you will obtain. Among other things, a great coach:

- Encourages their students, and
- Asks empowering and thoughtful questions.

I recommend you do the same to yourself.

Becoming aware of your negative self-talk

So, how do you talk to yourself and how often to you resort to criticism? Do you tell yourself how stupid you are when you make a mistake, or do you shrug it off and laugh at it, knowing you'll do a better job next time? Do you tell yourself you can't do something and give up, or do you say to yourself "I can do that."?

How you talk to yourself will, for a large part, determine the results you obtain in life. Therefore, you must become aware of all the ways you make yourself smaller than you really are, and then, you must replace them with more empowering methods.

During the next seven days, spend a couple of minutes each night to write down how you felt during the day. Make sure you recall every time you disrespected or discouraged yourself. As you do so, visualize the scene and imagine yourself saying something nice instead. Imagine you're talking to your best friend or your lover. What would you say to them?

This exercise will help you become more aware of your self-talk.

Changing your self-talk

Many of the words you use right now when talking to yourself create artificial limitations, preventing you from reaching your true potential. Why not replace them with more empowering words?

Below are some examples of disempowering words people use.

I can't:

- I can't do this.
- I can't lose weight.
- I can't speak in public.
- I can't change my job.

I will never + a negative statement:

- I will never succeed.
- I will never achieve my goals.
- I will never live the life I want.

I'm always + a negative statement:

- I'm always late.
- I'm always boring.
- I'm always the one who doesn't/can't *insert subsequent statement here*.

Also, look for disempowering questions, because they automatically invite poor or negative answers. Remember,

your mind will always come up with answers to any of your questions. For example:

Why am I always + a negative statement:

- Why am I always late?
- Why am I always the only one who can't cope with new tasks?
- Why am I always so slow to learn?

Why can't I + a negative statement:

- Why can't I do what I want to do?
- Why can't I be more successful?
- Why can't I speak in public?

Do these questions sound familiar?

Now, there are better ways to talk to yourself. For instance, instead of, "I can't do that," you could say:

- I can do this (you reassert your potential).
- I will do this (you broadcast your intention).
- I want to do this (you infuse desire).
- I love doing this (you confirm that you love doing it).
- I choose to do this (you take responsibility and reclaim your power).
- What if I could do this? (you open yourself up to possibilities).
- Imagine if I could do this? (same as above).
- How can I do this? (you presuppose you can and focus on solutions).
- What would I need to believe to be able to do this? (you look for empowering beliefs that will help you

achieve your goal).

- How would it make me feel if I could do this? (you create expectations and generate inner motivation).

Now, imagine if you were to use these expressions above every single day. How would they change your life in the long term?

* * *

Exercise: change your self-talk

Complete the exercises in the corresponding section of your action guide.

F. Develop self-compassion

Previously, we saw that self-criticism is an ineffective strategy. So, what is an effective strategy? The answer is self-compassion. As a rule, we tend to be much too hard on ourselves. Developing self-compassion is a wonderful way to start creating a healthier internal relationship. Self-compassion is a tool that gives you emotional flexibility. It will help you will bend like a reed instead of snapping like a dry twig. Self-compassion is a much-needed safety net, and one you definitely need in your life.

Practicing self-compassion provides a number of benefits and will enhance your life in many ways. It will help you remain motivated when things don't go as planned, and it will discourage procrastination. Rather than staying in your comfort zone and trying to please everybody around you, you will be more likely to take the plunge and try new exciting projects. Why? Because, even if you fail, you will be able to comfort yourself and bounce back quickly from disappointment.

In my own life, self-compassion has been a valuable tool. It has allowed me to feel better about myself and to persevere despite multiple setbacks. You can benefit in the same way. When you notice you're being hard on yourself, do yourself a favor—be self-compassionate. Nobody's perfect, yet we all try so hard to hide this fact to the world. Allow yourself some slack. You're doing okay. Really, you are.

You are exactly where you're supposed to be right now

Self-compassion entails realizing you are exactly where you're supposed to be. It's accepting reality rather than denying it. Sure, you have the potential to achieve extraordinary things, but you have to do so by starting from where you are *right now*. Therefore, instead of believing you should be somewhere else, accept you are where you are right now, and learn to enjoy the process that will lead you to where you want to be. Otherwise, you will miss the beauty of the journey.

How to become self-compassionate

Self-compassion is a skill that requires practice. The more you practice being self-compassionate, the easier it will become. Every time you feel like criticizing yourself, consider it a wonderful opportunity to practice self-compassion. In her book, *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself*, Kristin Neff identifies three key components of self-compassion:

a) Self-kindness: This entails being kind to ourselves instead of resorting to criticism and being overly judgmental.

b) Recognition of our common humanity: This is the recognition that we are all in the same boat. We are all human beings experiencing life on earth with all that entails. Other people have experienced, are experiencing or will experience pain similar to us. We aren't alone or disconnected from others.

c) Mindfulness: This is being aware of our pain and seeing it as it is rather than ignoring it or exaggerating it.

Focusing on these three components can help us all become more self-compassionate. Let's have a brief look at each component in turn.

a) Self-kindness

Have you ever been angry with yourself to the point of insulting yourself? I certainly have. While this may seem like a natural thing for many people, it doesn't have to be this way. Being kind to yourself means talking to yourself as you would talk to your best friend or spouse—that is, with respect and sincere care. Perhaps you believe that doing so

would make you a narcissist or would lead you to become overly complacent. These are common fears we often suffer. However, this is not the case. Being gentle with yourself is a sign of self-respect and an expression of your desire to be happy.

b) Recognition of our common humanity

With over 7.5 billion humans on this planet, chances are that quite a few of them have been through similar challenges to you—or even worse ones. You're not the only one to face the challenge. Therefore, you should learn to recognize that we are all connected through our shared experience of human suffering.

c) Mindfulness

You can't change something unless you're aware of it. In the same way, you can't alleviate the emotional pain you're experiencing unless you acknowledge it. Too often, we pretend everything is okay when, in reality, we would be better off acknowledging the hard time we're suffering. If you're having challenges in your life right now, do what you can to solve them, but also acknowledge your struggles and give yourself words of encouragement.

* * *

Exercise: cultivate self-compassion

The best way to experience the benefit of self-compassion is to practice it. To do so, I invite you to undertake a 7-day compassion challenge. For the next seven days, wherever possible, refrain from criticizing yourself. To help you become aware of your negative self-talk, I encourage you to wear a rubber band around your wrist and to snap it whenever you notice any self-criticism. Then, give yourself words of encouragement. They could be something like:

- “I know you’re struggling right now, but you’re doing the best you can.”
- “You’re doing okay. Everybody goes through challenging times once in a while.”
- “I’m proud of you. Even though you feel the urge to criticize yourself, you still make an effort to be kinder to yourself.”

Don’t get too caught up with the exact words you should use. Your intention to be gentle with yourself is what matters the most. Over time, you’ll find the right words to encourage yourself and show yourself the compassion you deserve. Remember, you’re not alone. We are all in the same boat.

G. Practice daily gratitude

Many people take things for granted and fail to appreciate all the things they already have in their lives. They continuously seek to have more, even though they have little appreciation for what they currently have. They keep chasing an illusory sense of happiness and, sadly, never find it.

How much time do you spend each day celebrating the little things in your life? How much importance do you give to each day when you wake in the morning?

The truth is, you live in more luxury than even kings and queens did just a century ago. You have access to electricity, water and many other services. You have a roof over your head and food on the table. You have easy access to all the knowledge in the world. And you can even visit countries all over the world by getting in a weird flying tube called an “airplane.” Isn’t this completely extraordinary and totally wonderful?

While you probably realize you should feel grateful, you might have difficulties experiencing it at an emotional level. This is because gratitude isn’t something you can intellectualize, it is something you must feel. This is why you must practice gratitude daily. As the business philosopher, Jim Rohn, wrote, “*Our emotions need to be as educated as our intellect.*” I found this idea to be very true.

Now, let’s consider a few exercises you can do to experience more gratitude in your life.

Thanking people

For this exercise, sit down on a chair or lie down in your bed and close your eyes. Then, think of someone you know and thank him or her. It doesn't matter who the person is. Whenever possible, think of something specific they did for you. Perhaps, they gave you some advice, helped you learn an important lesson or brought you joy during the time you spent with them. If you don't like this person, still come up with something positive to say about them.

Now, think of someone else. Don't try too hard, simply let your mind wander. Repeat the same process. Keep doing this for a few minutes. It might be a good idea to set a timer for, let's say, five minutes. At the end of the exercise, amplify your sense of gratitude by thinking of all the things these people did for you. Allow yourself to experience a deep sense of thankfulness.

To begin with, complete this exercise every morning for two weeks.

Thanking items in your life

Nowadays, we are fortunate to be surrounded by many items that make our lives easier. Have you taken the time to thank these things for all the benefits they bring you? If not, this exercise is for you.

Select one specific item in the room you're sitting in right now. For instance, it could be your desk or the chair you're sitting in. Then, take the time to appreciate it.

- Think of the way this item improves your life. For instance, what does your desk allow you to do? I love my desk because it allows me to put my computer on it and write this book. It allows me to write my goals in a notebook. It allows me to place my cup of tea or coffee on it. It provides me with a space I can use to read books. Imagine how uncomfortable it would be if I had to do all these things on the floor.
- Think of all the people involved in your desk's creation. It didn't appear magically. It is the result of the effort of many people. Designers had to come up with the design for it. Factory workers had to create and assemble it. Truck drivers had to ship it to the store. People had to write the user's guide. Translators had to translate it into different languages. Store clerks had to stock it. Other people had to create the price tag. Many people were involved, and it's only thanks to their hard work that you can enjoy your desk. So, thank each of them for their time and effort.

Creating a gratitude journal

Sadly, most people spend far too much time thinking about the things they don't have or don't want. A gratitude journal is a great way to start noticing all the things you already have and to express your appreciation for them. What should you write in such a journal? I encourage you to write every positive thing that people say to you. Every time you receive a compliment, write it in your journal. Do the same with any praise you receive at work or positive reviews you receive from people who bought your products or services. For instance, in my own gratitude journal, I like to take note of positive reviews as well as any nice emails I receive from my readers.

What about you? What could you write in your gratitude journal? Did you receive a thank you email from someone you helped? Did someone compliment your outfit? Whatever it may be, take notice and add a new entry in your journal.

Our brain is naturally designed to give more importance to negative feedback. A single mean or negative comment can often outweigh dozens of positive comments. This is why it is important you acknowledge all the nice things people tell you and capture them on paper. You're doing better than you probably think and have many things to be grateful for.

I invite you to buy a notebook and write your first entry. Then, keep adding entries while reading old entries a few times a week.

Gratitude exercise

Every day when you wake, write down three new things you would like to acknowledge. Try to come up with three different things each morning. The more specific you are the better. And remember, these things can be very small. You could be grateful for your bed, your books, the internet, your clothes or your vision, your freedom from pain.

Gratitude meditation

Listen to gratitude meditation and follow the instructions.
You'll find many examples on YouTube.

Sending thank you letters/emails

For some reason, we are often reluctant to say thank you wholeheartedly. Maybe this is because it makes us feel vulnerable. Perhaps we're afraid that if we are too thankful, we may be asked to reciprocate. What about you? Do you say "thank you" mechanically, or do you take the time to express your feelings of gratitude wholeheartedly?

This exercise isn't something you need to do every day but doing it once in a while can be very effective. To do so, think of someone you would like to thank because of what they did for you. Then, think of something specific you want to thank them for. The more specific the better. Write them a letter or an email and do your best to express your feelings of gratitude fully. If it feels somewhat uncomfortable or if you feel vulnerable, you're doing it right.

Consider including the following points:

- Specify what exactly they did for you,
- Tell them what it means to you, and
- Tell them how it makes you feel.

If you do not wish to send the letter, you can just keep it for yourself. The simple act of writing it will help you express your gratitude.

Additional tip:

I encourage you to find beautiful songs that touch your heart and to listen to them as you do your gratitude exercises. This will help you elicit feelings of gratitude.

PART IV

TWENTY-FIVE SIMPLE STRATEGIES TO REGAIN YOUR MOTIVATION

Motivation comes and goes but there are many things you can do to regain your motivation. Below are some techniques you can use to climb out of a slump and start generating momentum:

A. Just do it

Use the completion principle to get your motivation back.

- 1. Complete a task you've been putting off for too long:** Identify one task or project you've been putting off for a while and complete it right now.
- 2. Write it down, get it done:** Write a list of all things you have to do but have been putting off. Now, schedule a block of time to complete them by batching them together.
- 3. Complete a simple and easy task:** Work on a small task that moves you toward your goal. Then, if you feel like it, work on another and see where it leads you.

4. Complete one specific project: Deep-dive on a specific project you have left unfinished and complete it 100%.

5. Complete three things today: Write down three simple tasks you want to complete today. Complete them, then cross them off your list and say to yourself, “Good job!” Reward yourself with your favorite treat or movie at the end of the day. Repeat this process tomorrow and the day after.

B. Give yourself a break

Take a step back and get out of your head. Things probably aren't as bad as you think.

6. Look at the facts: Take a step back and look at your current situation from a purely objective point of view. What are the facts? Facts are no big deal, but your interpretation of them can be. Will you remember your current situation twenty years from now? Is it really such a big deal? If not, can you let go?

7. Talk to a friend: Call a friend or meet him or her to get a different perspective.

8. Hire a coach or find an accountability partner: Find someone you can work with. This will give you a new perspective and will create accountability, encouraging you to take consistent action.

9. Take a break: Perhaps, all you need is a break. Take a day off. Have a relaxing weekend and just do nothing.

10. Cultivate self-compassion: Go easy on yourself. How you feel now is fine. Let go of self-criticism and encourage yourself instead.

11. Do something for someone else: Helping other people can prevent you from being overly focused on yourself and on

your own problems. Who can you help today? Could you buy a gift for someone? Could you send a thank you letter? Could you help someone reach their goals?

12. Exercise: Move your body. Go for a run. Work out. Do yoga. Exercise is a great way to change your focus from your mind to your body.

C. Sort things out

Put some order in your life. Too much clutter can make you feel stuck.

13. Sort out your worries: Make a list of all the things you worry about. Next to each item write down whether you have control (C), some control (SC) or no control (NC) over these things. Practice letting go of things you have no control over. For the things you have some control over, write down what you can do to help overcome your worry.

14. Free up your schedule: Be ruthless in the way you use your time. Try to remove any activities you don't enjoy or that don't move you toward your ideal vision.

15. Declutter your desk: A cluttered desk can be the manifestation of a cluttered mind. Tidy your desk and reorganize the files on your computer.

16. Declutter your digital space: Clean up your email box, unsubscribe from newsletters, remove software you don't use, et cetera.

17. Declutter your house: Spend your weekend decluttering your house. Only keep things you love and remove everything else (see the section on decluttering your physical environment)

D. Regain the excitement

Focus on what you love and do well and regenerate your motivation.

18. Do more of what you love: Schedule time during your day to do one of the things you love the most.

19. Ask yourself what excites you: Sit at your desk, take a pen and a piece of paper and write down, "What do I love?" Then, write anything that comes to mind. See what projects, goals or ideas you feel drawn toward.

20. Start a new and exciting challenge: Forget about your small goals. Think of a challenge that really excites you, no matter how big or unrealistic it may seem. Then, take one action to move you forward, whether it is buying a book, watching a video or contacting an expert on the subject.

21. Celebrate your accomplishments: Take a sheet of paper and write down everything you've ever accomplished in your life. Make sure you also acknowledge the personal problems you have overcome. The more specific you can be, the better.

22. Express gratitude: Cultivate the habit of expressing gratitude for all the things you have going on for you. Focus on the positive.

E. Reinvent yourself

Do something different. You can't do the same things and expect different results.

23. Move beyond your comfort zone: Do something a little scary. Do something you've never attempted before. Is there anything you've always wanted to try but never dared to? Go do it!

24. Meet new people: Who do you want to be surrounded by? Find a group of like-minded people and join it (e.g., use

Meetup.com). Or create your own group to attract people you want to meet.

25. Break old patterns: Spend your day doing things you don't normally do. Call an old friend, go for a walk, et cetera.

CONCLUSION

Thank you so much for staying with me until the end of this book. Sometimes, we struggle to generate the motivation we need to achieve the goals that truly matter to us. This is a normal process and there is nothing unusual about it. Fortunately, after reading and using the ideas outlined in this book, you now have many tools to climb out of such a slump. See this as a virtuous circle: the more action you take, the more momentum you build and, the more momentum you build, the more action you take. Remember, you are never stuck. It only appears that way because of your thoughts, your emotions, and the actions you take—or fail to take. You can always change, and the motivation you thought you lost can return quicker than you would have expected.

My hope is that you will revisit this book whenever you feel stuck and will use the exercises and insights in it to revitalize your motivation. You may feel the urge to beat yourself up for not being as productive as you would like to be or for failing to achieve your biggest goals. But be nice to yourself.

Always.

Nobody is perfect.

Personally, I suffer my fair share of procrastination and self-doubt and I'm sure you do too, but this part of being human. Another part of being human is that we are extremely resilient. We can overcome any obstacles in our path, we can hit rock bottom and still rise again. We are full of surprises. Thus, no matter how you may feel now, I know you can regain your motivation and start moving toward your goals and dreams with more conviction and passion than ever before.

It's now time for you to return to work, complete unfinished business, do things that scare you and build momentum. Whenever in doubt, remember to take action. Action cures fears. An object in motion tends to stay in motion and so do you.

Keep moving forward at your own pace while being kind to yourself and you will achieve great things.

If you want to share your story or anything else with me, please feel free to email me at: thibaut.meurisse@gmail.com.

I always love hearing from my readers.

Looking forward to hearing from you very soon.

Warm regards,

Thibaut

What do you think?

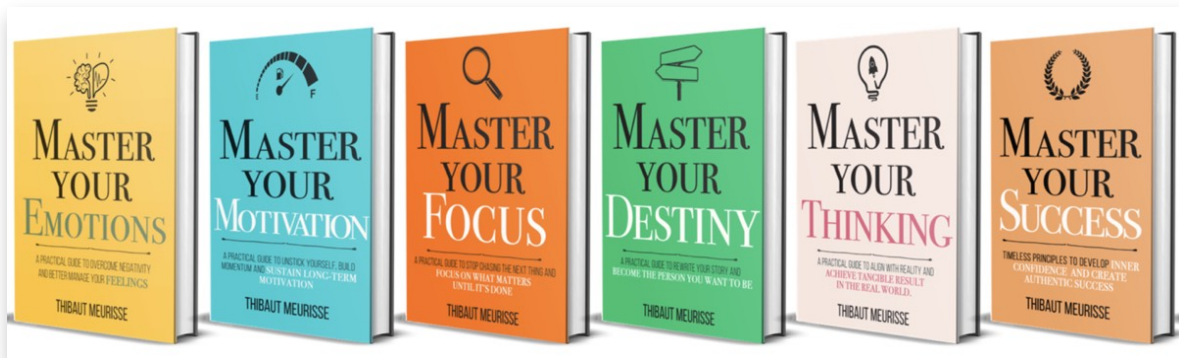
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This book is the second book in the “**Mastery Series**”. You can check out the first book, “Master Your Emotions” below:

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What readers say about Master Your Emotions:

“Changed my life”

"One of the best self help books I have ever read!"

“One Word: PHENOMENAL!”

[Click here to learn how to master your emotions](#)

MASTER YOUR EMOTIONS (PREVIEW)

The mind in its own place, and in itself can make a
heaven of Hell, a hell of Heaven.

— JOHN MILTON, POET.

We all experience a wild range of emotions throughout our lives. I had to admit, while writing this book, I experienced highs and lows myself. At first, I was filled with excitement and thrilled at the idea of providing people with a guide to help them understand their emotions. I imagined how readers' lives would improve as they learned to control their emotions. My motivation was high and I couldn't help but imagine how great the book would be.

Or so I thought.

After the initial excitement, the time came to sit down to write the actual book, and that's when the excitement wore off pretty quickly. Ideas that looked great in my mind suddenly felt dull. My writing seemed boring, and I felt as though I had nothing substantive or valuable to contribute.

Sitting at my desk and writing became more challenging each day. I started losing confidence. Who was I to write a

book about emotions if I couldn't even master my own emotions? How ironic! I considered giving up. There are already plenty of books on the topic, so why add one more?

At the same time, I realized this book was a perfect opportunity to work on my own emotional issues. And who doesn't suffer from negative emotions from time to time? We all have highs and lows, don't we? The key is what we *do* with our lows. Are we using our emotions to grow? Are we learning something from them? Or are we beating ourselves up over them?

So, let's talk about *your* emotions now. Let me start by asking you this:

How do you feel right now?

Knowing how you feel is the first step toward taking control of your emotions. You may have spent so much time internalizing you've lost touch with your emotions. Perhaps you answered as follows: "I feel this book could be useful," or "I really feel I could learn something from this book."

However, none of these answers reflect how you feel. You don't 'feel like this,' or 'feel like that,' you simply 'feel.' You don't 'feel like' this book could be useful, you 'think' this book could be useful, and that generates an emotion which makes you 'feel' excited about reading it. Feelings manifest as physical sensations in your body, not as an idea in your mind. Perhaps, the reason the word 'feel' is so often overused or misused is because we don't want to talk about our emotions.

So, how do you feel now?

Why is it important to talk about emotions?

How you feel determines the quality of your life. Your emotions can make your life miserable or truly magical. That's why they are among the most important things to focus on. Your emotions color all your experiences. When you feel good, everything seems, feels, or tastes better. You also think better thoughts. Your energy levels are higher and possibilities seem limitless. Conversely, when you feel depressed, everything seems dull. You have little energy and you become unmotivated. You feel stuck in a place (mentally and physically) you don't want to be, and the future looks gloomy.

Your emotions can also act as a powerful guide. They can tell you something is wrong and allow you to make changes in your life. As such, they may be among the most powerful personal growth tools you have.

Sadly, neither your teachers nor your parents taught you how emotions work or how to control them. I find it ironic that just about anything comes with a how-to manual, while your mind doesn't. You've never received an instruction manual to teach you how your mind works and how to use it to better manage your emotions, have you? I haven't. In fact, until now, I doubt one even existed.

What you'll learn in this book

This book is the how-to manual your parents should have given you at birth. It's the instruction manual you should have received at school. In it, I'll share everything you need to know about emotions so you can overcome your fears and limitations and become the type of person you really want to be.

You'll learn what emotions are, how they are formed, and how you can use them for your personal growth. You'll also learn how to deal with negative emotions and condition your mind to create more positive emotions.

It is my sincere hope and expectation that, by the end of this book, you will have a clear understanding of what emotions are and will have all the tools you need to start taking control of them.

More specifically, this book will help you:

- Understand what emotions are and how they impact your life
- Identify negative emotions that control your life and learn to overcome them
- Change your story to take better control over your life and create a more compelling future, and
- Reprogram your mind to experience more positive emotions.

Here is a more detailed summary of what you'll learn in this book:

In **Part I**, we'll discuss what emotions are. You'll learn why you are wired to focus on negativity and what you can do to counter this effect. You'll also discover how your beliefs impinge upon your emotions. Finally, you'll learn how negative emotions work and why they are so tricky.

In **Part II**, we'll go over the things that directly impact your emotions. You'll understand the roles your body, your thoughts, your words, or your sleep, play in your life and how you can use them to change your emotions.

In **Part III**, you'll learn how emotions are formed. You'll also learn how to condition your mind to experience more positive emotions.

And finally, in **Part IV**, we'll discuss how to use your emotions as a tool for personal growth. You'll learn why you experience emotions such as fear or depression and how they work. You'll then discover how to use them to grow.

To start mastering your emotions today go to

mybook.to/Master_Emotions

I. What emotions are

Have you ever wondered what emotions are and what purpose they serve?

In this section, we'll discuss how your survival mechanism affects your emotions. Then, we'll explain what the 'ego' is and how it impacts your emotions. Finally, we'll discover the mechanism behind emotions and learn why negative emotions can be so hard to deal with.

1. How your survival mechanism affects your emotions

Why people have a bias towards negativity

Your brain is designed for survival, which explains why you're able to read this book at this very moment. When you think about it, the probability of you being born was extremely low. For this miracle to happen, all the generations before you had to survive long enough to procreate. In their quest for survival and procreation, they must have faced death hundreds or perhaps thousands of times.

Fortunately, unlike your ancestors, you're (probably) not facing death every day. In fact, in many parts of the world, life has never been safer. Yet, your survival mechanism hasn't changed much. Your brain still scans your environment looking for potential threats.

In many ways, some parts of your brain have become obsolete. While you may not be seconds away from being eaten by a predator, your brain still gives significantly more weight to negative events than to positive ones.

Fear of rejection is one example of a bias toward negativity. In the past, being rejected from your tribe would reduce your chances of survival significantly. Therefore, you learned to look for any sign of rejection, and this became hardwired in your brain.

Nowadays, being rejected often carries little or no consequence to your long-term survival. You could be hated by the entire world and still have a job, a roof and plenty of

food on the table, yet, your brain is still programmed to perceive rejection as a threat to your survival.

This is why rejection can be so painful. While you know most rejections are no big deal, you nevertheless feel the emotional pain. If you listen to your mind, you may even create a whole drama around it. You may believe you aren't worthy of love and dwell on a rejection for days or weeks. Worse still, you may become depressed as a result of this rejection.

In fact, one single criticism can often outweigh hundreds of positive ones. That's why, an author with fifty 5-star reviews, is likely to feel terrible when they receive a single 1-star review. While the author understands the 1-star review isn't a threat to her survival, her authorial brain doesn't. It likely interprets the negative review as a threat to her ego which triggers an emotional reaction.

The fear of rejection can also lead you to over-dramatize events. If your boss criticized you at work, your brain may see the event as a threat and you now think, "What if I'm fired? What if I can't find a job quickly enough and my wife leaves me? What about my kids? What if I can't see them again?"

While you are fortunate to have such an effective survival mechanism, it is also your responsibility to separate real threats from imaginary ones. If you don't, you'll experience unnecessary pain and worry that will negatively impact the quality of your life. To overcome this bias towards negativity, you must reprogram your mind. One of a human being's greatest powers is our ability to use our thoughts to shape our reality and interpret events in a more empowering way. This book will teach you how to do this.

Why your brain's job isn't to make you happy

Your brain's primary job is not to make you happy, but to ensure your survival. Thus, if you want to be happy, you must take control of your emotions rather than hoping you'll be happy because it's your natural state. In the following section, we'll discuss what happiness is and how it works.

How dopamine can mess with your happiness

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter which, among other functions, plays a major role in rewarding certain behaviors. When dopamine is released into specific areas of your brain—the pleasure centers—you get a high. This is what happens during exercise, when you gamble, have sex, or eat great food.

One of the roles of dopamine is to ensure you look for food so you don't die of starvation, and you search for a mate so you can reproduce. Without dopamine, our species would likely be extinct by now. It's a pretty good thing, right?

Well, yes and no. In today's world, this reward system is, in many cases, obsolete. While in the past, dopamine was linked to our survival instinct, The release of dopamine can now be generated artificially. A great example of this effect is social media, which uses psychology to suck as much time as possible out of your life. Have you noticed all these notifications that pop up constantly? They're used to trigger a release of dopamine so you stay connected, and the longer you stay connected, the more money the services make. Watching pornography or gambling also leads to a release of dopamine which can make these activities highly addictive.

Fortunately, we don't need to act each time our brain releases dopamine. For instance, we don't need to constantly check our Facebook newsfeeds just because it gives us a pleasurable shot of dopamine.

Today's society is selling a version of happiness that can make us *unhappy*. We've become addicted to dopamine largely because of marketers who have found effective ways to exploit our brains. We receive multiple shots of dopamine throughout the day and we love it. But is that the same thing as happiness?

Worse than that, dopamine can create real addictions with severe consequences on our health. Research conducted at Tulane University showed that, when given permission to self-stimulate their pleasure center, participants did it an average of forty times per minute. They chose the stimulation of their pleasure center over food, even refusing to eat when hungry!

Korean, Lee Seung Seop is an extreme case of this syndrome. In 2005, Mr Seop died after playing a video game for fifty-eight hours straight with very little food or water, and no sleep. The subsequent investigation concluded the cause of death was heart failure induced by exhaustion and dehydration. He was only twenty-eight years old.

To take control of your emotions, it is essential you understand the role dopamine plays and how it affects your happiness. Are you addicted to your phone? Are you glued to your TV? Or maybe you spend too much time playing video games. Most of us are addicted to something. For some people it's obvious, but for others, it's more subtle. For instance, you could be addicted to thinking. To better control your emotions, it is important to shed the light on your addictions as they can rob you of your happiness.

The ‘one day I will’ myth

Do you believe that one day you will achieve your dream and finally be happy? This is unlikely to happen. You may (and I hope you will) achieve your dream, but you won’t live ‘happily ever after.’ This is just another trick your mind plays on you.

Your mind quickly acclimates to new situations, which is probably the result of evolution and our need to adapt continually in order to survive and reproduce. This is also probably why the new car or house you want will only make you happy for a while. Once the initial excitement wears off, you’ll move on to crave the next exciting thing. This phenomenon is known as ‘hedonic adaptation.’

How hedonic adaptation works

Let me share an interesting study that will likely change the way you see happiness. This study, which was conducted on lottery winners and paraplegics, was extremely eye-opening for me. Conducted in 1978, the investigation evaluated how winning the lottery or becoming a paraplegic influence happiness:

The study found that one year after the event, both groups were just as happy as they were beforehand. Yes, just as happy (or unhappy). You can find more about it by watching Dan Gilbert’s Ted Talk, The Surprising Science of Happiness [here](#).

Perhaps you believe that you’ll be happy once you’ve ‘made it.’ But, as the above study on happiness shows, this is simply not true. No matter what happens to you, you’ll revert back to your predetermined level of happiness once you’ve adapted to the new event. This is how your mind works.

Does that mean you can't be happier than you are right now? No. What it means is that, in the long run, external events have very little impact upon your level of happiness.

In fact, according to Sonja Lyubomirsky, author of *The How of Happiness*, fifty percent of our happiness is determined by genetics, forty percent by internal factors, and only ten percent by external factors. These external factors include such things as whether we're single or married, rich or poor, and similar social influences.

This suggests, only ten percent of your happiness is linked to external factors, which is probably way less than you thought. The bottom line is this: Your attitude towards life influences your happiness, not what happens to you.

By now, you understand how your survival mechanism impacts negatively your emotions and prevent you from experiencing more joy and happiness in your life. In the next segment/section we'll learn about the ego.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



THIBAUT MEURISSE

Thibaut Meurisse is a personal development blogger, author, and founder of whatispersonaldevelopment.org.

He has been featured on major personal development websites such as Lifehack, Goalcast, TinyBuddha, Addicted2Success, MotivationGrid or PickTheBrain.

Obsessed with self-improvement and fascinated by the power of the brain, his personal mission is to help people realize their full potential and reach higher levels of fulfillment and consciousness.

In love with foreign languages, he is French, writes in English, and lived in Japan for almost ten years.

Learn more about Thibaut at:

amazon.com/author/thibautmeurisse
whatispersonaldevelopment.org

thibaut.meurisse@gmail.com

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