

3 Ways to Get the Most out of This Book

3. **Agree to disagree.** You will not agree with all nine secrets the first time you read them. That's okay. Expect to disagree. But remember you have the power to slowly let new ideas into your brain whenever you like. A hundred years before neuroplasticity became a buzzword, American philosopher William James said, "Plasticity, in the wide sense of the word, means the possession of a structure weak enough to yield to an influence but strong enough not to yield all at once."
2. **Change your scenery.** Reading this book cover to cover in one night is fine. But if you change your scenery, you'll get more out of it. A chapter in the buzzing airport, a chapter at the beach, a chapter in bed before flicking off your lamp. Our brains are stimulated by different air, smells, and sounds. Everywhere you read the book you'll get something different from it and you'll more easily recall the lessons. Carry this book as you're moving.
1. **Create a seven-day challenge.** Any time you read an idea in this book that you want to try, give yourself a seven-day challenge. Write down every day in your calendar for seven days "Do X" and then try to do it. If you can do it for seven days, you just proved you could do it for seven days. Then you can do it for another seven days. Then it becomes a habit. Aristotle says, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

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The Happiness Equation

Want Nothing + Do Anything
= Have Everything

Neil Pasricha

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
New York

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Some names and details have been changed in the stories in this book.

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To my baby,
I wanted you to have this in case I didn't get a chance to tell you,
Love, Dad



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Want Nothing

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Do Anything

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Have Everything

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Author's Note

I have spent more than a decade developing leaders.

I have had incredible experiences speaking about leadership to hundreds of thousands of people around the world, eating dinner with royal families in the Middle East, sharing stages with Harvard deans, and consulting on leadership to organizations like Audi, Viacom, and GE. I have worked as Director of Leadership Development at Walmart, interviewed billionaires, and worked directly for two CEOs at the world's largest company.

But after years successfully helping people lead teams, lead businesses, and lead organizations, something slowly dawned on me.

Hardly anyone was happy.

Every conference lunch was filled with conversations about struggling to find balance, feeling too busy, and keeping up with others. So many leaders said they didn't have space in their lives, were stressed about time and money, and felt burdened with endless decisions and conflicting advice. Even the greatest leaders in the world—even billionaires, even Fortune 500 CEOs—were all plagued with dramatic crises on a daily basis. Fiery cauldrons of stress were bubbling in their heads and stomachs.

I also realized I wasn't happy myself.

I was searching for simple models to decide what to do, searching for structure to relieve stress, and searching for guidelines to steer me through tough decisions constantly bogging me down. I thought about all the times I felt guilty not getting work done,

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burned out after a crazy week, or struggling in messy mental states for days navigating tough choices.

Looking back, I can't believe how much time I wasted.

Being happier is the biggest challenge you face every single day at work. Same if you're a stay-at-home mom, studying through school, or traveling abroad. Teaching and training your brain to stay positively focused while navigating the bumps of life is something we're not taught at school. I mean, have you ever taken a course called "How to Be Happier"?

For the past few years, I have led workshops every summer with high school students who are brought together for the entire month of July for a world-class enrichment camp. These students have the highest grades in their schools, participate in the most clubs and teams, and are all destined for Ivy Leagues. They love the program because they get to meet and spend time with people like them. I do the workshops because I was lucky enough to attend when I was in high school.

What started organically, with no notes and no slides, has slowly evolved into a talk I give called "9 Secrets to a Happier Life." And at the end of my talk I open up to questions. I am always surprised by what is asked. The students don't have questions about getting better grades, getting into the best schools, or landing the highest-paid jobs. They know they can do all that. Everything they ask comes from a desire to be happier.

"How much money do I need to retire?" "What's the best way to handle criticism?" "How do I get more done with less stress?" "How do I find my true passion?" "How can I cure my anxiety?" "What's the best way to achieve more inside and outside work?" "What do I do when everyone gives me different advice?" "How can I become a more positive person?"

The sessions are illuminating because they show how some of

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the smartest kids around don't care about developing brainpower or technical smarts. They want *contentment . . . freedom . . . and happiness*. They want to *want nothing . . . do anything . . . and have everything*.

They just want to live happier lives.

So don't you think every college, university, and library would be full of courses and advice on how we can become happier? On how we can make decisions that spur ourselves into positive action every day?

When I asked a hospitality CEO if he knew a book, model, or website that actually helped people navigate and simplify their most challenging decisions so they can live with contentment, freedom, and happiness, he said, "That book doesn't exist. It would be like asking every high-powered executive, successful person, and positive leader to distill all the personal mental models they've created over their lives into one book. Nobody has ever done it."

I know this is true because I've been searching for a practical book with real frameworks on leading myself to happiness for years. I wanted something beyond stories about generals, parables about penguins, and research studies with data pointing any which way. I wanted real, I wanted practical, I wanted clear. I wanted an action book that I could use every day.

This is that book.

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Want Nothing

Be content with what you have. Rejoice in the way things are.

When you realize there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you.

—LAO TZU

True happiness is to enjoy the present, without anxious dependence upon the future, not to amuse ourselves with either hopes or fears but to rest satisfied with what we have, which is sufficient, for he that is so wants nothing. The greatest blessings of mankind are within us and within our reach. A wise man is content with his lot, whatever it may be, without wishing for what he has not.

—SENECA

You can't have everything. Where would you put it?

—STEVEN WRIGHT

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Secret #1

The First Thing
You Must Do
Before You Can
Be Happy

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6 words that will forever change how you see happiness

Let's start off with some bad news.
The happiness model we're taught from a young age is actually completely backward.

We think we work hard in order to achieve big success and then we're happy.

We think the scribble goes like this:

GREAT → BIG → BE
WORK → SUCCESS → HAPPY

Study hard! → Straight A's! → Be happy!

Interview lots! → Great job! → Be happy!

Work overtime! → Get promoted! → Be happy!

But it doesn't work like that in real life. That model is broken. We do great work, have a big success, but instead of being happy, we just set new goals. Now we study for the next job, the next degree, the next promotion. Why stop at a college degree when you can get a master's? Why stop at Director when you can be VP? Why stop at one house when you can have two? We never get to happiness. It keeps getting pushed further and further away.

What happens when we snap "Be happy" off the end of this



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scribble and stick it on the beginning? Then these important six words look like this:

BE → GREAT → BIG
HAPPY → WORK → SUCCESS

Now everything changes. *Everything* changes. If we start with being happy, then we feel great. We look great. We exercise. We connect. What happens? We end up doing great work because we *feel* great doing it. What does great work lead to? Big success. Massive feelings of accomplishment and the resulting degrees, promotions, and phone calls from your mom telling you she's proud of you.

Harvard Business Review reports that happy people are 31% more productive, have 37% higher sales, and are three times more creative than their counterparts.

So what's the *first* thing you must do before you can be happy?

Be happy.

Be happy *first*.

Being happy opens up your learning centers. Your brain will light up like Manhattan skyscrapers at dusk, sparkle like diamonds under jewelry store lights, glow like stars in the black sky above a farmer's field.

American philosopher William James says, "The greatest discovery of any generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitude."

The Happiness Advantage author Shawn Achor says, "It's not necessarily the reality that shapes us but the lens through which your brain views the world that shapes your reality."

William Shakespeare says, "For there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so."

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The single biggest reason it's so hard to be happy

Shakespeare says, “For there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” But if it’s just thinking, plain thinking, why can’t we *think* ourselves into a good mood whenever we want? Seems like we should be able to just flip a mental switch.

But we all know it’s not that easy. Sometimes our brains get focused on negative things. We can’t stop! I do this all the time. And you want to know a secret? Everybody does. Every single person gets stuck focusing on the negative sometimes. I’ve spoken on stages with the best-known motivational speakers, Fortune 500 CEOs, and political leaders from around the world. Do you know what they’re all doing backstage? Freaking out. Sweating. Thinking something might go wrong.

We all have negative self-talk. There is no such thing as an eternal optimist. There are people who feel optimistic, but those people have negative self-talk, too. And that’s okay. The problem isn’t that we have negative thoughts in our brain.

The problem is we think we shouldn’t have negative thoughts.

But *why* do our brains focus on negative things? Once we understand this we can learn how much we can control and make conscious efforts to be happy using proven techniques.

This is one of the most important things I can share with you.

Why is it so hard to be happy?

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Because life was mostly short, brutal, and highly competitive over the two hundred thousand years our species has existed on this planet. And our brains are trained for this short, brutal, and highly competitive world.

How short, brutal, and highly competitive was it?

Let's do a quick experiment.

Stop, close your eyes, and picture the last time you felt completely alone in the middle of nowhere.

Was it camping in the mountains when you walked away from the fire and stood on the jagged edge of a mirrory lake? Was it a misty waterfall you found on a field trip when your classmates disappeared and all you could hear was the wind rustling the leaves in the forest canopy? Was it jogging at sunrise on a sandy beach when you curled around the coastline and suddenly couldn't see anyone for miles in any direction?

Picture yourself back in that scene.

Now mentally erase from our planet all of the following:

- Toilets
- Sinks
- Showers
- Running water
- Computers
- Phones
- Internet
- Beds
- Chairs
- Roads
- Bikes
- Cars
- Planes
- Boats
- Books
- Paper
- Pencils
- Pens
- Hospitals
- Doctors
- Medicines
- Tools
- Grocery stores
- Fridges
- Freezers
- Farms
- Stoves
- Microwaves
- Shirts
- Sweaters
- Jackets
- Pants
- Socks
- Shoes
- Underwear

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You are now standing alone in the middle of the planet with none of those things. Take your phone out of your pocket and toss it away. Take your shoes and shirt off, too, because they don't exist. Take everything off. You are completely naked with nothing around. None of those things exist. And none of them will be gin to exist before the end of your life!

Now close your eyes, picture yourself there, and remember that:

99% of our history was living in this world.

99% of our history was with a life span of thirty years.

99% of our history was with brains **constantly battling for survival.**

Life was short, brutal, and highly competitive, and we have the same brains now that we've had throughout our history.

Were we happy back then? The better question is: Did we have time to be happy?

David Cain, author of *This Will Never Happen Again*, describes this exact situation on his website Raptitude: Getting Better at Being Human:

If one of our ancestors ever actually became happy with his possessions, with his social standing, or with what he had accomplished in life, he would suddenly be in a particular kind of danger. There was no cradle of civilization to depend on if something went wrong. So survival required us to make our own safety nets. Having enough could never feel like enough, or else we'd become complacent, leaving us vulnerable to predators, competitors, and bad luck. Lasting happiness was too risky.

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This instinctive need for what we don't yet have creates in us a persistent state of dissatisfaction. Without it, our ancestors would always be only one failed hunting session away from starvation. This simple, ruthless script is programmed to drive survival at all costs. It works exceedingly well for this purpose, but it leaves us feeling stress and unpleasantness much of the time. Unhappiness is nature's way of keeping people on their toes. It's a crude system, but it has worked for thousands of years.

We have the same brains we've always had through this short, brutal, and highly competitive time in our history. Our brains didn't just suddenly change when we got printing presses, airplanes, and the Internet. How have our brains been programmed?

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Year	→	"I need . . ."	→	"If I don't, I'll . . ."
180,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
170,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
160,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
150,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
140,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
130,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
120,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
110,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
100,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
90,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
80,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
70,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
60,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
50,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
40,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
30,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
20,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
10,000 BCE	→	Food and safety	→	Die
1	→	Food and safety	→	Die
1000	→	Food and safety	→	Die
2000	→	Happiness	→	Die

What did this fear do? It drove our survival. We survived at all costs. We were paranoid. We were fighters. We were ruthless. We were brutal. We were murderous. And because of it . . . we got here. And because of it . . . we took over the planet. And because of it . . . we have everything in the world.

So this begs the question: Is that fear still programmed into our heads today?

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3

The one thing your doctor, teacher, and Tom Hanks all have in common

Yes, that fear is still programmed into our heads.
It's everywhere, it's between our ears, it's in our brains.

Tom Hanks, one of the world's most successful actors, who earns millions with every movie and has scored two Academy Awards, said, "Some people go to bed at night thinking, 'That was a good day.' I am one of those who worries and asks, 'How did I screw up today?'"

Andy Grove is the longtime Intel executive who helped transform the company into a multibillion-dollar success. He was believed by many to have helped drive the growth phase of Silicon Valley, was named *Time's* Man of the Year in 1997, and was idolized by Steve Jobs, according to Jobs's biography. How did he famously put it? "Only the paranoid survive."

Our brains still follow this paranoid model every day, and it is a recipe for unhappiness! Some call it Medical Student's Syndrome. That's a term Jerome K. Jerome first coined in his 1889 classic, *Three Men in a Boat*: "I remember going to the British Museum one day to read up the treatment for some slight ailment of which I had a touch—hay fever, I fancy it was. I got down the book, and read all I came to read; and then, in an unthinking moment, I idly turned the leaves, and began to indolently study diseases, generally. I forget which was the first distemper I plunged into—some fear-

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ful, devastating scourge, I know—and, before I had glanced half down the list of ‘premonitory symptoms,’ it was borne in upon me that I had fairly got it.

“I sat for a while, frozen with horror; and then, in the listlessness of despair, I again turned over the pages. I came to typhoid fever—read the symptoms—discovered that I had typhoid fever, must have had it for months without knowing it—wondered what else I had got; turned up St. Vitus’s Dance—found, as I expected, that I had that, too—began to get interested in my case, and determined to sift it to the bottom, and so started alphabetically—read up ague, and learnt that I was sickening for it, and that the acute stage would commence in about another fortnight . . .”

It’s not just medical students. We’ve all been there.

We scan the world for problems because that led to our survival. And our current design of the world only reinforces and grows these negative-lens feelings.

At your doctor’s office when you get lab results, the doctor says, “Your blood sugar is fine, your cholesterol is fine, but your iron is low.” What do you do? You talk about getting your iron up. Eat steak! No work is done improving your blood sugar or cholesterol. If cholesterol should be below 200mg/dL and you’re at 195, great! If you’re 205, that’s a problem. Doctors get paid when we’re sick. Shouldn’t we pay them when we’re healthy?

Retail store managers “manage by exception” by staring at morning reports, finding a number below average, and trying to bump it up. If that report says your traffic count is fine, basket size is fine, but checkout time is below average, what does the boss want? Faster checkouts. More cashiers! No work is done improving statistics that are already average.

In the classroom the teacher hands back test results and offers extra help to those below average. They have to pass! If not, the

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year is repeated, the system is drained, friends all move ahead. What happens for the below-average kids? Extra help at lunch. Tutoring sessions. Remedial tests. Why aren't students who get 100% offered any extra challenge?

It's no different in the workplace. We get job evaluations showing how well we're doing. What happens if you're below expectations? Performance improvement plan! Extra meetings with the boss! Shipped to training classes! What happens if you're doing well? Two percent raise. Pat on the back.

Rather than find good results and make them better, our brains do this:

1. Look for problem.
2. Find problem.
3. Improve problem.



That's what our brains have been trained to do for two hundred thousand years. But because we scan the world for problems, sometimes that's all we see. Here's how *New York Times*–bestselling author Kelly Oxford framed our Medical Student's Syndrome on Twitter: “WebMD is like a Choose Your Own Adventure book where the ending is always cancer.”

So what do we do about it?



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How much can we control?

Aristotle says, “Happiness depends upon ourselves.”
Viktor Frankl says, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

Walt Whitman writes, “Keep your face always toward the sunshine—and shadows will fall behind you.”

I love what Aristotle, Viktor Frankl, and Walt Whitman say. But how do you get there?

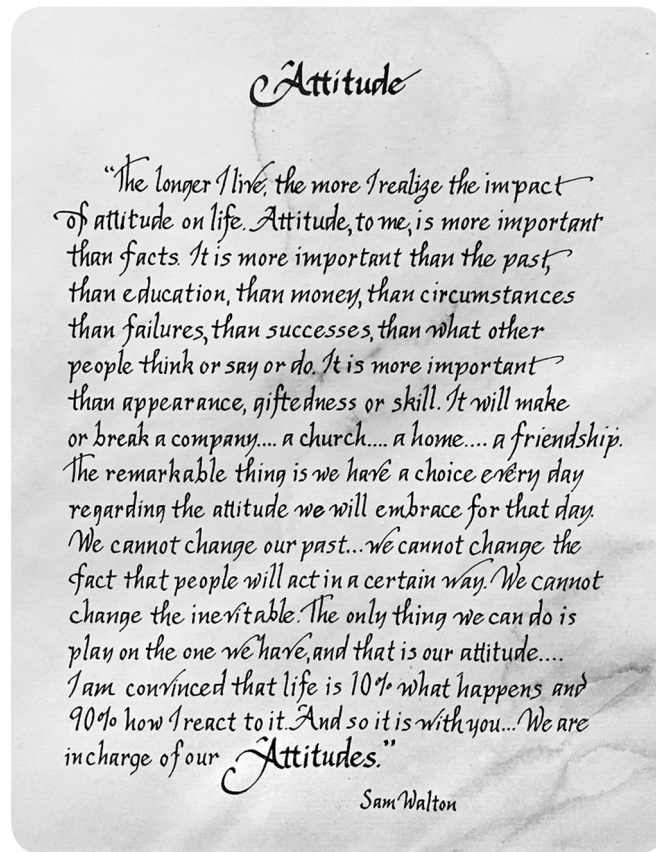
Well, we now have scientific evidence of the importance of attitude and specific proven actions we can take to manage our attitude.

When my wife Leslie turned sixteen, her grandmother gave her a brass-framed quote for her birthday. She hung it on her bedroom wall. She looked at it in the mornings before school, and it is still hanging in her old bedroom today. I have stopped to read it several times, and I took a picture to show you.

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Pay special attention to the second last sentence:



I know it says Sam Walton on the poster! But this is an artifact of the old days when email forwards and chain letters had misattributions that lasted for years. This quote was actually said by Charles Swindoll, a Texas preacher who broadcasts a show to more than two thousand radio stations.

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Do you know what's amazing about this quote?

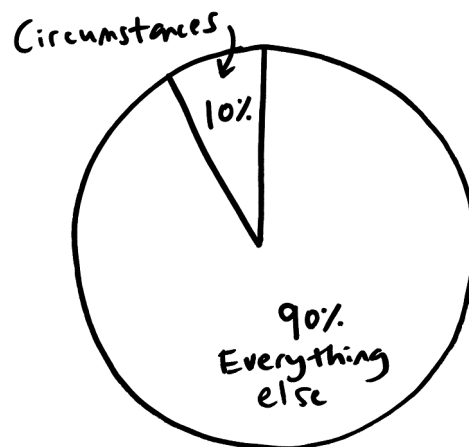
The second last sentence!

"I am convinced that life is 10% what happens and 90% how I react to it."

Well, new research published in *The How of Happiness* by University of California psychology professor Sonja Lyubomirsky tells us exactly how much of our happiness is based on our life circumstances.

And it is 10%!

10% of our happiness is what happens *to* us.



So 90% of our happiness isn't based on what's happening in the world! *It's based on how we see the world.* What's included in the 90%? Our genetic predisposition and our intentional activities. Yes, intentional activities. This is big. Those are *specific things* we can do to improve our happiness. And they alone have *four times the effect on our happiness* than anything happening in our life.

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Let me put it another way:

If I knew everything about your life circumstances—your job, your health, your marital status, your income—I could predict only 10% of your happiness. That's it! The remaining amount is not determined by your external world but by the way your brain processes it.

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5

7 ways to be happy right now

How do you be happy first?

For this chapter we look to the emerging field of positive psychology. What's that? It's not fluffy lollipop experiments. Professors of psychology Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi are called the fathers of positive psychology because of their passion for cold hard facts. As they put it themselves in *American Psychologist*:

"Psychology is not just a branch of medicine concerned with illness or health; it is much larger. It is about work, education, insight, love, growth, and play. And in this quest for what is best, positive psychology does not rely on wishful thinking, faith, self-deception, fads, or hand-waving; it tries to adapt what is best in the scientific method to the unique problems that human behavior presents to those who wish to understand it in all its complexity."

Positive psychology is a new and growing field.

I have sifted through hundreds of studies to find the **Big 7** ways to train your brain to be happy. Many of these studies have been discussed in journals, conference keynotes, and research reports, but I've brought them together for you here.

If you do any of these seven things for two straight weeks, you will feel happier.

So what are the Big 7?

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THREE WALKS
THE 20-MINUTE REPLAY
RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS
A COMPLETE UNPLUG
HIT FLOW
2-MINUTE MEDITATIONS
FIVE GRATITUDES

Three Walks

Pennsylvania State researchers reported in the *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology* that the more physically active people are, the greater their general feelings of excitement and enthusiasm. Researcher Amanda Hyde reports, “We found that people who are more physically active have more pleasant-activated feelings than people who are less active, and we also found that people have more pleasant-activated feelings on days when they are more physically active than usual.” It doesn’t take much: Half an hour of brisk walking three times a week improves happiness. The American Psychosomatic Society published a study showing how Michael Babyak and a team of doctors found that three thirty-minute brisk walks or jogs even improve recovery from clinical depression. Yes, *clinical depression*. Results were stronger than studies using medication or studies using exercise and medication combined.

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The 20-Minute Replay

Writing for twenty minutes about a positive experience dramatically improves happiness. Why? Because you actually *relive* the experience as you're writing it and then *relive* it every time you read it. Your brain sends you back. In a University of Texas study called "How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Words," researchers Richard Slatcher and James Pennebaker had one member of a couple write about their relationship for twenty minutes three times a day. Compared to the test group, the couple was more likely to engage in intimate dialogue afterward and the relationship was more likely to last. What does the 20-Minute Replay do? It helps us remember things we like about people and experiences in our lives.

Random Acts of Kindness

Carrying out five random acts of kindness a week dramatically improves your happiness. We don't naturally think about paying for someone's coffee, mowing our neighbor's lawn, or writing a thank-you note to our apartment building security guard at Christmas. But Sonja Lyubomirsky, author of *The How of Happiness*, did a study asking Stanford students to perform five random acts of kindness over a week. Not surprisingly, they reported much higher happiness levels than the test group. Why? They felt good about themselves! People appreciated them. In his book *Flourish*, Professor Martin Seligman says that "we scientists have found that doing a kindness produces the single most reliable momentary increase in well-being of any exercise we have tested."

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A Complete Unplug

“The richest, happiest and most productive lives are characterized by the ability to fully engage in the challenge at hand, but also to disengage periodically and seek renewal,” say Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz in *The Power of Full Engagement*. And a Kansas State University study found that complete downtime after work helps us recharge for the next day. Turning your phone off after dinner. Not using the Internet on vacation. There’s a lot more to this, and we’re going to chat about it in Secret #6. If you can’t wait, flip to page 145.

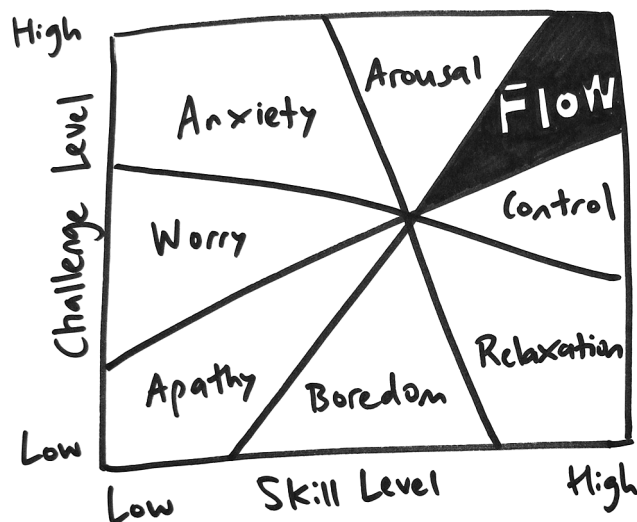
Hit Flow

Get into a groove. Be in the zone. Find your flow. However you characterize it, when you’re completely absorbed with what you’re doing, it means you’re being challenged and demonstrating skill at the same time. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes this moment as “being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you’re using your skills to the utmost.” In his book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, he describes it using an image I’ve redrawn on the following page:

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2-Minute Meditations

A research team from Massachusetts General Hospital looked at brain scans of people before and after they participated in a course on mindfulness meditation and published the results in *Psychiatry Research*. What happened? After the course, parts of the brain associated with compassion and self-awareness grew while parts associated with stress shrank. Studies report that meditation can “permanently rewire” your brain to raise levels of happiness.

Five Gratitudes

If you can be happy with simple things, then it will be simple to be happy. Find a book or a journal, or start a website, and write down three to five things you’re grateful for from the past week. I wrote five a week on 1000awesomethings.com. Some people write in a notebook by their bedside. Back in 2003, researchers Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough asked groups of students to

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write down five gratitudes, five hassles, or five events that happened over the past week for ten straight weeks. Guess what happened? The students who wrote five gratitudes were happier and physically healthier. Charles Dickens puts this well: “Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has many, not your past misfortunes, of which all men have some.”

Those are the Big 7. You know it’s important to be happy first, and these are the seven ways to get there. Remember: Just like driving a car, throwing a football, or doing a headstand—you can *learn* to be happier.

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6

A final lesson from the convent

A few years ago a group of researchers at the University of Kentucky stumbled upon pure academic gold: cardboard boxes stashed away and full of *handwritten autobiographies* written by nuns as they joined US convents in the 1930s and '40s. So the researchers read these autobiographies and began sorting them into piles based on how positive the attitude and emotion were in each one.

Here are a couple that show the difference between low and high positive emotion:

Sister 1: I was born on September 26, 1909, the eldest of seven children, five girls and two boys. My candidate year was spent in the Motherhouse, teaching Chemistry and Second Year Latin at Notre Dame Institute. With God's grace, I intend to do my best for our Order, for the spread of religion, and for my personal sanctification.

Sister 2: God started my life off well by bestowing upon me a grace of inestimable value. The past year which I have spent as a candidate studying at Notre Dame College has been a very happy one. Now I look forward with eager joy to receiving the Holy Habit of Our Lady and to a life of union with Love Divine.

Pretty different, aren't they?

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Turns out it was easy for the researchers to categorize the autobiographies into four “levels of happiness” seventy years later and excitedly rub their hands together, squeal nerdy academic researcher squeals, and compare those dusty old autobiographies with how well the nuns were doing today.

Now, keep in mind the best thing about studying nuns is that all the difficult, hard-to-control variables were controlled. None of them smoked, drank, had sex, got married, or had kids . . . ever! They even lived in the same cities, ate the same foods, and wore the same clothes. (Who’s doing a load of whites? Nobody! Ever!)

Therefore, their positive attitude seventy years ago was **the prime indicator** of how long they lived.

That’s why this study is so powerful.

And guess what the researchers found out?

Revolutionary findings that sent academic circles buzzing. Staggering takeaways about the power of starting with a positive lens in your life. They published the results and called them “Positive Emotions in Early Life and Longevity: Findings from the Nun Study.”

Here’s what they found:

- The happiest nuns lived ten years longer than the least happy nuns.
- By age eighty, the most happy group had lost only 25% of its population, whereas the least happy group had lost 60%.
- 54% of the most happy nuns reached the age of ninety-four, compared to 15% of the least happy nuns.

The Nun Study shows an incredibly strong link between how happy you are today and how long you’re going to live. And it’s not

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just length, either! Think of it: You will be happier through all those years, too.

Happy people don't have the best of everything.

They make the best of everything.

Be happy first.

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BE HAPPY FIRST

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Secret #2

Do This
and Criticism
Can't Touch You

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The only goal you set that matters

Blog Stats: 50,017 hits.

Heart thumping, palms sweating, I sit back on my creaky wooden chair, stare at my blog, and grimace. Is this real? I click Refresh, scrunch my face, and look at the screen again.

Blog Stats: 50,792 hits.

Seven hundred people visited my blog in the last thirty seconds, I think to myself.

Only four weeks ago I'd started writing 1000awesomethings.com, and after a few hundred visits it looks like that day's post—#980 Old, dangerous playground equipment—went viral while I was at work.

My heart beats faster.

I had one simple goal when I started writing 1000 Awesome Things.

I wanted to try to write 1000 awesome things for 1000 days in a row.

But after the first couple weeks writing about broccoflower and potato chip crumbs, I started noticing the stats counter on the side of my page.

It showed how many people had visited. Seven then twenty then *dozens* then *hundreds*. I got hooked on watching the number climb.

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So I set a different goal for myself. I decided I wanted fifty thousand hits.

When #980 Old, dangerous playground equipment went viral a few weeks later, I had accomplished my goal.

But then I told myself fifty thousand was too small. Too easy. It didn't mean much getting fifty thousand hits. The big sites had a million. So that became my new goal. One million hits.

I kept writing every day, adding links to email signatures and blog comments I left around the Web. I got stickers printed and started handing them out. I wrote #951 Hearing a stranger fart in public, #933 The first scoop out of a jar of peanut butter, and #909 Bakery air.

Flash-forward a few months later and . . . I got to one million hits!

I enjoyed the feeling for a couple days before realizing the best blogs don't just get a million hits. They get ten million hits and get turned into books and movies. I had set my goal too low. One million hits wasn't *worth* anything. Nothing *happened* when you got a million hits. I needed to go big to get some real action.

So I set a new goal.

Ten million hits.

For six months, I kept writing. After work every day, I got takeout and sat at my computer well into the night. I wrote the next post, responded to email, and started getting interviews with local radio and TV stations. I was featured on the front page of the *Toronto Star*! I wrote #874 The Five Second Rule, #858 The other side of the pillow, and #824 Finding the TV remote after looking forever. Nine months after I had started my blog, I suddenly reached ten million hits, won two awards for Best Blog in the World, and was approached by literary agents to turn my blog into a book.

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Once I had a literary agent I started researching the book industry. I learned that more than three hundred thousand books are published in the United States *every single year*. And well over a million a year are published around the world. Suddenly it dawned on me: Getting a book published was not very special. A million people did it every year!

I looked at bestseller lists and they had only ten or twenty books on them. I calculated that only a few hundred books make best-seller lists each year. Less than 0.01%.

So I set a new goal.

I wanted my book to be a bestseller.

I wanted to be one of the 0.01%.

The Globe and Mail published a bestseller list every weekend and I started checking it. What did these books have in common, what made them great, what made them sell?

So for the next year I kept writing my blog every day, writing my book, and working on a book launch plan. My plan was to work with bloggers to prepare interviews and articles about my book while working with my publisher to line up radio, newspaper, and TV interviews—all to come out when the book hit shelves.

Basically, the entire year after winning the awards, I was consumed with *The Book of Awesome* hitting the bestseller list. It was all I wanted, thought about, talked about. Then the big day of publication finally came!

I woke up early and started interview after interview. I posted a special entry called #526 When dreams come true. My voice turned scratchy, bags under my eyes turned black, and I was sleeping three or four hours a night. And then, finally, the next Saturday morning the newspaper came out and . . .

I hit #2 on the bestseller list!

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It was a dream come true. I went to bed happy. I had achieved my goal. My publishers were excited, too! Their joy said to keep pushing.

I woke up the next morning and took a closer look at the best-seller list.

My book was listed with a *1* beside it because it had been on the bestseller list for one week. I noticed other books were on the list for twenty or thirty weeks. Staying power. That was more important than being a one-hit wonder. I didn't want to go the rest of my life telling people my book was a bestseller for only one week.

I suddenly realized that popping on the bestseller list was nice . . . but it was nowhere near my true goal. I wanted this book to be bigger. *The New York Times* bestseller list. A *#1* beside my name.

Eventually *The Book of Awesome* hit #1 on the bestseller list and stayed there for five weeks then ten weeks then fifty weeks then one hundred weeks. Foreign publishers translated the book into German, Korean, French, Dutch, and Portuguese. *The Book of Awesome* hit *The New York Times* bestseller list, too. I was on the *Today* show, *The Early Show*, CNN, and the BBC. The producers of *The Office* optioned TV rights to the book and some big film producers optioned the movie rights, too. I got another book deal, then another, then another . . .

And I had done it!

I had finally reached my goal.

I started smiling. Tried to relax. A few days later, after working so hard for three years straight, lying in bed alone in my tiny apartment, getting three or four hours of sleep, eating takeout for every meal, developing black bags under my eyes, and losing touch with friends . . . I suddenly had a realization.

No matter how many external goals I achieved . . . I just kept setting more.

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I started realizing that external goals didn't help me become a better person.

Only internal goals did.

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2

What's the biggest problem with external goals?

When I was stressing about my blog and watching hit counters, bestseller lists, and award nominations, I was using *external motivators*. I wasn't doing it for me. *I was doing it for others*. I lost my self-confidence because I started outsourcing it to signals outside my brain, which I couldn't always control. When those signals were positive, I was flying. Lots of emails, piles of comments, and bestseller list rankings lifted me up and kept me going. But when those signs were negative, even relatively negative, I was devastated. Critical comments, a nasty review, and the inevitable slipping off the bestseller list—meant I was a loser.



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3

4 simple words that block all criticism

1. Do
2. It
3. For
4. You

Do it for you.

Don't do it for others.

It's hard to compete endlessly because there's always more to compete with when you get there.

Remember we will always be number two to seven billion at everything in the world. And every level we go up has new peers, new benchmarks, new competitors. A CEO once told me, "You always think the geniuses are at the next level."

But the next level never ends unless you are literally *the best in the entire world*. What are the odds of that happening? Well, they are one in seven billion.

You have better chances of getting struck by lightning every single day of your life.

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4

Why your dream job could be the worst job you ever have

Teddy Roosevelt famously said, “It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming, but who does actually strive to do the deeds, who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

It’s not the critic who counts.

But what motivates that man in the arena? Why is he working so hard?

First, remember there are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic is internal. You’re doing it because you want to. Extrinsic is external. You’re doing it because you get something for it.

Guess which gets better performance?

Studies show that when we begin to value the *rewards* we get for doing a task, we lose our inherent interest in doing the task. Like,

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we *literally* lose interest—as in, the interest we have becomes truly lost in our minds, hidden away from our own brains, as the shiny external reward sits front and center and becomes the new object of our desire.

While at Brandeis University, Dr. Teresa Amabile performed experiments on elementary school and college students and asked groups to make “silly collages” and invent stories for them. Some were told they were getting rewards for their work and some were not. What happened? Based on independent judges, who didn’t know who was getting paid, the least creative projects by far were done by students who were promised rewards for their work. Dr. Amabile said, “It may be that commissioned work will, in general, be less creative than work that is done out of pure interest.”

Makes sense.

When you’re **not doing it for you** . . . you’re not doing a good job.

It’s not just that getting rewards hurts quality, either.

In another study, seventy-two creative writers at Brandeis and Boston Universities were split into three groups of twenty-four creative writers each and asked to write poetry. Some were given extrinsic reasons for doing so—impressing teachers, making money, getting into fancy grad schools. Others were given a list of intrinsic reasons for writing haiku—enjoying the feeling of expressing themselves, the fun of playing with words. And the third group wasn’t given any reasons at all. On the sidelines, Dr. Amabile put together a group of a dozen poet judges, mixed up all the poems, and had the judges evaluate the work.

By far and away, the lowest-quality poems were from those who had the list of extrinsic motivators for doing so.

James Garbarino, former president of the Erikson Institute for Advanced Study in Child Development, was curious about this phenomenon. He studied fifth- and sixth-grade girls hired to tutor

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younger children. Some of the tutors were offered free movie tickets for doing a good job. Some weren't. What happened? The girls offered free movie tickets took longer to communicate ideas, got frustrated more easily, and did a worse job in the end than the girls who were given nothing except the feeling of helping someone else.

I was surprised by the studies, but they made sense to me.

I remembered writing articles for the *Golden Words* comedy newspaper at Queen's University every Sunday for four straight years while in college. I didn't get paid a cent but loved every minute because I got to hang out with a group of really funny people writing articles that made us all laugh. I loved it so much that I took a job working at a New York City comedy writing startup in my last summer at college. I rented an apartment on the Lower East Side and started working in a Brooklyn loft with writers from *The Simpsons* and *Saturday Night Live*.

Wow, I remember thinking. I can't believe I'm getting paid to do what I love.

It was the hardest job of my life.

Instead of having creative freedom to write whatever I wanted, I had to write "800 words about the bright side of getting dumped by 5:00 p.m." for a client like *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Instead of joking with friends naturally, finding chemistry with certain people, I was scheduled to write with others. Eventually my interest in comedy writing faded and faded and faded . . . and I decided I would never do it for money again.

When I started writing 1000 Awesome Things, I said I'd never put ads on the website. I would have liked the beer money! But I knew the ads would feel like work to me. I might start writing an article to get more views on an ad. And I would be spending time checking invoices. Looking at payment transfers. It would take

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away—or just hide—my reasons for writing in the first place. I was smart about that . . . but not smart enough to ignore the other extrinsic motivators that kept showing up. Stat counters, website awards, bestseller lists. It was all so visible, so measurable, and so tempting.

I started looking into this whole “extrinsic motivators kill intrinsic motivators” phenomenon and kept finding studies showing this to be true.

Professor Edward Deci of the University of Rochester had students try to solve a puzzle. Some were told they were competing with other students and some were not. Guess what happened? The students who were told they were competing with others simply stopped working once the other kids finished their puzzle—believing themselves to be out of the race. They ran out of reasons to do the puzzle in the first place. But those who weren’t told they were competing with others kept going once their peers finished.

When you don’t feel like you’re competing with others, you compete only with yourself.

You do it for you.

And you do more, go further, and perform better.

Want to hear an old joke?

An old man enjoyed sitting on his front porch every day until the elementary school bell rang and neighborhood kids walking past his porch stopped to taunt him from the sidewalk.

Finally, the old man came up with a plan.

He offered the children a dollar each if they’d return the next day and yell their insults.

They were excited, so they returned, yelled their insults, and he paid each of them a dollar.

He then said he’d like them to come back the next day and yell their insults, but he could pay them only 25 cents.

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So they returned, yelled their insults, and he paid them a quarter each.

Before they left, he said that he could only afford to pay them a penny on Wednesday.

“Forget it,” they said. “That’s not worth it.”

And they never bothered him again.

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5

The 3 S's of success

How can I be successful?"

I smiled at the eager fifty-something woman beside me. We were sitting at Table 1 at a banquet dinner for SHAD, a non-profit for which I sit on the board of directors, as students paraded across the stage winning awards. Me being a director, she being a sponsor, we would be sitting a foot apart for the next two hours. The chairman of the board introduced us with a big grin and said, "Neil's a *New York Times* bestseller who's sold over a million books! Nancy wants to be a writer! Enjoy!"

Now I was smiling at her bright and shiny face. She spent a few minutes telling me about the years she'd spent writing novels that she's never shown anybody. Then came the big question.

"What's your secret to success?" she asked.

I paused for a minute and thought about it.

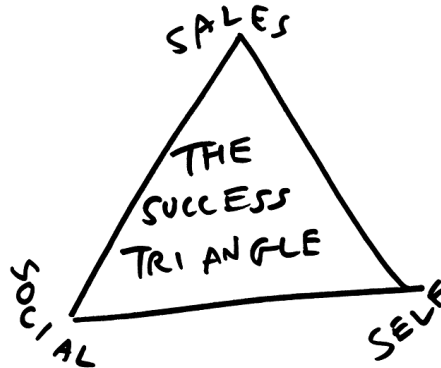
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“Do you have a pen?” I asked, grabbing a napkin. “Let me show you a scribble.”



“There are three S’s of Success,” I started. “I put them in The Success Triangle. It took me a really long time to figure this out. The first step is actually figuring out what kind of success you want.”

Sales success is about sales. Your book is a commercial hit!

Everybody’s reading it, everybody’s talking about it, you’re on TV. You sell hundreds then thousands then millions of copies. Your book becomes an “it book.” A catchphrase. Dump trucks beep while backing into your garage to pour endless royalty payments.

Social success means you’re a success among your peers.

People you respect. This is *critical* success. The industry loves you! *The New York Times* reviews your book. You’re short-listed for the Man Booker Prize. An influential author you look up to sends you a letter, which feels like gold.

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Self success is in your head. It's invisible! Only you know if you have it. Self success means you achieved what you wanted to achieve. For yourself. You're genuinely proud of your accomplishment, you're happy with your work, and, most important, you're *satisfied*. You want nothing. You feel contentment. Some people believe without self success, no amount of sales or social success will ever feel meaningful.

The 3 S's of Success apply to all industries, professions, and aspects of life. Success is not one-dimensional. You must decide what kind of success you want.

Are you in marketing? Sales success means your product flew off the shelves, sales shot through the roof, and your numbers blew away forecasts. Social success means you were written up in prestigious magazines. Nominated for an award. Recognized by the CEO at a company meeting. Self success? That's the same. How do *you* feel about your accomplishments?

Are you a teacher? Sales success means you're offered promotions. Asked if you're interested in becoming vice principal or principal one day. Social success means you're presenting at conferences, mentoring new teachers, and the principal talks about your work. Self success? That's the same. How do *you* feel about your accomplishments?

Here's the catch: It is impossible to have all three successes.

I say this because I've never seen it and I don't think you should aspire toward it. At least at first. If you have one type of success for a very long time, and then you add another for a long time, then sure. Go ahead. Try for the third.

But often two corners of The Success Triangle actually prevent the third.

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How so?

Well, sales success can block self success. That's what happened when I got hooked on blog counters and bestseller lists. My personal goals suddenly took a backseat to more tangible commercial goals. Think of Krusty the Clown—brand cough syrup, home pregnancy tests, and imitation gruel. ("Nine out of ten orphans can't tell the difference.") This is the artist who sells out. There's nothing wrong with that! But you can see how commercial success blocks personal success sometimes.

And self success doesn't necessarily have a marketable strategy—so no sales or social success follows. The birthday cakes you bake for your daughter. That incredible lesson you put your heart into for weeks. The backyard deck you built with your bare hands. You wouldn't expect royalty payments or critical reviews from those endeavors. You're not trying to sell cakes, lessons, or decks. You could! But that wasn't your goal.

Lastly, critical darlings rarely sell! Social success can *block* sales success. Let me give you an example: One of my favorite movies a few years ago was *The Hurt Locker*. Tense, dramatic, I was glued to the screen. The movie won Best Picture at the Academy Awards. There is no higher honor! But its total domestic box office was 17 million dollars. *Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel* came out that same year. And it ended up making 219 million dollars.

Which would you have rather made?

Know which of the 3 S's of Success you want.

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6

The sad and unfortunate reason we listen to critics in the first place

We know we shouldn't listen to our critics.
We know we should do things for ourselves.

Morihei Ueshiba, founder of the Japanese martial art aikido, said, "As soon as you concern yourself with the 'good' and 'bad' of your fellows, you create an opening in your heart for maliciousness to enter. Testing, competing with, and criticizing others weaken and defeat you."

So why do we listen? What makes us interested in external measurements? Why do we take outside rankings, results, or opinions over our own opinion of ourselves?

There is a root issue.

An underlying reason.

There is one issue that many of us have, that I know I have, that is at the basis of why we jump at external rankings.

The root issue is . . . our lack of confidence. Self-judgment. We get lost in our own heads, we get confused with mixed advice, so we follow what we see.

The root issue is self-confidence.

And we're going to solve this root issue together in less than ten pages.

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“Every single day I come to work I feel like I’m a failure.”

Twilight shone through the glass window and dim lights lit up leather chairs and the shiny lacquered desk as I sat staring in disbelief at my Harvard Business School leadership professor as he smiled wryly through wet, shiny eyes.

Tenured Harvard Business School professors have bachelor’s degrees, master’s degrees, and PhDs, and they finish at the top of their class in all three! They make six-figure salaries and consult and speak on the side to earn even more. And they’re teaching at Harvard! A not-too-shabby résumé bullet point.

So why did my Harvard professor consider himself a failure?

“I walk up to my office door every morning and see that the professor in the office to my left has a Nobel Prize . . . and I know I’ll never have a Nobel Prize,” he continued. “And I see that the professor in the office to my right has written twelve books . . . and I know I’ll never write twelve books. I haven’t even written one. Every single morning I’m reminded how inferior I am and it kills me.”

I looked at him and could tell he was smiling and trying to make a point . . . but I could also see there was some truth in his words. After all, in his world, all his major accomplishments are neutralized by his peers. Piles of degrees, million-dollar bank accounts, prestigious jobs—all just par for the course.

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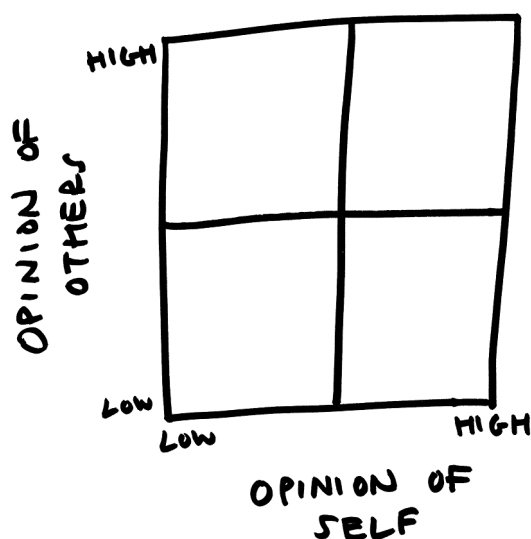




7

The secret scribble to increasing your confidence

What is confidence?
Time for our next scribble.



Let's talk about your opinion of yourself. It can be high or low. Sure, it will flip-flop all the time. But let's say in any instant it can be high or it can be low. Does confidence just have to do with your opinion of yourself?

No!

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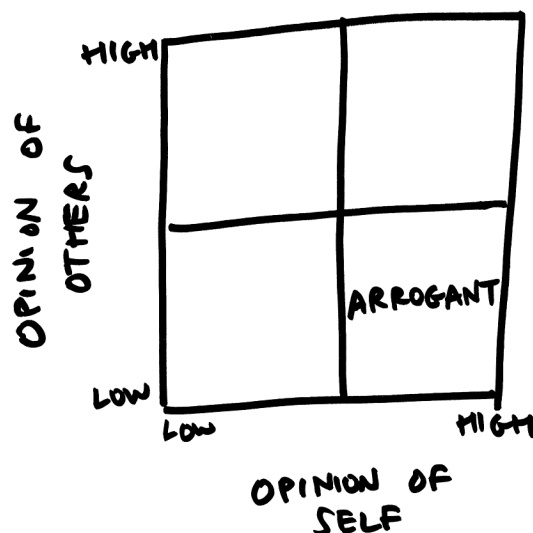
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Most people think it does. But we always have an opinion of others, too.

What do you call people with a high opinion of themselves and a low opinion of others?

They're not confident. They are . . .

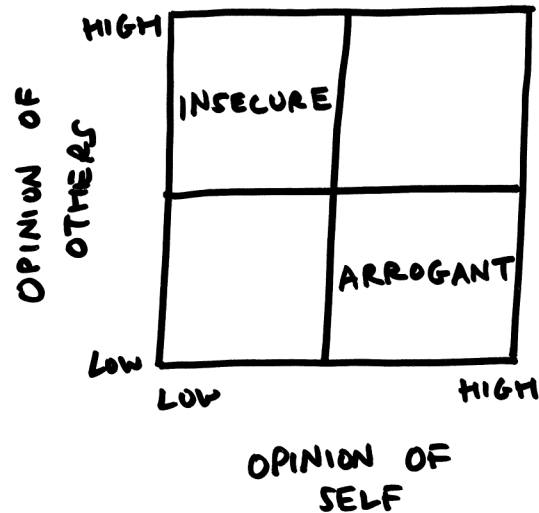


Stuck-up. Egotistical. Bigheaded. Arrogant people are not confident because they don't understand that having a high opinion of others doesn't lower their opinion of themselves. They are affected by other people's confidence! It makes them feel weak. So they try to lower that confidence while increasing their own. Remember the school yard bully who actually feels bad about himself deep down? This is the guy we're talking about here. This is the guy who feels the need to be better than others in order to be good at all.

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Next box.

What do you call people with a high opinion of others but a low opinion of themselves?

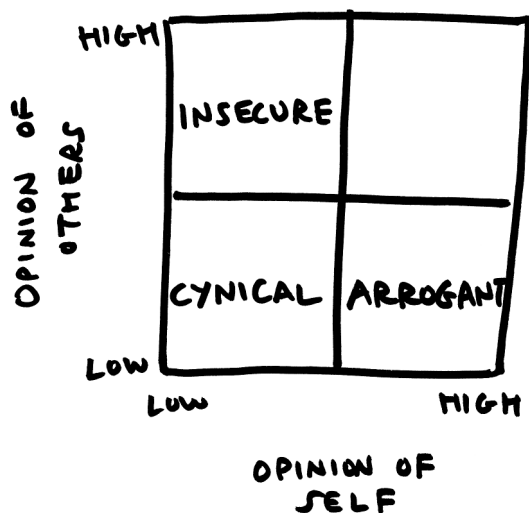


We've all been there! We think greatly of other people and believe ourselves to be "lesser than." You feel this way when you stare at a group photo and say something like "Oh my God! I look hideous! I look huge! You look great, though." Talk about beating yourself up. High opinion of others. Low opinion of yourself.

Insecure.

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Now, what do you call people with a low opinion of themselves and a low opinion of others? No high opinions of anyone at all!



We've all been here, too. Bad days, bad bosses, big mistakes. We can get into a funk and see problems everywhere. We become cynical. The cynic isn't confident. Cynical is the furthest thing from confident! As Conan O'Brien said on his final episode hosting *The Tonight Show*, "All I ask of you is one thing: Please don't be cynical. I hate cynicism—it's my least favorite quality and it doesn't lead anywhere."

What's left?

What do the truly confident people have?

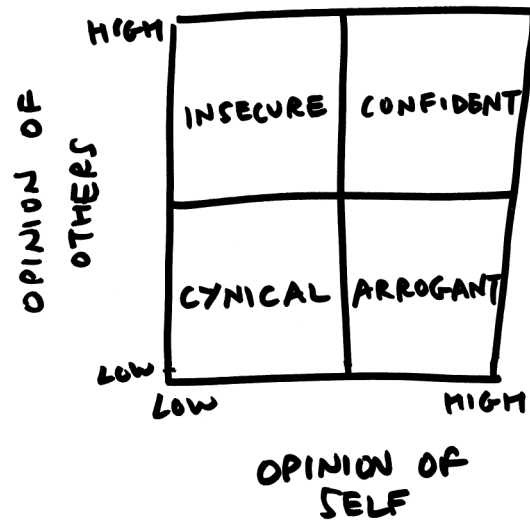
They have a high opinion of themselves. And! They have a high opinion of others.

That is the true definition of confidence.

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Buddha says, "You can search throughout the entire universe for someone who is more deserving of your love and affection than you are yourself and that person is not to be found anywhere. You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection."

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8

3 simple steps to self-acceptance

How do we get to that dream place?
How do we accept ourselves and think highly of others at the same time?

How can we separate those two opinions in our mind so we can allow both?

There are three steps to achieving a high opinion of yourself. It is a torturous path! But we go through this journey with every part of ourselves that we eventually learn to accept.

The three steps are:

1. Hide
2. Apologize
3. Accept

And here's what it looks like.

Hide

For years after I graduated from Harvard I answered the question the same way most of my classmates did.

THEM: So where did you go to school, anyway?

ME: Boston.

THEM: Cool.

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Eventually, I started realizing that *masking* is a form of self-judgment. I wasn't confident about having attended Harvard. I was afraid to mention Harvard because I was afraid of people's perceptions. Elite, nerdy, trust-fund kids with silver spoons, shady bankers corrupting society—whatever they were going to think, I was going to avoid. Rather than identify with this part of my identity, I hid it. I didn't mention it in my biography, in my blog or any of my books, in any radio lead-ins, any newspaper interviews. I didn't list my degree in my email signature at work like my coworkers.

I called this humility.

But it was fear.

After a couple years, I figured this out and decided that from then on I would tell anybody exactly where I went to school if they asked. Of course, I did this in a tentative way. An awkward way. Like dipping my toe in freezing cold water off the dock. Not really sure. How did I do it?

Apologize

THEM: So where did you go to school, anyway?

ME: (grimacing) Uh . . . Harvard?

THEM: Oh, uh, okay, haha . . . yeah, I heard of the place!

Haha, uh . . .

By acting awkward, I made things awkward for others. By apologizing for myself, I forced others to apologize, too.

Eventually, I started realizing that *apologizing* was a form of self-judgment, too. Great, another one!

Apologizing was communicating a part of myself, then immediately sounding a bright red *Family Feud* triple-X buzzer through it.

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“We surveyed a hundred people and the top five answers are on the board. Name a school you attended.”

“Uh . . . Harvard?”

NNNNNNN!

Apologizing avoids ownership.

Apologizing creates distance.

Apologizing suggests a mistake.

Apologizing is what you do when your dog craps on the neighbor’s lawn and then you look up and notice your neighbor watching from the window. (Sorry!)

Well, eventually I realized this, and after a couple years of apologizing I finally moved on to the third and final step.

Accept

THEM: So where did you go to school, anyway?

ME: Harvard.

THEM: Cool.

Gone went the tendency to hide the truth from others . . . which reflected my desire to hide it from myself.

Gone went the tentativeness and questioning . . . which reflected my tentativeness and questioning part of myself.

Replacing both came a clear and simple truth. Replacing both came a solid, grounded fact. By being clear and simple, without pretension, without assumptions, I consciously remove myself from any possible judgment that comes from any given statement.

This allows whatever judgment that comes to be wholly owned by the other person.

Physicist Richard Feynman says, “You have no responsibility to live up to what other people think you ought to accomplish. I have

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no responsibility to be like they expect me to be. It's their mistake, not my failing."

Accepting yourself communicates confidence.

Accepting yourself insulates you from the washing machine of emotions that comes from other people's views swaying your own. Swishing your thoughts. Bending your beliefs. Until they're muddy in even your own head.

What do you do with their views? How do you stop judging yourself?

Laugh at it.

A big laugh helps you look deep, notice your self-judgments, and push through the steps to accepting part of yourself.

H—Hide

A—Apologize

A—Accept

We're all full of self-judgments.

We're fat, lazy, don't exercise enough, aren't worthy of a raise, aren't worthy of her love, wouldn't find another job if we were fired, wouldn't find a new boyfriend if we were dumped. Sometimes we forget that we are all trying, trying, trying. We are all trying. We are all trying. We are all getting better.

You are what you are what you are.

Find what's hidden, stop apologizing, and accept yourself.

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9

How does Buddha use this secret?

One day Buddha was visiting a tiny village. He had become a religious man, also called a Brahman, and was traveling from town to town to share his message. He was becoming so popular that when people heard the Buddha was coming they went to hear him speak. As a result many other Brahmans lost their audience.

One Brahman was so upset with the Buddha that he found him and went to see him late at night. He was furious! “You have no right teaching others,” he shouted. “You are as stupid as everyone else. You are nothing but a fake!”

Buddha smiled at the Brahman and listened until he was done with his rant.

When the Brahman was done, Buddha still sat, smiling at him. This made the Brahman even angrier. “Why are you just sitting there smiling? What do you have to say?”

Then Buddha spoke.

“Tell me something, Brahman: Do friends and colleagues, relatives and kinsmen, ever come to your house as guests?”

“Yes,” the Brahman answered.

“And tell me something, Brahman,” Buddha continued. “Do you serve them foods and delicacies when they arrive?”

“Yes,” the Brahman answered, “I do.”

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“And tell me something, Brahman,” Buddha continued. “If they don’t accept them, to whom do those foods belong?”

“Well, I suppose if they don’t accept them, those foods are all mine.”

“Yes,” said Buddha. “In the same way, Brahman, I do not accept your anger and your criticism. It is all yours.”

The Brahman was stunned and could think of nothing to say.

His anger continued to bubble up inside him, but he had nowhere to put it.

Nobody was accepting it or taking it from him.

Buddha continued: “That with which you have insulted me, who is not insulting, that with which you have taunted me, who is not taunting, that with which you have berated me, who is not berating, that I don’t accept from you. It’s all yours, Brahman. It’s all yours.

“If you become angry with me and I do not get insulted, then the anger falls back on you. You are then the only one who becomes unhappy. All you have done is hurt yourself. If you want to stop hurting yourself, you must get rid of your anger and become loving instead.

“Whoever returns insult to one who is insulting, returns taunts to one who is taunting, returns a berating to one who is berating, is eating together, sharing company, with that person. But I am neither eating together nor sharing your company, Brahman. It’s all yours. It’s all yours.”

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10

What does a message secretly hidden under Wimbledon's Centre Court show us?

There are two lines of a poem above the player entrance to Centre Court at Wimbledon:



*If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same.*

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Picture walking down the tunnel and under that sign on your way to play in the Wimbledon final.



Sunlight beams through the entryway and you catch a glimpse of thousands filling the stands. The Royal Family is in their private box, and cameras capture your every action. Smile at your girlfriend, miss a shot and scream, sweat through your T-shirt—it's all beamed to hundreds of millions around the world.

You have played tennis every single day for fifteen years. You picked up an old racquet as a kid and everyone said you were a natural, so you made it your life. Your parents mortgaged their house to get you private lessons. You skipped graduation and prom because of tournaments. You managed to avoid major injuries by designing your off-court life to complement tennis: no skiing, no boozing, no building decks with your hands.

It all led to this. Right here. Right now. This is the big one.

If you win this match, you walk away with 3 million dollars. Lose and you don't. And the 3 million dollars doesn't include the notoriety, sponsorships, and legacy you'll create. Everybody remembers who wins Wimbledon. Nobody remembers who finishes second.

Who are you up against in this game?

Only the best tennis player in the entire world.

Now, right before you walk onto the court, onto the biggest tennis match of your life, your eye catches this quote.

*If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same.*

It jolts you. You pause and digest it.

No matter what happens right now, Triumph or Disaster, it's an impostor. You should treat them the same. Winning or losing is the same. Place the game in the context of your entire life. The world will go on. You will have more highs and lows no matter what. "If

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you can meet with Triumph or Disaster, And treat those two impostors just the same.”

You are competing only with yourself.

You relax, take a deep breath, and walk on the court smiling.

Although there’s no attribution on that wall, these two lines are from a poem called “If—,” written by Rudyard Kipling in 1895. Kipling was an English short-story writer and poet born in India who went on to win the Nobel Prize in Literature and was declared England’s favorite poet in national polls.

“If—” is thirty-two beautiful lines written by Rudyard Kipling to his son John as parental advice on how to be confident, accept yourself, and do it for you.

“If—” by Rudyard Kipling

*If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don’t deal in lies,
Or being hated, don’t give way to hating,
And yet don’t look too good, nor talk too wise:*

*If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you’ve spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,*

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*Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:*

*If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"*

*If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!*

Remember Secret #2. What do you do so criticism can't touch
you?

Remember to do it for you.

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11

"I don't stand back and judge . . . I do."

Do it for you.

When I was young I asked my cousin why it seemed to me that the NCAA Final Four was more exciting to watch than the NBA. "I don't understand," I said. "These college guys are running as fast as possible, diving for balls, jumping for difficult shots, smiling and laughing the whole time. When I flip to an NBA game the point guard is *walking* up the court. Everyone is *sitting* on the bench instead of standing and screaming." He smiled and said, "The college guys aren't getting paid for it. They might never get paid for it. They're doing it for themselves. Because they love it."

His words rang clear as a bell.

At around that same age I used to love rolling up my parents' change so they could take it to the bank every few months. I loved sorting the coins and counting out the exact number for each roll. I loved standing the coins up on their sides while squeezing them tightly together with my fingers. I loved carefully rolling them into those slippery little papers before folding tightly at the ends. Turning a big jar of coins into a small, heavy pile was deeply satisfying.

Then one day my mom said, "Neil, for your allowance you can keep ten percent of whatever you roll." What did I do? I rolled all the quarters and dimes but quit before the nickels and pennies. I said I'd get back to those. My mom was disappointed. Suddenly I

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didn't appreciate rolling fifty pennies for five cents when a roll of quarters earned me a dollar.

Do it for you.

Blog counters, score sheets, and job evaluations will always tell you how you're doing. They will deliver external rewards like money, promotions, or critical praise. But those rewards mask your intrinsic motivators. You go from running down the court to walking. You start focusing on appealing to those judging you. Risk-taking disappears.

Remember, it's not the critic who counts. It's the man in the arena. Pick the type of success you're aiming for and have a high opinion of yourself and a high opinion of others along the way. Move through hiding and apologizing to eventually accepting all parts of you. And as Buddha said, let others keep their criticism for you.

Do it for you.

Let's finish this secret with a story.

John Lennon was one of the most fiercely independent artists of all time. Do it for you? He did. Most people who experienced his level of sales and social success would never walk away from the Beatles—but he privately told Paul, George, and Ringo in September 1969 that he was leaving the group. More than a decade later, just weeks before his death, John Lennon was asked in a famous *Playboy* interview if he thought his post-Beatles music would ever have the lasting imprint of his work with the Beatles.

Tough question.

What did he say?

"I'm not judging whether 'I Am the Walrus' is better or worse than 'Imagine.' It is for others to judge. I am doing it. I do. I don't stand back and judge . . . I do."

Say "I do."

Do it for you.

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BE HAPPY FIRST
DO IT FOR YOU

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