

PERSONAL BIBLE

My favorite writings and wisdom

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I think it's about juggling. The juggling metaphor is a lot more apt. One of the things about juggling is that you've got to keep your eye on all the balls. A second thing about juggling is each time you touch something you have to give it energy. You've got to throw it up in the air so that it takes care of itself while you're working on the others. You've also got to throw the balls thoughtfully and carefully. That requires a lot of practice. The third thing about juggling, though, is you've got to catch the falling ball. The most important ball is the one that's about to hit the ground. – Howard Stevenson on why juggling is a better life metaphor than balancing

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The Art of Living by Thich Nhat Hanh [[link](#)]

Humanity has given rise to many talented artists, musicians, and architects, but how many of us have mastered the art of creating a happy moment—for ourselves and those around us?

We too are full of so many things and yet empty of a separate self. Like the flower, we contain earth, water, air, sunlight, and warmth. We contain space and consciousness. We contain our ancestors, our parents and grandparents, education, food, and culture. The whole cosmos has come together to create the wonderful manifestation that we are. If we remove any of these “non-us” elements, we will find there is no “us” left.

The Buddha said, “Where there is a sign, there is always deception.”

It is up to each one of us to develop a strong spiritual practice body every day. Every time you take one peaceful step or one mindful breath, your spiritual practice grows. Every time you embrace a strong emotion with mindfulness and restore your clarity and calm, it grows.

Use your time wisely. Every moment it is possible to think, say, or do something that inspires hope, forgiveness, and compassion.

Just as it tastes bitter to utter words that are negative or unkind, it feels wonderful to say something full of understanding and love.

Master Lin-Chi exhorted his students to be “business-less.” It means to not be getting busy all the time, to be free from busyness. If we can be business-less, we can touch the spirit of aimlessness in our daily life, not being carried away by our desires, plans, and projects.

You are about to start an argument. But then you remember to close your eyes and contemplate impermanence. You imagine your beloved three hundred years from now. He will be nothing but ash. It may not take three hundred years; perhaps within thirty or fifty years you will both be ash.

I am of the nature to grow old. There is no way to escape growing old. I am of the nature to have ill health. There is no way to escape ill health. I am of the nature to die. There is no way to escape death. All that is dear to me and everyone I love are of the nature to change. There is no way to escape being separated from them. My actions are my only true belongings. I cannot escape the consequences of my actions. They are the ground upon which I stand.

Later, when you turn into rain, you will have no regrets.

The art of happiness is the art of living deeply in the present moment.

When you wake up in the morning, you can choose how you want to start your day. I recommend you start the day smiling. Why smile? Because you are alive and you have twenty-four brand-new hours ahead of you. The new day is a gift of life offered to you. Celebrate it and vow to live it deeply. Vow not to waste it.

Often we are not eating our food; we are eating our worries and our projects.

A strong emotion is like a storm that comes, stays a while, and passes. Everyone must learn to survive a storm. The practice of belly breathing is essential. Every time a strong emotion like anger, fear, sadness, or despair comes up, we should go back to our breathing right away so we can take care of the storm raging within us.

As we learn to handle our suffering, we are learning to generate moments of nirvana.

Time is not money. Time is life, and time is love.

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Seeking Wisdom by Peter Bevelin [[copied from Derek Sivers](#)]

Master the best that other people have ever figured out.

The advice we give others is the advice that we ourselves need.

The more we are exposed to a stimulus, the higher our threshold of fear becomes.

Try to be consistently not stupid, instead of trying to be very intelligent.

Ask: How can I be wrong? Who can tell me if I'm wrong?

Talk to a man about himself and he will listen for hours.

When all are accountable, no one is accountable.

Everything seems stupid when it fails. In hindsight, everything seems obvious. Look at earlier decisions in the context of their own time.

If you always tell people why, they'll understand it better, they'll consider it more important, and they'll be more likely to comply.

Warren Buffett says: "It is not necessary to do extraordinary things to get extraordinary results."

In many business activities a few things can produce much of the value.

Bad terminology is the enemy of good thinking.

"If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." - Ein-

stein

Make fewer and better decisions. Why? Because it forces us to think more on each decision and thereby reduces our chance of mistakes.

A good business throws up one easy decision after another, whereas a bad one gives you horrible choices - decisions that are extremely hard to make.

A few major opportunities, clearly recognizable as such, will usually come to one who continuously searches and waits, with a curious mind.

Find the people you don't like and figure out what you don't like about them. Ask yourself if you have some of those qualities in you.

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“Quantity is a quality all its own” - Stalin

The ceramics teacher announced on opening day that he was dividing the class into two groups. All those on the left side of the studio, he said, would be graded solely on the quantity of work they produced, all those on the right solely on its quality. His procedure was simple: on the final day of class he would bring in his bathroom scales and weigh the work of the "quantity" group: fifty pound of pots rated an "A", forty pounds a "B", and so on. Those being graded on "quality", however, needed to produce only one pot -- albeit a perfect one -- to get an "A". Well, came grading time and a curious fact emerged: the works of highest quality were all produced by the group being graded for quantity. It seems that while the "quantity" group was busily churning out piles of work - and learning from their mistakes -- the "quality" group had sat theorizing about perfection, and in the end had little more to show for their efforts than grandiose theories and a pile of dead clay.

— from Art & Fear

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Scenius, or Communal Genius [[link](#)]

Brian Eno suggested the word to convey the extreme creativity that groups, places or “scenes” can occasionally generate. His actual definition is: “Scenius stands for the intelligence and the intuition of a whole cultural scene. It is the communal form of the concept of the genius.”

The serendipitous ingredients for scenius are hard to control. They depend on the presence of the right early pioneers. A place that is open, but not too open. A buffer that is tolerant of outlaws. And some flash of excitement to kick off the virtuous circle. You just can’t order this.

What Camp 4 illustrated is that the best you can do is NOT KILL IT. When it pops up, don’t crush it. When it starts rolling, don’t formalize it. When it sparks, fan it. But don’t move the scenius to better quarters. Try to keep accountants and architects and police and do-gooders away from it. Let it remain inefficient, wasteful, edgy, marginal, in the basement, downtown, in the ‘burbs, in the hotel ballroom, on the fringes, out back, in Camp 4.

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Scathing Reviews of Classic Books [\[link\]](#)

“Shall we frankly declare that, after the most deliberate consideration of Mr. Darwin’s arguments, we remain unconvinced?”
On the Origin of Species, by Charles Darwin (1860)

“The average intelligent reader will glean little or nothing from it ... save bewilderment and a sense of disgust.”
Ulysses, by James Joyce (1922)

“This Salinger, he’s a short-story guy.”
The Catcher in the Rye, by J.D. Salinger (1951)

“As discouraging as a breakfast of cold porridge.”
Collected Poems, by W.B. Yeats (1896)

“There are two equally serious reasons why it isn’t worth any adult reader’s attention. The first is that it is dull, dull, dull in a pretentious, florid and archly fatuous fashion. The second is that it is repulsive.”
Lolita, by Vladimir Nabokov (1958)

“Not one syllable of what Hemingway has written can or will be missed by any literate person in the world.”

Across the River and Into the Trees, by Ernest Hemingway (1950)

“‘Catch-22’ has much passion, comic and fervent, but it gasps for want of craft and sensibility.”

Catch-22, by Joseph Heller (1963)

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The Mundanity of Excellence [\[link\]](#)

The main differences between less and more elite swimmers:

1. **Technique** - Not only are the strokes different, they are so different that the “C” swimmer may be amazed to see how the “AAAA” swimmer looks when swimming. The appearance alone is dramatically different
2. **Discipline** - Diver Greg Louganis, who won two Olympic gold medals in 1984, practices only three hours each day – not a long time – divided into two or three sessions. But during each session, he tries to do every dive perfectly
3. **Attitude** - The very features of the sport that the “C” swimmer finds unpleasant, the top-level swimmer enjoys. What others see as boring – swimming back and forth over a black line for two hours, say – they find peaceful, even meditative, often challenging, or therapeutic. They enjoy hard practices, look forward to difficult competitions, try to set difficult goals

Athletes move up to the top ranks through qualitative jumps: noticeable changes in their techniques, discipline, and attitude, accomplished usually through a change in settings, e.g., joining a new team with a new coach, new friends, etc., who work at a higher level

Talent is often recognized after the fact - conveniently after all the skill acquisition and hard work have already been invested - ...despite the physical capabilities he was born with, it took Peter several years (six by our estimate) to appear gifted. This is the predominant, though not exclusive, pattern found in our data on swimmers. Most of them are said to be “natural” or “gifted” after they had already devoted a great deal of time and

hard work to the field

Superlative performance is really a confluence of dozens of small skills or activities, each one learned or stumbled upon, which have been carefully drilled into habit and then are fitted together in a synthesized whole

In the pursuit of excellence, maintaining mundanity is the key psychological challenge

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The Analects of Confucius [\[link\]](#)

Zi Xia said, "If a man withdraws his mind from the love of beauty, and applies it as sincerely to the love of the virtuous; if, in serving his parents, he can exert his utmost strength; if, in serving his prince, he can devote his life; if, in his intercourse with his friends, his words are sincere -although men say that he has not learned, I will certainly say that he has."

The superior man does not, even for the space of a single meal, act contrary to virtue. In moments of haste, he cleaves to it. In seasons of danger, he cleaves to it.

The Master said of Zi Chan that he had four of the characteristics of a superior man -in his conduct of himself, he was humble; in serving his superior, he was respectful; in nourishing the people, he was kind; in ordering the people, he was just.

The Master said, "The sage and the man of perfect virtue -how dare I rank myself with them? It may simply be said of me, that I strive to become such without satiety, and teach others without weariness."

There were four things from which the Master was entirely free. He had no foregone conclusions, no arbitrary predeterminations, no obstinacy, and no egoism.

The Master said, "Hold faithfulness and sincerity as first principles. Have no friends not equal to yourself. When you have faults, do not fear to abandon them."

The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it.

The Master said, "The firm, the enduring, the simple, and the modest are near to virtue."

Some one asked about him, saying, "I suppose he has made great progress." The Master said, "I observe that he is fond of occupying the seat of a full-grown man; I observe that he walks shoulder to shoulder with his elders. He is not one who is seeking to make progress in learning. He wishes quickly to become a man."

Zi Gong asked, saying, "Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?" The Master said, "Is not RECIPROCITY such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."

Confucius said, "There are three friendships which are advantageous, and three which are injurious. Friendship with the upright; friendship with the sincere; and friendship with the man of much observation -these are advantageous. Friendship with the man of specious airs; friendship with the insinuatingly soft; and friendship with the glib-tongued -these are injurious."

Confucius said, "There are three things which the superior man guards against. In youth, when the physical powers are not yet settled, he guards against lust. When he is strong and the physical powers are full of vigor, he guards against quarrelsomeness. When he is old, and the animal powers are decayed, he guards against covetousness."

With coarse rice to eat, with water to drink, and my bended arm for a pillow - I have still joy in the midst of these things

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Hit Makers by Derek Thompson [[link](#)]

But perhaps every hit is a cult hit. You could easily say that from a majoritarian standpoint, nothing is popular. The mainstream does not exist. Cul-

ture is cults, all the way down.

people crave fresh voices telling them familiar stories, because they enjoy the thrill of discovery but ultimately gravitate to the comfort of fluency.

In study after study, people reliably chose the words and funny shapes that they'd seen the most. It wasn't that some rectangles were perfectly rectangular. It wasn't that some Chinese-like characters were perfectly Chinese-like. People simply liked whatever shapes and words they saw the most. Their preference was for familiarity. This discovery is known as the "mere exposure effect," or just the "exposure effect," and it is one of the sturdiest findings in modern psychology.

Even governance is showbiz: One third of the White House staff works in some aspect of public relations to promote the president and his policies, according to political scientists Matthew Baum and Samuel Kernell. The White House is a studio, and the president is its star.

The most significant neophilic group in the consumer economy is probably teenagers. Young people are "far more receptive to advanced designs," Lowery wrote, because they have the smallest stake in the status quo.

Writing poetry without rhyme is "like playing tennis without a net," the poet Robert Frost once said. In music, repetition is the net.

But in all cases, the hero is the synthesis of his friends. The thinking Spock and the feeling McCoy are two halves of Captain Kirk. The brilliant Hermione and the sensitive Ron balance out Harry Potter. Luke Skywalker combines Han's bravery and Leia's conscience

Clothing, once a ritual, is now the definitive fashion. First names, once a tradition, now follow the hype cycle of fashion lines. Communication, too, is now coming to resemble the hallmarks of a fashion, where choices emerge and preferences change, sometimes with seeming arbitrariness, as people discover new, more convenient, and more fun ways to say hello.

If you think Tinder and dating apps are destroying romance today, you would have hated cars in the 1900s. Cars didn't just hasten a historical shift from teenage codependence to independence. They fed the growth of a high school subculture.

But what is coolness, anyway? In sociology, it is sometimes defined as a positive rebellion.

HBO does not rely on dial testing, focus groups, or surveys, its executives told me, because its business model requires something subtler. Its economic imperative is to build a television product that viewers feel like they have to pay for – even when they don't watch it.

Disney might not have been a born businessman, but he absorbed Kamen's lesson: The art of film is film, but the business of movies is everywhere. Disney described the strategy as "total merchandising." A movie was more than a movie. It was also a shirt, a watch, a game – and, soon, a television show.

Umberto Eco called Disneyland "the quintessence of consumer ideology," because it "not only produces illusion," but also "stimulates the desire for it."

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The Dhammapada, translation by Viknath Easwaran [[link](#)]

ahimsa paramo dharma: the essence of dharma, the highest law of life, is to do no harm to any living creature.

For hatred can never put an end to hatred; love alone can. This is an unalterable law.

Better than a speech of a thousand vain words is one thoughtful word which brings peace to the mind. Better than a poem of a thousand vain verses is one thoughtful line which brings peace to the mind.

"I will make this my winter home, have another house for the monsoon, and dwell in a third during the summer." Lost in such fancies, one forgets his final destination.

An act performed carelessly, a vow not kept, a code of chastity not strictly observed: these things bring little reward. If anything is worth doing, do it

with all your heart. A half-hearted ascetic covers himself with more and more dust.

If you want to reach the other shore, don't let doubts, passions, and cravings strengthen your fetters. Meditate deeply, discriminate between the pleasant and the permanent, and break the fetters of Mara.

the Buddha also emphasized the importance of keeping the body strong and fit. He rejected asceticism completely.

Shantideva, an eighth-century monk, wrote: "This in brief is the mark of complete wisdom: again and again, the capacity to watch the changes taking place in the body and mind."

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Elephant in the Brain by Kevin Simler and Robin Hanson [[link](#)]

Our ancestors did a lot of cheating. How do we know? One source of evidence is the fact that our brains have special-purpose adaptations for detecting cheaters. When abstract logic puzzles are framed as cheating scenarios, for example, we're a lot better at solving them.

We assume that there is one person in each body, but in some ways we are each more like a committee whose members have been thrown together working at cross purposes.

In any given comedic situation, humor precedes and causes laughter, but when we step back and take a broader perspective, the order is reversed. Our propensity to laugh comes first and provides the necessary goal for humor to achieve.

First you need to get two or more people together. Then you must set the mood dial to "play." Then you need to jostle things, carefully, so that the dial feints in the direction of "serious," but quickly falls back to "play." And only then will the safe come open, releasing the precious laughter locked inside.

you're looking for a backpack full of tools that are both new to you and useful to the things you care about. If Henry can consistently delight you with new, useful artifacts, it speaks to the quality of his backpack and therefore his value as an ally.

listeners generally prefer speakers who can impress them wherever a conversation happens to lead, rather than speakers who steer conversations to specific topics where they already know what to say.

Ellen Dissanayake's characterization of art as anything "made special," that is, not for some functional or practical purpose but for human attention and enjoyment

Miller's observation that "sexually mature males have produced almost all of the publicly displayed art throughout human history"

So whenever people make a sacrifice to your god, they're implicitly showing loyalty to you – and to everyone else who worships at the same altar.

Note that positions of greater trust and authority require larger sacrifices; if the Pope had children, for example, his loyalty would be split between his family and his faith, and Catholics would have a harder time trusting him to lead the Church.

All these sacrifices work to maintain high levels of commitment and trust among community members, which ultimately reduces the need to monitor everyone's behavior. The net result is the ability to sustain cooperative groups at larger scales and over longer periods of time.

As Jason Weeden and colleagues have pointed out, religions can be understood, in part, as community-enforced mating strategies.

Our species, for reasons that aren't entirely clear, is wired to form social bonds when we move in lockstep with each other. This can mean marching together, singing or chanting in unison, clapping hands to a beat, or even just wearing the same clothes.

When people are asked the same policy question a few months apart, they frequently give different answers – not because they've changed their minds, but because they're making up answers on the spot, without re-

remembering what they said last time.

The kicker? Stalin himself wasn't even in the room. His cult of personality was strong enough to sustain 11 minutes of applause even in his absence. At least 600,000 people were killed in these ways during Stalin's purges.

This helps explain why voters feel little pressure to be informed. As long as we adopt the "right" beliefs – those of our main coalitions – we get full credit for loyalty.

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How to Survive Your 40s by Pamela Druckerman

But the number 40 still has symbolic resonance. Jesus fasted for 40 days. Muhammad was 40 when the archangel Gabriel appeared to him. The Israelites wandered the desert for 40 years

The seminal journey of the 40s is from "everyone hates me" to "they don't really care."

At 40, we're no longer preparing for an imagined future life. Our real lives are, indisputably, happening right now. We've arrived at what Immanuel Kant called the "Ding an sich" – the thing itself.

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The Lessons of History by Ariel and Will Durant

People like to think they are a little special. Without this bit of vanity, we might find it harder to push forward. In a way, delusion is a motivator.

By and large, the poor have the same impulses as the rich, but with less opportunity or skill to implement them.

The hero is just the product of a situation. Not the other way around. If it were not for the situation, we never would have heard of the hero.

Morals are the way society exhorts behavior from its members.

You want to reign in your impulses and weaknesses to the point where they are useful, but not excessive.

There is no example in history of a society maintaining moral life among the masses without religion as a force for binding people together.

The most valuable talents and skills are confined to a few people, which means the most valuable wealth is confined to a few as well. This pattern shows up again and again.

All consuming toil is usually the price of genius.

Do not feel depressed that life may only have meaning insofar as man puts into it. It is remarkable that we can put any meaning into life at all.

Every religion should preach morality, not theology.

Cooperation is the ultimate form of competition.

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A New Earth by Eckhart Tolle

[...] the normal state of mind of most human beings contains a strong element of what we might call dysfunction or even madness. Certain teachings at the heart of Hinduism perhaps come closest to seeing this dysfunction as a form of collective mental illness. They call it maya, the veil of delusion. Ramana Maharshi, one of the greatest Indian sages, bluntly states: The mind is maya.

Throughout history, there have always been rare individuals who experienced a shift in consciousness and so realized within themselves that toward which all religions point. To describe that non-conceptual Truth, they then used the conceptual framework of their own religions.

The dysfunction of the egoic human mind, recognized already more than 2,500 years ago by the ancient wisdom teachers and now magnified

through science and technology, is for the first time threatening the survival of the planet.

What a liberation to realize that the voice in my head is not who I am. Who am I then? The one who sees that. The awareness that is prior to thought, the space in which the thought or the emotion or sense perception happens.

Van Gogh didn't say: That's just an old chair. He looked, and looked, and looked. He sensed the Beingness of the chair. Then he sat in front of the canvas and took up the brush. The chair itself would have sold for the equivalent of a few dollars. The painting of that same chair today would fetch in excess of \$25 million.

One of the most basic levels of identification is with things: My toy later becomes my car, my house, my clothes, and so on. I try to find myself in things but never quite make it and end up losing myself in them. That is the fate of the ego.

How do you know this is the experience you need? Because this is the experience you are having at this moment.

Can you feel there is something in you that would rather be right than at peace?

Complaining is one of the ego's favorite strategies for strengthening itself. Every complaint is a little story the mind makes up that you completely believe in.

To forgive is to overlook, or rather to look through. You look through the ego to the sanity that is in every human being as his or her essence.

When you complain, by implication you are right and the person or situation you complain about or react against is wrong.

Some Christian mystics have called it the Christ within; Buddhists call it your Buddha nature; for Hindus, it is Atman, the indwelling God. When you are in touch with that dimension within yourself and being in touch with it is your natural state, not some miraculous achievement all your actions and relationships will reflect the oneness with all life that you sense

deep within. This is love.

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What Technology Wants by Kevin Kelly [[link](#)]

If a thousand lines of letters in UNIX qualifies as a technology, then a thousand lines of letters in English must qualify as well. Both can change our behavior, alter the course of events, or enable future inventions.

We have become deeply dependent on technology. If all technology - every last knife and spear - were to be removed from this planet, our species would not last more than a few months. We are now symbiotic with technology.

Clothes are people's extended skin, wheels extended feet, camera and telescopes extended eyes.

In one year 1 eagle eats 100 trout, which eat 10,000 grasshoppers, which eat 1 million blades of grass. Thus it takes, indirectly, 1 million blades of grass to support 1 eagle.

What money brings is increased choices, rather than merely increased stuff.

The freedom in a city makes their village seem a prison.

Great discoverers not only contribute more than the average number of "next" steps, but they also take part in those steps that have the greatest impact, which are naturally the areas of investigation that attract many other players and so produce multiples. If discovery is a lottery, the greatest discoverers buy lots of tickets.

Each new technology creates more problems than it solves.

The technium spends only one quarter of its energy on human comfort, food, and travel needs; the rest of the energy is made by technology for technology.

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The Sovereign Individual by James Dale Davidson [\[link\]](#)

the most important causes of change are...in the hidden factors that alter the boundaries where power is exercised.

Most democracies run chronic deficits. This is a fiscal policy characteristic of control by employees. Governments seem notably resistant to reducing the costs of their operations.

Governments have never established stable monopolies of coercion over the open sea...This is a matter of the utmost importance in understanding how the organization of violence and protection will evolve as the economy migrates into cyberspace, which has no physical existence at all.

The average psychotherapist probably gives the patient less good moral advice on how to lead his life than the average Jew would have received from his teacher in the period of Moses.

The morality of the Information Age applauds efficiency, and recognizes the advantage of resources being dedicated to their highest-value uses. In other words, the morality of the Information Age will be the morality of the market.

Every human on earth could be packed into Texas, with each family living in its own detached house with a yard, and still have some of Texas left over.

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What the Buddha Taught by Walpola Rahula [\[link\]](#)

What we call a 'being', or an 'individual', is only a convenient name or a label given to the combination of [the Five Aggregates]. They are all impermanent, all constantly changing. 'Whatever is impermanent is dukkha'

According to Buddhism for a man to be perfect there are two qualities that he should develop equally: compassion on one side, and wisdom on the

other.

The moment you think 'I am doing this', you become self-conscious, and then you do not live in the action, but you live in the idea 'I am'

It may be agreeable for certain people to live a retired life in a quiet place away from noise and disturbance. But it is certainly more praiseworthy and courageous to practise Buddhism living among your fellow beings, helping them and being of service to them.

'Ever mindful he breathes in, and ever mindful he breathes out. Breathing in a long breath, he knows "I am breathing in a long breath"; breathing out a long breath, he knows "I am breathing out a long breath"; breathing in a short breath, he knows "I am breathing in a short breath"; breathing out a short breath, he knows "I am breathing out a short breath".

He whose senses are mastered like horses well under the charioteer's control, he who is purged of pride, free from passions, such a steadfast one even the gods envy.

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The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle [[link](#)]

Give your fullest attention to whatever the moment presents. This implies that you also completely accept what is, because you cannot give your full attention to something and at the same time resist it.

Your outer journey may contain a million steps; your inner journey only has one: the step you are taking right now. As you become more deeply aware of this one step, you realize that it already contains within itself all the other steps as well as the destination.

You see time as the means to salvation, whereas in truth it is the greatest obstacle to salvation.

The greatest catalyst for change in a relationship is complete acceptance of your partner as he or she is, without needing to judge or change them in any way.

God is Being itself, not a being.

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Warren Buffett's 1989 letter to shareholders [\[link\]](#)

My most surprising discovery: the overwhelming importance in business of an unseen force that we might call 'the institutional imperative.' [...] I thought that decent, intelligent, and experienced managers would automatically make rational business decisions. But I learned over time that isn't so.

For example: (1) As if governed by Newton's First Law of Motion, an institution will resist any change in its current direction; (2) Just as work expands to fill available time, corporate projects or acquisitions will materialize to soak up available funds; (3) Any business craving of the leader, however foolish, will be quickly supported by detailed rate-of-return and strategic studies prepared by his troops; and (4) The behavior of peer companies, whether they are expanding, acquiring, setting executive compensation or whatever, will be mindlessly imitated.

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I was the ambitious one, the one that strayed far from home, chasing the dream, getting caught up in the consumerism. I'm glad that by the age of 38 I have come to realize that I had everything that was important before I left. The remainder was a constant cycle of churn, want more, want bigger, want better, want newer, want more convenient. Except it's hard when it's being fed to you every day by every billboard, every sign, every menu, every advert, every press release, every news story, every TV show to differentiate between want and need. When you stop to analyze what you actually need – I mean really need: Clean air, clean water, shelter, nutrition, sanitation, family, community, companionship; how much of what you're being sold every day is truly "needed" and how much of it is a want to fulfill some notion that has been sold to you by the media? – a Hacker News commenter

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Tim Ferriss [[link](#)]

What's the least crowded channel?

What if I could only subtract to solve problems?

Am I hunting antelope or field mice?

What would this look like if it were easy?

One former Navy SEAL friend recently texted me a principle used in their training: "Slow is smooth. Smooth is fast."

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War of Art by Steven Pressfield [[link](#)]

Resistance will unfailingly point to true North — meaning that calling or action it most wants to stop us from doing. We can use this. We can use it as a compass. [...] Rule of thumb: The more important a call or action is to our soul's evolution, the more Resistance we will feel toward pursuing it.

The warrior and the artist live by the same code of necessity, which dictates that the battle must be fought anew every day.

The more scared we are of a work or calling, the more sure we can be that we have to do it. Resistance is experienced as fear; the degree of fear equates to the strength of Resistance.

The conventional interpretation is that the amateur pursues his calling out of love, while the pro does it for money. Not the way I see it. In my view, the amateur does not love the game enough. If he did, he would not pursue it as a sideline, distinct from his "real" vocation.

The professional dedicates himself to mastering technique not because he believes technique is a substitute for inspiration but because he wants to be

in possession of the full arsenal of skills when inspiration does come.

The ancient Spartans schooled themselves to regard the enemy, any enemy, as nameless and faceless. In other words, they believed that if they did their work, no force on earth could stand against them.

When Arnold Schwarzenegger hits the gym, he's on his own turf. But what made it his own are the hours and years of sweat he put in to claim it. A territory doesn't give, it gives back.

You know, Hitler wanted to be an artist. At eighteen he took his inheritance, seven hundred kronen, and moved to Vienna to live and study. He applied to the Academy of Fine Arts and later to the School of Architecture. Ever see one of his paintings? Neither have I. Resistance beat him.

We can navigate by Resistance, letting it guide us to that calling or action that we must follow before all others. Rule of thumb: The more important a call or action is to our soul's evolution, the more Resistance we will feel toward pursuing it.

Henry Fonda was still throwing up before each stage performance, even when he was seventy-five. In other words, fear doesn't go away.

Resistance has no strength of its own. Every ounce of juice it possesses comes from us. We feed it with power by our fear of it. Master that fear and we conquer Resistance.

The paradox seems to be, as Socrates demonstrated long ago, that the truly free individual is free only to the extent of his own self-mastery. While those who will not govern themselves are condemned to find masters to govern over them.

My friend Tony Keppelman snapped me out of it by asking if I was gonna quit. Hell, no! "Then be happy. You're where you wanted to be, aren't you? So you're taking a few blows. That's the price for being in the arena and not on the sidelines. Stop complaining and be grateful." That was when I realized I had become a pro. I had not yet had a success. But I had had a real failure.

**

48 Laws of Power: Enter Action With Boldness

Timidity is dangerous: Better to enter with boldness. Any mistakes you commit through audacity are easily corrected with more audacity. Everyone admires the bold; no one honors the timid.

Con artists know that the bolder the lie, the more convincing it becomes. The sheer audacity of the story makes it more credible, distracting attention from its inconsistencies.

People have a sixth sense for the weaknesses of others. If, in a first encounter, you demonstrate your willingness to compromise, back down, and retreat, you bring out the lion even in people who are not necessarily bloodthirsty. Everything depends on perception, and once you are seen as the kind of person who quickly goes on the defensive, who is willing to negotiate and be amenable, you will be pushed around without mercy.

Most of us are timid. We want to avoid tension and conflict and we want to be liked by all. We may contemplate a bold action but we rarely bring it to life. [...] Although we may disguise our timidity as a concern for others, a desire not to hurt or offend them, in fact it is the opposite. We are really self-absorbed, worried about ourselves and how others perceive us. Boldness, on the other hand, is outer-directed, and often makes people feel more at ease, since it is less self-conscious and less repressed.

**

Bob Clyatt on semi-retirement [\[link\]](#)

My wife works ten or twenty hours a week in a large specialty women's clothing store. Her job allows her to stay connected to her interests in fashion while spending time with a younger generation of women: her co-workers and managers.

Meanwhile, I got to pursue my dream of becoming an artist. I went to art school, then built a sculpture studio. I now show and sell my work everywhere from Hong Kong to Paris, from trendy art fairs in Miami to galleries

in Manhattan.

When you leave life in the fast lane a decade or two before your peers, some of the folks you know will go on to become Big Dogs at a time when you're feeling more like a Chihuahua!

I'm certainly appreciated and respected in the circles I move in. But those circles sometimes feel rather quiet and small. [...] I made an intentional choice to pursue a quieter, more introspective path. Yet there's a sense of loss — of missing out — that comes when you realize certain paths are closed off forever.

**

The Little Book of Talent by Daniel Coyle [[link](#)]

Study and repeat the best performances of that skill for 15 minutes every day

Record your progress

Use simple, sparse environments to focus and motivate you

Find a great coach: someone who is tough, blunt, active, usually older, and enjoys teaching fundamentals (reminds me of John Wooden)

Embrace frustration. That's when you're improving most

Practice a little each day, instead of a lot once in awhile

Make a mistake? Pay attention immediately!

Do it as slowly as possible

Close your eyes to challenge yourself and hone different senses

Practice immediately after a performance, when the mistakes are fresh (favorite new concept)

Think like Buddha (calm, patient) and work like Jesus (strategic, steady)

**

Chris Michel [[link](#)]

From philosophers to grandparents, we've heard them countless times. But, hearing something isn't quite the same as observing it. I won't bore you with specifics. Suffice it to say, I think the Buddha had it right when he said craving, desire and attachment are the sources of suffering.

I've seen more dissatisfied 20 something's in SoHo than their counterparts in rural Jodhpur. I know that there is real joy and meaning to be found outside the secular system of wealth, status and eternal youth. It's not our fault; it's our programming. But the answers can't be found in accumulating more. You knew that already.

**

Does Life End at 35? KZhu.net

He stops me mid-sentence "You know, my career only really took off after I turned 58". Hang on, what? "Yes, I'd say the 10 years between my 60s and 70s were my busiest". I was floored. Here is a man who helped revolutionize medical technology and he did it in his twilight years.

His advice to me: Don't be in so much of a rush. Be easier on yourself. Comparing yourself to what others are doing is a waste of time. He also adds an old Chinese saying "大器晚成" - A big construction is always completed late.

**

1-pager of Eric Hoffer's The True Believer [[link](#)]

An effective doctrine loathes the present, worships the future, and (some-

times) glorifies the past

True Believers desperately need to belong; when they join, they must then be isolated from the outside world

Mass Movements are about selflessness and self-sacrifice

Ritual and ceremony are important elements

An alliance with intellectuals is important for any Mass Movement

Mass Movements always have an enemy, the more wicked the better

Force is essential but it should be masked by doctrine and applied with persistence

A healthy amount of suspicion promotes uniformity and obedience

The vanity of the selfless, even those who practice utmost humility, is boundless.

Proselytizing is more a passionate search for something not yet found than a desire to bestow upon the world something we already have.

Hitler dressed eighty million Germans in costumes and made them perform in a grandiose, heroic and bloody opera.

There is a moment in the career of almost every faultfinding man of words when a deferential or conciliatory gesture from those in power may win him over to their side.

<http://www.religionofbusiness.com/notes/the-3-stages-of-leadership-in-every-mass-movement-the-intellectual-the-fanatic-and-the-man-of-action>

Exceptional intelligence, noble character and originality seem neither indispensable nor perhaps desirable. The main requirements seem to be: audacity and a joy in defiance; an iron will; a fanatical conviction that he is in possession of the one and only truth; faith in his destiny and luck; a capacity for passionate hatred; contempt for the present; a cunning estimate of human nature; a delight in symbols (spectacles and ceremonials)...

...a capacity for winning and holding the utmost loyalty of a group of able lieutenants. This last faculty is one of the most essential and elusive. The uncanny powers of a leader manifest themselves not so much in the hold he has on the masses as in his ability to dominate and almost bewitch a small group of able men.

...the order evolved by a man of action is a patchwork. Stalin's Russia was a patchwork of bolshevism, czarism, nationalism, pan-Slavism, dictatorship and borrowings from Hitler, and monopolistic capitalism. Hitler's Third Reich was a conglomerate of nationalism, racialism, Prussianism, dictatorship and borrowings from fascism, bolshevism, Shintoism, Catholicism and the ancient Hebrews.

Such rare leaders as Lincoln and Gandhi not only try to curb the evil inherent in a mass movement but are willing to put an end to the movement when its objective is more or less realized.

...from The Ordeal of Change:

It has been often said that power corrupts. But it is perhaps equally important to realize that weakness, too, corrupts. Power corrupts the few, while weakness corrupts the many.

Our healing gift to the weak is the capacity for self-help. We must learn how to impart to them the technical, social, and political skills which would enable them to get bread, human dignity, freedom, and strength by their own efforts.

**

Beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**

Jim Carrey commencement speech @ Maharishi

I learned many great lessons from my father, not the least of which was that you can fail at what you don't want, so you might as well take a chance on doing what you love.

You can spend your whole life imagining ghosts, worrying about your pathway to the future, but all there will ever be is what's happening here, and the decisions we make in this moment, which are based in either love or fear.

So many of us choose our path out of fear disguised as practicality.

You can join the game, fight the wars, play with form all you want, but to find real peace, you have to let the armor fall. Your need for acceptance can make you invisible in this world.

I've often said that I wished people could realize all their dreams of wealth and fame so they could see that it's not where you'll find your sense of completion.

No matter what you gain, ego will not let you rest. It will tell you that you cannot stop until you've left an indelible mark on the earth, until you've achieved immortality. How tricky is the ego that it would tempt us with the promise of something we already possess.

My father used to brag that I wasn't a ham — I was the whole pig. And he treated my talent as if it was his second chance. When I was about 28, after a decade as a professional comedian, I realized one night in LA that the purpose of my life had always been to free people from concern, like my dad. When I realized this, I dubbed my new devotion, "The Church of Freedom From Concern" — "The Church of FFC" — and I dedicated my-

self to that ministry.

**

Late Bloomers by Malcolm Gladwell [\[link\]](#)

Foer went to Princeton and took a creative-writing class in his freshman year with Joyce Carol Oates. It was, he explains, "sort of on a whim, maybe out of a sense that I should have a diverse course load." He'd never written a story before. "I didn't really think anything of it, to be honest, but half-way through the semester I arrived to class early one day, and she said, 'Oh, I'm glad I have this chance to talk to you. I'm a fan of your writing.' And it was a real revelation for me." Oates told him that he had the most important of writerly qualities, which was energy. He had been writing fifteen pages a week for that class, an entire story for each seminar. "Why does a dam with a crack in it leak so much?" he said, with a laugh. "There was just something in me, there was like a pressure."

But Ben Fountain's success was far from sudden. He quit his job at Akin, Gump in 1988. For every story he published in those early years, he had at least thirty rejections. The novel that he put away in a drawer took him four years. The dark period lasted for the entire second half of the nineteen-nineties. His breakthrough with "Brief Encounters" came in 2006, eighteen years after he first sat down to write at his kitchen table. The "young" writer from the provinces took the literary world by storm at the age of forty-eight.

"When Ben first did this, we talked about the fact that it might not work, and we talked about, generally, 'When will we know that it really isn't working?' and I'd say, 'Well, give it ten years,' " Sharie recalled. To her, ten years didn't seem unreasonable. "It takes a while to decide whether you like something or not," she says. And when ten years became twelve and then fourteen and then sixteen, and the kids were off in high school, she stood by him, because, even during that long stretch when Ben had nothing published at all, she was confident that he was getting better.

There is no evidence, Galenson concluded, for the notion that lyric poetry is a young person's game. Some poets do their best work at the beginning of their careers. Others do their best work decades later. Forty-two per cent

of Frost's anthologized poems were written after the age of fifty. For Williams, it's forty-four per cent. For Stevens, it's forty-nine per cent.

Twain's trial-and-error method: "His routine procedure seems to have been to start a novel with some structural plan which ordinarily soon proved defective, whereupon he would cast about for a new plot which would overcome the difficulty, rewrite what he had already written, and then push on until some new defect forced him to repeat the process once again." Twain fiddled and despaired and revised and gave up on "Huckleberry Finn" so many times that the book took him nearly a decade to complete.

**

JK Rowling commencement speech @ Harvard

Now, I am not going to stand here and tell you that failure is fun. That period of my life was a dark one, and I had no idea that there was going to be what the press has since represented as a kind of fairy tale resolution. I had no idea then how far the tunnel extended, and for a long time, any light at the end of it was a hope rather than a reality.

There is an expiry date on blaming your parents for steering you in the wrong direction; the moment you are old enough to take the wheel, responsibility lies with you.

Poverty entails fear, and stress, and sometimes depression; it means a thousand petty humiliations and hardships. Climbing out of poverty by your own efforts, that is indeed something on which to pride yourself, but poverty itself is romanticised only by fools.

**

Jack Ma talk @ Stanford GSB [[link](#)]

he thought, Internet will be something, as long as I'm the last person to survive, I will succeed

when you have too much money, that's when your real problems start
Alibaba has one of China's largest cash reserves and that's part of their culture; money is like armed forces, try not to use it, but if you do, you must win

"without belief, technology is a tool"

"life is a plan that is slowly unfolding...embrace change"

world's never been in better place, yet never have people had more complaints; "best of times, worst of time"

luck is like seeds to be sown, it won't come to you on its own
when you have a lot of good luck, it won't continue forever, your job is to sow other peoples' seeds, spread it around, and it may even extend your own run

"some of you believe in God, some in Buddha, I'm still shopping around"

things change too fast, too hard to understand consumer tastes, not in our DNA, but small businesses know their customers, so we help them

we're not competing with eBay, Google, Yahoo...we're competing with the previous generation, and with the future

**

Insights from Alain de Botton

1. There's nothing that is considered sexy that isn't, with the wrong person, disgusting

4. Why do we have too little sex? It's because the person we have sex with is someone we do too much other stuff with

6. We're not materialistic, we live in a society where emotional rewards are pegged to material goods. So when you see a Ferrari driver, don't criticize them for being greedy, instead, see them as somebody who is incredibly vulnerable and in need of love

8. What is envy? Envy is relatability. When you can't relate to them, you can't envy them

11. In a "just" society like ours, we believe the rich deserve their success, but we also assume the poor deserve their failure (which makes it harder to tolerate our own mediocrity or lack of success)

13. We want the respect of people who we don't even respect

15. Ironically, the secular are least suited to cope because they believe we can achieve heaven on earth through Silicon Valley, Fortune 500s, university research, etc

16. Religions provide angels – forever young and beautiful – to worship, and our lovers instead to tolerate (whereas secular people are always complaining, "why can't you be more perfect?").

La Rochefoucauld

23. There are some people who would never have fallen in love, if they had not heard there was such a thing.

Epicurus on happiness

24. Happiness is important: it comes from friends (as permanent companions), freedom (Epicurus left city life to start a commune), and an analyzed life (to find the time and space for quiet thinking about our lives)

Montaigne on self-esteem

28. Animals often surpass us in wisdom. They are much more natural about their bodies

31. "even on the highest throne, we are seated, still, on our asses"

From Religion for Atheists

33. We feel guilty for all that we have not yet read, but overlook how much better read we already are than Augustine or Dante, thereby ignoring that

our problem lies squarely with our manner of absorption rather than with the extent of our consumption.

34. The single danger of life in a godless society is that it lacks reminders of the transcendent and therefore leaves us unprepared for disappointment and eventual annihilation. When God is dead, human beings – much to their detriment – are at risk of taking psychological centre stage

38. Images of tranquillity and security haunt it: a particular job, social conquest or material acquisition always seems to hold out the promise of an end to craving. In reality, however, each worry will soon enough be replaced by another, and one desire by the next, generating a relentless cycle of what Buddhists call ‘grasping’, or upādāna in Sanskrit.

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The Scott Adams happiness formula

Eat right

Exercise

Get enough sleep

Imagine an incredible future (even if you don’t believe it)

Work toward a flexible schedule

Do things you can steadily improve at

Help others (if you’ve already helped yourself)

Reduce daily decisions to routine

How To Fail At Almost Everything and Still Win Big

If you want success, figure out the price, then pay it.

Things that will someday work out well start out well. Things that will never work start out bad and stay that way.

The main reason I blog is because it energizes me. I could rationalize my blogging by telling you it increases traffic on Dilbert.com by 10 percent or that it keeps my mind sharp or that I think the world is a better place when there are more ideas in it. But the main truth is that blogging charges me

up. It gets me going. I don't need another reason.

As a bonus, smiling makes you more attractive to others. When you're more attractive, people respond to you with more respect and consideration, more smiles, and sometimes even lust.

Your story isn't a story unless something unexpected or unusual happens. That's the plot twist. If you don't have a twist, it's not a story. It's just a regurgitation of your day.

For in-person humor, quality isn't as important as you might think. Your attitude and effort count for a lot.

There's one step you will always do first if it's available to you: You'll ask a smart friend how he or she tackled the same problem. A smart friend can save you loads of time and effort.

The short answer is that over the years I have cultivated a unique relationship with failure. I invite it. I survive it. I appreciate it. And then I mug the shit out of it. Failure always brings something valuable with it. I don't let it leave until I extract that value.

The goals people are fighting the feeling of discouragement at each turn. The systems people are feeling good every time they apply their system.

The way I approach the problem of multiple priorities is by focusing on just one main metric: my energy. I make choices that maximize my personal energy because that makes it easier to manage all of the other priorities.

If you imagine winning a Nobel Prize, buying your own private island, or playing in the NBA, don't worry that those things are unlikely. Putting yourself in that imagination-fueled frame of mind will pep you up. Imagination is the interface to your attitude.

My proposition, which I invite you to be skeptical about, is that one of the primary factors in determining your energy level, and therefore your mood, is what you've eaten recently.

You might not think you're an early-morning person. I didn't think I was either. But once you get used to it, you might never want to go back. You

can accomplish more by the time other people wake up than most people accomplish all day.

Bill Gates famously found ways to hone his technical skills by stealing time on a mainframe. Jobs and Wozniak's first product involved technology that allowed people to steal long-distance phone calls. Where there is a tolerance for risk, there is often talent.

One of the best ways to detect the x factor is to watch what customers do about your idea or product, not what they say. People tend to say what they think you want to hear or what they think will cause the least pain. What people do is far more honest. For example, with comics, a good test of potential is whether people stick the comic to the refrigerator, tweet it, e-mail it to friends, put it on a blog page, or do anything else active.

Positivity is far more than a mental preference. It changes your brain, literally, and it changes the people around you. It's the nearest thing we have to magic.

Here's my own list of the important patterns for success that I've noticed over the years. This is purely anecdotal. I exclude the ones that are 100 percent genetic: Lack of fear of embarrassment. Education (the right kind). Exercise.

I find it helpful to see the world as a slot machine that doesn't ask you to put money in. All it asks is your time, focus, and energy to pull the handle over and over.

Dealing with experts is always tricky. Are they honest? Are they competent? How often are they right? My observation and best guess is that experts are right about 98 percent of the time on the easy stuff but only right 50 percent of the time on anything that is unusually complicated, mysterious, or even new.

**

DFW speech @ Kenyon College

If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning

in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough. It's the truth. Worship your body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly. And when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally grieve you. On one level, we all know this stuff already. It's been codified as myths, proverbs, clichés, epigrams, parables; the skeleton of every great story. The whole trick is keeping the truth up front in daily consciousness.

And the world will not discourage you from operating on your default-settings, because the world of men and money and power hums along quite nicely on the fuel of fear and contempt and frustration and craving and the worship of self.

**

Jiro and Rene Redzepi share a cup of tea

Jiro: If you start saying "I don't like this" or "this isn't the job for me" you won't become an expert in anything

Rene: When did you feel like you were finally a master?

Jiro: 50.

Rene: Did [you] ever want to stop?

Jiro: No. Never. I never considered that question. The only question was, "how can I get better?"

Rene: What makes you happiest?

Jiro: I can work. That's the first and most important thing. I can work. After that, it's especially great if you enjoy what you do.

Jiro: If you don't learn to love your work and remind your brain to make new steps every day, there can be no progress.

Jiro: [on Rene] You are stubborn, right? If you aren't a strong willed person, you can't get to this. And you are sensitive, too. Both have to be there to become like this.

Jiro: The people who are truly at the top won't say they want to retire after

they are 70 or 80. They just fasten their belts after that.

**

Why do happy people cheat, Esther Perel [[link](#)]

adultery is the only commandment repeated twice in Bible (once for doing it, once just for thinking about it!)

“monogamy used to be one person for life, today it’s one person at a time”

“we used to marry and have sex for the first time, now we marry and stop having sex with others”

we are walking contradictions: 95% say it’s terribly wrong for our partner to lie about an affair, but same % say that’s what we would do if we were having one

today we're more inclined to stray than ever; we feel right to pursue our desires; we believe we deserve to be happy

“not so much that we are looking for another person, but we are looking for another self”

one word unfaithful spouses use: **ALIVE**, they feel **ALIVE**

avoid mining for sordid details – better to move on, figure out meaning and motives, not logistics

**

DAVID BROOKS

The Service Patch [[link](#)]

- Many people today find it easy to use the vocabulary of entrepreneurialism, whether they are in business or social entrepreneurs. This is a utilitarian vocabulary. How can I serve the greatest num-

ber? How can I most productively apply my talents to the problems of the world? It's about resource allocation.

- Around what ultimate purpose should your life revolve? Are you capable of heroic self-sacrifice or is life just a series of achievement hoops? These, too, are not analytic questions about what to do. They require literary distinctions and moral evaluations.
- In whatever field you go into, you will face greed, frustration and failure. You may find your life challenged by depression, alcoholism, infidelity, your own stupidity and self-indulgence. So how should you structure your soul to prepare for this? Simply working at Amnesty International instead of McKinsey is not necessarily going to help you with these primal character tests.

The 4 types of commitments [\[link\]](#)

- failure advice sucks (he mentions Steve Jobs), **don't fail**
- happiness peaks in 20s, then declines until bottoming out at 47, then climbs again
- you need an agency moment, when you're deciding your own criteria for judging success
- making commitments is key, there are 4 types:
- **1. to spouse and family** - love humbles you; love is both a gritty commitment (washing the dishes) and transcendent magic; love is not zero-sum; the more you love, the more you can love
- **2. to career and vocation** - "a vocation summons you"; find passion by looking outward, sensitive to a void or need, not inward
- **3. to faith or philosophy**
- **4. to community and village**
- morality has an inverse logic: give to receive, failure leads to success, find yourself by losing yourself
- resume versus eulogy virtues
- society today values skills over character
- "it's the things you chain yourself to that set you free"

Moral Bucket List [\[link\]](#)

- The résumé virtues are the skills you bring to the marketplace. The eulogy virtues are the ones that are talked about at your funeral
- You lack a moral vocabulary. It is easy to slip into a self-satisfied moral mediocrity.

- But all the people I've ever deeply admired are profoundly honest about their own weaknesses. They have identified their core sin
- In the realm of the intellect, a person of character has achieved a settled philosophy about fundamental things. In the realm of emotion, she is embedded in a web of unconditional loves. In the realm of action, she is committed to tasks that can't be completed in a single lifetime.
- re: Dorothy Day: She made unshakable commitments in all directions. She became a Catholic, started a radical newspaper, opened settlement houses for the poor and lived among the poor, embracing shared poverty as a way to build community
- All that matters is living up to the standard of excellence inherent in their craft.
- But people on the road to inner light do not find their vocations by asking, what do I want from life? They ask, what is life asking of me? How can I match my intrinsic talent with one of the world's deep needs?
- The people on this road see the moments of suffering as pieces of a larger narrative. [...] They see life as a moral drama and feel fulfilled only when they are enmeshed in a struggle on behalf of some ideal.

The Heart Grows Smarter [\[link\]](#)

- It was the capacity for intimate relationships that predicted flourishing in all aspects of these men's lives.
- In case after case, the magic formula is capacity for intimacy combined with persistence, discipline, order and dependability.

**

PAUL GRAHAM

History tends to get rewritten by big successes, so that in retrospect it seems obvious they were going to make it big. For that reason one of my most valuable memories is how lame Facebook sounded to me when I first heard about it. A site for college students to waste time? It seemed the perfect bad idea: a site (1) for a niche market (2) with no money (3) to do something that didn't matter.

How to make wealth

- I think everyone who gets rich by their own efforts will be found to be in a situation with measurement and leverage. Everyone I can think of does: CEOs, movie stars, hedge fund managers, professional athletes
- McDonald's, for example, grew big by designing a system, the McDonald's franchise, that could then be reproduced at will all over the face of the earth.
- At Viaweb one of our rules of thumb was run upstairs. Suppose you are a little, nimble guy being chased by a big, fat, bully. You open a door and find yourself in a staircase. Do you go up or down?
- For potential acquirers, the most powerful motivator is the prospect that one of their competitors will buy you. This, as we found, causes CEOs to take red-eyes.
- Many people feel confused and depressed in their early twenties. Life seemed so much more fun in college. Well, of course it was. Don't be fooled by the surface similarities. You've gone from guest to servant.
- There is a conservation law at work here: if you want to make a million dollars, you have to endure a million dollars' worth of pain.
- After all those years you get used to the idea of belonging to a group of people who all get up in the morning, go to some set of buildings, and do things that they do not, ordinarily, enjoy doing.
- What made the Florentines rich in 1200 was the discovery of new techniques for making the high-tech product of the time, fine woven cloth. What made the Dutch rich in 1600 was the discovery of ship-building and navigation techniques that enabled them to dominate the seas of the Far East.
- Number of users may not be the perfect test, but it will be very close. It's what acquirers care about. It's what revenues depend on. It's what makes competitors unhappy.

What you can't say (my notes)

- there are moral fashions just like clothing fashions
- through history, people have believed things that later people found ridiculous
- *do you have any opinions you'd be reluctant to share with a group of peers?*
- look at what people get in trouble for saying; ask, it might be hereti-

- cal, but might it also be true?
- follow what is blasphemous, heretical, sacrilegious; start with labels, such as “sexist”
- diff present ideas against those of past cultures; diff your culture against others’ cultures
- compare a very experienced, traveled the world type vs an innocent 16-year old, what does he know that the 16-year old doesn’t?
- when something can’t be said, **it’s because some group doesn’t want it**
- early adopters of taboos driven by ambition; later adopters driven by fear
- *“people you can say heretical things to without getting jumped on are also the most interesting to know”*

Expertise

- *“When experts are wrong, it's often because they're experts on an earlier version of the world.”*
- in a changing world, you must be aggressively open-minded
- crazy ideas are better than good ideas
- be public about your ideas, invest in them, have working hypotheses
- if you’re expert in a field, pay attention to weird ideas and intuitions

How to do what you love

- by looking at parents, kids learn that work = pain
- *Do what you love doesn't mean, do what you would like to do most this second*
- lower bound should be work you enjoy doing more than unproductive pleasure
- do work you enjoy AND admire
- *Prestige is the opinion of the rest of the world*
- *A comparatively safe and prosperous career with some automatic baseline prestige is dangerously tempting to someone young*
- *The test of whether people love what they do is whether they'd do it even if they weren't paid for it*
- *Always produce. For example, if you have a day job you don't take seriously because you plan to be a novelist, are you producing? Are you writing pages of fiction, however bad?*

Be good

- "Don't be evil" may be the most valuable thing Paul Buchheit made for Google, because it may turn out to be an elixir of corporate youth.
- The idea of starting a company with benevolent aims is currently undervalued, because the kind of people who currently make that their explicit goal don't usually do a very good job.

How not to die

- When startups die, the official cause of death is always either running out of money or a critical founder bailing. Often the two occur simultaneously. But I think the underlying cause is usually that they've become demoralized.
- As long as you've made something that a few users are ecstatic about, you're on the right track. It will be good for your morale to have even a handful of users who really love you, and startups run on morale.

Life is short

- Relentlessly prune bullshit, don't wait to do things that matter, and savor the time you have. That's what you do when life is short.
- Your instinct when attacked is to defend yourself. But like a lot of instincts, this one wasn't designed for the world we now live in. Counterintuitive as it feels, it's better most of the time not to defend yourself. Otherwise these people are literally taking your life.

Procrastination

- That's the sense in which the most impressive people I know are all procrastinators. They're type-C procrastinators: they put off working on small stuff to work on big stuff.
- Richard Hamming suggests that you ask yourself three questions: What are the most important problems in your field? Are you working on one of them? Why not?
- I think the way to "solve" the problem of procrastination is to let delight pull you instead of making a to-do list push you.

**

Richard Hamming: You and Your Research

Given two people with exactly the same ability, the one person who manages day in and day out to **get in one more hour of thinking** will be tremendously more productive over a lifetime.

If you do not work on an important problem, it's unlikely you'll do important work. Great scientists have thought through, in a careful way, a number of important problems in their field, and they keep an eye on wondering how to attack them.

...there is a pretty good correlation between those who work with the doors open and those who ultimately do important things, although people who work with doors closed often work harder. Somehow they seem to work on slightly the wrong thing - not much, but enough that they miss fame.

But if you want to be a great scientist you're going to have to put up with stress. You can lead a nice life; you can be a nice guy or you can be a great scientist.

**

John McPherson

http://www.iasc-culture.org/THR/THR_article_2014_Fall_McPherson.php

“the truly poor often look weary”

As my older brother, who to keep me off the streets invited me to live with him after his wife died, said, shaking his head in warning, “Don’t spend your capital.” His advice was right, but his timing was wrong. I’d already spent it. He sounded like the ghost of my father. Capital produces income. If you want to have an income, don’t dip into your capital. I’d always been a bit of a contrarian, even as a child.

**

Hell Yeah or No by Derek Sivers

When deciding whether to commit to something, if I feel anything less than, "Wow! That would be amazing! Absolutely! Hell yeah!" - then my answer is no.

another take on it, from Jason Fried

<http://blog.asmartbear.com/how-to-say-yes.html>

never say no, just say YES if certain conditions are met which would make you AND them happy

**

Applied Philosophy aka Hacking by Paul Buchheit [[link](#)]

Our entire reality is systems of systems, all the way down. This includes human relations (see The Game for an very amusing story of people hacking human attraction), health (Seth Roberts has some interesting ideas), sports (Tim Ferriss claims to have hacked the National Chinese Kickboxing championship), and finance ("too big to fail").

wherever and whenever there were people, there was someone staring into the system, searching for the truth...these are the people that created the governments, businesses, religions, and other machines that operate our society, and they necessarily did it by hacking the prior systems.

**

Robert Greene's 48 laws of power

Law 2 Never put too much trust in friends; learn how to use enemies.

Law 9 Win through your actions, never through argument.

Law 12 Use selective honesty and generosity to disarm your victim.

Law 13 When asking for help, appeal to people's self-interests, never to their mercy or gratitude.

Law 17 Keep others in suspended terror: cultivate an air of unpredictability.

Law 27 Play on people's need to believe to create a cultlike following.

Law 33 Discover each man's thumbscrew.

Law 28 Enter action with boldness: When [...] entering any kind of negotiation, go further than you planned. Ask for the moon and you will be surprised how often you get it.

**

Daily Rituals by Mason Currey [[link 1](#) and [2](#)]

The most common activities included:

- long walks, typically after lunch or in the early evening
- early morning or late night work sessions (instead of working the white collar 9-5 schedule)
- a minority had regular jobs of the 9-5 sort
- lots of coffee and cigarettes; quite a few regularly took amphetamines and sleep aids, too

Stephen King writes every day, including birthdays and holidays, and has a daily quota of 2,000 words

Joseph Heller on writing Catch 22: "I spent two or three hours a night on it for eight years"

Wallace Stevens: "I find that having a job is one of the best things in the world that could happen to me," he once said. "It introduces discipline and regularity into one's life."

Beauvoir and Sartre had a relationship where they could take other lovers but were required to tell everything

Freud's wife "laid out his clothes, chose his handkerchiefs, and even put toothpaste on his toothbrush"

He was dismissive of inspiration, saying that if he waited for the muse he would compose at most three songs a year. It was better to work every day.

“Like the pugilist,” Gershwin said, “the songwriter must always keep in training.”

**

STEVE PAVLINA

Broadcast Your Desires [[link](#)]

Of course there will be consequences to broadcasting your desires, but one of those consequences is that you’re more likely to actually get what you want. All the seemingly negative consequences become irrelevant and meaningless when you’re enjoying the manifestation of your desires.

If you can’t broadcast your desires, it’s fair to say you don’t own them yet. How can your desires become real if you can’t speak up about them? If you’re going to receive them, then let it be known. If you find it necessary to hide what you desire, that suggests you aren’t ready to receive.

The Harder It Is [[link](#)]

For harder goals, you’d better find an approach to the daily grind that you can fall in love with.

Stop trying to make everything in life easier. Learn to cultivate tenacious determination to conquer a goal because it’s ridiculously tough

One Week On, One Week Off [[link](#)]

A weekend simply isn’t long enough to complete a serious renewal cycle. Six to seven days is a more realistic minimum. It normally takes a few days just to let go of work and become fully immersed in vacation mode (or personal project mode).

**

PATRICK MCKENZIE [[link 1](#) [and 2](#)]

call your work ESSAYS, or comprehensive GUIDES, not blog posts or "content"

build your best work into core navigation of your site

have a goal for each piece of writing - often its to continue the conversation via email newsletter

have something of immediate value for giving you their email

build a library of your best content that you can re-use and remix (e.g., a case study, data)

Prefer to work on things you can show. Prefer to work where people can see you. Prefer to work on things you can own.

Jason Cohen's formula for a side-project is: "Predictable acquisition of recurring revenue with an annual pre-pay option with a product which solves a demonstrable, enduring pain point for a business."

**

Dale Carnegie [[link](#)]

Don't criticize, condemn or complain.

Arouse in the other person an eager want.

Use encouragement. Make the fault seem easy to correct.

Make the other person feel important - and do it sincerely.

If you are wrong, admit it quickly and emphatically.

Let the other person feel that the idea is his or hers.

Call attention to people's mistakes indirectly.

Give the other person a fine reputation to live up to.

Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.

**

Scale by James Clear [[link](#)]

I have come to realize that if I'm serious about making an impact with my work, about helping as many people as possible, and about putting a small dent in my corner of the universe – writing will carry my work and ideas further than just about anything else.

**

Advice to Graduates by George Saunders [[link](#)]

Each of us is born with a series of built-in confusions that are probably somehow Darwinian. [...] Now, we don't really believe these things – intellectually we know better – but we believe them viscerally, and live by them, and they cause us to prioritize our own needs over the needs of others, even though what we really want, in our hearts, is to be less selfish, more aware of what's actually happening in the present moment, more open, and more loving.

Education is good; immersing ourselves in a work of art: good; prayer is good; meditation's good; a frank talk with a dear friend; establishing ourselves in some kind of spiritual tradition – recognizing that there have been countless really smart people before us who have asked these same questions and left behind answers for us.

Do those things that incline you toward the big questions, and avoid the things that would reduce you and make you trivial.

**

The Man Watching by Rainer Maria Rilke

I can tell by the way the trees beat, after
so many dull days, on my worried windowpanes
that a storm is coming,
and I hear the far-off fields say things
I can't bear without a friend,
I can't love without a sister.

The storm, the shifter of shapes, drives on
across the woods and across time, and the world looks as if it had no age:
the landscape, like a line in the psalm book,
is seriousness and weight and eternity

What we choose to fight is so tiny!
What fights with us is so great.
If only we would let ourselves be dominated as things do by some im-
mense storm,
we would become strong too, and not need names.

When we win it's with small things,
and the triumph itself makes us small.
What is extraordinary and eternal does not want to be bent by us.
I mean the Angel who appeared to the wrestlers of the Old Testament:
when the wrestlers' sinews
grew long like metal strings
he felt them under his fingers
like chords of deep music

Whoever was beaten by this Angel
(who often simply declined to fight)
went away proud and strengthened
and great from that harsh hand,
that kneaded him as if to change his shape.
Winning does not tempt that man.
This is how he grows: by being defeated, decisively,
by constantly greater beings.

**

Kaihogyo monks run 18 miles/day for 100 straight days, for 7 years, and if they fail after year 1, must commit suicide
one man completed it twice, once at age 47 and once at 60

**

Cal Newport [[link](#)]

Fix your ideal schedule, then work backwards to make everything fit – ruthlessly culling obligations, turning people down, becoming hard to reach, and shedding marginally useful tasks along the way.

If we instead identify only the most important tasks, he said, and tackle them under severe constraints, we'd be surprised by how little time we actually require.

His fixed-schedule approach to life comes from his simple conviction “to produce a lasting and distinctive body of work,” and his “willingness...to focus on what not to do as much as what to do” has made that possible.

**

DeAngelo's 77 laws

- 5. Build a powerful self image that you love
- 8. Failure is a made up thing, don't apply meaning to failure
- 10. Evolve constantly and consciously
- 14. Stop giving approval to get it
- 24. Never whine or complain
- 30. Prove to yourself over and over that you can cope with rejection
- 51. Pay constant attention to your hygiene, dress and posture

57. Learn how to tell an interesting story about anything

63. Be honest, authentic with women at all times

68. Convince yourself that what is going to happen is going to be unbelievably fun and convince others of it

**

Jure Robic [[link](#)]

Around Day 2 of a typical weeklong race, his speech goes staccato. By Day 3, he is belligerent and sometimes paranoid. His short-term memory vanishes, and he weeps uncontrollably. The last days are marked by hallucinations: bears, wolves and aliens prowl the roadside; asphalt cracks rearrange themselves into coded messages. Occasionally, Robic leaps from his bike to square off with shadowy figures that turn out to be mailboxes. In a 2004 race, he turned to see himself pursued by a howling band of black-bearded men on horseback.

His wife, a nurse, interjects: *“The first time I went to a race, I was not prepared to see what happens to his mind. We nearly split up.”*

On rare occasions when he permits himself to be tested in a laboratory, his ability to produce power and transport oxygen ranks on a par with those of many other ultra-endurance athletes. He wins for the most fundamental of reasons: he refuses to stop.

In all decisions, Stanovnik governs according to a rule of thumb that he has developed over the years: at the dark moment when Robic feels utterly exhausted, when he is so empty and sleep-deprived that he feels as if he might literally die on the bike, he actually has 50 percent more energy to give.

As the riders approached complete fatigue, the percentage of active muscle fibers decreased, until they were using only about 30 percent. Even as the athletes felt they were giving their all, the reality was that more of their muscles were at rest. Was the brain purposely holding back the body?

Some people “have the ability to reprocess the pain signal...It’s not that they don’t feel the pain; they just shift their brain dynamics and alter their perception of reality so the pain matters less. It’s basically a purposeful hallucination.”

**

Always bet on text [[link](#)]

We can read texts from five thousand years ago, almost the moment they started being produced

let's hit the random button on wikipedia and pick a sentence, see if you can draw a picture to convey it, mm? Here:

"Human rights are moral principles or norms that describe certain standards of human behaviour, and are regularly protected as legal rights in national and international law."

It is not a coincidence that all of literature and poetry, history and philosophy, mathematics, logic, programming and engineering rely on textual encodings for their ideas.

Text is the most efficient communication technology. By orders of magnitude. This blog post is likely to take perhaps 5000 bytes of storage, and could compress down to maybe 2000; by comparison the following 20-pixel-square image of the silhouette of a tweeting bird takes 4000 bytes:

Text is the most socially useful communication technology. It works well in 1:1, 1:N, and M:N modes. It can be indexed and searched efficiently, even by hand. It can be translated. It can be produced and consumed at variable speeds. It is asynchronous.

**

Max Skibinsky on the transmutation of failure [[link](#)]

If one looks at the actual time spent by entrepreneurs, as a distinctively dif-

ferent class of people than salaried employees of successful startups, they spend the most of their time and effort creating, enduring, and recovering from failure rather than creating success.

However, after observing Valley life for 15 years this author realistic estimate would along the following figures: 70% market, 29% team, 1% original idea.

We have collective wisdom of Silicon Valley best and brightest estimating new high tech product (Facebook platform) and completely missing its importance and impact. The Facebook team and their venerated young founder completely missed the scale of their own product.

What differentiates #1 from #2, #3,...#10 players is the team. What is ironic they did not even have to work twice or ten times better. 10% difference could be all it takes. The team works just slightly better and faster, customers flock to its product faster then they flock to competitors, that attracts more investors, more creative talent, success breeds success, and before you know it such startup gets x1,000 times better outcome.

Operate at the maximum transparency. You don't know the right market, the time when "Instant Olympics" start and how to adjust your product vision to it. The only cure is to open all the possible barriers for communications. Instead of building walls that isolate fragile startup from the outside, integrate it into all possible channels to the broader community.

Therefore a startup team after establishing broad area what kind of problems they trying to solve (flashlight cone) should concentrate and follow any seeds of early success (first customer, first users, first media excitement) and make up bigger plans as that success story unfolds.

These 9 failed startups with 5-10 person each, had just created 50-100 people tempered and experienced by the failure. Reinvigorated by Silicon Valley community these people will now jump back into fray, some to join other startups, some to start their own. The real full production of 10 startups was one winning startup and 100 high quality people. While representing the loss of individual investors (from which they are of course protected by portfolio system), it's a big win for the Valley as whole.

**

BVP's Anti Portfolio [\[link\]](#)

eBay: "Stamps? Coins? Comic books? You've GOT to be kidding," thought Cowan. "No-brainer pass."

Google: Cowan's college friend rented her garage to Sergey and Larry for their first year. In 1999 and 2000 she tried to introduce Cowan to "these two really smart Stanford students writing a search engine". Students? A new search engine? In the most important moment ever for Bessemer's anti-portfolio, Cowan asked her, "How can I get out of this house without going anywhere near your garage?"

PayPal: David Cowan passed on the Series A round. Rookie team, regulatory nightmare, and, 4 years later, a \$1.5 billion acquisition by eBay.

**

The 4 Agreements by Miguel Ruiz

1. Be impeccable with your word
2. Don't take anything personally
3. Don't make assumptions
4. Always do your best.

**

All of the above are roughly in chronological order of when the content was added. Thanks for reading! You can read more on [my blog](#) or [Twitter](#) (@kgao).